Creolization, Ethnicity, and Affective Economies; An examination of Chagossian identity under the changing circumstances of life in Mauritius.

By Daniel Martin

BA

Department of Anthropology,

Macquarie University,

Sydney, Australia.

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Contents

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)_____   Date: _23/10/2017_____

Daniel Martin

Abstract

This thesis examines the lived experiences of the Chagos Islanders in Mauritius by analysing the social impacts of displacement. From 1965-1973 the Chagos Islanders were forcibly relocated from the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean to Mauritius, to make way for the construction of a US military base on Diego Garcia. The Chagossians continue to deal with the social ramifications of resettlement and the challenges in establishing an ethnic identity within the culturally diverse society of Mauritius. Drawing on ethnographic research in Port Louis this paper uses creolization as a theoretical framework to examine social impacts that span three generations of displaced Islanders. The thesis will also explore how these same processes of creolization are actively used by the Islanders to adapt to changing life circumstances. This thesis will argue that Chagossian identity is an emergent category of social organisation within Mauritian society and provides a generative base for affective networks that contribute to a collective identity.

Abbreviations

BIOT – British Indian Ocean Territory

CPE – Certificate of Primary Education

CRG – Chagos Refugees Group

CSC – Chagos Social Committee

CWF – Chagossian Welfare Fund

FCO – Foreign & Commonwealth Office

IRR – Impoverishment Risk and Reconstruction [model]

ITFB – Ilois Trust Fund Board

MMM – *Mouvement Militant Mauricien* (Mauritian Militant Movement)

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

U.S. – United States

ZEP – *Zones d'Éducation Prioritaires* (Priority Education Zones)

Introduction

In the middle of the Indian Ocean lie the remote islands of the Chagos Archipelago. Claimed by the French in 1744, the islands became an economic and administrative extension of their colonial presence in the Indian Ocean. The islands remained uninhabited until settled by French plantation owners from Mauritius in 1783 and were subsequently populated with slaves from Madagascar and Eastern Africa. In 1814 under the Treaty of Paris the Seychelles, Mauritius, and its dependencies; the Chagos Archipelago, Rodrigues, Agalega, Saint Brandon (Cargados Carajos), and Tromelin, were transferred from French to British governance.

During the Cold War, the United States planned to establish a military base in the Indian Ocean. Discussions turned to the remote islands of the Chagos, primarily its largest island, Diego Garcia. To accommodate these geopolitical designs, from the period of 1965-1973, the Chagos Islanders were strategically, and forcibly, relocated to Mauritius and the Seychelles.

Chagossian communities in Mauritius have since created Chagossian-run organisations to pursue their desire to return to the Chagos. In 1982 the Chagos Refugees Group (CRG) was established, and in 1995 a new group called the Chagos Social Committee (CSC) was set up. Both groups have managed varying degrees of success in spreading awareness of the Chagossian struggle and seeking the right to return to the Chagos. The CSC popularised the collective noun 'Chagossian' to identify the Chagos Islanders as a distinct group and gained recognition of the Chagossians as indigenous people at the 1996 UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations. However, the community has faced opposition from Mauritian politicians regarding the definition of indigeneity as Mauritius and its dependencies had no pre-colonial populations. If an indigenous label were to be applied to the Chagos Islanders, then numerous social and political implications follow for Mauritius in sustaining peaceful ethnic relations and potential claims to Mauritian sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago (Jeffery 2011:51-52). Despite the UN giving support to the Chagos Islanders in their self-determination as indigenous to the Chagos Archipelago, the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is non-binding and hence, has no enforceable power.

Meanwhile, the CRG aimed to obtain recognition of Chagossians as refugees, people who were forcibly exiled from their homeland. In 2003 the CRG and the Sheridan legal team

approached the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to seek legitimate recognition for the Chagossians as refugees. The Chagossian organisation found that once again, Mauritian politicians were opposed to the assignment of such a label. Defining Chagossians as refugees would imply that they came to Mauritius from outside Mauritian territory, which has implications for Mauritius' claim to sovereignty over the islands. Instead, the politicians argued, Chagossians should be considered Internally Displaced People as the Chagos Archipelago was a dependency of Mauritius and thus, under Mauritian sovereignty (Jeffery 2011:52).

My research is focused on this ongoing conundrum, specifically, the Chagossian community's attempts to establish a distinctive identity within a Creole society and the perceived impact it will have for their fight to return to their islands. The establishment of an identity label is seemingly necessary for their situation to be legally evaluated and an outcome determined. The issue is complex. Since the Chagos developed under similar circumstances to Mauritius (as plantation colonies under the same administration), classifying people of one island under a particular definition has implication for other islands in the region. Attempts to secure recognition of Chagossians as refugees or as indigenous people has, so far, offered no tangible benefit to the community. This prompts the question; if Chagossians are not recognised under these definitions, yet a label is necessary for the evaluation of their case to seek rectification of Human Rights abuses, what classification would apply that is both practically beneficial to obtain a ruling, and analytically useful for approaching other cases where an identity label is likewise ambiguous?

Among the ex-colonies of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, local groups descended from slave populations came to be identified as Creoles. Numerous scholars have outlined a theoretical approach to understanding the process of cultural development and change in European colonial territories, primarily in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, that were dependant on a labour force of slaves taken from various locations (Baron & Cara 2011; Erkisen 2007; Jourdan 2015; Khan 2007; Stewart 2011). In these approaches, processes of collective integration which manifests in shared symbolic forms of communication and interaction are most commonly described as creolization. Creolization emerges out of the shared experience of being uprooted and displaced alongside others with whom there was no common history or shared social forms to structure interactions (Eriksen 2007).

Creolization is thereby "driven by the search for 'roots' but crisscrossed by the experience of 'movement', displacement and multiple connections." (Rodríguez 2015;83). This theory has practical implications for the understanding of how social life is structured in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. Creolization offers important insights into how identity is dynamically constituted in circumstances defined by disjuncture and displacement.

Specifically, in this thesis, I wish to introduce creolization theory into perspectives on the Chagossian struggle to advance the analytical basis upon which their case can be understood and evaluated. As seen above, disputes arise within legal discourse due to the lack of an established and accepted frame of reference when it comes to evaluating claims of right to land among Creole populations. For creolization to be of value in understanding ongoing change, the process needs to be situated within the Chagossian experience of their most recent displacement to Mauritius. I will outline the social impacts that widely affected the community during their early resettlement to illustrate where creolization can be observed having an impact on integration in the changing circumstances of life. Qualitative data on the first-hand experiences of being uprooted and cut off from familial, social, and cultural connections, and placed into slavery is sparse among the early inhabitants of the colonies throughout the Indian Ocean. The Chagossian situation provides an opportunity to observe 'creolization in action' as I examine ways in which being displaced from the Chagos has affected individuals. Despite often being considered 'Mauritian' in many aspects of life, a closer look at life in the Indian Ocean before and after the depopulation of the Chagos can illuminate differences between the Creole culture of the Chagos and that of Mauritius. In this instance, creolization works on a social level to create a new cultural identity through an affective economy spurred by the community mobilisation to return to the Chagos. Hence, using this theoretical lens offers a way of viewing the social impacts of displacement that reveals both the source of the social tensions caused by resettlement, the methods through which the community have managed integration, as well as ongoing manoeuvres to distinguish themselves through distinctive characteristics.

Each stage of this thesis will be driven by key questions; What is the historical relationship between the Chagos and Mauritius? What does identity and ethnicity mean to the people of the Chagos? What impact has displacement had on Chagossian experiences of resettlement?

What do these experiences tell us about the conceptualisation of a Chagossian identity in shaping their struggle to return to the Chagos?

Certain texts are central to my analysis. They include anthropological investigations by Laura Jeffery and David Vine, which have increased international awareness of the Chagossian struggle from two fronts. In her book, *Chagos Islanders in Mauritius and the UK* (2011), Jeffery documents the social, economic and political conditions that confronted the Chagossians in Mauritius following their displacement. Her papers on the Chagossian community provide strong insights into the Chagossian experience, identity, and culture (2006; 2007; 2011; 2017). In his widely read book, *Island of Shame* (2009)*,* Vine details the intricacies of the political process which led to the construction of the U.S. military base on Diego Garcia and the consequent displacement of the Chagos Islanders. Vine's papers address the politics of U.S. foreign military bases and the implication of U.S. military and defence programmes to human rights which shapes the Chagossian struggle to return home (2004; 2006; 2010; 2012).

An understanding of the Chagossian experience in Mauritius needs to be placed within the broader cultural context of colonialism, displacement and slavery in the Indian Ocean. The anthropologist, Thomas Hylland Eriksen's seminal work 'Creolization in Anthropological Theory and in Mauritius' (2007), will be introduced to demonstrate the complexity of Creole identities. Understanding identity politics within an ethnically diverse society like Mauritius requires a thorough appreciation of the performative role of ethnicity in shaping social relations (Eriksen 2010). Frederik Barth, in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969)*,* identifies ethnicity as a form of social organisation and illustrates a series of conditions that need to be taken into consideration when seeking to understand the formation of, and interactions between, 'contiguous' ethnic groups.

Lastly, this thesis requires consideration of the role that emotions and affect have in the construction and continuity of identity, culture, and social relations. Sara Ahmed's work on *Affective Economies* (2004a) and *Collective Feelings* (2004b), give us a detailed insight into the role of feelings and affective networks in drawing individuals together in a collective identity. Ahmed (2004a) argues that emotions "*do things"* as they are shared and circulated among individuals of a group to strengthen and foster identity as it is compared and contrasted with the 'other'. Integrating this theoretical approach allows for an analysis of how Chagos Islanders construct identity using sentimental relations to the Chagos, thereby embracing

generations that have no physical connection to the islands and how this informs ongoing dynamics of creolization.

Methodology

To investigate the above concerns, I spent four months in Mauritius between November 2016 and March 2017 conducting ethnographic fieldwork with the Chagossian community in Port Louis. I resided in an apartment building near a Chagossian housing estate and CRG office in Pointe aux Sables. Pointe aux Sables is located south-west of the Mauritian capital, Port Louis, and is one of the two locations where the Chagossians were allocated land after their displacement to Mauritius. The other location is Baie du Tombeau, located to the north of Port Louis, and houses another CRG community centre. Throughout my fieldwork, I conversed at length with roughly twenty people about their lives and aspirations. Most of my interviews were conducted at the CRG office or community centres. I spent much of my time at the office in Pointe aux Sables, which was a short walk from my apartment. I volunteered at the CRG office carrying out small tasks such as preparing for weekly meetings, setting up for media conferences, organising placards for political demonstrations, and general maintenance of the office. While English is the official language of Mauritius, the *lingua franca* is *Kreol*, and many members of the Chagossian community spoke little English. I was proficient enough in *Kreol* to carry out short conversations, however, the in-depth interviews with those who did not speak English required a translator. The translator was a Mauritian contact who has distant familial connections with the Chagos yet is not actively involved with the community. She was chosen with permission from my respondents out of respect for their privacy and integrity to maintain the confidentiality of our conversations. I often travelled to people's houses in Cassis and Roche Bois, other neighbourhoods near the capital of Port Louis, to conduct interviews.

In addition to interviews with the community, I attended certain events such as the distribution of scholarship funds to school children of Chagossian families and CRG political demonstrations held outside the British High Commission in Port Louis. I observed Chagossian cultural occasions, such as fundraising nights where they served traditional meals of the Chagos, played *séga* music and danced. I was invited to attend church with the community (who are mainly Catholic), funerals, and special occasions such as birthdays and graduations from university.

I also gathered archival and quantitative records and data. The CRG provided me with access to the court details of their legal case with the UK in 2000. These documents contained records of inhabitant's births and deaths throughout the Chagos colonial history in addition to the statements from Chagossians of life on the islands and displacement. I was supplied with the press releases from the CRG regarding their ongoing legal battle with the UK, as well as correspondence between the CRG and the UK government. To better understand these documents and historical events I conducted interviews with members of the Mauritian government, politicians, journalists and police officers. I was provided with access to documents from the Department of Education which supplied data on grades and attendance of the schools in the areas where the Chagossian communities are situated.

My research was conducted using ethnographic methodology to obtain an in-depth, firsthand perspective of experience from Chagossians. I began my research by investigating the socio-economic impacts of displacement, information best obtained through regular conversations with people about their experiences. I designed my approach to be flexible to changing circumstances as I was introduced to the everyday lives of Chagossians in Mauritius. The confines of this thesis, i.e. the limited time allocated for research and space for writing, meant that I needed to be strategic in my methodology to gain as deep an understanding as possible within the time available. For this reason, I chose to prioritise regular, informal conversations with a small group of participants over structured interviews or widespread surveys. My choice was based on the understanding that a more nuanced picture of the complexities of experience could be obtained from people whom I spent a significant amount of time with. Likewise, I chose to rely on participant observation to observe the connections and interactions among members of the Chagossian community and thereby gain broader insights into how cultural identity is structured and situated within Mauritian society.

The introduction of quantitative data into this research can ideally provide additional layers of understanding local complexities that would, in turn, strengthen future research. However, obtaining quantitative data of Chagossians in Mauritius was intrinsically difficult. As I will show, there is no ostensible differentiation of Chagossians from Mauritian Creoles that would allow for a socio-economic analysis of the Chagossian experience in isolation from factors affecting the broader Mauritian Creole community. This was not an obstacle I was aware of prior to my research, and one I could not comprehensively address in the time allocated.

Instead, I chose to focus my research on the *qualitative* data I could obtain and construct my thesis around the Chagossian experience that I acquired from people of different ages, socioeconomic class, and gender. This thesis, therefore, provides the groundwork for further research that will contribute to the understanding of experience both among the Chagossian community and Creole populations throughout the Indian Ocean.

Structure

Chapter One will provide a historical description of the Chagos Archipelago and Mauritius, examining social and economic trajectories to trace out the contexts within which creolization took place. I will focus on three key issues; settlement, structuring of social life, and the socio-political relationship between Mauritius and the Chagos. Creolization is constituted through everyday interactions, encounters and practices (Rodríguez 2015;84) which are heavily influenced by the organisation of social life. On the remote islands of the Chagos, a steady rhythm of life was structured around the operation of the coconut plantations and private activities like gardening and fishing. Mauritius, meanwhile, underwent more diverse stages of cultural and economic development. Exports from Mauritius were dictated by the European economy while trade and industry regulations encouraged foreign investment and migration. Ethnic diversity in Mauritius made social life hierarchically structured and economically divided. The Chagos, being a remote dependency, had little say or representation in Mauritian politics, particularly as Mauritius moved towards independence. These factors will inform the notion that, at the time of their displacement, the Chagossians occupied an ambivalent space in Mauritian society wherein they were simultaneously considered to be both Mauritian and non-Mauritians.

Chapter Two will document ethnographic data gathered from key respondents within the Chagossian community living in Mauritius; François and Lynette – an elderly couple who were displaced from Peros Banhos, Edouard – the son of Chagossians, Henrie, and Emilienne – both grandchildren of Chagossians. Generational distinctions will illustrate displacement's impact over time. These life stories will be framed within an analysis of three key social elements of displacement as described in Michael Cernea's Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) model (1997); discrimination and marginalisation, problems of unemployment, and issues in establishing and maintaining social networks. Within this analysis, I will also include Mahapatra's (1996) addition of 'access to education' as an impoverishment risk. These

experiences reveal the lines of contact where cultural difference can be the basis for marginalisation and present structural disadvantages or act as foundational characteristics for the formation of a distinct cultural identity. In respect to these changing circumstances, I argue that the Chagossians are undergoing creolization within the already creolized society.

Chapter Three explores immaterial and affective dimensions of the ongoing Chagossian exile and legal proceedings with the UK surrounding their fight to return to the Chagos Archipelago. The mobilization of the Chagossian community towards political activism arose within the complex socio-political environment of Mauritius. These conditions fostered an affective economy that underpins the formulation of a Chagossian identity that has become politically recognised, and thus, socially tangible. I will suggest it is the performative role of emotions that give the conceptualisation of Chagossian identity its tactile power in joining individuals to a collective. Chapter three will outline the legal history of the Chagossian fight for their right to return and analyse the impact these proceedings have on Chagossian identity.

> Henrie (35, grandson of Chagossians, living in Mauritius): "Another problem for me, I don't know my relatives before my grandfather. I don't know their origins. Because my life, my origins for me, starts in the Chagos, that is all."

The Chagos Archipelago is a group of roughly 64 small islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean. The three main island groups are; Peros Banhos, Salomon Island and Diego Garcia. Originally uninhabited prior to European colonial expansion[1], the Chagos was claimed in 1744 by the French and, as mentioned, was first populated in 1783 with 22 enslaved Africans brought from Madagascar and Mozambique via Mauritius (Vine 2009:21). These first inhabitants worked the coconut plantations and established new social and cultural forms among those with whom they shared only the experience of being uprooted, displaced, and forced into slavery. This '*culture des îles*', the culture of the islands, formed in the Chagos came to be self-ascribed as 'Creole' culture (Vine 2009:30). Other Creole cultures emerged throughout the colonial plantations across the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, and even into the South Pacific.

Etymologically, 'Creole' is believed to have been a derivative of the Spanish word '*criollo',* meaning a Spaniard born in the New World (Eriksen 2007:155). In the local context, Creole became an ethnic label assigned to the descendants of the African slaves first brought to work on island plantations of the New World. The African slaves were torn from their homes, their families, and their culture, forced to live and work alongside other's displaced from different locations. Each person carried with them differences in language, social organisation, and kinship structures. Logically, a problem in communication followed. The languages that emerged throughout these plantations has drawn much academic attention given it showed "that certain new languages develop more rapidly than they 'should'" (Haring 2011:178). This sparked an examination of the conditions within which this phenomenon was taking place and it soon became clear that it was more than the development of a new language. Rather, life in these circumstances demonstrated processes of broader cultural (re)construction.

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[1] No archaeological survey has yet found if the islands were previously settled. The Chagos archipelago was uninhabited when discovered by Europeans in the early 1500's and remained so for more than 250 years.

Attempts to understand the complex cultural amalgams emerging amongst the slave population resulted in the development of 'creolization' theory. Eriksen points out that "creolization is often used merely as a synonym for hybridity", but according to both the historical origins of Creoles and with respect to the process, "a more restrictive use of the term might be both necessary and analytically helpful" (2007:155). Creolization offers more than just an additional layer to a historical account, it provides a nuanced understanding of how, historically, the process of creolization on both Mauritius and the Chagos continues to shape and colour the lives of the people today.

Ethnic Boundaries and Continuity

> Edouard (51, son of Chagossian parents, living in Mauritius): "Mauritius is like you… how you say? Your heritage is not here in Mauritius… I can feel it. That my heritage is not from here. My ancestors left it over there. That is why I have to go there."

To understand the value that creolization offers is helpful to examine the relationship between boundedness and continuity within the study of culture. I will do this through an examination of ethnic boundaries and diversity in Mauritius. Contemporary anthropological theory acknowledges the problems of perceiving culture as rigid in its boundaries and homogenous in its adherence (Fox & King 2002). What follows is the a priori understanding that cultural identity is fluid and under continuous flux, as it is reproduced and transmitted across individuals and down through generations, continuously adapting to new circumstances and environments (Bader 2001; Drummond 1980; Eriksen 2007; Friedman 1994). To understand the changing nature of culture and identity, how they produce levels of experience and variation within their respective collectives, we need to consider the "ambiguous grey-zones", spaces of interaction where variation and change put accepted categories and boundaries under pressure (Eriksen 2007:155). Ethnicity and its role in the organisation of Creole social groups is a logical place to start.

The use of 'ethnicity' as a method for the categorisation of different groups of people relies on the analytical terminology being *socially effective* within the context of its application for both the group itself and the groups with whom they interact (Barth 1969). That is, to employ 'ethnicity' in anthropological research it needs to *do something*; there needs to be an empirically tangible basis for this method of categorisation. In Barth's 'Introduction', he

critiques the widespread, ethnocentric notion of ethnicity as defining and labelling minority groups and demonstrates the term's practical value as a form of social organisation (1969:13). 'Ethnicity' is a theoretical tool used as a means of conceptualising the way everyday interactions are constructed out of the organisation of social groups that the subjects of anthropological investigation assign and are assigned to.

Building on Barth's suggestions, Eriksen argues that theoretical challenges[2] surrounding the use of 'ethnicity' can be illuminated when we consider how ethnic relations and identities are shared within specific historical trajectories (2010:95). From this perspective, ethnicity can be defined as a category of social organisation of communicated cultural differences arising from processes of social differentiation and expansion of system boundaries that bring into contact formerly discrete groups (Eriksen 2010:96). What makes ethnicity empirically tangible is the conscious concern and active participation in the preservation of culture through the formation of organisational systems that secures the groups respective cultural and political interests (Eriksen 2010:96). The political organisation of these groups is an important element in collective association to ethnicity (Grillo 1998; Nash 1988; Watson 2000), something I will return to in chapter three.

Acknowledging variation within ethnic groups is key to understanding the way boundaries and identities are under constant pressure and change. The lines of differentiation drawn up around ethnic groups work as boundaries until they don't. That is to say until variation within a group transcends defined boundaries and becomes problematic for group identity. The negotiation, reformulation and transformation that occur along these boundaries when a group is faced with deviation from accepted or established norms are key areas of focus for anthropological observations. Along these lines, we see the interplay between identity, the individual's self-ascribed sense of self[3], and culture, the collectively bound sense of identity. These negotiations reveal the limits of boundaries, and the times and places where boundaries become permeable, leading to change and continuity as ideas, experiences, and emotions are exchanged (Bader 2001; Caglar 1997; Eriksen 2007).

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[2] "Notably the relationship between ethnicity and modernity, culture and ethnicity, and agency and structure" (Eriksen 1994:95)

[3] See chapter three for a more detailed explanation of identity formulation.

Creole Cultures in the Indian Ocean

With the importation of slaves from different regions of Africa onto the colonial island plantations, there were few shared collective cultural resources and too much ethnic variation to allow for compliance among the labourers to anyone over-arching cultural system (Eriksen 2007). The degree of cultural continuity through one group securing a dominant cultural foothold over the rest of the slave-labour population was limited. The immediate need for communication between the slaves prompted the formulation of "an ethnic identity with an everyday relevance" (Eriksen 2010:98). Practically speaking, it was more convenient for these people to construct language, social and cultural forms anew (Cohen 2007). This provides an explanation for similarities in cultural traits among the Creole communities of the Indian Ocean as they were derived from similar circumstances, given Mauritius and its dependencies, and the Seychelles were established under French colonial rule within a short span of time. In this sense, creolization is a process that requires active participation from social actors to produce the kinds of cultural forms that enables communication and fosters collective identities.

Creolization is embedded in the social conditions established by colonialism. It is a process that is constituted in the day to day interactions of the human actors that have ranging degrees of agency[4] and consciousness in their participation within this process (Khan 2007; Glissant 1995; Ortner 2001). With French being the *lingua franca* on the plantations, the labour force developed a common language based on the linguistic framework of the ruling class. This language became known as *Kreol*, or *Morisyen* in Mauritius. It was a derivative of French and varies in form and dialect across islands, villages, generations, subcultures, and class (Boswell 2017:96). Where *Kreol* provided a means for communication and interaction among the linguistically diverse group of individuals, s*éga* music and dance provided an avenue for cultural expressions of experience.

S*éga* is a widely popular music genre throughout the Indian Ocean stemming from the enslaved labourer's experiences of hardship and domination under slavery and colonialism

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[4] The term 'agency' is loaded with meaning, within the context of my application it indicates an individual's capacity to make decisions within a socio-cultural framework. It is not synonymous with free will or resistance. It covers the range individual capabilities as they make decisions in conjunction with other social, cultural, economic, or political processes which enable certain actions while restricting others. For similar theoretical approaches to agency see Ahearn 2001; Khan 2007; Ortner 2001.

(Boswell 2006, 2017; Jeffery 2011; Lee 1990). It is impossible, in this thesis, to capture the ethnomusicological complexities of *séga* and its relation to each island's specific history. However, it is important to note that *séga* was a product of the discontent felt among the enslaved labourers as they sung of their oppression, the hardship of daily life, their unfair treatment, and the social unrest that was widespread among the different communities (Boswell 2006, 2017; Jeffery 2007, 2011; Lee 1990). These songs, while a product of the conditions of their time, serve as a form of cultural continuity as, like most popular music, they act as a "retrospective definition of tradition" (Waterman 1990:369). The content, meaning, and performance of these songs vary from island to island as they serve to embody the conditions particular to their origin while explanations of their differences serve to distinguish themselves as culturally distinct (Boswell 2017: 96-99; Jeffery 2011:87-88).

Cuisine has also had a role in serving as a mode of cultural distinctness among Creole populations throughout the Indian Ocean. During interviews, many Chagossians identified the meals they cook in Mauritius as a means of preserving Chagossian culture. Henrie's wife, Jane, who is Mauritian, told me that she has been learning how to cook traditional Chagossian meals from Henrie's mother as she believes it to be an important part of Henrie's heritage and is something they can pass down to their son. Given the readily available coconuts, Chagossian meals are characterised by a creamy base of coconut milk, called *seraz* (Le Chartier 1991:24) that distinguishes Chagossian cuisine from that of Mauritius and Rodrigues. The Seychelles and Agalega both had coconut plantations and while Agalega's coconut milk-based dishes are also known as *seraz*, in the Seychelles it is called *ladob* (Jeffery 2011:88). The dish is served with either fish, octopus, or chicken. On the Chagos, the Islanders brewed *baka* a beverage made from fermented maize with pineapple, sugar and lentils. This homemade drink made an appearance at every social gathering I attended.

Language, *séga* music, and cuisine act as symbolic models for comparison of similarities and differences among Creole communities. The emphasis of these cultural characteristics serves to demarcate the traits produced through creolization as constitutional of a Creole culture. Very few African religious beliefs and practices survived the process of creolization. Those that did were modified. Under French colonial authority, most of the slaves converted to Christianity and their descendants today are Catholic (Boswell 2014:153; Eriksen 2007:157). We must be cautious not to look back on this history from a teleological standpoint and

perceive the process as if it can operate independent of human actors (Khan 2007), thus perceiving the cultural products of creolization observable today, as inevitable. Conversely, creolization should be viewed as producing cultural forms based on situational requirements and circumstances that demand particular outcomes to ensure degrees of cultural continuity. Creolization produces, changes, adapts and alters cultural forms that, while linked to a long history, are made new due to the multiplicity and multi-vocality of the diversity among those participating in this process (Baron & Cara 2011:3). Creolization is situationally dependent and thus there is a wide variety of factors that shape emerging cultural products such that "there is no one creolity or single way of being Creole" (Baron & Cara 2011:5). Given these considerations, a framework that can unpack the social and cultural complexities of the islands under colonialism offers clear-cut benefits to the study of Creole cultures and the wider social contexts that impinge upon them (Szwed 2011:23).

The employment of creolization in anthropological theory has been critiqued due to a level of uncertainty surrounding the theoretical application and relevance of the term. Scholars have argued against the theoretical utility of creolization as the definition is too wide and general (Allen 1998; Palmié 2006). They suggest that, if by the nature of cultural continuity, cultural processes are characteristically creole, then the use of creolization as a theoretical term is redundant. Without a clearly defined objective and theoretical framework, the theory of creolization can lack a required level of reflexivity (Khan 2007). The unconscious projection of concerns towards cultural differences, power structures, and systems of change, makes the product of creolization theory "a mere reflex of the very conditions it seeks to denounce and supercede" (Palmié 2006:448). In response to this, Khan and Eriksen argue for the need to make the agenda of creolization transparent through a comprehensive definition of the process. Eriksen offers a definition of creolization that encompasses dislocation and alienation, the localisation of foreign influence, and refers to the anomalous or ambiguous ethnic groups, which we might think of, in this instance, as the Creoles of Mauritius and the Chagos;

> "Creolization, finally, directs our attention toward cultural phenomena that result from displacement and the ensuing social encounter and mutual influence between/among two or several groups, creating an ongoing dynamic interchange of symbols and practices, eventually leading to new forms with varying degrees of stability. The term

'creole culture' suggests the presence of a standardized, relatively stable cultural idiom resulting from such a process." (Eriksen 2007:172-173).

Importantly this offers us a way to approach Creole populations, not just as victims of a historical injustice, but as active participants (Khan 2007) in the creation of new cultures. Comparisons of cultural forms like language, music, and food, highlights three elements of creolization. Firstly, there exists an overarching cultural 'type' known as Creole that exhibits situational variations. Secondly, these situational variations make visible through contact selected differences between islands of the Indian Ocean. Thirdly, when differences are made apparent they act as the basis upon which particular Creole identities are asserted and boundaries are created. From this process, Creole groups are presented with tangible cultural traits that are performed, passed down, and – through contact – are either consolidated, enhanced, and preserved, or change in adaptation to situational changes.

Points of Origin; Mauritian Settlement

"It may be said that all the cultures of all the ethnic groups in Mauritius have been culturally creolised – uprooted and adapted to local circumstances – to a greater or lesser extent" (Eriksen 2007:156).

Mauritius and its dependencies were uninhabited prior to the seventeenth century (Allen 2001; Selvon 2001; Teelock 1998). In 1638, the Dutch first attempted to establish a settlement on Mauritius. Shifting economic interests compromised the viability of maintaining sovereignty over Mauritius and by 1710 the Dutch had departed. Meanwhile, the French had been present in the Indian Ocean since 1642. After the Dutch departed, the French established a settlement in Mauritius (which was renamed Isle de France until British occupation) in 1721. Historian J.M. Filliot compiled maritime records for the Mascarene islands showing the slave population imported to Mauritius under French administration consisted of 45% from the East African Coast, 40% from Madagascar, 3% from West Africa, and 12% from the Indian Sub-Continent (Moutou 2016:13). In total, 90,000 slaves were introduced from a variety of regions while under French colonial control.

The transition from French to British rule in 1814 was relatively smooth after signing the treaty (Selvon 2001:180). One notable change was the rapid increase in sugar production. The cultivation of wheat, indigo and coffee, cotton and cloves were phased out, while sugar

production increased from 1,000 tonnes in 1807 to 57,000 tonnes by 1829 following the entry of Mauritian sugar into the London Market in 1825 (Moutou 2016:34). This change would prove to be a long-term disadvantage to the Creole community as their knowledge and skillsets were reduced to a single occupation.

On the 1st February 1835, slavery was abolished in Mauritius, marking significant social and economic changes for the colony. The emancipation resulted in a large migration of Creole workers; some moved to the Chagos or Agalega. Slaves were laid off from the plantations in phases and gradually replaced by indentured labourers brought in from India (Tinker 1974). In all, 28,000 Creoles had been working on the sugar estates during a four-year transitory period wherein an 'apprenticeship' contract guaranteed people training and work. 14,000 to 15,000 Creoles left the estates around the time that the Indian indentured labourers were introduced (Selvon 2001:219). Most Creoles who left the plantations, voluntarily or otherwise, lived in destitution as squatters in the suburbs of Port-Louis or in the outskirts of large villages (Teelock 2001:283) where they were employed as dockers, fishermen, stevedores or in the hard manual labour of stone breakers, masons, loaders or odd manual jobs (Moutou 2016:36). While the labourers from India worked to put their children through school, who then grew up educated and filled governmental positions, the Creoles toiled in the precarious manual labour jobs while facing public accusations of laziness and a lack of ambition (Carter & d'Unienville 2001:61). The social structuring that developed throughout this time culminated in ethnic tension between the Indo-Mauritians and the disadvantaged Creoles in the mid-twentieth century as Mauritius moved towards independence. The 1860's saw the immigration of labourers from China at the behest of European contractors (Jeffery 2011:19). Once emigration had been legalised the Chinese population grew within Mauritian society to constitute 3% of the population by 1952 (Central Statistics Office 2016:16-17).

In the years that followed, Mauritian population classifications were altered to reflect the main denominations no longer being from East Africa and Madagascar but rather India and China, and that "an increasing proportion of the population was now born in Mauritius rather than elsewhere" (Jeffery 2011:23-24). For the first time in Mauritian history, there was a diversity of ethnic groups in a single location that was not relocated – voluntary or otherwise – and forced by necessity to undergo creolization in order to function in Mauritian society. People were born into a society where creolization was an implicit part of everyday

socialization. The ethnic diversification and social fluctuations that Mauritius underwent following independence in 1978 underpinned a society that was an amalgamation of distinct and bounded ethnic identities while also being all part of a cultural whole that was drawing from the same pool of cultural resources. This cultural environment is known as a poly-ethnic society (Barth 1969:16-17). Poly-ethnic societies are those under which a government or state system is dominated by one ethnic group, in the case of Mauritius that is the Indo-Mauritians, but allows for a diversity of ethnicities and cultures to coexist in public, religious and domestic sectors (Barth 1969:16; Eriksen 1992, 2010).

Mauritian society consists of groups that have diverse origins yet identify as Mauritians even as a historical sense of home plays an important part in ongoing ethnic distinctions (Eriksen 2007:159). Quantitative assessment of ethnic history is difficult to pin down since Mauritius has not had a question on ethnicity in its census since 1972. The last census, which was undertaken shortly after the arrival of the last Chagos Islanders in Mauritius, asked people to align themselves with a particular ethnic identity. The data revealed that Mauritius was home to; Hindu (50%), Muslim (16%), Sino-Mauritians – Mauritians of Chinese background – (3%), 31% were classified under General Population, which included Creoles who were descendants of slaves, and Franco-Mauritians of European descent, (Central Statistics Office 2016). Since then there has been no further data collection on numbers of different ethnic groups (Dinan 2002: 81).

As mentioned above, the ethnic hierarchy established within Mauritian society that marginalised the Mauritian Creoles culminated in a series of ethnic riots in the mid-twentieth century as conflicting agendas around Mauritian independence clashed. In 1965 there were riots between the Creoles, who were campaigning against independence, and the Hindus, who sought to gain a majority position within the political system of an independent Mauritius. In 1967 a general election was held in Mauritius and was won by the Independence Party. With public support, negotiations began with the UK government. The British ministers gave the leading Mauritian official, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, little choice. Mauritius had to forfeit the Chagos Archipelago to UK sovereignty in exchange for independence and £3 million, or no independence (Vine 2009:83). In January of 1968, two months before independence, there was an outbreak of rioting between Creoles and Muslims for control of the constituency in the north of Port Louis. The political climate of the newly independent

Mauritius put emphasis on ethnic boundaries, encouraging an ideology of inclusion and exclusion as different ethnic groups competed for representation in the independent government. Knowing what group you belonged to and where you stood within a social hierarchy was important both for establishing interactions within a group and among different groups (Barth 1969:25). This was essential for the social organisation of Mauritius in establishing itself as a newly independent, poly-ethnic society.

People growing up in this milieu had to establish cultural bounds and allow for flexibility across boundaries that would ensure continuity through cultural exchange and negotiations. While *Kreol* was a linguistic necessity that transcended cultural boundaries, it was also negatively associated with a marginalised population, commonly referred to as *malaise creole* (Boswell 2005, 2014; Bunwaree 2001; Eriksen 2007; Maurer 2014). '*Malaise*' was attached to Mauritian Creole identity as it associated "a collection of pathologies and problems deriving from slavery" (Boswell 2014:153). This category stigmatised the community as "slavery is perceived as having a fragmenting (and often annihilating) impact on identity, solidarity, and economy" (Boswell 2005:213). Gradual improvements in housing, employment, and education in Mauritius since the mid-1980's have revealed that the Creole community has been lagging behind as a consequence of "their relative lack of symbolic capital in Mauritian identity politics" compared to non-Creoles (Eriksen 2007:160). It was into this ethnically structured social environment that the Chagos Islanders were placed.

The Chagos Archipelago

"Chagos had all the major features of the plantation world; a mostly enslaved labour force, an agricultural-based economy organised around large-scale capitalist plantation's supplying specialized products (copra) to distant markets, political control emanating from a distant European Nation, a population that was generally not self-sustaining and required frequent replenishment (enslaved peoples and later indentured labourers) and elements of feudal labor control." (Vine 2009:25)

The climate of the Chagos Archipelago was ideal for coconut plantations as the coconut trees produced copious quantities of nuts all year round. Being close to the equator and free of cyclones, the islands presented an attractive location for the establishment of more plantations beyond Peros Banhos. By 1813, hundreds of slaves from across Eastern Africa and

Madagascar were brought in to work on the islands of Diego Garcia, Three Brothers, Eagle and Salomon Islands, and Six Islands (Vine 2009:24). *Kreol* developed on the Chagos, differing from *Morisyen* slightly in dialect and accent (addressed in chapter two). The *séga* of the Chagos was likewise a product of the turbulent conditions of its history of settlement based on uprooted and displaced slaves. Jeffery notes that *séga* songs composed on the Chagos addressed concerns about the harsh conditions of life on the plantations and separation from family and community within the Chagos Archipelago (2007:957-958).

The settlement of the Chagos was organised by companies with a vested economic interest in the Chagos and who controlled its economic activity, settlement, and administration (Scott 1961:96-101). Regulation of the working conditions on the Chagos evolved following the abolition of slavery in 1835. Colonial investigators, monitoring the conditions of the plantations among the dependencies of Mauritius, noted that work on the Chagos was "of a much milder nature than that which is performed on the sugar plantations of Mauritius", and that the workers seemed to be "a more comfortable body of people" due "to so much of their own time being employed to their own advantage" (Vine 2009:27-28). The relatively benign working conditions, compared to the treatment of slaves in different colonies, could be attributed to the island's isolation and the potential fallout from revolts.

The coconut plantations on the Chagos produced mainly copra – the dried flesh of the coconut – and coconut oil that was extracted from pressed copra. By the twentieth century the plantations were run almost exclusively by the Chagos-Agalega plantation company (hereby referred to as 'the Company'). There was no private land ownership on the islands as the Company owned the land, controlled its use, took charge of assigning plots and the construction of houses for the Islanders (Bancoult 2000). In other words, the Chagos functioned, for all intents and purposes, as a privately-owned 'state'. The Chagos was self-sufficient in many ways as forests provided materials for the construction of houses and boats, the sea provided an abundance of fish, and the plantations provided almost universal work. However, the Chagos did rely upon Mauritius for certain supplies necessary to daily life; milk, salt, sugar, and medicine, and staff for the administration, hospitals, and schools – which were not opened until the mid-twentieth century. In this regard, the Chagos was a dependency of Mauritius, which itself was a dependency of the UK, making it "a colony of a colony" (Vine 2009:26).

The Chagos Archipelago's isolation played a key role in shaping its economic environment, as there was no opportunity for foreign investment, development, or entrepreneurial ventures that interfered with the functioning of the coconut plantations – with the exception of the Islander's informal economic activities. The inhabitants of the Chagos were not passively compliant employees of the coconut plantations and by 1880 a socio-economic hierarchy had been established throughout the Chagos (Bancoult 2000; Vine 2009:28). At the top of the wage ladder were blacksmiths, carpenters, assistant carpenters, coopers [5], and junior administrators, who earned 20-32 shillings a month. These jobs required specialised skill training available on the islands. Men working in coconut oil mills earned 18-20 shillings a month, slightly more than the male labourers in the coconut drying sheds who received 16 shillings a month, with the women earning only 12 shillings a month. However, women working in domestic or supervisory jobs, such as housekeepers, nannies or au pairs, received more. At the bottom of this hierarchy were rat-catchers, stablemen, gardeners, maize planters, toddy-makers and pig- and fowl-keepers. As money had minimal relevance in everyday life of the Chagos, earning reports symbolised the social value placed on respective roles. Wage reports serve to quantify economic variation within a colony run as a single economic outlet – the production and exportation of coconut products. The socio-economic hierarchy that was being developed served as a model of social organisation within the "*culture des îles*" that differs from the capitalistic structuring that shaped Mauritian social organisation.

Most people did not usually receive their wages in physical cash. The administrators of each island, who were usually Mauritian and employed by the Company, managed the personal accounts for the employees. The function of these accounts was to keep track of each person's pay with the deductions for the food supply that was distributed weekly, and other services the administration offered (Vine 2009:35-36). If people chose to work overtime they received cash which was saved for vacations to Mauritius, and to purchase items not available on the island. Management paid for bonuses in tobacco, rum, toddy and coconut oil. Fishing became one of the main sources of capital in the non-monetary economy. Those with the specialised skills would construct "pirogues", small wooden seafaring boats used for fishing, that could be built in a week (Bancoult 2000). The Islanders would fish off these *pirogues* using

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[5] Profession that deals with constructing wooden vessels such as barrels, casks, buckets, tubes, etc.

handlines and hooks. The surplus of these fishing ventures was traded among the islands in exchange for the products of the other professions of blacksmiths, carpenters or coopers. That is not to say that this was an exclusively cashless economy, but the necessity for cash was an irregular requirement. Economic life was structured, not around the accumulation of a financial wealth, but rather the completion of a set of required tasks for the day on the plantation alongside fulfilling the tasks of daily communal life.

> Francois (82, Chagossian man born on Peros Banhos, displaced 1973): "We would wake up to the bell at 6 am and gathered in front of the administrator's house. There we were given our tasks for the day. Before we started we would go home and have our tea and our breakfast before we started our work. We would work until 11 am and then the rest of the day was ours to do what we want. If you wanted to go back to work and work overtime for more money, you could do that. Otherwise, we would do our own things. We would tend to our gardens, do our chores, go fishing, whatever we want."

The period that Francois is recalling occurred during the final years of the Chagos plantations. Francois was born in 1935 on Salomon Island but grew up on Diego Garcia where he studied as a blacksmith's apprentice. A school was not established on Diego Garcia until 1951, by which time he was already 16 and decided to move to Mauritius. Mauritius offered a range of opportunities in areas of education, employment and leisure activities. Like a lot of Chagos Islanders, when Francois reached the age where he was thinking of settling down he moved back to the Chagos. During this time, the Chagos was gradually being depopulated to make way for the impending establishment of a US military base on Diego Garcia. When Francois went to return he was told that was not possible. However, he contacted another official within the Company and managed to secure a return passage due to the islands being his birthplace. In 1967 he moved to Peros Banhos where he met Lynette – they married in 1968 and had four children before they were forcibly removed to Mauritius in 1973. Francois' nostalgic memories of their life of relative comfort on the Chagos has to be placed within the context of the plantations gradual closure. Their flexible and undemanding workload was, in part, indicative of a diminishing production economy.

Francois and Lynette told me that once a couple got married they would approach the administrator and ask for their own house. The administrator would select an available plot

of land and the community would assemble to construct the house. Houses were built in either brick and concrete or via traditional methods of lashing together cut timbers and palm trees. The traditional construction was a skill possessed by the Islanders, there was usually a concrete floor, and houses could be built in a day (Bancoult 2000:5). The majority of the houses had a *'petit plantation'* – a small garden – attached where the Islanders could grow fruits and vegetables such as pumpkins, chillies, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, aubergines, bananas and squash. Families also cared for animals like chickens and ducks.

These aspects of everyday life convey the image of an agricultural society within a European plantation society. This structuring of life creates a sense of a unitary agenda among the communities on the islands directed towards a common goal – the economic viability of the coconut plantations – and social connections were established based on economic tenets of trading and reciprocity. There was a lack of competition and risk-taking associated with the capitalism brought to other colonised regions that encourage foreign investment and entrepreneurial ventures. These conditions somewhat distanced the Chagos from the economic diversification and ethnic migration that Mauritius experienced.

According to Lynette, there were certain social characteristics associated with different islands of the Chagos, but the Islanders were collectively identified as *"creole des îles"*, or more commonly, *ilois*. These identities were not watertight. It was common for Chagos Islanders to travel to Mauritius for education, or a wider variety of employment opportunities, and to engage in the lifestyle of a more rapidly developing society. So too, it was common for Mauritians to travel to the Chagos under employment contracts for two-three years. Intermarrying was common under both conditions. Following the abolition of slavery and the introduction of indentured labourers from India, many Creoles migrated permanently to the Chagos. Fluidity between cultural boundaries is characteristic of creolization, however, fluidity does not preclude the important maintenance work that boundaries perform. This becomes apparent when we consider the subsequent modes of similarity and difference that colour the lives of Chagossians transplanted to Mauritius.

The Displacement

Discussions between the US and UK concerning the establishment of a US military base in the Indian Ocean began in 1960. The decision was made to use Diego Garcia due to its location,

isolation, and the fact that it was British controlled territory. The relative obscurity of the Chagos islands allowed the US and the UK to reach a consensus that the islands were to remain British territory without a local civilian population (Vine 2009). With Mauritius moving towards independence, the UK was confident that the Indo-Mauritian leadership "would care little about uprooting an isolated, mostly African population whose ties to Mauritius were historically tenuous" (Vine 2009:61). The UK conceded to Mauritian independence on the condition that Mauritius detach the Chagos Archipelago. On November 8, 1965, the islands of the Chagos Archipelago were officially established as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

Throughout this period, the UK had begun the insidious process of covertly depopulating the islands. The initial stage involved restricting shipping passage to the Chagos. New contracts for employees on the coconut plantations were halted and travel to the islands was prohibited. Chagos Islanders in Mauritius found themselves stranded. Many families were left without any material possessions, in a place where they were not prepared or equipped to settle down permanently. The second stage was the gradual reduction of supplies and closure of the plantations. Import items like salt, milk, and medicine were halted. With the Company closing the plantations, some families 'voluntarily' departed. The remaining Islanders watched as their dogs were poisoned, shot and then burned alive in the coconut drying shed (Jeffery 2011; Vine 2009). Under the imposing presence of the American military, the final 146 inhabitants were forced onto the *Nordvær* which only had a passenger capacity of seventy-two; room for sixty on the deck and cabin space for twelve (Vine 2009:114). In cramped conditions on the open deck of the ship, as the lower holds were used to shelter the horses, they were taken from the islands. Diego Garcia was the first to be completely depopulated in 1971. Locals were given the option of temporarily moving to Salomon or Peros Banhos, or to be taken to Mauritius or the Seychelles (Jeffery 2011). Salomon was subsequently depopulated in 1972 and Peros Banhos in 1973. The 18-day journey to Mauritius was uncomfortable, unsanitary, and crowded. The passengers suffered physically and emotionally, with little food and water and no medical care as people got sick, women had miscarriages, and some died or committed suicide (Jeffery 2011; Pilger 2004; Vine 2009).

The UK worked to 'construct the fiction' (Pilger 2004; Vine 2009) that the people they were depopulating from the islands were 'transient labourers' from Mauritius or the Seychelles. To maintain this fabrication, no resettlement or integration programmes were established. This

left the Chagos Islanders to negotiate the complex social landscape of Mauritius, without the benefit of foreknowledge or preparatory planning. The Mauritian population, perhaps unsurprisingly, took a hostile approach to the Chagos displacees. While the Chagos Islanders were not markedly distinct from the other Creole populations in Port Louis (Jeffery 2006:301), they were stigmatised by the use of the label *ilois.* Barth notes that when different ethnic groups interact, as part of a larger societal whole, an important organisational dynamic is established on the grounds that both groups have a mutual understanding of how interactions are supposed to take place. "What matters is how well the others, with whom one interacts and to whom one is compared, manage to perform" (Barth 1969:25). The Chagos Islanders were not designated as a distinct ethnic group, nor afforded any considerations this might carry. The Chagos Islanders were expected to *be Mauritians*, and that meant that when they fell short, with regards to employment, education, management of finances, or compliance to social norms, they were designated as outsiders. Hence, the potency of the term *ilois*.

> Lynette: "they would yell across the street at us 'go back to your islands, ilois'. Did they not know that we could not? That the reason we can't is the reason that Mauritians have independence?"

This prejudice made the historical construction of difference between Chagos Islanders and Mauritian Creoles into a social reality. The Chagos Islanders were not Mauritians, but they could not be distinguished as non-Mauritians. Instead, cultural forms became an indicator of difference and 'otherness'. This, in a sense, helped towards creating a Chagossian identity. Stigmatisation created the basis for the selection and adoption of cultural forms available for the Islanders to self-ascribe and signify as 'Chagossian', even as to avoid stigma they assimilated within what is generalised as being Mauritian Creole.

Conclusion

Following the approach outlined by Eriksen to employ creolization in a way that is theoretically useful, "a first step must consist in distinguishing between cultural mixing and collective identities" (2007:165). The cultural milieu found in Mauritius is more than just a diverse collection of cultural groups mixing within a common environment. Rather, it demonstrates that collective identities, from distinct ethnic backgrounds, can form parts of a larger whole through the process of creolization. These social categories are a way of placing

oneself within an ethnically diverse population that recognises a common culture even as it allows individuals to situate themselves with respect to an identity that stretches back to a geographically and ethnically distinct history. As Eriksen notes, the non-Creoles of Mauritius construct their social identities out of genealogical and cultural links with an ancestral country. These groups perceive their cultural history as "an unbroken and continuous narrative" within the context of Mauritius' diasporic populations, where "their identity can be metonymically linked with a prestigious civilization – Chinese, Indian, Islamic, or European" (2007:159). On the other hand, the Creoles of Mauritius have, as a consequence of colonialism, little ability to recognise and maintain a continuous narrative with their African roots. The response I received from both my respondents within the Chagossian community and among the Mauritian Creoles I spoke to, was that the narrative of their history begins on the islands where their Creole culture emerged. Researchers have attempted to shift conceptualisation of Creoles towards "Afro-Mauritians" (Benoît 1984; Boswell 2006), to constitute an identity perceived to carry more social capital, with little success. Given these conditions, it appears that Mauritian Creoles might lay claim to the same level of authenticity as Indo-Mauritians, Sino-Mauritians, or Franco-Mauritians without implying the existence of a more 'pure' culture (Szwed 2011:27-28) or that one has a more authentic claim to Mauritian Identity. Creolization, within the realm of identity politics, affords Creoles the opportunity to compensate for a lack of clear ancestral origin, by constructing an identity 'indigenous' to the colony within which creolization took place. This is not to say that the Creole populations are indigenous to their respective colonial islands in the same sense that indigeneity is defined as a pre-colonial population. The employment of this term is meant to indicate that Creole identity is emergent within these locations. Hence, connection to these locations is integral to Creole identity politics as it provides an identifiable homeland to the descendants of slaves who "lack a precolonial past and are unable to draw on close links with a major civilisation" (Eriksen 2007:160). In light of the significance creolization has on the constitution of an identity with roots to a tangible location, observing the impacts of the Chagos Islander's displacement can provide further insight into the nature of Creole identity, formulation of homeland, and the variation among different Creole groups.

Introduction

The Port Louis District of Mauritius is the smallest district on the island (46.7km²) but it has the highest population density due to it containing the capital city. The population of Mauritius is 1.263 million people (World Bank 2016) of which 149,672 people live in the district of Port Louis. Pointe aux Sables, a majority Creole neighbourhood located in the southwest region of the district, is the location of the CRG office and a large Chagossian community. Removed from the towering industry and business buildings of the city, such a short distance brings about a stark contrast in the pace of life. Pointe aux Sables is a low-income neighbourhood situated along the coast where a mixture of broken and dead coral, plastic waste and other non-degradable garbage litter the shore. Within the residential area, music travels out from crude corrugated iron houses, the age of which is evident in the rust and deterioration giving a sombre and ironic note to the intention that they were 'temporary' structures. Concrete walls topped with glass or barbed wire surround some of the more permanent houses. Others do the best they can with simpler boundaries of hedges or corrugated iron fences. Empty plots gather the debris of past houses and rubbish. The people are constantly moving about, with buses the primary form of public transport and motorcycles or scooters the popular choice of private vehicle. The narrow roads are locations for social gatherings, people sit along the road on milk cartons or stools, chatting or just watching the day bustle by.

The houses in Pointe aux Sables were assigned to the Chagos Islanders as part of the '*Ilois Resettlement Scheme*' facilitated through the Ilois Trust Fund Board (ITFB, now Chagos Welfare Fund – CWF) on 26 September 1986. A plaque stands among these houses today (see Fig2.1). Similar plots of land were allocated to the Chagos Islanders in the impoverished neighbourhood of Baie du Tombeau, located in the Pamplemousses District, north-east of Port Louis. Some Chagossians sold the land provided to them through the ITFB, often to predatory realtors who purchased it below value to flip for a higher price (Vine 2009:147). Today Baie du Tombeau is large and crowded. Roughly a third of the Chagossian community still hold possession of their land and houses built by the Mauritian government from the compensation payments dispersed to the community following lengthy negotiations in 1982.

The families I visited in this area have their houses decorated in remembrance of the Chagos. Francois and Lynette have a garden at the front with plants and trees chosen to remind them of Peros Banhos.

Pointe aux Sables, Cassis, Roche Bois, and Baie du Tombeau are among the poorest areas of Mauritius, they are also the areas where a large number of Mauritian Creoles live. These areas are overtly characterised by low levels of education (both attendance and performance), unemployment, and crime (described below). However, discussions with local residents tell us more about the nuances of life under these conditions.

Figure 2. 1 Plaque in Pointe aux Sables commemorating Ilois land allocation

This chapter explores the social impacts that affected the Chagossian community following their displacement from the Chagos and resettlement in Mauritius. Michael Cernea (1997) outlines, within what he terms the Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction model (IRR), the social and economic impacts that place displaced communities at risk of falling into impoverishment. His argument suggests that there needs to be a comprehensive resettlement programme in place prior to the displacement of a community, which can be applied and adapted throughout the process of resettlement (Cernea 1997; Vanclay 2017).

Effective implementation of the IRR model is ideally instrumental in preventing vulnerable displaced communities from sliding into poverty (Cernea 1997). As I detail below, no such considerations were made with regards to the resettlement of the Chagossians. The lack of a coherent resettlement programme meant that supposedly predictable consequences were not effectively managed to prevent unnecessary or avoidable harm. I will focus specifically on how the impacts of joblessness, access to education, marginalisation and social disarticulation have affected the Chagossian community. I will discuss ensuing obstacles to the community, and through interviews with my respondents, show how individuals have responded to these impacts in the formulation of a Chagossian identity that establishes community networks which improve wellbeing and integration. In so doing, the contours of this cultural process become clearer as boundaries strengthen a sense of being Chagossian, and at the same time, foster inter-group tensions as the Chagossians adjust to changing circumstances over time.

Chagossian 'Resettlement'

The Chagos Archipelago was depopulated by the UK and the U.S. in ways designed to sidestep the United Nations depopulation guidelines and regulations. As a consequence, no formal programme was in place to manage the resettlement of the Chagos Islanders being displaced. It meant that the Islanders themselves became the sole agents tasked with resettlement and integration. The last Chagossians removed from the islands on the *Nordvær* refused to depart the boat in Port Louis, demanding to be returned to the Chagos Archipelago or to be given accommodation in Mauritius (Jeffery 2011;26). After nearly a week of negotiations, the government assigned them the available rundown and dilapidated dockers flats in Baie du Tombeau and government houses in Cité la Cure, another disadvantaged neighbourhood north-east of Port Louis (*L'express* 1973; *Le Mauricien* 1973). These lodgings provided barely hospitable living conditions, with no running water, or glass in the windows (Jeffery 2011:26; Vine 2009:120).

Compensation funds provided to the Mauritian government by the UK intended to assist in the resettlement of the Islanders but with no guidelines on how and when to be used, it took until 1978 to reach the community. Vanclay argues against the choice of cash compensation in favour of a comprehensive resettlement plan, but in the event of cash payments being the chosen method of compensation, "[a] delay in the payment of compensation creates considerable stress and inconvenience, and generally leads to the affected people incurring

additional costs" (2017:13). Reports by social workers in the 1980's found that for many Chagossians, this compensation was used to pay debts accrued in the intervening time, as people had little understanding of money and no work available to support themselves. For some, it fostered alcoholism, gambling, prostitution, and/or substance abuse (Botte 1980:43-49; Sylva 1981). Deliberations between Chagossian groups and the Mauritian government resulted in a second compensation package in 1982 (see chapter three). This package, distributed over a four-year period, provided each member of the community with a sum of money and land in Pointe aux Sables or Baie du Tombeau, prompting over one hundred families with ties to the Chagos to move to housing estates, labelled *Cités Ilois*.

These events shaped two significant elements that coloured the Chagossians experiences of integration into Mauritian society. First, a physical space was carved out in the district of Port Louis. These disadvantaged areas became home to a large Chagossian community and informed the social perception of these people known as '*ilois*'. The label *ilois*, based on associated rather than any physical characteristics became a discriminatory stereotype. Second, the lines of difference and 'otherness' that were drawn in the distancing of the *ilois* community from Mauritian society worked to lay the foundation for the formulation of a 'Chagossian' identity. Numerous studies have shown that creolization can provide a framework for the creation of a new cultural identity under conditions of hardship following displacement (Baron & Cara 2011; Eriksen 2007). While theoretical approaches have focused on the formulation of Creole identities out of ethnic diversity, these studies have been less successful at explaining the interplay between Creole groups from different locations as uniqueness is established through the constitution of "otherness" when different groups come into contact (Jeffery 2011:89-90; Said 1978). Encounters between Mauritian Creoles and Chagos Creoles demonstrates the way marginalisation plays a role in the solidification of distinct (or sub-) Creole identities. The workings of ethnic distinction are "not the sum of 'objective' differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant" (Barth 1969:14). These boundaries of difference are not predetermined cultural, historical or biological factors, rather they are context dependent and need to be understood on a situational basis through the participant's perspectives. If we consider then, the role of difference in formulating ethnic identities, and apply this to our understanding of creolization, we can see how the Chagos Creoles are undergoing the process of creolization within

Mauritius, a 'creolised' society. The product of this process is a new 'Chagossian' identity which aims to affirm itself both as a distinct ethnic and Creole group within Creole culture of the Indian Ocean.

Language, Identity and Discrimination

The first of these modes of distinction comes about through language. Linguistic anthropology studies the nature and complexity of language embedded in sociocultural relations and its influence on interactions. Language, Ahearn argues, needs to be treated as a form of social action as language and culture are so tightly interwoven that neither can be comprehensively understood without consideration for the other (2001). *Kreol* is a product of and a driving force in, creolization. The dynamic nature of *Kreol* and the social weight it carries requires a more detailed analysis than I can provide here. Instead, I will look at language as a meaning-laden symbol of social significance and indicative of hierarchical power relations when individuals designate a dialect or accent as inferior or superior (Bourdieu 1991). While it was the most widely spoken language in Mauritius there was, until recently, resistance to the widespread use and application of *Kreol* throughout administration, television and news, in government, and in schools throughout Mauritius. This resistance can be attributed to several factors including connotations that it is "the poor cousin of French", its risk of isolating Mauritius due to its regional specificity, and its association with *malaise creole* (Eriksen 2007:162).

Francois and Lynette were among the last people to be removed from the Chagos in 1973. Once in Mauritius, there was nothing to distinguish them from the Mauritian Creole population aside from their accent. While the Chagossians spoke the same language, *Kreol*, the Chagossian accent was slightly different from *Morisyen* and became a signifier of difference. The symbolic power of language lies, not only in the fact that the Chagossian accent was perceived to be inferior in Mauritian society, but that the Chagossians themselves internalised this notion. Many Chagossians actively worked to disguise their accent, not wanting to be identified and treated as different. Language does not reflect a social reality; there is no system of evaluation built into the linguistic structure of *Kreol*, rather the social participation in attaching value to linguistic styles – like accent – gives language the power to create social realities (Ahearn 2001; Gumperz & Levinson 1996; Lucy 1992; Sapir 1949:7-32).

An alternate approach is to see the loss of the Chagossian accent as part of the process of creolising into Mauritian society. In much the same way many Creole communities have historically downplayed or removed social forms that did not actively assist or improve their lives (Cohen 2007), some Chagossians actively suppressed their accent as a coping mechanism to assist integration. For people like Lynette, however, language was a symbol of connection to the Chagos and it provided the opportunity to confront any misconceptions about the Islander's circumstances in Mauritius.

> Lynette: "I was working at a bottling factory and my supervisor heard me talking and asked, 'what is this kind of *Kreol* you are talking?' I told her I was from Chagos and I asked her if there was something wrong with that."

Not all Chagossians lived under the same conditions. As part of adapting to life in Mauritius, many sought to overtly identify as Mauritians, strengthening the boundaries between them and displacees living as Chagossians. This highlights the open-ended, unbounded nature of cultural processes like creolization (Eriksen 2007). The ways of 'becoming' Mauritian, varied depending on individual situation and circumstance. Some Chagossians preferred to align themselves wholeheartedly with a Mauritian identity – drawing from the available social forms to successfully integrate. The children or grandchildren of these people do not know about their connection to the Chagos and so to them, and everyone they know, they are Mauritian. Take, for example, a description from a Mauritian employee at the Ministry of Education who sat on the board of the CWF as she describes her role within the CWF of addressing issues in education among the Chagossian community.

> "The difficulty of my task, working with the CWF, is that when I visit schools I will never know which children are from Chagos because most of them, they do not know. They are all Mauritians, there is no separate identification that labels them as Chagossian. We only know those that are registered with the CWF or the CRG. There could be many more students who are Chagossian but we just do not know… Unless their parents tell them 'you are from Chagos', they will never know, they will become Mauritian."

This is not the case for all Chagossian families and children. Others drew upon the experiences of displacement to affirm their identity. As the criteria for difference expanded, the lines of identity divisions consolidated (Barth 1969:24-25). For families like Francois and Lynette, the

common signifier of difference was the way they ate, drank, and celebrated in day to day life. Interactions with other Mauritian social groups brought to the surface boundaries highlighted by the forms of discrimination directed towards the Islanders. Constant affirmation of difference emphasised that the Chagos Islanders had not yet been designated a space within the social setting of Mauritius' ethnic landscape. As marginalisation enhanced the feeling of being outsiders, it simultaneously provided the Chagossians with the opportunity to establish themselves as a distinct social group. As mentioned in chapter one, Chagossian food, and Chagossian *séga* music, served as cultural symbols for Chagossian identity. These symbols were further strengthened in Chagossian artworks depicting life on the islands; the animals that were common, the activities they took part in, the tools they used in the plantation work, and the instruments they played. These cultural elements were gradually introduced into the public life of Mauritius as a means to consolidate a distinct sense of being Chagossian and usually took form through a reminder of life in the Chagos.

Joblessness

Francois: "Our life [on the Chagos] was good. There was always work. Whatever we needed we could get from the island. There was so much fish, people fished a lot. We also grew extra fruits and vegetables or made things that we could trade for what we needed. But medicine and essentials, they were all provided by the company. Food as well. We did not need to think about going out and buying the things we needed for the day. We did not use money on the island."

In Cernea's IRR model, joblessness among displaced people takes high importance due to its "lasting painful economic and psychological effects" (1997:1573). In the ethnically divided employment market of Mauritius (Jeffery 2011:30-33), knowledge of and capacity to engage economic opportunities played a huge part in the Chagossians' capacity to obtain employment. In Mauritius, the Chagossians were both materially poor and socioeconomically disadvantaged (Vine 2011:133-136) as they competed for employment in an economy of diverse specialised skills. The single economy of coconut plantations on the Chagos Archipelago restricted ability to participate within a competitive economic framework. Mauritius, on the other hand, has been a country under constant economic adaptation and change with a variety of educational institutes, vocational and training opportunities, and

economic participation accessible to most of the population. This contrasts notably with the way of thinking about property, finances and economic competition on the Chagos.

> Lynette: "And then we come to Mauritius. Francois spent 16 years in Mauritius when he was young, so he knew about life here. But me? I grew up on Peros, we did not need to go to the shops every day to buy food or worry about having money aside to pay bills. Money was not important, we only needed it to buy sugar and things, the things you could not get from work, the luxury stuff. Medicines and essentials, we did not have to buy."

In earlier models, capitalist societies are divided into a class-based hierarchy in which the proletariat (working class) survive by selling their labour to the capitalist class (Marx 1967). Marx demonstrated that this social structuring has not done away with class antagonisms from feudal societies, but rather formed "new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones" (1967:220). Conceptualisations of class relations have changed since Marx, with Bourdieu examining symbolic power as the organisational structure in class relations as opposed to property (1984). Eriksen proposes ethnicity as an alternate form of class relations, whereby poly-ethnic societies (like Mauritius) are ranked according to ethnic membership (2010:11). Within this system, ethnic organisation replaces class, with the structuring criteria centred around cultural differences that carry weight as symbolic forms of power. Understanding that the notion of ethnicity as social organisation emerging among the colonies alongside capitalism (Eriksen 2010:98) gives us a framework for viewing the ethnic division of labour within Mauritius. Discrimination from employers in favour of hiring members of their own group is a matter of affirming and reaffirming the power of ethnic boundaries in social organisation (Jeffery 2011:31). Ethnic division and discrimination in employment are normalised in Mauritius as ethnic identities are not just signifiers of cultural backgrounds but have real-world implications. Eriksen argues that "[e]thnic identities are neither ascribed nor achieved: they are both. They are wedged between situational selection and imperatives imposed from without" (2010:66). Hence, the symbolic power of ethnic identity is cemented through conforming to ascribed values substantiated by social interactions.

For most of the Chagossian community finding a job upon arrival in Port Louis was difficult. In the 1960's-1970's, Mauritius was ranked among the highest in the world for population growth. The availability of jobs was unable to keep up with the rising population (Vine 2009:133). In the 1970s Mauritius responded by diversifying its economy. The Mauritian Government established an export-processing zone to encourage foreign investment. This action resulted in a boom of garment and textile factories throughout the mid-1970s and into the 1980s. The Chagossians, however, faced structural disadvantages in this competitive employment sector (Vine 2009:133-136). A survey conducted in 1980 found that among the Chagossians, 85.8 % of males and 46.3% of women were unemployed (Vine 2011:135). Their skills were suited to life on the Chagos. To be adept at the craft of house and boat building, fishing, and small-scale farming, had little relevance to the workforce in urban Mauritius. Wooden boat construction was nearly obsolete in Mauritius. The thatched roof houses of the Chagos were inappropriate for the cyclone-prone Mauritius. Fishing skills were only relatively useful and created other pressures as it required long absences from home. Jobs that Chagossians were ultimately able to find included, lorry drivers, labourers, petrol station attendants, and construction workers. Among these physically strenuous jobs, being a dock worker became the preferred choice for those who could find work at the port as it offered more stability.

Edouard was born two years after his parents arrived in Mauritius in 1963. They had travelled to Mauritius as his mother needed to give birth to Edouard's older brother in a hospital due to complications in her pregnancy. The family wanted to return to the Chagos but were refused and told the islands had been given to the British. They grew up in Pointe aux Sables, on land that his parents owned. His father moved from job to job eventually securing employment as a dock-worker.

> "I remember when I was four, we would run out of food by the weekend and would be waiting for my father to return home on the Saturday with his pay, so we could get food."

Edouard's father had started work on the docks in 1972 when initial conditions were difficult, to say the least. As he notes:

"It was very rough work, he would be carrying bags of sugar or rice that weighed 80kgs. They would carry around 250-300 bags a day. It was tough work. Conditions got better in 1982, Mr Berenger and the MMM (the Mouvement Militant Mauricien) party got into power and improved conditions for the dock workers; good shoes, good uniform, they got a better salary and a better status."

The improvements for the dock-workers provided little immediate benefit for either Mauritian Creole and Chagossian communities. It was for the children like Edouard that the difference can be observed. A scholarship programme was introduced for the docker's families providing financial assistance to their children with good academic performance. Edouard had the opportunity to attend a good school, and the scholarship assisted with school expenses. Arguably one of the biggest structural challenges that the Chagossians faced in the competition to secure employment was access to education in the impoverished neighbourhoods of Pointe aux Sables, Baie du Tombeau, Cassis and Roche Bois.

Access to Education

Edouard's parents were illiterate; they did not have a school on the Chagos when they were growing up. They could read little, but spoke mainly *Kreol*, with a little French and no English, yet they pushed him to get an education. For Mauritian citizens, primary schooling was free, with secondary school becoming free in 1976. As outlined in chapter one, there was public resistance against the popularisation of *Kreol* in Mauritian society which kept the use of *Kreol* from being formally accepted in education. As school was taught in English or French, this was problematic for those coming from both Mauritian Creole and Chagossian households where they only spoke *Kreol*. Enduring disadvantages are common outcomes within a system where language has symbolic value in a social hierarchy, as linguistic competence becomes a contributing factor to the exclusion of children from the benefits of education (Bunwaree 2001:264).

The interplay between poverty and education is self-reinforcing as low performance in education negatively impacts people's socio-economic standing (Patel, Sliuzas, & Mathur 2015) and psychological well-being (Hong, Singh, & Ramic 2009; Patel & Kleinman 2003) which, in turn hinders the capacity for displaced communities to increase their socioeconomic situation (Bunwaree 2001:262-264; Mahapatra 1996; World Bank 2004).

Inequalities within education can result in "drops in family income" as "many children are drafted into the labor market earlier than what would have otherwise been the case" (Cernea 1997:1576). Competition within the education system can foster a productive environment where children are motivated to excel. However, in Mauritius "the structure and rules of competition are linked to social capital in such a way that there is a differential capacity to compete, built into the system itself" (Morrison 1997:191).

Henrie's grandparents on his father's side were from the Chagos. They moved to Mauritius for work on a 6-month contract. After the contract expired, they tried to return but were refused passage. They found accommodation in Roche Bois with some Mauritian relatives. Henrie grew up in the Mauritian Creole community not knowing about his connection to the Chagos until he was ten years old. At the age of sixteen, he left school to work with his father on the farm they owned. As is evident in many parts of the world, this dynamic creates an ongoing precarity (Cernea 1997; Mahapatra 1996). The need to provide for one's family forces individuals out of school and into the workforce where they are at a disadvantage in competing for employment with other more qualified applicants.

There are financial barriers to education for poor families. While schooling is free to Mauritians, families are still lumped with the cost of textbooks and exam fees. Emilienne is the granddaughter of a Chagossian couple displaced to Mauritius. Emilienne's grandparents, on her mother's side, came to Mauritius on holiday to visit family shortly before the depopulation took place. Her great-grandparents lived in Mauritius. This familial connection added a level of stability to their lives that other displacees lacked. Growing up, Emilienne's family struggled financially. Her mother was a housekeeper, and father was a self-employed mason meaning they only had one regular source of income. It was difficult to afford books for school; sometimes she had to wait until halfway through the semester to get the books she needed, and this often put her behind as she had to share books with children in her class. She would do her homework during library periods where she could use textbooks and computers. When Emilienne finished school, she wanted to become a lawyer, so she could help fight for the Chagossians' right to return to the islands. However, financial restrictions meant she could not pursue a law degree and instead studied political science. She is among a very small cohort of Chagossians who have undertaken tertiary studies. Of all the people I

spoke with, only three had gone to university and completed their degrees, all of them third generation Chagossians.

The lowest performing schools, determined by an average pass rate of the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE), are monitored by the Ministry of Education by the ZEP programme. There are twenty-seven ZEP (*zones d'éducation prioritaires* – priority education zones) throughout the four education zones covering all the primary schools in Mauritius (Mauritian Government Website). There are 83 primary schools in Zone 1 which cover those schools in the small but densely populated area in the north-west of the island around the Port Louis and Pamplemousses district – the main locations where the Chagossians live. Fourteen of the twenty-seven ZEP schools are located in Zone 1. This is a product of the socio-cultural disadvantages that ensure ethnic groups congregate in separate neighbourhoods. As the data below demonstrates, with children attend local schools, regional socio-economic inequalities play out in the access to, and utilization of, education. Figure 2.2 shows the pass rate of ZEP

	Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research - Zone 1								
	CPE Pass Rate (ZEP Schools)								
S.N	Schools	Address	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	E. Anquetil GS	Roche Bois	23.3	25.0	19.6	30.0	34.1	42.3	43.0
2	Guy Rozemont GS	Tranquebar	17.2	21.4	30.0	27.3	28.0	34.5	23.1
3	H. Ramnarain GS	Terre Rouge	47.3	54.5	42.4	48.3	51.6	42.5	48.6
4	La Briquetterie GS	Sainte Croix	13.5	12.1	15.4	28.8	42.6	58.8	38.6
5	Marcel Cabon GS	Cité la Cure	19.3	16.5	8.4	26.3	24.4	22.1	25.4
6	Nicolay GS	Roche Bois	28.4	38.2	27.5	41.5	33.3	19.1	35.2
7	Pointe Aux Piments G.S	Pointe aux Piments	23.1	33.7	47.9	47.2	41.8	47.8	51.8
8	Pointe Aux Sables GS	Pointe aux Sables	22.0	26.6	20.0	14.8	34.2	26.5	34.8
9	R. Seeneevassen GS	Cassis	31.3	35.2	74.1	39.1	91.1	82.1	56.4
10	Residence Vallijee GS	Cité Vallijee	44.3	48.3	32.7	40.4	48.8	51.4	74.2
11	L. Serge Coutet GS	Baie du Tombeau	16.1	6.7	19.4	20.2	20.9	41.7	21.2
12	Surtee Soonee GS	Vallée Pitot	43.3	44.7	46.2	53.9	56.9	62.9	65.7
13	Xavier Christian Barbe GS	Pailles	32.4	31.7	38.5	32.6	42.0	53.8	48.4
14	Jean Eon RC	Grand Gaube	48.8	45.2	49.0	38.9	56.3	53.4	44.2
	Average for Zone 1		29.3	31.4	33.0	35.0	43.3	45.6	43.6

Figure 2. 2 – I have highlighted the schools that lie in the area where large Chagossian communities live. 4 of the 5 schools in Chagossian neighbourhoods are below average in the ZEP results

schools from 2009-2015, of which the five schools that are in neighbourhoods where Chagossians live are all below average within the ZEP schools. Figure 2.3 shows the overall CPE pass rates for the schools in Zone 1. The immense variation in pass rates in a condensed area signifies institutionalised inequalities in education. These ZEP schools are in Creole neighbourhoods, of which several are home to Chagossian communities, indicating a correlation between poverty and inequality within the educational performance.

S.N	Schools	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	Ministry of Education & HR, TE & SR							
	Directorate Zone 1							
	COMPARATIVE CPE Pass Rate 2009 - 2015							
1	Abdool Rahman Abdool GS	69.0	69.4	66.1	62.4	68.5	71.1	73.1
2	Amaury G.S	91.8	90.9	90.0	79.5	89.5	95.5	90.4
3	Arsenal G.S	34.5	54.0	52.3	34.3	62.3	61.3	38.1
4	B.Khemloliva G.S	59.2	72.9	69.8	84.0	82.9	62.2	90.5
5	Barlow G.S	73.0	77.0	84.2	95.2	93.8	100.0	85.7
6	Bheewa Mahadoo G.S	60.0	78.2	69.5	78.5	71.8	82.8	80.4
7	Calebasses G.S	66.7	79.6	76.9	76.0	75.7	81.7	79.8
8	Chitrakoot GS	88.8	68.4	71.4	75.0	50.0	81.0	83.3
9	Cottage GS	79.4	67.2	75.4	85.9	87.8	82.0	82.8
10	Creve Coeur GS	85.3	86.8	83.8	79.3	91.4	91.7	91.7
11	D.Hurry G.S	78.0	82.4	79.4	83.1	83.6	85.8	79.7
12	D.Sewraz G.S	72.8	73.9	77.0	78.5	81.9	85.3	85.3
13	D`Epinay G.S	76.2	92.3	78.6	79.6	91.4	85.0	84.6
14	Dr E. Millien GS	38.7	33.3	28.6	46.0	61.8	44.8	27.3
15	Dr I. A. Goomany GS	62.0	54.1	64.6	66.7	67.8	64.4	61.4
16	Dr O. Beaugeard GS	68.6	72.4	69.7	67.9	76.2	70.9	64.4
17	E. Anquetil GS	23.3	25.0	19.6	30.0	34.1	42.3	43.0
18	Elsie Prèle GS	50.6	33.3	39.4	44.0	45.7	31.7	35.7
19	Esperance Trebuchet GS	82.7	88.6	88.2	100.0	92.1	88.5	93.1
20	Fond du Sac G.S	82.3	74.4	67.0	70.7	83.5	89.0	84.1
21	Grand Bay G.S	67.0	68.0	60.4	62.7	74.8	59.8	54.0
22	GRNW GS	42.8	26.6	24.5	19.5	27.0	50.0	39.1
23	Guy Rozemont GS	17.2	21.4	30.0	27.3	28.0	34.5	23.1
24	H. Ramnarain GS	47.3	54.5	42.4	48.3	51.6	42.5	48.6
25	Ilot G.S	75.0	67.8	80.0	73.7	80.0	84.6	83.8
26	Jean Lebrun GS	85.0	88.0	84.0	82.6	88.3	88.4	90.2
27	L`Amitie GS	66.6	70.0	63.2	73.1	94.4	100.0	88.9
28	La Briquetterie GS	13.5	12.1	15.4	28.8	42.6	58.8	38.6
29	Labourdonnais GS	83.0	74.2	74.6	79.0	69.5	84.3	79.2
30	M Parsad Kisnah G.S	87.4	75.9	81.5	78.3	84.6	90.5	93.0
31	Maheshwarnath G.S	64.6	73.0	70.5	71.7	78.5	72.9	71.3
32	Mapou G.S	50.0	40.1	26.5	72.7	76.2	64.7	70.6
33	Marcel Cabon GS	19.3	16.5	8.4	26.3	24.4	22.1	25.4
34	Mohabeer Foogooa GS	84.8	86.1	83.7	85.8	90.8	85.9	88.7
35	Morcellement Raffray GS	67.2	68.5	71.1	67.4	88.1	72.2	78.3
36	New La Tour Koenig GS	44.0	46.0	44.0	44.0	48.7	46.3	34.6
37	New Pailles GS	58.2	64.0	52.1	60.5	73.4	70.0	82.4
38	Nicolay GS	28.4	38.2	27.5	41.5	33.3	19.1	35.2
39	Noe Nemorin G.S	58.9	42.8	46.7	69.2	100.0	16.7	60.0
40	Notre Dame GS	56.9	60.0	66.1	44.4	75.5	65.9	70.0
41	Old La Tour Koenig GS	65.3	55.4	49.0	55.4	63.0	62.0	56.2
42	P. Shibchurn G.S	83.0	92.4	96.5	95.6	92.3	80.6	98.1
43	Pamplemousses G.S	57.3	51.4	60.3	42.9	73.7	52.6	73.1
44	Petit Raffray GS	77.0	72.0	72.8	68.1	69.4	79.8	78.0
45	Petite Julie GS	68.5	84.6	94.7	84.6	90.0	93.8	66.7
46	Plaine des Papayes G.S	89.7	70.5	74.4	59.3	78.3	73.1	63.2
47	Pointe Aux Piments G.S	23.1	33.7	47.9	47.2	41.8	47.8	51.8
48	Pointe Aux Sables GS	22.0	26.6	20.0	14.8	34.2	26.5	34.8
49	Poudre d`Or Hamlet G.S	80.0	80.9	100.0	95.7	93.3	100.0	80.0
50	Poudre D'Or Village GS	48.6	54.9	47.8	60.5	57.1	48.8	70.4
51	Prof. Ramprakash G.S	79.4	74.1	71.6	75.6	89.6	84.8	79.5
52	PT D Sharma Ayrga G.S	81.7	81.7	82.4	82.0	92.9	90.0	90.5
53	Pt. Sharma Radhay GS	93.3	85.7	77.8	82.1	90.0	88.9	100.0
54	R. Gobhurdhun G.S	89.0	91.6	80.4	76.5	40.0	28.6	73.3
55	R. Seeneevassen GS	31.3	35.2	74.1	39.1	91.1	82.1	56.4
56	Ramlugun Moosun G.S	48.6	45.3	28.2	23.1	56.1	55.0	58.6
57	Raoul Rivet GS	92.9	93.6	94.2	94.8	97.2	96.5	95.7
58	Residence Vallijee GS	44.3	48.3	32.7	40.4	48.8	51.4	74.2
59	Roche Terre G.S	59.2	64.1	64.9	66.4	77.7	69.7	67.0
60	Roches Noires G.S	70.2	60.2	84.1	69.6	82.6	69.3	87.8
61	S.K.Kanhye G.S	55.3	63.6	65.6	65.0	74.3	68.4	78.6
62	Serge Coutet GS	16.1	6.7	19.4	20.2	20.9	41.7	21.2
63	Sir Aneerood Jugnauth GS	87.2	76.9	91.5	85.9	91.2	97.1	95.8
64	Sir E. Laurent GS	25.5	37.7	37.7	46.2	55.0	42.6	57.4
65	Sir H.Vaghjee G.S	55.1	60.4	58.3	63.6	74.7	73.1	69.8
66	Sir S.Ramgoolam G.S	57.6	58.5	57.4	56.9	49.2	55.7	57.9
67	Surtee Soonee GS	43.3	44.7	46.2	53.9	56.9	62.9	65.7
68	The Vale G.S	71.0	79.3	70.1	63.2	81.0	67.6	51.0
69	Vallée des Pretres GS	55.0	58.4	57.7	57.5	69.5	60.3	73.8
70	Villiers Rene GS	90.5	91.0	94.6	95.6	92.3	96.5	96.5
71	Xavier Christian Barbe GS	32.4	31.7	38.5	32.6	42.0	53.8	48.4
72	Young Men's Hindu GS	52.6	41.1	43.0	49.3	62.9	59.3	50.0
73	C. Sacré de Jesus RCA	58.0	55.1	59.4	54.2	57.3	70.6	64.4
74	De La Salle RCA	72.0	72.6	72.7	63.2	78.6	72.6	76.1
75	Jean Eon RCA	48.8	45.2	49.0	38.9	56.3	53.4	44.2
76	Marie Reine RCA	67.6	60.9	75.0	73.9	74.3	70.6	57.1
77	N. Dame de Lorette RCA	89.0	94.0	83.0	80.2	86.0	88.0	84.3
78	N.Dame de Bon Secours	78.7	71.9	91.5	91.6	82.1	77.2	76.2
79	N.Dame de la Paix RCA	72.0	78.0	76.7	78.4	89.0	83.1	81.0
80	Père Laval RCA	53.4	50.3	58.0	51.5	67.7	65.5	66.4
81	Signal Mountain RCA	42.8	43.4	40.6	51.7	68.8	59.7	73.5
82	St. Antoine RCA	58.1	45.2	43.5	43.8	66.7	45.5	62.2
83	St. François Xavier RCA	64.6	50.0	53.7	41.5	74.5	64.9	60.5
	Average for Zone 1	61.6	61.3	61.4	62.7	70.5	67.9	68.4

Figure 2. 3 – The Pass Rate of 83 schools that make up the education district of Zone 1, Port Louis and its surrounds. The Pass Rate of the ZEP schools, and the schools that the Chagossians primarily attend (shown in Figure 2.2), can be seen in relation to the other schools within the region.

Identity and Social Networks

A further predicted consequence of displacement is social disarticulation; the breakdown of communities and social networks as people were separated during displacement and the resettlement process (Cernea 1997). Since relocation is often dictated by space availability in the host area, people can be separated from their 'neighbourhood' community. Indeed, "these networks can be damaged by resettlement, especially when the community is not

resettled as a whole community" (Vanclay 2017:6). Having to build social and communal networks within an ethnically diverse society presented challenges across generations of Chagossians. Its residual effects can be discerned in present-day life in Port Louis.

> Henrie (35 years old): "The community is diluted now. Because Chagossians are almost Creole. And Chagossians, they have this accent and they were recognised by this accent, so many hid their accent to fit into Mauritius… Because if they thought you were from the Chagos you were *ilois* which was to bring you down… They did not want to be thought of as *ilois* because that was bad, so many lived as Creoles… It is different now. People are proud to be Chagossian now. But many people did not know they were Chagossian, some still might not know."

Henrie recalls his grandmother telling him stories of the Chagos at night, but for him, they were tales of an idyllic paradise, where everything you needed was readily available, where people did not get sick – no evidence of obesity, diabetes and heart disease that plagues the community in Mauritius today. To Henrie, these were only bedtime stories of a life that was a stark contrast to their life of poverty in Mauritius. When he was ten he was walking through Port Louis with his grandmother, they passed the British Embassy where the CRG was holding a political demonstration. His grandmother spoke with the Chagossians who had organised the demonstration and, inspired by this mobilisation, Henrie and his family have been actively involved with the CRG's efforts.

> Henrie: "For me, I feel sad now because I know that this place [Mauritius] is not my place. Those Chagossians, they were born there [the Chagos] and they were happy. Even though they don't have lots of money, they are happy to live in this beautiful place. Now they are sad. Living here, I cannot feel this happiness that they did. I believe over there, I might."

For Henrie accounts of his ancestral heritage and connection to land serve as the tool through which he identifies with the community and feels a connection to a home he has never set foot on. He is not alone in this. Many second or third generation Chagossians feel a connection to the Chagos that comes from an idealised past, communicated through the stories of their relatives, which collectively embody the emotional potency of their longing to return. In this regard, we can detect a prominent 'technique' of creolization (Haring 2011;182-183), that of

'framing' – contextualising the story of the idyllic life of the Chagos – within the experiences of suffering and displacement in Mauritius. Narratives draw networks of connections among people based on a shared experience, establishing the lifestyle of the Chagos as the basis upon which a diverse group of individuals can find solidarity and a collective sense of identity within Mauritian society. Links to a collective identity does not preclude variation and divisional boundaries. For many, Chagossian identity is embedded within the experience of displacement. Consequently, many young Chagossians choose to distance themselves from a sense of shared identity that is, under certain circumstances, synonymous with victimhood (Jeffery 2006). These categories of inter-ethnic organisation play out in social interactions.

> Emilienne (23): "My cousins, they are not like me. Some of them do not search for information on the Chagos and our history, they have been influenced by Mauritian life… I am both Chagossian and Mauritian. I have my Mauritian habits, I have grown up here. For example, when I wake up in the morning, after breakfast I like to listen to my music, turn it up high. I don't think they did that there!"

As a result, many third-generation Chagossians consider themselves to be ChagossianMauritians. Connection to land (Low and Altman 1992) is a strong shaping force of identity. The potency of this connection transcends generations reaching descendants who have not had physical contact with the ancestral homeland. Henrie said, "my origins for me, starts in the Chagos, that is all." This signifies that even though many third generation Chagossians associate as Mauritians, being born in Mauritius where they constantly and actively participate in the modern lifestyle of Mauritius, their heritage is intimately linked with the Chagos and that makes them Chagossian. Despite this, generational classification within identity has the capacity to manufacture and produce divisions.

> Emilienne; "I think there is a problem here, you know, I don't like it when they divide first generation, second, third. It creates confusion sometimes. I was called by a radio station for an interview to talk about the UK's recent decision. And some of the natives, they did not see it from a good eye. They say they should have called a first generation, not a third one."

For Emilienne, these generational classifications provide a basis for division within the community. Considering generational categorisations as social organisation adds additional

layers of complexity to the understanding of creolization as we consider how boundedness and continuity play out under changing circumstances. Continuity and stability can be reconciled with the constant mixing and change that occurs through creolization by an understanding of the systemic model developed by Morin (2001). This model understands social organisation as an emergent property from recursive interactions in zones of contact where order and chaos coincide (Eriksen 2007:170). This approach allows for a system of analysis whereby the integration of Chagos Islanders into Mauritius can be viewed as a process of constant cultural development while providing the means through which a bounded cultural identity can exist and persist in the face of changing circumstances.

Conclusion

Mauritius, built on a history of uprooted and displaced people, has 'creolised' several different cultural groups into a collective Mauritian identity whereby ethnicity plays a significant role in social organisation. Mauritius is a society that, on a level of ethnicity, is much less conflict-ridden that other poly-ethnic societies (Eriksen 1992:87). Eriksen attributes this stability to the growing domain of shared symbolic meanings upon which ethnic groups of diverse origins can construct distinct cultural identities (1992:89). Eriksen argues that the absence of large-scale ethnic conflict is not a passive result of a poly-ethnic system or the process of creolization. "Peacekeeping is a continuous task" that "Mauritians have *chosen*" and maintain through recognition of cultural differences (Eriksen 1992:89). The adverse impact of this social technique for stability is in the production, as seen with the Chagos Islander's experiences, of marginalisation based on recognised cultural differences. These cultural traits exist on a spectrum whereby some exist as markers of difference that result in marginalisation, while others are accepted as intrinsic to a distinct ethnic identity. Creolization becomes analytically useful in distinguishing where cultural traits fit on this spectrum.

Examination of the Chagossian experience of displacement reveals ongoing processes of creolization, whereby the Chagos Islanders have been, and are being, creolised into Mauritius, which is itself a creolised society. When combining the experience of marginalisation with the process of cultural creativity attached to creolization, the interactions that take place reveal the markers of difference that the actors themselves consider relevant. It is from these lines of difference that participants determine, and have determined for them by others, those cultural traits that conflict with accepted societal norms, and those that are attached to

distinct cultural identities. Hence, we see creolization as an active process, by which the Chagossian community draws upon what is socially effective in their effort to integrate into Mauritian society and adjust to the changing conditions of everyday life in Mauritius. More than providing a means to attach a common language to the *"creole des îles"* that allows for the articulation and affordance of cultural difference, the construction of the collective identity 'Chagossian' provides inordinate benefits for the community. The Chagossian identity is simultaneously a response to displacement and creolization as it is a means of structuring new communal networks based off affect developed from a connection and attachment to a homeland.

In the preceding chapters, I have briefly covered the relevant historical and cultural details of Mauritius and the Chagos Archipelago. Examining the Chagossians' lives in Mauritius following their displacement from the Chagos through a framework of creolization allows for a nuanced conceptualisation of experience as historically constituted and situationally dependent. This analysis has, thus far, lacked consideration of affect as an important dimension of experience (Ahmed 2004; Butler 1993; Ana 2012; Jeffery 2016). Past anthropological exploration of creolization has hinted towards emotional connections that are born out of hardship and suffering (Eriksen 2007; Khan 2007; Rodrígues 2015). Various contemporary 'immaterial' economies have roots linking back to slavery and colonialism, in that affective networks continue to inform subjective experiences that reconstitute identity (Fanon 1999). In this chapter, I will focus on the role of the affective economies that are emergent from the creolization processes I have described. I will examine them, not as a response to oppression per se but how they have been channelled into forms of activism built upon the Chagossian agenda of regaining a lost homeland. These networks were established within the context of the changing political climate of Mauritius, that both feeds off and nourishes a sense of belonging and identity attached sentimentally to the Chagos Archipelago.

Identity and the Affective Economy

The Chagos Refugees Group is actively devoted to securing the rights for the Chagossian people to return to the Chagos Archipelago. Today, there is estimated to be roughly 10,000 people with Chagossian heritage living in Mauritius, the Seychelles, and the United Kingdom (Guardian 2016). Many first and second generation Chagossians have British citizenship (obtainable from 2002), some of whom have since moved to the UK and are living in Crawley, a town in West Sussex near the south coast of England. Across these three countries, the communities are bound by a common identity; being Chagossian. The association with Chagossian identity goes beyond a shared birthplace or ancestral connection to homeland (Jeffery 2006; 2010). The strength of Chagossian identity (and, to a degree, a sense of common ethnicity), in connecting people across geographical distances, lies in the potent emotional bonds that draw individuals to a collective sense of belonging. As Ahmed notes; "Emotions *do*

things, and they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensities of their attachments" (2004;119).

Emotions are crucial underpinnings of social bonds as understood through the sociology of emotions (Bendelow and Williams, 1998; Kemper 1990; Williams, 2001). Sara Ahmed (2004b) demonstrates the way emotions act as a form of social alignment in drawing individuals towards a shared collective. Much like the constitution of ethnic groups outlined in the previous chapter, collective feelings are constituted in relation to emotions directed towards others outside that collective (2004b;27). Consider the vignettes from the previous chapter about the *feelings* the Chagossians of the different generations have towards the Chagos and Mauritius. Space is an important part of community and social networks as geographical localities have significant symbolic forms of meaning attached (Low and Altman 1992). These place-based associations can be fundamental in the formulation of personal and social identities (Basso 1996:53). A Chagossian sense of belonging within Mauritius (to the extent that it exists) has been influenced by the way they have been treated by the other groups. Likewise, the sense of shared Chagossian identity has been a result of the interplay between Chagos Islanders and Mauritians, Chagossians and UK residents, and even among Chagossians of different generations. Recall the statement from the employee of the Ministry of Education in the previous chapter; "unless their parents tell them 'you are from Chagos', they will never know, and they will become Mauritian". In this respect, following Ahmed's argument, if there is no outwardly directed emotionally charged behaviour towards someone of a particular group, then there is no counter basis upon which an individual can align a sense of identity.

Identity, as I refer to it, is taken from the anthropological understanding of the individual subjective association with a group that is based on collective symbolic forms that Bourdieu refers to as 'cultural capital' (2001). The embodied state of cultural capital refers to capital in the form of knowledge, behaviour, habits, and skills that come about in response to an individual's circumstances, otherwise known as 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977). Habitus is thus the embodied notion of "an endless capacity to engender [products, thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions], whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production" (Bourdieu 1977:72,95). Within this conceptual framework, we can extrapolate the role of emotions in framing the individual experience and cognitive

structures. Durkheim conceptualises emotions, not as something born from the individual, but as a social force that holds or binds a collective identity together and "becomes an integral part of our being and by that very fact… is elevated and magnified" (1976;209). Emotions, then, act as a social force operating within social relations, framing the cognitive structures of individuals that is reflective of their structural positions within the field. The field is understood, in conjunction with habitus, as a social "space of possibles" (Johnaon & Bourdieu 1993:64), where individuals are provided with the environment within which they can access and negotiate various aspects of social relations, including emotional exchange, that contributes to identity formulation.

The negotiations that occur in the areas where social, or ethnic, boundaries meet reveal the feelings of a group towards 'others' and thus illuminate the affective 'economy' involved in the exchange of collective emotions that constitutes the group as it circulates and develops value through exchange (Ahmed 2004). Within this exchange, the role of collective feelings in meaning production and identity cohesion as part of creolization demonstrates that Chagossian identity is, at least in part, a product of a socio-economic relationship with Mauritian society. Creolization provides the theoretical framework that gives us the *how* of cultural creativity that produces a variety of Creole identities, while an understanding of the emotional exchange – the economy of affect – gives us the *why* of the situation. Hence, the process of creolization is affect-intensive; "fuelled through human needs, desires and affects" (Rodriguez 2015;84). We see this working with particular potency in the Chagossian quest to return home.

Political Mobilization

In 1982 the Chagos Refugees Group (CRG) was established. This the first organisation formed *by* Chagossians and has been responsible for formulating a coherent plan to advocate for their right to return to the Chagos Archipelago. While the CRG heads the legal disputes to secure the right for the Chagossian people to return to the Chagos Archipelago, it has also been instrumental in providing community services and a physical, as well as phenomenological, space where the Islanders have formed a 'Chagossian' identity. Barth notes that the bounds of ethnic groups frequently have political dimensions and that "political movements constitute new ways of making cultural differences organizationally relevant" (1969:34).

During negotiations between the UK and the Mauritian government in 1965 concerning Mauritius' Independence and the detachment of the Chagos from Mauritius, the UK pledged to provide compensation to the Mauritian government to assist in the accommodation of the Chagos Islanders. The UK provided the Mauritian government with £650,000 in 1972. It was not until 1978 that these payments were disseminated to the community, with the Mauritian government retaining the interest accrued in the interim (de l'Estrac 1983:78), and even then, it proved to be "hopelessly inadequate" (Madeley 1985:7). For six years (even longer for some) the Chagossians had to make do on their own. For most, the compensation payments were around Rs.7,590 [£650] for adults and Rs.1,000-Rs.1,500 children under eighteen (de l'Estrac 1983:77). The cash distribution came after a series of public demonstrations by the community drew attention to the Islanders' situation. A group of eight Chagossian women took up a three-week hunger strike and circulated flyers saying, "Give us a house; if not, return us to our country, Diego" (*Le Mauricien* 1978). This contributed to the growing awareness among Mauritians of the Chagos Islanders' situation and it drew the attention of the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM). In 1979, several Chagossians aligned with the MMM to negotiate with the British Government over additional compensation (Vine 2011:166). Over subsequent years, the Chagossians periodically held demonstrations in Port Louis (Jeffery 2011:38-39), led primarily by women who faced police intimidation, violence and arrest. In 1981 the community held an extensive protest, camping outside the British High Commission, where they demanded the right to return to the Chagos or at the very least, compensation, housing, and employment. "*Rann Nu Diego*" ["Give Us Back Diego"] was the rallying cry for the Islanders during this protest, uniting them as a community with a common political objective. The protest culminated in an eighteen-day hunger strike, violent clashes, and the arrest of eight women before the government responded.

In 1982, the UK government delivered compensation payments of £4 million and the Mauritian government provided land in Baie du Tombeau and Pointe aux Sables, worth approximately £1 million. The Ilois Trust Fund Board (ITFB) was set up by the Mauritian government tasked with the distribution of compensation payments to those that were involuntarily removed from the Chagos.

Francois: "Every adult got Rs.36,000 [approx. £800] and a plot of land. 150 [Chagossian] families were given land here [Baie du Tombeau], but today only 45 have kept that land.

[When asked why the 45 stayed] Most of us are from Peros, on the island we always use to meet as a community, we would talk about things and then decide. But here, when people got the money and the land they sold it right away and bought things, like radios or televisions. When we got the money, we talked with everyone and decided to leave the money with the government and get them to build a house on our land."

In 1982 the MMM defeated the Mauritian Labour Party (MLP), the party instrumental in achieving Mauritius' independence – and consequently the excision of the Chagos. The MMM's political agenda was aligned with improving the conditions of the working-class Creole population (for example, the improvement of the labour conditions among dockworkers). The Chagossians' plight provided the MMM with the chance to demonstrate that they had not abandoned the working-class in favour of the majority Indo-Mauritian middle-class (Jeffery 2011:43). Co-founder of the MMM, Paul Berenger, who was Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister at the time, had been instrumental in the negotiations between the Mauritian government and the UK government that had obtained the compensation package for the Chagossian community. The final instalment of the compensation payments from 1982 was only provided after the recipient signed, with a thumbprint, a document written in English – a language they could not read or understand – that renounced future claims of compensation or the right to return to the Chagos (Madeley 1985). Berenger told me in an interview that, due to the political climate at that time, the Chagossians had no bargaining power with the UK, and knowing that they needed the money to improve their living conditions, recommended signing the forms. Berenger said he knew these documents would not be binding since they were obtained without proper informed consent.

Following the controversial compensation payments of 1982, Charlesia Alexis, Lisette Talate, and Olivier Bancoult formed the CRG to provide representation for the community as a Chagossian-run organisation that operated with the sole intent of obtaining the right to return to the Chagos. The 1980's and 1990's saw little progress towards resolving the Chagossians' plight and the CRG gradually lost support within the community (Jeffery 2011:40). In 1995, Fernand Mandarin set up a new group called the Chagos Social Committee (CSC) with Mauritian barrister Hervé Lassemillante. The CSC popularised the collective noun 'Chagossian'

to move away from the generative and derogatory *ilois* label and to signify a link to the Chagos while at the same time emphasising boundaries between Chagossians and Mauritian Creoles.

In 1996, at the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the CSC gained recognition for the Chagossians as an indigenous population, but the lack of concrete progress saw the decline of community support by the late 1990's.

The sense of disillusionment reversed when Mauritian journalist Henri Marimootoo published a series of newly declassified documents from the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) in a series called the *Diego Files* between May and August 1997. These documents contained communications between colonial officials in the 1960's that revealed the UK had intentionally constructed "the fiction" that the Chagos had no permanent inhabitants but was made up of "transient labourers" employed on contracts. This was a landmark moment for the Chagossian people, the first time they had solid proof of the injustice and illegality of their removal. The publication of this story created widespread awareness among the population of Mauritius about the illegal displacement of the Chagossians (who they had known only as *ilois*) and about the role of the Chagossian displacement to Mauritian independence.

Legal Developments

The Sheridan law firm took the Chagossian case in 1999, working with the CRG, now led by Olivier Bancoult. The case reached the UK courts in November 2000 where the High Court ruled the expulsion of the Chagos Islanders from the Chagos Archipelago was unlawful and reinstated their right to return to all islands excluding Diego Garcia as it was still being used for military purposes. This was a landmark victory for the community. Photos of Olivier Bancoult leaving the courtroom and newspaper clippings of the event are displayed on the walls of the CRG offices. Over the next few years, the CRG was involved in court cases to investigate whether some Chagos Islanders and their descendants might be eligible for further compensation (Jeffery 2011:41). In 2003, the coalition was overruled and in 2004 three Court of Appeal judges ruled against the appeal for additional compensation. June 10, 2004 brought the UK government's application of an Orders in Council (a royal prerogative; a ruling made in the name of the crown to overrule a decision made by the High Court) to put in place a new BIOT Immigration Order that prohibited any unauthorised persons (which included the Chagossians) from entering the BIOT. This ruling, made on the highest level of the British

government had the ability to remove a democratic decision voted upon following High Court cases without further discussion. What followed over the next few years was a back-and-forth battle to reinstate the 2000 High Court ruling that would allow the Chagossians to return. On May 11, 2006, the High Court deemed the 2004 Orders in Council illegal. The UK government opposed the 2006 ruling and lodged an appeal in 2007 but it was defeated in the Court of Appeal. However, in 2008, the UK took the appeal to the House of Lords where they ruled in favour of the UK government with a majority of three-to-two. What this meant was that it was decided that the Orders in Council, the BIOT Immigration Order that was used to deny Chagossians access to the Chagos Archipelago, was legal, despite the High Court and Court of Appeal saying otherwise. The Chagossians would not be able to return.

The British Overseas Territory Act of 2002 reclassified the British Dependent Territory's (BDT) inhabitants, making Chagos Islanders born on the Chagos and their children eligible for full UK citizenship. The negotiations that followed centred around eligibility as the UK began distinguishing those deemed to have left the Chagos 'voluntarily', compared to those forcibly removed, and excluding the second-generation Chagossians born before 26 April 1969 (Jeffery 2017:74). This "policy of exclusion" (Jeffery 2011:97) was contentious since many Chagossians freely travelled to Mauritius with the expectation of returning to the Chagos.

In addition to the numerous social and economic disadvantages, the community has faced in Mauritius, Chagossian 'victimhood' (Jeffery 2006) is understood and portrayed through the numerous legal injustices they have suffered through the UK court system. Stemming from their initial displacement, the Chagossians have felt perpetually victimised at the hands of the UK government. The entirety of the Chagossians' legal battles has been characterised by victories that have been unjustly overturned. The words below were chants that the community voiced during the demonstration I attended with the CRG outside the British High Commission in Port Louis that confirm the sense of injustice felt throughout the community;

"Respecter nous droits" / "Respect our rights!"

"Anglais voler" / "English are thieves!"

"Nou dignite pa vender" / "Our dignity is not for sale!"

"Rane nous Diego" / "Give us back Diego!"

Back on December 30, 1966, the UK and US governments formally signed a fifty-year agreement allowing the U.S. to use Diego Garcia for military purposes (Page 2003:375), with a rollover period of an additional twenty years. In anticipation of the approaching expiration of the original fifty-year agreement, the CRG had been campaigning for the UK to add a clause to their negotiations of the rollover period with the US that would allow the Chagossians to return. On November 16, 2016, the UK government released a statement. Foreign Minister Baroness Joyce Anelay informed parliament;

> "The government has decided against resettlement of the Chagossian people to the British Indian Ocean Territory on the grounds of feasibility, defence and security interests, and cost to the British taxpayer." (The Guardian 2016a)

The UK government offered, as an alternative, a further £40 million support package to be distributed over the next decade to help improve the Chagossians' lives (The Guardian 2016b). The main point of contention among the community following this decision was whether to accept the support package or continue the fight to return. The main point of concern for the CRG was a lack of understanding about what this support package entailed. A letter received by the CRG from the UK FCO on January 12, 2017, stated;

> "Your letter requests explanation of how and when the £40 million support package will be made available. Before making any firm decisions, the British Government wants to discuss the options with Chagossian communities in the UK, the Seychelles and Mauritius to enable us to develop programmes which will ensure the greatest improvement in the life chances of Chagossians."

Due to the lack of a clear and coherent plan regarding the support package that the CRG could present to the community, the CRG returned to the UK with the proposition that the support package be used for resettlement on the Chagos. In a letter sent on January 24, 2017, from the CRG to the UK FCO, Olivier Bancoult states;

> "In particular, I pointed out that this fund should be made available for resettlement, since it was almost twice the amount estimated by Dr John Howell in his 'Returning

Home'[6] report as the cost of resettling 750 Chagossians in their homeland… Our position is that these monies should be made available for resettlement, while poverty relief, in the way I have suggested, is a moral imperative that stands outside of the resettlement programme."

The CRG chose to remain firm in their desire to return to the Chagos and turned down the support package. The progress of the Chagossian community was not isolated from the social and political environment of Mauritius. These developments were bound by a combination of community mobilisation, rising social awareness and affective networks that draw together individuals under a collective identity based on a shared history.

Affective Mobilization

The progress of the CRG and Olivier Bancoult in furthering the agenda of returning to the Chagos increased the potency of emotional bonds that acted as the cohesive 'stickiness' of collective identity (Ahmed 2004a). The emotions that bind individuals to a collective, much like the process of creolization itself, are performative (Butler 1993). Emotional responses that either distance the symbolic differences embodied in individuals – through hate or prejudice such as the marginalisation of the *ilois* – or that join individuals together through a shared emotional bond, comes about through zones of contact and interaction. "Contact both depends on histories of association, at the same time as it generates its object" (Ahmed 2004b:32). These associations act as the basis for analysing interactions and offers a lens through which behaviour is understood and projected onto the object. The term *ilois* came to be associated with a person "behaving in an antisocial or immoral fashion" (Walker 1986:24). These prejudices reproduce themselves through interactions among the different ethnic groups that have maintained the relatively rigid social hierarchy of Mauritius (Vine 2011:139140).

> Jane (Mauritian, wife of Henrie): "the term *ilois,* it's really Islanders, like you only know coconuts and the sea, that's all. They say; 'ah you're from Chagos', 'you're Chagos', or 'coconut Chagos'. They use this term like this because I think that when the Chagossian

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[6] The study referred to here was conducted in Mauritius and the Seychelles from November 2007 until February 2008. This project was not claimed to be a "fully-fledged plan for resettlement" since it lacked site visits or the financial resources to enlist teams of consultants, unlike the BIOT feasibility studies conducted in 1999 (2008:10).

came in Mauritius, they didn't have money, they didn't have a house, and no one knew about them…"

The zones of contact, when emotions are aligned, draws individuals together through a shared history and connection to the Chagos. The emotive strength of the attachment to the islands traverses time and space, creating a bounded identity that has affective influence among individuals in association with a shared past. The active participation in the transmission and transferal of collective emotions tied to the Chagos generates the object - 'Chagossian' - that can, in turn, contribute to the continuity of the emotions that form the bonds in the first place.

Popular music is one medium through which emotions surface as "songs [that] form part of an emergent collective mythico-historical imagination motivated by political and legal struggles for compensation and the right to return to the Chagos" (Jeffery 2007:951). These songs evoke a longing for return, or to experience, the romanticized and idealised lifestyle of the Chagos that is contrasted to the life of poverty and hardship in Mauritius, with its simplicity, abundance and social connectivity (Jeffery 2007). Importantly these tendencies are reflected in oral narratives where the life of the Chagos is juxtaposed against their experiences of Mauritius.

> Henrie: "I can remember my grandmother talking to us of the Chagos; how beautiful it was, how it was like a paradise there when she was young, how she use to play with all the Chagossians in the yards, how the sea was beautiful and full of life, yes, there were lots of fish, lots of coconut trees on the plantations they were working on… It was like paradise, there was no danger, it was a happy life. But as I was really young, so I was not really concerned with the Chagos, but those stories were really nice to hear. It's like, before going to bed your grandmother tells you nice stories so you can fall asleep."

The nostalgic lens through which life on the Chagos is viewed needs to be placed in context; it is both a tool that is used to elicit social, political and legal support for the cause as well as presenting a solid, coherent image under which the Chagossians themselves can unite. The nostalgic memory (Lems 2016) of the Chagos resembles a tool of *hope movements* (Dinerstein & Deneulin 2012) that rely on what Ernst Bloch calls an "anticipatory consciousness" that enables an ideal of possibilities to create positive affective responses that are made real through experience (1959/1986:11-12). Hope movements rely on a future concept

materialising as affect in the present (Dodd 1994) which allows positive emotions to be experienced in the face of a situation where that is lacking (Roderick 1987). Hope movements that pursue living well, in this sense, are not 'utopian' rather, they guide concrete action towards that end (Dinerstein & Deneulin 2012; Levitas 1990).

Creolization and the Consequence of Variation

These sentiments are not homogenously experienced. There is variation among the community on the levels at which they have felt discriminated and the degree to which they feel connected to the Chagos. The fight to return to the islands is built upon the momentum of the first and second generation who experienced the immediate impacts of resettlement. A point of concern for the CRG is the younger generations' emotional commitment to the activism driving the fight to return to the islands. Jeffery notes that the "Chagossian leadership has found it increasingly difficult to encourage Chagos Islanders' Mauritius-born children and grandchildren to get involved in the Chagossian struggle" (2006:307). This concern permeates across generations.

> "There are not many here. The young ones, they are not interested," was Edouard's response when asked about young Chagossians' involvement in the CRG. "I do not think they really realise the fight, maybe. They don't understand the reason behind these people's [first generation Chagossians] attachment to their islands. Many are born in Mauritius and that's all that matters to them, so they are only concerned with money that will improve their lives."

There is little incentive for the young Chagossians to devote themselves to the struggle as they are ineligible to directly receive cash compensation or UK passports that are offered to first and second generation Chagossians. The primary focus of life for the young Chagossians is integration into Mauritius (Jeffery 2006:307). The younger Chagossians, I found, categorised themselves as 'Chagossian-Mauritians', or 'Chagossian descendants'. While most of the young generation identify strongly with Mauritius and the lifestyle it offers, their ties to the Chagos are acknowledged with varying degrees based on individual experience and the influence of Chagossian culture in their everyday lives.

For Chagossians like Henrie, even though they have never set foot upon the Chagos, there is a disconnect felt towards life in Mauritius and a more salient understanding of identity is

achieved through association to an ancestry connected to the Chagos. This point, above all, ties together the emotional connection that joins individuals together across generations, to a history that is constructed on the backdrop of colonialism, within a culture formed through creolization.

> Henrie: "My heritage is not from here. My ancestors left it over there. That is why I have to go there. They're the first ones that constructed the Chagos because there were no Africans there before the Chagossians, the French brought them there, they were descended from slaves, but they stayed there for four generations. They built the port, the villages, everywhere so they can get water and work. They were to first people who built something there. They were the first settlers."

Conclusion

Henrie's comment is telling. It frames Chagossian identity within the experience of a second displacement when removed from the Chagos, a movement that differentiates them as a distinct group from Mauritian Creoles. Where creolization took place among the early Creole populations, the criteria for the cultural traits that took root depended upon their relevant utility for the respective social environments. The reformation of Chagossian identity is an adaptive response to the altered demands of everyday life in Mauritius. When the community organised themselves under organisations devoted to a political goal (CRG & CSC), their identity needed to reflect the motivations embodied in their agenda. Obtaining recognition as a 'victimised' community allowed Chagossians to give meaning to their situation. These external structures produced by change reverberate and are embedded as they "frame ways of thinking and feeling and experiencing, which are not always cognitively or consciously available" (Hall 2012:32, 34). This process binds individuals together, and also separates them, through affective networks forged by social, economic and political factors, facets of life that are themselves under the sway of ongoing creolization.

I began this thesis with an introduction to the complex political issues surrounding Chagossian identity. An established, and in some sense verifiable, definition of identity is integral to resolving the Chagossian plight. The legal battles that organisations like the CRG are involved in, centre around the Chagossians' right of abode on the Chagos Archipelago as their ancestral and cultural homeland. Competing political interests that surround the ambiguous national sovereignty of the Chagos, whether it is Mauritian, UK, or Chagossian territory, have implications for how Chagossian people are seen, and see themselves, as a distinguishable group of people. This, of course, has profound implications for a sense of self. As background to this contested terrain, I presented a historical and cultural context of the Chagos Archipelago and Mauritius to illustrate the necessity for a theoretical framework that can explain the cultural particularities of Creole cultures that emerged throughout the Indian Ocean. We see that creolization offers a framing analysis to understand how certain cultures identify as Creole due to conditions that prompted the formulation of new social and cultural forms as a means of communication and interaction. It is on this point of cultural creativity born out of necessity that creolization diverges from other forms of hybridity.

While this thesis does not have the space to encapsulate the complexities of creolization in a comprehensive fashion, a preliminary examination suggests there are both similarities and differences between the Creole cultures of the Chagos and Mauritius. In particular, differences emerge out of the structuring of everyday life and forms of social organisation that were possible under different colonial settings. The plantations on the Chagos, for instance, were solely run by companies for the singular purpose of growing and harvesting coconuts. Mauritius, specialising in sugar production under British administration, was economically diverse and attracted foreign investment throughout the twentieth century. The subsequent immigration produced a far more ethnically diverse society than present on the Chagos. Understanding these differences aids in interpreting the experiences of the Chagossians exiled to Mauritius. Creolization is a common historical process that characterises life for both Chagossians and Mauritians but is not uniform in its outcomes. Within Creole society in Mauritius, Chagossians have been marked by, and are strategically

seeking to further demarcate, distinguishing characteristics. Contextualising the history and socio-political intersections of these two locations lays the foundation for an analysis of the social impacts that have affected Chagossians across generations. Further, I have sought to show that creolization offers a way of viewing the social impacts of displacement in ways that reveal both the source of the social tensions caused by resettlement as well as the methods through which the community manage integration.

The application of creolization to this context is based on the theoretical framework developed by scholars specialising in this area (Baron & Cara 2011; Eriksen 2007; Khan 2007). These papers highlight the necessity of developing a practical definition for creolization that will allow applied insights to specific politicised practical situations. I chose creolization over indigeneity studies or works on refugee and internally displaced peoples as these approaches would fail to account for the historically situational process that led to the emergence of Creole cultures in the Indian Ocean. The implications of creolization, as a process that is born out of displacement (Eriksen 2007), forged under hardship, and constituted in everyday interactions (Rodrígues 2015), carries significant weight for Chagossian integration into Mauritian society.

I hope to have shown that integration of the Chagossian community into Mauritian society is an ongoing process of creolization whereby a Creole community is being 'creolised' into an already creolised society. Further 'creolization' was, and is, necessary because, while the Chagos Islanders are considered Mauritian, given Mauritian citizenship and afforded all the opportunities available to other residents, upon arrival they were simultaneously treated as 'non-Mauritians'. When the Chagos Islanders disembarked the *Nordvær* in Mauritius, they were put through immigration, given sub-standard housing, and socially marginalised as an ethnic minority ('*creole des îles*' – *ilois*) within an existing ethnic minority (*malaise-creole*). Amongst other things, living conditions contribute to a yearning for the previous life on the Chagos Archipelago and provide the emotive force for the community in their quest to return home. This aspiration, in turn, reinforces the sense they are currently 'homeless'. Homelessness, as a chronic condition of displacement, is a prominent risk factor leading to impoverishment (Cernea 1997). Importantly, this sense of dislocation from home now acts as a symbolic rallying-point to construct an ever-evolving sense of Chagossian identity. It must be noted, however, the efficacy of these affective networks does not encompass all

Chagossian experience. Among the younger generations, we see, as a possible outcome of the embracive nature of creolization taking place following displacement, the formulation of an identity that is Chagossian-Mauritian, or Chagossian-English. These identities are structured based on the everyday socialisation in Mauritius or the UK where the younger Chagossians are born, grow up, and adopt an identity with an everyday relevance.

Bader warns against a constructivist approach towards identity that tends to dissolve cultures into narrative discourses, then into processes, and then identities, preventing "rich descriptions and adequate explanations of processes of cultural change, of community formation and identity definition" (2001:252). To avoid the temptation of such a path, I have applied creolization in a way that distinguishes between perspectives of cultural change as an outcome of historical processes, processes of group formation, and the definitions and constitutional elements of identity. This thesis does not propose to comprehensively address the entire scope of variation and nuances within Chagossian identity, instead, it means to demonstrate the influences of three key processes through the lens of creolization. To this end, I restricted my use of creolization to the specific criteria of being displaced, uprooted, and forced to cohabitate among people with whom there are no shared social or cultural forms, wherein, the process itself is born out of everyday interactions to constitute a socially relevant identity, driven by "human needs, desires, and affect" (Rodríguez 2015). Most importantly, I have argued that while these conditions are a prerequisite for the emergence of creolization, it is a process that has continuous influence in the formulation of cultural identity in relation to changing circumstances of everyday life.

My central finding has been that even as Chagossians are 'creolised' into Mauritian society, they simultaneously develop collective symbolic forms that contribute to the formulation of a distinct Chagossian identity attached to a homeland that is no longer part of Mauritius. The most vivid of these collective symbolisms is represented through the CRG flag (Figure 4) that is emblematic of their history as well as their collective agenda. The flag was first revealed by the CRG following the High Court ruling in 2000. There are three horizontal stripes with orange at the top, black along the middle and light blue along the bottom. Olivier Bancoult told me that the orange represented the Chagos and the colour of the setting sun seen from the islands. The thinner, black stripe symbolises the suffering they have gone through from displacement to the marginalisation in Mauritius. Finally, the blue is inspired by the waters

and lagoons of the Chagos Archipelago, but most importantly it represents their hope for the future of someday being able to return. The ways in which this hope plays out in everyday Chagossian Creole life is a topic for further research.

Figure 2. 3 – The Chagos Refugees Group Flag.

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