RACE, NATIVITY, AND MULTICULTURAL EXCLUSION

Negotiating the Inclusion of Kreol in Mauritian Language Policy

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Abstract

This article examines the exclusion of Afro-Mauritians (or Creoles) in Mauritian multiculturalism. Although Creoles represent nearly thirty percent of the population, they are the only major group not officially recognized in the Mauritian Constitution (unlike Hindus, Muslims, and the Chinese) and they experience uniquely high levels of socioeconomic and political marginalization despite the country's decades-long policy of official multiculturalism. While scholarship on multiculturalism and nation-building in plural societies might explain the exclusion of Creoles as a breakdown in the forging of political community in postcolonial Mauritius, I build on these theories by focusing on the tension between diaspora and nativity evident in Mauritian public discourse. Using the politics of language policy as a case study, I examine why the *Kreol* language in Mauritius—the ancestral language of Creoles and mother tongue of the majority of Mauritians—was consistently rejected for inclusion in language policy until recently (unlike Hindi, Urdu, and other ethnic languages). In my analysis of public policy discourse, I map how Creole ethnic activists negotiated *Kreol's* inclusion in multiculturalism and highlight their constraints. This analysis shows that through multiculturalism, non-Creole political actors have created *ethnic* categories of inclusion while reciprocally denoting *racially*-excluded others defined by their lack of diasporic cultural value. I argue that groups claiming diasporic cultural connections are privileged as "ethnics" deemed worthy of multicultural inclusion, while those with ancestral connections more natively-bound to the local territory (such as Creoles, as a post-slavery population) are deemed problematic, culturally dis-recognized, and racialized as "the Other" because their nativity gives them a platform from which to lay territorial counter-claims to the nation.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Race, Nativity, Diaspora, Exclusion, Belonging, Recognition

INTRODUCTION

In the past four decades, most plural, liberal democracies have instituted some form of multicultural policy to facilitate the inclusion of disadvantaged, non-dominant groups. In Mauritius—an African island located Northeast of Madagascar—the government's adoption of official multiculturalism is one oft-cited example of this balancing act within a postcolonial society.[1] Mauritius has a plural democratic political system,

an open, widely assessable media, a steadily growing middle class, a highly participatory civil society, and a strong framework of multiculturalism that characterizes the country's political culture. Its varied ethnic landscape includes Hindus (at 52% of the population), Creoles of African descent (28%), Muslims of predominately Indian descent (17%) and smaller percentages of Chinese (2%) as well as Franco-Mauritian descendants of French settlers (2%). Mauritius' official multiculturalism has been credited for creating fertile ground for democratic governance, leading to its relatively peaceful history despite its racially and ethnically diverse population (Carroll and Carroll, 2000).

Prior to its independence from the British in 1968, Mauritius was essentially a "nationless" country with no pre-modern indigenous groups and a small percentage of White settlers. The islanders share a complicated history of "sequential colonialism" (Miles 1999) passing between Dutch, French, and then British colonial rule, with African, Indian, and Chinese populations imported as slaves or indentured servants in the production of cane sugar.[2] Since the transition of power to Hindu elites during independence, the Mauritian government has implemented a wide range of multicultural policies—from the constitutional recognition of ethnic groups to the funding of sociocultural organizations—in an attempt to integrate previously colonized populations into the national fabric on a politically equal basis. There also exists a plethora of cultural parastatal bodies—including research institutes and preservation societies—funded by the government to directly implement multicultural policies. As a result of these policies, Mauritius boasts a highly participatory civil society.

However, although Mauritians are active within civil society, the predominance of sociocultural and religious associations has arranged civil society into what Henry Srebrnik (2000) calls "segmented religio-ethnic communities." In particular, Hindu associations have the strongest involvement with the state, and these organizations work intimately with parastatal bodies in the provision and implementation of government services. In addition, Hindus comprise a majority of civil servants and typically hold among the most active memberships in sociocultural associations (Eisenlohr 2006). Sino-Mauritians and Muslims (mostly of South Asian ancestry) have also had traditionally high rates of participation. This burgeoning and active associational life has led to the "generalized trust" that is typically created through civic engagement, but tends to stay confined within a specific ethnic group (Miles 1999; Srebrnik 2000;). Hindus, Muslims, and other groups of Asian descent have largely benefitted from these multicultural policies, which have strengthened the ethnic, bonding nature of their associational life (Darga 1998), leading to much higher levels of civic engagement, political representation, socioeconomic mobility, and government responsiveness.

At the same time, the experience of Creoles has been characterized by marginalization, poverty, and civic disengagement. While the country has had high socioeconomic development since the 1980s, this development has become increasingly ethnically stratified, creating "pockets of poverty" that disproportionately contain the Creole population (Mathews and Flore-Smereczniak, 2005). Rodrigues, Black River, Port Louis, and other predominately Creole provinces are areas with the lowest education assessment scores, highest poverty rates, highest unemployment rates, and lowest levels of land ownership (Bunwaree 2001).

Most striking is that Creoles make up nearly a third of the population (as the second largest group) but are unrecognized in the Mauritian Constitution, unlike Hindus, Muslims, and Chinese, whose groups were each officially recognized by the government with the first post-independence constitution. The country's "Best Losers"

system—a quasi-consociational system of ethnic political representation—grants guaranteed electoral seats on the basis of these official categories to each ethnic group, but because Creoles remain unrecognized, they are also least likely to occupy political office and have the lowest levels of political representation, as parliamentary seats do not reflect their population numbers.

Among the most controversial forms of multiculturalism, the Mauritian government has sought to incorporate a multitude of what it terms "ancestral" languages (numbering fifteen different Asian languages—from Hindi and Urdu to Hakka and Mandarin) into the national fabric. Language courses are also offered at the primary and secondary levels, and include the teaching of the cultural practices, worldviews, and religious connections of each language with a specific "ancestral" group (Baptiste 2002). While English and French are mandatory subjects that are required for a pupil to receive the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) and advance to secondary school, the Asian ancestral languages are additionally offered as optional languages to be tested in to improve students' overall scores on the CPE exam.

In stark contrast, *Kreol Morisien* (the only language native to the island), has not been included in Mauritian language policy until very recently and is the only language not officially recognized by the government, despite the fact that it is the mother tongue of ninety percent of the Mauritian-born population and the most dominantly spoken language on the island (Statistics Mauritius, 2012). In comparison to the Asian languages, government consideration for the institutionalization of *Kreol* has consistently been rejected in policy debates since the 1980s. *Kreol* is also the ancestral language of Mauritians of African descent. Not only was *Kreol* never offered as a subject in government schools, its use is additionally excluded in government, the civil service, and other formal institutions. *Kreol*'s exclusion also belies the fact that the officially recognized Asian ancestral languages comprise a mere 2% of Mauritian language speakers (ibid).

Only in 2012, after considerable controversy, did the government officially introduce *Kreol* as an optional subject to be taught in public schools alongside the Asian languages, nearly forty years after the institutionalization of Hindi. What explains the lack of recognition of *Kreol* in Mauritius' multilingual framework and what explains its inclusion in multicultural policy in the most recent years—a divergent break from previous language policy? What does this reveal about the lack of recognition of Creoles as a group in Mauritian multiculturalism?

Mauritius' multiculturalism has been a relative success for some groups, but a failure for others. Further, while it has increased the recognition, civic participation, and government responsiveness within groups, it has failed to facilitate the political solidarity and generalized trust across groups that is necessary for democratic life. Using discourse analysis and process tracing, I analyze public policy discourse within newspapers, parliamentary records, and government reports, in addition to elite interviews conducted with government officials and political activists. Through an examination of the process by which the *Kreol* language became institutionalized and introduced in the public school system, I delineate the barriers that prevented *Kreol*'s past inclusion, outline how the entrance of *Kreol* into Mauritian language policy was negotiated, and explain what this signifies about the configuration of Mauritian multiculturalism and the boundaries of the Mauritian "nation" that has led to Creole exclusion.

I argue that our current vision of multiculturalism is limited as a framework of inclusion in the Mauritian context—a postcolonial context characterized by competing ideologies of diaspora versus nativity and purity versus *métissage*. Because of *Kreol*'s status as a "native" language born of Mauritian soil, the language competes with the vision of the "rainbow nation" created by the post-independence Mauritian government.

Kreol stands in contrast to the other languages on the island which have been recognized and preserved because of their characterization as diasporic languages connected to cultures abroad, marking these languages as *ethnically*-distinct. Likewise, Creoles—whose culture and biology are understood as native-born within Mauritian soil—are viewed as problematic to a vision of multiculturalism that privileges diasporic ancestry abroad over native origin. As a result, the language and culture of Creoles are stripped of value and their group distinctively *racialized* in comparison to other Mauritians.

I begin the article with a description of the literatures highlighting the relationship between multiculturalism, racial/ethnic politics, political community, and nation-building in the construction of multicultural policy across North America and Latin America. As a caveat, my use of the terms "native" or "nativity" throughout this article is distinct from "indigenous" or "indigeneity." By native, I mean those peoples and cultural artifacts born out of the local territory during or after modernity. Indigeneity or the indigenous, on the other hand, imply an origin within a territory that precedes the introduction of a modern nation-state.[3]

Next, I give an overview of the roles of the languages in Mauritius and their advocacy in language policy across three competing advocacy groups. Language policy advocacy took place within the context of the Afro-Creole identity movement, which sets the foundation for policy negotiation leading up to the 2010 elections, as I briefly explain in the next section. I then chronicle the role of Creole and Indo-Mauritian political actors and the arguments they have made in advancing the recognition and inclusion of *Kreol* in language policy. I end with a discussion that explains how in this process, *Kreol* language advocates were able to re-appraise the value of both the language and the Creole ethnic boundary in multiculturalism. Consequently, *Kreol*'s institutionalization was facilitated by the development of a more heavily demarcated Creole ethnic boundary that could be accepted by and reap the sociopolitical benefits of Mauritian multiculturalism. However, as a structural framework that privileges diaspora over nativity, Mauritian multiculturalism activates a discourse of purity versus *métissage* that characterizes the *Kreol* language (and other Creole cultural forces) as a threat to the postcolonial nation, which further limited *Kreol*'s incorporation in language policy.

RACE AND MULTICULTURALISM IN PLURAL DEMOCRACIES

Multicultural policies are intended to facilitate the incorporation of non-dominant groups by creating pathways to political representation, civic engagement, and socio-economic mobility. But in many countries with official multiculturalism, social stratification and inequality between groups have exacerbated. For Creoles in Mauritius, the adoption of multiculturalism has coincided with their increasing socioeconomic marginalization and lack of upward mobility, their lack of recognition in the Mauritian Constitution and guaranteed political representation, and their comparatively lower levels of civic engagement—a situation that has left their community excluded from sociopolitical life.

This contradiction falls in line with broader patterns of ethnic and racial stratification in many plural, liberal democracies, where the inclusion and empowerment of some minority groups takes place concurrent to the exclusion and disempowerment of others, creating increasing levels of inequality between groups. Within these contexts, certain groups are not only marginalized in society, but may not be extended a place within the political community beyond legal rights to citizenship, while others are enabled to obtain ideational and sociopolitical forms of national belonging that facilitate their inclusion beyond—and sometimes even in place of—legal citizenship rights.

Much of the literature on multiculturalism and racial politics explains the lack of incorporation of long-standing marginalized and previously subjugated communities by highlighting how racial and ethnic boundaries are constructed by states in distinct ways that incorporate (or exclude) non-dominant populations from the political community differently. This scholarship examines racial politics within settler societies that typically include a mix of European-settler, Afro-descendant, and indigenous groups, focusing on the construction of racial segregation, the struggles of indigenous communities for self-governance and land rights, and the identity politics of mixed-race populations.

This scholarship also fits within a broader conversation about the ways and means of forging political community among disparate groups that have been absorbed by the liberal-democratic state at various moments across time, including the literatures on nationalism and nation-building in the postcolonial context. These literatures collectively outline the morphological process of the political construction of national boundaries spanning from state formation until today. While the early nation-states of Europe were constructed on the basis of inclusion, using a singular language or religion to combine disparate populations into a singular national identity (Anderson 1991; Gellner 1983), settler states such as the United States, Canada, and Australia formed with the unique task of constructing a national boundary on the basis of racial exclusion (Agamben 1998; Hanchard 2006; Sheth 2009). In Latin America, the construction of new settler states enforced strict cultural hegemony based on a singular language and culture (Spanish/Latin) over an increasingly mixed race "*mestizo*" population, which later became the dominant majority. At different times, both Afro-descended and "pure-blooded" indigenous populations (racialized as distinct from *mestizo* populations) were excluded from these national models through the construction of racial boundaries explicitly used by settlers to demarcate their newly-constructed nation-states. Throughout history, these marginalized populations have been designated as "denizens," occupying a political space somewhere between full citizenship and foreign status.

In North America, long-standing race-based systems of exclusion were similarly created during settlement to construct the parameters of national membership. Citizenship was restricted by means of "old" ethno-nationalist processes of exclusion, including through the creation of census categories, the restriction of citizenship on the basis of race, and the state mandate of a single language. Across the Americas, exclusion and political membership were two faces of the same coin: as political membership was defined by public policy, equally rigid definitions of who could not belong were delineated. In this way, dichotomous national narratives based on racial difference were central to defining the boundaries of the United States.[4]

Whether through linguistic/religious difference or racial consciousness, states have historically instilled beliefs about membership in "the nation," and national identity and national belonging have remained a vital aspect of modern liberal democracies that continue to facilitate democratic participation and political solidarity. According to Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996), for liberal democracies to flourish, both the nation and the state are important for successful democratic transition and maintenance, as the nation defines who is included in citizenship (and facilitates their allegiance to democratic processes) and the state defines the sovereign power over said citizenry. The authors thus characterize many failures of democratization as a disjuncture between the state and the nation in multinational or multicultural contexts where peoples with different degrees of national belonging and state allegiance are in competition. In this way, nation-building and democratic consolidation become inherently at odds—the former process seeking to homogenize and unify disparate groups while

the latter process seeks to endorse the equal rights of disparate individuals through political inclusion—although many states subscribe to policies that attempt to do both (Linz and Stepan, 1996).

In such situations, attempts at constructing the traditional "nation-state" create political tensions by exalting the culture and sociopolitical value of one group (designated the "nation") above all others, seeking to incorporate other groups through assimilation or marginalize them from civil society and the polity through processes of social closure. However what Linz and Stepan (1996) call contemporary "state-nations" (as opposed to "nation-states") are liberal-democratic states that have instead successfully consolidated democracy by instituting "state policies that grant inclusive and equal citizenship and that give all citizens a common 'roof' of state mandated and enforced individual rights" (p. 33). These "common" rights provide security and a feeling of "belonging" for non-dominant groups by incorporating policies such as the translation of multiple languages, the teaching of numerous ethnic histories in the public school curriculum, and consociational representation. As a result, state-nations help suppress the salience of ethnic identities (without completely eliminating them) and endow a supra-national allegiance to the state.[5]

The equal representation and inclusiveness necessary for the successful consolidation of the "state-nation" is one of the primary goals of multiculturalism, which seeks to generate "the terms of a shared citizenship and national identity" (Modood 2013, p. 2) among diverse groups in a polity through a more broad-based civic identity with the state. Multicultural policies attempt to subvert the previous assimilationist pressures of the Western liberal nation-state by amalgamating the concerns and needs of minority groups (Modood 2013). With the recognition of groups through multiculturalism, ethnically-representative organizations in civil society are also provided with a range of politically empowering resources, from positive social acknowledgement, to rights of political representation, to the state funding of sociocultural organizations (Kymlicka 1996; Young 1989).

Particularly in many plural, postcolonial democracies—where the expressed appreciation of plurality was the foundation of nation-building—multiculturalism is embraced to equalize disparate groups while maintaining their cultural boundaries. Integrative frameworks thus characterize many of these countries where there are no singular claims to the nation and a multitude of diverse ethnic and racial groups emphasize "unity in diversity" as a framework for nation-building (Eriksen 1992). Here, the goal of the state is less about homogenizing groups and more about forging community across cultural, religious, and linguistic divides. In this manner, multiculturalism is a key means of incorporation into the "nation," but also a distinct configuration of the nation itself that facilitates the expansion and inclusiveness of the national boundary.

Anthony Moran (2011) argues that nation-building was an integral part of the construction of multiculturalism in Australia to accommodate mass increases in immigration after the eradication of the "White Australia" policy. The author writes that Australia and other plural countries "require some degree of (mainly civic) common national culture, supporting a sense of 'we-ness,' that provides the context through which co-nationals can debate—and are willing to debate together—the complexities of identity, diversity, and contested national traditions" (Moran 2011, p. 2154). Similar "new" nations—including settler states such as Canada, or postcolonial states such as Mauritius or Trinidad—are built with the consensual understanding that their nations were recently constructed and are continuously and actively sustained through contemporary multicultural processes that are overtly engaged (Eriksen 1992; Laitin 1992; Moran 2011).

Yet many Western scholars debate the efficacy of multicultural policies, offering competing visions of the context necessary for multiculturalism to realize its goals. Contributing to these disagreements is a lack of focus on the politics of multiculturalism in countries outside of the Western world, including plural postcolonial and settler societies in Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Africa, which tend to be heavily influenced by the presence of racial divisions.

According to Juliette Hooker (2009), a pervasive "racialized solidarity" exists in most plural democracies. She cites the muted response to the predominately Black victims of Hurricane Katrina and the racial riots that took place in Paris the same year as a reflection of the fracture in political solidarity between racialized communities within liberal polities that have valued equality only in theory. Hooker argues that political solidarity has been mediated by race in many liberal polities despite the myriad multicultural policies that they have put forth, and this is because the most prominent theorists on multiculturalism have problematically separated ethnic, racial, and indigenous groups in their conceptualizations of multiculturalism while ignoring the ways that these groups overlap.

Other scholars have studied the politics of inclusion for Afro-descended and immigrant or indigenous populations comparatively, and find that there are differences in outcomes between groups ascribed as "racial" and "ethnic"—these differences are the result of political processes involving the negotiation of national ideologies, group interests, and state institutions and policies that facilitate divergent levels of incorporation (Gunew 1997; Hattam 2007; Hooker 2005; Paschel 2013; Wade 2010).

Hooker (2005) also compares the collective politics of indigenous populations and Afro-Latino groups across Latin America and finds that in the past twenty years, large gains have been made in the attainment of collective rights for minority groups (particularly land rights). But they have disproportionately benefited indigenous peoples, who have been able to make group-based claims to obtain legal protections and rights that have not been extended to Afro-Latinos making similar claims. According to Hooker (2005), the discrepancy in their rates of success can be explained by the ability of indigenous groups to justify specific rights on the basis of their cultural distinction and ancestral connection with the land. Conversely, claims for collective rights based on racial discrimination, inequality, or historical injustice (typically proposed by Afro-Latino groups) have generally not been met with similar policy changes. This has led to an increasing emphasis on cultural distinction and the downplaying of racial inequality on the part of Afro-Latino groups as a social movement strategy (Hooker 2005; Paschel 2010).

Victoria Hattam (2007) also argues that in the United States, the focus on race began to shift to a focus on culture and ethnicity beginning in the mid-twentieth century after increases in immigration and a wave of minority rights movements began to flex the boundaries of the nation. Spearheaded by Jewish-American writers and activists fighting against their own racial exclusion, the creation of the recognition of "ethnic difference" in state policy allowed for the national inclusion of some groups on the basis of their perceived ability to culturally assimilate despite their foreign ethnic origins. This culminated in an explicit movement in which ethnicity was created as a category juxtaposed with that of the racial "Other,"—a category reserved for African Americans (Hattam 2007). Further, this movement was not based so much on supporting ethnic diversity as it was on tearing down racial barriers and opening the boundaries of citizenship for recent immigrant groups that had previously been racially marginalized alongside African Americans.

In this way, cultural attachments no longer needed to be left at the door of political membership so long as groups could assimilate across cultural boundaries, but racial

distinctions continued to mark an inability to assimilate, and racial identifications were viewed as problematic. Groups thus began to construct themselves as culturally (rather than racially) distinct to justify their inclusion in multiculturalism. The author writes that "immigrants were increasingly referred to as *foreigners* and *aliens* and, as such, began to be marked out as a distinct group requiring separate analysis from the races" (Hattam 2007, p. 40). This ideology did not eliminate the idea of race, but instead strengthened it, as "raced" individuals are placed outside of the national fabric and within a "state of exception" (Agamben 1998), while "ethnicized" groups are afforded the opportunity for national incorporation. Thus groups designated as racially distinct (Afro-descended populations in particular) are heavily problematized in society and considered by many as incapable of cultural or behavioral shifting, unlike Jewish, Asian, or other "model minorities." National boundaries were no longer just about the distinction between natives and immigrants, but about the distinction between racial "Others" and ethnic co-nationals.

As a result of such categorizations, theorists and policymakers in both the United States and abroad have problematically overlooked the experiences of Afro-descended populations as a raced group in the construction of multicultural policies. One of the most influential scholars on multiculturalism, Will Kymlicka (1996) argues that the resurgence of minority group movements for recognition, self-determination, or self-governance is a legitimate response to the continued pressure to assimilate within a dominant societal culture. But in an endnote, Kymlicka makes an exception for minority groups that he believes have been arbitrarily created through injustice; he places these groups outside of his typology of populations deserving of multicultural recognition. He explains their exclusion based on the idea that their specific cultures were falsely created in comparison to immigrant or indigenous groups, making these groups culturally indistinguishable from the dominant group. Kymlicka (1996) states that:

> Pre-existing societal cultures which have been incorporated into a larger state are the most common groups which see themselves as distinct 'nations,' and which have developed 'nationalist' movements. But in some cases, *an existing nation* has undergone such a deep division, perhaps along racial or religious lines, that it has developed into two or more groups, each of which comes to see itself as a distinct nation or people, even though they continue to share a common language. If racial and religious differences and discrimination within a given societal culture become so entrenched that a common life comes to be seen as impossible, a sense of separate nationhood may develop within a subgroup of the larger society. And, over time, this subgroup may develop its own distinct 'pervasive' or 'societal' cultures… While the excluded group may go on to develop its own pervasive culture in response, this separate culture *would not have developed were it not for the original injustice*. Therefore, nationalist movements based on religion or race are evidence of an injustice, a failure to live up to liberal principles (p. 217, emphasis added).

Kymlicka's characterization insufficiently describes these groups as a faction or segment of a national population that had not existed as a distinct entity prior to an injustice of racial exclusion, which he believes artificially created their group boundaries. These groups most notably include African Americans and other groups across the African Diaspora that were historically regarded by Western states in the modern era as unassimilable on the basis of race. Mauritian Creoles fall into this category, as the descendants of slaves whose ancestors were among the first to arrive to the island during its settlement. More specifically, multiculturalism's emphasis on "pre-existing" (or pre-modern) cultures leaves little room for raced individuals whose cultures were born after

the creation of the post-modern nation-state. Thus while Afro-descended populations actually *are* marked by unique cultural repertoires and historical experiences that distinguish them from other groups (stemming from their shared experience as the descendants of slaves), their cultures are also distinctly *native* to their hostlands, rather than diasporically connected to a foreign cultural space pre-dating the modern nation-state.

In addition, in countries such as Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, many Black and indigenous groups have "overlapping identities" that complicate racial/ethnic categorizations (for instance, indigenous groups are understood as both culturally and racially distinct). Therefore, understanding the consequences of both racial and ethnic distinction is necessary in the creation of more effective multicultural policies (Hooker 2009). This also leaves open how questions about indigeneity should be addressed in theories of multiculturalism premised on distinctions of cultural purity. The category of indigeneity itself is contested in the literature on racial and ethnic politics, and while it typically represents those that are viewed as the original inhabitants of a territory, centuries of human migration and cultural intermixture have muddled the idea of "purity" and origination inherent in this category. Indigeneity also has a strong connection to the advent of the nation-state, with most indigenous peoples being identified as pre-dating sovereign states because their political systems were unrecognized. In addition, the concept of indigeneity (and its juxtaposition with the category of immigrant or new arrival) leaves little room for cultures that both originate in a territory and are born anew in the modern period.

Although indigenous groups have been able to make greater collective gains through their status as "ethnic" rather than "racial" (Hooker 2005), several Afro-descended groups across Latin America have been characterized as simultaneously indigenous (being the descendants of marooned Africans) and racially distinct (Anderson 2007; Hooker 2009). The Garifuna people of Honduras—an Afro-descended group with roots dating back prior to the formation of the modern nation-state—are viewed as indigenous on cultural grounds, but also distinguished from indigenous Americans on the basis of race (Anderson 2007). They are therefore categorized as one of the "autochthonous groups" of Honduras, in addition to indigenous groups. Mark Anderson (2007) states that in general,

> 'autochthonous' refers to the idea of native, or to the condition of being the native inhabitants of a particular place… Once understood as 'autochthonous,' Garifunas could be represented in the same terms as indigenous people—as long-standing occupants of a territory, as bearers of non-Western languages and cultural 'traditions,' and as beneficiaries of the same set of collective rights as indigenous peoples" (p. 394).

Similar to the status given to the autochthonous, in Mauritius diasporic origin is also associated with cultural purity in ways that are not available to Afro-descended Creoles, who are both Black and born of a creolized biology, language, and culture as slave descendants.

Across many of the cases previously mentioned, Afro-descended, post-slavery populations have specifically endured obstacles to inclusion. Is this a continuation of racial hierarchy and anti-Blackness, barring Black bodies specifically within these settings? Or is there something distinct about Black culture that enables Black exclusion? In a context of postracial colorblindness, what is the nature of new, modern forms of "Othering" that are simultaneously racial and postracial?

Research on transnationalism and the politics of diaspora enriches this conversation by going beyond the analysis of domestic systems of national inclusion and bringing

into focus transnational processes. This literature highlights the transnational processes inherent in the production and maintenance of ethnic, racial, and national identities both locally and abroad through political engagement with diasporas (Anthias 1998; Ben-Rafael 2013; Gamlen 2008; Laguerre 2006). Because ethnic/racial politics have both transnational and national effects, exploring how the mechanisms of multicultural inclusion work from this frame highlights new ways of understanding the role of the contemporary "nation-state" in managing groups. As such, while the political system in Mauritius was designed at its outset as a "state-nation," there is a strong presence of diasporic ties to the "homelands" of India, China, and France that collectively influence the country's configuration of official multiculturalism.

While there is much research noting how diasporic communities maintain political and economic engagement with their countries of origin, host states also engage in the accommodation of diaspora groups seeking to maintain their ethnic boundaries. This is demonstrated by the works of Nasar Meer and colleagues (2015) and Riva Kastoryano (2002), who show that nation-states such as France, Germany, and Denmark (countries that have previously rejected multiculturalism) have adapted to the transnational flows of globalization by creating institutional spaces and taking on new adaptive forms of multicultural policies to accommodate (rather than work against) immigrants groups. This underscores the decreasing ability of states to remain relevant in the face of transnational forces of migratory labor.

From this perspective, I put forth that race and ethnicity (or culture) work dichotomously through the concepts of diaspora,[6] ancestry, and nativity in ways that may reveal why the inclusion of certain languages, peoples, and cultural elements have been deemed problematic within contexts of diversity and multiculturalism. Ethnicity thus has the ability of taking on different configurations in different contexts, enabling the tactical restructuring of group boundaries across ethnic, national, and transnational levels. How do diasporic politics influence "native," non-dominant groups who also engage in the politics of inclusion? In what ways are notions of *nativity* (standing in contrast to *diaspora*) utilized in processes of exclusion?

THE *KREOL* LANGUAGE IN MAURITIAN SOCIETY

An analysis of the politics of language helps to illustrate what role the concepts of diaspora and nativity play in the politics of multiculturalism. Because language represents ethnic boundaries quite durably, it acts both pragmatically and symbolically in erecting concrete social divisions between groups while having high stakes in the political arena. Languages that are recognized and officialized by the state are given sociocultural value that lend to the empowerment of its speakers, through access to democratic channels, language education funding, and other means of institutional support (Weinstein 1983).

Through the state-sanctioned institutionalization of languages, language policy defines the rightful inhabitants that make-up the national fabric by signifying which language speakers comprise the "nation," and through this, language policy aids in the construction of a coherent citizenry with a shared, singular national culture—usually that of the dominant group. But because language policy is allocated within a political system of scarce resources, these factors afford languages with power that also translate into the strengthening of some ethnic groups over others. This is particularly the case when an ethnic language also serves as the national language.

In Mauritius, a society in which the economy is heavily dependent on tourism and international trade, knowledge of English (and to some extent French) is important in

the most lucrative of workplaces, whether due to interaction with Western foreigners or the need to access bodies of knowledge from Western universities and other sources. Whether a language is officially sanctioned and promoted by the government is not just a question of whose identity is recognized, but of its ability to facilitate access to the state apparatus and other institutions of power. This in turn reinforces status hierarchies by creating congruence between social and symbolic boundaries.[7]

For instance, the current barring of the use of *Kreol* in Parliament and on official government correspondence is a cause for concern for those who have never mastered English. This is especially problematic given that less than 1 percent of Mauritians speak English in their households (Statistics Mauritius, 2012) and only 60 percent of Mauritians are able to read and write in any of the European languages (Statistics Mauritius, 2000). Linguistic boundaries in a political sense thus do a specific type of "work" that can—in addition to the work done by religion or phenotype—actively perpetuate social divisions and maintain the salience of ethnic identities, exclusions, and stigmas.[8] With linguistic difference, the boundaries of who-is and who-is-not can be more cogently solidified.

Policies that facilitate multilingualism strive to establish the equal, official recognition of multiple languages, support diverse language speakers through the multilingual publication and production of civic literature, and provide multilingual education in public schools, among other benefits. Mutual recognition, then, is a key aspect of multiculturalism in language policy that serves to provide disparate groups with state legitimacy and agency, designating which groups "belong," and by extension, which groups do not.

But throughout Mauritius' political history, language has been deployed intentionally in the facilitation of social hierarchies between groups (Eisenlohr 2001). Prior to independence, language policy constituted a static hierarchical arrangement between the roles of the languages in Mauritius based on each ethnic group's relationship to the colonial state. Within this pecking order, French and English were explicitly reinforced and expanded as the written and spoken languages of the colonizers, and as such, the two languages of prestige and power associated with business and law. They were also the only officially recognized languages to be used in government communications and the media. At the bottom of the hierarchy, the languages of subjugated Indian, Creole, and Chinese groups were suppressed and marginalized in the formal realm. The Asian languages were spoken in the households of the large Indo-Mauritian population, mainly among elders and new immigrants to the island, but were not commonly passed down within the Indo- and Sino-Mauritian communities.[9]

During independence, Hindu leaders focused on multiculturalism as the medium for a form of nation-building that would replace a past colonial history based on White supremacy and racism. Political leaders at the time eschewed the idea of a melting pot as a singular nationhood and instead embraced the idea of a cultural mosaic. This would help counteract the colonial domination of Francophone culture and maintain cooperation and peace between Hindus, Muslims, Tamils, and other Asian-descended groups. Above all, language policy was viewed as the most expedient way to assimilate groups into the multicultural fabric of the new "rainbow nation."

Thus, the institutionalization, preservation, and promotion of the island's Asian languages—which had been previously suppressed by the colonial regime—became paramount to the post-independence government. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a proliferation of over sixty speaking unions, cultural centers, and research institutions were created by the government as parastatal bodies whose central aim was to rebalance the colonial hierarchy and preserve and promote the various languages representing Hindus, Muslims, and Chinese. An even larger number of civil society organizations

(predominately religious temples) have been regularly funded by the government to facilitate language training.

But in contrast to the Asian languages, *Kreol* was not considered in language policy planning in the early post-independence period. *Kreol* has a strong ancestral connection with the Creole community as a product of the blending of the various languages of previously enslaved Africans (including Malagasy, Fon, Bambara, Dravidian, and Wolof) with French, the language of slave owners (Bissoonauth 1998). As a contact language, it quickly became the mother tongue of most native-born Mauritians over the course of a century. While French retained cultural domination on the island, defining what constituted high culture, *Kreol* was connected to French in a relationship of diglossia that gave it low value but also made it functionally important as the *lingua franca* between all unequally regarded groups and classes.

Kreol's exclusion was in part a product of the common conceptualization of the language as simply a vernacular, pidgin, or dialect that had been relegated to informal, household usage.[10] *Kreol* was also heavily associated with Creoles, who were (and continue to be) denigrated in society because of their ancestral roots to enslaved Black Africans. But just prior to independence, advocacy for the *Kreol* language began to develop slowly and incrementally over four decades across the work of two advocacy groups, beginning with Nationalist language advocates and then later being picked up by Creole ethnic activists. This advocacy was also split between two conceptualizations of the language: for the former group, *Kreol* was viewed as hosting a *métissage* of different cultural elements while for the latter group, it was viewed as having distinct roots in African culture.

Beginning in 1967, Dev Virahsawmy (a Nationalist politician in the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien* (MMM) party) published a series of articles in *Le Mauricien* arguing that *Kreol* was not only a language of strong cultural value, but also a trans-ethnic language and a specifically Mauritian cultural attribute which people across all ethnic groups shared.[11] He also conceptualized *Kreol* as a hybrid language incorporating various cultural elements that were symbolic of a unifying national culture. A variety of political actors then began to contribute to the informal standardization of the language, including Philip Baker's (1972) development of the first orthographical sketch of *Kreol* as a language (rather than a "pidgin") and René Noyau's (1971) first literary publication in *Kreol* entitled *Tention Caïman*, which was a collection of short stories expressed in the Creole narrative tradition (Hookoomsing 2004).

Ledikasyon Pu Travayer (LPT), an organization created in 1977, popularized the language as a literary medium by translating and publishing plays, poems, novels, and other literary works into *Kreol*, as well as showcasing texts in the language by local Mauritian authors (Hookoomsing 2004). Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, a multitude of artworks, songs, and other expressions showcased by literary and creative associations in civil society increasingly featured the use of *Kreol* in place of the commonly used French language. These literary and artistic works—most of which were not recognized by mainstream publishers or the government press at the time—incrementally developed a standard, albeit informal, orthography for which the language could later be standardized through official means. These actions also facilitated widespread changes in the public media where increasingly, advertisements, newspapers translations, and television programs began to be shown in *Kreol* (Bissoonauth 1998).

Language advocacy from within the Creole community took a slower pace. Many of the Nationalist advocates for the inclusion of *Kreol* were also Creoles themselves (most notably René Noyau), but most of those involved in early *Kreol* language advocacy were of Indo-Mauritian descent from various ethnic backgrounds. Those Creoles working within the Nationalist camp tended to advocate for the language on a class

basis rather than an identity basis, viewing its promotion as a pragmatic approach to socioeconomic advancement for poor Creoles. They mainly participated in interest-based organizations within and outside of the Catholic Church that called for broad-scale, class-based policies cutting across ethnic lines.

The lag in advocacy was also caused in part by a weak cultural identity of Creoles with the *Kreol* language and the negative associations of *Kreol* with both hybridity and Blackness that facilitated internalized feelings of shame within the community. At the time, Creoles generally viewed themselves first and foremost as Christians, rather than as having ancestral connections to Africa. As the Church was the sole aspect of organizational capacity within civil society for the Creole community, the domination of French in this associational space delayed any sociopolitical awareness towards *Kreol* language and culture among the Creole leadership.

CREOLE MOBILIZATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY

It was not until the mid-1980s that leaders within the Creole community would begin to advocate the *Kreol* language as a major policy issue on grounds distinct from those within the Nationalist camp, and this change corresponded with changes to Creole group identity that began to take root during this decade. Creole ethnic advocates then began to more heavily promote the language, and they did so by defining *Kreol* as a cultural artifact linked to its origins in narratives of slavery and Africanity. From here, the *Kreol* language became a key feature of a burgeoning Afro-Creole identity movement[12] because it was one of the few cultural artifacts from which to ground the community within an ancestral time and space. In this way, advocacy for the language became less about its interest-based value and more about its African roots. In addition, *Kreol*'s predominance in society lent greater cultural legitimation to the Creole ethnic identity.

However, the distinct divergence between the overall goals of Nationalists and Creole ethnic activists had less to do with Creole connections to the ethnic myths and legends of an ancestral past (which until this period lay dormant within the community) and more to do with their increasingly distinctive socioeconomic and political experience in Mauritius. Firstly, there was a marked class difference between many of the Nationalists, who were educated, predominately middle to upper class Indo-Mauritians and Coloured Creoles (with some Franco-Mauritians), and the average "*ti-Kreol*" that comprised a majority of the Creole community.[13] In this way, class and race converged, as those Creoles making up the lower rungs of society began to view their socioeconomic marginalization as a circumstance inextricably connected to their ethnic status. This class difference motivated a more protectionist view of the language among Creole ethnic activists.

Nevertheless, the competition for Nationalist and Creole ethnic advocates to lay claim to the language gave it a doubly negative association in the general public, who neither wanted to identify as African nor as culturally hybrid in embracing the language. For others in the general public—particularly Orientalists, a third subset of mainly Indo-Mauritian political actors that advocated for the primacy of the Asian "ancestral" languages—*Kreol* was distinctly linked to Blackness and Africanity, and thus viewed as inferior. In addition, many Indo-Mauritians also saw *Kreol's* societal dominance as part of a process of *creolization* that served to erase previously established cultural identities. This dual characterization labeled the language as a backwards "pidgin" limited in its applicability outside of informal spaces, especially in the highly regarded fields of education, philosophy, and the sciences.

Kreol language advocates were therefore largely forced to work within the margins of civil society, but *Kreol*'s standardization and institutionalization began to materialize relatively rapidly in the early 2000s, as several major gains were made. Many Creole civil society organizations were created throughout the rise of the Afro-Creole identity movement—including *Organisation Fraternelles* (OF), *Front Commun*, and *Mouvement Morisien Kreol Afrikin* (MMKA)—that made a large impact in nurturing a collective consciousness among Creoles through their activism in several policy areas. One of the most prominent organizations, the *Fédération Créole Mauricien* (FCM) had a major impact on the government's receptivity to Creole concerns after its creation in 2001. FCM was an umbrella organization of several Creole associations that banded together under the leadership of Father Jocelyn Gregoire, one of Mauritius' first Afro-Creole priests. As a charismatic leader, Father Gregoire gave powerful, expressly political sermons (in an oratory performative style similar to Black American Protestant preachers), and he was also a gospel singer who uniquely gave popularity to spiritual songs through the medium of *sega*—a widely popular genre of music and performative dance created by African and Malagasy slaves in pre-colonial Mauritius. Gospel *sega* music also provided a repertoire of discourses from which other Creole political activists could draw in their attempts to infiltrate and influence the policy process. Using *sega* and the burgeoning Creole leadership within the Catholic Church, FCM facilitated greater levels of community-building among Creoles by harnessing their high levels of religious engagement. The creation of the FCM was a springboard for the participation of Creoles in the policy process, and as a result, Creole ethnic leaders were able to wield considerable influence over public policy at the apex of the Afro-Creole movement.

The next major influence was the creation of the Prevokbek program in 2005—a *Kreol* literacy program set-up in select Catholic schools. The Prevokbek program was funded by the Roman Catholic Education Authority (RCEA), and allowed students who failed the CPE exam more than once to enter a "prevocational stream" in order to obtain alternate certification for advancement into some Catholic secondary schools. Designed by Dev Virahsawmy in conjunction with educators at the *Institute Cardinal Jean Margéot* (ICJM), *Kreol* was both taught as a subject and used as the medium of instruction for other subjects, including math, sciences, and French and English language courses. Still in operation today, the program provides an alternative route to secondary education for lower class children who would typically be unable to continue beyond the primary school level in Mauritius' highly competitive education system.

Two additional institutional milestones in *Kreol* language advocacy followed: the creation of the *Akademi Kreol Morisien* (AKM) and the Creole Speaking Union. As a result of continued conversations between Nationalist academics and the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), the Ministry of Education and Human Resources organized a national forum on the introduction of *Kreol* as an optional language in August 2010, and from this, the government created AKM in October 2010. AKM was set-up to spearhead the standardization of the *Kreol* language and aid in the design of the *Kreol* curriculum for its 2012 introduction in government schools (in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the MIE). One of AKM's first publications included the creation of a harmonized writing system for *Kreol*, the organization's "Grafi Larmoni." Shortly thereafter, the Creole Speaking Union was created with the purpose of promoting *Kreol* in wider society and encouraging and supporting its use through publications, conferences, workshops, scholarships, and other forms of exhibition.[14] These institutions were parastatal organizations created by the government in a negotiation process that concurrently gave way to the introduction of five additional speaking unions, including the Arabic, Bhojpuri, Sanskrit, and Chinese speaking unions.[15]

Finally, the increase in Creole mobilization led to the simultaneous entrance of prominent Afro-Creoles as parliamentary candidates that, together, pressured for the inclusion of Creole recognition on the national agenda during the 2010 elections. While Coloured Creoles had long gained entrance into politics, a greater number of Creoles identifying as "Afro-Creoles" were elected into Parliament after the elections, representing a growing segment of darker-skinned, middle class "Afro-Creoles" in politics. These "placements" included prominent mainstays of Creole activism such as Francoise Labelle of *Front Commun*, Edley Chimon and Filip Fanchette of the FCM, and Sylvio Michel of OF (who continued to serve as Minister of Fisheries). Creole politicians and government officials spanned across the three major political parties—the Mauritian Labour Party (MLP), Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM-MSM), and *Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate* (PMSD)—and although they were in opposing parties, they acted in relative unity when it came to the *Kreol* language issue. This is partly because the prior lack of attention to Creole interests in each party allowed some latitude for Creole politicians to influence new party platforms bolstered by the work of Creole activism in the public sphere.

THE DEBATES ON *KREOL*

The shift in the government's focus towards the *Kreol* language was the result of a tension between the activities of Creole ethnic advocates, Nationalist language advocates, and Orientalists seeking to maintain predominance within the state. How exactly the state would seek to recognize and incorporate *Kreol* constituted a delicate balance of these multiple interests.

Nationalist advocates mainly argued for *Kreol*'s officialization as an issue for practical consideration, promoting it as a direct remedy to an ineffective education system in which a large percentage of Mauritian students did not obtain education beyond primary schooling. Backed by the success of the Prevokbek program, they noted that the policy would be a solution to the problem of high drop-out and failure rates at the primary level. In support, the 2007 report of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Mauritius argued that using *Kreol* as the medium of instruction would prevent the problems of school failure at the primary and secondary levels by increasing the quality of education for students early on and effectively reducing the number of students placed within the prevocational stream. ZEP (*Zones Ecole Prioritaire*) [16] government schools providing remedial education in certain provinces had already been designated by the government in 1998 but had had little effect in outcomes for primary and secondary education rates (NHRC 2008).

Nationalists also focused the value of the language on its cross-cultural element as the island's lingua franca. From this perspective, advocacy groups such as LPT, Lalit, and *Rezistans ek Alternativ* organized around the recognition of *Kreol* as the national language in addition to pushing for *Kreol* as the medium of instruction in public schools and its use in the National Assembly. In October 2009, LPT organized a conference entitled "International Hearing on the Harm Done in Schools by the Suppression of the Mother Tongue," linking *Kreol*'s value to a more human-rights centered argument for social justice for the poor—in particular, the right to use one's mother tongue in the education system and as a pathway to democratic participation (*Ledikasyon pu Travayer* 2009).

Creole ethnic activists took a different approach to *Kreol*'s advocacy. As a language that had been devalued in Mauritius, many Creole activists believed that *Kreol* epitomized the status of the Creole community and how it sought to re-envision itself: it represented an excluded and denigrated cultural artifact whose true value lay in its

underlying power as both "natively Mauritian" and trans-ethnic, as well as through its linkage to African civilization. For these activists, the consistent denial and rejection of the language by the state and the wider public was further evidence of Creole exclusion.

According to Olivier Precieux, a schoolteacher and Creole ethnic advocate, *Kreol*'s lack of recognition had to do with the historical devaluation of Creoles as a group, and a hierarchical society in which individuals with a more "African" phenotype continued to be actively discriminated against. He points to the lack of famous Creoles mentioned in historical textbooks in public schools, such as Gaëtan Duval, and the over-emphasis on Indo- and Franco-Mauritian historical contributions to Mauritian society as examples (Lutchmanen 2010). The institutionalization of *Kreol* became increasingly important to Creole ethnic activists not only for the practical benefits its inclusion could produce for Creole students in the public school system, but for the benefits of ethnic identity and recognition that could further garner collective mobilization and engagement in other policy areas.

The Catholic Church also took a strong stance supporting the teaching of *Kreol* from this identity perspective. Bishop Maurice Piat (2010), in his annual Pastoral Letter, made the following statement that promoted *Kreol* not only as a medium of instruction for the early years of education, but as a crucial aspect of Creole identity, dignity and empowerment:

> [Creole as the language of instruction] is not to lock up children in their cultural universe or in the relatively small network of their native language. This is just beginning his formal education respecting the language learned in the lap of his parents, the value, and thus joining in its cultural context. Experience shows that a child who feels respected opens more easily later in the learning of other languages he needs to grow humanly… It is time to overcome the ingrained prejudices that exclude the Creole language of its rightful place at school. Although it is clear that this language is less old and less developed than the other languages that exist in Mauritius, she happens to be the mother tongue of 80% of our compatriots. As such, it deserves to be respected… As regards the introduction of Creole as an optional subject in the curriculum… All Mauritians, regardless of origin, now have the opportunity to study at school the language of his ancestors and the culture that goes with it. It just seems to me in line with respect for fundamental human rights, that the Creoles also have the opportunity to study the language that has been nurtured by their ancestors in the terrible circumstances of slavery. Knowing these cultural roots, appreciating the true value, is an essential condition for human development. The introduction of Creole and 'Creole Studies' in the school curriculum, would benefit not only to respect the right of our Creole brothers and sisters, but also to fill a void, and to restore some social balance in school and in Mauritian society.[17]

Parliamentary Debates, 2009–2011

The parliamentary debates on the creation of several speaking unions between 2009 and 2011 give a glimpse of the different ways that various forces have articulated the value and role of each language. In particular, the *Kreol* language was mainly evaluated in juxtaposition with the "ancestral languages." During these debates, arguments were made from the Nationalist, Orientalist, and Creole ethnic perspectives. With a Nationalist framing, Member of Parliament (MP) Sayed-Hossen makes the argument against the invoking of identity in the promotion of languages in general, and as a specific example, states that *Kreol* should not be closed to those only ethnically-described as

Creole, as he himself is not a Creole but speaks *Kreol* as his mother tongue. MP Sayed-Hossen states:

> Mr. President, what is presented as factors of linkage, such as bridges, such as the joints, these different Speaking Unions may also become factors of inter-community subdivision. We need to avoid the danger of conflating language/ethnic group, language/religion. I often used to say to some friends with whom I discuss about the Creole language, if the Creole identity is a factor, it is clear that I am not Creole. But the Creole language belongs to me as it belongs to all other Mauritians. So I use this example, Mr. President, to make my point, as they say, that the language must not become pluralistic in Mauritius, multiple and diversified, an identity factor. (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 10, 31 May 2011).

Creole politicians in support of *Kreol* include MP Francoise Labelle, MP Aurore Perraud, MP Mirielle Martin, and MP Georges Pierre Lesjongard, who were among the first wave of self-proclaimed "Afro-Creoles" elected into office following the Afro-Creole identity movement. Speaking in contrast to the perspective of Nationalist advocates in the parliamentary debates, MP Perraud directly connects *Kreol* with its slave origins:

> It is worth underlining that the Creole language is the language spoken and understood by almost all Mauritians, and it is a language that originated in suffering; the suffering of the slaves. Creole, the native language of the descendants of slaves, today is the mother tongue of the majority of Mauritians… Creole language is an ancestral language as it is the first language spoken by children born during the slavery period. This is why Creole is an ancestral language for slave descendants and is linked to the cultural identity of slave descendants. (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 8, 17 May 2011).

In a similar fashion that underscores the cultural value of the linguistic descendants of a community, Perraud further argues that *Kreol*'s value is determined not just by its national ubiquitousness, but its connection to Creole culture. This culture includes *sega*[18] and *Ti Frere* (dubbed the father of modern *sega*), and *sega*'s role in the expression of Creole suffering:

> Mr. Speaker, Sir, culture is transmitted through language, material objects, ritual, institutions and art, music, and drama. We must herein commend the great contribution of the Mauritian artists in the fight for the recognition and appreciation of the Creole language in Mauritius. Starting with the griot Alphonse Ravaton, Ti Frère, who through the *séga* he composed gave Creole its acclaim. We are also reminded of the music of Fanfan with "*Ile Maurice ki joli joli*" among others, and all other *ségatiers* that followed, as well as playwrights, writers, poets who were the defenders of the Creole language. Mr. President, the Creole language is a language that is born in suffering and has suffered a lot to fight its way and grow in the Mauritian linguistic landscape… De facto, the users of the Creole language were stigmatized, and for a long time had the feeling of being inferior, to be worse than others, have a sense of unease, of being bad. (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 8, 17 May 2011).

MP Perraud characterizes *Kreol* as a medium through which the distinct experiences of Creoles can be shared and expressed, a medium popularized by the work of

Afro-Creole artists. Perraud also notes that the language was historically denigrated in wider society because of its connection to the Afro-Creole—and Blackness, specifically. She additionally states:

> This is a big step for the promotion of Creole and the valuing of Creole culture. The time is no longer that of "*malaise creole*," but the appropriation and valuing of Creole identity and culture. Artists choose the names of their groups to show their pride and demand their Creole identity and culture… The outfits, hairstyles symbolizing the Creole culture are worn with pride and great ease. With the Creole-Speaking Union Bill, Creole has a promising future. (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 8, 17 May 2011).

Here, the MP links the creation of the Creole Speaking Union with the ending of the Afro-Creole identity movement. Regarding the proposal of the Creole Speaking Union Bill, she states that the language, and thus its people, are finally recognized, valued, and respected.

MP Francoise Labelle additionally responds with a counter-argument to those of Nationalist politicians, comparing the UNESCO speech on the importance of languages with the colonial government's statements on the necessity to promote the *Kreol* language specifically for the African community. In doing so, the parliamentary member builds a case for the inclusion of *Kreol* as an ancestral language that promotes ethnic identity—an identity that she argues is necessary for an individual's self-development. MP Labelle states:

> Mr. Speaker, Sir, promoting a language is promoting the identity of the individual, and promoting the identity of the individual is promoting the individual himself. Mr. Speaker, Sir, all the five languages that we are talking about today are well present in our society, true it is, at different degrees. If the Chinese language happens to be the ancestral language of some of our citizens, we all know the growing importance of Mandarin with the growing economy of China. We also all know how better the relationship can be established when you address someone in his or her own language, the language of an individual being such an integral part of that individual. (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 10, 31 May 2011).

Labelle also points out that the identity-dimension of the languages are important for the empowerment of individuals within their respective communities, notwithstanding their more practical economic and global value. The MP also argues that *Kreol* can be accepted as both the de facto national language and the ancestral language of Creoles, and that it can both "belong to me and belong to all Mauritians."

Responses from the perspective of the Orientalists continued to bolster a multicultural framework for language inclusion, and in doing so, these actors argued in chorus for the creation of the Arabic, Bhojpuri, Sanskrit, and Chinese speaking unions because of their ability to pass down and maintain cultural boundaries. MP Peetumber explains that languages represent identity by facilitating the dissemination of the past and providing direction for the future. Through language, culture can be produced and practiced, and likewise, identities can be valued. He explains:

> Why should we give a boost to our linguistic heritage? Well, languages are vehicles of communication and socialisation par excellence which enable us to acquaint ourselves with the norms of a society, its customs and traditions, its religious, social, and cultural values. They are also a *sine qua non* condition for the acquisition

of knowledge and science. Through language, we can express our joy, thrill, and excitement; our frustration, apprehension, miseries, and sufferings. We can also give vent to our feelings and emotions through songs, poetry, ballads, and groom our children through storytelling and plays... In a nutshell, languages are essential to the identity of groups and individuals and any measure to suppress people's languages will be tantamount to suppressing the identity of the people, whose reactions might well lead to unrest and instability in the country… When languages disappear, the identities of the communities which use them tend to dissolve. With the death of a language, a whole way of thinking, living, and acting dies too. Each takes with it a storehouse of consciousness. (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 8, 17 May 2011).

MP Sayed-Hossen further argues that languages are not just simply a tool for communication, but are "vehicles or vectors for culture," and that they structure how people think, as well as their beliefs, values, and expectations (Mauritius National Assembly, Creole Speaking Union Bill, Second Reading, 31 May 2011). The parliamentary member also personifies languages by stating that they represent differences between human speakers in the following passage: "When we study a language we are uncovering in part what makes us human, getting a peek at the very deepest nature of human nature. As we uncover how languages and their speakers differ from one another, we discover that our human natures too can differ dramatically, depending on the languages that we speak and the cultural background wherefrom we draw our philosophical references." (Mauritius National Assembly, Creole Speaking Union Bill, Second Reading, 31 May 2011).

In the parliamentary debates, MPs from the Orientalist perspective continued to refute the *Kreol* language as an ethnic or cultural expression of the Creole community alone, unlike other languages in Mauritius. These politicians adopted Nationalist arguments regarding *Kreol*, viewing it as a language for all Mauritians, long due its recognition as a unifier across ethnic groups. For instance, MP R. Uteem stated:

> Today, through the Creole-Speaking Union Bill, we are recognising Creole as a language *à part entière* in its own right, a language which is spoken by every Mauritian irrespective of its [*sic*] race, colour, creed, or social background. Creole is a language of our *sega*, a language which needs to be promoted *et valoriser*…

And further…

> The Creole language has progressed in strides recently. Regarded as an inferior medium of communication during the pre-independence era, the Creole language has now taken firm roots in every Mauritian and is the primary source of identification for the average Mauritian as it cuts across all cultures and ethnic components. Creole has taken a national dimension and is now a language recognised in its own right. This Bill in many ways formalises its wide use by Mauritians of all walks of life and today students will have the opportunity to learn, write, and speak Creole without any inhibitions or complex, with the right to submit an application for a job." (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 8, 17 May 2011).

From this perspective, Creole is described as the language of all Mauritians, and *sega* is claimed to belong to all Mauritians rather than recognized as a unique artifact of Creole culture. Here again, the boundaries of Creole culture stand in tension with the boundaries of the nation, and Creole heritage is either backgrounded or erased.

Orientalists also linked *Kreol* internationally with the "creole" languages spoken in other island nations, instead of characterizing it as a distinctly Mauritian language. *Kreol*'s linkage to the history of slave resistance and marronnage was more squarely placed within the context of nations across the African diaspora in Seychelles, Reunion, or the Caribbean islands, in addition to Mauritius, rather than as a distinct feature of Mauritius—or Mauritian Creoles—itself. Minister of Arts and Education M. Choonee described *Kreol*'s relevance in this way:

> Creole is the mother-tongue of the majority of Mauritians. It is the language we use every day and everywhere in this country. We use it to converse, to teach, to joke, and to share our beliefs! It is the language par excellence to bind the nation. Creole is not restricted to Mauritius, it is the vernacular that is used in many countries—Reunion, Seychelles, Tahiti, Nouvelle Calédonie, etc. This is the language of those who rebelled against inhuman treatment. They expressed their feelings and emotions in this language. Today, by rehabilitating the Creole language, we are also paying homage to those who contributed to making our Nation… (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 7, 10 May 2011).

In this passage, *Kreol* is conceptualized as a language of trans-ethnic and transnational unity and a language of resistance common to other island nations marred by the history of colonialism. In this way, it is divorced from a specifically Mauritian Creole community and viewed as a medium of cultural contact across diverse island nations. Many Creole activists have viewed such descriptions of *Kreol* as a consistent form of dis-recognition of their ethnic community, signifying much of the disillusionment they feel with their lack of recognition in the Constitution.

In stark contrast, the Asian languages under debate—Arabic, Mandarin, Bhojpuri, and Sanskrit—are consistently described as being brought over from abroad by their respective ethnic groups and, more specifically, living through their descendants diasporically rather than being frozen in the past within their countries of origin. The following passage from MP Uteem demonstrates this:

> Besides its religious importance, Arabic has also been the language through which major breakthroughs were recorded. During the middle ages, it was the Arabs who contributed mostly to the advancement of such fields as astronomy, science, medicine, philosophy, mathematics, and literature. For example, Al-Idrisi who is considered the greatest geographer and cartographer of the Middle Ages, constructed a globe of the world map of 400 kg of pure silver and it is this map that has been used for centuries by Europeans. It was even used by Christopher Columbus when travelling abroad. Mr. Speaker, Sir, all these works were written and recorded in Arabic language and with the knowledge of Arabic, we can better understand the basic principles that were used to make ground-breaking discoveries some 1,200 years ago. Along with the Indian immigrants came the Chinese with their work ethic, religion, culture, and language. (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 8, 17 May 2011).

Arabic and Chinese are frequently connected with their histories in their countries of origin; French and English with their currency in a "global marketplace" but also their roots in Europe. Such linguistic interpretations are not afforded to *Kreol* through its connection with Creoles or Africa, however. *Kreol* was described above as a language of "emotion" necessary for passionate expression, while in contrast, Minister Choonee describes Arabic and Sanskrit as languages of science and reason,

and attaches value to Chinese languages (encompassing Mandarin, Hakka, and Cantonese) through their connection to China as an economic "powerhouse" important for its trade relations with Mauritius. (For example, Minister Choonee later asks, "how do we trade with China without knowing its languages?" (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 7, 10 May 2011)).

The Chinese, Indian, and Arabic languages are generally linked to "economic diplomacy" in this way as a means to welcome business and trade from the major foreign countries in which these languages originate. Similar arguments are made for English as the new global language. In fact, one of the impediments expressed by Minister Bunwaree during the debates was the possibility of the teaching of *Kreol* coming into competition with the learning of English (English fluency had continued to falter among the majority of pupils). These economic arguments attempt to rationalize the languages in an instrumental fashion beyond their ancestral value.

Comparisons between *Kreol* and Bhojpuri (an Indian "ancestral language" derived from Hindi) took a similar tone during the debates. While Bhojpuri was also spoken of in a way that underscored its trans-ethnic use across the Mauritian population, it was still consistently linked to its Indian ancestry, and its trans-ethnic, national use was characterized as a testimony to its value originating in the Indian subcontinent, rather than a signal of its de-ethnicization. For instance, Minister of Arts and Culture M. Choonee stated:

> Bhojpuri is widely spoken by our population. It is not restricted to people of Indian origin. In the villages, it is not uncommon to find the Chinese shopkeeper using the language fluently. This language is shared by almost all the people of Mauritius. As all dynamic and active languages, Bhojpuri has evolved and enriched itself with inputs from other sources. A typical Bhojpuri sentence will nearly always contain a word from Creole, French, English, Hindi, etc. It seems that Bhojpuri is one of the most widely spoken languages outside India after Hindi. This is the language spoken by people from the Indian diaspora who settled in Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji, Surinam, and other countries during the indenture period. This language was carried to other shores in Europe and America when children of the diaspora emigrated there. (Mauritius National Assembly, Debate No. 7, 10 May 2011).

Kreol and Bhojpuri are both characterized as national languages, but for different reasons. In some ways, Bhojpuri is spoken of as an ancestral language, but also made to appear on equal footing with *Kreol* as a national and transnational unifying language, although the number of Mauritians speaking Bhojpuri is similar to those of the other ancestral languages: a considerably lower percentage than *Kreol* that has been steadily decreasing in recent decades.

THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE IN *KREOL*'S NEGOTIATION

In the parliamentary debates on *Kreol*, language was viewed as representative of culture and seen as a competitive resource for each community. While the ancestral languages were linked to religion, diaspora, and culture, the *Kreol* language was de-ethnicized and spoken of as a national language and also an international language characteristic to island peoples. Overall, many in the general public began to support the Nationalist argument for *Kreol*'s institutionalization, both in the form of the creation of the Creole Speaking Union and as a subject for study in public schools. But *Kreol*'s "identity dimension"—promoted by Creole ethnic activists—placed it in a precarious position in public debate.

In many ways the Creole ethnic perspective had all along combined both identity and practical motives for socioeconomic empowerment, which cannot easily be separated. A Creole activist working in *Kreol* pedagogy with the *Bureau d'Education Catholique* (BEC) describes how these competing forces ultimately divorced *Kreol* from its "identity dimension:"

> I was against *Kreol* being introduced in 2012. I said that we should look at the recruitment policy. But then the Minister said 'no, let us take all teachers who volunteer to teach Creole. Let us launch the subject.…' I was convinced that this was not a good decision; that sooner or later we would get trapped in that. I think today that I am right. I was right when I said that *Kreol* should not be introduced in such a hurry, not looking at important issues like who they were going to recruit. What type of training, what will you put in that training. So the Creole dimension has been diluted. If you look at the content of the training that is being delivered at MIE, you will see there… Most of the trainers delivering courses there, it's a Hindu establishment. And now if you do have some Creoles, these Creoles have to downplay their Creole identity in such institutions… But we have to be positive; it has been a real victory for the Creole community, that *Kreol* has been introduced in schools (Anonymous 2013).

For this activist, *Kreol*'s inclusion was important not only because of the recognition it would lend to the Creole community in multicultural policy, but because it could have stimulated the recruitment of a greater number of Creole teachers in government schools. Yet most teachers of *Kreol* in government schools are of Asian descent, a continuation of their common overrepresentation in the civil service.

In the end, however, *Kreol*'s nationalization created a favorable situation for its institutionalization, as the idea of *Kreol*'s inclusion in multiculturalism became increasingly tenable to government officials. This is because the language could serve as a counter to Creole demands for recognition as an ethnic body, provided that it was introduced as a trans-ethnic, nationalistic language. This discursive negotiation has now set the pace for *Kreol* to be viewed as complimentary to a specifically multicultural framework that recognizes diasporic cultural boundaries linked to countries beyond Mauritius, but also prevents this same increase in cultural power to be tied directly to the Creole community.

Anu Bissoonauth (1998) argues that the failure of *Kreol* to become normalized and institutionalized formally in society can be explained by its past lack of "intellectualization," as well as its lack of "rootedness." In this case, because the language was prevented from being developed through formal academic study, it could not begin to become a literary language until the 1990s, which exacerbated its view as inferior in academic and formal settings in the eyes of most Mauritians. In addition, in a multicultural framework in which state-sanctioned languages are assigned value based on their ancestral and diasporic lineages, *Kreol*'s combined lack of association to a specific and exclusive community and its origination among previously-enslaved Africans fed perceptions that it did not hold any valuable cultural attributes or a culturally-informed value system, which is thought to imbibe a language with value by connecting its use with the knowledge and aspirations of its "people." For this reason, both French and the Asian languages are viewed as worthy of state promotion and preservation although they did not display a functional value in society—instead, the "identity" value they provided was made prominent in politics. In this way, the Nationalists who helped to intellectualize the language and the Creole ethnic activists who sought to culturally "root" the language in both a diasporic "African" and a native, national "Mauritian"

culture both contributed to its eventual institutionalization by combining several of its strengths in promoting the language.

Through their advocacy in language policy, Creole ethnic activists worked in concert towards the goal of Creole recognition and ethnic inclusion, whether at the grassroots and within the public sphere, by raising questions and debates in Parliament, or within governmental ministries and parastatal bodies. They were able to publically frame the language issue as an ethnic issue over a national one in a way that utilized the multicultural framework, underscoring the government's hypocrisy in espousing the virtues of cultural preservation while denying the recognition of Creole culture as a segment of the country's multicultural fabric. Creoles did not demand the acceptance of their mixed race origins, their Mauritian nativity, or the trans-ethnic cultural commonality between all Mauritians, but instead, advocated for the recognition of their own exclusive boundaries linked to an African diasporic heritage from the slave experience. Framing the issue in this way made government officials more attentive to considering *Kreol*'s institutionalization by further bolstering multiculturalism and complementing the efforts of Orientalists in their projects of Asian cultural preservation. The appointment of prominent Creoles within these institutions (including Arnaud Carpooran and Daniella Police-Michel, although Nationalists such as Dev Virahsawmy and Vinesh Hookoomsing were also selected) was a strategic move on the part of the MLP government to signal to the Creole community an attempt at addressing the issue of Creole recognition and representation.

However, the entrance of Creole ethnic activists into party politics gave their lobbying efforts greater visibility in the public sphere and stimulated a considerable amount of backlash and competition from Hindu lobbies. As a result, *Kreol*'s institutionalization endured much pushback with increased levels of bargaining from other lobbying groups who viewed the recognition of Creoles and the incorporation of their political interests as a threat to their own influence within a zero-sum political system. Hindu activists in particular advocated for balancing Creole social, political, and historical recognition with increased recognition of Hindu history and culture. For each of the policies fought for by Creoles during this period, Hindu lobbies wielded considerable force in influencing their outcomes to include concessions to Hindu interests.

While Creole ethnic advocates promoted the historical and cultural roots of the language to the wider public, Nationalists worked to standardize the language and develop a pedagogy that would bridge *Kreol* with English and French. They also attempted to frame the language in a way that highlighted the benefits for all Mauritian children if *Kreol* became the medium of instruction in government schools. Nonetheless, this type of advocacy was viewed as incompatible with the state goal of multiculturalism, as well as the interests of Orientalists promoting the primacy of Indian culture in the national narrative. As a result, *Kreol*'s final introduction in government schools as a trans-ethnic, optional language took on both identity-based and interest-based elements that satisfied neither side of *Kreol* advocacy completely.

Thus, while the government was initially responsive, the government's decision on how to proceed with the policy was unclear. In the 2010-2015 Government Programme, President N. Ramgoolam announced the government's intention to introduce both *Kreol* and Bhojpuri as optional languages in government schools to encourage the use of mother tongues in facilitating instruction. The government's program did not, however, give support for the languages in recognition of the cultural or ethnic identity of language speakers and their descendants. In 2012, *Kreol* language courses were introduced in public schools, but as an optional language rather than an instructional medium, to the dismay of many Nationalist advocates.

Yet its lack of a culture-based curriculum—the curriculum focused instead on the written syntax of the language—also disconnected the language from the Creole community.

Creole and Nationalist advocates had pushed for *Kreol* to be instituted as a medium of instruction, and plans were made for the government to support the language in this capacity at the lower levels of schooling, but this initiative was abandoned at the proposal stage. It was also severely weakened in its implementation by the influence of Orientalist lobbyists. While *Kreol* became recognized de facto as a national language, it was not officially integrated and supported beyond the creation of the Creole Speaking Union and AKM—both institutions that remain underfunded with limited institutional power in comparison to the many parastatal institutions devoted to Asian cultural preservation and promotion.

Furthermore, the language of the Creole-Speaking Union Act disconnects *Kreol* from the Creole ethnic community in Mauritius and instead connects it to "Creole-speaking peoples," both nationally and internationally. The Act states that the Union's central goals are to "promote the Creole language in its spoken and written forms; [and] promote friendship and understanding between the Creole-speaking peoples of the world and to engage in any educational, academic, cultural, and artistic work to further that objective."[19] This de-ethnicizes the language and also opens up its value globally and transnationally. The creation of the Creole Speaking Union had also spurred the negotiation for several additional speaking unions seeking to balance its inclusion in the multicultural framework, including a bolstering of Bhojpuri to a similar transnational status as that of *Kreol*. These concessions were well-known by some members of the Creole Speaking Union and AKM, who viewed both organizations as ultimately empty vessels and symbolic gestures rather than substantive moves towards *Kreol*'s institutionalization. For Creole ethnic activists, this outcome came as both a bane and a boon to the struggle for recognition; it would be seen as a failure at worst and a small step in a positive direction at best, depending on the government's treatment of *Kreol* in the future.

DIASPORA AND NATIVITY, ETHNICITY AND RACE

The complicated historical status of both the Creole ethnic group and the *Kreol* language—which involves a tension between hybridity and Blackness, and origins that are simultaneously trans-ethnic and African—sets the backdrop in which the politics of multicultural inclusion take shape. For Creoles, their Blackness and their hybridity are characterizations that mark the group's "cultural and biological impurity," which is the main source of their categorical exclusion in a multicultural society (Boswell 2005). The *Kreol* language is widely regarded as a language of low social status for similar reasons. The same ambiguous identity of Creoles characterizes the *Kreol* language as a degenerated "hodge podge" of French and African languages, rather than a language itself. Throughout the colonial period and up until today, *Kreol* has been viewed as a language that does not fit into the government's multicultural framework because it has no diasporic connection to external cultures or civilizations of perceived value (unlike Hindi, English, Arabic, Mandarin, or French).

This connection between *Kreol* and the Creole community also highlights the ways that cultural links are used in Mauritius to raise or lower the value of groups. *Kreol* has been used to lower the status of Creoles by reinforcing their hybrid, rootless nature through their association to the language, even though *Kreol* has been equally important in the everyday lives of all Mauritians. Likewise, *Kreol* has been lowered in its status because of its association with Creoles as the descendants of Black Africans

who some believe lack the culture and refinement of other groups. As Jocelyn Chan Low (2004) explains, the experience of *métissage* was an integral part of Creole culture as the interaction between the culture of slaves and the culture of their masters, yet this same experience also represents the cultural heritage of all Mauritians (including Hindus and Franco-Mauritians), who are, in fact, generally part of an historical experience that was largely culturally and racially "hybrid."[20]

Four explanations might further unpack the exclusion of Creoles as a people and a culture in Mauritian multiculturalism. First, multiculturalism's emphasis on diasporic or foreign cultures exists as complimentary within polities that still provide a concurrent space of supremacy for Euro-descended groups whose cultures dominate within society, but fade into the backdrop as a "natural" part of the political landscape. Within these liberal democracies, openness and inclusion forms the basis of a political culture based on individualism, equality of opportunity, universalism, and by extension, colorblindness. Yet these principles also reinforce notions that citizens must be the same to be equal (Young 1989), with the dominant culture as the barometer for all other groups. In Mauritius, multiculturalism seeks to mediate inclusion within this framework, but only in a way that requires multicultural citizens to participate as part of a cultural mosaic that does not challenge the native, dominant culture. This is done through the continuous maintenance and re-articulation of diaspora and "the immigrant story" in order to allow for their inclusion, even for groups that are generations removed from their original countries of origin (as is the case for Indo-Mauritians, whose arrival to Mauritius dates back to the 1840s). In contrast, Creoles, as a post-slavery population, have been characterized as being born of a culture native to Mauritius that makes a distinct claim to nationhood. As such, their status competes with both the historical justifications of colonial White supremacy and the articulations of diaspora asserted by the postcolonial non-White citizenry.

Secondly, *Kreol*'s linkage to Africa and Blackness places it in a precarious position in contexts where both postracialism and anti-Blackness exist within societal culture, marking a shift from traditional, overt racism to a more subtle, covert racism that operates through cultural hierarchies.[21] While the vestiges of White supremacy and anti-Blackness live on through institutional forms of racism that continue to segregate and structure the daily lives of non-dominant groups, post-racialism and color-blind racism allows such racial injustices to continue without the ability to name them or counteract them on the basis of race (Bonilla-Silva 2003; DaCosta 2016). These ideological frameworks work together with multiculturalism to provide a conceptual toolkit from which non-Creole political actors have been able to justify the refusal of race-targeted, remedial policies in spite of the existence of anti-Black racism and racial inequalities. The Mauritian government's strong emphasis on colorblindness in particular, while actively promoting cultural difference, privileges cultural distinction over racial distinction. Yet its neoliberal policies promote the continuation of racial stratification in politics, the economy, and society while actively resisting redistributive calls for racial justice.

Expressions of diasporic lineage, on the other hand, work within these frameworks by defining racial descent as the national "Other" lacking in the cultural purity and value that is attributed to diasporas. At the same time, diasporic citizens have consistently denied Creole culture and defined the group as having an exclusively and exceptionally racial lineage. Although Creoles also belong to a diaspora, the African Diaspora is constituted by a distinct racial boundary (rather than an ethnic, national, or cultural boundary) in which "Black" populations who inhabit countries outside of Africa several generations into the future are perpetually identified as "Afro-descended" (Falola 2013). The inability for Blacks to fully assimilate in varying national contexts

(even after centuries of generational reproduction) marks the presence of a transnational, permanent racial marker of difference that is geospatially bound to the African continent and that transcends ethnic, linguistic, national, and territorial boundaries.[22] In particular, Afro-descended groups are viewed as distinctly non-cultural, or what culture they do have is viewed as backwards and inferior, whether or not their "race" is officially recognized, despite the prominent contributions they have made in science, political philosophy, music and the arts. In this way, Creoles and Creole culture have been placed in a position in society where they have been denied cultural or ethnic distinction and are thus culturally invisible, but have also been heavily racialized by their Blackness, making them still highly visible and vulnerable to racial discrimination in society.

Thirdly, for Hindus and other Asian-descended groups in Mauritius, their historical status as perpetual "foreigners" has cultivated a sensitivity to discourses seeking to promote assimilation or hybridity (an inherent aspect of Creole culture) over the maintenance of their own ethnic boundaries. In particular, Indo-Mauritian elites have sought to heavily demarcate and refine their ethno-racial boundaries since the Indian Nationalist movements of the early 1900s, giving strength to an Indo-Mauritian identity defined by cultural "purity" against both the White supremacy of Francophone culture and the *Kreol* language and Creole culture as a culturally impure force.

In a postcolonial context where, after independence, multiple ethnic groups have had to negotiate the ways and means of their national inclusion, a focus on diasporic boundaries also helped to facilitate nation-building and ethnic power sharing in the polity without the tensions of nationalistic claims to the state. The modern birth of Afro-descended cultures, however—embedded in the racial projects of modern state formation—has provided an obstacle for multiculturalism as a nation-building project focused on diasporas.

Finally, ethnic politics in other societies with post-slavery, Afro-descended populations illustrate similar cases in which the development of multiculturalism has signaled a tension between diaspora and nativity in politics. However, their distinct histories and political environments point to different relationships with the state and the nation, leading to different configurations of multiculturalism and its outcomes.

In Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, political life is split between two relatively equal majorities that view politics through a prism of ethnic competition. Similar to Indo-descended peoples elsewhere, Indo-Trinidadians continue to identify with India and Indian culture abroad, and they seek to preserve these connections through a government policy of multiculturalism that maintains diplomatic and economic connections with India. But for much of the country's postcolonial history, the dominant culture has been centered around the culture of Afro-Trinidadians, who have also dominated politics (Rampersad 2014). The Afro-descended population has instead had an historical identity with Trinidad as a cultural birthplace, and they therefore emphasize cultural rootedness and nativity within the territory itself, an "assimilationist" model of national culture characterized by the island's "hybrid" Caribbean culture.

Structuring politics is a situation in which Afro-Trinidadians have been able to make cultural claims to the island as being integral to its native culture, and as such, their boundaries exist as a force that Indo-Trinidadian political actors believe they must fight against. According to Aisha Khan (2004), discourses such as *creolité*, racial democracy, the "callaloo nation," *mestizaje*, and others emphasizing racial mixture and hybridity as a national ideal exist in contrast with discourses of multiculturalism, diaspora, and ethnic purity across the Caribbean and Latin America.

Conversely, in Honduras, the Garifuna peoples—the descendants of marooned African slaves—have in recent years managed to receive state recognition and other sociopolitical benefits by casting themselves as "indigenous," emphasizing their cultural distinction over their racial distinction (Anderson 2007). Their embracement of indigeneity came at

a time when indigenous groups have been able to secure state benefits through multicultural policies, which in recent decades have generally been designed to address the cultural differences and desire for sovereignty and land rights expressed by indigenous Americans but has been insensitive to calls for racial justice or the dismantling of structural racism expressed by Afro-descended peoples. But unlike Mauritian Creoles or Afro-Trinidadians, the Garifuna people have been able to make a distinct claim to nativity based on a racial and ethnic purity that entitles them to sovereignty and land rights, but also limits their claims to remedial state benefits as racial minorities (Anderson 2007).

Though all three groups are vulnerable to the effects of structural racism, colorblind racism and postracialism, in the case of the Garifuna, it is the perceived *cultural purity* of their nativity that gives them a distinct advantage in a context of multiculturalism, while in Mauritius and Trinidad, the nativity of Afro-descended groups is marked by a *creolizing force* that is viewed as a threat to the postcolonial nation. Thus embedded among competing claims of nativity and diaspora in politics is a simultaneous tension between purity and *métissage* that is further used to legitimize arguments for or against a group's incorporation in multiculturalism.

Creoles are viewed as cultureless in a way that denies both their diasporic, ancestral connection to African culture and the development of their own native "Mauritian" culture. But this interpretation of history eludes the fact that Creoles have still possessed a distinct culture, a "Creole way of life," developing native to the island and distinct from their racial origins, based on their centuries-long experience of exclusion and marginalization. Such conceptualizations of the group form the basis of a type of erasure and denial of their culture that has translated into the disempowerment of Creoles, not only by denying their assured representation and support in the democratic system, but also by limiting their ability to mobilize and organize collectively within civil society. This lack of organization and mobilization has also meant that, in the past, Creoles have been unable to strengthen, demarcate, or connect their group boundary with the *Kreol* language, or imbibe the language with cultural meaning in the same way that Hindi, Arabic, or French has been used as a source of cultural power for their corresponding groups. Although *Kreol* has been conceptually linked with Creoles, it has generally remained a relatively loose linkage frozen in the historical past.

But because Mauritius' political system privileges diasporic attachments in the distribution of economic and political resources, Creoles are now clinging to a more Africa-centered identity in order to reap the benefits of ethnic-based collective action, juggling both native and foreign understandings of the *Kreol* language in negotiating their inclusion into multiculturalism. In the past three decades, the marginalization of Creoles in official multiculturalism has stimulated a high amount of political mobilization around the *Kreol* language as a cultural artifact that provides the group with a diasporic link to Africa while also generating a belief in greater ethnic and racial purity of the group. This has created a deeper sense of cultural and racial identity among Creoles. Yet this has also increased the visibility of *Kreol* and the Creole community as a native Mauritian culture that may threaten the legitimacy of a postcolonial nation uniquely defined by diasporic belonging.

CONCLUSION

This article analyzes the politics of language policy to examine why some groups have experienced the benefits of multiculturalism in liberal democracies while others have not. In Mauritius, cultural groups whose ancestors immigrated to the island more than a century ago have maintained their diasporic boundaries by actively engaging in

the construction of multiculturalism. However, Creoles as a racially-designated group have been less accommodated by the state because their racial distinction also denotes a cultural impurity and hybridity that stands in contrast to multicultural policies that privilege diasporic cultural purity. In sum, the divergent ways in which racialized and ethnicized groups relate to the state represent tensions between nativity, diaspora, purity, and *métissage* that have made Mauritian Creoles specifically problematic to the postcolonial goal of national inclusion.

In Mauritius' plural society, multiculturalism seeks to provide a space for non-White, non-dominant groups within the polity. Claims for inclusion in multicultural-ism have been made through a negotiative process among political actors seeking to influence the national narrative, and they do so in a way that enables their respective groups to not only "belong," but to creatively lay claims to the postcolonial "nation." In a fashion similar to the ethno-nationalist exclusions of the older, modern "nation-state," contemporary liberal democracies such as Mauritius set the parameters of belonging and inclusion as a specified *multiculture* (in place of a *monoculture*). "Belonging," however, has been limited to those groups recognized as diasporically linked abroad (Hindus, Muslims, and Chinese) with little space for native-grown population groups (Creoles, as the descendants of slaves). Language policy discourse in recent years has ultimately pro-duced an ethno-racial divide between Creoles and non-Creoles based on Creole cultural nativity in contrast to the diasporic cultures shared by other groups.

Throughout the language policy development process, the *Kreol* language was utilized in several ways as a point of negotiation within this multicultural framework: for the ethnic incorporation of the Creole community, the Nationalist eradication of ethnic boundaries, and ultimately, in the strengthening of official multiculturalism. In the parliamentary debates on *Kreol*'s incorporation, *Kreol* was characterized as a language without borders, belonging to all Mauritian ethnic groups and even non-Mauritians across the Mascarene islands, while also belonging to no one at all. Arabic, Mandarin, and other Asian languages were juxtaposed as pure and unadulterated, straight from discrete sources abroad, and of high cultural value, invoking oppositional discourses of purity versus *métissage*. Both Nationalist advocates and Creole ethnic advocates advanced the government agenda on *Kreol* in different ways that, together, affected its incorporation. Nationalist supporters of *Kreol* supplied a standardization of the language among linguists and artists in the private sphere, enabling the govern-ment to incorporate the language into the school system with greater ease, less public backlash, and less use of institutional resources. Creole ethnic advocates were able to provide heavy electoral pressure by facilitating an expansive social movement that pushed for the incorporation of *Kreol* as a means to both Creole ethnic empowerment and interest-based pragmatism in primary schooling.

As a newly-formed ethnic group, Creoles were in an inimitable position in politics because they did not have any specific political allegiances and their electoral prefer-ences beyond the issues concerning Creole ethnic activists were not a given. However, although this political strength provided a window of opportunity between the 2005 and 2010 elections in which all three major parties sought Creole votes, it also pro-vided a somewhat short-lived and superficial response from political parties and the government.

Kreol's final inclusion in language policy was limited in the eyes of both advocacy groups in that, on the one hand, it was introduced as an optional language, but on the other, it was not attached to a particular community. To date, there has also been much less investment in the *Kreol* curriculum than in the Asian languages and because it has not been used as a medium of instruction, its incorporation has done little to change the life chances of struggling Mauritian students. The outcome of this policy

process—with *Kreol* being offered as an "optional" language analogous to the Asian languages yet culturally bare in its curriculum—was the result of a contestation of the *Kreol* language being conceptualized as simultaneously an attribute of the Creole community and the national, trans-ethnic and local language of Mauritius, highlighting their racial distinction and their nativity in a way that challenges the multicultural framework. For this reason, while the *Kreol* language issue was rapidly taken up in language education policy, it was also severely weakened by the influence of Orientalist lobbyists in its implementation. This illustrates that much of the construction of Mauritian multiculturalism has not been wholly intentional—it has also been an enterprise in negotiating multiple tensions within a democratic arena influenced by prior events, and including institutional, ideational, and rival interests as constraints.

The *Kreol* language instead became a symbol to be used by the government during a moment in which national and global discourses on human rights, transnationalism, and postracialism has become dominant. For the Creole community, the struggle for *Kreol*'s officialization ultimately signified a policy that included Creoles on a broad-scale basis that residually recognized their ethnic language as present but not integral to the Mauritian multicultural nation, and did not recognize their distinct experience as a group.

The correlation between Creole marginalization and their lack of recognition and inclusion in multiculturalism are the result of an interaction between several ideological frameworks—including colorblindness and postracialism—that have structured the claims of political actors, leading to a situation in which Creole identity has been consistently negated by non-Creole political elites despite Creole demands. This process has not taken place in spite of multiculturalism, but as a result of multiculturalism as a structural framework. As such, multiculturalism has remained limited as a policy for inclusion because it creates a rubric by which the civic nation is defined by the exclusion of native, "hybrid" cultures. Accordingly, Mauritian multiculturalism has created a distinction between groups that elevates ethnic, immigrant status and its associated cultural contribution to the nation over populations whose cultures have been natively-constructed. To become "ethnicized" in this way affords the opportunity for groups to experience full democratic inclusion while those problematized and denied national membership and inclusion have instead become further "raced," particularly as socioeconomic inequalities continue to become magnified between "ethnic" and "racial" groups. In other words, multiculturalism has advocated the inclusive belief that there are commonalities between distinct cultural groups existing across the spectrum of humanity, while still legitimizing and reinforcing the racist belief in a sub-humanity that cannot belong.

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NOTES

1. Multiculturalism encompasses a set of policies, declarations, initiatives, and/or discourses that seek to facilitate the recognition of ethnic difference in a way that affirms the equal value of groups and peacefully manages group conflict (Kymlicka 1996; Modood 2013).
2. The island was uninhabited prior to Dutch settlement in the seventeenth century. Dutch settlers brought slaves from parts of East and Southern Africa (mainly Madagascar) beginning in 1641. Mauritius was later abandoned by the Dutch (leaving populations of marooned slaves on the island) and colonized by French settlers in 1715. The country was then annexed by the British in 1810, and they ruled indirectly through the Franco-Mauritian settler population. Similar to British colonization of other island countries, large numbers of

Indian indentured laborers were sent in after the emancipation of slavery in 1835, and Chinese laborers and merchants immigrated beginning in 1840. For more on Mauritius' colonial history, see Vaughan (2005).

3. However, the term "indigenous" has varying connotations depending on the regional context. For instance, in Latin America, it is heavily associated with the original peoples of American Indian descent (Anderson 2007).

4. The works of Omi and Winant (1996), King and Smith (2002), Marx (1998) and Mills (1997) also describe the intricate processes by which European settlers and their descendants used race as a dividing line to define and manage the national boundary and its beneficiaries.

5. Similarly, Kymlicka (1996) points out that multi-nation states outside of the West that are characterized by ethnic diversity and pluralism during state formation must usually engage in a "deep diversity" that stabilizes the polity in the path to democratization.

6. A diaspora is a transnational community originating within a territory but extending across multiple countries while maintaining connections to its territory of origin. Although an ethnic group is typically understood as a sub-state entity existing within a state (Eriksen 1992), diasporas can be regarded as the extension of ethnic boundaries at the transnational level (Anthias 1998; Ben-Rafael 2013; Laguerre 2006).

7. Lamont and Molnar's (2002) research underscores the distinction between the symbolic boundaries (boundaries based on symbolic social meanings) and the social boundaries (concrete, realized class-based boundaries) between groups. They posit that symbolic boundaries are used to enforce and justify the presence of social boundaries created through political or economic market relations, and that reciprocally, symbolic boundaries can create social boundaries once embedded in formal institutions that structure socioeconomic outcomes. Such boundaries thus both stem from and contribute to social inequalities.

8. However, language policy in Mauritius is constructed in a way that creates communities of belonging that necessitate linguistic identification without the need for linguistic fluency or practice (Eisenlohr 2001). In essence, Mauritians do not need to *know* a given language so long as they *identify* with the language.

9. The Asian languages also mainly served the religious elite who sought to acquire these languages for the translation of religious texts.

10. Creole languages have been historically viewed as "pidgins" (partial communication systems with a reduced lexicon) and as inferior versions of a "parent" language (typically operating within contexts of diglossia) (Bissoonauth 1998). However, linguists today argue that creole languages are full languages with their own vocabularies, syntax, and orthographies. Unlike pidgins, creoles also have native speakers.

11. Virahsawmy also opted to change the spelling of "Creole" to "*Kreol*" to distinguish it from the ethnic group.

12. The Afro-Creole identity movement began in the mid-1980s and developed across several socioeconomic and political events that culminated in the proliferation of a more Africa-centered Creole identity. Influenced by transnational discourses of Africanity and Black Consciousness, the movement was punctuated by an increasingly distinct socioeconomic experience of poverty and marginalization for Creoles (commonly called "*le malaise creole*"). This experience acted as a durable social group boundary that compounded the legitimacy of the group's symbolic group boundary.

13. "*Ti-Kreol*" or "little Creole" is a *Kreol* pejorative term designating darker-skinned, "pure blood" African descendants, in contrast to Coloured Creoles or *gens de couleur* of lighter complexions.

14. Creole Speaking Union Act of 2011.

15. Prior to 2011, several other speaking unions were created at various stages in time, including the English Speaking Union in 1993, the Hindi Speaking Union in 1994, the Urdu Speaking Union in 2002, and the Marathi, Tegelu, and Tamil Speaking Unions in 2008. The *Alliance Francaise* was established prior to independence.

16. ZEP schools, or those schools within state-designated *Zones Ecole Prioritaire*, were schools targeted as underperforming by the state and given increased funding to "catch up" academically. ZEP schools are mainly located in poor Creole neighborhoods with predominately Creole student bodies.

17. Bishop Maurice Piat, Pastoral Letter, 2010.
18. For many Mauritians, *sega* is more than a musical style. Created by Afro-Malagasy slaves, in its traditional form it is expressed through the use of performative ritual dance and the *ravine* (a traditional drum unique to Mauritius) with cultural elements deriving from the blend of African cultures from which the slaves originated. Modern *sega* has been influenced by both American hip hop and Jamaican reggae and has now become the most popular musical genre on the island. Through *sega* music (with its lyrics expressed in *Kreol*), Creoles were able to speak to each other through a counterpublic, while the popularity of Creole narratives and discourses increased the visibility of Creole culture in Mauritian society. In this way, *sega* has been a mobilizing force for Creoles to identify more with their African roots both nationally and abroad, and as a collective.
19. Creole-Speaking Union Act of 2011.
20. Much archaeological and anthropological research has demonstrated high levels of racial and ethnic intermixture among and between all communities in Mauritius, including research conducted by Meghan Vaughan (2005) and Vijaya Teelock and Edward Alpers (2001). Nationalist academics such as Vinesh Hookoomsing and Jocelyn Chan Low have also argued in their research that all Mauritians are of mixed backgrounds. This includes many Franco-Mauritians (Salverda 2015).
21. See Balibar (2007) for more on "neo-racism" (or cultural racism).
22. This phenomenon is not unique to Mauritius. In the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) racial classification categories created by the United States government, "Black" is the only category with a racial moniker in its definition (the term "black" is used to define sub-Saharan African lineage while all other groups are defined by the region in which they originate).

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