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Us and Them in Modern Societies

Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius, Trinidad and Beyond

With a Foreword by Bruce Kapferer

Scandinavian
University Press

can generate very different cultural orientations. Some globalization theorists seem to condemn the direction of history to the creation of a deadening uniformity. This study should throw doubt on such suggestions.

The study of egalitarian practices has long intrigued anthropologists. Usually, they have been explored outside the context of nation-states, which are often presented as the very contradiction of egalitarianism. There is great room in anthropology for an examination of egalitarian ideologies and practice in the context of contemporary political institutions of the state. This is highly relevant in current contexts for the present exaltation of identity, ethnicity, and nationalist self-assertion in many parts of the world are to be seen as diverse directions in the creation and expression of egalitarian and populist ideologies. Eriksen's work is a contribution to an understanding of ethnicity and nationalism as processes in the development of egalitarian social and political formations, and too, in the study of certain transformations in the ideologies and practices of modern states.

This volume is written in a style to reach a wide audience. It indicates the value of a range of developments in social science theoretical understanding to political and social issues of considerable immediate moment. It is a work suggestive in a practical way. Moreover, Eriksen shows how the study of ethnicity and nationalism can extend an understanding of processes of cultural creation and social institutional formation. Contemporary dynamics of ethnicity and nationalism are occurring in the midst of political and social transition and transformation of enormous global significance. Ethnicity and nationalism are phenomena through which a greater comprehension of vital global forces may be gained. The volume as a whole is an important step in a reevaluation of the conventional terms by which we comprehend vital human issues and is a demonstration of the value of new perspectives. Eriksen shows how the ethnographic focus of anthropology makes important contribution to an understanding of general political and social processes of immediate concern to us all.

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Introduction: On the Study of Ethnicity and Ethnicities

Although every chapter in this book deals, to a greater or lesser extent, with aspects of society and culture in Trinidad and/or Mauritius, the book is chiefly intended as a contribution to the interdisciplinary theoretical discussion on ethnicity, nationalism and modernity. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 depart from, and elaborate on, current anthropological perspectives on ethnicity and nationalism; Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are more ethnographic in nature, although they, too, are meant to illuminate the theoretical discussions about the phenomena; while Chapters 8 and 9 are attempts to move beyond some of the current theorizing on "polyethnic societies". In this introductory chapter, I shall give an overview of the main issues to be tackled and the analytical framework employed in so doing. I will also briefly situate the present work in contemporary Anglophone academic discourse. First, however, I shall suggest why Trinidad and Mauritius deserve sustained attention by practitioners of the comparative social disciplines.

Why Trinidad and Mauritius?

Trinidad & Tobago and Mauritius are tropical island-states, located in the southern Caribbean and the south-western Indian Ocean, respectively. Neither has a pre-modern history; as societies, they were created by plantation colonialism and were thus contributors to the development of a capitalist world-system. (Trinidad, unlike Mauritius, did have an indigenous population, which has been brutally exterminated without leaving any visible trace.) They belong to a category of societies which has not been intensively studied by social anthropologists; they are neither "primitive" societies nor "our own" society. They represent varieties of modernity sometimes carelessly labelled "creole cultures". This term, parasitical on the more accurate linguistic term "creole language" (see e.g. Hancock, 1979), suggests the presence of an incongruous admixture of cultural traditions. This idea, if ultimately misleading, at least puts us on the right track. Both island-

states, independent since the 1960s, contain populations of diverse origins, and are for this reason often classified as "plural" societies.

The population segments which make up these societies are aware of their objective uprootedness; at the same time, they scarcely yearn for their ancestral lands (India and Africa, in most cases). Nation-building in Trinidad and Mauritius, in other words, is a complex project and frequently a thorny issue in domestic politics (see Chapters 4, 7 and 8; see also Eriksen, 1991e).

Given the small territories of the islands, secession could never be an option for discontented groups. Further, nobody would be able to win a civil war. The uprooted populations of Trinidad and Mauritius have but two opportunities: emigration (which has been, and still is, common) or compromise. The latter option has largely been chosen in political life. During their brief period of independence, both societies have admirably avoided inter-ethnic violence, and both are functioning multi-party democracies. Lastly, both Trinidad and Mauritius are presently changing in ways which may (or may not) render ethnicity irrelevant in most practical contexts in a not too remote future.

In sum, then, Trinidad and Mauritius are tropical, densely populated, emphatically modern, poly-ethnic and democratic societies which change quickly, economically and culturally. What more could an analyst ask for? All of these issues will be discussed in the chapters to follow. For now I turn to an explication of the analytical framework to be employed.

Cornering the Elusive Fact of Ethnicity

Definitional quarrels concerning the concept of ethnicity and problems arising in this connection have led some scholars to discard the concept of ethnicity altogether (see, for example, Chapman et al., 1989), replacing it with a more comprehensive concept of classification. To make my position clear, I should state that in my view this is rather an overstatement of the issue. Instead of abandoning the ship, we might try to keep it afloat a while yet, to see whether or not the concept of ethnicity has been exhausted as a conceptual bridgehead towards a comparative understanding of social phenomena which are otherwise different.

Some of the contemporary confusion and resignation over the use and misuse of the concept of ethnicity arises, clearly, out of its being used for very different analytical (or ideological!) purposes, its being applied to human phenomena ranging from presumed biological dispositions (e.g. van den Berghe, 1981; 1986) or socio-psychological features of identity (e.g. Epstein, 1978; Liebkind, 1989) over situational analysis (e.g. Eidheim, 1971) and local political strategies (e.g. Cohen, 1969; 1974b) or minority strategies (e.g. Fishman, 1989) to comprehensive collective ideologies (e.g. Nash, 1988) on the one hand, and aspects of societal formations on the other (e.g. M.G. Smith, 1965.[1])

In addition, ethnicity has entered the political vocabulary of our times, and the inaccurate usage current in the mass media may have a dangerously contagious effect on analytical conceptualizations. The academic discourse on ethnicity is multidisciplinary and frequently interdisciplinary, and the concept of ethnicity has lost some of its accuracy because of the lack of discipline sometimes implied by interdisciplinary work. I should therefore make it clear that I am persuaded that we need a shared, comparative concept of ethnicity which is so fashioned that it may shamelessly be applied to contexts which are otherwise enormously different. Ethnicity, then, should be taken to mean *the systematic and enduring social reproduction of basic classificatory differences between categories of people who perceive each other as being culturally discrete.* It has aspects of politics as well as aspects of meaning or identity.[2]

This concept of ethnicity will be discussed in several of the chapters to follow (see particularly Chapters 2 and 3). Below, I shall therefore limit myself to discussing a few of its implications not dealt with elsewhere.

"Kinds" of Ethnicity?

The still quite recent development in ethnic studies which can be referred to as the Barthian revolution, consists of a number of related insights developed in the volume edited by Fredrik Barth following a conference in Bergen in 1967 (Barth, 1969b). Barth and his Scandinavian colleagues stressed that ethnicity should not be regarded as a property of a group, but rather as an aspect of social relationship and process. In other words, it was seen as futile and misleading to distinguish ethnic groups through listing different "cultural traits" supposedly dividing "cultural groups", as had been common until the mid-1960s (and which is, incidentally, still common among non-specialists). Instead, Barth suggested in his celebrated introductory chapter, one should look for what was *socially effective*; that is the ethnic boundaries whereby socially relevant cultural boundaries were being reproduced. In Chapter 3, I discuss the Barthian perspective extensively, and I shall therefore leave it for now.

However, the insistence on formal aspects of social relationship as

fundamental to ethnicity deserves a few comments in this introduction, not least as it is (I hope) to be read by some non-anthropologists. The issue deals with the relationship between *form* and *substance* in ethnicity. The programmatic insistence by Barth, Eidheim (1969, 1971) and others (which has, however, not always been followed up in practice) that all social phenomena involving ethnic boundary maintenance are in some relevant respect similar, no matter what their other characteristics, has led to great uneasiness, and has probably been partly responsible for the abandoning of the comparative concept of ethnicity on the part of a number of younger scholars, who prefer to slice up the social world according to different principles. For sheer common sense forces us to concede that ethnic groups in the Amazon forest are faced with problems different from those of ethnic groups in South London, and that the latter again are in important, analytically relevant respects different from secessionist movements in Canada or Sri Lanka. Can they meaningfully be regarded as the "same kind of group", and do they require the same analytical framework?

Allow me now to describe some characteristics of some different "kinds" of ethnic groups usually dealt with in the literature, in order to highlight their differences, to see if they have anything in common, and whether whatever they may have in common should either merit an extension of the Barthian perspective or contradict it. My own definition, as proposed above, is a variation on the Barthian theme; and it is also closely related to the heuristic concept of political–symbolic ethnicity proposed by Abner Cohen (1974a). The comparison between the four "types of ethnic groups" below is meant to indicate how and why substantial, empirical contexts and formal analytical contexts must be kept apart. It is also intended to show how comparison between substantial contexts (empirical, political or otherwise concrete societal phenomena) and the abstract classification of substantial contexts must be mediated by analytical contexts to be intelligible; that is, by our own inventions.

(1) Urban minorities. The Muslim immigrant populations of Western Europe may serve as a representative example of this category. Most of them have arrived since the Second World War in search of a livelihood. Although many second-generation immigrants of this category have lost their mother-tongue and have acquired citizenship, they remain self-consciously distinctive, and there can be no question of their status as ethnic minorities. Research, particularly in Britain and Scandinavia, has focused on problems of adaptation and, conversely, on discriminatory practices on the part of the host countries. More

recently, questions of cultural identity and belonging have entered the research agenda. Some problems revealed in research on these minorities, and often mentioned by their spokesmen, are (i) discrimination in the labour market, (ii) cultural discrimination in the public sphere (*re* the Rushdie affair), (iii) marginality in relation to the formal political system, (iv) the loss of cultural identity; for example, the second generation's lack of a true mother country or mother-tongue. These minorities, which are nevertheless usually ideologically oriented toward an ancestral land, rarely or never demand political autonomy, and, of course, they never demand political independence. Their aim is to be as well integrated as possible into the labour market of the host country without losing their distinctiveness; many expect to return to their ancestral country eventually (and many do so, some even within a few years). Their strategies in relation to the political and educational systems of the host countries tend to reflect a concern to be accepted as valuable contributors to the economy on the one hand, and as a legitimate cultural minority on the other hand.

(2) Indigenous populations. "Indigenous populations" is a blanket term for aboriginal inhabitants who are politically non-dominant and who are not, or only partially, integrated into the dominant nation-state. This means that their language, customs, political practices and/or livelihood must be different from that championed by the state. Indigenous populations are also defined by their being acknowledged as such by international organizations such as IWGIA (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs) in Copenhagen, Minority Rights Group in London, and their own non-localized council, WCIP (World Council of Indigenous Peoples). The Basques of the Bay of Biscay and the Welsh of Great Britain are usually not considered indigenous populations in these forums, although they are certainly as indigenous, technically speaking, as the Saami of northern Scandinavia or the Jivaro of the western Amazon. This is because their integration into the institutions of modernity is too complete; they take part in most of the practices instituted in, and sanctioned by, the nation-state. For one thing, the languages of "real" indigenous peoples should be chiefly oral, and their technology should be largely indigenous and non-industrial. As a rule, indigenous peoples are only partly integrated into, or claim the right of autonomy from, basic institutional dimensions of the modern nation-state such as capitalism, mass surveillance, militarization and/or industrialism (see Giddens, 1990:59). The concept "indigenous people" is not an accurate analytical one, but one drawing on broad family resemblances and contemporary political issues.

Scholars studying indigenous peoples implicitly assume that they need special protection and particular rights if they are to retain important aspects of their cultural heritage and develop some form of political autonomy. Features shared by indigenous peoples worldwide include: (i) territorial claims not respected by governments, (ii) threats of "cultural genocide", that is, enforced assimilation or physical extermination, (iii) a way of life requiring special measures in economic, political and/or educational matters. Indigenous peoples do not, as a rule, intend to set up their own nation-states. On the contrary, they tend to stress that their cultural distinctiveness requires that they should be allowed (by the nation-state) to retain their original political system in some or all respects. In their political struggle, they often depict their loss of their ancient homeland as theft on the part of the immigrants. They may in this respect demand some form of retribution from the nation-state. Common to the groups assembled in the WCIP is also a non-modern traditional technology and non-state traditional social organization. In the study of indigenous peoples and in their political struggle, their cultural uniqueness is often contrasted with central aspects of modernity, although there are variations. (See also Chapter 4.)

(3) Proto-nation-states ("ethnonationalist" movements). These groups, the most famous of ethnic groups in the news media in the early 1990s, include Kurds, Sikhs, Palestinians and southern Tamils, and their number is growing. They may be said to include diaspora or irredentist nationalists such as Kenyan Somalis, Northern Irish Catholics, Hungarians in Romania, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and German-speaking Alto-Adigese; as a rule, however, they have no external nation-state to relate to. They are secessionists, claiming that their cultural uniqueness implies that they should have their own nation-state and not be "ruled by others". These groups, short of having a nation-state, may be said to have more substantial characteristics in common with nations in nation-states than with either urban minorities or indigenous peoples. They are always territorially based; they are differentiated according to class and educational achievement; they are neither more nor less modern than others. In accordance with a common usage of the term, these groups are "nations without a state".

(4) "Plural societies". The term "plural society" is usually used about colonially created states with self-consciously culturally heterogeneous populations (M. G. Smith, 1965; see Chapter 9). Typical plural societies, originally analysed by J. S. Furnivall (1948) and later by M. G. Smith, would include Burma, Indonesia and Jamaica. The groups that

make up the plural society, although they are forced to participate in uniform political and economic systems, are regarded as (and regard themselves as) highly distinctive in other matters. According to Furnivall (1948) and Smith (1965), one group tends to dominate politics in the plural society. In the context of the typology of ethnic groups which I am presently trying out, the population segments of plural societies are distinctive in the following ways: (i) they have no external nation-state to relate to realistically; (ii) they are not strong nationalists, but rather tend to identify with their ethnic group; (iii) secessionism is normally not perceived as an alternative; (iv) each population segment is internally divided according to class and possibly other criteria of rank. According to Smith, these societies are deeply divided and potentially violent, but this view has been challenged repeatedly (see Ryan, 1990; see also Chapter 9). The relationship of the groups that make up plural societies to the modern institutions of the nation-state and the market, is not deemed an important variable in this approach. African nation-states and the United States alike are considered plural societies (M. G. Smith, 1986), although the groups that make up the former are much more heterogeneous in this respect than most of the groups that make up the latter. The general idea is that plural societies are faced with a constant threat of fragmentation due to group competition and group-based quest for power. Trinidad and Mauritius, which furnish the raw material for most of the analyses in this book, are both considered typical "plural societies".

A very wide formal definition of ethnicity, such as the one which I have proposed, would include all of these "kinds" of groups, no matter how different they are in other respects. Surely, there are aspects of politics (gain and loss in interaction) as well as meaning (social identity and belonging) in the ethnic relations reproduced by urban minorities, indigenous peoples, proto-nations and component groups of "plural societies" alike. Despite the great variations between the problems and substantial characteristics represented by the respective kinds of groups, the word ethnicity may, in other words, meaningfully be used as a common denominator for them. The distinctions that I have suggested merely refer to differences between particular historically contingent *contexts* of ethnicity. Besides, these distinctions are themselves highly problematic; notably, the idea of the plural society is in my view a dubious one (see Chapter 9).

An interesting empirical issue seems to be the fact that all of the "kinds of group" enumerated must relate politically to the nation-state, and stand in a problematic relationship to the nationalist ideology

embodied by the state. Their mutual differences, from this point of view, seem to lie in their varying prospects for getting a nation-state of their own, and in their varying degrees of participation in the institutions of modernity (notably wage work, institutional politics, modern education and mass media use). The urban minorities often either have a nation-state of their own to relate to (albeit geographically dislocated, as it were), and/or identify themselves (to varying degrees) with the host country. The proto-nations aspire to have their nation-state. The indigenous populations tend to have the rejection of the nation-state at the top of their political agenda, while the constituent segments of the plural society may be expected to try to appropriate the state and nationalist ideology on behalf of their own group. On the other hand, the *practices* associated with the state are in some cases compatible with the demands of the ethnic groups, in other cases not. The crucial variable here seems to be *modernisation*, which indicates degrees of participation in, and control from, the institutions related to the state and market. On this score, however, there are important differences within the categories which I have suggested. Among indigenous peoples, for example, there is a great difference between the literate and politically articulate Saami of northern Scandinavia (Eidheim, 1971; 1985) and the largely illiterate and politically powerless Dyirbal of northern Queensland (Schmidt, 1987).

Interfaces of Modernity

Apart from conforming to my proposed definition of ethnicity, there seems, thus, to be nothing uniting the different "kinds" of ethnic groups, except their all having to relate actively to the nation-state as ethnic groups. This empirical fact would support Giddens' (1985; 1990) and others' claim that the contemporary world is profoundly a modern one (Giddens rejects the term "post-modern"), where the nation-state is the "pre-eminent power container". A shared interface, which could be a useful analytical bridgehead, is therefore the nation-state (see Chapter 4).

However, the lumping together of, for example, "plural societies" and "indigenous peoples" as categories of ethnic groups, seems analytically unfortunate, since their mutual differences may prove more significant than their similarities. Moreover, there are, of course, also other ways of distinguishing between "kinds of ethnicity" or "kinds of ethnic contexts". Some are tried out in later chapters in this book; some have been tried out by others (see, for example, Yinger, 1986). Seen as such, ethnicity as a comparative concept is *devoid of substantial content*, let there be no doubt about that. The dimensions along which we choose to distinguish between kinds of ethnic phenomena, therefore, are contingent upon the questions we ask as analysts. The typology tried out above is constructed along the dimension of differential incorporation into the nation-state. If one were chiefly interested in the importance of ethnicity in comparative social classification, it would be natural to develop a typology of contexts where the ethnic element ranged from the very important to the almost insignificant. If, again, one were chiefly interested in accounting for the presence of ethnicity in a particular society, one would need to distinguish between societal levels and try to assess the importance of ethnicity at each level, as well as depicting the interlevel connections. Such a set of distinctions could, for example, look like this:

(1) State organization
(2) Political organization
(3) Property and the division of labour
(4) Patterns of settlement
(5) Casual intercourse
(6) Marital ideologies and practices

In some societies, thus, ethnicity may have an important bearing on virtually all aspects of social organization. In others, only rules of endogamy (which are followed to a varying degree) serve to reproduce ethnic boundaries socially. The *semantic density of ethnicity* varies enormously. At one extreme, ethnic difference could be intrinsically connected with cultural idioms related to almost every conceivable social situation (one could think of the heavily ethnically flavoured contexts of Israel, the Eastern Cape or the US South); at the other extreme, ethnicity is relevant only once a year in connection with the celebration of a national festival. The distinctions are clearly important if one wishes to locate ethnicity accurately in social time–space. And one might go on, inventing a host of further kinds of distinctions between ethnic contexts, tailored for dealing with particular sets of assumptions or analytical questions. Such distinctions, no matter how "concrete" and "empirically founded" we may claim them to be, are ultimately our own inventions, and are as such contingent on the questions we wish to examine. Let me now, therefore, turn to the substantial issues with which this volume is concerned.

Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Contemporary World

Following the change in the dominant analytical perspective on ethnicity usually attributed to Barth, the interest in ethnicity and ethnic phe-

nomena has grown enormously in social anthropology and related disciplines. This has also come about as a reaction to changes taking place in the world outside of academia. As aspects of modernity become dominant and begin to penetrate the very heartlands of anthropology, the discipline needs to respond to these changes. This has partly been undertaken through a change in the dominant empirical focus from "tribe" to "ethnic group", and additionally, most contemporary anthropologists do in some way or other account for the influence of the nation-state and the commodity market on the contexts which they study. In this sense, the world has shrunk. Moreover, conflicts and political alignments in the contemporary world tend to be expressed through ethnic idioms. Culture has in other words become *ideologized*; it has become a kind of symbolic system prone to conscious manipulation through politics. An increasing number of the world's inhabitants become self-consciously aware that they *have a culture*; in a sense, they thereby *invent* their culture. The kind of tradition that one desperately tries to revive and revitalize has, of course, a different content, and a different political function, from that of one's great-grandparents, who never objectivated their culture as something detachable from themselves. Cultural innocence has been irretrievably lost (cf. Eriksen, 1991f; 1991g).

Changes in the actual world have contributed to bridging gaps between academic disciplines in this respect. Traditionally the domain of historians and political scientists, the comparative study of nationalism has recently become close to the concerns of anthropologists and sociologists studying ethnicity – in a sense, it has forced itself upon them. International relationists concomitantly realise the importance of what they call "internal" (or domestic) conflicts and the need for anthropological perspectives (see Ryan, 1990, for a recent statement). Ernest Gellner's concise theoretical monograph on nationalism (1983) has in this regard served as a stimulus comparable in impact to that of Barth with respect to ethnicity. Gellner's thesis was that nationalism has developed as a *Gesellschaft* ideology trying to mitigate the socially fragmenting effects of industrialization and large-scale social organization. He points out that there is an infinite number of possible nationalisms, and, by implication, that nationalisms are inventions; their claims of historical continuity are always dubious and must be analyzed as expressions of ideology. Similar points were made by Benedict Anderson (1983) and Eric Hobsbawm (1983), and contemporary discourse on nationalism accordingly tends to focus on the ideological aspects of nations as *imagined communities* (Anderson's phrase) tailored to suit the social organization of industrial society.

Studies of ethnicity as well as nationalism are thus at a relativizing stage, where the social construction of identities and the relativity of "historical truths" are focused upon. In this book, particularly Chapters 4, 6, 8 and 9 are intended as critical contributions to the interdisciplinary discussion of nationalism. In Chapters 4 and 6, I discuss the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism; in Chapter 8, different aspects of nationalism are distinguished between; and in Chapter 9, a model of post-national and post-ethnic social identity is outlined.

Power and Domination

Sometimes analysts distinguish between violent and non-violent ethnic conflicts. In my view, one might in many of these cases discard the predicate "ethnic" and simply talk of violent versus non-violent conflicts. To characterize a particular conflict as an "ethnic" one is relevant if and only if one talks comparatively about forms of political organization and process which encourage either the improvement or the deterioration of inter-ethnic relations. From a political perspective, this is clearly the most important field for interdisciplinary research on ethnicity and nationalism. Since much previous research has, in my view, been tainted by insufficient analytical tools (such as "pluralist theory" and other reifying conceptualizations of "cultural groups" and the like), both conceptual rethinking and fresh research are called for. The most important questions dealing with political systems in so-called poly-ethnic societies addressed in this book are these two:

(1) What are the conditions for peace in poly-ethnic societies? My choice of Trinidad and Mauritius as foci for comparative research on ethnicity and nationalism was strongly influenced by the fact that both were emphatically poly-ethnic, and yet had avoided violent ethnic conflict since moving to independence in the 1960s. Most of the following chapters contribute to explaining how this can be; see particularly Chapters 4, 7 and 8. In my view, anthropologists have not paid sufficient attention to the manifestly destructive aspects of social identities; I have in mind phenomena such as violent racism and chauvinist nationalism (see, however, Kapferer, 1988; see also Jenkins, 1986). These phenomena need careful analysis. My own contribution, consists chiefly of critical analyses of programmatically non-violent, non-chauvinist ideologies of cultural unity.

(2) Is it fruitful to talk of poly-ethnic societies at all, or does such a terminology both misrepresent social reality and serve to justify crude ethnicism and or brutal chauvinist nationalism? If the social disciplines are to yield any new insights, they must be critical in the sense that

they do not appropriate folk conceptualizations of society without investigating the social reality to which they refer. If nationalisms and ethnicities are seen as "natural" entities which are not dealt with critically by investigators, then they will not be able to understand how social realities can be social products and in what ways they are ideological. If they fail to regard folk concepts of national and ethnic identity critically, analysts can easily become the hostages of nationalists wishing to justify violent and discriminatory practices. The analytical deconstruction of ethnicity and nationalism can therefore be politically important. The most fundamental deconstruction of these concepts, which are nevertheless debated throughout the book, is to be found in Chapter 9. The relevance of this deconstruction for the contemporary anthropological discussion concerning the concept of culture is made explicit there and, to some extent, in Chapter 3.

Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces in Globalization

The contemporary interest in ethnicity and nationalism, and the currently vivid exchange of views across academic boundaries, are largely caused by changes having taken place in the external world; the fact that nationalism and ethnicity, as foci of personal identity and of social organization alike, are empirically of great importance to many of the inhabitants of a world about to become thoroughly modern. The next important analytical step to be taken should in my view be a renewed, comparative focus on social identities. Since ethnic and national ideologies are of highly varying importance worldwide, it is highly pertinent that we try to account for the "negentropic" variations developed within, and in response to, the culturally and socially universalizing idioms of modernity. Why is it that ethnic ideologies are more important in some contexts than in others; what are the other identities available, and under which circumstances are they relevant? What exactly does it mean to be a *citizen*? I am not claiming that this is an unexplored field.[3] However, we seem to lack a unified conceptual framework for the comparative study of social identities in this sense of the word. In this book, a main concern lies in the search for social determinants in the construction of social identities and differences in a world that increasingly appears as a seamless one. The concept of identity itself is not, however, dealt with critically.

Again, the study of ethnicity and nationalism is being caught up with by the world. The tendencies sometimes described as *globalization* (see Featherstone, 1990; Giddens, 1990), which create entirely new socio-cultural configurations in time–space (to use Giddens' terminology), are highly relevant in this regard. The fact that knowledge, culture and even social organization no longer need to be confined to a particular location, clearly has important effects on the constructions of social identities. Migration, the spread of global mass media, mass education and of the main international language (English), the increasing power of the nation-state in most of the world, and the increasing dominance of monetary economies, together indicate profound social changes in the contemporary world. It seems that the agenda of modernity is about to be realized on a global level, at least at the level of symbolic representations. Whether or not Eric Hobsbawm is correct when he suggests that nationalism has thereby had its day,[4] it is doubtless true that important aspects of contemporary social identities are *non-localized*. The universal languages of pop music, soap operas and consumerism, or, for that matter, the global appropriation of Kafka's, Marquez's or Ngugi's novels, cannot be directly linked with particular ethnic or national identities; they smooth out differences and create the impression that the world is seamless. To this extent, they may seem to transcend territorially based identities. On the other hand, these processes in some areas create counterreactions in the form of ethnic, nationalist, linguistic or religious revivalism desperately trying to control indigenous cultural resources and maintain not only social boundaries but also the subjectively perceived cultural content of the group. However, such reactions may credibly be seen as confirmations of the hegemony of modernity, both since they tend to use the language of modernity for their own ends (they use the mass media and appeal to people's cultural self-consciousness), and since they relate ideologically to the ideology of modernity as simple negations of it.

Personally, I would like to believe that the contemporary upsurge in ethnic animosities and violent nationalist sentiment seen in parts of every continent is but a transitory phenomenon; a counterreaction directed against the irreversible social changes and cultural homogenization brought about by different forms of modernization. Although it would probably not be wise to hazard the guess that ethnic sentiments will eventually disappear, there are reasons, indicated above and in Chapter 9, for believing that their command over individuals may eventually diminish. On the other hand, conflicts between poor and rich countries may easily turn violent, and will in that case probably be justified by forms of nationalist ideology; that is, ideologies stressing the cultural differences between us and them.

In our endeavour fully to understand these and related contemporary processes of change and continuity, the combined efforts of schol-

ars from various academic disciplines will be required. Not least for this reason, it is to be hoped that the lively interdisciplinary discourse on nationalism, ethnicity, the nation-state and globalization in the world of high modernity will continue as we uneasily approach a new millennium.

2

Ethnicity as a Comparative Concept: A Justification

This chapter argues the viability of, and the need for, a truly comparative concept of ethnicity. Such a concept, it is maintained, must be "empty" of substantial content – it must be a formal, "defining" concept in order to be of comparative use. Drawing on examples from Mauritius and Trinidad, the chapter exemplifies widely different social contexts in which ethnicity can be an analytically relevant dimension.

A general typology of contexts is then proposed, and it is argued that ethnicity can serve as an analytical bridgehead in both intra-societal and inter-societal comparison. Its relevance thereby extends far beyond analyses of ethnic organization and identity, as it can contribute to the contextualization and the comparison of a wide range of social processes.

If my greengrocer happens to be an immigrant from Pakistan, a series of inter-ethnic situations is bound to occur during our brief, sporadic interaction. However, the Lebanese civil war and the mass uprisings in the Caucasian republics are also labelled ethnic or inter-ethnic phenomena. In other words, the predicate "ethnic" is applied by scholars to a wide variety of contexts and to very different levels of social reality. Some theorists regard ethnicity as a largely modern phenomenon caused by social change and the formation of nation-states (see, for example, Cohen, 1974b), thus making ethnicity analytically compatible with the widespread conceptualization of nationalism as the symbolic corollary of an industrial mode of social integration (Gellner, 1983) or as a secular religious ideology (Anderson, 1983; Kapferer, 1988). Other writers on ethnicity do not consider modernization as a crucial variable, but try to identify universal, substantial features of ethnicity, such as myths of common ancestry, shared language and religion, and so on (see Nash, 1988, for a moderate version of this empiricist approach).

The idea that ethnicity could be operationalized as a measurable property of social groups possessing certain identifiable cultural traits

objectively distinguishing them from other social groups, still common among non-specialists, has long been abandoned in social anthropology (see Barth, 1969a:10-11; Eidheim, 1969:39; see also Chapter 3). For as one of the most subtle analysts of ethnicity insisted several times, ethnic groups are *self-defining entities*: "Ethnicities demand to be viewed from the inside. They have no imperative relationship with particular 'objective' criteria" (Ardener, 1989c:111).

Attempts to define ethnicity have recently become unfashionable in social anthropology, and the reasons for this are sometimes good (Fardon, 1987), but sometimes appalling (Chapman et al., 1989:17).[1] At the risk of sounding facetious, I would here like to propose the view that, if we wish to use ethnicity as a comparative concept, then we must first know what it means. In this chapter, I shall defend a minimal concept of ethnicity, indicating its utility as an analytical bridgehead enabling us to arrive at a truly comparative understanding of very diverse contexts within and between societies. (In Chapter 3, I shall present the problem from a different angle.) The model is essentially cybernetic in the sense that no monocausal explanation is implied. It is also hermeneutic in that it takes the interpretive aspect of social research for granted. Ethnicity should in the following be taken to mean simply *the systematic social communication of cultural difference*. This implies that it is an experienced property of the flow of ongoing social intercourse. Starting from this narrow and accurate dimension for comparison, I shall suggest how some relevant differences between the contexts in which ethnicity operates can be explored.

From the outset, it should be kept in mind that, only through careful distinctions between ethnicity and its contexts, can it usefully serve as a comparative concept to be fixed as an empirically universal aspect of an enormous range of very different social processes. Although it may seem relevant to distinguish between empirical and analytical contexts, that is, between the contexts connecting ethnicity to other societal phenomena on the one hand, and the contexts relating ethnicity to other comparative concepts on the other (see Bateson, 1980:208 ff.), this will not be undertaken here.

Ethnicity, then, occurs whenever communicated cultural difference makes a difference in the definition of a social situation. The contexts of ethnicity will in this chapter be approached through sketchy considerations of different manifestations of ethnicity in Trinidad and Mauritius. Starting with descriptions of the ethnic element in various social contexts, I shall proceed to a description of the contexts themselves in order to assess the differences in the social relevance of ethnicity; thus,

an analysis starting with assumptions of *similarities* (ethnicity) can have as its end-product an understanding of *differences* between contexts. The material on which the discussion builds is taken from two societies which have a great deal in common, and their mutual differences will not be stressed here (for this, see Chapters 4 and 7; see also Eriksen, 1991e). The same individuals are involved in several different contexts of ethnicity simultaneously or successively, and the contexts are themselves systemically interrelated. This chapter should therefore be read not so much as an exercise in inter-cultural comparison as one in intra-cultural comparison.

The purpose of the examples outlined below is to show how ethnicity can be contextualized in order to expose variations in the social implications of, and conditions for, ethnic phenomena. Ethnicity is throughout kept constant, it should be noted, as a *defining concept* in the proposed quasi-experimental procedure of anthropological comparison.

Contexts of Ethnicity in Trinidad and Mauritius

Since the present argument in this chapter is essentially theoretical, little attention will be paid to the actual societies discussed. For detailed descriptions, the reader is referred to works of Trinidadian and Mauritian historiography and social analysis (see also the following chapters in this book). Some general Trinidadian studies are Brereton (1981), Braithwaite (1975) and Ryan (1972); with respect to Mauritius, general works include Arno and Orian (1986), Eriksen (1990a) and Bowman (1990); for some ethnographic comparisons, see Eriksen (1991e). A few introductory remarks about the societies nevertheless seem to be required at this point.

Trinidad & Tobago and Mauritius are independent island-states, located in the south Caribbean and in the south-western Indian Ocean, respectively. Trinidad is over twice the size of Mauritius, but they sustain populations of comparable size (slightly over 1 million). Both are tropical islands and former British colonies where the French influence has been (and, in the case of Mauritius, still is) substantial. Both experienced plantation slavery on a large scale until the 1830s, and subsequently received substantial numbers of Indian immigrants under the colonial indentureship scheme.[2] The demographic compositions of the islands have important similarities: the main ethnic categories, as depicted in national statistics and in folk taxonomies, are blacks, Indians, Chinese, Europeans and culturally ambiguous categories of phenotypically "mixed" people. Indians, most of them Hindus and

Muslims, are the most numerous in Mauritius; whereas blacks, who are as a rule Christian, are about as numerous as Indians in Trinidad.[3] However, neither island has an unambiguous ethnic majority. There are several ethnic subdivisions which may be relevant; for example, the distinction between Hindus and Muslims can in both societies be important, and there are ethnic categories which may be relevant in Mauritius but not in Trinidad (for instance, the category of Tamils) and vice versa. In popular representations and in public discourse, the most important distinction is nevertheless that between Indians and blacks. There are, of course, also non-ethnic social classifications which can be relevant; two such distinctions, important in both societies, are those obtaining between "the middle class" and "the working class" (these are local terms and do not necessarily coincide with analytical terms), and between rural and urban people.

Trinidad, an oil-rich island, is wealthier than Mauritius in absolute GDP terms, and is to a greater extent than the latter integrated into wider systems of exchange. Both societies are parliamentary multi-party democracies, and both are changing rapidly, economically and institutionally. The average level of education is comparable to, but lower than, that of European countries. Ethnicity plays an important part in daily interaction in both societies.

The contextualizations of ethnicity carried out on the following pages should be regarded primarily as experiments in thinking. None of them need necessarily be granted primacy in analysis, but all of the contexts have emerged from partial comparative analyses of empirical material.

Situational ethnicity

Virtually any situation involving individuals with differing ethnic membership has a varying ethnic character. For instance, in both Trinidad and Mauritius, there is a perceptible, routinely expressed connotation of mutual suspicion involved in many economic transactions between members of different ethnic categories. As a result, personal economic failures can frequently be explained with reference to the notorious dishonesty/partiality of ethnic category x, and informal economic networks are usually ethnically bounded. More generally, ethnicity seen as an aspect of a situation serves to organize the social world cognitively and normatively. In Mauritius, it is considered good for an Indian to conduct business with a Chinese, but it is bad to do it with a black (*Creole* in local terminology). In Trinidad, it is considered good for a brown woman to marry a white man, but it is bad to marry a

black one, all other things being equal. Ethnicity further serves to make sense of observed differences by making them appear *natural*: "They're Indian, that's why they worship those strange gods"; "Those black people just hang around all day; we Chinese can't do that", etc.

In studying ethnicity as an aspect of a situation, the *dyadic relationship* becomes the basic building-block in social analysis. The context which can gradually be elucidated from observation of such inter-ethnic encounters consists largely of the knowledge and actions of the agents; their shared representations, particularly their social classifications, and their patterns of action. These vary between and within societies and individuals.

A context which does *not* immediately emerge from this dyadic approach to ethnicity consists of the historical and societal conditions for a particular form of articulation of ethnicity (see Okamura, 1981). Studies of interpersonal ethnicity nevertheless enable us to approach such topics in a relevant way. If we first understand the internal dynamics of ethnic stereotyping in dyadic interaction, we can then meaningfully ask why brown women do not wish to marry black men, or how it has come about that black Muslims are not usually recognized as "true Muslims" by Indo-Trinidadian Muslims, etc. The posing of such questions again leads us to contextualizing ethnicity in a different way, for example as an aspect of social stratification.

Ethnicity in social stratification

In Trinidad and Mauritius, ethnicity can be seen as a criterion for the ranking of individuals or, from a structural perspective, a criterion for social stratification. Globally speaking, and all other things being equal, whites and browns rank highest, blacks and Indians lowest in both societies. This implies that it is locally held that there is a natural interrelationship between ethnicity and rank. Exceptions are accepted, but must be accounted for. Thus, a Mauritian Muslim could inform me, when we were discussing a common acquaintance, a *petit-blanc*, that Jean-Paul wasn't really a white man despite the fact that he arguably looked like one: "You see, there's been black people in his family." Similarly, an off-white shopkeeper in St James, Trinidad, told me this about Indians: "My best bookkeeper is an East Indian. Normally, of course, I wouldn't trust them with a penny. But this fellow is exceptional." Relative to social stratification, then, cultural difference is invoked to justify and explain correlations between rank and ethnic membership. Further relevant contexts of ethnicity in this respect could be labelled the ideology and class structure of the society seen from a

bird's perspective, and, by extension, history. If we then examine the histories of Trinidad and Mauritius, it turns out to be less than surprising that ethnicity can still be invoked to justify or account for inequality, and that browns are *in fact* better off than blacks. In both societies, shared ideology insists on the interconnectedness of individual political interests and ethnic solidarity. The ethnic dimension in fact provides a more effective focus for concerted political action than other criteria of social classification. A relevant context for ethnicity, seen as an aspect of social stratification, is therefore political organization.

Ethnicity in political organization

In an influential, although much criticized statement, Abner Cohen defined ethnicity in the contemporary world as "essentially a political phenomenon" (Cohen, 1974a:4). Although such a definition is simultaneously too narrow and too substantial for our purpose, it can be very illuminating to identify or decide on formal and informal political organization as an immediate context for communicated cultural difference in competitive situations and in accounts of social stratification. Conceptualizing ethnicity thus, relationships between and within corporate groups become the relevant units of analysis. In my own material, this has proved a useful approach for the description of processes of integration in the nation-state. In both Trinidad and Mauritius, voting and political activity are frequently justified with reference to ethnic membership. Since the electoral reforms of the late 1940s and early 1950s, there has normally been a strong correlation between ethnic membership and political organization in both of the island-states. There are Hindu parties and black parties, as well as multi-ethnic (but hardly non-ethnic) parties. As noted in the previous paragraph, ethnicity functions ideologically as a dominant principle for social differentiation; this applies to politics as to other contexts. This having been accounted for, the next step must consist of an investigation of further contexts which appear relevant to our analytical interests.

One such context could be the bases of such forms of social classification at the level of individual experience. In Mauritius, for instance, it is evident that agents genuinely believe that members of their own ethnic categories (or related ones) serve their interests better than others. Thus, the leading Franco-Mauritian (white) politician, Paul Bérenger, was at the time of my fieldwork (1986) immensely popular among the poor blacks since blacks generally acknowledge whites as their legitimate leaders. Similarly, the most fervent Hindu "communalist" (ethnicist) politician has his stronghold in the Indo-Mauritian countryside. A comparable pattern could be observed in Trinidad. Examining the life-worlds of the people in question, we shall find that their perceptions of national society are sectoral or segmentary: they tend to perceive other ethnic groups as external to themselves, as threats to their unique way of life on the one hand, and as competitors for the same scarce goods on the other.

Having established an understanding of the subjective rationale for ethnic allegiances, further analysis can take two directions. On the one hand, we may examine alternative ideologies (such as class ideologies) defining the conflicts or contradictions in society along different lines, and try to account for their relative failure or success. On the other hand, we may turn to the economic and political structure of the society in question, in order to trace the structures of legitimacy of ethnicity, and the systemic conditions for ethnic salience (see Chapter 4). Ethnicity may or may not itself be a significant property of these structures; a study of the immediate contexts of ethnicity nevertheless enables us to pose questions about them.[4]

Ethnicity in cultural identity

Historicism – the creation of historical traditions justifying present practices and beliefs – is an important feature of many contexts of ethnicity (as well as nationalism; see, for example, Hobsbawm, 1983). In historicist movements, ideology, political organization and cultural identity merge. When, in the late 1960s, black Trinidadians rediscovered and reinvented their African cultural origins, this process of cultural change could be studied both at the level of political rhetoric and organization (particularly the Black Power movement of the early 1970s and its relations to the official political system), and at the level of individual interaction and representations. Historicism codified in an ethnic idiom is evident in many contexts and takes on many shapes in both societies; in Mauritius, for instance, the state supports various programmes aimed at raising the historical consciousness of the average Mauritian. The most interesting immediate context in this respect is, in my opinion, that of the individual arranging his or her world in perceptions and actions to make it appear natural and ordered. Regarded as a constituent part of cultural identity, then, ethnicity can be located sociologically to individual life-worlds: it warrants an investigation of the inherently meaningful world-structures in which individuals find themselves. Cultural identities are among the most immediate contexts of ethnicity, since they are necessary preconditions for attempts to exploit ethnicity instrumentally, for example politically

or through informal economic networks – or through historicist propaganda. If an individual Mauritian Creole does not recognize his identity as a Mauritian Creole as being prior to that of, say, a Mauritian citizen or a member of the global working class, there is no reason to suppose that he will vote for the Creole party at elections.

There are two clearly distinguishable contexts which immediately emerge as important for an understanding of ethnicity in cultural identity. One is the meaningful ordering of the social world by individuals interacting; the other is the source of criteria for such an undertaking. The latter can be studied as ideology; as the wider legitimizing symbolic structures and processes of transmission of information in society. Ultimately, cultural identity can be reduced in at least two directions if one wishes: to presumed psychological processes at the individual level ("the innate need for order") and to societal power structures; to the collective, legitimized enaction of a form of discourse in a wide sense.

Ethnicity in history

Viewed historically and as a property of relationships in large-scale organization, ethnicity can serve as a bridgehead to an understanding of yet a different set of contexts – namely, the history and perhaps more importantly, the *historicity* of the society in question. This approach, complementary to the life-world perspective outlined above as well as emerging out of the perspective from social stratification, may indicate an attempt to *explain* the relative importance of ethnicity causally. Regarding individual agents largely as dependent variables, an historical approach would describe how the phenomena which are, analytically and at the level of social intercourse, labelled "ethnic groups" or "ethnic categories" are the products of long-term processes of social differentiation where relevances of cultural difference are invoked or created under shifting social circumstances, and where the result is a form of discourse justifying a particular social order. Thus, an historical approach to ethnicity in Mauritius (such as that presented in Arno and Orian, 1986) might focus on the division of labour and the allocation of land, education and other scarce goods in the 19th century. Demonstrating how racial ideology matched the structures of authorization and property in colonial Mauritius, one could thus trace down the roots of the current white–brown–black ranking in Mauritian ethnic taxonomy. Similarly, the until recently marginal position of Indians in Trinidad, and the denigrating stereotypes still current as regards traditionalist Indians, can be accounted for through descriptions of the late arrival of the Indians in Trinidad, their illiteracy and spatial isolation, and the fact that they were for generations a "muted" group in Trinidadian creole society (see Brereton, 1979; Tinker, 1974; this volume, Chapter 7). It is of course open to question what this actually *explains*, particularly at the level of the individual subjectivity. On the other hand, unexpected insights may emerge from studies of the history of a society with which one is already familiar; in other words, through a juxtaposition or combination of analytical contexts – or through methodological triangulation, to use the positivist term for this kind of *bricolage*. For instance, the history of Mauritius can teach us that Franco-Mauritian (white) stereotypes of blacks have been remarkably stable for two centuries or more, and that the present standard position of Coloureds as professionals, teachers, intellectuals, artists and ambiguous cultural middlemen has prevailed since the 1820s. Historical changes in the structure of ethnic relations, which seem to have been numerous and spectacular in both societies, can also shed light on the parameters of boundary maintenance and transgression. Lastly, the empirical emergence of ethnic categories and ethnic corporate groups can, of course, be studied historically. Coupled with hermeneutical readings of interaction, historical descriptions of ethnic contexts can thus open up analytically a wide array of interesting problems in anthropology.

Understanding Contexts Through Following the Cues of Ethnicity

By realizing in which ways the social impact of ethnicity can vary within a society and between societies, it is possible to learn about the distribution of power, and about the interrelationship between individual and society, through pursuing widely different contexts which are made immediately intelligible and comparable because one variable, ethnicity, is kept constant.

I have sketchily suggested how ethnicity can be a useful analytical bridgehead in the contextualization of phenomena and in the comparison of contexts. This should be taken to apply equally in paradigmatic (inter-societal) and syntagmatic (intra-societal) comparison. Both forms of comparison require a truly comparative concept of ethnicity; the concept must in other words be empirically empty and unambiguous in meaning. When combined, these forms of comparison simultaneously satisfy the requirements of both of Holy's (1987:11) suggested types of anthropological comparison: they suggest functional equivalences as well as facilitating description.

The contexts must be kept carefully apart. They can be compared sensibly if and only if an analytical concept is kept constant as a fixed common denominator. Contexts can, of course, be compared both syntagmatically (metonymically) and paradigmatically (metaphorically); which in the present usage corresponds to comparison within and between societies, respectively – and, if a concept like ethnicity does not contribute to our understanding of any social phenomenon, then it must be discarded, and should be replaced with a different concept serving our purposes better. At the moment, ethnicity seems to be one of the two or three most useful comparative concepts available in social anthropology.[5] This is chiefly because of its empirical pervasiveness in the contemporary world, but also because it can be identified as an aspect of phenomena existing at several levels of social reality; ethnicity can be an aspect of a societal formation as well as of a situation.

Table 1 exemplifies the comparative use of the minimal concept of ethnicity. In combination with any of the concepts enumerated, ethnicity, defined as the systematic communication of cultural difference, creates a provisional matrix for comparison at various analytical levels.

Table 1. A typology of contexts where the ethnic dimension is kept constant as a "defining" entity.

Analytical location of ethnicity	*Focus of anthropological investigation*	*A relevant empirical context*
Situation	Dyadic relationships	Individual's knowledge
Social stratification	Action-sets, scale	Division of labour
Political organization	Corporate groups	Macro power structures
Cultural identity	Life-worlds	The social self
Production of history	Perceptions of self	Ideology/dominant discourse
Historical process	Power relations	The past in the present

Interrelationships between contexts

Lastly, I should say something about the kinds of interrelationships which can be established analytically between the contexts. If the first column of Table 1 is read vertically, empirical connections can be established. The relationships within a given society are syntagmatic, like the elements of a sentence. The more the interrelations are mapped out, the more sense does each element make. Each of these elements, or concepts, refers to a specific kind of social reality as perceived by the anthropologist. Transposed to an actual society, these contexts are

linked in an analogous way, through interrelated forms of social organization and the participation of individuals in various contexts. In principle, every individual can be involved in every context, and each context constrains the others. The form of cultural identity is contingent on historical process and in turn determines interpretation of (and agency upon) historical process; forms of political organization are limited by, and influence, the system of social stratification, and so on.

The middle column refers to the methodological or even epistemological specification of units for research and analysis. These concepts can be compared as exemplifications of different research strategies and operationalizations of the social space.

The third column suggests forms of analysis of empirical material, as well as implications for further research. These "contexts of ethnicity" are, of course, second-order constructs reflecting analytical interests, yet contributing to a fuller understanding of the phenomena we have chosen to label "ethnic", and thereby society itself. The interrelations between these theoretical constructs are, like those of the two other columns, syntagmatic: they make better sense the more their connections are explored.

Read horizontally from left to right, the table can illustrate phases in the process of interpretation of particular social facts. I shall not dwell on this here.

Syntagmatic chains such as the ones suggested are necessary for intra-societal comparison; that is, they form hermeneutic circles. The units identified can, however, be useful in inter-societal comparison as well. Identifying the ethnic element in, for example, individual action-sets in Trinidad and Mauritius, after having understood the internal "syntagmatic chains" of the two societies separately, a wide array of possibilities for comparison is opened up. In this case, we would use both "action-set" and "ethnicity" as comparative concepts; that is, as "defining" entities or independent variables. Variations would be appreciated at the level of the defined entities; that is, in this case, aspects of ethnic salience, rules and practices of strategic action, and features of greater society. On a further level of description and analysis, it would obviously be relevant to fix concepts of ethnicity and corporate groups, in order to compare other features of the societies. In the case of localities with many substantial similarities, such as black suburbs in the capital cities, Port-Louis and Port of Spain, further provisional dimensions for comparison could be specified as we go along. This in principle purely methodological device thus enables us to map out systemic interrelationships within societies, and, if the comparison is successful, it may ultimately inspire us to draw arrows of causality if

we so wish. The only necessary prerequisite for comparison is the presence of defining concepts in the model, no matter how tentative and hypothesized they may be. Ethnicity, a concept taking its point of departure from agents' practical notions of cultural discontinuity, yet insisting on the possibility of a formal continuity between contexts, can in such a model enable us to pose many classic anthropological questions in an ever more accurate fashion. In the course of description and analysis, it may be replaced periodically by other defining concepts and thereby become part of the defined space (Ardener, 1989d:149-50). The so-called dependent and independent variables are in principle infinitely interchangeable. For there is nothing in the analytical model outlined which suggests the ontological primacy of ethnicity – or that of any other variable. In the end, we have to admit that ethnicity is in an important sense our own invention, since it appears only when we ask such questions of social reality that ethnicity will form part of the ensuing analysis.

The next chapter approaches the analytical concept of ethnicity from a different perspective. Instead of distinguishing between substantial contexts of ethnicity, as I have done here, I shall now suggest the possible utility of a distinction between the contexts of ethnicity based on formal criteria. In Chapter 3, the recent anthropological discourse on ethnicity will also be reviewed critically, and by extension, I shall argue that the concept of culture needs further scrutiny.

3

The Cultural Contexts of Ethnic Differences

Discarding simplistic conceptions of "cultures" as bounded entities for research, recent social anthropological studies of ethnicity have accounted for ethnicity as those aspects of social relationships and processes where cultural difference is communicated. This approach is endorsed here, but it is also argued that it is necessary to understand the content of cultural differences in ethnicity. In other words, variations in the significance of cultural differences in otherwise comparable ethnic situations must be understood comparatively. Drawing on concepts of language-games and degrees of mutual intelligibility, this chapter shows variations in the kinds of cultural differences expressed in ethnic interaction in Trinidad and Mauritius.

By implication, an anthropological concept of culture must be dual: culture is an aspect of agency, and it is simultaneously a necessary condition for agency to be meaningful.

The objective of this chapter is to contribute to the development of analytical devices for dealing comparatively with cultural differences made relevant in systems of interaction. First, the strengths and limitations of a leading social anthropological perspective on ethnicity are considered. Thereafter, certain aspects of ethnicity in two so-called multi-ethnic societies, Trinidad and Mauritius, are described and contextualized analytically. Finally, a general classification of inter-ethnic contexts is suggested. The criterion suggested to distinguish contexts in this respect is *the varying cultural significance of ethnicity*. The proposed classification is not necessarily incompatible with other attempts to compare ethnic phenomena, such as the model proposed in the previous chapter. Rather, it is complementary to other approaches through calling attention to aspects of ethnic contexts which have often been neglected in studies focused rather one-sidedly on their political aspects.

Although my point of departure is a concept of ethnicity which is

4

Ethnicity versus Nationalism

The aim of this chapter is to identify some conditions for peaceful coexistence between the state and populations in poly-ethnic societies. Initially, the concepts of ideology, nationalism and ethnicity are examined briefly. It is argued that a successful ideology, such as a nationalist or an ethnic one, must simultaneously legitimize a social order, i.e. a power structure, and provide a meaningful frame for the articulation of important, perceived needs and wishes of its adherents. A few empirical cases are then considered. The examples range from of Mauritius and Trinidad & Tobago to the Saami (Lappish) minority situation in northern Norway. Different conflicts, and different methods employed to resolve them, are compared. The uniqueness of nationalism as a modern, abstract ideology of exclusion and inclusion, and its powerful symbolic as well as practical aspects, are stressed and contrasted with ethnic ideologies. Lastly, the chapter proposes a list of necessary conditions for the peaceful coexistence of culturally diverse groups within the framework of a modern nation-state.

The conclusion is that the main responsibility lies with the state insofar as it possesses a monopoly of political power and the legitimate use of force. State policies should genuinely attempt to decentralize power while at the same time recognizing the right to be cultural distinctive, even in matters relevant for political discourse. The culturally homogenizing tendencies of nationalism and globalization should be counteracted through institutional arrangements which secure some form of ethnic autonomy and encourage cultural pluralism. The alternatives are violent suppression and the enforced assimilation of culturally distinctive groups.

This chapter, which more explicitly politically oriented than the previous ones, consists of a discussion of nationalism and ethnic ideologies in contemporary nation-states. Through examples, the varying content and impact of such different ideologies are explored. The purpose is to

identify some conditions under which *culturally justified conflicts* may arise within nation-states,[1] and to suggest conditions for their resolution or avoidance. The general perspective is from below; that is, ideologies and practices are regarded largely from the point of view of their adherents.

It is tautologically true that the crucial difference between intra-state and inter-state conflicts involving competing ideologies lies in the varying part played by the state. Whether or not one or both parties involved in the conflict regard themselves as nationalists or ethnic revivalists (or something altogether different) is irrelevant. The focus here is chiefly on processes taking place within the boundaries of state; not on political processes taking place between states. Before turning to the main discussion, I shall clarify the analytical concepts used.

Ideology

The central concept of *ideology* is treated throughout as a dual phenomenon. On the one hand, ideology serves to legitimize a particular power structure and in this respect conforms to a conventional Marxist view. On the other hand, ideologies necessarily derive their popular, potentially mobilizing force from their ability to organize and make sense of the immediate experiences of their adherents; they cannot, therefore, be regarded simply as forms of false consciousness.[2] Further, the term ideology can profitably be used in the plural in so far as people evaluate available ideologies critically and compare them through choosing their strategies and practices. My discussion will further suggest that the final outcome of a competitive situation involving two or several ideologies depends on their respective persuasive power among their frequently ambivalent audiences. It follows from this that an analysis of particular ideologies, in this case nationalist and ethnic ones, demands an understanding of the lives of the *followers* of the ideologies in question. An analysis of ideology cannot solely consider the properties of the political system and the ideational content of the ideologies themselves, since beliefs and other forms of knowledge contribute to the reproduction of society only to the extent that they are embedded in interaction.

Nationalism and ethnicity

In its most basic sense, ethnicity refers to the social reproduction of basic classificatory differences between categories of people and to aspects of gain and loss in social interaction. Ethnicity is fundamentally dual, encompassing aspects both of meaning and of politics. Ethnicity is, however, a concept which refers to a multitude of socio-cultural phenomena. It may appear on our doorstep any time and vanish in a matter of seconds. For instance, my relationship with foreign students at the university has ethnic connotations and can thus be viewed as an ethnic relationship. They enter my office and go away; the duration of such an ethnic relationship can be less than half an hour. Similarly, my Pakistani–Norwegian grocer enters my life to a very limited degree, and the ethnic aspect of our relationship is nearly negligible (although never entirely absent). On the other hand, the term ethnicity can also refer to large-scale, long-term political processes such as the relationship between blacks in the United States and the US nation-state; it can refer to intricate trade networks throughout the United Kingdom or to the religious sentiments of individuals; sometimes ethnicity becomes nationalism historically, sometimes it vanishes altogether, and so on. In a certain sense, ethnicity is created by analysts through the questions they pose in their research. What makes ethnicity a more interesting concept in the contexts considered below than, say, class, is its empirically pervasive nature: ethnicity can, if sufficiently powerful, provide individuals with most of their social statuses, and their entire cultural identity can be codified in ethnic terms.

In social anthropology and urban sociology, ethnicity has been analysed extensively at the level of interpersonal action, at the level of the township, at the level of factioning and riots, etc. In this restricted context, I will focus on ethnic phenomena which involve nation-states directly or indirectly, where ethnicity is manifest in political organization.[3]

I will treat nationalism and ethnicity as ideologies which stress the cultural similarity of their adherents. By implication, nationalists and/or ethnicists will, in a situation of conflict, stress cultural differences vis-à-vis their adversaries.[4] The distinction between the two may therefore appear to be one of degree, not one of kind – particularly since many political movements are widely perceived as being both nationalist and ethnic in character. What to make of say, autonomist movements in the Caucasus at the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union, proclaiming Azeri or Armenian nations, in so far as their official status was that of ethnic minority groups? The difference, in this case, is in the eye of the beholder. A self-proclaimed nationalist holds that state boundaries should be identical with cultural boundaries (see Gellner, 1983, for an excellent discussion of the concept). If such claims are not acknowledged as legitimate by the political authorities

of the state in which she resides, they will perceive her, and proceed to define her, as an ethnic revivalist. In other words, the major difference between ethnicity and nationalism lies, as they are defined here as a matter of convenience, in their relationship to the state. Unsuccessful nationalisms therefore tend to become transformed into ethnicities whose members reside more or less uncomfortably under the aegis of a state which they do not identify with their own nationality or ethnic category. This has happened to certain indigenous peoples of autonomist persuasion, to many of the "one hundred and four peoples" of the former Soviet Union, and, to some extent, to the white minority of Zimbabwe, whose brand of nationalism in the end lost the battle for political and cultural hegemony.[5] Many of the ethnics[6] condemned to such a fate eventually vanish through migration, extermination or cultural assimilation. On the other hand, there are ethnicities and ethnic movements whose ultimate aim is not – and can never be – full statehood. Urban minorities in Europe and North America are obvious examples; such groups are in many respects integrated in ways radically different from those ethnics who claim rights to territories. Lastly, we need to distinguish provisionally between those indigenous "Fourth World" peoples favouring autonomy but not full statehood, and those ethnic minorities (or nations without a state) whose legitimized leaders or spokespersons work for total political independence. Ethnic minority situations are frequently ambiguous in this regard. Greenlanders are an ethnic to the extent that their destiny is intertwined with that of metropolitan Denmark; but they constitute a nation to the extent that they collectively vie for full political autonomy. Their identity as Greenlanders can therefore be regarded both as an ethnic and as a national one, depending on the analytical perspective, and this contradiction is naturally manifest also in the experience of many Greenlanders. The widespread switching between ethnic and national identities in Poland and other Central European countries in the period between the wars further exemplifies the contextual character – and interrelatedness – of ethnicity and nationalism as popular ideologies (see Neumann, 1991).

In this chapter, nationalism should be taken to mean politically *successful* nationalism; that is, nationalist ideology linked up with a nation-state. Conversely, the term ethnicity can sometimes indicate some form of stagnant nationalism.

A final word of caution before we proceed to considering some political consequences of nationalism and ethnicity ought to be that the social importance, the "semantic density", of such ideologies varies immensely, historically, geographically, contextually and situationally – both at the level of the individual and at the level of the political system. The mere fact that "nationalism exists in country X" or "ethnic minority groups live in state Y" does not necessarily imply that such ideologies play an important part in the lives and/or political processes encompassed by the system. The relative importance of nationalism and ethnicity is an empirical question, and the cases discussed below suggest the circumstances under which they can assume importance.

Nationalism versus Ethnicity

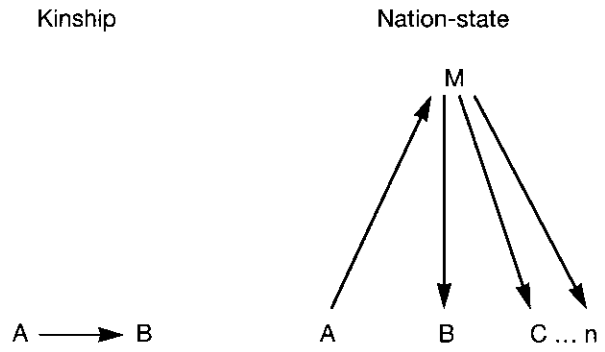
Viewed geopolitically, nationalism is an ambiguous type of ideology. It can be aggressive and expansionist – within and outside of state boundaries; and it can serve as a truly peacekeeping and culturally integrating force in a state or a region. Nationalism is frequently regarded by liberal theorists as a universalist kind of ideology emphasizing equality and human rights within its polity, but it can equally plausibly be seen as a kind of particularism denying non-citizens or culturally deviant citizens full human rights and, in extreme cases, even denying them membership in the community of humans (see Giddens, 1987:177 ff. for a critical discussion of these aspects of nationalism). Depending on the social context, then, nationalism may have socio-culturally integrating as well as disintegrating effects; it sometimes serves to identify a large number of people as *outsiders*, but it may also define an ever increasing number of people as *insiders* and thereby encourage social integration on a higher level than that which is current. There is nothing natural or historically inevitable in this. For the nation is an invention and a recent one at that – to paraphrase Anderson (1983), it is an *imagined community*; it is *not* a natural phenomenon, despite the fact that the object of every nationalism is to present a particular image of society as natural. Nationalism is ever emergent and must be defended and justified ideologically, perhaps particularly in the new states, where alternative modes of social integration, usually on a lower systemic level, remain immediately relevant to a large number of people. The "multi-ethnic" or "plural" state is the rule rather than the exception (Smith, 1981); however, cultural plurality can evaporate historically, it can lead to the formation of new nation-states, it can lead to conflict between ethnics or between state and ethnic minority, or it can be reconciled with nationhood and nationalism.

The emergence of nationalism

Historically, an important part played by nationalist ideologies in many contemporary nation-states has been to integrate an ever-larger number

of people culturally, politically and economically. The French were not a "people" before the French revolution, which began to spread the Ile-de-France (Parisian) language, notions of equal political rights, uniform primary education and, not least, the self-consciousness of being French to remote areas (Weber, 1976). Similar large-scale processes took place in all European countries during the 19th century, and the modern state, as well as nationalist ideology, is historically and logically linked with the spread of literacy (Goody, 1986), the quantification of time and the growth of industrial capitalism. The model of the nation-state as the supreme political unit spread (and continues to spread) through the 20th century. Not least owing to the increasing importance of international relations (trade, warfare, etc.), the state has played an extremely important part in the making of the contemporary world. Social integration on a large scale through the imposition of a uniform system of education, the introduction of universal contractual wagework, standardization of language, etc., is accordingly the explicit aim of nationalists in, for example, contemporary Africa. It is, of course, possible to achieve this end through contrasting the nation with a different nation or a minority residing in the state, which is then depicted as inferior or threatening. This strategy for cohesion is extremely widespread and is not a peculiar characteristic of the state as such: similar ideologies and practices are found in tribal societies and among urban minorities alike. In so far as enemy projections are dealt with in the present context, they are regarded as means to achieve internal, national cohesion, since international conflicts are not considered.

Nationalism as a mode of social organization represents a qualitative leap from earlier forms of integration. Within a national state, all men and women are *citizens*, and they participate in a system of relationships where they depend upon, and contribute to, the existence of a vast number of individuals whom they will never know personally. The main social distinction appears as that between insiders and outsiders; between citizens and non-citizens. The total system appears abstract and impenetrable to the citizen, who must nevertheless trust that it serves his needs. The seeming contradiction between the individual's immediate concerns and the large-scale machinations of the nation-state is bridged through nationalist ideology proposing to accord each individual citizen particular value. The ideology simultaneously depicts the nation metaphorically as an enormous system of relatives or as a religious community, and as a benefactor satisfying immediate needs (education, jobs, health, security, etc.). Through this kind of ideological technique, nationalism can serve to open *and* close former boundaries of social systems. Some become brothers metaphorically; others, whose citizenship (and, consequently, loyalty) is dubitable, become outsiders. In Figure 1, the peculiar communicational features of nationalism and the nation-state are depicted crudely and juxtaposed with the *Gemeinschaft*-like kinship or locality-based systems of communication which they seek to replace and imitate in their symbolism. The major difference is that nationalism and other modern ideologies communicate through abstract impersonal media (written laws, newspapers, mass meetings, books, electronic media etc.), whereas kinship ideology is largely communicated, whether directly or indirectly, through face-to-face interaction. The former presupposes the latter as a metaphoric model.



A and B denote agents. Arrows denote authoritative actions/ statements. M denotes a mediating structure (a mass medium).

Figur 1. Communication of ideology in two ideal-typical social systems.

Nationalism is ideally based on abstract norms; not on personal loyalty. Viewed as a popular ideology, nationalism is inextricably intertwined with the destiny of the state. Where the state is ideologically successful, its inhabitants become nationalists or patriots; that is, their identities and ways of life gradually grow compatible with the demands of the state and support its growth. Where nationalism fails to convince, the state may use violence or the threat of violence to prevent fission (that is, in the modern world, the potential formation of new states on its former territory). The monopoly on the use of legitimate violence is, together with its monopoly of taxation, one of the most important characteristics of the modern state; however, violence is usually seen as a last resort. Much more common are ideological

strategies aiming to integrate populations culturally. Since national boundaries change historically, and since nations are collectivities of people whose leaders conceive of their culture and history as shared, this is an ongoing process. Ethnic groups can vanish through annihilation or, more commonly, through assimilation. They may also continue to exist, and may pose a threat to nationalism in two main ways, either as agents of subversion (they do, after all, represent alternative cultural idioms and values – this was how the Jews of Nazi Germany were depicted) or as agents of fission (which was evidently the case with Baltic nationalists and other separatist groups in the Soviet Union).

Nationalist strategies are truly successful only when the state simultaneously increases its sphere of influence, and responds credibly to popular demands. It is tautologically true that if the state and state-related agencies can satisfy perceived needs in ways acknowledged by the citizens, then its inhabitants become nationalists. The main threats to national integration are therefore alternative types of social relationships which can also satisfy perceived needs. There are potential conflicts, therefore, between the state and non-state modes of organization, which may follow normative principles incompatible with those represented by the state. This kind of conflict is evident in every country in the world, and it can be studied as ideological conflict, provided ideology is seen not as a system of ideas, but as *sets of ideological practices*. Typical examples are African countries, where "tribalism" or organization along ethnic lines is perceived as a threat (by the state), or as an alternative (by the citizens), to the universalist rhetoric and practices of nationalism. From the citizen's point of view, nationalism may or may not be a viable alternative to kinship and/or ethnic ideology (or there may be two nationalisms to choose between, e.g. an Indian and a Sikh one) – and she will choose the option best suited to satisfy her needs, be they of a metaphysical, economic or political nature. The success or failure of attempts at national integration must therefore be studied not just at the level of political strategies or systemic imperatives; it must equally be understood at the level of the everyday life-world. In a word, the ideological struggles and the intra-state conflicts, as well as the context-specific options for "the good life", shape and are simultaneously rooted in the immediate experiences of its citizens, – and the analysis must begin there.

Universalism and particularism

Nationalism, as the ideology of the modern state, ostensibly represents universalist norms as opposed to particularist norms. A common type

of conflict entailed by this opposition occurs in the labour markets of many countries. According to kinship-based and ethnic ideologies of the kind prevalent in many African countries, employment should normally be provided by members of the extended lineage (or the ethnic). According to nationalist ideology, employment should be allocated democratically and bureaucratically, according to formal qualifications, regardless of the personal relationship between employer and applicant. These contradicting norms pervade labour markets in many parts of the world. The example further indicates that an individual who perceives the differences will adhere to the ideology whose implications are more beneficial to himself (see Helle-Valle, 1989; Eriksen, 1990a, for fuller discussions). The general point to be made here is that whenever nationalism is ideologically opposed to ethnic and kinship ideology, it will strive to present itself as just and fair according to abstract principles. Whether or not it succeeds in this respect depends on its ability to persuade people that it is beneficial to themselves (in some respect or other) that they subscribe to impartial justice of the kind represented by the state.

Contradictions between abstract norms of justice and concrete norms of loyalty occur in virtually every realm of social life in modern states. In most states, variations on this theme form a central part of the discourse on ideology; the question concerns which type of social identity is relevant and, ultimately, how the social world is constituted (see Larsen, 1987). The question I would like to pose while considering different forms of incorporation and integration in some modern states, is this: *Under which circumstances are social identities, specifically ethnic identities, made relevant in conflicts in modern states, how do such conflicts arise, and how can they be resolved?*

First of all, we should realize that the inhabitants of any society are members or potential members of many groups. This fact is understated by nationalist ideologies, which as a matter of principle divide individuals into two categories: insiders and outsiders. The pattern of competition and potential conflicts in complex modern societies could nevertheless be envisaged as one consisting of concentric circles; the general model would then be analog, since *degrees of difference* and different *levels of integration* are made relevant. Unlike the digital model advocated by nationalism, dividing people into only two, mutually exclusive categories, analog ideologies might entail that there are degrees of inside- and outsideness.

Through its official policies, the state will normally favour forms of organization incompatible with corporate action along ethnic or lineage lines; its way of classifying is different (digital or binary) and the

system of analog integration suggested is therefore incompatible with the organization of most states. On the other hand, the state may itself represent a form of "lineage organization", if it is controlled by a dominant ethnic.

One of the examples below describes a society where the state skilfully mediates between the two conflicting principles of social organization.

Compromise and Hegemony: Mauritius and Trinidad

Nowhere is the notion of the nation as an imagined community more evidently true than in the colonially created states. Commonly invoked as examples of this are the new African nation-states (see e.g. Smith, 1983), whose boundaries were randomly drawn a century ago, and whose nationalisms are of very recent origins. Even more striking are the culturally constructed nationalisms of societies which were never pre-colonial. Mauritius and Trinidad & Tobago are examples of such emergent nations. Both of these island-states, as I have stressed in the previous chapters, are ethnically heterogeneous and have always been; the very societies were created through the mass imports of slaves and indentured labourers during the modern era, and they have been independent less than 30 years.[7] Until the 1960s, then, the wider identities of the inhabitants of these islands were colonial; the people knew that they were British subjects and that, to some extent, they were ruled from Britain.

Mauritius and Trinidad, demographically similar, have followed different courses in inventing their respective nationalisms. Let us consider Mauritius first.

Mauritians are very conscious of problems related to ethnic differences. Their society is made up of groups originating from three continents and four major religions; there is no clear majority, and yet the Mauritian nation-state has hitherto avoided systematic inter-ethnic violence (the one notable exception to this being the series of minor riots around independence in 1967–8). Yet Mauritians are, regardless of ethnic membership, concerned to retain their ethnic distinctiveness. Rituals celebrating particular religions are widely attended, there is little intermarriage between groups, and there is currently an upsurge in popular interest in cultural origins: Hindi courses are held for Indo-Mauritians who have never learnt their ancestral tongue, Arabic is being introduced as the language of the mosque, an Organization of Afro-Mauritians was set up in the mid-1980s, etc. Simultaneously, there are strong forces at work encouraging a Mauritian nationalism

which is identified with uniformity in cultural practices: the emergent industrial system demands uniformly qualified, mobile labour, which in turn requires a standardization of education; national radio, TV and newspapers increasingly influence the form and topic of discourse about society, and the political system takes little account of ethnic differences. The Mauritian state, recognizing the immanent dangers of the potential dominance of one ethnic, has taken great pains to develop a set of national symbols which can be endorsed by anybody, and which are thus not associated with one particular ethnic.[8] Caught between different, sometimes conflicting ideological orientations, Mauritians choose situationally between the universalist ethics of nationalism, and the particularist ethics of ethnicity. In matters relating to employment and marriage, ethnicity is still a major variable, but it is constantly being counteracted by discourse where the superiority of abstract justice and non-particularism is explicitly endorsed. The openness of Mauritian discourse, public and private – in particular, the fact that ethnic conflicts and cultural differences are acknowledged everywhere as facts of social life – and the absence of a hegemonic ethnic are some of the conditions for – or expressions of – the kind of inter-ethnic compromise realized in Mauritius. Although there are important contradictions between ideologies of ethnicity and ideologies of nationalism at the level of individual action, the contradictions are to a great extent reconciled at the national political level, where compromise, justice, equal rights and tolerance are emphasized. Ethnically based systems of segmentary opposition are encouraged outside of the educational, political and economic systems, where the virtues of meritocracy are continuously stressed (see Chapters 5 and 6 for more details on Mauritian ethnicity).

Strategies of compromise, characteristic of Mauritian society, are by no means the inevitable outcome of ethnic plurality. In Trinidad, which is demographically similar to Mauritius, ethnicity takes on a different meaning. As in Mauritius, ethnicity is important in many situations in daily life as well as in politics, but it is not always acknowledged as such. Strategies of playing down ethnicity as a relevant topic are frequently employed; this kind of strategy is typical of dominant groups in many societies. The symbolic content of Trinidadian nationalism is a good example of this.

An important year in Trinidadian history was 1956, which may well be said to have been the year when Trinidadian nationalism emerged. For the first time, a pro-independence nationalist political party (PNM; People's National Movement) won the general election. What was the content of its nationalism? The main slogan was *"Massa Day Done"*;

a reasonable translation would be "our era as colonial servants is over". The notions of self-reliance and self-determination were in themselves powerful official national symbols. To the average Trinidadian, these ideas seem to have been perceived as immensely attractive, and nationalism was a strong and intoxicating force in Trinidadian life throughout the 1960s. But to whom? Who were the Trinidadians whose community was created imaginatively by the PNM leaders?

Looking more closely, we find several social schisms implicit in Trinidadian nationalism, the most important of which runs between blacks and Indians. The blacks are the larger group (but only slightly larger than the Indo-Trinidadian) and have held political power, and to a great extent economic power, since before independence. Indians were largely confined to the canefields. The towns were dominated by blacks; the radio played black music, and the national heroes, the calypsonians, were almost invariably black or brown creoles. The core electorate of the PNM were the urban black.

So what to make of the part played by Indians in early Trinidadian nationalism? It is a fact that they were for generations alienated from power and influence; only since around 1960 have the majority of Indo-Trinidadians taken part in the national project of Trinidad & Tobago to the extent that they have received compulsory elementary schooling and certain career opportunities in the national political and economic system. During the last 20 years, and particularly during the 1980s, there has been a strong wave of Indian ethnic revitalization in Trinidad. Culturally self-conscious Indians claim that Trinidadian nationalism is currently a black ideology with which they cannot identify without losing their identity as Indians. A question frequently raised critically by blacks as a reply to this accusation has been whether it is possible to be simultaneously Indian and Trinidadian. Here it should be noted that it would be absurd to ask whether it is possible to be simultaneously black and Trinidadian, since black culture is identified with national culture. In other words, the issue deals with responses to state-monitored attempts at cultural assimilation. Defining Indian culture as anti-national, blacks confirm their own as that of the Trinidadian nation. Less powerful than the blacks politically and in public culture, but still a large category of people fairly well integrated economically and politically, Indians react partly through declaring their status as that of an oppressed minority, partly by allowing themselves to become assimilated, and partly by arguing that their customs and notions, too, are part and parcel of the shared Trinidadian culture. The later line of argument recalls the official policies of the Mauritian state, where the desirability of cultural pluralism is emphasized (provided it does not conflict with bureaucratic and capitalistic values). In Trinidad, the legitimacy of ethnic systems of segmentary opposition is rejected in official discourse, but there is also a systematic inequality of power between ethnic groups. Stressing an ideology of equality in an environment of inequality is characteristic of dominant groups (see Ardener, 1989b:129–30, on dominant and "muted" groups with particular reference to gender). The unequal distribution of power thus seems to account for the significant variations in the techniques used for handling ethnic differences in Trinidad and Mauritius.

Trinidad and Mauritius were chosen as examples because they are in many ways similar, yet display two very different solutions to the problem of multiculturalism versus nationalism. Both are peaceful at the national level, at least in the sense of not having an ethnic problem involving systematic physical violence, whether between individuals or between state and individual. However, the Trinidadian model structurally resembles that of less successful multicultural societies. The United States is an obvious example of such a society, where all citizens, regardless of race and religion, have the same basic rights, but where rules of social mobility favour some but not all, and where nationalism is identified with cultural symbols of the hegemonic group. Thus, blacks and Hispanics are disqualified in a way structurally similar to that of Indians in Trinidad. Ideologies of equality in this way serve to justify inequality whenever they fail to account for cultural differences. Additionally, the US nation contains – or encapsulates – ethnic minorities whose cultural distinctiveness is in important ways incompatible with the requirements of national society. This is clearly the case with Amerindian groups, who more obviously than blacks and Hispanics suffer culturally from the intrusion of nationalistically justified imperatives. Participation in the capitalist economy, the schooling system, etc. may contradict important features of their way of life. In the case of such groups, the problem is not only one of unequal distribution of power; it is perhaps chiefly a problem of cultural and political autonomy. In this kind of state/ethnic relationship, the powerless, "muted" group (Ardener, 1989b) may demand the right to be culturally different in confrontation with the state, in a context of overwhelming power asymmetry.

I shall now turn to a description of a conflict of this type, which is nevertheless atypical – and therefore interesting analytically – because this state is in principle willing to take part in dialogue with the minority.

Indigenous Peoples and State Penetration: The Example of Northern Norway

The relationship between the Norwegian state and the Saami (Lappish) minority in northern Norway is complex, and a brief outline of some aspects of the contemporary relationship will have to suffice.

Since the start of the postwar wave of ethnic revitalization among the Saami (roughly since the 1950s), the Saami organizations' demand for cultural and political self-determination has grown in intensity. The ethnic processes taking place in territories settled by Saami are similar to nationalist movements. There is a current resurgence in popular interest in the recodification and glorification of their stigmatized cultural tradition, and there has consequently been an increasingly articulated dichotomization in interaction with Norwegians and mainstream Norwegian culture and society (Eidheim, 1971). These processes are similar to those of the burgeoning Norwegian nationalism of the mid-19th century (Østerud, 1984). There is one major difference, however, between indigenous rights groups, such as the Saami, and nationalist movements. The Saami do not demand full sovereignty; they do not intend to set up a Saami state. Orienting themselves towards international law, the Saami nevertheless fight for self-determination in matters considered vital to their survival as a culture-bearing group. In this they have aims comparable to those of indigenous groups in the Americas, in Australia and elsewhere. This would have to include an institutionalization of the relationship between the state and themselves built on an official recognition of their right to self-determination as an indigenous people and a recognition of the state's duty to grant these special rights.

A profound dilemma for the Saami movement, then, is rooted in the rather paradoxical situation that the state against which they fight for self-determination must also, in the last instance, be accepted as an ultimate guarantor for the very same rights that it threatens. Norwegian policies vis-à-vis the Saami, in so far as they have acknowledged the Saami as a culturally distinctive minority, have until recently focused on questions of juridical rights defined within the national Norwegian idiom. The Saami movement was not successful until it was able to present itself effectively as the representative of a Fourth World nation and present its case in the idiom of international law, although an institutionalized division of power between the state and the newly elected Saami parliament (1989) is now emerging. Unlike the situation in Mauritius and Trinidad, where negotiation takes place in a shared idiom of discourse, the state–Saami context is still one where there is not always agreement regarding the very *rules of the game* (see Eidheim, 1985, for a full discussion).

This dilemma goes to the core of a central problem of nationalism: the nationalist tendency towards cultural homogenization, and the accompanying tendency to frame every political question in the state's legalistic, bureaucratic form of discourse. This disqualifies culturally distinctive groups from full participation, and simultaneously promotes their assimilation. The process taking place in the northernmost part of Europe is an interesting one from this point of view, since the state is here in principle sympathetically inclined to a dialogue with a well-articulated, culturally distinctive group. The recent founding of an elected Saami parliament (with limited power) may enable Saami to articulate their political demands in their own terms. Such an attempt may, however, be unsuccessful for two reasons. First, the structure of the Saami parliament is modelled on Norwegian political institutions – it resembles a county council – which may result in an internationalization of the form of Saami politics. Secondly, the necessary discourse with the Norwegian state must probably be kept within a Norwegian idiom focusing on juridical rights and duties.

The ideological situation of contemporary Saami is a difficult one. Simultaneously a Norwegian citizen and member of the modern world on the one hand, and a member of a cultural minority on the other, the average Saami is faced with a number of difficult choices. He is culturally and ideologically opposed to, and yet economically and structurally dependent on the Norwegian state. It is relatively easy for Saami to assimilate, to *become Norwegian*, and many do. This should not be taken as an indication of Norwegian nationalism among the indigenes – there is little in their history and contemporary situation encouraging such an ideology; it should rather be seen as a tangible indication of the division of power and opportunities in a state society. Unless a truly ingenious model of autonomy within the national state is developed, the structural imperatives for Saami to assimilate will probably work in favour of assimilation in the long run, and the Saami ethnic may eventually vanish. Nationalism will in that case emerge victorious; not primarily as a belief system, however, but as a power structure and a set of unified, integrating political, economic and domestic practices. Ethnically based systems of segmentary oppositions (Saami values/principles against Norwegian values/principles) will in this case be invalidated: if they eventually cease to be relevant in all kinds of interaction, then the Saami minority will have been been fully assimilated.

On the other hand, if the principles of international law concerning the rights of indigenous peoples are fully acknowledged in the *prac-*

tices of the Norwegian state, then the Saami may survive as a culture-bearing group within the territory of the Norwegian state, which may thereby avoid otherwise inevitable accusations of cultural genocide.

It should be noted, lastly, that the Saami movement draws much of its legitimacy not from political entities constituted by the state or by a system of states (such as the UN or the European Community), but from international Fourth World organizations and informal networks, and through transnational public support. Fourth World politics thus serves as a countervailing influence – however modest – to the state's monopoly of political power in the contemporary world.

National Attitudes to Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities pose a problem to the national state to the extent that they communicate their distinctiveness in contexts where this distinctiveness is incompatible with requirements of the national state, notably those referring to formal equality and uniform practices. The minorities, as is evident from the example of the Saami, are faced with threats of more or less enforced assimilation. The intensity of such pressures to assimilate is generally linked to the degree of modernization and the level of state integration in national society. Where ethnic minorities could formerly be ignored and left alone, they are, in the modern world, defined from the outside as citizens of the national state, and are thus given equal rights by an administrative apparatus unable – or at least unwilling – to grant its subjects unequal rights on grounds of cultural distinctiveness. Indigenes or other ethnically distinctive populations may, too, serve as negative symbols of the nation, in which case the relationship is chiefly one of conflict, not one of possible compromise. This was clearly the case in Nazi Germany, where Germanness was defined in contrast to the un-Germanness of Jews, Gypsies and Slavs (and still is to some extent; see Forsythe, 1989). On the other hand, ethnic minority populations can also be used symbolically in an apparently opposite way, as metaphors of the nation. This seems to be the case in Australia, where Aboriginals "have become so close to the centre of nationalist thought that they have suffered from it" (Kapferer, 1988:142). In emphasizing the purity and ancientness of Aboriginal society, official Australia prevents their assimilation in a manner not dissimilar from policies of apartheid; that is, they are given differential treatment due to differences in culture (or race). That Aboriginals are not treated as equals by the Australian state is evident (Kapferer, 1988), and Australian prejudices against people of non-Northern European descent indicate that Australian egalitarianism

applies only to those perceived as *the same kind of people* (see Kapferer, 1988:183 ff.).

Autonomy or assimilation?

On the one hand, ethnic minorities may demand specific rights because of their distinctive culture and way of life. On the other hand, they may suffer systematic discrimination if they are granted such rights by the state. South African apartheid is an even more obvious example of this than the Australian policies vis-à-vis Aboriginals. When the "Bantustans" or "homelands" were created, black South Africans were formally allowed to refuse to contribute to the white economic system to which they were, inextricably, structurally tied. The teaching of African languages among blacks has also been encouraged in apartheid policy. This has enabled blacks to retain parts of their cultural heritage, and it has equally efficiently debarred them from political participation in South African society.[9] Their systems of segmentary oppositions have been isolated from the wider social context of which they potentially form part.

It may seem, then, that neither solution is viable. If all citizens are to be treated equally, then cultural minorities are disqualified because their particular skills are ignored. But if citizens are treated unequally on the basis of cultural difference, then cultural minorities suffer discrimination because they lack certain rights granted the rest of the population. It may seem, then, that ethnic minorities are bound to lose any conceivable battle with the state.

The dilemma is easier to resolve – at least in theory – than it may seem. If we consider the Trinidadian situation again, the crucial factor in the cultural predicament of Indo-Trinidadians clearly consists in the official definition of nationalism. If Trinidadian nationalism is to be defined as coterminous with black culture, then Indians have to choose between evils, as it were: either they assimilate and become "Creoles", or they retain their Indianness at the risk of being ostracized and disqualified. If the definition of Trinidadianness on the contrary is extended to include Hindus, and if India is officially recognized as an ancestral Trinidadian land, then it may be possible to be Indian *and* Trinidadian without more ado. Similarly, multicultural nations such as Australia, the United States and South Africa could conceivably extend the idiom of nationalism to include non-white people, creating compromises and tolerating differences in a "Mauritian" fashion.

The more fundamental problem is, however, not yet resolved. For nationalism, intimately linked with the state and large-scale organiza-

tion, entails specific principles of social organization not necessarily compatible with those of ethnic minorities. The success of Mauritian nationalism seems to depend on the containment of such differences to contexts where ethnic segmentary oppositions do not interfere with the principles of the state. Cultural minorities, apparently, are thus forced to adapt to some of the demands of the modern state in order to be able to articulate their interests (see Eriksen, 1991f, for a full discussion of this). This will to a greater or lesser extent be linked with cultural change. If they refuse, they run the risk of witnessing the purchase of their ancestral land for a handful of coloured glass beads. For the key variable in the understanding of relationships between nations and ethnics is *power*. The power invariably lies with the state, which represents the nation, which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence, which contains the culturally hegemonic group – and which thereby defines the terms of negotiation and the form of discourse. Powerless groups must therefore learn to master the language of the powerful, and in this process they may have to alter their cultural identity substantially. This applies equally to aboriginal populations and to urban minorities, although emphases may differ (for one thing, urban minorities, unlike many indigenes, usually engage in wage work and in this conform to nationalist ideology).

The Justification of Nationalism: Symbols, Power, Integrating Practices

In order to function successfully, nationalism must legitimize the power of the state, and it must simultaneously make the lives of citizens seem inherently meaningful. The partial failure of Norwegian nationalism to make sense to the Saami in this dual fashion has led to negotiations, where the Norwegian state nevertheless sets the terms by ignoring and tacitly disapproving of Saami identity and selfhood. Indeed, in all the examples mentioned except that of Mauritius, which is in this respect considered a success, conflicts between nation-states and ethnics can be understood along this dimension. If the state fails to persuade its citizens that it represents the realization of (some of) their dreams and aspirations, then its power may appear illegitimate. The result may be revolt, and in such cases the state may well resort to violence. This is well known from many countries, past and present. My point has been that there are also powerful non-violent means available for the state to secure its monopoly of political power, even if nationalist ideology fails. The most important is the state's exclusive right to define the terms of discourse, including its right to collect taxes. In

well-integrated states, these terms of discourse take on the form of *doxa* (Bourdieu's, 1980, expression); that is, they are perceived as unquestionable. In states including groups which are not integrated in the state through a shared education, participation in the same economic system, etc., this form of statal power is perceived as a form of coercion; as enforced "acculturation", as it were.

The ideological power of nationalism is often (but not always) expressed in the official identification of enemies, and as has been noted many times by analysts, warfare can serve as a nationally integrating force. Any segmentary oppositions (or other forms of conflict) within the polity may be postponed and "forgotten" when an external enemy encourages the realization of the highest level of the system of oppositions. The Falklands/Malvinas war between Britain and Argentina (1982) is a recent, obvious example of this familiar mechanism, at least if seen from a British point of view. Similarly, the identification and prosecution of *internal enemies* has been a familiar technique of integration for centuries. Contemporary witchhunts include the Kenyan police-state's "internal war" against the partly mythical opposition group Mwakenya and, with a starting-point in popular (not state-monitored) nationalism, the French nationalists' designation of North Africans as the main threat to Frenchness.

In order to understand the power of nationalism on the one hand, and its oppressive aspects on the other, it is crucial to understand how nationalism is, ultimately, a particularist form of ideology: it defines cultural and social boundaries for a community, and it excludes those who do not fit in. I have argued that these boundaries are flexible, but have also indicated that they are not indefinitely so. In particular, nationalism – as the ideology which holds that the boundaries of the political state should be coterminous with the boundaries of the cultural community[10] – requires cultural uniformity in certain respects. Nationalism represents a simple binary opposition (between citizens and non-citizens), whereas other ideologies differentiate between people in segmentary terms. The state, which by the late 20th century necessarily represents a successful nationalism, possesses a monopoly of violence and has exclusive rights to extract tribute in the form of taxes. It is therefore in the immediate interest of a successful nationalism to promote cultural homogeneity as regards law and order, and economic activity. Conflicts between pastoralists and the new states in Africa typically exemplify this problem. The pastoralists do not acknowledge the laws pertaining to private property (nor, for that matter, national borders), and since their economy is not chiefly a monetary one, they do not contribute financially to the state. Therefore, they are by defini-

tion anti-nationalists insofar as they reside within the state which, ideology has it, should be coterminous with the cultural community. In a very fundamental sense, then, *every human being in the late 20th century is encouraged – or forced – to take on an identity as a citizen.* As indicated, those who do not tend to lose. Empirically, the battle between nationalist and ethnic ideologies is most frequently won by the dominant nationalism, which is already represented in the state. However, as I have suggested, there are possible compromises between nation and ethnicity – even if the inherently aggressive assimilating drive of state nationalism is acknowledged. Let us therefore consider some conditions for the resolution – or avoidance – of conflicts between state nationalism and ethnicity.

Implications: Conditions for Multicultural Peace

Two main types of conflict involve nationalist ideology. On the one hand, many conflicts arise between states *or potential states.* Every international conflict involving states – as well as civil wars such as the one in Sri Lanka, where one party fights for political secession – are varieties of this kind of conflict. The ideologies activated are all nationalist in character.

This discussion has focused on the second type of conflict. This kind of conflict unfolds *within* a state where neither party favours political secession. Such conflicts can involve the state and one or several ethnics; ideologically, they are ambiguous as several of the combatants may claim to represent universalism and nationalism on behalf of all of the groups involved in the conflict, notwithstanding that some other group may (or may not) form the majority and/or be in charge of the state administration. This category of conflicts is the most complex, empirically and ideologically. First, we need to distinguish between those conflicts involving "Fourth World" people and those involving urban minorities. Secondly, there is an important difference between ethnically plural states and relatively homogeneous states in so far that the ethnic power relations will normally differ, and methods for resolving problems must differ too.

By way of conclusion, we can now indicate some necessary (although not sufficient) conditions for the resolution of types of conflict involving categories of people whose social emphasis on mutual cultural differences forms an important part of the ideological justification of the conflict, and where the boundaries of the state are not challenged. In other words, this is an attempt to delineate conditions for peaceful cultural plurality within a modern state.

Some necessary, but not sufficient conditions for peaceful multiculturalism in national societies

- Equal access to the educational system, the labour market and/or other shared facilities should be deemed as desirable. This must also entail the right to be different, *the right not to participate in national society* in certain respects, the right to enact systems of segmentary oppositions not sanctioned by the state. The judiciary system will normally limit the extent of the articulation of such differences. Laws are changeable.
- National identity should be available to all citizens regardless of their cultural differences.
- State policies pertaining to multiculturalism should take account of possible culturally contingent differences in their definitions of situations.
- By implication, the state cannot be identified with a set of symbols exclusively representing one or a few component populations.
- Political power should be decentralized, and different principles for local political organization should be accepted.

Differences between nations as regards modes of integration, political systems and economic circumstances are enormous. Since I have throughout this chapter treated the national state as an analytic concept, I am now compelled to mention some of the relevant differences between actual, historically situated states.

First, the differences in degree of incorporation within the nation-state are crucial. For instance, many African and Melanesian societies are hardly at all integrated at a national level; their members scarcely participate in national society. The problems discussed in this chapter do not apply to them yet (although they are faced with different problems). Secondly, the degree of cultural uniformity within nations varies. Even in Mauritius, where the absence of cultural uniformity seems to have been turned into a blessing for nationalism, cultural homogeneity is very high in important respects; there is consensus as regards the political system, there is uniform participation in the educational system as well as the capitalist economy (see Chapters 5, 6 and 9). Conflicts between state and ethnic are more difficult to resolve when representatives of the ethnic demand participation on their own terms, which need not be those of the nation-state. Thirdly, it is empirically significant whether a particular nation-state and its accompanying ideology have emerged out of feudalism or out of colonialism (or both at once, as seems to be the case with some of the post-1989 East Euro-

pean nationalisms). The former societies tend to be better integrated, socially and culturally, than the latter. Fourthly, specific political traditions or histories influence the nature of inter-ethnic relations. The history of slavery contributes to shaping the contemporary relationship between blacks and the US nation-state and seems to prevent constructive dialogue. On the other hand, the moderate success of independent Zimbabwe as regards ethnic relations shows that there is nothing inevitable in this kind of historical process. Fifthly, and perhaps most fundamentally, the actual division of political and economic power (and thereby, the division of cultural power) constitutes, in an important sense, the social structure of a society. In a word, groups which are oppressed, poor and stigmatized have little opportunity to articulate their claims convincingly. The remarkable success of North American Jews in retaining their ethnic identity, governing their own destiny and yet being recognized as good Americans (a striking success compared with other immigrant groups), has been possible only because their economic power has been considerable.

In sum, if violence or other serious conflicts between nation-state and ethnicity are to be avoided, then the state must reduce its demands with respect to the degree of cultural integration of its citizens. Since it is virtually second nature for modern, bureaucratic states (unlike earlier, pre-nationalist states) to promote cultural integration at any cost, this is extremely difficult to achieve. It remains an indubitable fact, nevertheless, that the responsibility lies largely with the state so long as it insists on retaining its monopolies of political power and the use of legitimate violence.

In the next two chapters, the Mauritian ideological situation will be discussed in greater detail. Chapter 5 describes the forms of social classification relevant in Mauritius, while Chapter 6 discusses the relationship between different languages in the ambiguous Mauritian context, where tensions between globalization, nationalism and ethnicity contribute to the political discourse concerning the official status of different languages.

5

Containing Conflict and Transcending Ethnicity?

In its widest sense, this chapter, like the preceding one, deals with conditions for peace and political stability in so-called poly-ethnic societies. In contrast with the wide-ranging comparisons undertaken in Chapter 4, this chapter approaches the topic through detailed description of a single, peaceful poly-ethnic society, and an analysis of the ways in which its inhabitants resolve or avoid violent ethnic conflicts.

The analysis presupposes the analytical delineation of nationalist and ethnic ideologies presented in Chapter 4. Relevant aspects of ideology and social organization in Mauritius are described. The final part of the chapter suggests an analytical framework for the study of ideology and ethnicity which can be a fruitful alternative to the conceptual models which have been proposed by most of the scholars who have hitherto written about "plural societies". This topic is pursued more extensively in Chapter 9.

Allow me initially to highlight and elaborate on the general discussion of ethnicity and nationalism presented in Chapter 4.

Nationalism, I have argued, is ever emergent and must continuously be defended and justified ideologically, perhaps particularly in the young states of the South. Particularly in these countries, alternative forms of identity, usually at lower systemic levels than nationalism (but also sometimes at higher systemic levels; cf. Pan-Africanism, Pan-Arabism and processes of globalization – see Chapter 9), remain immediately relevant to a large number of people. The "poly-ethnic" state is the rule rather than the exception in the contemporary world (Smith, 1981). However, this need not be a permanent situation. History has shown us that cultural plurality and its social relevance may disappear in the course of time; it can also lead to the formation of new nation-states.

States may be culturally "plural". Such a plurality, if it is to be peaceful, nevertheless requires that the form of nationalism sanctioned

7

New World Indians: A Comparison Between Mauritius and Trinidad

As has been suggested in previous chapters, there are many intriguing similarities and differences between the Creole island societies of the western Indian Ocean and Caribbean island societies. In this, as in Chapter 4, some comparisons of ethnic and nationalist ideologies in Mauritius and Trinidad are carried out. Unlike the previous discussion, this chapter focuses on the ethnic situation of the Indian "diaspora" of the two societies, as well as their relationship to nation-building. While the differences in political power are seen as significant in the comparison of the two island democracies, there are also important similarities between the two uprooted groups.

> For the 'sons of the soil', there could be liking, even respect; the 'noble savage' aura was sometimes painted around Malays, Burmese, Fijians. With the Creole blacks, there was an acknowledgedment of a partially shared language and folk culture, in dance and music. But the Indians were almost always stigmatized as the dregs of their country: lowborn, even criminal.
>
> (Tinker, 1974:221)

Brought to the islands during the British colonial indentureship scheme from c1840 to c1910, the Indians of Trinidad and Mauritius were in both societies politically marginal until the electoral reforms of the postwar years. There are both similarities and differences in the collective situation of Indians in Trinidad and Mauritius. Both of the societies are nevertheless, it should be kept in mind, remarkably peaceful at the inter-ethnic level. In this chapter, I shall compare the respective positions of Indians in the two nation-states, paying special attention to the relationship between the wider socio-cultural contexts of daily life and national politics.[1]

Three Analytical Perspectives

A fair number of studies dealing with Mauritius and Trinidad describe the ways in which the descendants of Indian immigrants in these societies "preserve their culture" and "reproduce their social institutions". Two well-known anthropological monographs representative of this approach are Morton Klass's study of Trinidad (Klass, 1961) and Burton Benedict's study of Mauritius (Benedict, 1961), both of which were based on village fieldwork in the late 1950s. Notwithstanding their merits, this type of study could be justly criticized for being one-sided and misleading in that it tends to neglect the very considerable interaction taking place between the descendants of Indians and members of other ethnic categories in the societies under investigation. This interaction, which has contributed to shaping the total socio-cultural environments in which Indians and non-Indians alike move, is constituted partly by inter-ethnic interfaces, partly by social contexts where ethnicity is irrelevant.

Other researchers, aware of the shortcomings of such mono-ethnic community studies, have emphasized the so-called poly-ethnic nature of societies such as Trinidad and Mauritius, and have (at least at the level of programmatic statements) called for studies of inter-ethnic relations in such societies. This sociological school, where M. G. Smith and Lloyd Braithwaite are among the more prominent names, has implicitly and sometimes explicitly viewed the East Indians of Caribbean societies as ethnic *minorities* with typical minority problems. Some, among them Braithwaite (1975), define their most serious problem as being one of *adaptation to the host society* (which is, in the Caribbean, dominated by Afro-American and European culture), while Smith and others have taken the view that Indian culture and social organization are in crucial ways incompatible with the dominant culture, and that conflict is bound to arise in any plural society, perhaps particularly in those recognizing the rights of minorities and trying to treat their citizens equally (Smith, 1965; see also Clarke, 1986; Serbin, 1987; see this volume, Chapters 5 and 9, for critical views on this perspective).

Such research strategies and theoretical perspectives have serious limitations, assuming that the aim of analysis is to understand internal social and cultural processes in the societies seen as total systems. Notably, the actual situation in which "diaspora Indians" find themselves, particularly regarding political strategies and identity management, should be examined. What is sometimes referred to, simplistically, as the cultural adaptation of diaspora Indians is better viewed as the ongoing interaction between Indian and non-Indian social and cultural systems, where values, norms and forms of organization are continuously negotiated and where the cultural differences within a statistically defined "population segment" or an "ethnic group" may be of greater significance than the systematic differences obtaining between the categories. Lastly, inter-ethnic contexts can never be reduced simply to either conflict or compromise. While Indian communities of the "diaspora"[2] are conditioned, culturally and socially, by the "host society", the influence exerted by Indians themselves on the societies in question is never negligible, and lines of communication and power are always two-ways, although power may, of course, be asymmetrically distributed. It is possible to be a West Indian East Indian, as Naipaul (1973) once put it.

The outcome of this ongoing process, while not necessarily a melting-pot in every respect, is a socio-cultural environment where members of different ethnic categories share some fields of interaction, where some fields of interaction are kept closed along ethnic lines (this is what one may, following Barth, 1969a, refer to as the maintenance of ethnic boundaries), and where a third, variable area of interaction belongs to an ambiguous grey zone as far as the reproduction of inter-ethnic shared meaning is concerned. There is nevertheless nothing to suggest that ethnic boundaries in Trinidad or Mauritius will break down absolutely in the near future, although they continuously change, historically, geographically and situationally; in symbolic content and in social relevance. This implies that a great number of inter-ethnic situations are subject to constant negotiation, and there are always a large number of societal factors which influence the nature of these encounters. We need, therefore, to take daily, apparently trivial inter-ethnic encounters seriously. If we are able fully to understand why there is say, a disagreement between a Negro and an Indian over a matter relating to say, a particular government policy, then we may have understood something very profound about the nature of ethnicity and social classification in general, thanks to the indexicality of social action on the one hand, and to the dependence of politicians for support in parliamentary democracies such as Trinidad and Mauritius on the other hand. The daily encounters between members of different ethnic groups constitute the fundamentals of ethnicity. Had there not been firm, widely shared perceptions of differences between Indians and blacks in Trinidad or Mauritius, then politicians, employers and opportunists would never have been able to exploit ethnic cleavages in the population, simply because there would have been none. It would be foolish to pretend that such differences do not exist, but it would be equally untenable to treat them as givens.

Although public discourse about ethnicity in Mauritius and Trinidad frequently focuses on conflicts between blacks and Indians, conflicts are not an inevitable outcome of the widespread inter-ethnic contacts, whether in Trinidad, in Mauritius or elsewhere. Whether or not a given situation leads to conflict along ethnic lines depends on a number of situational and contextual factors which need not be intrinsically connected with ethnicity.

Ethnicity and the Definition of Indianness

Indians in a poly-ethnic society outside of India cannot adequately be viewed as simply Indians. They are Indians in a particular historical and socio-cultural context, and this is an inextricable part of their life – even those aspects of their life which pertain to their very Indianness. A TV beer commercial popular in Trinidad in the latter half of 1989, which featured a classical Indian song, thus did not just communicate that Indians, too, ought to drink this brand of beer. It also communicated that it is quite legitimate to be Indian, despite the fact, which every Trinidadian knows, that public Trinidad is strongly dominated by cultural symbols and emblems associated with black New World culture. An identical commercial, shown in India or Mauritius, would have carried a different meaning because the wider ideological contexts are different. In Mauritius, Indian cultural messages are so widespread and so common, on TV and elsewhere, that nobody would notice such a commercial as being unusual. In Trinidad, as in Mauritius, it is impossible to forget that one is in a cultural environment where one always has to take the ethnic *others* into account. The implications for ethnicity of, on the one hand, dominant power structures and, on the other hand, everyday social contexts are different in the two societies, and a main aim of this chapter is to explore some of these differences.

When using the term ethnicity, we implicitly say that somebody claims the right to be different, but we should remember that ethnicity also implies that the person in question also claims the right to be *similar* in some respects. For had there not been a perceived similarity between blacks and Indians, then there could have been no inter-ethnic relationship, since perceptions of similarity are a necessary condition for the inter-ethnic contacts which are presupposed by, and which in a sense constitute, ethnicity. It is this ambiguity which makes ethnicity such a difficult topic to study; it is an elusive, yet obviously pervasive aspect of the shared discourse in a self-proclaimed poly-ethnic society. Apart from noting that ethnicity entails the systematic communication

of cultural differences between members of groups acknowledging each other's cultural specificity, we cannot list absolute, substantial criteria for ethnicity (see Chapters 2 and 3). Ethnicity may or may not involve conceptions of differences in "race", religion and/or language. What matters is whether differences are commonly agreed upon as being socially relevant, not whether or not they exist "objectively".[3] In a study from northern Norway, Eidheim (1971) thus showed that, although there were virtually no "objective cultural differences" between the Norwegians and the Saami, ethnicity was important because people acted according to ethnic stereotypes and thus maintained ethnic boundaries.

Ethnicity is always an aspect of a social relationship, and thus involves interaction and some shared base for communication on the part of both groups involved. This is an important point to make in relation to poly-ethnic societies because it suggests that ethnicity is not in principle incompatible with shared national identity. The ethnic identity of a single group viewed in isolation, as has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, is like the sound from one hand clapping. The Indians of Trinidad, for example, would not have been Indians in the way they are unless they had been forced to relate to black, brown, off-white and white creole culture, and vice versa. This holds for Mauritius too in situationally similar ways, but in different political and economic contexts. This is how the similarities and differences between Indians in Mauritius and in Trinidad can be envisaged; as historical and contemporary contexts. I shall therefore, when describing the situation of Indians in Mauritius and Trinidad, emphasize the national contexts in which they play a part *as Indians* – at the risk of overemphasizing the actual importance of ethnicity.

The Mauritian national context is in many respects a more Indian one than the Trinidadian, and I now turn to a brief account of its genesis and further development.

The Making of the Indo-Mauritians

From the abolition of slavery in 1835 until the end of World War I, millions of Indians were brought to other British colonies, particularly plantation colonies, under the system of indentureship, which has been labelled "a new form of slavery" in Hugh Tinker's (1974) oft-quoted phrase and which, whether a form of slavery proper or not, replaced the abandoned system of Negro slavery. The majority of these indentured labourers hailed from the north-eastern provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and were speakers of Bhojpuri (a spoken language

related to Hindi); substantial numbers also embarked from Madras, the main port of what is now Tamil Nadu in the south. The majority of the emigrants were Hindus; a large minority were Muslims and a smaller minority Christian. Although the bulk of Indian immigrants to the colonies were field labourers, small proportions were artisans, traders and even Hindu pundits. Some, most of them South Indians, speakers of the Dravidian languages Tamil and Telegu, left India on their own whim, in order to further their careers as traders or artisans abroad.[4]

In four of the colonies to which indentured Indian labourers were sent, their are numbers sufficiently substantial for them to vie for political power in the post-colonial era.[5] These four societies, all of them independent nation-states since the 1960s, are Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, and Mauritius. Mauritians of Indian origin constitute the only group of Indian emigrés who have continuously dominated politics in their new homeland since the electoral reforms introduced in many of these territories after the Second World War (see Simmons, 1983; Bowman, 1990). This is caused by several concurrent processes, not all of them obvious, and I shall consider the causes of the political success of Indo-Mauritians before describing their contemporary political and cultural situation in some detail.

The political success of Indo-Mauritians

In any political system with functioning parliamentary institutions, there is strength in numbers. In Mauritius, people of Indian descent have made up more than half the population since the 1870s; today, they comprise approximately 65 percent of the total population of roughly one million. In other words, by sheer force of numbers, it was likely that Indo-Mauritians should play a major part in national politics after the introduction of universal suffrage in 1948. This not only meant that Indians comprised the largest group of voters, but it also indicated that the size and diversity of the Indian population enabled them to retain and reproduce forms of local and domestic organization advantageous in politics – in a word, their foci of social organization were the family and extended kinship networks, the village and, to a not negligible extent, caste-based organization (see Benedict, 1961).

This leads to a second point, namely that the people of Indian descent in Mauritius were more heterogeneous than those who settled in the New World. Already under French rule, in the late 18th century, there were visible minorities of Indians in the capital Port-Louis; some of them menial labourers or dockers, others conducting business on varying scales (St Pierre, 1983 [1773]). Many of these immigrants,

most of whom were Tamils or Indian Muslims, were *creolized* during the 19th century; that is, they converted to Christianity, lost their language and were absorbed into the emergent coloured middle-class. But a substantial proportion of these urban migrants have retained their identity as Indians up to this day, and this indicates that throughout the history of Mauritius, and up to this day, there has been an economically influential group of "respectable" citizens of Indian descent. Some of these families have exerted an influence comparable to that of the French planters – and like the planters, rich urban Muslims are fiercely endogamous and take great pride in their origins.

Thirdly, geography works in the favour of Indians in Mauritius, compared with those settled in the New World. In the islands of the western Indian Ocean, which must in many other respects be regarded as similar to those of the Caribbean, a different set of cultural influences are at work. First, virtually all Mauritians, Indians and blacks alike, speak a French-based creole language, and they tend to prefer French to English as a literary language (although many Indians nowadays prefer English, this preference being an aspect of their ethnic identity as Indians; see Chapter 6). Secondly, Mauritius is too remote from America, geographically and (perhaps especially) culturally, to have taken part in the black self-consciousness movement which was very influential in the Caribbean and the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s. The society as a whole is, in contrast with Trinidad, more Gallicized than Americanized. Thirdly, the gravitational pull from India is strongly felt in Mauritius: it possesses a much stronger Indian flavour than any society in the New World. India is sufficiently close for the reasonably affluent to send their sons there for wives or to become educated, and even Mauritians of modest means can afford a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to the land of their ancestors. The link between India and Mauritius has long been acknowledged: on his way from South Africa to India, Mahatma Gandhi, for example, visited Mauritius. Flights between Bombay and Mauritius are frequent, and the island receives, among other things, fresh supplies of the most recent Hindi movies regularly. (A rather sadder aspect of the intimate links between Bombay and Mauritius is the soaring growth of drug abuse on the island during the last decade.)

The content of Mauritian Indianness

Compared with diaspora communities of Trinidad or Guyana, the Indian community in Mauritius has by and large been less creolized at the level of daily practices. The *tika* can still be seen on the foreheads

of most Mauritian Hindu women and, even in the towns, most of the married Hindu women rub henna into their hair parting. Half of the many cinemas in Mauritius show exclusively Indian films with no subtitles, and unlike in Trinidad, blacks rarely make jokes about "Hindi movies". Bhojpuri is still spoken fairly widely in the north-eastern villages and is understood by many blacks living in these areas, although only elderly, female, rural Indo-Mauritians now tend to be monolingual in Bhojpuri. The variant of Bhojpuri spoken in Mauritius is closer to that spoken in Bihar than the Bhojpuri spoken in either Fiji, Guyana or Trinidad. The caste system still exists, although not as a hierarchy of corporate groups or occupational groups; rather as a "hierarchy of prestige labels valued at the upper end, devalued at the lower end and largely ignored in the middle" (Benedict, 1965:36). Castes tend not to be endogamous.

This is not to say that there has been little or no cultural change since the bulk of the indentured labourers arrived four or more generations ago. An Indian from India (*«enn lendien dilend»* in Kreol) of my acquaintance thus lamented the shallowness of the Indo-Mauritian cultural identity. Pointing to what he called their obsession with money and material riches – and surely idealizing conditions in India – he thought the Indo-Mauritians unspiritual and superficial. While more than half of the Indo-Mauritians still have their source of income in the sugar industry, there are by now Indo-Mauritians in virtually every profession. Unlike in Trinidad (and even more unlike Guyana; see LaGuerre, 1989), many Indians work in the Mauritian civil service; and an increasing number are business managers in the thriving Mauritian industry,. Interestingly, several Indo-Mauritian authors write fiction in Hindi and publish in India.

However, the "diaspora Indians" were just as underprivileged in Mauritius as anywhere else until after World War II. The bulk of them were undernourished, illiterate, impoverished, and were viewed with suspicion and contempt as primitive pagans by whites, browns, Chinese and blacks alike. The Indians were perceived as being culturally more remote from the colonial and creole ruling classes than the blacks and coloureds, and the Colourels were therefore systematically preferred in virtually all forms of employment except that of field labourers (Allen, 1983).

It is not surprising that this situation was to change radically when, following Independence, Mauritius was to be ruled by Indians. Since then (actually, since the political and educational reforms of the late 1940s and early 1950s), their situation has improved very rapidly in politics, education and the economic system. As mentioned, their rapid

ascendancy can partly be accounted for by plain statistics: since Indians formed an overwhelming demographic majority, they could never be neglected, and since many were not indentured labourers, the community was able to create its indigenous leaders with adequate command of the dominant codes from the beginning of indentureship. Seewosagur Ramgoolam, the first prime minister of Mauritius, was active in politics from the 1930s to the early 1980s. In a sense, he holds a position in Mauritian nationalist ideology comparable to the combined positions of the national heroes Arthur Cipriani (a white Fabian socialist politician of the 1930s) and Eric Williams (prime minister 1956–81) in Trinidad. Mauritians are in other words accustomed to being led by Hindus.

Political and cultural contexts of Mauritian ethnicity

The strong position of Indians in many – but not all – fields of Mauritian public life has put the cohesion of the community under strain. Politically, the community has been split since the Indian civil war in the late 1940s: that is, the Muslims early formed their own party, the CAM (Comité d'Action Musulman). Cultural differences between Dravidians (Tamils, Telegus) and Aryans (especially Biharis; also Marathis and Bengalis) have also periodically been perceived as important, and at least the urban Tamils define themselves as non-Indians. Further, caste divisions also play a part in Mauritian social life, and caste differences have occasionally been exploited politically. The caste aspect is even sometimes believed to influence policies of employment. For example, a highly qualified Mauritian woman of my acquaintance once lamented that she would never get a high position in the state bureaucracy because she was a Brahmin. The latest political fragmentation of the Indo-Mauritians occurred in August 1988. In my earlier study of Mauritian ethnicity and nationalism, based on fieldwork in 1986 (Eriksen, 1990a), I had portrayed one of Mauritius's leading politicians, a Telegu, as a champion of inter-ethnic cooperation and compromise. Following the elections of 1987, his power base grew considerably – he was appointed Chief Whip of the governing MSM party – and less than a year later he broke away from the government and formed an organization representing Hindu minorities (Tamils, Telegus and Marathis, altogether about 12 percent of the population).

The point to be made here is that political ethnicity can, in the contexts of contemporary Trinidad and Mauritius, be meaningfully reduced to a power game where all actors follow identical rules, and that it therefore ought to be regarded as a phenomenon relatively dis-

tinctive from individual ethnic identity, which has a strong element of non-utilitarian symbolic meaning. For the "objective" cultural differences between a rural Telegu and a rural North Indian are negligible, particularly when viewed against the wider background of the Mauritian cultural complexity, and intermarriage between the groups has been, and remains, widespread. "Observable" cultural differences therefore do not enable us to predict anything about political alignments. Politics makes strange bedfellows, not least in Mauritius, where the bulk of the Catholic blacks and the Indian Muslims have been allied politically since the 1960s. True, the Indians of Mauritius are culturally heterogeneous, but they tend to share a number of notions about self and others that effectively set them socially apart from non-Indian Mauritians. These notions are embedded in cultural stereotypes, which are part and parcel of Mauritian culture and can be invoked whenever deemed necessary and ignored or underplayed if need be. The Indian standard view of the black is, according to stereotypical perceptions, that he is lazy, sexually immoral, disorganized and essentially stupid. The blacks, or Creoles, on their part, tend to regard the Indians as being too thrifty, sly and cunning, dishonest and boring to the extent that they are unable to enjoy the good things in life.

Stereotypes of this kind, which do lead to a great deal of tension and uneasiness in inter-ethnic encounters, nevertheless serve to fix ethnic relationships in social space, at least at the level of representations of ideology, and they thereby create a subjective sense of security and stability as regards cultural identity. They help reproduce ethnic boundaries in an environment where spatial boundaries are impossible – where Indians and blacks may live in the same neighbourhoods.

I have suggested that the cultural differences reproduced between Indo-Mauritians and black Mauritians are more socially effective than those being reproduced between the corresponding groups in Trinidad. Mauritius has been less strongly exposed to American and British cultural influences, and has only recently begun its path towards a total integration into the capitalist world economy. Ever since independence, however, Mauritian authorities have pursued cultural policies aimed at enabling the diverse ethnic groups to preserve their mutual differences. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute, a research and documentation centre, is, despite its name, devoted to research on the Indian, Chinese and African heritages alike, and already a wide array of courses and open lectures at the MGI has taught young Mauritians about their half-forgotten past. Mauritius is politically a Hindu-dominated society, however, and it is doubtless true that the main focus of post-independence historical research has been on indentureship and Indian

history and society. The school system has also been adapted to the poly-cultural reality of modern Mauritius. It is now the right of every pupil to be taught his or her ancestral language (although many Indo-Mauritians understand Hindustani and Bhojpuri, only a tiny minority are literate in Hindi). Among Mauritian Indians, there have been few conversions to Christianity, but many have chosen French as their primary vehicle for writing. The current policies aim to strengthen Hindi vis-à-vis French and English.

A final example is the Mauritian Emancipation Day, which is a public holiday where one simultaneously marks the end of slavery and the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers. In Mauritius, it is generally the blacks who claim that they are being discriminated against by the state. The government is in the hands of Indians, and many blacks interpret virtually every government policy as being "anti-black". An example is the recent scheme introduced by the state to improve the situation of smallplanters of sugarcane. Most smallplanters are of Indian descent, and so blacks tend to perceive this policy as being pro-Indian. As I shall indicate below, perceptions of ethnic politics tend to differ strongly in Trinidad.

East Indians in the West Indies

Trinidadian politics has been continuously dominated by blacks since the 1950s, and Trinidadian national identity is closely linked with cultural institutions associated with the blacks. I have met Trinidadians of non-Indian origin who, when describing central aspects of Trinidadian culture, totally ignore the cultural distinctiveness of the citizens of Indian origin and who, if asked, regard the Indo-Trinidadian culture as a "spice"; a subordinate, subservient cultural dependency of the by-and-large black West Indian society of Trinidad. This view has been common since colonial times, when British administrators would write off the substantial Indian community as "troublemakers", full stop (see Brereton, 1979). Whatever the case may be Trinidad, unlike Mauritius, is dominated politically by blacks and coloureds, culturally by North Americans and local blacks identifying with New World (local, Caribbean, and/or North American) culture, economically by local whites and off-whites as well as by foreign interests. Unlike in Mauritius, where a majority are of Indian descent, only slightly over 40 percent of the Trinidadian population would define themselves as Indo-Trinidadians. A context very different from the Mauritian one, it has led to a very different political situation for the Indians.

The idea of Indianness in Trinidad – as Indo-Trinidadian cultural

self-consciousness – evolved largely during the 1940s and 1950s. The part played by Indian cinema (most of the cinemas in Trinidad are owned by Indians) and the dissemination of popular Indian music through mass media, have clearly been very important aspects of the emergent self-definition of Trinidadian Indianness, confronting Indo-Trinidadians with images of India hitherto unknown. Since the early 1970s, a strong wave of Indian revitalization has spread, particularly among young, well-educated Indo-Trinidadians. With respect to actual notions and practices, however, it is clear that by and large, Indians in Trinidad are more creolized than those in Mauritius, notwithstanding the current revitalization of Hindu rites (see Vertovec, 1990). Many more are Christian than in Mauritius (although the majority are not), and many non-Christian Indians have Christian first names. Food taboos are dealt with in a more relaxed way, the loss of language is more complete; and Indian women are more "independent" (many tend to follow a Western pattern of careering) in Trinidad than in Mauritius. Caste is now of minor, if any, importance.

All of these (and other) radical changes in the culture and social organization of the Indians in Trinidad need not imply that the Indian community has been more strongly assimilated in Trinidad than in Mauritius; in fact, if we look at this in a converse way, it is evident that blacks in Mauritius and Trinidad alike have adopted a great many Indian practices and notions (to some extent without being aware of it), without assimilating into the Indian ethnic group. At any rate, it is obvious that however creolized the Indo-Trinidadians may be culturally, the group enjoys a higher degree of political cohesiveness than the Indo-Mauritians (see Hintzen, 1983, for a more complex picture). Until very recently, there was but one party representing the bulk of Indo-Trinidadians. The community was, it may seem, never large and powerful enough to split (notwithstanding the periodical Muslim support for the PNM (People's National Movement), which governed Trinidad & Tobago from 1956 to 1986). A different explanation would be that the Indo-Trinidadians are in general less politically active than both their Afro-Trinidadian and their Indo-Mauritian counterparts, largely because politics is seen as a black domain in Trinidad. While many of the Indo-Trinidadians I knew in 1989 would have liked to see the Indian leader Basdeo Panday as prime minister, few believed that this would come about in the near future. An investigation of the place of the Indo-Trinidadian in the division of labour would support this argument. Whereas most Indo-Trinidadians are still involved in agriculture, an increasing number are independent businessmen and professionals – and even among those still working the land, many run their own farms.

A conspicuous difference from Mauritius is the comparative absence of Indians from the public service and politics. In Trinidad, the high-ranking public servant of Indian origin is still the exception and not the rule (LaGuerre, 1989); in Mauritius, the situation is certainly different. Despite the massive black political dominance, and despite the American cultural onslaught prevailing in Trinidad, and notwithstanding the very significant effects of these influences on the lifestyles of Indo-Trinidadians, it is beyond doubt that most Trinidadians of Indian origins tend to regard themselves as *a kind of Indians*. They are locally labelled *East Indians*, ostensibly in order to distinguish them from Amerindians (of whom there are, incidentally, virtually *none* in Trinidad).

A New World brand of Indianness

Their Indianness is, however, increasingly a distinctive New World Indianness; this point was once made by V. S. Naipaul when he conceded that his approach to the past of his grandfather has to be the approach of a stranger, and it is to some extent documented by Nevadomsky (1980; 1983) in his restudy of the village of "Amity", first studied by Klass (1961) 20 years earlier. In the late 1950s, when Klass carried out his fieldwork, women were not educated, most families were of the extended type and residence was usually patrilocal, and there were criteria relating to caste and religious merit defining the rank of an individual. Focusing on changes in shared values and in household structure, Nevadomsky found that social rank was now derived from income earning potential and educational attainments; nuclear families were the norm and in many cases the ideal; patrilocal residence was now of insignificant duration; marriage partners were usually chosen by the young people themselves; girls were educated and their education enhanced their value as potential wives.

In abstract sociological terms, this change can be described as a transition from an ascription-based to an achievement-based form of organization, and it fits very neatly with classical sociological theory about the nature of modernization seen as the transition from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (society). However, such a transition is never as unambiguous as Nevadomsky seems to suggest, and this is particularly so in societies where there are several literate cultural traditions. For, as many sociologists have noted (for example, Epstein, 1978), the main point to be made about so-called ethnic melting-pots is that they tend to be non-starters: they fail to occur. Poles in the USA remain fervently Polish several generations after

their ancestors left Poland; second-generation Pakistanis in Norwegian cities, fluent speakers of Norwegian, voluntarily go to Pakistan to get married; and the Indians of Trinidad emphatically remain self-professed Indians despite apparently dramatic changes in their culture and social organization. However, their Indianness is a New World Indianness; it is a peculiar brand of Indianness which has grown out of the soil of Trinidad, where, for example, a taste for heavy rock music has become a conspicuous sign of modern youthful Indianness. Additionally, it should be emphasized that the ethnicity displayed by Indo-Trinidadians in the context of modern national society is not necessarily incompatible with the requirements of the modern nation-state and commodity market. Seen as an aspect of a total societal formation, therefore, contemporary Indian ethnicity in Trinidad is of diminishing relevance for the organization of national society. On the other hand, the cultural creolization of Indo-Trinidadians need not mean the disappearance of Indians as an ethnic category. On the contrary, it may lead to a greater ethnic self-consciousness since processes of creolization can be perceived as threats against Indianness. The emphatic refusal of the bulk of Indo-Trinidadians to join forces with blacks during the Black Power uprisings of the early 1970s could be indicative of the strength of their collective identity. The leaders of the Black Power movement claimed that Indians, as non-whites, were black; the Indians retorted that they were certainly not. In other words, they preferred not to define themselves as blacks, notwithstanding the fact that most Indo-Trinidadians are at least as dark-skinned as many of the leaders of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Creolization, revitalization and domination

Contemporary analytical perspectives on the Indo-Trinidadians differ strongly. Whereas, for example, Nevadomsky (1980, 1983) has emphasized processes of creolization and Vertovec (1990) has focused on ethnic revitalization, Baksh (1979) has documented an essential similarity in representations and practices among blacks and Indians. In distinguishing between the cultural and social aspects of ethnicity, as I have done, all three perspectives may be relevant, and need not contradict each other. The ethnic categories, black and (East) Indian, may become more similar and yet more strongly committed to communicating their mutual differences. In the Trinidadian context, this takes on the form of Indian revitalization because the dominant cultural idioms are associated with blacks, and because Trinidadian nationalist symbolism, unlike the Mauritian "pluralist" nationalism, is associated

with the blacks (see Chapters 4, 8 and 9). National symbols in Trinidad include the calypso, the steelband and the carnival, all of which are perceived as urban black institutions.

I have mentioned a number of aspects documenting changes in Indian culture and society since their arrival in the West Indies; some perhaps less immediately visible aspects of Trinidadian Indianness also show the impact of the wider local cultural context on Indian culture. For instance, the swastika, a very common religious symbol in India and Mauritius alike, is almost entirely absent from Trinidadian mandirs. This, I venture to assume, must be because the swastika is associated with Nazism in this particular cultural context. The local variety of Hosay celebrations (an annual Muslim feast) has obviously been shaped by Carnival influence; it is a rhythmic, colourful and strongly sensual festival, which would surely be considered a blasphemous feast by Arab fundamentalists. The popularity of rock music among Indo-Trinidadian youths, further, is inexplicable unless we look at the local cultural context. Since locally popular music such as reggae and soca are regarded as black musical forms, and since Indian music is frowned upon or laughed at as inherently silly, Indian youths have to look elsewhere for a youth culture which is simultaneously non-African and modern. The cult around rock music enables young Indians to communicate modernity and non-blackness (their taste generally goes in the direction of heavy rock, which is emphatically non-black within the wider Anglo-American reference system); it is a phenomenon generated from a variety of sources. Further, there is an obvious tendency for Indo-Trinidadians to prefer cricket to football (this parallels preferences in India itself), while wrestling was, in the 1970s, singularly popular among Indians – not among blacks. It would be easy to find other examples showing the ongoing negotiation of the content of Indianness, seen as systems of contrasts against local non-Indianness (that is, usually, black culture).

Indo-Trinidadian minority strategies

Self-conscious members of dominated minorities in self-proclaimed poly-ethnic societies may communicate their differences to their surroundings through an array of ethnic markers – symbols eclectically chosen from their acknowledged heritage and tailored to the task of communicating say, Saami identity in a Scandinavian cultural context. Apart from appearance, which can scarcely be chosen, the form of dress is clearly the most visible and most common such marker; and it is probably the most universally important one. Religious practices are

also powerful ethnic markers. This does not imply that religion is not a symbolic system with important meanings in its own right; the point is that it is also a very efficient way for a community to set itself apart, socially, politically, and culturally. Some of these techniques are virtually absent in Trinidad: it is indeed rare to see an urban Indo-Trinidadian, regardless of gender, dressed in anything but Western clothes. The reason is partly that the obvious phenotypical differences are sufficient to communicate ethnic distance. Yet, both in religion and in various cultural practices visible to the surroundings Indo-Trinidadians do consciously communicate that they are different. There are also other, less conspicious techniques employed to communicate cultural difference; for instance, when the Indo-Trinidadian community newspaper *Sandesh* ("News") in an editorial (1 September 1989) spoke of Independence Day and chose to focus its concern on the work ethic, only those readers who are familiar with the public discourse of Trinidad would realize that the editorial was an implicit attack on what is conceived of as black culture. The point to be made here is that Indians in Trinidad, to a greater extent than Indians in Mauritius, tend to be *self-conscious about their Indianness*.It doesn't come naturally, as it were; one has to decide for oneself that one wants to be a real, non-creolized Indian, and one must develop strategies in order to ensure this. Such ethnic revitalization is often presumed to follow the spread of capitalism and bureaucratic institutions, and particularly, the growth of mass education. As regards the Indo-Trinidadians as well as the Indo-Mauritians, there is a clear correlation to this effect. The increased availability of new forms of knowledge about their own history and their ancestral land have made reflection about their identity possible. It has also, incidentally, inhibited the development of a widespread nostalgia for India; most Indo-Trinidadians and Indo-Mauritians are well aware that their great-grandparents left India because of utter poverty, and that their own lot has improved since. The form of Indianness developed in the currents of ethnic revitalization now prevalent in Trinidad, therefore, is not intended to replicate the Indianness of India entirely; for example, there is little interest in reviving the *jatis* (caste-based occupational groups) and *panchayats* (caste councils), although other aspects of Hindu religious revival are strong. In the case of the Afro-Trinidadians, a comparable tendency of ethnic revitalization is present, perhaps most strongly articulated among intellectuals: they have realized they have lost their roots and have consciously taken measures to re-invent them.

In the less thoroughly modernized, and less exposed, society of Mauritius, by contrast, self-conscious ethnic-identity movements of

"Indo-Mauritianness" and "Afro-Mauritianness" have a more limited appeal. At least in the case of the Indo-Mauritians, this is because it is still possible for a large number of people to live in an acknowledged Indian way without having to articulate, and justify and protect it vis-a-vis the surroundings.[6] Ethnic stereotypes in Trinidad are also slightly different from those prevalent in Mauritius, although the similarities are more striking. It is true that Indo-Trinidadians tend to regard blacks as disorganized, immoral and essentially lazy ("the African wants the government to do everything for him" is a common kind of statement); but the great emphasis placed on physical appearance in the West Indies has inspired a widespread Indian contempt for the "ugliness" of the blacks; this notion is virtually unknown in Mauritius.

The thriftiness of Indians is regarded with suspicion by blacks in Mauritius and Trinidad alike, but in Trinidad there is a tendency among some young, urban blacks to regard young urban Indians as a kind of jet-set of conspicuous consumers. This view, of course, does not conform to any widespread view held by Indians. It has been documented, however, that the average income of Indians, traditionally lower than that of the blacks, is now officially identical to the average income of blacks (Henry, 1989). Economically, Indians are collectively ascending, although more slowly than many urban blacks believe.

Despite the emergence of growing fields of cross-ethnically shared meaning in both societies, ethnic differences remain strong, at the level both of representations and of certain practices. There is a Mauritian saying that if a black has 10 rupees, he will spend 15; but if an Indian has 10 rupees, he will spend 7 and hoard the rest. Similar notions are also widespread in Trinidad, and may indeed be quoted by members of both of the groups in question as an indication of their cultural superiority. Statistically, there are systematic differences between the groups in some respects (although not nearly as strong as commonly believed). Black households in Trinidad, particularly in the working class, tend to be unstable; the lives of many working class blacks are correspondingly loosely organized and prone to sudden changes with regards to marital status, jobs and place of residence. This contrasts with the typical Indian household, which is a stabler social unit. In this respect, Trinidadian AIDS figures must be regarded as relevant as an indication of systematic differences in behaviour: they reveal that Indians represented, in September, 1989, only 40 of a total of 489 recorded Aids cases. It has also been documented that "visiting relationships", that is, loose sexual relationships, are statistically much less common among Indians than among blacks (Roberts, 1975:163).

The power and powerlessness of creolized Indians

> From the moment that the immigrant entered the immigration depot in Calcutta, he was thrown together with peoples of different castes, and he found it impossible to follow caste guidelines governing people of lower caste. On board ship caste rules and regulations were further weakened. On the plantation the breakdown of caste as a principle of social organization was accelerated.
>
> (Brereton, 1979:185)

The current interest in recreating and reviving Indian traditions on Trinidadian soil (see LaGuerre, 1974; Dabydeen and Samaroo, 1987; Vertovec, 1990) has led to the widespread awareness and articulation of issues that go to the naked core of nationalism; namely, questions concerning the content of nationalism and its justification: why should the calypso be considered as intrinsically more nationally Trinidadian than the chutney (Indian popular music); who is a *true-true Trini* (see Chapter 8) and what are his discriminating qualities, and why should this necessarily be so? Through raising these issues, the Indian revitalization movement has converted issues which were formerly not on the political agenda to questions of open critical discourse. This has not happened in Mauritius, which has chosen a course of more consistent cultural pluralism in its official national symbolism and its development of national institutions. For example, Mauritian schoolchildren are offered courses in a wide variety of Asian languages, and Indian languages are granted airtime on national radio; this would be unthinkable in Trinidad.

The form of the Indo-Trinidadian revitalization movement is typical. Half-forgotten rites have been revived; pilgrimages to India are offered by travel agencies and, indeed, sometimes the exchange is mutual through the import of Indian pundits; Indo-Trinidadian participants in public discourse complain about discrimination. As the Indo-Trinidadian John Gaffar LaGuerre puts it, somewhat ironically: "The *kurta* and the *pajama*, the readings of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the retreat into Islam or Hinduism, the appeals for purity and the calls for more holidays – these constitute the euphoria of the movement". (LaGuerre, 1974:12). Yet, as is evident in the idiosyncratic identities of young Indians, their Indianness is emphatically local in character. As the educational and professional levels of Indo-Trinidadians have improved, Indian ethnicity has become more visible although its representatives are evidently more strongly creolized than ever as regards their actual representations and practices; the social and cultural references of Indianness have, in other words, changed.

Being creolized does not, it should be stressed, necessarily imply losing one's Indianness; to think so would be an essentialist error. Ethnically self-conscious Indians in both societies, but particularly in Trinidad, nevertheless see the foundations of their tradition turning from stone to clay. As young Indians begin to violate food taboos (they eat eggs and sometimes even beefburgers), intermarriage becomes a very real possibility and the source of profound worries in the parental generation. Perhaps the generations of Indo-Mauritians and Indo-Trinidadians reaching puberty at the turn of the century will know nothing about holy cows, or perhaps such knowledge will be purely emblematic, with no profound bearing on their life-worlds. This implies not necessarily that Indianness disappears as a form of social identity in either of the societies, but that its content changes. Thus, a focus on creolization or adaptation need not be incompatible with a focus on revitalization. It is theoretically conceivable, although I have argued that it has not come about yet, that all systematic cultural differences except the very notions of differences between blacks and Indians will gradually disappear through the culturally homogenizing agencies of nationalism and capitalism, and that the groups yet remain distinctive to the extent of not intermarrying systematically. This would imply what a leading Trinidadian intellectual, Lloyd Best, has called *cultural douglarization* (Best, personal communication, 1989). The *dougla*, in Trinidadian discourse, is a person with one black and one Indian parent; the cultural *dougla* would thus be a person whose identity encompasses aspects of cultural Indianness as well as cultural blackness.

Some Relevant Differences between the Societies

The similarities between the two societies should not be exaggerated. Trinidad is locally perceived as a largely black society (for better or for worse, as the case may be), and unlike in Mauritius, several self-proclaimed spokesmen for the Indians argue that they suffer cultural domination. Policies acknowledging that Trinidad is truly a poly-cultural society, and thus something different from a modern cultural melting-pot, are conspicuously absent. National cultural symbols include the calypso, the carnival and the steelband, all of which are associated with the blacks. The Indian presence is all but ignored in national cultural life and in tourism propaganda materials. The aforementioned beer commercial, featuring an Indian classical singer, is so exceptional that it may serve as a reminder of the paucity of Indian cultural messages in the shared Trinidadian public space. Most of the

creolization of Trinidadians of Indian origin occurs without their being discursively aware of it happening – in aesthetic taste, dress, body language and the perceptions of relevant paths for professional or matrimonial careers. This kind of process has also been evident in Mauritius; for instance, the common form of greeting between Mauritian men is universally the handshake – this is not so in India. Nevertheless, the Indo-Mauritians still seem to stand a better chance of retaining important aspects of their cultural distinctiveness than do the Indo-Trinidadians. This is due partly to their force in numbers, partly to their firm position in the state agencies, partly to the consciously polycultural policies of the nation-state, and partly to their geographic proximity to India. All this does not, however, necessarily matter as regards the political importance of ethnicity.

Writing about the Trinidad of the turn of the century, Bridget Brereton notes that; «[t]here were those [press correspondents] who argued that it was important to bring into the open the existence of race feeling and discrimination, in order to destroy it; they were nearly always coloured or black» (Brereton, 1979:199). The Indo-Trinidadians were muted then; they may no longer be politically silent but, unlike in Mauritius, they may never be in a position sufficiently strong for them to vie for cultural hegemony. The situation in the New World, where Indianness is frowned upon in the national context, encourages Trinidadians of Indian origin to relinquish their cultural heritage and become thoroughly creolized. Indo-Trinidadians featured on TV, radio, in the press and other cultural contexts of national society rarely display any of their Indian heritage. In other words, Indians are accepted as long as they overtly identify themselves with the majority; they are accepted as *Trinidadians* but not as *Indians*. This form of cultural hegemony presents many Indo-Trinidadians with a very real predicament: they strive to preserve their traditions, some avenues of careering will be closed to them; and if they wish to be successful say, in the media, then they must relinquish their cultural identity and may be regarded as traitors by the more militant members of their community. Discontent along these lines, widespread in Trinidad since independence, has led to a certain exodus of Indians – some even tried to achieve political refugee status in Canada in 1988 – but by and large, the outcome will probably be an ever increasing cultural creolization of the dominated Indian population, which may or may not influence the social importance of ethnicity.

From a slightly different perspective, we may arrive at a theoretically more exciting conclusion in this comparative exercise. Although I have stressed the differences, there are fundamental similarities, culturally and socially, between the blacks of Trinidad and Mauritius as well as between the Indians of Trinidad and Mauritius. In many respects, the similarities are more striking than the differences, and they include important aspects of social organization and cultural values. Yet, the respective structural positions of these four categories of people in their national societies are different from what one might be inclined to expect. It is true that in both societies, Indians are more successful petty capitalists than are blacks, and it is also true that more blacks and coloureds than Indians work in the media. But if we look at national politics, and more importantly, at the monitoring of public discourse through the legal system, through the mass media, through the forging of international links and through various state cultural policies, it appears that the rôle of Indians in Mauritius is the *opposite* of that in Trinidad, and, by the same token, the respective roles of blacks in the two societies are opposite. Indeed, the culturally defensive position of Trinidadian Indians, possessing many of the characteristics of minority groups, is similar to the position of blacks in Mauritius. Recall now the example of the governmental smallplanter support scheme in Mauritius and the negative reactions of the non-Indian population. A similar government policy in Trinidad in 1989 led to remarkably similar reactions from the Indians: the policy was intended to support small businessmen, and Indians claimed that it was tailored to suit the interests of urban blacks. This similarity in collective reactions to governmental policies has something to do with statistical majority–minority relationships, but it is also intrinsically connected with the wider international contexts in which the two societies are set; Trinidad being, geographically and historically, a part of the New World, while Mauritius has always been located *en route* from Europe to India. In Mauritius, blacks are rarely accused of being communalists (ethnicist); this could be interpreted as an indication of their lack of leadership, or of their lack of political power, or both. In Trinidad, blacks are often accused of "racism"; it is frequently alleged, by non-blacks, that the PNM took over an important principle of recruitment to high bureaucratic positions from the British, namely that of "providing jobs for the boys".

This crucial difference between the two societies shows the importance of distinguishing between what we may call the cultural and political contexts of ethnicity. At the level of social classification and ethnic stereotyping, Trinidad and Mauritius are very similar. At the level of ethnic politics, they are very different; both in the sense that the Indians have a variable relationship to the state, and in the sense that state policies tend to discourage, or at least ignore, cultural plural-

ity in Trinidad. It is not too bold to conclude, therefore, that the potential for serious ethnic conflict involving discontented Indians is presently higher in Trinidad than in Mauritius.

8

Two Nationalisms

> Superficially, because of the multitude of races, Trinidad may seem complex, but to anyone who knows it, it is a simple colonial philistine society.
>
> (V. S. Naipaul, 1958)

Ene sel lepep; ene sel nasyon
("One single people; one single nation" – slogan from Mauritian election campaign)[1]

Community draws a boundary
Decree draws a sword
(James Grigsby ,1990)

In this chapter, the theoretical analysis of nationalism is pursued further. I argue that nationalism is an essentially dual phenomenon with its crucial loci in the formal organization of the state on the one hand, and in civil society on the other hand. Formal nationalism is connected with the demands of the modern nation-state, including bureaucratic organization and meritocratic ideology, cultural uniformity and political consensus among the inhabitants. Informal nationalism is identified in collective events, such as ritual celebrations and international sports competitions, taking place in civil society.

Both of these aspects of nationalism have been discussed in the recent literature, but it has not been common to distinguish clearly between them. It is here argued that the two nationalisms are not reducible to each other; both are equally "authentic", although they can be contradictory. Although the discussion is intended to have general relevance for theories of nationalism, it draws its empirical material from nationalist ideologies in Trinidad & Tobago and Mauritius.