

The medium of conducting an interview was chosen as I have never played the role of an interviewer, so I wanted to broaden my, academic, horizons by being out of my comfort zone which is what IATL encourages. An interview gives opportunity for a firsthand account through an autobiographical style of understanding the identity of a particular migrant group: Atlas' migration from Mauritius to England. Migration is defined as, 'the movement of people from one country to another, temporarily or permanently, voluntarily or involuntarily'.¹ I hope to highlight the trajectory of migration in such a way to touch on the influences of migration; reimagining 'home' as a fragmenting concept thus promote discussion among the readers.

I titled the interview *Swapping one island for another: reimagining international migration to the West* as the United Kingdom is not often thought of as an island as we relate islands with a tropical climate, an asset that the UK does not possess, and when imagining a map of the participant's journey I realised that she moved from one island to another. This interview may address those who have not been exposed to migration experiences will grow to understand new terms and their multi-dimensional meanings and those who have will hopefully feel a sense of comfort relating to the trajectory. I would anticipate audiences to engage with this research in such a way that they would consider volunteering in communities like St Vincent de Paul as doing so will provide immigrants with a safe space to chat informally.

This interview points out that migration is not moving from one country to another then putting a full stop to the story, the story continues since ambiguous loss comes into play, this refers to 'relatives and friends who are alive in Mauritius but do not physically interact with the migrant anymore'.² The concept of 'home' is relevant to my research as it illustrates where Atlas feels free, but stereotypes of mine will be challenged when unravelling this concept. Post-colonialism's impact upon UK migration is a contextual factor to consider how the participant is situated within this global history.

Firstly, my research is on international migration, not internal migration therefore fits nicely within the theme of global connections whilst also investigating the West. The *Acculturation of young Mauritian people of Chagossian origin in the UK* study illuminates the understanding of the migrant experience in such a way that it is used as a model comparison to see if it is akin to that of the participant.³ Despite this study sampling young people as it is the only study I could find on migration from Mauritius to England, it is nevertheless still relevant as it bears similarities and differences to the participant's beliefs.

According to the study, the participants found it difficult to define 'home', some said either country, and others were in a quandary as they were attached to their birthplace while enjoying their life in England. Atlas' response to 'where is home' captures the idea that 'home' is multi-

¹ Dr Nadeen Dakkak, 'Migration in the Global South', lecture given at the University of Warwick, Coventry, 4 February 2021.

² Maria Gundowry, 'Acculturation of young Mauritian people of Chagossian origin in the UK: negotiating living in the host society' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Brighton, 2018) in ProQuest Dissertations Publishing & Theses A&I < <http://0-search.proquest.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/dissertations-theses/acculturation-young-mauritian-people-chagossian/docview/2312208057/se-2?accountid=14888> > [accessed 26 March 2021] p. 198.

³ Gundowry

dimensional and permits two contextual factors to come into play: Mauritian family's busy lifestyle, and no excess money. Because of these, England is Atlas' home as she defines home as where she feels free to do everything she desires such as be happy, work and receive free medical care on the National Health Service (NHS). In essence, she receives everything a white English person would therefore feeling equal, accepted and skin colour not posing a barrier contributes to the formation of 'home'. These reasons surprised me as home is often associated with a house, an architectural structure so referring to a location, however this is not solely the case for this migrant voice. I realised all my questions harmonised to paint a picture of Atlas' home: work, racial equality, the seaside, family and friends to gossip with, and her daughter- this list is characterised by Atlas' ambiguous loss and are her solutions per se of navigating life in the host culture she has accepted as part of her own.

Connecting this concept to my translation grammar module, one of the French translations for home is 'pays natal' which literally means 'country of birth'. 'Natal' comes from late 14th century Latin meaning, 'pertaining to birth or origin', however, this translation is problematic as the research has discovered that 'home' does not solely refer to a location.⁴ But some participants in the study considered Mauritius their home which would agree with the translation- this exhibits the fluid nature of 'home'; as a language student we would add a complement to the noun phrase ('étoffer').

Atlas mentioned that in her early twenties the tourism market expanded- the history that connects Mauritius and the UK in the colonial and postcolonial periods is Britain acquiring Mauritius and its dependencies, Mauritius was decolonised by France in 1968 and became independent, allowing Mauritians freedom of movement.⁵ Consequently, this colonial history informed migration to the UK as there was more travel informing this particularity.

A topic in a French grammar module, <<La Francophonie>>, noted French colonies such as Algeria, and France's impact upon their colonisation but failed to include Mauritius, possibly because of its smaller population of 1.27 million therefore this was a limitation of disciplinary insight.⁶ Despite this setback, it motivated me to pursue this topic to shed light on this rare diasporic voice, '[the] historical processes of consolidation of national-cultural identities and large international migration'.⁷ Subject knowledge that informed the interview is the Writing French grammar module, whereby we read interviews based on French social, environmental and political issues so I sought to replicate the semi-structured interview where I had set questions and have my own creative control.

Autoethnography

⁴ Online Etymology Dictionary, *natal* <[natal | Origin and meaning of natal by Online Etymology Dictionary \(etymonline.com\)](https://www.etymonline.com)> [accessed 17 April 2021].

⁵ Laura Jeffery and Alexander Smith, *Chagos Islanders in Mauritius and the UK: Forced Displacement and Onward Migration* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p.11. Proquest e-book.

⁶ worldometer, *Mauritius Population (LIVE)* (2021), <[Mauritius Population \(2021\) - Worldometer \(worldometers.info\)](https://www.worldometers.info)> [accessed 16 April 2021].

⁷ Sadananda Sahoo and B.K. Pattanaik, *Global Diasporas and Development* (New Dehli: Springer, 2014), p.1. Springer e-book.

Boylorn and Orbe's definition of autoethnography is fitting as it recognises a powerful method for working with the topics of diversity and identity, '...a research method that connects the "autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political" ... narrative ethnography'.⁸

In the Film Studies module *Discovering Cinema* we studied the topic of National Cinema and screened *Bend it Like Beckham* as the weekly module film.⁹ I relate to the main character Jess Bhamra, a second-generation immigrant, as it is not a story of a migration experience and instead focuses on how an ethnic minority balances assimilation in a quest for her identity- in saying this I mean how Jess assimilates into British culture, to an extent, while also continuing her Indian heritage in England.¹⁰ One particularity I notice about English people is that when they refer to 'family' they mean the people in their household whereas I refer to family as my aunts, uncles and cousins who live close. Jess' family bears similarities to mine, they are incredibly family-orientated, and in every scene where the family is together there are many dishes on the table and does not solely consist of household family members. In a crane shot, the screen space is divided: on the left is the Bhamra family's English neighbours' garden displaying typical British items such as a washing line and beer, whereas the other side of the fence is the Bhamra family celebrating their daughter's engagement wearing saris and sharing Indian food- this reflects a contrast of cultures in the same space.

Food as marker of cultural difference is seen in the interview when Atlas admits cakes are one of the two things she doesn't like about England, this may seem humorous at first, but it reinforces how food is a cultural symbol in Mauritius. Atlas also stated that Mauritius is incredibly multicultural therefore multiculturalism characterises the cultural value of food, even if you aren't part of the Indian culture, there is still a sense of conviviality and inclusion when celebrating Diwali. As a result, the interview and the film harmonise to aid with understanding my identity as I now assert that I feel Brit-ish: my nationality is British and my ethnicity is Asian Mauritian, so I am not wholly British.

Initially I struggled to delimit the scope for a clear line of research as migration opens many avenues; emailing Dr Nadeen Dakkak, the guest lecturer for migration, guided me to write the autoethnography.

The research involves a sample size of one participant so the latter cannot be propagated as a blueprint for all Mauritian migrant voices. However, the principal thing I am taking away from my research is the new definition of home iterated by this migrant voice, my stereotypes travelled from point A to point B. The question: does anything need to be done for future migrants based on this story, is thorny as Atlas has already stated that there are many charities

⁸ Robin M. Boylorn and Mark P. Orbe, *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2014), p.15. Proquest e-book.

⁹ *Bend it Like Beckham*, dir. by Gurinder Chadha (Lionsgate UK, 2002), online film recording, Box of Broadcasts, 6 September 2020, <[Bend It Like Beckham · BoB \(learningonscreen.ac.uk\)](#)> [accessed 16 April 2021].

¹⁰ Guido Rings, 'Questions of Identity: Cultural Encounters in Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham*', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 39.3 (2011), 114-123 (p.115) <[Full article: Questions of Identity: Cultural Encounters in Gurinder Chadha's Bend It Like Beckham \(warwick.ac.uk\)](#)> [accessed 17 April 2021].

supporting migrants, but I must highlight that this research focalises around legal migration. Images proliferated on the news in recent years have predominantly showcased ‘illegal’ migrants’ trespassing of whose circumstances are not mitigated and ‘prefer [ring to] accentuat [e] the negative’ when it is a crisis in itself to exploit societal divisions.¹¹ Although my research does not centralise ‘illegal’ migrants, a revision to my understanding is that we must see the government and charities doing more to aid their settling and send them in the direction of employment.

*Atlas is the participant’s pseudonym.

Appendix 1: Interview transcription

R= researcher, A= Atlas (the participant)

¹¹ Roy Greenslade, ‘Migrants are off the agenda for the UK press, but the damage is done’, *The Guardian*, 26 January 2020. < [Migrants are off the agenda for the UK press, but the damage is done | National newspapers | The Guardian](#) > [accessed 16 April 2021].

R: What is your ethnicity?

A: I am a Sino-Mauritian, my grandparents on my mum's side were from China but mum and dad were born in Mauritius, so I was born in Mauritius so I'm Sino-Mauritian.

R: What was your push factor to come to England? This means what drew you to come to England, what motivated you to emigrate.

A: When I was in Mauritius, I used to travel a lot because of my job, and I never wanted to leave Mauritius, for me this is my island, I will live and die there. But I came on holiday in 1999 to England [...] and I met your dad, then it took us a year and we decided to get married. I had to make a decision: if I would marry him, I would have to leave Mauritius, so I decided to leave Mauritius in 2000 and I came to live in England with him.

R: Did you have any family in England already?

A: Yes. I come from a very large family- 11 children, and I had only one brother in 2000 who lived in Christchurch, England.

R: With migration, people often dismiss the very complex part of it like the legalities and the paperwork process so it's not really a question but talk about the paperwork.

A: For me, it was very easy. The procedure was [that] I had to go to the embassy of England in Mauritius, so I had to prove to them that me and your dad were really in love with each other and that it wasn't a scam. They asked me to bring proof, for example your dad had to send me all the British Telecommunications (BT) bills that proved we spoke on the phone, and letters we wrote to each other. The first question the interviewer asked me was "where are your envelopes" because he wanted to see the English stamp for proof, but I threw away all my envelopes, but as soon as he read the first letter he said, "well, I don't have to read it, I can see you really love each other!". So, it was straightforward. And I had to send my passport to the immigration office which they kept for a year.

R: When you arrived in England how long would you say it took you to settle? In this context, settle means when you felt comfortable, when you knew your surroundings well, and you felt well-orientated?

A: It wasn't easy for me to settle. Of course, I was homesick, I was close with my mum and my siblings. But when I came, I felt settled very quickly, I think it's because I was pregnant, and I was so happy to have a baby, and for me, I don't want to use the word forget, but I was concentrating on myself. When I saw an aeroplane in the sky it reminded me of home, but I reminded myself that I couldn't travel because I was pregnant.

R: Does living by the beach remind you of Mauritius? Were you happy you would live near the beach when you found out you had to emigrate?

A: Of course, if I came to live in London where there's no seaside, I wouldn't like it. The sea reminds me of my island, it helped me settle in England.

R: Were you close to your neighbours in Mauritius?

A: The tradition for Christmas until New Year [is that] each neighbour will invite you for dinner, and then you will take turns daily- Christmas isn't like that here. You will know everything about the neighbours.

R: Where is home?

A: To be honest with you, my home is England. There are two things I don't like in England: winter and the cakes. I think it's because I have you now [her daughter] and I know how much you love your country, if one day I die I would like to be buried in England. But saying this, if tomorrow I win the lottery, I will definitely buy a house in Mauritius, then home will also be Mauritius.

*more questions and answers were communicated but these are the most relevant and valuable.

Appendix 2: Link to access the interview

https://www.icloud.com/iclouddrive/0dpLgYRWN3UX7FSjfh5UL9VdA#New_Recording

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