My identity as a formal creolist has been shaped by interplay between my country of origin and my formative educational background. I am a native speaker of Mauritian, a French-based creole spoken in Mauritius off the coast of Madagascar.

At a young age, I became painfully aware of how prejudices plague Mauritian creole-speakers and, in my particular case, the Creole community. I learned on the playground that speaking *patois* marks one as uneducated. My formal education was conducted in a colonial language but my family spoke creole at home. Mauritian education is built on the British colonial system but strives to accommodate the linguistic heritage of Mauritians—other than those of African descent. Mauritian creole—natively spoken by more than 95% of the population—only gained ancestral language status in 2011. Before that date, Mauritian pupils of African ancestry before took Chapel and etiquette classes instead of the rigorous courses offered to students from other ethnic backgrounds. And if at higher levels Creole students were authorized to register for Hinduism, they were not allowed into the classroom.

Private tutoring likewise has been institutionalized to the benefit Mauritius' most privileged citizens. Acquiring a Mauritian education is thus a considerable struggle for Creoles—especially those raised in a single-parent household with only a modest income. Despite facing some deplorable prejudices regarding Creoles' intellect, I was fortunate enough along the way to come across many people who believed in my abilities. For instance, my high school French teacher, Mrs. Desha, provided my private tutoring for free.

I was determined to navigate my way successfully through these ingrained prejudices in the Mauritian educational system. I graduated high school with arts and languages A-levels—a momentous achievement considering I was the first member from my family to graduate high school. My mother then urged me into full-time work, but I was resolved to attend university. I had accumulated savings doing factory work in the summer since I was 13, and my mother helped as much as she could. I gratefully registered for a French BA at the University of Mauritius in 1997.

Ongoing debate on the status of Mauritian creole and language policy fascinated me. Yet I wanted to contribute in a new way. People routinely insinuated that creoles were broken languages devoid of grammar or complexity. If I emphasized how creoles actually possessed complex systems of grammar, these languages could come to be regarded differently. But the training that I sought was not available in Mauritius.

The University of Paris 3–La Sorbonne Nouvelle accepted me in 1999 to begin an undergraduate degree in Linguistics. Paris proved challenging. I juggled multiple jobs alongside school. By the end of my Maîtrise, I was ready to return home when I was awarded a scholarship from the French Government. This began another exciting chapter of my academic journey. I had time to attend seminars and even attended classes at other Parisian universities. My Master's research focused on the

Mauritian Noun Phrase with a formal and computationally efficient description in HPSG.

After graduating in 2004, I went back home to teach in an underprivileged Mauritian high school. Creole-speakers were continually penalized in an education system still so foreign to them. One pupil complained to me about conducting lessons in English, "If you had been on TV, I would have switched channels." Already struggling students gained little knowledge from being instructed in a foreign language and subsequently found classes boring. Alongside local creolists, I participated in rallies asserting the sophistication of Mauritian creole grammar, urging for its formal introduction into the education system.

The French government again granted me funding for pursuing a PhD in Linguistics. I registered at the University of Paris 7 to work with an outstanding syntactician, Anne Abeillé. Graduate work allowed me to present my research internationally and network with renowned linguists in both creolistics and theoretical linguistics. One of my academic life's most memorable and inspiring moments happened at the HPSG 2008 Conference in Kyoto. Ivan Sag talked with me over coffee about my work and the possibility of my moving to Stanford University. This was the first of many wonderful opportunities.

I completed my PhD in 2010 with a dissertation on verb form alternation in Mauritian. My research adopts a generalist perspective on creolization, according to which creoles emerge from a combination of factors including natural language change, language contact, input from the lexifier (e.g. forms, frequency, collocations), substratic influence, cognitive processes (e.g. untutored SLA, regularization, grammaticalization), among other factors. This work provides a unique view of creole morphology, one which challenged the simplificational model of creolization. Building on my Mauritian findings, I extended my research to include other French-based creoles as well as Portuguese-based creoles.

After postdoc and adjunct positions at Paris 7, Paris 3 and Lille 3, I accepted another postdoc at the University of Kentucky to work with Gregory Stump, an eminent morphologist, before being promoted to Assistant Professor in the Linguistics Department. My associations with international scholars have led to formal collaborations in international research groups like the SEEPiCLa (Structure and Emergence of Pidgins and Creole Languages). I also collaborate with scholars in Mauritius to prepare creole pedagogical materials for Mauritian primary schools.

My academic career devoted to exploring the formal complexity of creoles has taken me across the globe and has established me as a major figure in contemporary creole studies—quite the far cry from that little Mauritian girl dreaming of improving life through education.

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