Summary
Multiculturalism as an ideology to manage culturally diverse societies argues that when cultural group distinctiveness is valued and promoted, positive intergroup relations would ensue (e.g. Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2001). Social psychological research has mainly looked at multiculturalism in terms of its endorsement by majority and minority group members and its implications for intergroup relations and acculturation processes. However, multiculturalism is not only about the maintenance of ethnic identities and cultures but also about the full participation of all ethno-cultural groups in society. This means that (i) individuals have to make sense of how their collective identities (e.g. ethnic, religious, national) come together and (ii) politically, multicultural societies are about equitable participation and hence inclusion, decision-making and power. The dissertation attempted to contribute to the social psychological literature on multiculturalism by looking at intergroup evaluations and also examine multiple identifications and the evaluations of (group) decision-making. The social identity approach provided the main theoretical framework from which to derive predictions. The studies were carried out in an under-researched social context of the nation as a ‘fruit salad’ (i.e. Mauritius) where multiculturalism is the predominant ideology. Mauritius is often considered as a successful polyethnic society (Eriksen, 2004). Survey data was collected among adolescent participants (age range 11 years to 19 years) of the three main ethnic groups, i.e. Hindus (n = 844), Muslims (n = 630) and Creoles (n = 310). Although the socio-historical context of Mauritius is specific, it provided real-life equivalence to the theoretical understanding of multiculturalism. The results are thus revealing of the forms that intergroup relations can take when multiculturalism is relatively uncontested. It was found that majority and minority adolescents’ attitudes and views on the different measures were functionally similar: preferred dual identity, positive role of national identification, positive associations between national and ethnic/religious group identifications and public and private domain distinctions. Participants reported greater social distance towards out-groups in the private compared to public domain. A multiculturalism context does not necessarily mean ‘group thinking’ on all grounds because across participants, representative democracy was judged as fairer than decision-making procedures that involved group considerations. The results indicated the primacy for the adolescents of their ethnic and religious identities but these were not to the detriment of their identification with the nation. However, the findings also showed that a ‘cultural diversity’ representation of the nation does not rule out the tendency for in-group projection in terms of prototypicality and indispensability with the related unfavourable consequences for intergroup relations. It seems that in a ‘rainbow’ or ‘fruit salad’ national narrative, all components can claim to be indispensable, can view their sub-group and national identities as compatible and accept that diversity is part and parcel of public life as long as one knows where to belong.