Ambivalent Resistance and Public Secrets: Contesting "The Truth"

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Abstract

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This thesis explores a youth cultural movement in Male', the Capital Island and urban center of the Republic of the Maldives. I will focus on the dialectic between the strict social control over society enforced by penal tactics and the censorship of expression in a social context whereby the imagining potential of youths has broadened, as well as the social frameworks in which young people negotiate identity. I argue that increased education and exposure to alternate ideologies and lifestyles have led to a greater consciousness of human rights discourses and an increased desire to participate with the changes underway among many youths in Male'. The youthful innovations discussed reflect ideological struggles that challenge the government's monopoly over information and dominant social representations. I will show the central role of exposure in these challenges to *official* "truth" and the possibilities opened up by wireless communication, digital cameras and the internet for disseminating information anonymously and with fewer boundaries. The examples of resistance discussed draw attention to the ambivalence of certain forms of agency. They demonstrate that resistance can be self-destructive or intentionally ambiguous by using parody and innuendos. These examples support the argument for broader considerations of resistance independent of assumptions of *efficacy* or *success* in altering existing structures, *intentionality* for emancipation and *affirmative* action.

Dedication

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1. Introduction

In 1990 the president of the Maldives, Maumoon Gayoom stated publicly "it is time for Maldivians to break our egg shells and come out of our cocoons into the new world."[1] All of a sudden, restrictions on freedom of expression were lifted and the people's voices that had been silenced for so long were given an expressive space. In response, two local magazines were established in Male', *Songul* and *Hukuru*. *Songul*, named after a conch shell traditionally used to announce public gatherings, was re-formulated into a contemporary printed vehicle of political expression. *Songul* carried on its traditional role of spreading news and gathering the public. *Hukuru*, the word for "Friday" in Dhivehi, was distributed on Fridays and also had a politically provocative content. The magazines exposed government corruption through satirical cartoons and articles that quickly became buzz words in conversations in local teashops in Male'. Six months later the government re-imposed restrictions on expression, the two magazines were banned, arrests were made and censorship laws became even more stringent than before.

Opening up to the "new world" involved economic restructuring and the development of tourism, foreign capital interests, development aid, and a rival ideology, capitalism, which was to coexist with the more socialist ideology of the regime. Despite the uneasy combination of two rival ideologies and the contradicting discourses they presented, Gayoom denied the public a voice and maintained strict control over the people, consolidating his power through a reign of extreme control and terror.

Gayoom introduced strict censorship laws, preventing the population from addressing any of the contradictions and inconsistencies of his rule, and various forms of government corruption.[2] These contradictions were popularly referred to as *public secrets*, social realities that were common knowledge but illegal to discuss. It is through public secrets and censorship that blatant contradictions could co-exist without public commentary or threat to government authority. Today, Gayoom is the longest serving dictator in Asia.[3]

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The 1990s were a pivotal period in Maldivian history. Expressive control coincided with access to the Internet, international television and the widespread use of computers and mobile phones in Male'. One male informant comments:

Internet, CNN, BBC ... none of that was there before. It was like North Korea, no international T.V. so most people believed what the government told them. I hardly watch local T.V., radio and dailies, all rubbish, nothing to read or watch. Because young people don't watch their propaganda, nothing they can do to brainwash. They (youths) have become more critical, to a lesser degree on other islands because Internet access is more difficult. Most islands have cable T.V. and Internet. Now there are no boundaries and it is impossible to control people, unless like North Korea where it's a complete cut off. Can't have (their) cake and eat it too, encourage tourism and open country to it and control people. Too many contradictions and so it is a confused regime, confused people, a transitional point (Bs: 1: 44).

At a time when public awareness was at its highest and the Internet and international media opened the minds of youths, the government implemented strict control over all forms of political and creative expression. Creative or artistic forms of expression that commented on social issues or political issues, such as visual arts, film, literary work, photography and music were censored and public gatherings, youth hangouts and dances were prohibited. That same year, 1990, *hakuru* (heroin) was introduced to the Maldives from Sri Lanka (W: 1: 31). A middle-aged woman commented:

In the 80s it was hash oil and stuff, it was the early 90s that the brown sugar started here. It started with people who are now in their thirties ... my brother was one of the first people who got into this brown sugar. Someone told him this is better than hashish or oil so he got addicted to it ... they didn't know, they weren't aware what it was. It came from India to Sri Lanka and it was the Sri Lankans who brought it here, one man, I have seen this man, he started it and it spread very fast, very fast. We didn't know what it was and suddenly kids were vomiting and scratching and not being able to eat anything (W: 1: 31).

1.1 Thesis argument

This thesis analyzes ambivalent or ambiguous forms of resistance among certain subcultural groups of youths in Male'. I argue that a comprehensive understanding of these acts of resistance must be embedded in international, national and local contexts evoked by rapid social change, foreign media, dominant discourses and power relations. The imposition of

Western infrastructures via development schemes of the IMF and World Bank (economic restructuring, tourism) and the pervasive Western and Hindi pop cultures imported via the media and consumer goods, clash with the more conservative values and collectivist ideology of this exclusively Muslim country. The contradicting discourses of capitalism and socialism, and Western ideologies and South Asian Muslim ideologies have created tensions in local value systems, disrupted domestic life and led to fascist forms of political and social control. In order to integrate Western capitalist perspectives and infrastructures with national political ideologies, contradictions form the precarious scaffolding buttressing national and international relations. These tensions are protected from public scrutiny through censorship laws, state violence and public secrets.

The social context in Male' has contributed to important ideological shifts affecting many youths. First of all, censorship laws, the lack of recreational spaces and expressive outlets, limited employment opportunities and the arbitrariness of arrests and violence have led to increased feelings of **hopelessness and frustration**. Many youths' awareness of the structural reasons behind arrests, the brutalities often experienced in prison and the secrecy covering up these social realities, as well as the people's inability to openly express their experiences of social injustice, have led to a sense of hopelessness often made manifest in self-destructive forms of resistance, such as with drug abuse. Many youths' frustration is also exacerbated by increased perceived needs (privacy, entertainment and material goods such as mobile phones, televisions, PC's and designer clothes) that cannot be met due to financial strains, overcrowding and limited employment opportunities that are considered satisfactory to both youths from both Male' and the *Rajjethere* (rural) islands. Furthermore, changing ideologies, such as widespread attitudes towards acceptable employment that ascribe high social status to white-collar work and regard fishing and other forms of blue collar work (garbage disposal, construction work) as degrading, have contributed to high-levels of unemployment. Since there is no university in the Maldives

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and only a minority can pursue post secondary studies, most youths lack the necessary skills for service sector employment.

Secondly, social changes that have most implicated youths, such as increased education levels and exposure to alternate ideologies through tourism, travel, education abroad, information technology (satellite TV, international news, internet) and communication technology (mobile phones, internet), have led to increased **consciousness** of social and political realities. Greater social awareness of human rights discourses, government corruption and penal tactics constitute an important form of empowerment: youths are becoming increasingly critical of government practices and policies, challenging dominant political and social representations of reality, and demanding accountability for civil injustices.

As a result, local notions of **resistance** among many youths seemed to be tied up with *truth* and with challenging the government monopoly over "official truth" and "official social reality." Youths have found covert ways to expose political propaganda and public secrets by disseminating information that is withheld from society. Access to the internet and digital cameras and the widespread use of mobile phones and SMS messaging have facilitated the covert transmission of information to other islands in the country and across international borders. The ability to send photos via e-mail and mobile phones equipped with cameras further facilitates the transmission of "evidence" of human rights violations to other islands within the country and internationally, providing a means for mobilization.

While I have distinguished between these ideological shifts they are all interrelated. For example, raised consciousness has increased many people's awareness of oppression, penal tactics, and inefficient government policies. Yet despite this knowledge people have continued to have little voice to express their experiences, which has led to despair and frustration and a struggle for empowerment or need to escape. Moreover, hopelessness and frustration among youths and the meanings many have attached to empowerment have given way to other income generating activities and means of acquiring material goods, namely drug dealing, informal

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prostitution, theft and the purchasing of stolen goods. It is important to perceive these activities in relation to the complex interplay of the political, economic and social transformations that have led to shifts in consciousnesses, social ideologies, modes of expression and subjective experiences.

This thesis is based on a protest that took place in Male' on the 20th of September 2003. Two analytical perspectives are used to deconstruct the events. First of all, I explore the dialectic between resistance and public secrets by looking at the various ways youths in Male' are contesting politically driven state mythologies by exposing "truths" or social realities. Drawing on Foucault's (1980) notion of ideological resistance as "battles for truth," I demonstrate how social changes and censorship have contributed to ideological shifts, whereby many youths are demanding that the president officially and publicly acknowledge social realities, free of illusion and public secrets. Under the rubric of this theme I will show the correlation between the youths' protest and the penal system, and the significance of the public exposure of the two teenage boys' bodies that were executed by NSS (National Security Service) officers in prison on the eve of the riots. I will also discuss the role communication technology played in circumventing censorship laws and disseminating information secretly and across borders. Other covert forms of political expression such as making political t-shirts, filmmaking and photography will be analyzed as additional examples of challenges to dominant social representations through exposure. This will highlight the dialectic between public secrets and ideological resistance to "official" truths.

Secondly, I will take my analysis further by deconstructing the riots and exploring the notion of ambivalent resistance. A symbolic perspective highlights the complexity of this resistance movement, by uncovering the layers of meaning that can be drawn from the riots. The idiosyncrasies of the uprising, such as many youths *chasing hakuru* (smoking heroin) prior to rioting, are analyzed from a variety of local perspectives and theoretical observations. This interpretive approach challenges some of the Birmingham School's theoretical conclusions on ambivalent resistance as being ultimately futile. I demonstrate how everyday covert forms of

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resistance can at times manifest as apathy, compliance and recreate structures of inequality but can also create political instability and lead to more organized forms of resistance. I emphasize the importance of understanding local meanings among certain youth subcultures that associate hakuru with empowerment. These subjectively defined meanings contest prevailing notions of drugs as alienating and disempowering and reflect how an illegal substance (and perhaps even political instrument of control) can be appropriated and symbolically transformed into a tool of resistance. Continuing with this theme I will address other covert forms of resistance that include the use of parody and satire in a homemade film, political t-shirt making, poetry and photography. These instances of covert resistance also inform the more paradoxical elements of resistance.

This thesis develops the argument of the need for broader considerations of resistance. I argue that notions of resistance are too narrowly delimited and often tied up with linear progress and success, obscuring ambiguous forms of resistance that are adapted to local forms of social control. A broader perspective of resistance challenges the polarization of the concepts of "resistance" and "deviancy." The treatment of both as exclusive categories overshadows the deeper symbolic meanings behind ambivalent and self-destructive forms of resistance, becoming a dialogue of 'discipline and punishment' that never addresses their relationships to broader national and international processes. Forms of resistance relate to local power structures (Foucault, 1980). I propose that contradicting discourses at the level of the state often evoke ambiguous and contradictory forms of resistance. These modes of resistance may be intentionally ambiguous as strategic adaptations to the local power structure (such as with the use of parody in filmmaking or innuendos in political t-shirt making), or unconscious and self-victimizing (drug abuse).

A theoretical underpinning of this thesis is the dialectic between awareness and censorship. Opening up to the world, alongside the attenuation of boundaries to knowledge with the Internet, satellite T.V., travel and education has expanded the minds and imaginations of many youths. Greater knowledge and awareness has made many people more conscious of their

subjugation. It has also evoked more ideas and desires to interact with these changes though cultural innovations and cultural participation. Censorship suppresses these needs, containing the thoughts, ideologies and innovations of youths and leaving room for only ambiguous forms of agency that are defined by the regime as "social deviance."

Before further discussion of resistance in Male' I must first define what is meant by *youth*. **Chapter 2** outlines the definition of "youth" used in this thesis and how this relates to social changes occurring in Male' since the late 1970s and local official definitions of youth. The chapter problematizes approaches to resistance in anthropological research on youths. It is concerned with the general notion of ambivalent resistance that is often obscured by preconceived notions of what constitutes resistance and the categorical distinction between resistance and deviance. The following questions are addressed: Have theoretical focuses on resistance privileged positive forms of resistance? Are self-destructive forms of covert resistance inevitably futile? What light does ambivalent resistance shed on the tensions between the contradicting discourses of global processes and local discourses in "Third World" countries? This chapter demonstrates the importance of a more comprehensive and integrated approach to youth studies. It shows how ambiguous forms of resistance in Male' respond to public secrets and symbolically reflect the contradicting discourses of the regime.

The methodological approaches used in this thesis are discussed in **chapter 3**, including the various approaches to data collection, interviewing styles and field settings for participant observation. I also discuss the change in my social positioning in the field after the riots and the impact this had on my research and theoretical orientation.

Chapter 4 is a narration of the events that took place during the riots on September 20th 2003 from the first person perspective. The chapter begins with a testimony by a young male who was an inmate at the time of the uprising in prison the day before the riots. I then narrate the sequence of events that were to follow. Beginning with the public exposure of one of the inmates killed by the National Security Service (NSS) in a funeral room in Male', I recount the

progression of the protest that eventually culminated into riots. Following is a presentation of various local perspectives on the riots drawn from interviews that highlight new layers of symbolic meaning and idiosyncrasies of the protest. I conclude the chapter with a narrative recounted by a key informant of her arrest and experiences in prison after the riots. These perspectives bring out dimensions of the uprising that symbolically reflect historical continuity, reformulations of older traditions and new categories of meaning and notions of empowerment.

The interplay between rapid social change, contradicting discourses and certain youth subcultures is discussed in **chapter 5** in the local context in Male'. After providing an overview of the impact of economic restructuring and social changes in the Maldives, I will discuss social issues affecting many youths such as unemployment, drug abuse, sexual behavior and the penal system. This background information is critical to broadening an understanding of the stark ideological changes separating youths and older generations. It is also crucial to an understanding of the gravity of the drug situation in the Maldives and its by-products (arrest, rape, informal prostitution) and expanding the notion of ambivalent resistance.

Chapter 6 further characterizes the paradoxical elements of resistance with artistic and creative examples of political expression and covert resistance. While these acts of resistance also respond to state propaganda and public secrets the intentions behind them render them distinct. In these examples ambiguity is appropriated and exploited as a tool of political resistance that is carefully wielded though innuendos and satire to strategically express political views yet curtail the risk of arrest. Therefore, unlike the often unconscious, self-victimizing examples of resistance to political oppression discussed in chapter 5, they are strategically adapted to penal tactics, and tackle state propaganda through parody (a home-made film), innuendos (political t-shirts) and ideologically (by criticizing government practices and policies in private conversations and activities with friends and family).

The overt and covert forms of resistance discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 6 are analyzed in **chapter 7** as ideological confrontations. I show the significance of *exposure* in various forms of

ideological resistance in Male', such as with the public display of the boys' bodies after the prison uprising and the ways in which this information was disseminated via photography, the Internet and mobile phones. These acts of resistance are reflective of a "battle for truth", by making "public secrets" public statements. This chapter shows that in fascist countries with strict censorship laws, resistance often manifests in ambiguous ways. These examples broaden our understanding of resistance and its relationship to some of the tensions faced by many youths in countries undergoing rapid social, economic and ideological change.

2. Ambivalent resistance

Before any further elaboration on youth culture I will first define the perspectives on culture and resistance engaged in this thesis, and the parameters I have set for defining "youth." I espouse a definition of culture that parallels that of Reynolds (1995), as a dynamic process, as discourse and as reflecting processes of continuity with the past as well as a "search for control in the present" (223). This approach also relates to certain theoretical elements from Abu-Lughod's *Writing Against Culture* (1991), which divides the notion of "culture" into two terms, *discourse* and *practice*. *Discourse* opens up cultural perspectives to include the interaction of "multiple, shifting, and competing statements with practical effects" whereas *practice* refers to the interests, strategies and innovations of people (1991: 147). The innovative forms the term *practice* denotes in the context of this thesis relate to the contestation of dominant social representations and power relations, paralleling what Reynolds (1995) describes as a "search for control in the present" (223).

Resistance is defined as self-assertion (Bakan, 1996, Thoonen, 2000) and challenging dominant social representations and ideological control. This broad definition allows room for locally defined meanings attached to empowerment, considerations of resistance as both unconscious and conscious (Thoonen, 2000) and forms of resistance that are ambivalent, risky and self-destructive. A focus on "creative agency" and ambivalent resistance allows for an exploration of the dynamic relationships between youth cultural innovations and their social environments (Thoonen, 2000).

Given my focus on ideological resistance as "battles for truth" that challenge state monopolies over "knowledge", it is important for me to define what is meant by "truth". The notion of an *objective truth* has evoked ethnographic criticism (Duranti, 1993). Duranti highlights the ambiguity in speaking of "a" truth, referring to Leibniz's "necessary truth," Kent's "analytic truth," and Carnap's "logical truth" (1993: 217). The definition of truth espoused in this thesis relates to the perspectives of my informants and the participants in the riots and other

reformist activities. In most cases this means the politically, economically or socially marginalized portion of the population. *Truth* refers to public secrets and the social realities in the country that are covered up for political reasons, including government corruption, unjust penal tactics, human rights violations and high levels of drug use. Many youths are pioneering this "battle for truth" in reaction to their victimization by violent and arbitrary penal tactics. The key weapon of this battle, *exposure*, is a product of greater consciousness and access to communication technology for the dissemination of information.

I have chosen to define youths as young men and women between the ages of 18 and 30. I have set these parameters for several reasons. Firstly, the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the Maldives defines youth broadly, delimiting the period as 18 years old to 35 years old. The National Youth Policy (2003) stipulates:

> Young people in this age group require social, economic and political support to realize their full potential. This is a time in life when most people are going through dramatic changes in their life circumstances as they move from childhood to adulthood (2003: 11).

Secondly, it is youths falling within this age group that have been most implicated in the rapid social changes that have transformed life in the Maldives and especially in Male' that were initiated in the late seventies, including changes in the education structure, increases in bonds to study overseas, and the booming tourism industry. Access to education has steadily improved with development initiatives and there has been a marked increase in completion rates of middle school education (grades 6 and 7) among women and men between the ages of 6 and 34 from 1985 to 1995 (Razee, 2000: 21).[4] Statistics reveal that from 1985 to 1995 the male completion rate increased from 39 to 181 per thousand and for females from 29 to 177 per thousand (ibid). The education gap is particularly evident among the middle-aged who have not had the same opportunities as present youth generations to obtain a formal education, and often times do not speak English. There is also a discrepancy between the education levels in Male' and the other atolls due to the availability of secondary and upper secondary education (upper secondary includes grades 11 and 12 and is available in two schools in Male', the Center for

Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) and the Institute of Islamic Studies). The disparity in

middle and secondary education attainment levels in Male' and the Atolls for both males and

females as well as the general increase in attainment levels between 1985 and 1995 are indicated

in the table below.

Figure 1: Gaps in completion of education among 6-34 year olds by location, sex and level, 1985 & 1995.[5]
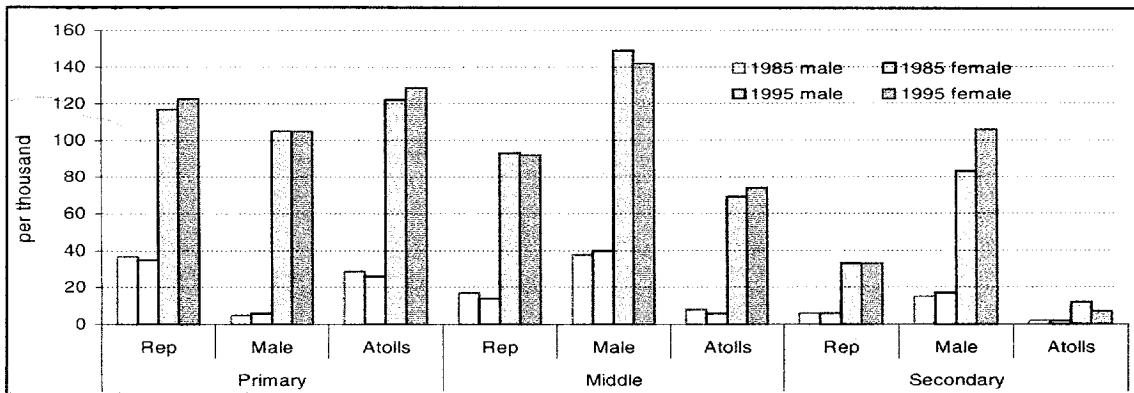
Instruction is in Dhivehi in most atoll schools whereas in most schools in Male'

instruction is in English.[6] University education is limited to a small proportion of the population

with the financial means to study abroad through personal funding and to those sponsored by the

government to study abroad on the condition that they work for the government upon their return

to the Maldives.[7] The greater availability of secondary education, overseas scholarships and

instruction in the English language coincide with the approximate age group defined as *youth* in

this thesis.

> *Problem is there is too much emphasis on English in the schools. English is equated with being educated by the people so the parents, especially on the other islands (Rajjethere) that don't speak English but have children that do, see their children as educated and themselves as uneducated. This is the problem. So they let their children tell them what is right, how to do things ... also these children finish their "o" levels and think they're "educated" because they speak English so they refuse to fish because they are "educated" (NM: 1: 39).*

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This age group has also been most affected by economic re-structuring programs initiated in the late 1970s and the shift from fishing as the country's main industry, to tourism and service sector employment. This structural shift has been accompanied by a shift in ideology whereby fishing is considered degrading and high social status is associated with white-collar service sector and government employment. However, while this is a general stigma held by most Maldivians of all economic backgrounds most youths have not completed secondary education levels and lack the necessary skills for white-collar employment, which is one reason for the high levels of unemployment and underemployment in the country.

> *They apply to be a room boy in a hotel and would rather do that than fish, but fishing pays more. Also many are sent to Male' to study because think it is better than island schools so these students come to Male' and work for families (domestic help) and it isn't better because they have no time to study, and many time they are not treated properly. Then they start to do poorly in their studies, then they just play. They buy clothes, they take drugs, they just play. And they go back to their islands and introduce these things, they bring drugs there ... and they don't respect their parents because see them as uneducated. And they refuse to fish so they just sleep all day. There is a big generation gap between this generation of youth and their parents. There are many communication difficulties. The youth are seen as more educated (NM: 1: 40).*

I have not included teenagers below the age of 17 in this research as it is generally youths that are more politically aware, critical minded, and have had greater exposure to other ideologies and lifestyles (through education, overseas scholarships, travel, contact with tourists). Therefore, I feel that this age group reflects most poignantly the tension between censorship, ideological change and expressive control.

2.1 A review of youth and agency

Youth studies date back to the first half of the twentieth century and span across the disciplines of psychology, sociology and anthropology, contributing to a vast body of literature on youths. Despite this preoccupation with youths, until recently, anthropology has contributed little to this body of work (Bucholtz, 2002; Amit, 2001). An ongoing criticism in contemporary anthropological and sociological discourse on youth culture argues that conceptions of culture

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have largely dismissed youth culture in its own right, treated children and youths as 'other' and silenced their voices. The inadequate provision for the role of youths in cultural construction is in part attributed to a cultural perspective that sees youths as 'mini adults' or 'adults to be.' Consequently 'youths' have been perceived processually in relation to adulthood, and the stages of youth stereotyped as phases from which nothing of cultural significance emerges. This approach obscures youth agency. Implicit in this perspective is a temporal assumption that views the impermanency of 'youth cultures' as equated with having less significance in cultural theory. Moreover, a tendency towards emphases on cultural homogeneity and collectivism within the discipline glosses over internal differences within communities, agents of change and new cultural processes often initiated by youths. Once again there is a temporal assumption of generational continuity and coherency. [8]

Sociological research has focused on youth cultures as primary objects of study. However, these approaches have either focused on youths in terms of "deviant subcultures" or as "class-based sites of resistance," and have tended to concentrate exclusively on late modern Western societies, primarily the United States and Britain (Bucholtz, 2002: 525-6). While the American tradition focused on deviance and its social repercussions, the British tradition highlighted working-class youth identities from a Marxist standpoint grounded in poststructuralist semiotic analysis (although research conducted by both camps were mutually influential) (ibid). It is from this latter approach that the field of cultural studies emerged at the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham.

The emphasis placed on resistance and deviancy in youth cultural studies that were, for the most part, pioneered by the CCCS, and their tendency to focus on extreme cases of 'male problem youth,' have been accused of assigning agency only to certain sectors of youths, ignoring female, middle and upper class youths, and omitting from their research the portion of youth that do conform to social expectations (Bucholtz, 2002). The CCCS' emphasis on resistance and "problem youths" set a precedent over what youth cultures were worthy of academic attention

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and which were not. The Marxist standpoint espoused by members of the CCCS led to a perception of youth deviance as futile resistance to incumbent working class adult lives, whereby resistance was seen as part of a process that recreated the very same structures of inequality that were symbolically being resisted.

In the 1980s ethnographies of resistance drew from different theoretical inspirations and fused interpretive approaches drawn from symbolic anthropology with material and historical analyses to show that inequality related not only to economic relations and divisions of labor, but was expressed in all social relations and materialized in particular cultural forms (Spencer, 1996: 488-9). Consequently perceptions of resistance were broadened to include elusive or disguised forms.

Changes in the conceptualization of youth cultures included more comprehensive analyses that perceived them as negotiations of multiple discourses and as embedded in broader discursive frameworks. Massey describes youth cultures as complex 'products of interaction' that are neither closed local cultures, nor undifferentiated global cultures, but rather hybrids that are formed in relation to local, national and global boundaries that include imported forms, local innovations, and adaptations of older forms (1998: 122-3). She emphasizes that all relations that construct space, since they are social relations, are always imbued with power and not neutral connections (Ibid).

The perspective of youth cultures as complex "products of interaction" relates to what Amit-Talai (1995) describes as the 'multi-cultural strategies' of youths. Amit draws attention to the multiple frameworks engaged through individual cultural participation that render cultural production inevitably multi-cultural. She outlines two levels of cultural engagement including "cultural competencies" used to produce and reproduce types of collective action, and "individual consciousness" developed by negotiating numerous cultural frameworks, but warns of the importance of avoiding assumptions on the ways in which the two are linked (1995: 228). Amit emphasizes the tendency to perceive the merging of both forms as "comprehensive cultural

transformations" arguing that despite re-occurring criticisms of notions of cultures as coherent, bounded wholes, and the resulting re-conceptualizations of culture, *coherency* continues to be assumed, and new cultural phenomena are seen as deriving from those earlier essentialising, functionalist notions of culture (1995: 230).

The persistence of such assumptions is perplexing since anthropological perspectives have heavily criticized views of cultures as bounded, coherent wholes over the past decades, and emphasized dynamic perspectives of culture that acknowledge processes of globalization and creolization. Ironically while the dynamic and dialectical nature of culture is conceded in contemporary anthropological literature, somehow the role played by youths in the negotiation of cultural processes has been largely ignored. Amit points out that "a notion of youth culture is clearly alien to a concept of shared, unitary and enclosed cultural universes" (1995: 225). She comments:

> It's puzzling because youths have been identified both in popular vernacular and in scholarly literature (Hannerz 1996: 29) as [the] on the "cutting edge" of contemporary processes of economic and political restructuring. Media and political representations of the latter are redolent with references to and images of youth. While research strategies and debates among anthropologists have been quickly responsive to popular and political interests in globalization, economic restructuring and technological innovation, this has not included a similarly strong interest in the youths who are so often associated in the popular imaginary with these structural shifts or reaction to them. (2001: 146).

Amit (2001) argues that research on youths in the past decade continues to be influenced by the Birmingham School in its orientation towards cultural studies and away from anthropology, and that youth studies continue to be marginalized. She concedes:

> Still shaped by the research agenda of the Birmingham school, the study of youth culture has not only failed to incite much regard from researchers investigating other subjects, it has signally failed even to attract the attention of researchers who are more interested in the implication of youth within larger social processes than in the construction of peculiarly youthful cultural creations" (2001: 149).

Amit goes on to show that in actuality this is not so perplexing, explaining that in the last thirty years the focus on youths' cultural agency has frequently been so narrowly demarcated that its theorists have increasingly less input on the comprehensive reality of young people's lives

(ibid). Such a comprehensive study would also include political and economic factors that affect but are not exclusive to youths (ibid).

More recent research, inspired by the impact of globalization, modernity and 'development' on youths, has emphasized agency and the negotiating strategies engaged to mediate multiple discourses. Numerous theorists (for example Abu-Lughod, 1990; Amit-Talai, 1995; Jourdan, 1995; Liechty, 2003; Pilkington, 1994; Reynolds, 1995; Smith, 1998; Ruddick, 1998; Massey, 1998) have looked at the ambivalent positioning of youths in local contexts affected by these broader processes of social change, and the unintended consequences of young people's responses to their local social contexts. Their research highlights more ambiguous examples of agency and resistance, problematizes the contexts from which they emerge, and less frequently the problematic aspects of the forms they have taken. Abu-Lughod (1990) states, "what one finds now is a concern with unlikely forms of resistance, subversions rather than large-scale collective insurrection, small and local resistance not tied to the overthrow of systems or even to ideologies of emancipation" (41).

Schade-Poulsen (1995), Jourdan (1995), and Liechty (1995; 2003), focus on the intersection of global processes and urbanization in "Third World" cities characterized by high youth populations, high levels of in-migration to urban centers, housing crises, high unemployment and poverty. They underscore the exposure of current youth generations to global processes and Western consumption habits, and how these factors interact with the emergence of particular youth cultural forms and expressions. These works demonstrate how youths have developed new patterns of consumption and entertainment and produced new categories of meaning, such as the notion of the 'teen' in Liechty's (1995; 2003) work, and also how youths reformulate older traditions, such as the contemporary Masta Liu described by Jourdan (1995).

These examples resonate strongly with my own research interests in youth cultures in the Maldives, as they echo similar social contexts of saturation by foreign goods, Western (and Hindi) consumption habits, economic re-structuring, stark generational change, and development

aid. These social, political and economic contexts demonstrate the far-reaching implications of economic re-structuring and globalization, and attest to the pervasive nature of change that spreads to every aspect of society and causes ruptures between generations. These 'chain reactions' reflect complex networks of interconnections between local, national and global levels that expand the frameworks in which identity is mediated.

In some instances these works also reflect situations where agency or new meanings attached to youth cultural production can be deleterious to youth subcultures. Liechty (1995), for example, does not emphasize the agency of the youths he studied in Kathmandu. Perhaps he avoids placing an emphasis on agency in his analysis of consumption patterns among Nepalese youths and processes of identity formation among young men, because such notions are generally optimistic and he is reluctant to construe consumerism and imported ideological notions of what it means to be a "teen" in Kathmandu, as reflective of agency.

Although these theorists widen the scope through which we view agency and problematize the various contexts from which these youth sub-cultural forms derive, the problematic forms the subcultures can take are, in some instances, not delved into very deeply. How socially disruptive are the contradicting discourses of global processes and local discourses in poor countries like Nepal or the Solomon Islands? How are the cultural innovations of the Masta Liu, or the young Nepalese men Liechty focused on reflections of these tensions and contradictions?

Other ethnographic inquiries, such as Smith (1998), Reynolds (1995), and Abu-Lughod (1990) underscore more specifically ambiguous forms of agency and the contradicting elements of certain aspects of youths' resistance. Smith (1998), in her discussion of sites of resistance in East Germany, outlines a similar social and political context characterized by complete centralization of power and government control over young people's spaces in terms of leisure activities and censorship in the media. She describes how the youths she interviewed felt a tension between behavioral expectations enforced by the state, Western ideologies imported via

the media, and their own life experiences. Smith (1998) brings out the contradictory elements of certain aspects of their resistance, such as the state's perception of the punks as a threat to social order despite their advocacy of left wing ideologies, and how the radio station, while re-enforcing East German ideologies as culturally distinct and anti-capitalist, also played songs from Western culture. Smith (1998) also shows how expression was negotiated in innovative ways, such as people circumventing the prohibition of public gatherings by coordinating them on bicycles.

Abu-Lughod (1990) demonstrates the ambiguous forms resistance can take with the example of Bedouin women. She shows how agency can also involve acquiescence to alternate prevailing ideologies, and describes how Bedouin women resisted patriarchal domination through consumerism, by wearing lingerie and fantasizing about romantic love (43-55).

These theoretical approaches reflect more encompassing perspectives of youths that are embedded in local, national and global processes and form complex networks of interaction on social, political, economic and ideological levels, creating an ever widening variety of contexts within which youths interact and negotiate identity and space. But while most anthropologists and sociologists agree that resistance must be analyzed within its historical context, conceptualizations of resistance tend to dichotomize resistance and acceptance and obscure the grayer areas of resistance. Such preconceived notions are insensitive to local definitions of resistance.

Resistance is highly idiosyncratic and while much literature has indeed brought out the more ambivalent aspects, many have also tended to emphasize young people's successful manipulation of multiple conflicting discourses, or the coherency of "comprehensive cultural transformations" (Amit-Talai, 1995). For example, Dwyer (1998), in her study of British Muslim women, illustrates how identities are negotiated differently in different contexts, are embedded in discursive frameworks, relate to dominant discourses and are formed and contested within certain spaces. Central to her argument is that these women construct their identities by challenging dominant media representations of Muslim women as being torn by the 'culture clash' between

their Muslim identities and the 'secular/modern' world of school. Dwyer's (1998) argument relates to the lack of research that recognizes the media as a significant cultural space for the construction of new ethnicities. In Dwyer's (1998) work the multiple cultural frameworks these youths negotiate are depicted as smooth syntheses, and the possibility that some do experience tensions mediating these different cultural worlds is not alluded to. In contrast, other works on Indian youths in Great Britain emphasize the contradictions presented by living in between two cultural worlds (Hall, 1995; Ballard, 1977).

The depiction of young people *negotiating* their multi-cultural identities in Dwyer's (1998) research and other anthropological literature on youths implies a careful balancing act in which young people manipulate multiple frameworks that are conceptualized as reflections of some form of agency. From this analytical perspective agency is conveyed in terms of successful individual syntheses of multiple, often conflicting discourses and social frameworks.

A similar observation can be made in Ruddick's (1998) article "modernism and resistance: how 'homeless youth sub-cultures make a difference,'" which conveys in its title the author's conceptual association of resistance with success. Ruddick (1998) discusses these acts of resistance as *real* and not simply symbolic acts that reproduce the same patterns of inequality. She reframes the criteria for determining what constitutes resistance based on young people's acceptance of their actions as acts of resistance and on their ability to win spaces for youths. Yet *successful* resistance continues to be a theoretical underpinning. This analytical perspective also carries the assumption that intentionality is necessary for young people's actions to be considered as acts of resistance. This perspective begs the questions: Are definitions of resistance contingent upon whether youths are "making a difference" and impacting social policies? Does resistance need to be consciously intended and successful for it to 'count'? In response to the first query Ruddick (1998) implies that 'making a difference' involves impacting external processes, specifically state control over space.

Obviously resistance matters, however we must be careful as to not delimit too narrowly what 'making a difference' denotes, and that our value judgments of agency and resistance, whether in terms of effectiveness in altering external infrastructures (Ruddick, 1998) or in contesting media stereotypes (Dwyer, 1998) are not slanted towards seeing them in overly optimistic ways. It is my opinion that resistance is highly idiosyncratic and not inevitably constructive or optimistic. Hansen and Stepputat (2001) comment:

> In the face of such obvious ambiguities of both resistance and power it seems that imposing a universal dialectic of power and resistance on diverse and complex situations may narrow rather than open the scope for interpretation (33).

Hansen and Stepputat (2001) argue that although anthropologists, sociologists and historians concede the importance of historical context, there is a *transhistorical* and universalizing dimension to the way resistance is analyzed (32). Social science literature has tended to glorify youths' resistance. Much of the research on youth cultures also implies that resistance must be intentional and directly challenge dominant discourses. It is my argument that *intentionality* and *success* should not be a gage in which resistance is measured and proved.

Perhaps in an effort to distance their research from the CCCS' focus on "problem youths" research into resistance is often structured in opposition to them, by avoiding the negative dimensions of resistance, *deviance* and *delinquency*, and focusing on the *successful* aspects. However, these dichotomizing approaches gloss over the ambiguity inherent in various forms of resistance, projecting a clear-cut image that understates their complexity. The futility ascribed to the youth resistance studied by the CCCS has perhaps oriented perspectives on resistance in terms of 'success' and 'external factors', defining the way resistance is assessed, and the terms of that assessment.

A focus on resistance as positive and straightforward in the social context in Male' would disregard various forms of resistance and notions of empowerment held by many youths. This argument may appear to resurrect elements of Willis' (1977) notion of 'self-damnation' and the 'inevitability of defeat' characterizing his version of resistance, but there are certain fundamental

differences. Willis (1977) portrays 'deviant youths' as unconscious of the process of their own self-damnation, arguing that their resistance merely re-creates the same patterns of inequality, dooming them to working class lives, yet this is experienced by youths "paradoxically as true learning, affirmation, appropriation and as a form of resistance" (3). I could apply this analysis to the hakuru addicts in Male' and argue that while the damaging affects of hakuru on the body and mind, and the disruptive effects on the families of drug abusers are self-destructive, the meanings many young people attach to hakuru see it as positive and empowering, including notions that hakuru abuse leads to better looking girlfriends, improved virility, being 'cool', rebelling against the system, and overcoming the fear of arrest and police brutality.

However, where these two theoretical approaches diverge is that Willis assumes that youths' resistance to dominant discourses through deviant behavior is inevitably futile. To regard deviant behavior as misguided and ineffective dismisses youths' own interpretations of their acts of resistance, as well as their potential for creating instability in existing structures of authority. The interaction between individuals or sub-cultural groups and social and political infrastructures shape dominant discourses so the local meanings youths attach to agency and resistance are hardly inconsequential. Bucholtz (2002) explains, "the problem-based perspective on youth focuses on young people's actions as social violations rather than agentive interventions into ongoing sociocultural change" (2002: 535). This perspective is re-enforced by assumptions inherent in many concepts of agency and resistance. Resistance is not a clearly defined theoretical concept that can be applied to various contexts, but rather an ambiguous concept that people define and attach meanings to. This demands that we problematize resistance and expand our definition of it to include the less recognizable everyday forms and the self-destructive behaviors that the meanings youths attach to it can incur. This will help us to improve our understanding of *deviant* behavior and of highly destructive social movements underway in most parts of the globe, including Male'.

Bucholtz, in reference to the impact of large-scale, rapid social and cultural

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transformations on youths, comments:

> The impact of modernity and economic restructuring ("development") on youth in societies previously organized in other ways is often thought to give rise to psychological stress of a kind not unlike that associated with youth in industrialized societies, who are claimed to undergo "identity crises" as they resolve psychic conflicts with their adult roles (Erickson 1968). The difficulties believed to be endemic to this stage of life, however, may appear to be compounded among adolescents in societies undergoing rapid cultural change because such young people also face tensions between tradition and innovation (2002: 533).

Social deviance, for example drug abuse, is rarely seen as a form of ambivalent resistance. Gailey (1992: 3), in reference to Diamond (1974) concedes that "rigid role" specializations that both define and frame the *deviant* obscure any broader understanding of the symbolic meanings behind deviant behavior. Such stigmatizations neglect to perceive deviant behavior relationally, as corresponding to existing systems and social structures they are in continuous dialogue with and often in resistance to. They are instead perceived in a vacuum. She states "chronic breakdown does not occur with any frequency in societies that have structured flexibility in roles and accepted arenas for public expression of ambivalence, anxiety, and contradicting emotional states" (ibid).

In rapidly developing "Third World" countries that are ruled by dictatorships and have high youth populations, youths represent the most volatile sector of the population, as they are often the harbingers of new ideologies and have the least at stake by challenging state authority: they have often not yet established their careers or started their own families. Therefore their obedience is assured by making them the prime targets of structural violence. State violence and a lack of forums for expression nurture self-destructive forms of resistance.

> "Whatever else schizophrenia, alcoholism, or drug addiction may be, they are the unconscious symptoms of a thwarted politics, art in suspension,...rituals of resistance on the verge of creative formulation" (Diamond, 1982: 876 cited in Gailey, 1992: 3).

Gailey explains that Diamond saw culture as emergent and constantly in the process of creation (1992: 1). She elaborates how Diamond was concerned with *cultural psychodynamics*, and the cultural creations that emerge as a result of the alienating effects bureaucratic and

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economic structures have on human potentialities (1992: 1-2). Gailey contends that although Diamond asserted that industrial monopoly capitalism has transformed the socialist world, he refuted any claims that this would lead to cultural homogeneity and the elimination of local diversity (ibid). Such a view would be assuming that capitalism simply replaces socialism, obscuring the dialectical interaction between the two systems, and how they play out in microprocesses in society.

This thesis aims to shed light on some of the bi-products emerging from the interaction between these ideological clashes in Male'. My purpose is not simply to show the self-destructive properties of ambiguous resistance and discount the efficacy they can have. These examples must not be underestimated in their ability to create instability in the political structure. The measuring of effective resistance is replete with preconceived notions. Manifestations of resistance relate to social and political contexts, as is demonstrated in the work of Foucault (1980), Smith (1998) and Reynolds (1995), and illustrated in this thesis. Within the parameters of this political context resistance is not directed toward emancipation. Such a goal would appear naïve given the political circumstances. It is more appropriately defined as an effort to expose public secrets and challenge the state's monopoly over "knowledge" and "social representations," at a time when youths' awareness of political scandals globally is arguably at its highest.

> "There is a battle 'for truth', or at least 'around truth'-it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true', it being understood also that it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays" (Foucault, 1980: 132).

The previous section has demonstrated the importance of broadening notions of resistance and exploring them in relation to social changes. The following section provides a context for understanding the role public secrets play at the level of the state by highlighting the interaction between national and international processes.

Processes of globalization and notions of the world as a global community problematize

the current function of the state (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001).

The role of the state in society in the twentieth century has been destabilized from above by the

obligations of supranational organization of military, monetary, environmental and humanitarian

policies, and from below by a growing awareness of human rights discourses and demands for the

decentralization of power and autonomy (ibid). Given the juxtaposition of a greater awareness of

human rights discourses with these macro and micro processes, the state is at a juncture where the

regulation of social life, territory and cultural legitimacy faces unparalleled challenges (ibid).

Hansen and Stepputat concede:

> The paradox seems to be that while the authority of the state is constantly questioned and
> functionally undermined, there are growing pressures on states to confer full-fledged
> rights and entitlements on ever more citizens, to confer recognition and visibility on ever
> more institutions, movements or organizations, and a growing demand on states from the
> so-called international community to address development problems effectively and to
> promote a "human rights culture," as the latest buzzword goes (2001: 2).

The implication of this in the Maldives, a "Third World" country that is heavily

reliant upon foreign aid, is a necessary political image of compliance with these international and

pervasive discourses and ideologies, and yet a social reality of noncompliance with human rights

discourses that is crucial for the maintenance of totalitarian control and the sovereignty of the

state. This paradox requires a lack of transparency in government policies and decision-making,

and mechanisms for ensuring that contradictions and ambiguities are not openly discussed but

treated as "public secrets," such as with fear tactics and violence. Hansen and Stepputat comment

that state authority demands a "persistence of the imagination, a portrayal of the state as a center

of authority that maintains stability and social order" (2001: 2).

On the one hand, as a peripheral third world country, nurturing positive international

relations with the West is crucial to preserve the influx of foreign aid that is contingent upon the

integration of development schemes. The speech made by President Maumoon Gayoom that is referred to in my introduction openly expresses this desire to "open up to the world." Opening up to the world brought in economic advantages, at the cost of increasing the country's vulnerability to foreign concepts and ideologies (Western and Hindi) that can be subversive on many different levels, the most threatening being the potential of subversion to authoritative control, from within or from without.

2.3 Public secrets and the state apparatus

The paradox of opening up to the international world and Capitalism and yet maintain dictatorial control is dealt with through public secrets and insured by a reign of terror. The contradictions are shielded from public scrutiny and criticism by censorship laws, media control, and laws that deem any critique of government propaganda and social or political policies as traitorous. Duranti, in reference to Lindstrom (1992) concedes that "truth is not just a goal in such public confrontation. It is a criterion through which power is both defined and claimed" (1993: 218). It is by exposing public secrets that many youths are empowering themselves.

What I am calling "public secrets" is not a new concept, and has been discussed in ethnographic inquiries into the postcolonial state that probe the relationship between violent conflict and popular culture. These works have used different terminologies in reference to the same general theme, including "public secrets" (Norval, 2001), "social fantasy" (Norval, 2001; Hansen and Stepputat, 2001), "perceived reality" (Beek, 2001), "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980), and "myths of nationhood" (Norval, 2001). The expression refers to the state's monopoly over knowledge and the manipulation of legitimate knowledge that produces the image desired by the state. The notion of public secrets extends beyond Benedict Anderson's (1991) "imagined community" as it refers not simply to the illusion of connectedness among strangers from the same nation or the reification of the nation, but relates to the censorship of expression of the realities of corruption and alarming social issues.

Hansen and Stepputat (2001) specify that it is *symbolic languages of authority* that are intended to reproduce the "imagination of the state" as a center of authority. Among the *symbolic languages of authority* outlined, is the nationalization of state institutions and territory by inscribing a history and shared community (2001: 8). Monopoly over the epistemology, the knowledge the population has of society and its well being, and knowledge producing techniques feature prominently in state authority. These mythological dimensions are vital in securing authority, by simulating coherency, order and political legitimacy" (2001: 14-15). Hansen and Stepputat state:

> The entire idea of political legitimacy, of the difference between naked power and authority, the idea that "the law" is something that stands above the contingencies of everyday life and incarnates a certain collective justice, the crucial discourse of rights as something that once defined and authorized become unassailable and inalienable: all hinge on the perpetuated myth of the state's coherence and ability to stand "above society," as it were (2001: 15).

2.4 Denaturalizing the state

The notion of *political legitimacy* and *collective justice* has been steadily collapsing among a large percentage of the population in the Male', as well as in some Rajjethere islands. This is the product of multiple factors, including historical continuities in patterns of rule, rapid social change, access to communication technology and satellite TV (international news), increased education, greater consciousness of human rights discourses, and the intensification of social control and state violence. This is particularly evident among youths who are generally more educated and more aware of political corruption, inadequate social policies, and human rights discourses. Comaroff and Comaroff comment,

> On the other hand is the recent rise of assertive, global youth cultures of desire, self-expression, and representation; in some places, too, of potent, if unconventional, forms of politicization....Youth activism, clearly, has been hugely facilitated by the flow of information, styles, and currencies across old sovereign boundaries (2001: 17).

This growing awareness and the ability to receive and disseminate information through the Internet and wireless communication have given way to a situation whereby the public imaginary

has been stretched too far, where blatant social injustices and arbitrariness in the law have driven out faith in the law and rendered the state incoherent, leaving only fear and state violence to secure the sovereignty of the state. Within this context the state resembles a Hobbesian state structure, and military and police forces become the basis of legitimacy (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001: 15). Hansen and Stepputat comment:

> As much as the law as a concept depends on the state's mythical qualities, the practices of solemnly eroding certain rights in constitutions, of entrenching and interpreting these rights in judicial practices and invoking them in political rhetoric also hinges on the efficiency of the imagination of the state as a guarantor of these rights. If that imagination is ineffective, the discourse of rights is inconsequential (2001: 18).

Such mythologies of coherence and rationality or what I have termed *public secrets* empower, and I would add obscure, otherwise highly discrepant and contradictory practices and control ideologically what is politically permissible and non-permissible, and what constitutes proper or improper conduct (Hansen and Stepputat, 2001). Ideological confrontations to the state's public secrets that challenge dominant representations and illusions by exposing social issues are strictly prohibited and controlled by censorship and other forms of social control (surveillance technology, informers, arrest, police intimidation).

The activities to be discussed further on in this thesis are instances of *non-permissible* depictions of social reality. They are ambivalent because they are not directed towards emancipation, and often not even publicly stated, but rather efforts to expose social reality and the contradictions between state representations of reality and actual reality, and disseminate information covertly.

3. Reflections on methodological considerations

3.1 Personal reflections

Wandering around Male' I feel invisible, ignored. White walls line all the streets and in areas reveal wind beaten coral stones, predecessors now covered by cement and painted white. Occasionally an open door or gate allows a momentary glimpse of the worlds concealed behind these walls, house compounds with young children running about, dozens of shoes lying outside a doorway, people sitting in *joalifathi* (hammock-like chairs). I worry. I cannot even penetrate the lives of these people visually. Life appears to be hidden behind walls. My long time friend and host is about as impenetrable as these walled in compounds. I convince myself that if I continue to walk these streets I am bound to find some individuals to talk to. As days go by, I begin to doubt that squeezing along with the crowds of individuals moving down the narrow bustling sidewalks will suffice. In the street there are no performers or musicians, nor beggars. Outdoor cafés do not line the streets and are mostly tucked away, each in their own borough. I sit in cafés and ice cream parlors, attempting participant observation. I am eyed suspiciously. I am carefully watched with disapproving stares. How will I manage to conduct this research? How will I manage to penetrate the lives of some people here?

I set out for the Maldives intent on researching young women's responses to the rapid changes that have so dramatically transformed life, particularly in the capital island Male', since the late 1970s. It was by looking at different forms of creative and artistic expression and how they symbolically reflect attitudes towards life, gender roles, and gender inequalities that I intended to explore the interaction between rapid social change and women's perceptions of themselves, their perspectives on gender roles and their hopes for the future. However, my original intention to focus on expressive outlets within the realms of art, music and dance was simply not viable, other than in a few exceptional cases.

After two weeks in the field I boarded a *dooni* (fishing boat) and together with Raloo, a

friend from Male', made my way to Vilufushi, a local island in the Thaa Atoll. Raloo was

conducting qualitative research on women and social stress in the Maldives. We immediately

'clicked' and seeing that we could be assets to one another's research, (she for her knowledge of

the country, language and people, and me for my familiarity with qualitative studies, and

methodological approaches) we decided to become cohorts, revising each other's work, getting

advice and helping with data analyses. On a more practical level we shared expenses related to

inter atoll travel and accommodations, and traveling with a Maldivian granted me permission

from local island chiefs to enter Rajjethere islands (local islands). Raloo became a friend and a

key informant. As two young men navigated the *dooni* (fishing boat), Raloo and I sat in the back

talking. I discussed my research concerns and my need for a field setting, a public space where

women hang out, to conduct participant observation and encounter more people. She

commented:

[HR] *That is a problem. Here it appears weird to people for someone to just sit on their own in a public space. I also often would like to sit at an outdoor café and read sometimes, but you can't do this. People think you're up to something. It's better to be in a group. People rarely go hang out on their own so the only ones that will talk to you will be boys. They will wonder what you are looking for. This café thing, to go have 'coffee' this is a new thing that started several years ago, but only some women go hangout in groups at such places, they sit there and smoke cigarettes. People usually stigmatize them as badi ("fast" women) (HR: 2: 7).*

I described my difficulties finding reference material, explaining how my visits to the

library proved to be quite useless, and that the book stores only sold a few books on the Maldives.

She nodded her head knowingly.

[HR] *The National library is pretty useless. There is a linguistic library that gives a bibliography of references for the Maldives, but it's pretty limited. No Maldivian has written any history books on the Maldives, the only history written was by shipwrecked foreigners, the most often quoted here is H.C.P. Bell, and less often Maloney and Pyrard. I can't say why but it is, it is odd. So much of Maldivian history has been destroyed, like many of the Buddhist temple remains and artifacts. Artistic expression is not very common, no one would be a street artist or anything like that...people aren't really interested in the arts here, Shehe and Bodu are exceptions here (two of her friends) (HR: 2: 7).*

The reality of local historians having barely written about their own history, my hostess' silence and the presence of innumerable walls was daunting. The conversation made me realize I would have to change the forms of expression I intended to look at. Although I had no intention of exploring politics, after entering the field I quickly realized how imperative it was that I consider the political dimensions of expression, and that in the face of strict censorship laws, creative expression is often political. In the Maldives, this reality is so pronounced that extremely subtle and covert forms of expression such as the words written on the pages of a personal diary, a private conversation with a friend, or a public gathering could be considered *crimes* if they criticize the government, and could lead to arrest and other forms of punishment. Since this oppression affects both males and females, I shifted my analysis to focus on youths, as it would be misrepresentative to construe expressive control as only impacting women.

The research for this thesis was conducted in Male', the capital island of the Republic of the Maldives, between August 20th, 2003 and January 10th, 2004. It was within the concrete walls of house compounds that I would have informal interviews, often running into the late hours of the night.

Numerous walls, on both physical and metaphorical levels, complicated my research. As already outlined in my opening narrative to this chapter, the architecture of the capital island itself and the structure of everyday life made it difficult to access people's worlds. Furthermore my rejection by my host and friend and her refusal to be interviewed or in any way involved in my research proved to be another roadblock. Most fundamentally, the severe legal consequences for speaking openly about repression and criticizing the government in any way, and the culture of fear nurtured by the longest serving dictator in Asia, fostered suspicion, paranoia and fear of expressing one's thoughts to an outsider.

National and global power relations and their effect on the social fabric of Male' were recurring themes initiated by informants in Male' during most interviews. They were also apparent in the government's control over the media (all newspapers, radio and television are

controlled exclusively by the government), in the censorship laws of the country and in the strict control over public behavior. These observations paralleled my informants' criticisms of the complete centralization of power in the Maldives, the lack of freedom of speech or expression, and the false social reality portrayed in the media, government ministries and education system.

My key informants were women between the ages of 17 and 43 years, with a majority aged between 22 years and 30 years. A total of twelve men and 26 women were interviewed. This gender differential is mostly because of my initial orientation to study women's experience of social changes for the first two months spent in the field. Also socio cultural norms made it much more practical for me to interview women.

I used a variety of approaches to gather data: structured interviews (6), informal interviews (50), the collection of life histories (17), a photography assignment and two group interviews. Interviews with ministers were more formal and took place in large conference rooms. A total of four structured interviews were held at the Women's Ministry, the URC (*Unit for the Rights of the Child* agency, which shares the same office) and the Ministry of Youth. Structured interviews were also conducted with a historian at the Linguistic Center and a doctor at the IGMH (Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital). These interviews were distinct in two senses. They were more formal in terms of the dynamic of the interview, where I was expected to ask more specific questions related to the ministry and its projects, and not the personal life of the respondent. Also when asking questions I was always conscious to speak diplomatically and not imply any hint of government criticism in anything said, to eliminate the possibility of being reported to the government and endangering myself and my informants (if my research were to be confiscated). For these interviews I would prepare some general questions pertaining to social changes, women and youths and would encourage the respondent to go on tangents and explain in greater detail, by using prompts or keeping silent.

Interviews with people from islands other than Male' were distinct because some of the informants did not speak English and I had to hire a local translator, which changed the nature of the interview. Interpreters were hired in Vilufushi and Maafushi. In addition to this is the fact that my visits there were brief, with a total of five days spent in Vilufushi and one afternoon in Maafushi, which did not allow for the same degree of comfort and familiarity achieved with respondents in Male'. Moreover, because of the locals' familiarity with census data collection, the non-directive interviewing and life history approach used in Male' was awkwardly received by most, and informants seemed to expect specific, short answer questions rather than open ended questions. Therefore interviews had to be more structured and most conversations were non-spontaneous. Only three of those interviewed in Vilufushi really opened up and discussed personal issues.

3.3 Photography assignment

Ten disposable cameras were brought into the field and distributed to ten informants with an outline of the project (see appendix 2 for project themes). I decided to use photography as a way to develop a greater understanding of my informants, ask questions and open up discussions. Most respondents, whether from Vilufushi or Male' seemed intimidated by the cameras, the abstract nature of the themes outlined, and unsure of how to express themselves through this medium. Only one informant completed the assignment, Kokko. This informant was already very much into photography and excited about the project. She decided to use her own camera. The rest of those given the assignment did not complete the project, and in most cases the cameras were not returned. The assignment will be presented in chapter 6 as an individual case study of Kokko.

In Male', most respondents actively analyzed the themes discussed during interviews, and showed extensive knowledge of politics, history, 'development' and emergent social issues that have arisen in past decades. Their interpretations of the current situation in Male' and broader processes at national and international levels provided me with important insights into youth subcultural forms. These women's stories reflect the multiple layers of their 'cultural moment', a period of rapid change initiated since the late 1970s with economic re-structuring, modernization in Male', the growth of service sector employment, television, wireless communication, Hindi and Western pop culture and consumer goods, the collapse of cottage fishing industries, and new emergent ideologies emphasizing education and 'white-collar' work. Yet despite this radical thrust of change one constant has remained in tact, the iron fist dictatorship of Maumoon Gayoom, the longest standing dictator in South Asia.

In Male' the research for this project involved non-directive interviews for several reasons. First of all non-directive interviews encouraged spontaneity and allowed respondents to construct their own experiences and lifestyles (Jourdan, 1997). Secondly the metanarrative dimensions revealed in the way people structured their life in telling their story were often just as telling as the words themselves (Angrosino, 2002; Jourdan, 1997). The telling reflected how the respondents chose to prioritize events that had shaped their lives, the degree of importance placed on certain details, and the way they framed their story.

The interviews were informal and conversational, an approach that I am most comfortable with. It was crucial that a level of comfort be reached before asking to interview informants given the context of secrecy and suspicion characterizing life in Male'. It was immediately obvious to me that I couldn't simply approach random people, ask for interviews and be able to gather intimate details of people's lives, or any details at all. What would they stand to gain, and how would that measure to the risks involved?

I adopted a life history approach because I felt it was the best way to capture the complexity of my informants' life experiences on a variety of levels (Jourdan, 1997) providing an "experience-near" perspective (Geertz, 1973). It would otherwise be very difficult to capture a sense of the frustration that was felt and the need to express oneself. As various theorists have shown (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Behar, 1993; Jansen, 1987; Jourdan, 1997; Thoonen, 2000) the telling of life histories can reveal how individuals reflect on certain events, social situations and upon themselves and how their perceptions change through time. A life history approach also allowed me to situate events and behaviors in a broader social context (Abu-Lughod, 1993) and establish historical continuities (Angrosino, 2002; Farmer, 2004). A historical context is significant to discussions of resistance in Male' as many key informants that oppose the current regime are descendents of previous generations of political reformists that experienced the attack on Thinadhoo in the late 1960s.[9]

Culture is dialectical and as historical events (presidential elections, globalization, "development") and the influence of previous generations shape the world around individuals, generations develop new approaches to culture, new mechanisms for processing and framing experiences, new mediums for expressing changes, and new attitudes and perspectives and ways of coping with them. While my theoretical focus is on youth, the life histories collected spanned two generations with the youngest informant being seventeen and the eldest fifty-four.

To protect my informants' anonymity I have used pseudonyms and kinship terms to identify them. Because many key informants in this research are members of the same extended family, I have decided to use kinship terms to identify most of them, and have referred to them as belonging to the "Aziz" family. It also makes the reader aware of the kinship ties that link them. Each kinship term in this Dravidian kinship system identifies the social positioning of each individual within their family, identifying for instance whether they are the eldest sister or youngest brother. Below is a glossary of these terms:

Kinship Glossary

Bappaa (also Appaa): Father.

Mamma: Mother.

Dhondatha: Eldest sister.

Thuthatha (Thuta): Older sister.

Kokko: Little sister or little brother.

Dhombe: Eldest brother.

Bebe: Older brother.

Thithibe: Older brother

Following are the abbreviated life histories and character descriptions of six of my key informants. The first five characters introduced are from the same extended family, the Aziz family. Bappaa, the head of the Aziz family is a successful businessman in Male'. Dhondatha, Kokko and some of their friends who participated in interviews, are part of the young elite that travels widely, dresses in the latest fashions and occasionally spend weekends at tourist resorts. Two weeks after the riots I changed residences and moved into the Aziz family's section of their compound. In Male' house compounds are identified by names. Therefore, I have referred to the Aziz section of their compound as *Madhani* and the extended family's section as *Eduge*.

3.5 Character descriptions

Dhondatha

Dhondatha was thirty years old at the time of this research. She was born in the Maldives and lived in Male' until she completed high school. She furthered her studies abroad and completed a B.A. before returning to Male'. She was an anomaly to most women her age in the Maldives, who are usually married or divorced and have children. She stated that she never intended to marry and would continue to fight for justice in the Maldives.

A strong believer in social justice with an inexorable determination to propagate change in her country's social policies, Dhondatha paid a heavy price for her optimism and courage.

After the riots she was arrested by the NSS (National Security Service) and detained for over two months in a cell in Male' and in the detention center of Dhoonidhoo Island. After her release she was then placed under house arrest for an additional month. Dhondatha now faces a charge of terrorism and could be sentenced to thirty years in jail.

While Dhondatha was under house arrest we spent several weeks in her room talking and hanging out. Most of our interviews took place at this time.

[D] *When I was a teenager, I felt repressed. I mean you couldn't do anything without everyone knowing, talking about you. You do the smallest thing and everyone is talking about it, gossiping, spreading rumors. So you just feel trapped. It's gotten much worse since the 80's ... they're more organized now. They have so much power Kim. Also it's getting more frustrating to deal with as I get older. Now I know even more and still I can't do anything. There are no ways to express your self here! With the people I really trust, I talk. You can't trust anyone here. So many people are just too gutless, it's pathetic. They'll report you (deep breath). People are scared. Everyone's scared! They're just chicken, they'd rather not make things right, they'd rather conform to the way it is and just get used to how things are. They report you just to move up a little[...]now...I feel...stronger, they didn't break my spirit...I am not afraid anymore...I just can't believe they kept me for so long and they knew I'm innocent...did you see my shirt? (She begins rummaging through her wardrobe and holds up a black t-shirt with "innocent" printed in white across the front that her sister and friends made for her). I am innocent, they know I'm innocent and they're just messing with me because of my father. I hate being under house arrest...I just want to go out, walk around... (D: 2: 34).*

Kokko

[K] *Nasir's (former president) the one who killed my grandfather and my great grandfather, and my whole family on my dad's side...they were from Thinadhoo (southern atoll). My grandfather was a diabetic, he was injected with insulin and he died ... they knew he was diabetic. My great grandfather was killed, my dad's uncle was made to stare at a 1000-watt light bulb all the time. He used to give his portion of food to my great grandfather and there was poison in the food ... (K: 2: 38).*

Kokko was in her early twenties and was born in the Maldives. She conducted her secondary and post secondary studies abroad and later returned to Male'. She was unemployed at the time of this research and complained of the difficulties in finding satisfactory employment. She was very creative and experimented with photography, writing poetry, and writing and reflecting on her experiences.

[K] *It would be very difficult for me not to be like this (activist) when my dad's been taken in, all my life I remember him being taken in for something or the other, and it's always not just, not just causes. Not to feel something when your dad's been taken in, you hear it all your life, I've heard it all my life, and you can't ignore it, whereas if I grew up in a family that didn't talk about that, I*

wouldn't know. I mean a lot of people get taken in, but not all for political reasons. A lot of people, most of the people there'll be at least one person in the family that gets taken in for drugs. The way they're treated inside, builds up, beaten-up... I could be beaten-up, and that doesn't make it right, I'm not being taken in for something that's really that bad, I didn't kill anyone I'm only abusing myself right? To be beaten up for something like that, that's not right, that breaks you. You become angry at that point. So a lot of people they come back and you hear the stories from jail, they're just boiling (K: 2: 38).

Throughout her life many of her family members and friends were arrested, including her sister Dhondatha, her parents, her uncles, her aunt, cousins and friends. Seven months after I returned from the field she was arrested and held at the Dhoonidhoo prison for approximately two months, along with Dhondatha, Bodu, and many friends, for attending a public gathering on August 13, 2004.

Thuthatha

Thuthatha was seventeen years old and her family background was of low economic standing.

[T] *I hate my father...he doesn't care about things...you should come to my house one day, you will see him like (whistles, looks up at the ceiling lazily) maybe one minute he does something with sewing machine, then just watching T.V...all day every day like this (spoken with irritation and a resignation that conveys that she is used to it). All my life he's like this, not doing anything. He is not a father. He doesn't care about his kids. In my family we are 5 kids, I am in the middle. But my brother, he does nothing, older brother Bebe, he doesn't work or nothing. Then my sister (older) she is under house arrest because of what happened on the 20th (the riots) so she can't do nothing like work or something. You know my father is 60 and his new wife, she is 20. My father has had 10 wives and he doesn't care about any of his children. In the house it is so small, each person's room is 4 feet by 4 feet. Can you imagine that? It is like a cage my father's house. My mother is trying about the house, but she doesn't know nothing...she has no education...it is in court but we are supposed to have 600 square feet and they just want to give house for 250 square feet...but how can 5 children and parent live in such a small place? (T: 2: 33).*

Thutha explained that it was very hard living in her house amidst the fighting and yelling. Her parents got divorced when she was eleven years old, and because they were both poor they separated the children and she had to live with her father. Her father quickly got re-married to their servant, a sixteen-year-old girl from a Rajjethere island. To cope with this domestic stress, Thutha began using drugs at eleven years old. She explained that drugs and music helped her to escape her reality. At fourteen Thutha began taking *hakuru* with her sister. She had a lot of

difficulty in school because of family stress, rumors that were spread about her family and her father's relationship with their servant, and drug addiction. She completed her education up to grade eight and was unemployed at the time of this research. Thuthatha's father's house was at the end of an alleyway. A small stairway only four feet high led up to her door. There were other families also crammed into the small, dilapidated building. Drug dealers often stood around the dirty alley.

Aki

[Ak] *It's my grandmother's house, (the Madhani/eduge compound) there's 7 in my house, the bit we're living in. My grandmother's house was divided into 5 sections, it's crowded. I still share my room with 2 sisters, brother sleeps in my parent's room, they chuck him out to have sex, I walked in on it so many times, because I have to go through their room to go to the bathroom, it's so embarrassing. I wouldn't go pee anymore, just stay in my room. It happened last, 2 weeks ago. We don't have locks on any doors, no privacy, my mom reads my letters and stuff. I don't feel comfortable with my parents. I have to go through my parent's room to get to my room. People always walk in on each other. In the olden days there would be more privacy because less people [...] From like 10 to 15 (years old) I was in India with mom and my sisters and cousins. My uncle tried to kill my mom and strangle me so father thought it best to leave, so he sent us to India. He (uncle) was on heroin so that's why. He chucked stones at my mom and threatened her. He wouldn't stop abusing us, screaming obscenities, jealousy about the land, saying, "This is my house!" It was my grandmother's house so extended family is supposed to share. Now there are more kids, more people, like starts 9 kids (father's siblings, including Bodu and Mamma) Thuthatha has 3, Dad has 4, Mayan's dad 3, Thuthatha 3, Thithibe 1, 14 in all I think, so it's too many to live in the same house, so there's arguments over land ... (Ak: 1: 55).*

Aki was in her early twenties and was born in Male'. She is Dhondatha and Kokko's cousin and lived in her family's section of the house compound. Her family was middle class and her parents and four siblings shared a cramped space. She had a strict upbringing and rebelled against it by leading a 'double life'. Aki attended primary and high school in Male' and was therefore obligated to be a policewoman for four years.

[Ak] *As kids we were always running around the Madhani/eduge compounds...there was always so many people in the houses, lots of family around. I didn't go to Lanka when Kokko went. I had to stay (makes a face). I went to primary school and high school here ... that's why I'm a cop (pause) I had to be a cop (voice raising). If you go to a government school you have to have a government job, or go be a cop. (Dry tone) Pay is shit and you have to work for long hours. It's up to you if you want to get brainwashed or not (Ak: 1: 55).*

Bodu

Bodu was in her early forties and from Male'. Four of her family members were *hakuru* addicts. She passionately described her film projects, her work with youths and her teaching days. She became a mentor and included me in her private discussions of how to get Dhondatha (her niece) released from prison.

[B] *Lots of youngsters come to me. You would be surprised to know, on this drug project how many kids on the street ask, have you finished it? When? How? We will do anything to help you. They need a leader figure as well, but how can a leader emerge from this society also? You know a lot about this society ... it's impossible. I don't feel I am, people are scared of me. People talk to me, mostly youngsters and it is a, revolution will come. They're so mad, artists who aren't encouraged in this country. If you analyze T.V. program you see all songs are Hindi influenced, all films are copies of Hindi films, no originality. We've got the place of the first Maldivian original Dhivehi film, the only original Dhivehi film (B: 2: 35).*

Bodu struggled to bring attention to social issues relating to sex, drugs, child abuse, violence against women and government corruption, by creatively addressing these issues through journalism, photography, video projects and filmmaking. Her projects emphasized realism. She advocated that society must recognize the social issues it has been ignoring, including drug abuse, prostitution, poverty and rehabilitation, before they can be dealt with. She explained that people are being kept in the dark for a reason, to avoid an uprising. She predicted even greater instability once the public has a sense of the enormity and gravity of the real situation regarding these issues.

Mayan

[Ms] *If I can do anything, first of all I would really want to unpack this whole...it's like a bomb, first we have to dismantle the bomb, before it explodes...and unfortunately it's not a time bomb...a time bomb we know dho? Exactly what time it's going to explode, but this bomb since it's not a time bomb we do not know when it's going to explode and I think that's more dangerous because we do not take any precautions [...] If I can get any power to do anything about this, first, try to unpack, dismantle the whole thing and see what constitutes the bigger problem, 'cause right now we do not know, really, what is going on, then we can actually sit down and talk about how to resolve these issues (Ms: 1: 1).*

Mayan was in her late twenties and her family came from the south of the Maldives. She lived most of her life in Male' except for three years when she received a government bond to complete her B.A. abroad. A few days after our last interview she left the country to begin

another degree. She was independent, strong minded and an advocator of women and children's rights, working with youth and 'delinquent' youth at the NCB (Narcotics Control Board) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Mayan criticized the lack of comprehensive studies done on social issues and attributed the reason to excessive government control and the exclusion of civilians from participation in policy-making to help the community. She complained how her university training, skills and creative ideas were not put to use by the ministries she worked for and that projects such as studies on domestic violence or drugs were blocked by the government.

Mayan's ancestry was also involved in the attempted Addu coup, to which she attributed her sense of justice and her strong personality.

[Ms] *My grandfather was never tried in court, he died in prison and so did my uncles from my grandmother's side, 4 of them, so 5 men died together (from her family) ... Because, um (voice softens) I don't know, they were one of the prominent people in the region. So all of these key figures were jailed and you know there was no proper trial for them, so they were subjected to very cruel treatment, harsh treatment and punishment, they were beaten badly, beaten so badly they died of these injuries. So the consequence of that* now, *is like for example my family, we don't have any* males *in the family, it's a very* female *headed household, so I think you know all these incidences actually have a historical connection, dho (eh)? [...] Now, in my compound it's my mum and her children, uncle and his children, aunt died very recently (lowers her voice) and her children, and now they're all grown up and then they're about to start their own families. But there's this, you know, historical link (laughs) the reason behind what we are today you know, it has a historical background to it (Ms: 1: 4).*

Mayan chose to wear a *buruqaa* (a scarf covering her hair) and explained that she did so out of respect for her body. She did not feel men had a right to "feast" their eyes on her, and stated that by covering her body she claimed control over it, deciding who was allowed to see her. She argued that many women and girls in Male' confuse liberation with the sexualization of their bodies.

Mayan expressed herself mainly through her work, by trying to inject new ideas into the government and changing policies regarding social issues. She complained that people pretended problems weren't there and were blind to them instead of facing them and dealing with them before they got worse. She spoke rapidly and demonstrated good debating skills, analyzing social problems from a multitude of perspectives including self reflection and an awareness of her own

biases. She often asked rhetorical questions, answering them herself as she spoke passionately about social injustices.

3.6 Interview coding

In this thesis, the interviews are referenced as follows. The coding system first identifies the respondent, either with the initials of the respondent, (both letters capitalized) an abbreviation of their first name, (only the first letter capitalized) or the first letter of the kinship term used to refer to them. This is followed by a number indicating which interview with the informant I am referring to and the total number of interviews conducted with this informant. The last number indicates the order of interviews conducted during field research (See appendix 1 for interview index).

3.7 Field Settings

Most participant observation and interviewing took place in Male'. The majority of interviews were conducted in people's homes. The home is the only 'safe' place where they could speak freely about oppression and be heard by a 'safe' listener, (since as a non-Maldivian I was less of a threat) without the paranoia of bugs or informers eaves dropping on our conversations. Since social commentary or criticism of government practices constitutes "politically subversive activity" such conversations could be punishable by arrest.

In the Rajjethere islands, a total of seven interviews were conducted in Vilufushi, and one interview in Maafushi. The interviews in Vilufushi all took place in the health center with the exception of two that took place in the informants' bedrooms. Participant observation involved helping the Island Women's Committee with some of their tasks, such as serving food to the men volunteering to build the small pharmacy beside the health center, and then bringing everything back to the island chief's house, as well as participating in recreational activities including volley

ball, water games and a picnic excursion to a nearby uninhabited island. In Maafushi an interview was conducted during a tour of the reformatory for youths and children located there, *Islaahiyya*.

Participant observation in Male' was constant after I changed residences and moved into the Aziz's house, where I was in daily contact with the extended family. Outside of this family network, participant observation was regularly conducted four times a week at a local gym in Male' called *Heat*, where I joined a few aerobics classes. Within this social setting it was easier to socialize with other women and develop a familiarity before approaching them for interviews. After attending the classes for three weeks I began interviewing four members, all in their late twenties and early thirties. These interviews usually took place in my bedroom at my host family's house with the exception of one interview that took place at a small coffee shop in Male'. Furthermore, by volunteering with a local NGO, *FASHAN*, in the early stages of my research, and helping them set-up a photography exhibition I established many contacts.[10] Most significant, however, was being a participant observer at the riots on September 20th and accompanying some key informants to the various locations where youths were protesting.

3.8 Position of researcher in the field

On September 19th and 20th riots broke out in the Maafushi prison and in Male' after a teenage boy was killed in prison by the NSS (National Security Service). It took a few days to digest how everything had changed. My position in the field took an unexpected turn. My living arrangement was affected as I became a potential danger to my host family's reputation. My position vis-à-vis the government became precarious as I was associated with a family that was notorious for being anti-government and became a foreign witness to the government's disregard for human rights. In addition to this, Dhondatha testified that she was with me during the riots when she was interrogated in prison. As her alibi I was also cast under suspicion, particularly

because of my status as a researcher. Having gotten official permission to conduct research, I was paranoid that the government would demand to see my research data.

My social status as a researcher was also transformed. I became an insider. Now trusted by my informants and friends, interviews were in-depth, charged with emotion, and often times potentially incriminating. Word spread fast and I was trusted by many locals, who now respected my reason for being in Male' and my involvement in the aftermath of the riots.

Furthermore, some informants saw me as a useful link in their underground network. Because I was a foreigner from *Canada* who could help them acquire greater international attention to human rights issues in the Maldives and collaborate with them to get individuals released from prison, I became privy to many private discussions. The riots were discussed at length over my entire time spent in the field and became more and more entwined with my research and my experience living there.

As a participant observer during the riots and in the human rights underground efforts that were to follow, my research was redirected. I had set out to focus on the ways women had found to express their cultural moment in a rapidly changing Muslim country with a South Asian heritage. Assuming that behavioral restrictions would be more pronounced among women I sought a gendered approach. While the inference was indeed valid, heavy restrictions on behavior were imposed on both sexes and so I decided to focus on youths of both genders.

Aware that there could be dangerous consequences to both my informants and myself as my research became more entrenched in politics, I adopted several safety measures to ensure their autonomy and our safety. I kept my taped interviews in a safe at a trustworthy and apolitical key informant's apartment. I was constantly paranoid and locking up my field notes and diaries in a hidden place, and using code words in my field logs for words such as *prison, government, torture* and *riots*. I also wrote notes pertaining to human rights violations in Spanish. I left for India after the elections in mid-October and only then wrote down everything from memory that was too risky to write in Male', and mailed the field diary to Canada from India before returning

to Male'. I sent my taped interviews and logs with an informant when she left for Australia to complete her PhD and she mailed them to my home address in Canada once she arrived.

Having a glimpse of my informants' paranoia and fear deepened my research. In addition to changing my social positioning and gaining acceptance, the riots strengthened my friendship bonds with the informants I shared the experience with. The circumstances also created contexts where political discussions and underground networking occurred and changed my personal commitments to my research.

What I continue to be in awe of, is that despite the risks associated with telling their stories and the realities of their everyday lives, informants willingly participated in interviews that would last hours, usually at a kitchen table, or in someone's bedroom. They narrated their life histories with an eagerness that resonated with catharsis for being able to speak openly about their opinions, experiences and suffering. These conversations revealed their trust in me, and most of all, a determined courage and need to speak their minds.

I see the participation in this research by all key informants and many other interviewees as a form of resistance. The routine muffling of their voices, the silence in which most Maldivians have lived throughout past generations, and the heavy limitations imposed on many forms of self-expression in many ways obscures their often subtle resistance to domination, the hardships they face and their courage. Simply by telling their stories they challenge the control of the government over the 'production' of history and knowledge. While their resistance is on varying levels and degrees, all accepted the risks that participation in interviews involved. While few have actually influenced the public record, it is by telling their stories and by the transmission of oral history that these people interpret and chronicle history (Angrosino, 2002; Bell, 2001). Without this oral tradition their lives would be left out of the country's history.

Most nights a group of us hung out in Kokko's room and played poker, sang along while someone strummed a guitar, or played pranks and teased one another. Many times the conversations gave way to politics and informants recounted how someone got 'taken in' or

released. They also gave each other updates on political corruption and propaganda in the country, and on news reports and BBC televised broadcasts that featured stories on the political situation in the Maldives. One individual upon returning from prison showed bruises and burns on his arms and back, inflicted by prison guards. He described how prisoners would cling to the rafters on the ceiling at night to avoid the nightly beatings. Another former inmate described how it was impossible to sleep with so many brown sugar addicts crying in pain as they went through withdrawal. The life histories of these key informants carried themes of oppression, frustration, suffering and survival.

Interviews and participant observation reflected how power relations were challenged in covert, overt, everyday and self-destructive ways. Although there are other resistance movements underway that are more easily defined as resistance, such as pro-democracy groups like the MDP (Maldivian Democratic Party in exile) or the Wahhabi movement (Islamic fundamentalists), it is the more imperceptible and ambiguous forms that I have decided to focus on. This perspective includes a broad analysis of the historical, economic, political and social factors contributing to the forms of resistance discussed (Farmer, 2004), and recognizes the Maldives' peripheral positioning in the world system as a 'least developed country.' In contexts where the manipulation of expression is constrained, ambivalent forms of resistance often reflect the multiple layers of negotiation of expression, whereby even silence or the appearance of compliance or acquiescence may be a strategy for resistance (Bell, 2001). It is by including narratives that I hope to convey to the reader the nature of my informants' struggles, the social issues that have emerged at the cross roads of globalization, development and dictatorship and the ambivalence of some forms of resistance.

It is important to emphasize that protest is not continuous, at times interrupted by resignation to fate, protection of loved ones and the realities of everyday life. Similar to the circumstances outlined by Bell in her discussion of women's resistance in Haiti:

Where their survival depends on their maintaining silence or acquiescence, they may do that. Where they find an opening, they may push-often gently, so no one will notice, but sometimes hard because they feel they have no other choice. Where there is no opening, they may seek to create one. Their exertions of will may mean, at certain times, simply refusing to despair, and at other times, refusing to die (2001: 7).

When reading excerpts from the life histories of Mayan, Kokko, Dhondatha, Aki, Bodu, Thuthatha and Mamma the reader should note that these women's lives are not reflective of the status quo. Yet their stories resonate with many of the difficulties faced by the majority of people in Male'. The telling of these informant's life histories cannot change the power relations that continue to repress them and thwart their efforts to inject changes into society and deal with urgent social issues. The obstacles these informants face are entrenched in local, national and international processes. Despite their efforts they are victimized and violated by the system. Gross discrepancies in global economies, development aid, government corruption, large disparities in income and an enduring dictatorship are interlinked in a complexity of ways to the structural violence of the economically and politically marginalized (Farmer, 2004). Yet by presenting their life histories and perspectives on social issues, informants seemed to feel in many instances empowered and interviews became a form of catharsis (Jourdan, 1997; Angrosino, 2002).

The interviews occurred during a specific span of time and as the worlds of participants are shaped further by new experiences their perceptions and perspectives may change. It is difficult to fathom that while this thesis refers to the riots of September 19th and 20th, 2003, the political situation continues to be turbulent, dramatically altering the life course of several key informants at each juncture. Shortly after I left the field one informant's house was raided by numerous police officers and she was arrested once again. During the summer of 2004 peaceful public gatherings renewed a sense of optimism among the civilians that joined the protests. These aspirations were crushed on August 13th now known as "Black Friday," when the president declared a "state of emergency" in order to justify the unlawful arrest of hundreds of innocent people that attended a non-violent public gathering demanding the release of four political

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prisoners. Among those taken-in the following day were Kokko, Dhondatha and Bodu. This became another 'public secret' and the peaceful gathering was publicly portrayed as an insurgence of rebels trying to destabilize Maldivian society.

3.9 Reflexivity

This thesis aims to analyze the prevalent political situation in Male' in the fall of 2003, and the roles macro and micro processes play in state oppression, structural violence and ideological resistance. My intention is to create a more comprehensive understanding of power relations and public secrets in the Maldives, which are at the crux of understanding local forms of resistance.

Throughout this thesis I have espoused an experiential approach to conjure a sense of my involvement in the subject I am researching, and in some of my key informants' lives. In many instances I include narratives to provide primary accounts of informants' perspectives and experiences instead of generalizations (Abu-Lughod, 1991). A narrative form is also used to describe the riots based on my first impressions to give greater transparency to my experiences in the field, as well as a more profound understanding of my informants, our relationships and the fear pervading everyday life.

In discussing power relations it is important that I recognize my positioning in the global schema. Limón (1997) advocates a degree of reflexivity that goes beyond the individual. He highlights how discourses of power demand that ethnographers also frame their ethnographies within the structures of power between their countries and those they are researching. As a white Western woman, while I don't normally identify myself in this way, I am aware that it is naïve not to acknowledge these characteristics and the benefits they incur, and their relevance to the context of research. Reflexivity must transcend the individual and include the global. This is particularly crucial now as global forces touch everyone and macro processes are expressed at all levels of society.

In thinking about how to integrate this into my research I realize how complex and paradoxical my 'global positioning' is within the context of the Maldives. In a society where global processes are simultaneously embraced and resisted; where tourists and locals are segregated to separate islands; where society fears cultural pollution yet embraces Hindi and Western pop culture; where a repressive dictatorship prohibits government criticism and free expression, yet allows a white, Western anthropologist to conduct research, discourses of power are vital dimensions to writing a reflexive ethnography. It is the interaction of these discourses that set the stage for me, a white Western middle class anthropology student, to 'give voice' to the Maldivians I interviewed. Why must I be conscious of these power relations?

The Maldivian government is a dictatorship run by an all-powerful president who, according to many of those interviewed, is the prime benefactor of the millions of dollars received in foreign aid (based on my interview data; Perry, 2003: 39). Government spending is mainly deficit financed and foreign aid is received from a variety of European, Muslim and Asian countries, as well as the United Nations, the IMF and World Bank.[11] The Maldivian economy relies on tourism and the Maldivian government seeks to promote an image of the country as an exemplary democratized Muslim country, with gender equality and no "abject poverty" (Ahmed, 2002: 3).

On another level, the legacy of feudalism from the period when the country was ruled by Sultans has in some ways led to a very obedient population, particularly in the Rajjethere islands. For example, shortly after arriving in Vilufushi I sat with the local interpreter to discuss my research and he began to make a list. After about twenty minutes I interrupted him and asked what he was doing. He replied "you need young women? (I nodded) So you interview Ainthu 4:30 to 5:00, Zaida 5:00 to 5:30, Aisha 5:30 to 6:00 (he paused to think, tapping his pencil) is thirty years old okay?" (05/09/2003, 16:00).

As a foreign researcher carrying the title of 'graduate anthropology student,' the interpreter did not even question whether villagers wanted to be interviewed, it was assumed they

would accommodate me. As a few villagers lined up outside the clinic to be interviewed I tried to explain that they were not obliged in any way to participate. They smiled and stood their ground.

Last of all, it is important to contextualize discourses of power within my ethnographic research because of my key informants. As citizens of a repressive dictatorship they do not have a voice. I am a vehicle for their expression. Ironically, the sanctions for government criticism are partly related to the importance of international relations and development aid (with countries like Canada), civil obedience, and the tourist industry, (to not tarnish the illusion of a paradise for foreigners like me).

These three examples drawn from my field research all attest to the importance of using an interpretive approach that acknowledges power relations. The layering of complex relations and multiple, often conflicting discourses seem to be best presented in the form of narrative. I favor this approach as it is more interesting for the reader, invites greater participation in the analysis, and allows for the smoother composition of open endings and innuendos. As stated by Limón, "anthropology itself is not and should not be immune to its disorderly character" (1997: 76).

The following chapter recounts the progression of the protest from the first person perspective. It begins with a prisoner's testimony that recounts the prison uprising that led to the riots of September 20th 2003 in Male'.

Alex Perry/Malé

A Paradise Divided

Has Asia's longest-serving head of state lost touch with his restless populace?

IN THE CAVERNOUS HALL OF A dazzling white palace that rises out of the Indian Ocean, the tiny President of one of the world's smallest countries wriggles forward in his armchair, plants tiptoes on the floor and begins the story of his revolutionary days. It's a little-known epic of how a humble teacher endured oppression, rose to lead his island people against a tyrant and finally triumphed, uniting the palm-lined Maldives. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom wears a saintly smile as he stresses that he "did not seek" greatness but rather "a lot of people wanted me to be President ... so I accepted." As the man who is now Asia's longest-serving elected leader begins his sixth five-year term, he relates how under his guidance Maldivians realized a small but perfectly formed paradise. When he took office, incomes averaged $300 a year, life expectancy was just 48 years and one in nine infants died; the

coral lagoon and a banner that reads: "Welcome to the sunny side of life."

But in the cafés, noodle joints and bare-bulb fishermen's shacks outside the palace, many Maldivians tell a different story. Here the social indices that matter are one of the world's

charge that it has made multimillionaires of Gayoom's friends while official figures show that 42% of Maldivians earn less than $1 a day. And there's a hot fury reserved for Gayoom himself, whom they and Amnesty International accuse of running an iron-fisted regime that controls the police, army, media, legislature and courts, tolerates no rival parties, virtually outlaws free speech and makes liberal use of torture. Inmates inside nearby Maafushi Prison claim they are the epicenter of the repression. "They torture and kill, then they

rampaged through Malé, torching and ransacking courts, election offices, police stations and other symbols of the regime.

None of which appears to disturb Gayoom's reverie. Ensconced in his seafront palace, the President is cooing over his victory in October's election when, as the sole candidate, he won 90% of the vote. (Opposition figures abroad insist the elections—conducted by Gayoom's appointees—were rigged. Gayoom denies this.) The President airbrushes away anything that mars his picture of a peaceful paradise. To allegations of profiting from tourism, he declares that "I'm a poor man," despite the presidential yacht bobbing behind him. He says the press is free and the editors of the Internet magazine *Sandhaanu*— detained in early 2002 and tortured, according to Amnesty International and Reporters Sans Frontières—"were never really
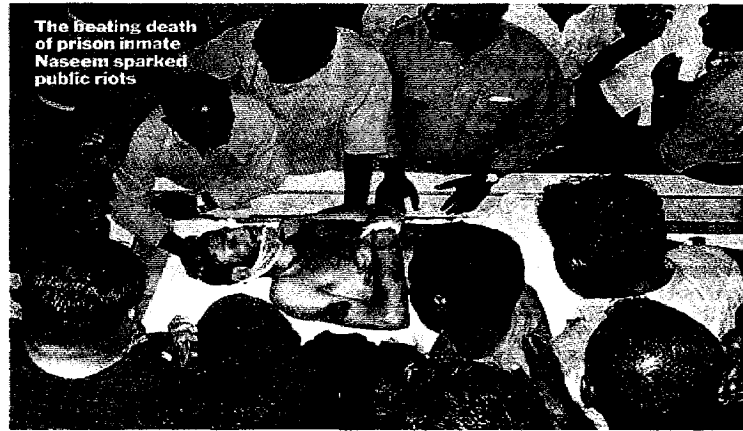
The beating death of prison inmate Naseem sparked public riots

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Maldivian Democratic Party

Covering up murder

The regime of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, in power for the last 25 years, has had a long a history of human rights abuse. The regime has reached an amazing level of comfort in covering up torture and ill treatment in jail. The most basic human rights of the people are routinely denied to the people. In September of last year, the regime became so complacent as to dump the tortured remains of Hassan Evan Naseem in the central hospital in the capital Male'. This sparked unprecedented riots both in Male and Maafushi jail. To add insult to injury the security personnel in the jail opened fire killing three more people. "The killing of at least three prisoners by the National Security Services (NSS) and the injury of a dozen more in Maafushi Prison, is only the latest chapter in a catalogue of human rights violations in the country by the NSS personal who function under the President's command"

"I have omitted parts of the report", President Gayoom presenting the commission report on the findings of torture and killing of Hassan Evan Naseem and the Shootings and killing of three inmates.

Tortured remains of Hassan Evan Naseem

said Amnesty International commenting on the incident.

What has come to be known as the Sattar Report is the report of the commission appointed by Gayoom to investigate the torture and the killing of Evan and the subsequent shooting of prisoners. In December the Commission presented its finding to Gayoom who now refuses to publicize the Report in the form that it was presented to him. On 27th January 2004, Gayoom admitted in parliament that what he presented to them is only a partial report.

The Maldivian Democratic Party calls upon the President to publish the entire report and to come out clean. Omitting and hiding parts of the report will only lead to more resentment among the people. This would force MDP to reluctantly raise the stakes in its attempts to get the full report published.

I was in jail that day during the incidents at the prison in September and I watched everything that happened with my own eyes...Two NSS officers moved into the block (prison cell) and Eevaan told them not to touch him. He said he would hit back if they tried. One of the officers grabbed Eevaan, and Eevaan hit him three times. When they saw this, the NSS force of about 70 officers suddenly poured into the cellblock, seized Eevaan and took him outside. The police used a video camera for a short time to record this. There is a check-point a short distance away from the cellblock. It is where prisoners arriving from Male' are processed. Right in front of us, the NSS force took Eevaan in there and they must have shackled him. We heard the sound of metal restrainers being put on. Then they began to beat him. Eevaan was just the first prisoner they beat that night. We heard Eevaan crying out with pain, 'Mother! Father!' he kept on calling out loudly. Then there was no sound. The NSS took Eevaan out and brought other prisoners in, and chained them together in a line. Eevaan wasn't tied into this line. The NSS officers took Eevaan to a coconut palm near the new workshop being built by the Corrections department. Part of the workshop is a big sheltered hall. Next to the hall there is a structure made of iron bars. The NSS officers handcuffed Eevaan's hands together above his head and wrapped a tarpaulin around his body. They lifted him up with a pulley so his feet just touched the ground. He was beaten and when he stopped making any sound, they threw water over him and resumed beating him again. They kept beating him with a measuring rod and police batons for a long time after he stopped making any sound. The Corrections warden said Eevaan was faking and being tricky, so they put fire on various parts of Eevaan's exposed arms as they continued beating him. They also broke a chair against his head. Eevaan was probably already dead by this time. While the NSS were killing Eevaan, the other prisoners whose names had been called were being tortured and beaten. The NSS took Eevaan's body away and I don't know who took him to Male', but there would have been people from the Corrections department and some NSS officers aboard the boat. Next morning (September 20th, 2003) a secret phone call (hidden cell phone of a prisoner) informed us that Eevaan had died. Prisoners in the warehouse cellblock were sad and subdued when they heard the news, but at first they remained silent. Slowly, prisoners' emotions began to boil and they wanted to find out what had happened to the others taken out of the cellblock with Eevaan. They wanted to know where they were, if they were ok, and whether they were still alive. The prisoners remained calm and there was no discussion or planning among them. They stayed quietly in their cells. At noon, the prisoners refused to leave their cellblocks for lunch, but they were ready for the midday prayer. With loud voices they said the funeral prayer for Eevaan, so the duty officers would hear their words and understand who they were praying for. The NSS officers realized the prisoners knew of Eevaan's death. After the funeral prayer, the prisoners left the praying area and pushed over a small shed made of corrugated iron near the duty officers' tent. Prisoners from all the other cellblocks, including those kept in small single cells, came outside as the news spread and the crowd of prisoners grew. The police were waiting for them, equipped with new plastic riot shields and batons. There were buildings nearby that the police use for eating and sleeping, and the police began retreating slowly towards that area. Some of

the prisoners broke the glass windows of these NSS buildings, and the windows of a van and pickup truck. An old experienced NSS officer was there with Fusfaru, the Officer Commanding (OC) the prison. The old officer was standing just in front of Fusfaru and he turned to the prisoners, put his hands in the air and told them all to calm down. He told the prisoners to wait and talk, he said things can only be settled by talking. Some prisoners did stop and calm down, but there were too many prisoners and it was difficult to stop this mob that quickly. The NSS became frightened. Then the prisoners noticed two NSS officers, Appa and Aalim, standing behind Fusfaru. Appa fired the first shot, a single round up into the air. The second shot was fired directly at the prisoners. I don't know whether it was Aalim or Appa who fired directly at prisoner Faseeh. Two prisoners fell down, Faseeh and Clinton, and they both fell right in front of the NSS building on either side of the entrance door. All the other prisoners turned back and began to run and the NSS began to fire into their backs, and kept on firing. There was at least one spray of automatic fire. At that stage, prisoners were running for their lives. I did not look back. When the first shot went off, the prisoners thought it was only rubber bullets, but when they saw Faseeh hit in the leg and Clinton hit in the head and they saw blood, they realized the NSS was using real bullets. There was no plan by the prisoners to attack NSS officers and Corrections wardens. It wasn't a dispute with the Corrections people, it was a problem between the NSS and the prisoners, caused by the killing of Eevaan [...] Between them, Fusfaru the prison chief, and Faseeh the inmates' leader, could have controlled the prisoners. Faseeh wanted to talk to the NSS but before that could happen, Appa fired the gun into the air. In the shooting, some people were hit and they fell. Prisoners face down on the ground, calling out their surrender, were shot where they lay. Some prisoners were shot again by the NSS, even after they were already wounded ... (Maafushi prisoner, October 2, 2003).[12]

Kokko took this photograph of Hassan Eevaan Naseem in the funeral room on September 20th, 2003.

It is September 20th, 2003 and the funeral room is cramped and stiflingly hot as hundreds of bodies squeeze their way in and out, pushing for their turn to get a glimpse at the beaten body of Hassan Eevaan, lying on a table at the far end of the room. Youths crawl in through the windows, some sitting on the ledge, perched over his body as though they are watching over him. As I let the momentum of the crowd carry me forward, Kokko follows closely behind, her arm stretched above her head holding a camera. A man standing nearby the body notices us and cries out "oh it's that white girl, she's probably with the media…they're probably with the media! Take pictures, put it everywhere, put it on the internet!" and others join in yelling in Dhivehi "let the media through!" People move aside while others push us forward more forcefully. Finally we arrive at the table where Hassan's nineteen-year-old brutally beaten body lies. Family members stand by him weeping, and a man directs the crowd clockwise around his body, ushering people along to allow others to see. I feel nauseous. Hassan's partly open eyes betray the suffering he endured for his last moments of life. His exposed body is bruised and burned, a result of the torture that was inflicted by the NSS. His ice-cold skin discloses the police's attempt to diminish

the severity of the beatings and torture by keeping him on ice to reduce the swelling before returning him to his family.

Hassan's family chose to expose his body as it was when returned to them, to show the horror of what had happened the previous night and early this morning at the prison located on the island of Maafushi. As word of mouth spreads like wild fire more people come to pay their respects. Maldivians of all ages gather in grief and outrage. Many youths are present, speaking in agitated voices with looks of excitement lighting up their eyes. An argument erupts as two men begin yelling at each other. The air is tension ridden and anger is written over the faces of the people.

At the entrance to the cemetery a large crowd has gathered. Hundreds of people stand, clustered in small groups, offering support to one another and conferring in hushed tones. Many hold cell phones to their ears or are sending and receiving SMS messages, spreading the word of the killings and networking. Kokko and I join her extended family and friends and Kokko shows them her pictures. A group of children nearby ask if they can see and as Kokko shows the photographs, Dhondatha, her sister, motions towards an informer eavesdropping on them. Kokko quickly hides her camera. Dhondatha warns that police are videotaping the crowd and gestures to the darkened windows of a school in front of the cemetery. In between phone calls and SMS messages Dhondatha summarizes what happened in prison. She quickly explains that when the NSS officers beat Hassan to death, the prisoners protested. In response the police opened fire with AK 47's, a shower of gunfire arbitrarily aimed at the backs of prisoners as they ran for their lives, killing four people and injuring seventeen. She then begins walking in the direction of the crowd moving towards the hospital, announcing that the other bodies are being hidden there. I follow along, unsure about exactly what is happening.

In front of the hospital an even larger crowd is gathered, once again standing in smaller groups talking amongst themselves and on their cell phones. They are enraged that the police are concealing the rest of the dead in the hospital. The air is heavy with anticipation. It is as though

everyone is waiting for something to happen. I stand dumbly, observing those around me. Several people exit the hospital weeping. Suddenly behind me a young man in his twenties yells "*talagale!*" (beat them, throw them out)[13] and several groups of individuals charge the entrance of the hospital. I quickly jump out of their way, only then noticing the police jeep that has pulled up to the entrance. Tension heightens as the police attempt to enter the hospital and are blocked and beaten by an angry mob of youths, refusing to let them anywhere near the victims' bodies in the hospital. Outside the entrance police seize cameras, smashing them on the pavement. The jeep departs and twenty young boys punch and kick the vehicle, yelling in Dhivehi.

What had once seemed a tranquil and peaceful city quickly transforms into chaos and anarchy. Police launches are out, cruising around the island, and riot police and two armored tanks appear in the distance. Mobs of youths rush down the road to block them from approaching the hospital. Dhondatha and Kokko yell "let's go" and our group makes our way there. Coconuts and rocks fly through the air as they are flung at the riot police, deflecting off their shields. Policewomen stand at the front of the line, terrified expressions written across their faces. As the onslaught intensifies, the riot police retreat backward provoking greater vehemence with this sign of weakness. Protesters encourage others to join them and there is a sense of solidarity among civilians. Hundreds charge the riot police, mostly young teenage boys and men in their early twenties. Young men and women in their twenties take pictures and coordinate some of the action while the teenage boys fight more violently. Many young women and teenage girls are also at the forefront of the riot, participating but being less vocal and violent than the men. A group of five young boys approach me with expressions of approval, asking if I understood what was happening and stating "*tell your country!*" "*It's good a foreigner is here!*"

We re-group amidst the chaos and make our way to the NSS building where hundreds more have gathered. I notice a gay couple walking with their arms around each other (homosexuality is illegal in the Maldives) and some youths smoking drugs in the road. Dhondatha exclaims, "*it's about time, it's about time something like this happens...people are*

finally waking up!" Thousands line the sidewalks watching with mixed feelings of fear, anger

and approval written across their faces. They pat each other's backs supportively and hold hands.

Dhondatha and Kokko are on their phones. Hundreds of young boys brandishing sticks, coconuts

and rocks charge down the street, anger raging in their eyes. A police jeep is turned over and

torched by a group of young boys. Gripped by fear I move to the sidewalk and two elderly

women supportively clasp their hands together around me wearing grave expressions on their

faces. We slowly make our way towards the nearby police station, walking cautiously past the

ignited debris on the road as flames consume police motorbikes and a few jeeps. At the police

station the sky is littered with papers as documents are flung from windows, computers destroyed,

and the building is set on fire. Another large crowd of youths has gathered. Police try to hose

down the crowd but the hose does not work.

This photograph is of Clinton who died of a fatal gunshot wound to his head when prisoners protested the attempted cover-up of Hassan's death during their midday prayers in the Maafushi prison, September 20th, 2003.

That evening, in the same funeral room where Hassan lies, another victim of the

Maafushi uprising is also exposed. Clinton, a seventeen-year-old boy, lies in a pool of blood.

Blood continues to trickle from a fatal gunshot wound to his head. He still wears his jeans and

his body caked with sand from having been dragged.

Seeing the two teenage boys together spurs an even greater outrage as the reality of the killings is made more explicit. Outside the air is thick with smoke and fires blaze all over the island. Roadblocks are set up everywhere and armored tanks patrol the streets shooting rubber bullets and tear gas at the protesters. Megaphones perched on tanks warn people to stop the noise and order the crowd to disperse. In all the confusion we lose each other and I wander the streets alone. A group of young boys approaches me, asking where I am from, eyes shining with excitement. They tell me how this is the first time anything like this happens here, that I would have never seen something like this before. They say that this will be the last year for Gayoom, excitedly explaining that with the elections so near and this happening, there is no chance he will be re-elected.

I return to my host family's house briefly, and inform Raloo of what is happening. We walk around the vicinity where many government buildings are concentrated. We see that among the buildings the youths have vandalized and in most cases set fire to, are the Elections House, the High Court, the department of corrections, three police stations, police barracks and the head of Islamic affairs' house. Only government property is targeted, and there is no vandalizing of private property or looting of any kind. Raloo nervously urges me to return home with her and soon after we arrive, her friend Aisha enters, excitedly recounting what she had observed from a window of a local pool hall, *Godown*. She describes how police were videotaping the crowd from the windows of Godown and other nearby buildings. Aisha is in her mid-twenties and works at the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

[A] *(laughs) This is really funny, this one policeman had a scared look, and chasing him was a little boy about this size (gestures 3-4 feet) with two rocks (laughing) he had two rocks and he was running after him ... all these "good" Maldivian people stopping at traffic lights and then they were cheering this boy and saying "go after him, get him! Get him!" It's quite a big joke (the three of us laugh).*

Aisha convinces Raloo to return to the protest and I stay home and continue to call Kokko but all the lines are busy. Soon after Raloo returns alone and I briefly record her first impressions.

[HR] *It's time this has happened, I don't, I wouldn't want violence but, you can really sense the energy and the excitement around. Aisha was saying, there was a young boy there, he must have said something and Aisha said "why are you going away, call more people, I am going to call too!" I said "shut-up Aisha, you know, you don't want to be ..." (taken-in) because you don't know who is there in the crowd (informers), and Aisha is a person who has been marked so to speak [...] Maybe I am being a bit paranoid, but ... stuff like this happens and the police uh, you know ... they could if uh Kokko was taking pictures and you were there with ... her ... uh, if if they like ... trace you back here, they could come and uh, they could check ... raid this house. (Long pause) you should really stay in for a while. Don't see them (Kokko and Dhondatha) for a while (HR: 5: 22).*

I finally manage to contact Kokko and she tells me to meet her at the corner and that she will wave from the car. I spot her and jump into their 'get-away car' rushing to Hishgo's house to make it in time for curfew. It is just after 10:00 pm and police jeeps patrol the streets arresting individuals involved in the protest. We arrive and all rush into the house, carrying a few computers. Hishgo states, "if they come for any of us, refuse to go ... just refuse, stay together." Everyone begins networking, putting photos of the riots and of Hassan and Clinton on the internet, communicating with prison inmates, sending SMS messages to friends and family, and trying to give interviews with the BBC and CNN.

4.3 Informants' narratives: perspectives on the riots

Informant X

A key informant sits on the floor beside me, her mobile phone constantly ringing with SMS messages from prisoners giving their phone numbers and updates on what is going on in prison. In between phone calls she shares with me her first impressions of the riots.

[X] *I felt surprised that they, the people actually came together, and that, that ... I actually didn't think we had it in us, to um to do all this you know, to actually strike the cops and bomb the places and you know, go into riots and stuff. I really didn't think we were capable of that, and that struck me ... and the people were so together ... it's just something I really never expected. I think everybody was surprised, about what happened, because I don't think anybody expected it to get this far, I don't think anybody expected that the cop um you know those places to be blown up and people to just rampage in there and break all the glasses, throw the computers away, like you know, not even the cops would've dreamt that. The police jeeps that were near that area, near the hospital ... they were turned upside down, they were like three or something there, and then they just threw petrol and get them on fire (X: 1: 24).*
It was good that everybody, stayed together, focused, that they weren't just destroying private places or private houses or shops and nobody touched any of that. Nobody even touched

like uh, people's motorbikes, or whatever that were thrown away were cops' motorbikes, specifically chose that, and all buildings were all government buildings as well ... except for the hospital, which is you know, it's also government owned, attacked because the police were going in there, I think they wanted to know, I think most people thought that there were other people dead there, and uh they wanted to see if the cops were just trying to hide them (she receives another SMS from prison) (X: 1: 24).

Just as soon as he (Hassan Eevaan) was brought there (funeral room) the parents didn't want to uh ... the cops actually wanted to do the funeral rituals (wrap cloth around the entire body except for the face) and everything and the parents wanted to uh, show as many people what they've done before they ... he was cleaned and buried and stuff. And everybody, obviously you know word travels, and then just people just started coming, one by one by one and when we went there, you know it was packed and the president was just getting out of there (X: 1: 24).

[Q] When people started showing up, do you think they had it in their heads to start protesting?

[X] *No, no (shaking her head) it just came out. Right after the president left, um the cops came, six of them, came in there and like then everyone just got heated up because you know the president just came and said "oh, I'm sorry" you know what does the sorry count? His life is gone! When the cops tried to get in, they just they really beat them up, everybody just ran to them and all of them were on, on them, I never, I never thought, I thought, I really thought Maldivians were chicken shits, I did, I didn't think we had it in us, to, you know, not this generation, not our generation (X: 1: 24).*

[Q] But during the riots things were different, people worked together ... what has changed in 25 years of repressive rule for this to happen only now?

[X] *There are a lot of brown sugar addicts and minors ... there are a lot of kids, especially around that area (Maafunu, the poorest region in Male'). They came here from the islands for school, they have a hard time, they quit school and go into brown sugar. They make criminals here, you learn nothing in school, and there is nothing to do, no activities ... also with arbitrary arrests. Like one kid that is 16 was taken to jail for a couple of months for riding a bike without a license. They're making these criminals. Once you've been taken in, tortured, abused ... it kills their spirit. And you have no more fear of going back to jail again, so they do whatever they want. And they start thinking it's cool to have gone to jail, they laugh about it like an ongoing joke (X: 1: 24).*

[Q] Are most brown sugar addicts from the Rajjethere?

[X] *Brown sugar is everywhere, Male', Rajjethere, everywhere it's the same. But in jail there are lots of people from Addu. A lot of them, Rajjethere in Male', do take brown sugar, but it's not a higher concentration, it's the same. Also a lot of people on brown sugar have girls doing dealings for them. A lot of girls also take now. It's the cool thing to do here (sarcastic, exasperated tone) (X: 1: 24).*

[Q] Did brown sugar play a big role in the uprising?

[X] *Yeah, it was all initiated by brown sugar addicts (pause) ... in jail most people are there for brown sugar and most people that take brown sugar have been to jail. That's a lot of people. Every family in this country has someone on brown sugar. Everything in Maafushi (prison) and here on September 20th was brown sugar addicts. (Pause) I'm afraid because there's no awareness and with these incidents that people think are cool, then it becomes that a lot of people*

say it's cool, if you're a brown sugar addict you get better looking girls ... that's what people think. And there is no awareness in school. So many people that recover go back. It's so small here you can't avoid seeing those people you used to take it with. They will see their brown sugar friends and be offered and they fall back. Then they'll use some stupid excuse...like "poor me, my family is like this" (whining tone) ... then they get high so that they have nothing else to think about. (Voice raising) there should be more to do in this country, there's nothing to do! They should let them explore their talents. [...] The people that started protesting were just random people who were there. All these people that were there, every person, every family in this country would have experienced you know, there's a brown sugar addict in most families and they've been taken to jail and they've been beaten (X: 1: 24).

A lot is happening in jail now you know, people are getting beaten ... seventeen people shot, three were brought back here, but the rest are still there, and not cared for, and they've only been given one meal and they're still being beaten. The three that were dead after the prison riots were brought here so all together seven had died. And I don't know if they're keeping some at the airport ... I don't know, because probably (while) the riots were going on here, they didn't want to cause more riots, keeping (them) there because there's a police area at the airport, no public access (X: 1: 24).

There are a lot of people in jail that witnessed everything. They're not going to release those people. They won't kill them, most of them are weak and in jail for like twenty years, they're going to beat them, they make deals with these people, they make deals so that they come out and say "nothing happened," there's been so many people that just come out of jail and say "no, nothing happened." They were asked not to talk about it and they just refuse to talk about it. Like my friend Imtiaz, he doesn't talk about it...they threaten him so much, they're told their family, their life, their , you know, livelihood will be taken from them. (Changing tone) Oh my god, almost one hour of curfew left, curfew ends at 4:30, after prayers (X: 1: 24).

All this time, like throughout our entire history, I think we've been pretty powerless. We're very passive people, very peaceful as well, we do not have guns, we don't go fights, we've got one religion, one culture, one everything. We don't have any reason to fight really, except for the ... and you know, until ... I don't think they realized they had it in them as well ... there's been cases in islands, some islands where um there's one island this guy brought a satellite dish and just gave it (cable) to everyone, and the cops came in there and tried to stop it and the women went out and uh ... and just told them that they can't, all the women came out and made the cops go away and then two hundred cops came there and "handled" it. They (raises voice) don't want people having information, they don't want people educated, they sent two hundred cops to stop these women, actually who rioted, because they broke down the atoll house, you know, and stuff and they had to leave, women just refused to (X: 1: 24).

Thuthatha

Thuthatha began taking *hakuru* when she was twelve years old and now, at seventeen is a recovered addict. She attributed her drug abuse to domestic stress from living in a cramped household with constant arguing. Her personal experiences with the drug and her affiliation with the brown sugar subculture shed more light on the riots.

[Q] On September 20th, can you explain what happened?

[T] *You know at 2:00, at the funeral...lots of young peoples were high (pause) and when they have the kick they start doing things ... then when they need more stuff, you*

saw how things died down? (I nod) (T: 1: 31).

[Q] What do you mean 'kick'? Doesn't *hakuru* make people tired and passive?

[T] *Not always. Some people when they take it they get really like doing many things, other people it's like you say (pause) like for example Dhondatha's cousin, he sleeps all day, then he takes his kick, then he cleans and cleans and cleans all the house. Often first when smoke it you get a kick and are really active, want to do things and then get very tired and sleep. People react differently (T: 1: 31).*

[Q] So what happened on September 20th?

[T] *People went to the funeral high and they were ready for action. They had their kick. Then later on at night they needed to buy more stuff, so groups started splitting up and then riot slowed down. They broke off into small groups to go to some house and get high, got their second kick and started burning and destroying things. After, once people separated in smaller groups, then got more scared again of police. (I look questioningly) Because if you're with 100 people it's okay, you know they can't do anything, but if twenty they can handle it. You heard what the president said on T.V. that people should stay in so he can find those responsible and he will shoot? (Looks at me inquisitively, I nod). The president, he separated the riot from Hassan's death, he was making it seem like it was just violence by young people, drug addicts and not a human rights thing (T: 1: 31).*

[Q] So why were the streets so quiet after curfew? Why did people listen?

[T] *Because they were scared. Because it broke off into smaller groups and cops were going around with cameras. They lost their kick and there was much less peoples and so probably went to places in groups to get high and talk about what happened. Everyone sending SMS to everyone else to find out what is happening (T: 1: 31).*

[Q] Do you think drugs played a big role in the riots?

[T] *I mean (pause) not everyone there, this you know (looks at me sternly), is taking hakuru, but many people that were violent, burning things ... those were younger kids on hakuru, and the people that sort of organized protest, they are older, and they are all peoples that have been in jail, take hakuru, it's a lot of people. But many people there watching, they don't take any drugs or anythings, but all have in their family kids that do, and all were happy (about the protest) because they are angry. Before if someone is killed in jail, at least they have proper Muslim burial, but they tried to hide Hassan's body, that's why prisoners got so angry (T: 1: 31).*

[Q] But before it was still murder, so why didn't people protest?

[T] *They would always make it look like it wasn't murder, even if the people know, it is still not something they can prove. It's a joke (gets angry) why do you think Maldivians can't have a lawyer? Or why pictures and forensic evidence not allowed in court? But this was first time they try just making bodies disappear, so people had enough (T: 1: 31).*

[Q] So they never protested before?

[T] *This was the first real protest. About eight months before another boy from Maafunu was also killed in jail and the next day many people were just sitting in the street, but that was it. It wasn't like a real protest. You came at a very important time in Maldivian history (T: 1: 31).*

Kokko

[Q] What triggered the riots?

[K] *Oppression. Police brutality has been going on for a very long time. Most of these cops go on major power trips with a lot of the people, people get taken in for just shit and they could be beaten up or anything, you know, there is a lot of anger towards the system ... especially towards the police. And a lot of fear, they're scared, they're very, very scared. I mean who wouldn't be? You talk about the president, you talk about the government, and you can get a life sentence. Terrorism is thirty years. You know all they need to do is find some way to fit those people into the terrorist lot. All they need to do, they just manipulate everything. Because you don't really have the system where um ... you have a lawyer. It's decided. It was mostly younger guys that did the physical, like fighting, but there were other people driving them to do it. Those were people that were educated abroad, they actually know a lot, more worldly, they've seen a lot more, they've experienced a lot more. People like them that were taking pictures and stuff, like Shahe, he was taking pictures and he studied in the States. Just different people like that, you notice they're doing something, quite in the front, but they're not leading the rioting in a way, in the sense that they're not the ones actually physically breaking things ... (K: 2: 38).*

    Some gang of people I didn't know came up to me and said "where is your camera now?" I was like, "oh, I don't have it anymore cause they're smashing cameras and stuff." He said this is something really important and I said yeah, we've got some pictures. People were really organized, they were like "get the people with cameras in the front!" You were literally the only foreigner there, in the midst of it all, I was just the camera right behind you. This guy was beside me and Abulli was like this (arms spread) trying to block people from both of us so I could like take pictures and stuff, and the guy's like, "oh it's that white girl" right, "she's probably with the media, they're probably with the media! Take pictures put it everywhere, put it on the Internet!" It's like, "yeah, that's what we're going to do," you know, and showing pictures to people as well (K: 2: 38).

[Q] Has anything like this ever happened before?

[K] This is the first time anything like has happened. I mean stuff like this (torture and police brutality) has been happening for a long time, but the thing is ... okay, you hear about it yeah, it was really vague before, like you would never see any bodies or anything like that, it was like covered up a lot more because the beatings weren't as brutal or whatever. And then this kid died (roughly 8-9 months prior to prison uprising), the 18 year old, he died and there was a lot of publicity because of his death, cause he was beaten to death, and the whole road was filled with people as well, it, not as many (as at the riots), people sitting on pavement. It was his house so there was more respect as well because it's his house right, you know in Maldives you, in Islam, you see the face of the dead person and that's the sort of, respect the dead, it's like saying good-bye in a way ... and people went to do that. But whereas here (the NSS intended to dispose of Hassan Eevaan Naseem's body without the proper funeral rituals), and then (previous teenage boy killed) they were really, really, really angry about that as well, and the president actually publicly apologized and stuff like that, and he said that this would never happen again. Then this happens (prison uprising), you know so there's already one ...(previous experience). It's been about 8 to 9 months since that happened ... so yeah, they do know about it (people being killed in

prison). I think about, at least three quarters of Male', not three quarters of the adult population but people who are like teenagers and above (were there). The cops keep saying they had to open fire because they (the prisoners) were going to break into the gun storeroom, except there is no gun storeroom in that jail island (K: 2: 38).

Bodu

[Q] How serious is the drug problem here?

[B] *Oh my god...I don't think there is one family in this country without one person going through drugs, I do not know one single family. In every family there will be one addict. Take this neighborhood here (Maafunu) there are, we have four in our family, next door two couples were arrested, in front a couple arrested, around the corner (gesturing two different house) two girls arrested here, again a girl arrested there (B: 2: 35).*

[Q] If so many families are dealing with this why weren't they all more involved with the protest on September 20th?

[B] *That's the whole thing, that's why they don't want to educate people on this issue, they don't want people to know that it is very bad, people are not so aware, people are not politically aware, they do not know to protest, they do not know what to do, it's never happened (B: 2: 35).*

Bodu related the riots more broadly to expressive control that is enforced politically,

socially and creatively:

[B] *It's suppression as a whole, and then they were ready for an opportunity and this happened and it just blew-up, the reason is control, control from every end and mainly control, media control, can't say anything, write anything, read anything they want, I think it can be better if had the chance to be creative. Creativity can be used in every area of life and they have used that part of their mind at that moment (B: 1: 29).*

A local businessman and member of the MDP in exile commented during an interview in

Sri Lanka:

[M] *There has always been same brutalities, but now even though people don't come out so much, politically people are a lot more aware [...] if Gayoom continues the way he is doing now, just paying lip service to human rights principles and doesn't do something to change this structure, it will be very violent confrontation probably more sooner than later [...] this cycle of violence, torture, violations of people's rights [...] 25 years and what he has done is make things worse you know. He has this very <u>largest</u> type of mentality, Saddam Hussein type of thinking, where he thinks there has to be this very strong center, just he and his few cronies around run the country, and then you have a very strong, very violent, coercive institution, in this case the National Security Service [...] this largest philosophy doesn't work anymore, it's very much a matter of time, I mean changes are in process. Like anywhere else, the older people are a lot more, lets say, go along with the status quo, people in their 40's and 50's already they have been exposed to some things and this sort of regime. Then you have access to Internet, international news, media, BBC, and have a bigger picture of what's happening in the world and they see all these things happening outside the country and they start thinking this could happen in our country too. It is the younger generation that will make the difference, people in their 20's can't*

be contained, like you see this in the recent riots, almost 90% of the people who were on the streets that day rioting would have been in their 20's, or teens, also 30's (M: 1: 54).

4.4 The calm after the storm

After curfew at 10:00 pm the riots stop just as suddenly as they started. At 4:45 AM curfew is over. Dhondatha, Kokko, Peanut and I get into a taxi after a long night awake. The streets that would normally be coming alive with the everyday bustle of this urban center are silent and deserted, apart from the NSS and police officers guarding government buildings and picking up all the remnants of the previous day. Corrugated metal is erected to hide buildings damaged by the fires, scraps of metal debris from burned police vehicles and bikes are picked up, and every scrap of paper is collected. The riots become a public secret, all traces removed to stamp out the historical event. We stop near the cemetery to drop Peanut off at his brother Clinton's funeral. The area is guarded and an officer interrogates him before grudgingly allowing him to attend the burial ceremony, alone.

We then make our way to Kokko's house and immediately set to the task of destroying or concealing *evidence*, in anticipation of a police raid. It seems to be a routine Kokko is familiar with. We go through all her photo albums, removing photographs of 'illicit' activities (alcohol, drugs and nudity). She asks me to hide them for her in my suitcase at my host family's house. We destroy an empty bottle of vodka, disposing of it in a nearby dumpster.

Outside the Maldivian sun shines and apart from school being cancelled, life seems to be back to normal, for the most part. Police jeeps continue to patrol the island, and many people are talking. There is tension and worry as people fear for their friends and family that were either 'taken in' or likely to be targeted. Nothing is mentioned of the riots in the three local, government owned newspapers or radio stations. Exhausted, I return to my host family's house.

Two days after the riots a group of police officers arrive at Dhondatha's house and she is 'taken in.' Dhondatha is not alone as several hundred other Maldivians, many of whom are friends, informants and their relatives are placed under some form of arrest. As days pass police jeeps patrol the streets "taking-in" many people. I no longer conduct interviews in cafés and restaurants as bugs are planted in public spaces all over the island making it dangerous to speak freely about the riots and government oppression. The curfew continues for a month and while life seems peaceful on the surface a heavy tension hangs in the air.

[D] *Fifteen people came to get me. I was sleeping and they came in four vehicles. They were planning to come themselves to knock on my door, but Thuthatha stopped them, so I went down. My father was so angry. He went with us. He was yelling at them "you can't take my daughter!" So they took me to the police headquarters near the harbor, kept me there sitting on a chair for ten hours in a huge yard. I was kept there ... everyone else was kept some other place. I was handcuffed and blindfolded. I asked them after a bit, " is this really necessary?" and then they took it off. Because I was near the toilet when they took off the stuff I saw when any of the others were going to the toilet ... they were all handcuffed and blindfolded. Bastard cops would make them walk into walls, not guide them properly and laugh at them. They blindfold because even if you're tortured and beaten you wouldn't know who is doing it. Two guys that day were blindfolded and handcuffed, being beaten, they were there for September 20th. It's horrible. You can't walk, no fresh air, bad food, they don't take you out, it smells of exhaust. I had this paranoia of dying or getting brain damage. I'm thinking, I don't know if they're killing me.*

Everybody gave each other a lot of support (the inmates). We would talk to each other, sing, check-up on one another. At least we could communicate. We were each in separate cells with walls dividing them so that we couldn't see each other. Marie was in the one next to me. We could still talk. Sometimes I could look over the wall to see somebody, except they hear everything we say so we can't talk about anything. Mostly we just sang. The cell I was in was terrible. There are no windows and the lights are fluorescent and always on, so you can't really sleep, you always feel like someone is watching you. And you get no exercise except when they take you to the interrogation room. In the entrance to the cell there is just one strip of wall, so when you go to the bathroom it's embarrassing.

I knew only a few days before that I was going to be released, because they had me sign these four forms, or copies or whatever. Before that I had to spend eleven days in Dhoonidhoo. I was scared because I heard from another girl that they gang raped women and were under no supervision, the cops, so did whatever they wanted. I was taken there by launch. But no one did anything. I wasn't sexually harassed or tortured. We weren't supposed to talk but we did anyway, after the first few days, but we couldn't really talk because everything is heard. Time went quicker during Ramazan (Ramadan) because it gave a structure to the day. We would sleep, if you can call it sleep because it's so noisy, during the day and then wake up to break fast, and stay up all night. The days seemed shorter (laughs) we'd find ways to entertain ourselves, or give structure to the day ... we'd do the bit of exercise we could do in our cells (D: 2: 34).

You can't really sleep there, there is <u>constant light, noise, guards looking at you while you sleep</u> ... also the yelling and crying of people coming off brown sugar, and all sick and

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suffering. And I know they knew after the first week I am innocent! So they changed their interrogation strategy and started trying to get me to say who was there. I just said I couldn't remember, that I didn't know. All I said in my statement was that you, Kokko, me were at the funeral and then walked to the hospital. They asked me who you are and stuff, then they tried to accuse me of throwing a rock and smashing someone's head! Then it was setting fire to a cop bike!

Everything is getting really stirred up ... like these ten guys had a crazy plan, thank god they didn't do it. They were going to take over a resort by starting an uprising in jail and invading the armory. They were then going to take control of the airport and blow-up the, the place where all the electricity to the island comes from! No, actually they were going to first blow-up the electricity place, and while the power was off do the rest! Can you imagine! It would have been terrible. I mean you see how close houses are to each other, can you imagine what a fire would do? But someone leaked it (pause) guess who? Hassan Eevaan's brother!

You know the lady downstairs (cleaning lady) her son was, so he said, not there on the 20th and that he didn't see anything, but it didn't matter. He was taken in the following day and brought to another island off of Male'! He's only sixteen years old! They beat him in the bathroom and who knows what else they did to him there ... he was probably raped ... all the young boys were taken there, the minors. It's where cops are trained and they're all like sixteen. It was mostly kids that burned stuff. All were tied together and terrible things done to them. Her son was beaten and then the next day released... (D: 2: 34).

Over the next four months 33 interviews with people young and old, male and female and from different social classes revealed different attitudes towards the riots and different interpretations of them. Some individuals reduced the riots to the delinquency of drug addicts, and not a matter of human rights violations. On the other hand some admired their courage, while others stated with resignation that perhaps now violence is the only way. Those interviewed that did participate in the protest felt empowered and proud that they and others took a stand against the government. At the same time these informants felt frustrated with the *hakuru* problem in the country that had torn apart their families and their friends. A common denominator in all these perspectives was that youths, including many youths addicted to *hakuru*, initiated the protest.

The interviews highlighted the lack of expressive outlets and reflected a growing frustration with censorship and authoritarian control. The riots were about much more than Hassan's death and the police attempt to make him 'disappear', particularly given the fact that torture, beatings and murder had long been a part of the country's history. Key informants identified the exposure of Hassan and Clinton's bodies as the trigger for the riots and the

subsequent challenges to government authority that have occurred since, including increased

criminal activity, creative political expression (t-shirts, painting, poetry), and public gatherings.

Furthermore, after the riots opposition parties like the MDP and other rival groups, such as the

Wahhabis and a group of wealthy businessmen, became more organized and active.

5. The penal system, punishment and self-victimizing notions of empowerment

The riots reveal the way a set of circumstances coalesced together to produce an uprising. The fact that many youths who rioted were *hakuru* addicts and actually got high before rioting demonstrates that resistance can come from odd sources. Resistance does not challenge the system everyday, sometimes manifesting itself as apathy, self-destruction or compliance, sometimes recreating the same structures of authority (creating themselves as an underclass). At other times covert acts of resistance can lead to organized challenges to the system that can create political instability, such as what happened with the riots.

The forms of resistance discussed in this chapter are the product of a complex interaction of social circumstances. This chapter will show how economic re-structuring, increased movement, globalization, consumerism and the influx of Hindi and Western pop culture improve our understanding of the riots. I will start by establishing a historical link in patterns of rule since the sultanic period. I will then discuss the impact of tourism on society at large and on youths in particular. This will show how the ambivalent forms of expression and resistance among some youths in Male' are a reflection of these tensions and contradictions.

The activities analyzed in this chapter are drug abuse and sexual behavior. This is not to suggest that youths comprise a homogeneous group (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001) or to reduce the divergent cultural innovations and behaviors of youths to the examples discussed in this thesis. These activities are discussed under the rubric of ambivalent resistance, based on the local meanings some youths attached to empowerment. The following chapter will address creative expressions of resistance (including t-shirt making, photography, poetry and filmmaking). Although these examples of expression and resistance are not reciprocal they are analyzed under the common rubric of ambivalent resistance as they mutually comprise deviations from *acceptable behavior* as designated by the state, are considered to be *deviant* and result in punishment. The punishments exercised in prison, including physical and psychological torture, public executions and other fear tactics have fueled a social movement among many youths that

is challenging the secrecy surrounding these penal tactics by exposing the social reality. The *truth-producing* strategies of the state and the truth exposing strategies of resistance highlight the notion of *ideological resistance* and the dialectic between relations of power and modes of resistance.

Figure 2: Income poverty levels in the north, Male' and surrounding atolls.[14]
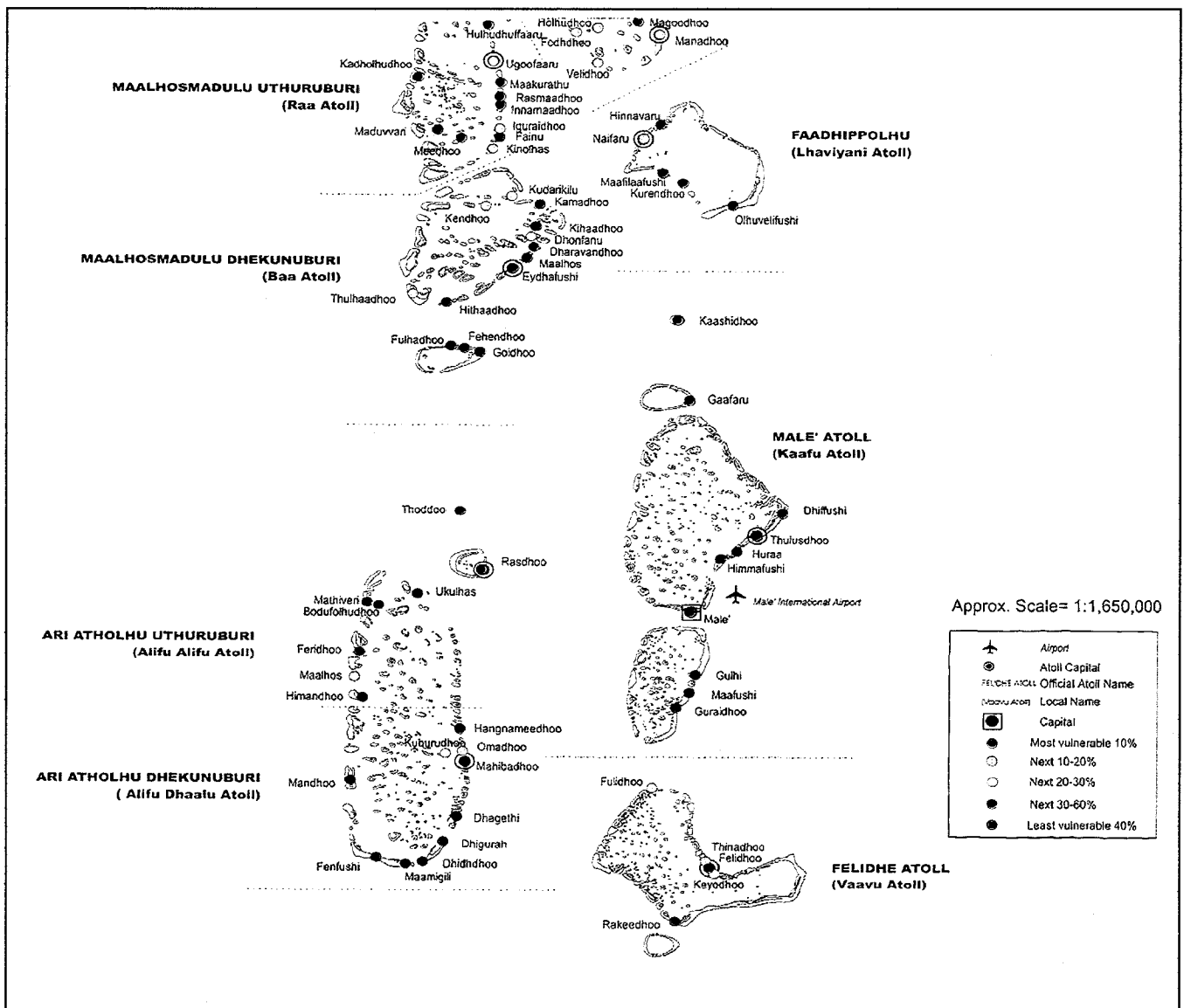
The Republic of the Maldives is an archipelago of approximately 1190 small, low lying coral islands floating in the Indian Ocean southwest of India and Sri Lanka that extend over a territorial area of 859,000 square-kilometers, of which over 95% is water.[15] The islands are all very small and only 33 inhabited islands have a land area exceeding one square kilometer.[16] Just 199 of the islands are inhabited, while an additional 86 islands are developed exclusively as tourist resorts and 56 are used for industrial purposes.[17] There are approximately 1200 uninhabited islands (including sand banks and islands in the process of formation and erosion).[18]

The total population according to the 2000 census was 270,101, of which 27.4% lived in the urban center Male', and 72.6% resided in the rural atolls.[19] In the atolls, 67 islands (or one-third of all islands) have a population under 500, and 144 islands (or 70% of all islands) have less than 1,000 inhabitants.[20] Six islands have a population exceeding 3000, and only 35 inhabited islands have a population density of less than 50 people per hectare.[21]

The islands are clustered into 26 natural atolls that are, for administrative purposes, divided into 20 regions.[22] The islands within these atolls are popularly referred to as *Rajjethere* ("inside" islands), which distinguishes them from the capital island, Male', the main administrative and trading center.[23] The islands are scarcely one meter above sea level, and most are protected from waves and tides by the coral reefs that surround them and help to form sand and marine ecosystems.[24] There are no rivers or streams, nor are there any land-based building materials. The soils are not well suited for agriculture and although some islands have fruit trees or can sustain minor agriculture, others depend entirely on fishing.[25] The people live a fragile subsistence economy and are vulnerable to food shortages, water contamination, inadequate healthcare and sea surges, such as the recent devastating tsunami in December 2004.

Male' is the country's capital island and is located on the Kaafu Atoll. It lies in tension at the cross roads of the seemingly contradicting worlds of the traditional collectivism of the islands and the industrial capitalism of the West. The island extends widthwise a mere two kilometers and lengthwise one kilometer. Described by one informant as a "concrete jungle",

Male' lacks physical space. Its 88 000 people swarm the narrow streets in an endless bustle comprised of Maldivians from Male' and the Rajjethere islands, as well as labor migrants from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Members of the latter groups take up most of the blue-collar work in the country, as it is considered "dirty work" and unacceptable employment among many Maldivians. Life is hectic, with extended families often living together crammed into small houses or apartments, sometimes having to sleep in shifts due to limited floor space, with very little recreational areas or facilities. In the work place people face the pressures of responsibility and the frustration of having little say in what happens while at home they face the pressures of lack of space, privacy and tension with in-laws.

Drastically transformed from its earlier rural island appearance with natural beaches, the capital city is congested with buildings from end to end, save an artificial beach and recreational area on the east side. The west side of the island is less developed and there are no government buildings. This is where Maafunu is located, the poorest district in Male'.

In stark contrast to the world of the Rajjethere, Male' is saturated with motorized vehicles, boutiques, music stores, restaurants, teashops and modern grocery stores. Local entrepreneurs and foreign investors make up the business community. People are very savvy about everything hi-tech and owning the latest mobile phone or motorbike is a major status symbol. Everyone seems to own a mobile phone, a television set, a DVD or VCD player, and in most cases a computer. Many young people in Male' walk around in modern Western and Hindi dress. Some females, particularly those from the Rajjethere islands, dress more conservatively wearing *shelvar kameez, buruqaa* or *Hijabs* and elder women normally wear traditional Maldivian dress. Some male youths dress in rocker, punk or surfer subcultural styles, while men wear suits, casual wear or sarongs tied at the waist.

The Maldives have been populated for over 2000 years, and the first inhabitants likely came from Sri Lanka and southern India.[26] The islands were at the trading intersection of various maritime nations as early as 2000 BC (Mohamed, 2002: 109; Heyerdahl, 1986). The earliest known settlers of the country were an ancient race of sun-worshiping people called the Redin, who left a legacy of beliefs in *jinnis* (evil spirits) still apparent today (Heyerdahl, 1986).[27] Archeological findings and copperplate records reveal that the Redin, Buddhists and Hindus all occupied the country at various points in pre-Islamic times. Most of these artifacts were destroyed, often by the locals who found them, because of superstitions or in observance of the Islamic faith, which forbids the worshipping of effigies. Statues of the Buddha, Shiva (Hindu god) and phallic sculptures were destroyed and ancient carved stones were pilfered from *hawittas* (Redin sun-worshipping temples) and coral stones from *stupas* (Buddhist mounds) for building materials. Consequently, little is known of the country's history prior to the conversion to Islam in 1153 A.D.

The Tarikh documents six sultanic dynasties and a total of 89 sultans and 3 sultanas from 1153 A.D. to 1968 (excluding an interregnum in 1953).[28] During this period, Islam was widely disseminated and Islamic law enforced, and to this day citizenship is confined to Muslims (although resident permits are available to those working and residing in the Maldives). The country has stayed mostly independent in faith and thought over the last 800 years, despite its proximity to India and Sri Lanka, its strategic location on trade routes to India, and Western colonial incursions, first by the Portuguese, then the Dutch and ultimately the British.[29] The Maldives became fully independent from the UK on July 26, 1965 and became a republic in 1968.

Maldivians form a unitary state of Sunni Muslims and share a single language, Dhivehi, an Indo-Aryan language most closely related to an early form of Sinhala that incorporates

elements of Arabic and Persian, evident in the local script, *Thaana*.[30] Sharing one religion and

language has contributed to keeping the country cohesive and close-knit, with a shared system of

values grounded in the principles of Islam.

The Maldivian political structure and economic system show a certain degree of

continuity with the feudal organizational framework of the Sultanic past, despite the significant

changes introduced in the 20th century. Sultanic reign was characterized by a political and

economic hold over Maldivian society that was re-enforced and sanctioned by Islamic law.[31] The

Vaziers, called *Mouskouli* (elders), were the closest advisors to the Sultans and responsible for the

administration and revenue of the state, and the command of the police and military.[32] Island and

atoll chiefs formed the next rung in the pyramidal hierarchical structure (administrators and

revenue collectors for the atolls), followed by the *Naibs*, (religious and judicial heads at the atoll

level). The next rung comprised the *Muskuli avas* (wards responsible for keeping informed of all

activities of people in the respective atolls), and *Moudins* (priests in charge of the mosques).[33]

Phadnis and Luithui state, "The *Muskuli avas* were the eyes and ears of the government"

(1985: 11).

Many contemporary parallels may be found in the current government structure.

Nepotism persists in the government with relatives and in-laws nominated as ministers and island

chiefs.[34] The large revenues reserved for the sultan's court and ministers are also evident in the

existing structure, as well as the government's total control over the economy and the complete

centralization of power.[35] The Governor of Ceylon (1934) in a confidential letter to the British

Secretary of State commented:

> The Legislative Council seems to consist of nominees of the Ministers and to have little
> or no influence over the Ministers' activities. The people's assembly whose avowed
> function is to ratify the measures passed by the Legislative Council and to pass the
> Annual Budget, appears to have existed on paper only (Phadnis and Luithui, 1985: 22).[36]

Most importantly, like his predecessors, Gayoom continues the legacy of a virtual

one-man government. The NSS (National Security Service), the police, a system of patronage, and various forms of surveillance (cameras, bugs and informers) allow the government to maintain sovereignty and control over the people, justified in the name of Islam.[37] The numerous informers reporting to the government the activities of dissidents could be likened to the traditional function of the *Muskuli avis*. These informers spy on locals in exchange for government favors. This is a patronage that is sometimes vital in poverty-stricken families. Discussing historical patterns a local historian commented:

> *You have very long reigns of serial power and then after that you have this very short period of upheaval...uh sometimes even chaos, and then it settles down again, settles down again to another long period. Now, these short periods can last, it has lasted for let's say two to eight, nine years. During short periods you can have two, three rulers, um, but after that, settles down again, goes on for another long term of dictatorial power, ruler is capable of consolidating power for himself, captures it, consolidates it (An: 1: 54).*

Political demonstrations also appear to show a historical continuity. In the past they have related to developments of reform and taxation, the creation of a police force and social restrictions. For example, Amin Didi, the first president of the Maldives (1952) was replaced by his vice-president in a "bloodless coup" because of the public's dissatisfaction with his rule. He was later arrested and jailed at the infamous prison island Dhoonidhoo.[38] In a later attempt to regain power, he was attacked by Maldivians upon landing in Male' and died of his injuries. After a brief period where the country returned to sultanic rule, a new president, Ibrahim Nasir, took office and was challenged by an attempt made by the Southern atolls, Gaaf Daal and Addu, to separate. The separatist movement was allegedly backed by the British who occupied a military base on the island of Gan, in the southernmost atoll. The British presence in the south and the physical insularity of the Addu atoll from Male' at this time, nurtured feelings of socio-cultural distinctiveness among the locals that was stimulated by the socio-economic benefits gained by the presence of the base, such as employment opportunities, high salaries, and access to consumer goods.[39] Nasir, fearing the locals felt greater allegiance to the British, attempted to prevent them from working on the British project by withholding their salaries. This, along with

other regulations and taxations that the locals felt were unjust, spurred a separatist movement.

Maniku, who lost his father and grandfather as a result of the attempt to separate commented:

> *I think it started with some sort of back-up from the British [...] and then we wanted to break off because said that central government wasn't giving us a fair deal, and then the other two atolls, uh Gaaf Daal was one atoll at that time and Addu atoll, were getting a raw deal from Nasir. Nasir came into power at that time, three years or ... whatever, and then he also kind of consolidated power and he came up with a rule where the people in the southern atolls thought they were being penalized because they used to take fish and some local produce to Sri Lanka, sell it, and then take goods from Sri Lanka and sell it in the atoll. So, and these merchants were being penalized and so this is one reason why people from these atolls, like my father's atoll for example, they wanted to separate, because they thought the central government wasn't being fair with them. In any case because it was so isolated, there was almost no communication between the center and these atolls, especially because they are very far, almost no one from the center came so people were very much by themselves. In the Maldives you could not create a sense of government at that time, I'm talking forty years back [...] so that was the first Maldivian attempt to break away and form a separate government. It didn't last long. They didn't really storm Addu because the British government was there, so they came to some sort of understanding and, you know the leader of the movement was exiled in Seychelles, and then in Foah Mulaku there was some amount of government intervention there, but there again, it was fairly peaceful. In <u>Thinadhoo</u> the story was different, there the president was very violent, they started shooting and uh, couple of people died [...] then they were given some 24 hours or 48 hours to leave the island, [...] you had to leave, by whatever means, so people went to other islands, not enough boats, there were sailing boats from other islands, very difficult, some people had to swim, it was a bit like an exodus, some people that got there and some people that died, but they just burned the island down (M:1:54).*

The high degree of centralization and the punishments enforced for "disobedience" in Gayoom's regime show a certain consistency with Nasir's rule. However, during Gayoom's rule laws became stricter and certain leisure activities and behaviors were prohibited (public dances, parties, alcohol, cannabis). Similar to the attack on Thinadhoo, during the prison uprising on September 20th, 2003 several individuals were instantly shot, followed by many arrests. Furthermore, the penal tactics of banishment, house arrest, prison arrest, Male' arrest and Rajjethere arrest, and the use of torture in prison, continue to prevail under the current regime. Akin to the penal practices of the previous regime, the deaths of inmates are often made to look like 'accidents' and become public secrets. To this day the official historical record of this separatist movement still has not acknowledged the attack on Thinadhoo. Several informants stated with bitter irony that the government had not yet decided on the history of the country.

There is also a historical continuity on an ideological level as most key informants interviewed for this research lost many family members in the unsuccessful coup attempted by the Adduans and maintained the legacy of reform by challenging the existing political structure in their own ways.

5.2 Economic Re-structuring: the displacement of fishing

Despite these processes of continuity in the power structure the past two decades have been characterized by rapid change. Since the late 1970s the Maldivian economy has undergone a major structural transformation, going from an economy relying mostly on fishing to a service sector based economy driven mainly by tourism, causing fissures on physical, demographic, social and ideological levels. [40] The Maldives are currently experiencing demographic transitions resulting from in-migration from the atolls to Male' or tourist resorts, increased life expectancy, decreased infant mortality rates and high but declining birth rates.[41] This movement has also led to over-crowded households in Male' and increased social and domestic stress, including family breakdown, high divorce rates, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and drug and substance abuse.[42]

Tourism began in 1972 and is the Maldives' largest industry, accounting for 20 percent of the GDP and over 60 percent of foreign exchange receipts.[43] The government took complete control over tourism in 1979 and drafted the first law (Law 15/79) to regulate tourism and control its development. It demanded that all tourist accommodation facilities register at the Department of Tourism, the regulatory body for tourism in Maldives at the time.[44] In 1984, locals running island guesthouses had their permits revoked and tourists were no longer allowed to stay in the inexpensive accommodations of the Rajjethere islands.[45] The government wished to segregate local islands and tourist islands in order to channel tourism to tourist resorts, diminish cultural contacts between tourists and locals, and the "cultural pollution" of local values. In 1986 regulations were increased establishing "minimum standards" for the industry that now caters only to elite tourism.[46] Each resort, usually having its own island and 'cultural clientele,' caters

to the tastes and habits of either Italian, German, Japanese, Malaysian, or British tourists, creating

a familiar cultural milieu in terms of culinary habits, music, entertainment and an activity staff

hired from the "mother country."

> *As I arrive at an Italian resort with two Maldivian friends the activities staff is in the midst of their dance class. All the activities staff are young Italians, the music is Italian, and the Italian guests sing along with the familiar songs (diary excerpt, 02/10/2003).*

The leasing of islands, land and marinas for the development of tourist resorts is controlled by the

Maldives Tourism Act 1999, which asserts the government's control over every aspect of

tourism, including the operation of vessels, diving centers and travel agencies.[47] This reflects the

high degree of centralization of all aspects of development.

The Maldives are among the least developed countries, but have made considerable

progress between 1985 and 1997, with a GDP per capita that went from $470 USD to $837

USD.[48] During the same period, the crude death rate, the crude birth rate, and the Infant

Mortality Rate were halved, and life expectancy extended by almost ten years.[49] Improved

healthcare facilities and access to health centers and regional hospitals, as well as immunization

programs, improved sanitation and access to uncontaminated water and electricity have improved

the general wellbeing of the population. Also, access to primary education, now available on all

islands, has augmented literacy levels that are now *officially* at 98%.[50]

Despite these positive indicators a closer reading of the "improvements" shows that the

wealthy elite largely skews the results. The Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment Report of

1998 focuses on the median as a more reliable indicator of poverty levels than the mean and

reveals that the median per household income is Rf26 per person per day in Male' and Rf15 per

person per day in the atolls (Rf12 is roughly the equivalent of USD 1) (1999: 20). Nearly 40% of

the country's rural population lives below the poverty line defined as RF 600 (approximately

USD 51) per capita per month. The atoll median of Rf15 (slightly over 1 USD) per day is the

maximum poverty line and half the atoll population falls below that line with 13% of the

population earning less than Rf7.5 per day, 22% having an income under Rf10 a day and 42%

earning under Rf15 per day (1998: 21). Male' has the highest absolute number of income poor

(under Rf7.5 per day) due to its large population.

5.3 Disparities between the Rajjethere islands and Male'

"Development", and the improvements in the basic standard of living among much of the

population has also given way to greater inequalities and awareness of class distinctions. Despite

the country's homogeneity in terms of a shared language, religion and culture, there are many

internal differences. The main inequalities are between the capital Male' and the atolls, and relate

to access to social and physical infrastructures, consumer goods and incomes. Male' is the most

developed island in both social and physical infrastructures (a ratio averaging 4:1 in comparison

with the atolls), and in terms of income (a ratio of 2:1).[51]

There are also many differences among the Rajjethere islands. Islanders may be

disadvantaged in terms of access to land (certain islands have fruit trees or can sustain some

minor agriculture), fresh water, short fishing seasons, a lack of live bait for pole and line fishing,

and limited access to other islands (due to the cost of inter-island or atoll transport costs, absence

of a harbor, presence of reefs that cannot be penetrated by motorized boats etc). Inhabitants are

sometimes vulnerable to food shortages and water contamination. They often rely on the "catch

of the day" and imported goods such as rice, foodstuffs and fuel for subsistence. They have

limited access to communication facilities (some islands have no telephone), electricity, waste

disposal facilities, and health centers.[52] In the rural islands 28% get less than six hours of

electricity per day, 12% have no access to safe water and 40% live on islands without a clinic,

health center, or hospital.[53] On a social level, limited opportunities for education beyond grade

seven, or employment opportunities (besides fishing), lead to frustration among many youths, and

often relocation to Male'.

Given the wide dispersal of the population the national media plays a crucial role in

shaping the Maldivian society and keeping the population up-to-date. Government run radio and

television networks are utilized as tools for consolidating social unity and upholding cultural values and traditions, despite the physical isolation of the islands. Since the establishment of telecasting services in 1978 by Television Maldives (TVM), television has found its way into most households in Male', with a total of 60, 848 televisions imported between 1995 and 2000 (Maldives 2000 The Official Year Book: 93). TVM, broadcasts nationally and covers news, current affairs and entertainment. A second channel, TVM Plus is an entertainment channel receivable through registered decoders (ibid.). Both channels transmit for 10 hours every day (ibid.).

The introduction of satellite dishes in 1993 and the Internet in 1998, mainly available in Male', introduced a new era of information (Maldives 2000 The Official Year Book: 93-4). Many informants commented that they preferred watching international news instead of the propaganda featured on TVM. The disruptive effect this could have politically is reflected in the governments' concern that unregulated access to international television transmission is having a negative impact on society (ibid).

The following vignette taken from my field notes describes my visit to Vilufushi in the Thaa Atoll, where I spent five days. It gives an idea of the activities of people on that island. Raloo, a researcher from Male', accompanied me on this long journey, where we first took a local flight to Kaashidhoo, spent a night in Kadhoo, and the following day traveled by boat for several hours before arriving in Vilufushi. Upon arrival, local employees of the island health center, where Raloo and I were accommodated, warmly greeted us. As a member of the health ministry Raloo was well respected for her help in the establishment of the health center, which was a great source of pride for the islanders. Tragically, Vilufushi was devastated by the recent tsunami.

A Day on the Island of Vilufushi

Every morning the women are called to begin cleaning the island, only a loud speaker now replaces the *songul*, or conch shell that was traditionally used. Upon hearing the call, a group of women from the I.W.C. (Island Women's Committee)[54] bend at ninety degree angles and begin the task of cleaning the island, sweeping the leaves and flowers off the white sand roads with brooms made of palm tree fronds and walking backwards to erase their footprints. The men have already gone out to fish, and the elder students are in class. Raloo and I sit outside the health center and have breakfast, consisting of *roshi* (unleavened bread) and fish curry prepared by Mariyam, a middle-aged woman and the local *foolhuma* (midwife). As we eat she tells us about her life and the struggles she has faced. She describes how she was married at ten years old to a sixty-year-old man, and that she tried on more than one occasion to kill herself. She states smiling that now she is free, and jokes that maybe she will move to a separate island to meet a man.
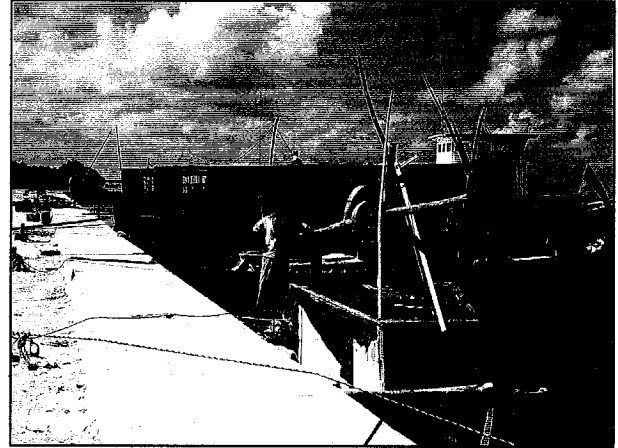
Picture her sitting on the swept ground of an open compound in the shade of breadfruit and guava trees, with several women (friends, sisters, sister-in-laws and mother). As they talk they grate coconut, pick through the rice and grind the spices needed to prepare curry. A few go off into the sparse forest to look for firewood as their supply of kerosene is dwindling while another woman goes to fetch water from the large container were rain water is collected. I make my way to the small harbour and sit by the water to write up my field notes. Nearby several women are pounding soaked coconut husks, which will be made into coir rope. Twenty years ago they would have been in the process of smoking and drying fish but this activity is no longer carried out on this island.

Young children play outside and eye me curiously and soon children surround me. I stop working and distribute empty pages from my field log and pens to several children and they draw pictures of their island, doonis and people. A young girl writes out the English alphabet and a few words in English. At noon the older students finish their classes and the children's shift begins. Teenage boys make their way to the football field and a group of teenage girls and a few of their young siblings signal to me to come. They ask me to go for a swim and we all climb into an old, traditional dooni belonging to the eldest girl's father. Pushing the dooni out with a long staff we go to a nearby area in shallow water (many cannot swim). We begin a game of *icegay* (tag) that all participate in. In the late afternoon the women working at the health center invite me to join in a volleyball game. The teams are separated into "*buruqaa*" and "non *buruqaa*" (island women that wear *buruqaa* and those who do not). The division is meant to be humorous as there are no internal divisions with regards to wearing *buruqaa*. We begin playing and one woman jokingly rips off her *buruqaa* and laughingly runs to join our "non-*buruqaa*" team!

The volleyball net and soccer field are among the minimal recreational activities available to the community. For entertainment both men and women play volleyball and the men play soccer. In the evening the male members of the island committee, returned from their day of

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fishing, volunteer in the construction of a small pharmacy beside the health center. The female members of the I.W.C. prepare supper for them on a table set up outside, beside the construction project. The community in Vilufushi is comparatively successful in their community projects, and having a pharmacy will add to the island's prestige (although the availability of pharmaceutical drugs is limited), and its distinction from other islands.

The women sit together and talk and I learn that most are divorced, have had more than one marriage partner and some have married their husbands more than once. Many have not seen their husbands for extended periods of time and have difficulty supporting their children. When asked about their dreams for the future they seem resigned to their fate and hope that their children will have more opportunities than they have had and that they will be "educated" and "good" and "work for the government."

At night many locals come to the health center to watch TV, use the telephone or socialize (each atoll has a health center, and they are a great source of pride for islanders). Many sit in the entrance hallway watching TVM, (television Maldives, the local station controlled by the government) the only channel available (for those without satellite T.V.). Some also wait for incoming phone calls from family and friends, as it is the only telephone on the island able to receive phone calls. Just outside the health center is a pay phone islanders can use for calling out. On one particular night TVM was featuring footage from nearby tourist resorts that showed women in bikinis, tourists kite boarding and the facilities of the luxurious resort. Paradoxically, the islanders watch attentively this other world that is the anti-thesis of their lives. The island women dress in shelvar kameez and some wear buruqaa, and if they swim, they wear their shelvar kameez, or a long, baggy t-shirt and stretch pants covering past the knees.

Every night from 8:00pm to 11:00pm Hindi movies are aired on TVM and many islanders, both in Male' and Rajjethere, are watching, either on their own TVs or at a friend or relative's house. The introduction of electricity, television, and even Internet services, which have been made available to some islands in the last 15 years (although many locals cannot afford the fees and often they are there to accommodate visitors from Male') have altered local perceptions. One woman commented how she knew about the attack on the U.S. on September 11th within hours of it happening. The world has become smaller with media and communication technology and occurrences in the rest of the country and the world at large reach them more rapidly than ever before.

5.5 Changing ideologies of respectable employment

The gap between Male' and the atolls has widened with economic re-structuring. The displacement of the fishing industry, now the second largest industry, has caused many ruptures in different aspects of Maldivian social life. This shift, along with the mechanization of fishing boats, has enabled fishermen to sell fresh fish directly from the boats to collecting vessels traveling in the atolls, eliminating women's traditional task of smoking and drying fish. This transformation has drastically reduced women's participation in the economy in Rajjethere islands, and the earnings brought home by the men do not add up to the value of dried fish which could be bartered for goods or services, sold for export, or eaten if necessary. Many feel that

living standards have not increased under this new economic system. Fish are becoming scarcer on the islands and the nutritious by-products from the fish are no longer being made.[55]

Other trickle down effects of economic re-structuring are high levels of unemployment and relocation in Male' as a result of changing ideals. The displacement of the fishing industry has transformed traditional ideologies regarding acceptable employment and needs: fishing is perceived as degrading work for the uneducated and lower classes, (unless you are operating an industry or act as a manager). Locals feel that opportunities for their children lie in education and high status is associated with service sector government employment (that actually pays less than fishing) and working at tourist resorts. This attitude is disastrous, particularly in the Rajjethere islands where fishing is often the only economic activity possible and most male youths either refuse to fish or are prohibited to do so by their parents. Since male youths have finished secondary school they are considered "too educated" to demean themselves by becoming fishermen.[56] The impacts these social changes have had on notions of identity are particularly poignant among youths. One senior advisor at the Youth Ministry commented during an interview:

> There is a lack of employment opportunities because they don't have skills and they consider fishing degrading (pause) dirty work. For instance from the islands (Rajjethere) youth finish their 'A' levels but few want to fish when they go back after studying in Male' ... even if it is the _modern_ way! With engines, and they prepare the boat by themselves, with a fridge. Most people want white-collar jobs, because the _working culture_ is not there, but there are so many jobs in different areas. There _is_ employment and many foreigners are working here, but the problem is a lack of skills and a mentality that sees working culture as degrading [...] For instance they think fishing is dirty work that is for old people and uneducated people, or they think road work, construction work, garbage disposal are degrading, so there is a large percentage of foreign labor carrying out these tasks. This is a stigma the whole of Maldivians hold ... that white-collar work is _clean_ ... so even if they are not qualified for white-collar jobs they refuse to do other things and simply don't work (As: 1: 49).

The climate of rapid social change and the unstable conditions as a result of these transformations place youths in a liminal position at the crossroads of capitalism and the more socialist traditional way of life. The effects transformations in international and local politics of culture are having on youths and children, and the ways young people experience, conceptualize and resist or refashion often contradictory cultural politics have been explored by several theorists (Stephens, 1995; Coles, 1986; Reynolds, 1995; Hall, 1995; Ndebele, 1995; Wee, 1995; Field, 1995). Many of these works demonstrate that as new ideologies challenge traditional morals, social norms and taboos, state institutions and judicial systems have responded by tightening their control over young people, the primary innovators of change. Stephens concedes that alongside the growing consciousness and theoretical interest in "children at risk", particularly since the "Children at Risk " conference in Bergen in 1992, there is also an expanding stigmatization of children as "the risk" and youths and children are seen as responsible for increases in urban crime, global environmental problems, and moral decay (1995: 12-3). Consequently youths are more vulnerable to coming into conflict with the law and being victimized by penal systems or *unofficial* "death squads", particularly in circumstances where censorship laws, social control and heavy policing allow little room for political and social expression and participation, and penal tactics target "deviant" youths.[57]

These changing ideologies are particularly significant in countries with very high concentrations of youths. In 2000, 48.73% of the Maldives' population was under 17 years of age, 27.52% fell between the ages of 18 and 34, and only 23.76% of the population was aged over 34 years.[58] The distribution of the population is indicated in the following table.

Figure 3: Population by broad age groups, Maldives, 1985-2000[59]
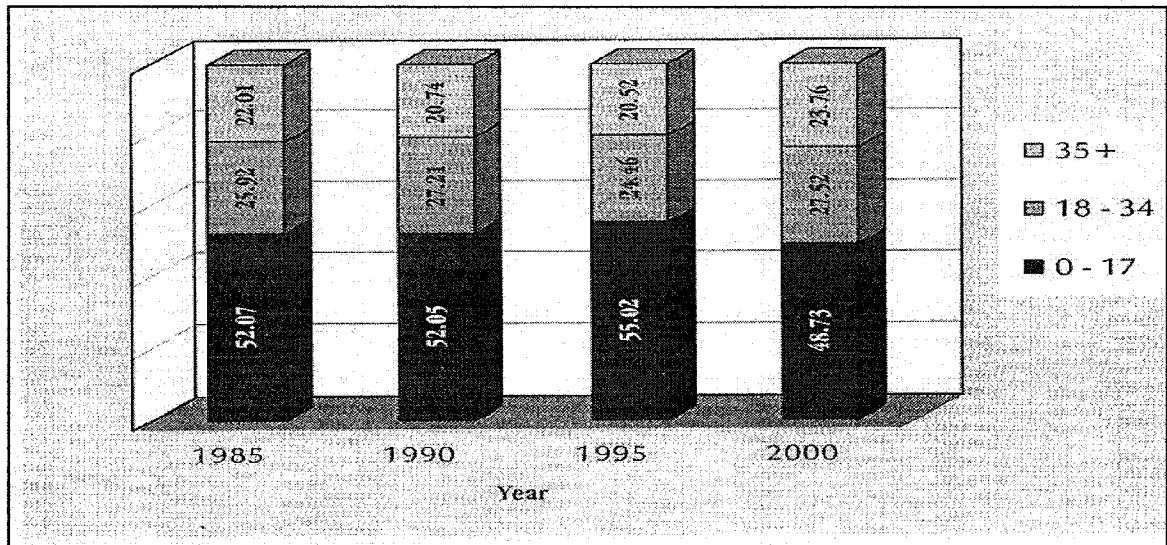
The high proportion of youths and the rapidly changing cultural ideologies render

certain trends among many youths alarming. Participant observation and interviews all

highlighted increased sexual promiscuity and drug abuse as the most obvious intergenerational

changes among youths. In many cases the two are interrelated, but for the purposes of clarity I

will first discuss the drug issue.

It is important to view drug abuse and informal prostitution as the complex

outcome of various social stresses and global processes. All countries in South Asia have

problems with drug abuse. Heroin use was first officially reported in Nepal in 1976, India in

1986 and Sri Lanka in 1981 (Drug Demand Reduction Report-South Asia, 2000). In Bangladesh

a survey conducted in 1997 revealed that out of 1, 750 drug users heroin, cough syrups, cannabis

and sedatives were the most commonly abused substances (FASHAN, UNDP & NCB, 2003:

15). Apart from Bhutan, heroin is among the most widely used drugs in all countries in South

Asia (ibid).

The Maldives' proximity to the golden triangle, the increased movement of tourists and consumer goods in and out of the country and the geographical layout of the country make it vulnerable to illegal shipments of drugs. Drug availability was first officially reported in the mid-1970s, and is believed to have begun with tourism and cannabis use. Since that time drug abuse in the Maldives was reported in 1995 to have increased 40-fold (FASHAN, UNDP & NCB, 2003: 16) and illicit drug use is found on tourist and non-tourist islands. However, the tourist industry might also indirectly contribute to current drug abuse as the government has invested primarily in tourism leaving few work opportunities on non-tourist islands.

The pressures of overcrowding on islands, cramped households, poverty and high levels of unemployment place additional strains on families, contributing to the high rate of divorce and high levels of drug addiction. One young female informant from Male' comments:

> *I was always trying to escape reality. It was very hard living in my house. Always yelling and fighting and swearing. You saw my shirt I made with the person meditating with ear phones on, this is like me, put out rest of the world, just listen to music ... when I was 11 my parents got divorced and I was feeling very depressed. I mean divorce is okay but they were not friends, always yelling so it was very bad. I started taking lots of tablets, Valium, anti-depressants, all different kinds and when I took them I felt balanced and happy. Most were pretty easy to get, also drinking. We would go to Ahmed's house, he was really crazy, he was gay or bi-sexual, he like everything, boys, girls, Lolita's, young ones [...]and it was when I was 14 I tried it (hakuru). First it was pills like valium and drinking alcohol, I was so depressed and it was an escape from everything in my family, no space, the divorce, this new servant, fighting, then I was with some friends at a party and someone said this is good and so we tried but we didn't know what it is. At first it was something like once a month, then every week, then every day and for one and a half years it was going on (T: 2: 33).*

In many instances up-rooted youth from Rajjethere islands fall victim to these circumstances. As they work as domestic servants in exchange for room and board while studying in Male', they are often exploited and abused, cannot keep up with their studies and begin taking drugs. Many youths also become disenchanted as exposure to consumerism and status symbols lead to greater perceived needs that cannot be met due to poverty. Some resort to drug-dealing, stealing and informal prostitution for "fast money" so that they can consume material goods and drugs. Many use drugs as a way to escape their social reality. It is worth

noting that most prisoners in Maldivian jails at the time of this research were youths from

Rajjethere who had moved to Male', even though drug abuse and drug dealing are just as rampant

among youths from Male' and among youths in certain Rajjethere islands. In some cases, drugs

are introduced to Rajjethere islands by youths returning home from their studies in Male' or from

working in tourist resorts. In other instances, individuals banished to Rajjethere islands for

committing crimes introduce drugs to the local youths. Raloo commented:

> *From mid-70's drugs started, but hard drugs really started in the 90's (hakuru). Big among young people, below 30 years, also kids 12, 13 years. In Kashidhoo (Rajjethere island) just got back, glue sniffing there, cough syrup, Valium ... women's committee in Kashidhoo say problem with kids as young as 13 glue sniffing, not an urban trend at all. Addu, Lhaviani, Noonu have big hakuru problems. Traffickers are very active, they are spreading because want to make money. Give to kids free (hakuru laced something) till hooked then buy it. Spread to islands because initially punishment for drug addicts was banishment to inhabited islands, and somehow even though banished got their supply, start introducing it to others, and in places like Addu much easier than Male' to find places to get high without adults seeing (HR: 5: 22).*

Mamma was careful not to reduce the reasons youths are taking drugs to any one-to-one

equation and provided a more comprehensive picture. While she emphasized that she did not

believe drugs started being used as an expressive outlet, she underscored the lack of

entertainment or activities where youths can release energy as an important factor in drug abuse.

In other words, drugs are an outlet resulting from the lack of expressive spaces and entertainment

available to youths, a suppression re-instated in the home, social institutions (school), legally and

through the censorship of creative activities. Mamma commented:

> *Drugs is one of problems but it's not the main thing. There is no entertainment, there is no way you can release, (corrects herself) young people can release their energy, there is nothing else to do, no entertainment ... our generation had just gotten into it (drugs). I guess we had more hope that we could go through school, get opportunities, there were more job opportunities, we could work and have education, there was still hope then ... there doesn't seem to be hope anymore, for these young people that are growing up. And the money that they get, 1500 rufiyaa (approximately 125 USD/month) just doesn't seem enough for them anymore, because we didn't need all this branded clothes and sunglasses that were brand names and all of these things that have come, MTV and all these TV programs, we didn't have TV then, but with the TV came all these status symbols that weren't part of our generation. These things seem so important that it's okay to spend so much of money. In the islands where there is hardly education, there's just a base education, people are the same. They just don't seem to have any hope at all that there would be anything for them. Fishing has become very ... unfashionable, you*

know, and the more aware that you become, the more despair there is. I guess you know, and it's not so much education because most of the kids who are going around, into drugs and all that, are dropouts. It's not the educated people who are left out. There just doesn't seem to be any hope inside at all, because it's the lack of comfort, the freedom even in your own home, the lack of privacy for themselves where all of them sleep, basically crowded into a room, there is no privacy at all so, it is that constraint, and restriction and suppression working from all directions, and also lack of parental guidance (W: 1: 31).

The first comprehensive drug survey to be conducted in the Maldives took place in 2002 and was organized by a local NGO, FASHAN with the help of the NCB (Narcotics Control Board) and the UNDP. It estimated that there are approximately 33,864 drug users in the country, a figure that accounts for roughly 15 percent of the population and excludes individuals who have been sent to the rehabilitation center.[60] The most commonly abused drug is a crude form of heroin locally known as *brown sugar*, or *hakuru*, although cocaine, ecstasy, cannabis and its derivatives, and medically controlled substances, such as sedatives, including hypnotics, solvents, inhalants and other locally available substances like *Cola water* (cologne) and *oshani* (hallucinogen) are also abused.[61]

The drug survey inquired into the reasons for drug abuse among 204 youths from Male' (157 youths), Noonu and Lhaviani atolls (21 youths) and Addu atoll (26 youths). These atolls were selected because the drug problems among their youth populations are well known. The majority of these youths were dependent on *hakuru*, declared by 68.5% of those participating in the study as the most available drug (2003: 28).[62] The following table shows youths' responses to why they began abusing drugs.

Figure 4: Reasons for abusing drugs

Reason	Male' (N=54)	Addu (N=34)	Noonu & Lhaviani (N=23)	Total (N=111)
Family problems	48.1%	26.4%	56.5%	43.2%
Experimentation	11.1%	17.6%	8.6%	12.6%
Peer pressure	9.2%	5.8%	17.3%	9.9%
Lack of awareness	16.6%	26.4%	17.3%	19.8%
Easy availability	5.5%	2.9%	13.0%	6.3%
Lack of recreational activities	5.5%	2.9%	0%	2.7%
Anxiety, stress, sexual dysfunctions	33.3%	5.8%	0%	18%

Source: FASHAN, NCB & UNDP, 2003: 31.

Responses revealed that family problems, lack of awareness and anxiety were the primary reasons for drug abuse. Over nineteen percent of youths cited lack of awareness as the reason why they began abusing drugs. This is largely due to the fact that the current drug situation in the Maldives is in many ways a "public secret", and even publicly addressing the drug problem as a social reality is taboo. The motivation behind this secrecy includes preserving an aura of order for the tourists, extorting money from drug addicts and maintaining political stability, which would be threatened if citizens knew the extent and severity of the problem. This information cannot be proven but was discussed by informants during interviews. The result is that the public is not well informed of the extent and severity of the problem and is prevented from taking an active role in the implementation of policies, or from devising ways of increasing awareness.

This drug report, for example, was given to me in confidence, as the government had not yet approved its publication. Additionally, while conducting the drug survey the NGO faced many obstacles. For instance, four boys who were interviewed were arrested within 48 hours of interviewing, forcing project management advisors to temporarily stop primary respondent data collection and stopping other youths from participating in interviews.[63] One member of the NGO

commented: "One of the main problems has been convincing users to agree for individual interviews as fear of arrest is the main reason cited for non-cooperation."[64] Furthermore, the NSS chief was instructed from a higher official not to make any secondary data from prison or from the IGMH (Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital) available to the NGO. The government did not want the on-going abuses in prison to be publicly documented, so the prison reports and forensic evidence of brutalities and torture from the hospital were suppressed. For this reason, FASHAN had to abandon their analysis of the data collected in prison.[65]

Several of my informants discussed the physical and mental torture and sexual violence they endured while blindfolded and handcuffed in prison. One informant pointed out an NSS official whom she identified as *Backbone Fiaz*, a man notorious for crushing the spines of inmates by stomping on their backs with his combat boots. A teenage boy stated how he was handcuffed and made to stand in the ocean for 48 hours, at a depth so that at high tide the water would just barely reach his mouth. These brutalities were often performed as a spectacle in front of other inmates.

When asked how the drug situation could be improved the most common responses were strengthening prevention and awareness programs (60.3%) and reducing supply by tightening control in ports of entry, such as using dogs at the airport to detect drugs entering the country (49.5%).[66] Youths' responses are indicated in the following table.

Figure 5: Suggestions on improving the drug situation in the Maldives.

Areas in need of improvement	Male' (N=54)	Addu (N=34)	Noonu & Lhaviani (N=23)	Total (N=111)
NCB, Customs, NSS: develop stronger networking	7.4%	0.0%	4.3%	4.5%
Strengthen prevention and awareness program	59.2%	50.0%	78.2%	60.3%
Strengthen the treatment and rehabilitation program	22.2%	17.6%	8.6%	18.0%
Develop the technical expertise of NCB	22.2%	2.9%	0.0%	11.7%
Law needs further amendments	14.8%	23.5%	21.7%	18.9%
Dev. alternative education system: vocational/recreational training	9.2%	17.6%	13.0%	12.6%
Start treatment centers in other zones of the country	7.9%	38.2%	13.0%	18.0%
Strengthen supply reduction by using snuffer dogs and machines to increase the surveillance at airports and sea ports	59.2%	41.1%	39.1%	49.5%

Source: FASHAN, NCB & UNDP, 2003: 64.

The absence of other illegal products, (such as firearms and pork) in the country casts suspicion over the large quantities of drugs, especially *hakuru,* entering the country. Several informants accused the government of being involved in allowing drugs into the country, stating this to be a public secret, and another reason for the secrecy and censorship around making public the extent of the drug problem. These allegations were raised during several interviews with both adults and youths. Raloo commented,

[HR] *Just think of the repercussions of it, 80% of the population is below 35 and if more than half of population becomes drug addicts what's going to happen to the country? The drug problem is not taken seriously. Putting users in prison isn't solution to it. There is rehab but it's not handled in proper way, long waiting list ... in rehab what they do is replace one addiction with another. They try to put religion to replace drugs. Very strict, have to pray, no methadone, cold turkey, not proper way of doing it. We have to provide education for people, even kids 9, 10 years old [...] some traffickers have links with (hesitates) big shots in government, some are users themselves ... maybe not directly involved but are indirectly involved. You see, no one can bring firearms into this country, no one can bring pork into this country, no one can bring in alcohol, pornography, arms ... if police are saying drugs are brought in by yachts going to north, why can't they smuggle in arms that way? But they don't. I don't think there is as much incentive or effort to stop drugs coming in than firearms cause firearms is different aspect in terms of politics and so on ... (lowers her voice) I sometimes think (that they think) let half the population be intoxicated so that most of the time they are unable to make much of a problem because they are under the influence (HR: 5: 22).*

Thuthatha cynically described a TVM news report showing police confiscating hakuru that had been seized on the beach. She accused the president of staging the seizure as part of his presidential campaign.

[T] *Did you see on the news a couple of weeks ago the police burning hakuru? (I shake my head) It's so stupid. They found some stuff and on TVM (Television Maldives) they burned it! So stupid! So fake! Because of the elections, just before the elections they showed this. Like never before do they ever show the cops burning hakuru, then suddenly they do just before the elections! And such a small amount! Just for the media. They always say they do this, but everyone knows (T: 2: 34).*

[Q] So what do they do with it?

[T] *They sell it again of course. Think about it. They could easily stop hakuru from coming in, this is such a small place! I mean why are there no guns here? Okay, you can say guns are bigger, harder to hide, but they can be taken apart, put into pieces and then it is easy to hide and they can bring it over. So why are there no guns here? And there is reason for people to want them because people are very angry. Also dogs can't smell guns but they smell drugs. Think about that. Also the only drugs here are oil and hakuru ... like there is not often ecstasy, no acid and there are all those things in Sri Lanka. It is so obvious ... if they wanted to stop it coming in they could but they don't want that, probably because of money. They always say they destroy the stuff when they catch people, but it is such a joke. I am sure it is like this. Older peoples bring it from Lanka, just hakuru and oil (Hash oil), then younger people work for them and get smaller pieces to sell. You know that song by seaweed juice (local band) about hakuru? It is about just needing it, asking everybody for five rufiyaa to get next fix (T: 2: 33).*

When interviewed about the link between *hakuru* and the riots, Kokko commented:

[K] *It's not being controlled for a reason, and today we found the reason ... you have a group of people, who at their prime age to rebel against the government, if you have them, dependent on a drug which makes them like, usually very ... sedated, you know not very active and quite sick and you know completely dependent, usually when you're dependent on brown sugar the only thing on your mind is brown sugar, if you don't have it, you're looking for it, if you have it, you smoke it, and the next stage is looking for it again. So when you have a group of like people that's dependent on that sort of thing, you know ... brown sugar addiction actually, percentage is quite high now, and it's growing and growing and growing and if you don't control something like that, who is there to revolt against you? (K: 2: 38)*

In the last 10 years drug abuse has increased dramatically, mostly among youths. These "deviant" youths, both male and female, are often imprisoned for drug or drug-related crimes.

Dhondatha commented:

[D] *I think it starts by being in a group, something to try out. A lot of boys hang out like that, in these groups. Since there is no recreation, there's basically nothing to do here (raises voice) ... they get up, get high, then spend the entire day trying to find it, then a place to go to take it, then experiment with new combinations like with sleeping pills. You know how much it costs for a bullet? (I look questioningly, "bullet?") It's a tablet, like a capsule filled with hakuru. It costs about 5 thousand bucks (Rufiyaa)! Most of these kids don't even work ... where do they get the money? (Raises her voice) So most steal, they do a lot of things. Only a few work, there are those too. Like I know people that go to their office high, then at lunch they're coming down and get high again, they take it at work! But when they get progressively worse they can't really work. Then they need a new bullet usually 2 days later (D: 2: 35).*

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The uncensored version of the FASHAN study reports that during the period from 1992 to 2001, 198 children aged sixteen or less, and 1845 youths aged between 17 and 36 were arrested for drug related crimes, of which 9% were female."[67] Additionally, while this survey was conducted, 111 out of the 201 youths (55.2%) forming the sample population had been imprisoned during the year prior to the survey.[68] In 2000, the courts sentenced 2,187 people, of which 80.65% were young people (55.3% of which were young males), and in 2001 of the 1,898 people sentenced 74.6% were young people (61% being young males).[69] Statistics from the Ministry of Defense reveal an increase in petty crime from 169 in 1992 to 462 in 1996, and the number of arrests of teenagers increased from 391 in 1988 to 512 in 1998.[70] The relationship between drug abuse and criminal behavior has not yet been explored.[71]

The FASHAN report estimates that the minimum amount spent on drugs per day (median value) was 190 rufiyaa (15 USD) with a range from 0 RF to 3, 500 RF (2003: 41). Results for the maximum amount spent daily on drugs was 500 RF (39 USD) with a range up to 198,000 RF (ibid.). Poverty and the high levels of unemployment in the country bring up the question of how youths can afford to spend so much money on drugs. Out of the 195 users interviewed 80 (41%) claimed that they supported their habit with their employment incomes, 56 individuals (29%) did so by selling drugs, 24 (12%) were supported by friends and 23 were supported by their family (ibid).[72] Only 9 individuals stated that they had stolen from their families (ibid).

Arrests related to consensual sex between unmarried individuals between 1998 and 2001 amounted to a total of 866 people from Male' and the Rajjethere islands charged for having illegal coital relationships.[73] "Crimes of fornication" and the existence of polygamy are particularly problematic for women as often the biological father denies paternity (Eldakak, 2000: 23). In such cases the girl might be subjected to *hadd al-zinaa*, punishable by lashes and banishment, in addition to the disgrace brought to her family and the stigmatizations that the child will suffer from in the future. Furthermore, the absence of a mechanism for collecting child support from fathers fosters evasion from paying, which increases the economic vulnerability of

mothers and their children (ibid.). The high rate of divorce in the country and the lack of

necessary financial support for single mothers can precipitate illegal income generating activities

(ibid.).

5.7 Penal tactics: controlled illegality

The Ministry of Defense and National Security is the primary law enforcement agency

responsible for the arrests and seizures related to illicit drugs in the country.[74] The principal

legislative act (1995) dealing with narcotic and psychotropic drug offences is Bill 17/77, which

states a penalty of life imprisonment (twenty-five years) for offences of trafficking in prohibited

drugs by either cultivation, manufacture, exportation, importation, selling, buying, giving, or

possession of **one gram or more**.[75]   Under section 4 of the law, the penalty for possession or

consumption for personal use of **less than one gram** is imprisonment, banishment, or house

arrest for a period of five to twelve years.[76] Several individuals working with youths addicted to

drugs identified the lack of differentiation in punishments for possession for personal use,

quantities possessed, and the absence of a separate prison for drug offenders under the age of

sixteen as major concerns.

To understand the rationale behind these punishments it is important to recognize that the

usefulness of the penal system responds to a political agenda, and to what Foucault (1975)

describes as the *political technology of the body*. Foucault comments, "…although the juridical

opposition is between legality and illegal practice, the strategic opposition is between illegalities

and delinquency" (1975: 277). This raises the question: what are the advantages of such penal

tactics? The frequent arrests and lengthy sentences imposed on youths for committing petty

crimes (theft, drug abuse, traffic violations) enable containment, supervision and *intimidation* of

the most politically threatening social groups, and helps the government to impede potential

public gatherings. One local journalist reported in an Internet magazine run by dissidents in

exile:

Many Maldivians believe that current government does not have an efficient program to curb the drug problem in Maldives. In fact, they believe that little is being done about the drug problem in Maldives because Gayyoom uses drugs as another of his weapons to stay in power. In the sense that he uses drugs as a means to cripple the society at large, to dismantle the youth movement, to destroy the future generation of the Maldives. If he keeps youth of country at bay, no one will dare or bother challenging him.[77]

In addition to this is the irony of *hakuru's* availability in prison, a potential tactic for

diverting delinquency to other, less menacing forms. Foucault states,

> The prison cannot fail to produce delinquents. It does so by the very type of existence that it imposes on its inmates: whether they are isolated in cells or whether they are given useless work, for which they will find no employment, it is, in any case, 'not to think of man in society; it is to create an unnatural, useless and dangerous existence' [...] the prison also produces delinquents by imposing violent constraints on its inmates: it is supposed to apply the law, and to teach respect for it; but all its functioning operates in the form of an abuse of power [...] Maintained by the pressure of controls on the fringes of society, reduced to precarious conditions of existence, lacking links with the population that would be able to sustain it ... delinquents inevitably fell back on a localized criminality, limited in its power to attract popular support, politically harmless and economically negligible (1975: 278).

Allowing the drug problem to flourish and being allegedly instrumental to its expansion

could be analyzed as a political tactic to sedate many youths, (generate a vicious cycle of getting

high or looking to get high) thereby preventing more subversive crimes such as rallying against

the President, and as a mechanism for social control, by validating the imprisonment of those

perceived as political threats based on drug-related charges. 'Devaluation disempowers'

therefore their characterization as drug addicts or prostitutes (Wright, 2001) guarantees their

subjugation.

> Delinquency, controlled illegality, is an agent for the illegality of the dominant groups [...] Arms trafficking, the illegal sale of alcohol in prohibition countries, or, more recently drug trafficking show a similar functioning of this 'useful delinquency': the existence of a legal prohibition creates around it a field of illegal practices, which one manages to supervise while extracting from it an illicit profit through elements, themselves illegal, but rendered manipulable by their organization in delinquency. This organization is an instrument for administering and exploiting illegalities (Foucault, 1975: 280).

There was a strong correlation between drug abuse, sexual activities and informal prostitution. Among 148 individuals interviewed in FASHAN's drug survey, one third reported having sex by the age of 15 years, 54 percent by the age of 16 years and 72 percent by the age of 17 years (2003: 43). Although delayed marriages played a role in the increase of premarital sex, and sexual behavior with different partners was not a recent phenomenon, there was a high incidence of sex in exchange for consumer goods (i.e. mobile phones), particularly among some teenage girls who prostituted themselves to local businessmen, government officials, drug dealers or tourists. Informal prostitution was also a way to support drug habits. One young female prostitute commented:

> *My mother first introduced me to sex. A family friend abused me for money to support my mother's usage. I was abused at the age of nine years. As my mom was an addict she sent me with a man asking me to do whatever he says. There I was abused [...] my abuse was one main reason why I had to use drugs in order to avoid my stress. At first I had sex when I was 12 years old with my boyfriend. Later as I started using drugs I wanted to support for my addiction so I got relationship with one of stuff, as my boyfriend was a dealer (FASHAN, NCB & UNDP, 2003: 57).*

Group sex, sexual exploitation and rape were frequently related to drug abuse. Of the 148 youths responding to questions regarding group sex in the FASHAN survey, 43% said they had had sex with more than one partner at the same time and more than half of the respondents were under the age of 16 years (2003: 44). Often it is after smoking *hakuru* in a group that youths participated in orgies. In recent years there have also been incidences of gang rape, even among primary school children. A student focus group in Naifaru commented:

> *Now in this island many youth involve in the sexual intercourse. Those who are in grade 6 also involve in the sexual intercourse. Even some adults abuse small children to have sex with them. They give the child chocolates. In this island a group of thirty boys make sexual intercourse with one girl. They do that in the sandy beaches of the island. Mostly the use the drug and make sexual intercourse (FASHAN, NCB & UNDP, 2003: 43).*

Mamma, when describing the most poignant inter-generational changes, also highlighted the rise in sexual behavior among youths. She attributed one of the reasons for the increase in sexual promiscuity to the need for entertainment. She commented:

I remember in my time we had one or two girls who were sexually promiscuous, now it is almost everyone ... that is another way of escaping, and, you know, entertainment, is what I feel, belonging somewhere, some person, because home, home is suppressive by itself for most of these kids, where there are so many kids in the house, and parents are, busy and all flustered, and no time for them to talk, and they need to belong somewhere and I think this is how it starts ... twelve or thirteen, kids begin to look ... even girls begin to look for boyfriends around that age[...] In our times most girls, parents would make a fuss about their daughters having boyfriends, but it was accepted, but having a boyfriend didn't mean what it means today. Today a parent has really no say, they could make a lot of problems and scream and shout about it but, a lot of kids have gone out of hand and there's no morality at all. I'm talking about morality, it's not about sex, it's about things like this, getting them to pay for your phones, selling sex, that's what it's about, it's not really boyfriends, it's men, men doing this for favors, and the girls are very young girls who do this, school kids as well, young teenage girls ... (W: 1: 30).

Mamma seemed to be saying that young girls were engaging in informal prostitution in order to purchase consumer items such as mobile phones, a major status symbol in Male'. When I inquired into their motivation for exchanging sex for material goods she elaborated that their incentives in many cases went beyond wanting a status symbol. Mobile phones allowed them to contact drug dealers anonymously.

I think, yes status symbols, owning a mobile, yeah but it's more than that, it's a form of communication and it is more than anything else the drug problem, it is so that they could keep in contact with, you know, whoever it is (their dealers), it's the young people are like this because brown sugar problem that we have (W: 1: 30).

Mamma clarified that mobile phones provided youths with more independence and control over their lives because they could circumvent parental interference and communicate secretly.

When I asked Raloo what the most significant social changes were, her response paralleled that of Mamma, citing first sexual and homosexual behavior and then drugs. However, she discussed these activities within the context of public secrets.

Lots of stories in the past about kings being homosexual but was all hidden, a public secret, everyone knows, no one talks about it. Whereas now young people more open about it (not in terms of homosexuality) in terms of sex. Homosexuals repress selves, but now, especially young people practice it secretly, don't do it openly because would be punished for it, it's a "sin." Well so is any form of public sexual behavior. More people

now sexually active outside of marriage than before. Considered normal among young people, before would be guilt feeling. Blue films, pornography, people watch, if found in possession of blue film you're in trouble but it still goes on, so much of things against the law and people do it all the time and even police do it. That's where corruption comes in! [...] Sex and prostitution are a major social change. Another public secret, don't acknowledge it exists, but know it exists, know it exists ... (HR: 5: 22).

While she was careful to emphasize that sex outside of marriage is not new, she explained how youths are much more promiscuous today and much more sexually explicit. I asked her to clarify why youths were being more open given the legal risks involved. Raloo responded, "*it's a society where the severity of punishment is there, but a society where people ignore it. Only get punished if report it, so can exist, even law enforcement people can see it ...*" (HR: 5: 22).

These social issues appear contradictory given the fact that it is a Muslim country with a South Asian heritage that has until recently been quite isolated and where the government exercises so much control. The risks associated with premarital sex, including public lashes and banishment, and the punishments received if arrested for drug use, render these activities highly self-destructive and risky. These practices provide a dynamic example of the ambiguity of national and local discourses that enables a range of inconsistent practices.

The arbitrary enforcement of the law and the fact that some government officials abuse *hakuru*, are involved in drug trafficking and form a portion of the clientele for prostitutes, helps to clarify why these social policies, laws, and morals have lost their legitimacy. Enshrouded as "public secrets" these inconsistencies are public knowledge, discussed among trusted friends, families and during the interviews I conducted.

The layering of ambiguities within government policies and forms of resistance is perplexing and most coherently expressed in tabulated form. The following table is based on interview data and observations made in the field. Various perspectives related to drugs and sex are included to highlight the government's social policies, the perspectives held by many youths, the multiple contradictions this presents, and the social reality and consequences of this situation.

Figure 6: Government policies and youths' perspectives on drugs and sex.

Ambiguous forms of agency	Government policy	Youth & adolescent meanings	Contradictions	Social reality and Consequences
Drugs	Refusal to publicly recognize the drug problem. The censorship of data from prison in the *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse In Maldives*, as well as obstacles to any comprehensive studies, awareness programs, and documentary films on drugs.	Sign of virility, get better girl friends, cool, rebellion (going to prison is cool), escape, empowerment and community.	-political reasons behind hakuru entering the country (i.e. sedate "deviant" youths) but many young people rioted under drug-induced states. -Drugs are thought to isolate but addicts form strong communities.	-high rates of drug addiction -Connection between drug abuse and both overt and covert protest of government policies. -most prisoners are arrested under drug-related charges for drug use, trafficking, or petty theft.
Sex	Premarital sex is illegal, punished by lashes and banishment. No sex education in schools and limited availability of contraceptives. -Sexual abuse cases are often not treated seriously and not made public.	Sex is cool, liberalization, entertainment and empowerment (informal prostitution for consumer goods).	-severe punishment if reported and social stigmas yet increasing sexual promiscuity, group sex, prostitution, and secret abortions. -often times government officials are the ones hiring prostitutes.	-informal prostitution for mobile phones and other consumer goods among teenage girls and young women. -gang rapes in primary schools and at parties where women often are sexually exploited after getting high. -arrest or banishment and being ostracized by the community.

The scenario outlined above belays a pattern whereby the government ignores two growing trends among youths by not addressing sex or drugs in the media, in social policies, in education, or even legally by turning a blind eye to cases that are not reported and allowing drugs to infiltrate the country. The symbolic meanings youths attach to these social practices are constructions that contest dominant meanings and acculturated values, allowing them to create social spaces where they can mediate their identities, express themselves, or escape their social realities. Instead of being intimidated by legal consequences and fearing arrest and torture, some youths, mostly male, are inverting meanings and defining prison as cool and not fearing the authorities.

One 23-year-old male informant and active political reformist described to me how he used to get arrested on purpose just to show how much he did not care.

(Laughing) I would climb over the wall of my compound even though I had the key, then (gestures being grabbed by the scruff of the neck) they just take me to prison, I'm laughing like you idiots (laughing) I have the key, it's my house ... just to take the piss out of them. I've been to jail like 15 times. One time after a football game I started walking across the field and this cop said like hey come here (laughing) and I just kept walking, then I got arrested for that too, for walking across the field (laughs) (G: 1: 37).

He had many more similar experiences, recounting them jokingly. What he underwent while arrested did not seem to intimidate him; it was outsmarting the police officers or laughing at them, and not caring about being arrested that were somehow a challenge, a form of resistance.

The third column of the table outlines the contradictory nature of these practices on various levels. The president's alleged involvement in allowing drugs into the country, the long term prison sentences for drug use, possession of a small quantity or distribution, and the availability of *hakuru* in the prisons all point to the possibility of it being a political strategy to marshal, sedate or keep individuals in low levels of crime. What was perhaps intended to be an instrument of control backfired and became a tool of resistance when many youths smoked hakuru prior to rioting. While drugs are expected to sedate and disconnect people from reality, in this social context youths challenged government propaganda in a drug-induced state. Furthermore, drugs are assumed to isolate individuals, not unite a community.

It is important to clarify that I am not implying that youths started abusing drugs in an effort at self expression, or consciously as acts of resistance, but rather drug use emerged as a product of a combination of factors already outlined, and often resorted to because of a lack of expressive outlets, opportunities and activities available to youths. Over time many youths attached their own meanings to *hakuru* use, and the subculture has provided them with a social space that gives them a sense of belonging, community and free will.

Mayan, a young woman who works with "delinquent" youths at the NCB, attributed these contradicting practices to broader ideological contradictions, such as the socially disruptive

consequences of Hindi and Western pop culture, primarily imported to Male' via the media. She

argued that youths emulate these styles and behaviors and that this creates a tension with their

Muslim identities, leading to "confused identities" resulting from a confused way of living. She

commented:

[Ms] *The old values are eroding but they haven't actually substituted the old values with new values, or better values, so they are in a disadvantaged situation. I feel sorry for them (youths) [...] it has to do with the wider society, the political system, the legal system. We claim ourselves to be Muslim you know, we claim to practice Islam, but then the whole confusion comes here again, there's a discrepancy between people's faith and their actions, and now when they do not harmonize these two then obviously there's a lot of turmoil inside them. But of course they don't suffocate like a person who has got a cardiac arrest or something like that, but even though the effects are not so dramatic I think they have a lot of tension inside, like first of all I think all this confused way of living stems from a confused identity. So number one their identities are confused, you know, but if we say we are Muslims we practice Islam then I think we must practice to a large extent (Ms: 1: 4).*

[Q] Why are they confused? (By 'they' Mayan later specified that she was referring to young people, meaning people her age, twenty-seven, and also youths younger than her).

[Ms] *Because no one is telling them what is right, everyone knows that things are changing, but nobody knows what needs to be substituted. So there are vacuums, empty spaces so when people are devising their own stuff to put into these vacuums, which might not necessarily be right, like drugs for example, drugs is one innovation that they actually have come up with, it's rampant, it is, and crime, delinquency. Like, okay if for example children have to be assertive, how do you do that? But now they're assertive to the extent that they violate people's rights. Like stealing [...] they're the wrong values, they're being assertive in the wrong way. The assertiveness is there but in the wrong way. Like, for example, women are becoming more liberal but liberal, the liberation is perceived and manifested in the form of exposure, not with mental liberation. By that they're becoming more sexualized, and they're portraying themselves as sexual objects, for example I am seen as a conventional person, but there can be a woman who dresses in a so-called modern or Western style but still is not able to tell what is wrong or right for her. That kind of liberation, is that liberation? Is this true liberation? When she cannot fight for her rights? For justice? That kind of liberation is on a superficial level, mentally nothing is happening. Things have changed but not in a very desirable way. Like for example with drugs ... you know becoming more of a success symbol. Emotionally things have changed that's sexual liberation you know, if I want to I can do anything with my body, but does anything mean liberation, like is liberation about anything? Even things that are harmful to you? Like going into prostitution? (Ms: 2: 17).*

Mayan's statement touched on some very important questions that are at the center of this

thesis. Does claiming control over one's body signify liberation? Does that liberation include

activities that are harmful to the physical and mental well-being of youths? Mayan's description

of empty vacuums that are being filled with the wrong values refers to the changing ideologies

and moralities of many youths brought about by rapid economic and social change since the 1970s. She critiqued the youth cultural innovations that have emerged and the various forms 'assertiveness' is taking. Mayan problematized some youths' perspectives on empowerment and liberation and criticized the self-destructive behaviors these attitudes produce, stating *"the assertiveness is there but in the wrong way"* (Ms: 2: 17).

Butt describes how increased mobility has provided youths in Papua with the opportunity for a broader range of sexual practices including informal prostitution and sexual promiscuity with multiple partners (2004: 1). She outlines a similar social, political and economic context of rapid "development" and social change, capitalist economic policies, state control and political violence, and an emphasis on "fast capital" that is far more pronounced (ibid). Butt grapples with the ambiguity presented by claims that "secret sex" is empowering by arguing that "socially transgressive acts" should not be deemed as agency, but rather reactions "to situations of relative powerlessness" (2004: 6). Drawing on Karp's (1986) distinction between *actors*, whereby behavior is rule-governed, and *agents*, where power is exercised to "bring about affects", Butt relegates youths practicing "secret sex" to the status of actors victimized by a given set of social circumstances (2004: 25). While Butt emphasizes the importance of understanding the social contexts from which these practices emerge, the association of agency or resistance with *effecting change* is an oversimplification. Resistance is complex, context dependent and in political contexts where behavior is strictly "rule-governed" resistance often manifests in covert and ambivalent ways. In many contexts such large-scale emancipatory goals are unrealistic and agency is adapted to what is feasible and pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable (Ruddick, 1998; Hebdige, 1979; Smith, 1998; Pilkington, 1994). By broadening definitions of resistance to accommodate for such scenarios of self-destructive forms of behavior we can begin to understand why many youths are associating self-victimizing activities with empowerment, how these attitudes are a reflection of power relations and social changes, and how they indirectly can cause political instability.

The impact of urban and rural disparities, the widening gap between the wealthy minority and poor majority, and greater perceived needs, alongside high unemployment levels, lack of recreational activities and censorship, make it particularly difficult for youths to keep up with the rapid social changes underway. Moreover, increased education and the raised consciousness of youths with regards to political corruption, inadequate social policies and social injustices, make it more frustrating to live with censorship and the limited social participation available. The routine silencing of their voices through censorship, arbitrary arrests, and lack of expressive outlets has led to social stress and desperation. Most youths grew up alongside the tourism boom and have only known life under the dictatorship of Gayoom. One young male commented, *"Our parents believed in the government. They saw the opening of the economy and the launch of tourism. But the youth have grown up without seeing much change" (Imma, 23).*

Increased political consciousness and awareness of propaganda has placed truth at the epicenter of this ideological struggle. For those escaping into drugs and other self-destructive behaviors, perhaps it is not so ironic that by living in a state enforced fictional reality, people build their own delusions, like for instance, thinking *hakuru* is cool and empowering. In a political context where truth doesn't matter, is it so surprising that youths' definitions of empowerment can be delusional? Does this not explain the emergence of self-destructive forms of ambivalent resistance?

A common underlying feature of the various ways in which many youths are expressing this need for change and creating instability in the existing power structure is by exposing social realities and public secrets (government corruption and human rights violations). The riots, as well as other forms of political expression to be discussed in the following chapter illustrate the interaction between resistance and the contestation of *official* reality as caricatured by state propaganda and its truth producing strategies.

6. Symbolic forms of covert resistance

Political resistance can take on a plethora of forms, both *overt*; class struggles and large social movements that attack political systems, and *covert*; displaced resistance carried out in symbolic, subtle ways that avoid direct confrontation and violence (Gledhill, 1994: 80). Several anthropologists advocate the efficacy of covert resistance (Gledhill, 1994; Keesing, 1992; Comaroff, 1985) and maintain that overt forms upset the stability of society and hamper emancipation. Gledhill emphasizes that some of the most subtle forms of resistance can be most effective, in that the power imbalance dividing the dominant in contemporary societies from the subordinate render overt and organized modes of popular resistance misguided on the 'real prospects for emancipation' (1994: 81).

My intention is not to de-emphasize the efficacy of organized overt forms of resistance but rather to look at subtle forms that are often more viable and have tended to be under represented, not recognized, or dismissed as utopian and inconsequential. The Western tendency to dichotomize and to separate action and thought, politics and religion, and delinquency and agency, explains the dismissal of such social movements as 'symbolic' and 'utopian' (Gledhill, 1994: 84).

The concept of resistance has been broadened to include "everyday" practices and historical events (Scott, 1985). Scott's definition of resistance incorporates "the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups," including false compliance, foot dragging, ignorance and other covert forms (1985, xvi). Comaroff (1985) advocates the efficacy of subtle forms of counter hegemonic resistance. She bases her argument on her anthropological research of the Tshidi on the borderland between South Africa and Botswana and their conversion to Zionism. South African Zionism established a "middle ground" situated between a "displaced traditional order" and a "modern world" (Comaroff, 1985: 254). Comaroff comments, "for all its inability to reverse the brute structures of dominance, Zionism as sociocultural form has proved remarkably durable..." (1985: 253). She suggests that the shift from Methodism and Protestantism to

Zionism is far from being apolitical and embodies a covert resistance that is more viable given the existing power relations.

Keesing, in discussing Kwaio political resistance, comments how religion was an integral part of their mobilization as they functioned within the imposed framework by establishing their 'paganness' within Christian discourse through parody and by inverting meanings (1992: 237). He describes the Kwaio manipulation of Christian meanings as displaced resistance that acknowledged the futility of more overt attacks on the system, a displacement observable in Comaroff's (1985) depiction of Tshidi Zionism as well. Keesing argues that political forms of resistance that are broadly defined are necessarily based on a 'subculture of subalternity' a collective system of symbols whereby strategies for opposition are "communicated, shared, themselves represented ideologically" (1992: 214). He discusses covert resistance as the only alternative in circumstances of extreme oppression and advocates that transformations may be generated through appropriation, "…as a kind of latent phase of resistance" (1992: 216). By functioning within the existing framework of domination and internalizing some of its forms, subaltern groups are capable of transforming existing models (ibid).

Gledhill emphasizes that it is important to study such contemporary forms of resistance and analyze their effect on existing power relations while simultaneously recognizing that they do not present an imminent threat to the stability of power relations (1994: 85). He asserts that it is in fact vital that we do not perceive social movements as choosing between 'stability' and 'totalizing revolution,' even when a 'counter-hegemonic culture' carries an 'apocalyptic tone' (ibid.). Gledhill advocates that while it is important to acknowledge covert processes of resistance, to render them analytically useful models for resistance they must be viewed within their wider context of power relations (1994: 92).

This chapter analyzes various forms of creative expression as examples of displaced, covert resistance, symbolically reflected in informants' activities such as filmmaking, song writing, poetry, photography and t-shirt making. I define these activities as resistance because

these symbolic expressions confronted public secrets and challenged dominant representations of society. "Expression is about power" (Bell, 2001: 63) and these innovations exemplify how key informants expressed shared ideological convictions through symbols without being directly politically confrontational.

While freedom of expression was established in the 1997 constitution, clauses within the article stipulate the condition that it should not upset *public order* or the *sovereignty of the state*. For example, Article 19, on the freedom of education states: "Persons shall be free to acquire knowledge and to impart knowledge **provided that such acquisition and imparting of knowledge does not contravene law**" (1997: 4). Article 25 on the Freedom of expression states:

> Every citizen shall have the freedom to express his conscience and thoughts orally or in writing or by other means, **unless prohibited by law in the interest of protecting the sovereignty of the Maldives, of maintaining public order and of protecting the basic tenets of Islam** (1997: 6).

Therefore forms of expression that expose public secrets are easily construed as being in violation of these clauses, potentially leading to sentences of "high treason" that are punishable by thirty years in prison. Article 12 on high treason states:

(1) Any person who, by the threat or use of force **or in violation of the Constitution, abrogates or attempts to abrogate the Constitution or attempt to undermine the Constitution or conspires to commit any of the said acts shall be guilty of high treason.**
(2) **Any person who aids and abets or is an accomplice in the commission of any act mentioned in clause (1) of this article or any person who has knowledge of the commission of such act and has failed to report the same shall also be guilty of high treason**" (1997: 2-3).

6.1 Expressions of resistance: two case studies

Bodu

The following excerpt is taken from an interview with Bodu, who directed and produced films to make social issues such as domestic violence and drug abuse more public. At the time of the interview she was frustrated by the amount of scenes cut from her films for being too realistic.

[B] *Our main project, feature film, (when we) put it to the censor board, we took into consideration censorship, followed the rules, but they cut* nine *scenes from the film, but no scenes had nudity. I went to fight, I asked for an appointment and the Minister wouldn't see me, got someone else to meet me. It was about* violence against women *(emphasis and sarcasm as this is an example of another 'public secret') [...] The minister said the scene was too* **realistic**, *people should not see realistic stuff and the whole scene was cut. We did research on other films and what they had censored and how censored in public cinema and there was one film where a woman is pushed out of the second floor building and killed by her husband, in this film it was accidental death in a moment of fury, these scenes were also taken out because too realistic. Reality ... everything is covered up, they don't want to show reality. All T.V., all radio, everything so covered up. Nothing that really happens is shown in the Media. You saw Kim, during September 20th newspapers and news did not carry any articles on it (B: 1: 29).*

[Q] Do you find ways to keep on producing?

[B] *No, I don't find ways (firmly stated) and that is why our project, this drug project, it is very realistic again. It is, we wanted to make it realistic so people see the hard side of it is, how bad it is, for them to get the message, it didn't glorify drugs, it showed the hard side and I've been trying for the last two years, also I've been talking about it so much, but still we haven't been able to break through because I think again it's so realistic and they don't want to show realism and they really don't want to address issue of drugs in the country (B: 1: 29).*

[Q] You're not losing your inspiration to continue?

[B] *No. I would say if people were a little more courageous there would be a lot of underground stuff in the country, like that little film Raskaleh about the king that we showed, satire this kind of things [...] I think it's physical set up, the geography, it's so small if people do stuff it's easy to catch them, if one person does something like that it's very transparent, people would be able to catch you. People tell me how September 20th, from the public there was people reporting, so really don't know who is on other side and when back bite will come to you. The biggest problem I think is poverty here, although the government refuses to accept that there is poverty. Everybody, the government has bought people here, they help, you know, from special accounts and special things, so they (civilians) protect themselves, they know the way of earning ... there's no way of getting social support here, there's no social services, they're protecting their own life by informing, that's why people are afraid also to go against ... (the government) (B: 1: 29).*

[Q] But through your film projects you've found ways to express yourself?

[B] *That's not enough! My audience is only my home. I would like to share my feelings with everybody but I cannot do that, now it's always a selected audience, once you get to know them ... something like that should be able to show on public T.V. and get people's comments. That is what I would like ... (B: 1: 29).*

[Q] Is there any political reason behind not encouraging art?

[B] *Of course! Most definitely. Art is expression, and expression is threat [...] If you listen to Maldivian songs, it's all love songs, love is the only thing you can express, address in songs, in theater, in films, you cannot talk of anything else [...] and people are not encouraged to appreciate art ... (B: 1: 29).*

Bodu's "home video" is a parody of the government structure, enacted by children. *Raskaleh* translates to "king", and is a satirical reference to the president, and oppressive dictatorial rule. The king, *Rasgefaan*, give orders to the people, and promises to reward those who obey with ice cream, an allegorical reference to the favors given by the president in exchange for popular support. Those who disobey are put in the goat pen (prison) as punishment. The people are forced to stay on all fours, symbolically reflecting their subjugation by being physically lower than the king. A dissenter speaks up against the injustice and the king orders him to be thrown in the goat pen, a reference to penal tactics used to maintain power relations.

The film also satirically refers to news broadcasts that are full of irrelevant details of the president's life, such as 'the Rasgefaan has eaten chocolate chip ice cream and will eat it tomorrow.' The broadcasting scene also alludes to the fear tactics used by the government, by showing a photo of the prisoner in the goat pen, and threatening the imprisonment of those who disobey the king. The broadcaster states that this is what happens when the mental stability of the president is at risk, a reference to the constitutional laws which justify arrest for forms of expression that cause political instability, in the name of Islam, and for the good of the nation. It warns of the danger of more dissenters to the king's health, parodying presidential statements about preserving the harmony and health of society and encouraging the people to report any *deviant* activities. Informers are promised an additional spoonful of ice cream, alluding to the favors exchanged for reporting "social deviants."

Two informants translated the film's dialogue, presented below, from Dhivehi to English. The coding system used identifies the people being subjugated as the [Mass], Rasgefaan as [R], and the dissenter that is arrested as [A].

"Raskaleh"

[R] A salaam alaikum (peace be upon you).

[Mass] Vaalaikumu salaam (peace be upon you too).

[R] Development is something that progresses day by day. It only happens when everyone works together. You have to listen to what advice I give. When I ask you to do something, you have to respond by saying "as you say" (Vidhaalhu vi gotheh, formal Dhivehi). You can't say anything else! You all have to act as I say. You can't speak to someone for too long. Those children who obey, I'll give you ice cream. Those children who don't obey me, I'll put you in the goat pen! Why are you like that? Go on all fours now!

[Mass] As you say.

[R] What a pretty brooch...

[Girl] Oh Ras, the way you act!

[A] Look at how comfortably he's sitting there! And eating the tastiest ice cream too!

[R] Who is that?

[A] After making us live in this condition!

[R] Ey, take her away take her away. Put him in the goat pen now!

[Newscaster] In the name of God. News from Rasgefaan's TV. First the headlines. Rasgefaan has eaten chocolate chip ice cream. Now for the details of the news. This morning the Rasgefaan ate chocolate chip ice cream and reports say he will eat it tomorrow as well. Yesterday afternoon the Rasgefaan addressed and spoke with Alif Mathidhoo citizens. During the address, the Rasgefaan made it clear that no one can live unless it is according to his wishes. This photo shows a man who has been put in the goat pen because he did this that could have mentally disturbed the Rasgefaan. This man also deliberately disobeyed the order to walk on fours. If these types of people increase, the Rasgefaan might have a heart attack. In order to preserve the health of the king, if you know anyone who is acting against his orders, please report immediately to authorities. The informants as a reward will get one extra spoon of ice cream. Now entertainment. Tomorrow is the Rasgefaan's birthday and to celebrate, there will be a special show for the King at Chandhanee Bageecha. Rasgefaan TV.

[Girl] The Rasgefaan's been stolen/kidnapped!

[Mass] The Rasgefaan's been stolen/kidnapped!

The film epitomizes how expression and resistance must be carefully negotiated in the Maldives. Bodu created this fictional reality of a king, rewards of ice cream and detainment in the goat pen, to symbolically reflect through parody what cannot be explicitly expressed without great risk. "Raskaleh," is a carefully negotiated expression of the political propaganda and oppression in the country. The film was only intended for home viewing because even as a parody it was too dangerous to show publicly. However, the act of making the film, the

collaboration of those who participated in it and the act of watching the film as a group comprised a form of underground resistance. Although the film seems to be a small and indirect statement, simply acknowledging government propaganda and power relations in the country through this medium provided an expressive outlet, re-affirmed a counter-discourse among a collective of people that share the same ideological convictions, and was empowering.

6.3 Kokko: song, poem and photography assignment

Below are a song and poem written in English by Kokko after the presidential elections. Kokko completed her secondary and post secondary education in English institutions and was more comfortable writing in English than in Dhivehi. The song refers to Gay (Gayoom) and her anger towards what he has done to her family and her life. During the elections the family wore red clothing to protest the unlawful arrest of their family members, explaining the lyrics in the chorus "red for my rage, red for the blood on their hands." The song was written on October 20th, 2003 and shows her suffering and her frustration at not being able to express her thoughts, views and her anger.

WANNA OPEN MY MOUTH
WANNA SAY NO BUT CAN'T
WANNA BE FREE
BUT THEY SAY NO
CAN'T
WANNA BE JUST ME
COS THE
BUT SYSTEM SAYS SO

WHY CAN'T I SPEAK?
WHY CAN'T I EXPRESS?
WHY AM I REPRESSED?
WHY AM I SO OPRESSED?

SAY I GOT A THOUGHT
HEAR ME OUT
I CRY MY HEART
DO YOU HEAR IT BEAT?
HEAR ITS HURT?

RED FOR MY RAGE
RED FOR THE BLOOD ON THEIR HANDS — RED FOR BLOOD ON THEIR HANDS
DO YOU HEAR MY HATE
SEE MY FIGHT FEEL MY PAIN
WOULD YOU LET IT BE
OR WOULD YOU TRY TO SEE
REP CHORUS

IMPRISONED THOUGHTS

CAGED MIND

Kokko integrated the following poem with her photography assignment. The poem helps to capture why she took the photographs presented below and her feelings towards the images represented. In the poem she refers to the "helmets" and "green clothed monsters" referring to the police and the "UC's" (undercover police) patrolling and ready for any opportunity to exercise and abuse their power. Kokko's reference to the "tentacles feeling, pinching, prodding and provoking" and the "raid" refer specifically to her house being raided after the riots. Following the riots undercover police and informers were frequently lurking on the street keeping watch over her compound.

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Theme 1: Things that you fear

"Hiding"

ONE AM The helmuts come out riding past you giving you the eye. Looking for a reason, they'll be circling. A group hangs around their corner talking and chilling. Zooms in the green clotted monsters poking eyes, searching noses desiring trouble. Wanting the excuse to exercise control and power, they wait.

Slowly the story unfolds. Unrolls their tentacles feeling, pinching, prodding, and provoking until one gets pushed to the edge. With the opening rising and expanding, the prodding continues. Out comes the talkie, in rolls the raid, out rolls the group. Reason? Who knows?

You see the uc's, but they are just hanging around your corner flashing eyes at you - they'll be paying detailed attention, looking extre nonchalant and being too inconspicious. You wonder whether they know - by the way you eye them up and down - that they aren't being very undercover.
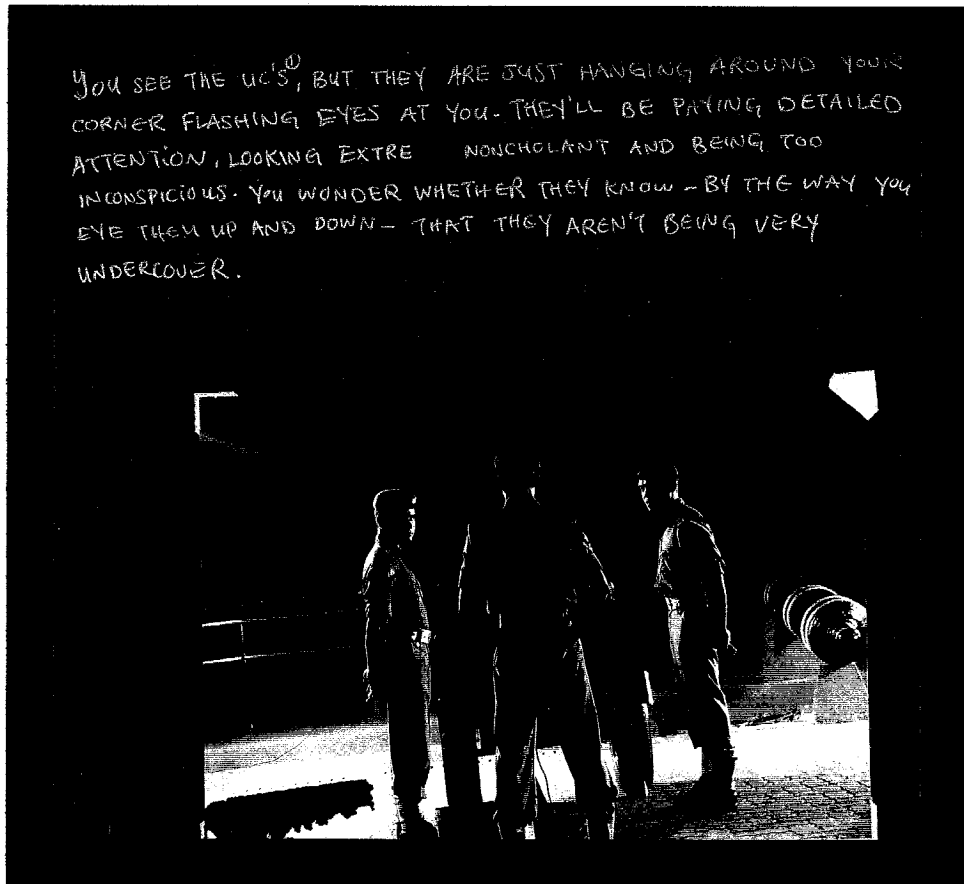
Kokko had selected these two photos for the theme "things that you fear" in her photography assignment. The original theme was "things that make you feel trapped and restrict you," but Kokko modified it to "things that she fears." The first photo she entitled "Hiding." It is of the police headquarters and the Friday Mosque, with a police jeep and flag of the Maldives dividing the photo vertically. The minaret of the mosque appears on the opposite side of Gayoom's face, which has been superimposed digitally from another photograph. The photograph of the president features a billboard in Maafunu that was part of the presidential campaign. Kokko made it clear that the presence of the mosque in the photo does not refer to Islam itself as a restriction, but the manipulation of religion for political reasons. Her intention

with this photograph was to show that what she fears is how the president secretly controls society through Islam.

Theme 2: Things that make you feel free

"Haze"

The photo is of a girl smoking hashish oil. Kokko explained that when she gets high she feels free because she forgets about her problems and the social realities that repress her.

Theme 3: Things that reflect your role within society

"Human Rights Day"

Kokko took a photo of a group of people on motorbikes wearing the Human Rights Day t-shirts we made. She explained that she framed the photograph between the police headquarters and NSS building, as they are the forces that inflict the human rights abuses that they were protesting that day with the t-shirts. She stated that her role within society was to help to bring about changes in society and to protest the human rights violations suffered by so many people. She elaborated that the building on the right was where she was struck by the police, brought inside the gate, blindfolded and beaten.

6.4 An interview with Kokko on political t-shirt making

It was a week before the presidential elections and the city was plastered with posters of Gayoom's face. Ani and Nassima walked around with bits of black tape cut into small squares and stuck to their sleeves, discreetly sticking them over Gayoom's upper lip and creating a Hitler-like moustache. The act was subtle but the statement strong. Kokko suggested we make political t-shirts for Election Day and everyone was enthusiastic. The designs were taken off the Internet and for a week ten of us collaborated on the project. Careful attention was given to where the t-shirts were purchased to avoid arousing any suspicion by potential informers. In an assembly like fashion everyone performed a task in the process of making the t-shirts (stretching, imprinting, or drying).

[K] *I was going through the phobias, I wanted to wear a t-shirt on Election Day that said policeophobia, dictatophobia, all those phobias I wanted to list down. I had all these different ideas for t-shirts and then Ani came up with the whole, the images and stuff. I actually wanted to do individual ones because I think that would've really made an impression as well, whole bunch of people wearing their own opinion that expresses what they're really feeling. What you really want to say. Like you have the group feeling but, there's also something that you really want to say and if you can't walk around yelling it, you might as well wear it ... you can only express like in what you wear. That's it. You can't even really write it because it'll never be seen, it'll only be, like I said, you show it to your group, that's it ... couldn't get any further than that (K: 2: 38).*

Political t-shirt making was an innovation that several informants came up with to express their views silently, covertly and through the body. The t-shirts were secretly made, distributed, and worn in public only by some, but never as a group, (with the exception of a t-shirt made to acknowledge human rights day) to avoid running the risk of arrest. Three of the designs were made during the weeks falling between the riots on September 20th, 2003 and the presidential elections on October 17[th]2003. The slogans address the need to end the 25-year dictatorship of Gayoom.

Several designs were selected for individual t-shirts and one design was chosen for the few hundred t-shirts that were made for distribution. The t-shirt design that was chosen for distribution stated on the front: "Fascist State" and on the back: "WARNING CONTINUED WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW LEADERS IS GETTING US NOWHERE."

The third t-shirt carried a symbol 5<6, with the 6th term in darkness, foreshadowing the imminent gloom of a 6th presidential term and again stressing the importance of resisting Gayoom's reinstatement into his sixth five-year term. On the back of the t-shirt was the statement "It's Not True" in reference to his repeated response to the accusations made during a BBC interview. The phrase was meant to be a mockery of his lame attempts at legitimizing his rule. The meaning of the symbol is less evident than the other designs as several people were uncomfortable with the other more explicit statements against the government and wanted a shirt that was less obvious.
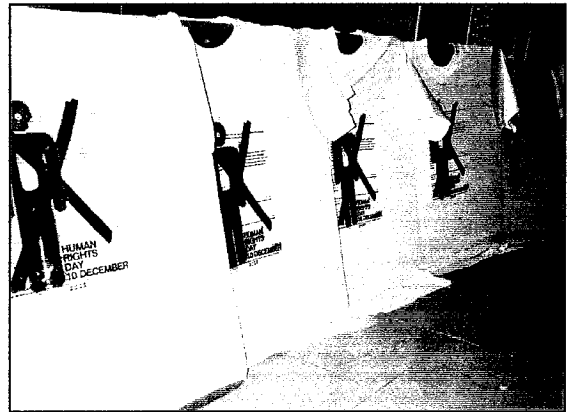
[K] *By 2:00 (am) we finished the design, and we decided on what to do, and then, while we were doing the printing the BBC Report came on. So while we were printing out the 5 by 6 (t-shirt) that was when the report came, so we all ran to watch it, and you know the president (Gayoom) was saying "that's not true" about everything, and after watching it we were like, "we have to, we have to put it on the back!" So we made a print out of that (K: 2: 38).*

The "5 by 6" t-shirt's statement was more subtle and ambiguous, a negotiation of expression that was less risky. The t-shirts were not meant to thwart the elections and emancipate society but rather express and affirm ideological convictions shared by those making the t-shirts, and those buying and wearing the t-shirts.

[K] *No one really wore it on election's day because we all decided to wear red, cause I wasn't going to wear that t-shirt on that day ... I didn't really want to, I wanted to wear red.[78] My grandmother started it, (smiles proudly) she was like "I'm gonna wear red, me and my group (her friends she voted with) are wearing red, so my grandma and her two friends were all wearing red, from the same material as well! They all had dresses made the day before from the same material, same print and everything and when they went to vote all three of them went together (K: 2: 38).*

The fourth design was made in early December to be ready for Human Rights Day on December 10th, 2003. On one side of the t-shirt is the figure of a body carrying a large "X." "Human Rights Day," is imprinted beside it over a background stating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in English. Human Rights Day coincided with Dhondatha's release from house arrest and the implementation of a Human Rights Commission (run by the government). Therefore, several individuals in a mocking gesture distributed the t-shirts to some members of the new commission. The t-shirt was intended to point out the irony of the formation of a human rights commission when the murders in prison and the arrests related to the September 20th riots had still not been officially recognized and publicly addressed as human rights violations. Given the recent gross human rights violations, specifically those triggered by the riots, only an acknowledgment of those injustices (and the commission functioning independently of the government) would have lent any legitimacy and realism to the establishment of a Human Rights Commission. The gesture of former political prisoners presenting human rights t-shirts to the human rights commission members sarcastically played up the charade of the commission's farcical existence. Walking across the island in a group wearing the t-shirts also emphasized the internationally recognized day and the lack of any national effort to commemorate human rights day in the Maldives, despite it coinciding with the inauguration of a human rights commission. The Human Rights Day t-shirts were worn publicly as a group because the message they conveyed did not explicitly criticize the Maldivian government, but commemorated an international holiday, making it less

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risky a statement. Although the public gesture was a ruse, it reflected, once again, a carefully

mediated ambiguous statement of resistance.

[Q] Why are the t-shirts important to you?

[K] *Cause it's about time people spoke out what they believe, we've been pushed into a corner for so long, never really been able to express the, anger that we have ... really it is anger, how else would you put it, and at some point you have to show that. When he (Gayoom) goes, like on an interview or something, he keeps saying people are not against him just because no one's ever shown him that they are against him. Whereas if you wear something like a t-shirt that says all this, you wear it because you believe in it, and if someone sees it, they know what you believe in, they know what you're saying. And if a lot of people wear it and a lot of people go out and express this, then you know the president can't say that there aren't people against him. Right now everyone's against him in their silent way. You talk to your friends, you decide these things, but it never gets out ... the fear is still there. But you have to slowly start pushing those boundaries, and you know, moving ahead so you let the fear dissolve a bit (K: 2: 38).*

[Q] Why do you think it's worth taking the risk to express yourself?

[K] *You have to take the risk! I mean I didn't grow up thinking that I have to submit to the system. All my life I've heard what he's doing is wrong, you know, he won't decentralize power which is the biggest problem because he's got way too much power now. The parliament is pretty much nothing, he's got the ultimate decision. You question authority but only when they're doing wrong right? And when you see the wrong done and how it's affected people, obviously you can't not speak about it (K: 2: 38).*

Kokko's statement about *carefully pushing the boundaries* demonstrates how these

examples of resistance are not directed at emancipation per se, but are cautious adaptations to the

local power structure and examples of "rule-governed creativity" (Giddens, 1979) or "regulated

improvisations" (Feierman, 1990). It was not relevant that the Election Day t-shirts were not

actually worn on that day nor worn collectively in public as a group, despite the fact that we had

rushed to have the t-shirts ready in time and stayed up all night working on them for two days

prior to the elections. The underground group effort and the intention defined the purpose.

Making a statement, however small and indirect, and the simple acknowledgement of *reality*

uncensored among a collectivity, a group of youths united in their suffering and outlook towards

the government seemed to make them feel empowered.

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7. Deconstructing the Riots

Drawing by Kokko, 2005.

To an outsider it might seem that the riots were a spontaneous social protest against the government that citizens of all ages and social statuses initiated. Subsequent interviews then revealed that those participating in the protest had either directly or indirectly (through relatives, spouses and friends) been victimized by the penal system. Often the cause of these arrests related to drugs use or distribution, or petty crimes, accounting for the correlation between *hakuru* and the rioting. The two boys exposed in the funeral parlor were both part of a *hakuru* subcultural group. Moreover, many of those addicted to *hakuru* were high at the time of the riots.

A perspective of the riots that defines resistance based on "intentionality" (Ruddick, 1998) would highlight the relationship between the protest and challenges to the government's

monopoly over knowledge. The exposure of Hassan and Clinton's bodies and the destruction of only government property, such as government buildings, police vehicles, court files and police documents, reflect a resistance against *official* "knowledge" by exposing public secrets. Also, by destroying police and court files youths sabotaged the "panoptic gaze" of the government and reclaimed their autonomy.

7.1 Power creations: normal versus deviant

We tend to think of power as taking away, (civil liberties, freedom, expression, money, land), as static and vested among elite populations (Foucault, 1980). Foucault (1975; 1980) argues for a perspective of power that does not perceive it in negative terms as repressive, restrictive and censoring, but rather as constructive, fluid, creative, exercised, strategically positioned, and sometimes even extended by the dominated. Foucault (1975) describes power relations as multi vocal, with multiple points of confrontation and instability, each carrying with it risks of struggle, conflict, and an inversion of power relations that is at least temporary (27).

A perspective of power as constructive allows for the crucial link between knowledge and power to be made, the *epistemologic-juridical* function that produces knowledge in relation to disciplinary tactics of punishment (Foucault, 1975). From this perspective the lack of awareness on drugs, the absence of adequate approaches to rehabilitation, the censoring of research and films on drugs, and the criminal charges resulting from publicly addressing public secrets (including treatment in prison, government corruption and political motivations behind drugs entering the country) can all be understood as a type of insurance that protects the "knowledge" authorized by the state; with a clause authorizing the punishment for those who in some way refute this "knowledge." The tactics of punishment exist to preserve official representations of social reality and public secrets. Consequently, the production of *knowledge* entails the production of *delinquents*.

Foucault (1975) emphasizes in *Discipline and Punish* four important analytical

perspectives when interpreting punishment: (1) to regard punishment as a complex social function

and analyze punitive methods as *techniques* strategically adapted to other political, *power* tactics,

(2) to perceive histories of human sciences and penal law relationally as part of a process of

epistemologico-juridical configuration, (3) to situate the *technology of power* as the dogma that

defines knowledge and humanizes the penal system, and (4) to view the attributes of penal justice

regarding the body and soul of the prisoner, and *knowledge*, as relative to transitions "in the way

the body is invested by power relations" (23-4).

When viewed from this analytical perspective the high proportion of youths in prison and

the arbitrary arrest of individuals that challenge *official knowledge* and threaten to expose public

secrets, establishes a connection between the *epistemologico-judical* and tactics of punishment.

Moreover, many of the protesters and those who were arrested, resided in *Maafunu*, the poorest

district in Male'.

Also significant were the political tactics behind the defensive police strategies at the

riots. The riot police in general avoided any offensive retaliation, and the riots were instead

carefully observed, photographed and videotaped by police surveying from behind windows, a

panoptic strategy that allowed the government to identify dissidents, monitor the extent to which

they would go, and only later carry out punishments in private, away from the watchful gaze of

cameras and civilians. The destruction of cameras at the riots, the absence of any articles on the

riots in local newspapers, and the rapid cleanup afterwards attest to the effort to erase this

moment in history (as with the Addu separation attempt). The president's caricaturing of the riots

as proof of the delinquency of drug addicts and the need to control these *threats to civil society*,

and not as a human rights issue further substantiates the propaganda intrinsic to local power

tactics. Foucault states:

> In recent years, prison revolts have occurred throughout the world. There was certainly
> something paradoxical about their aims, their slogans and the way they took place. They
> were revolts against an entire state of physical misery that is over a century old: against

cold, suffocation and overcrowding, against decrepit walls, hunger, physical maltreatment. But they were also revolts against model prisons, tranquilizers, isolation, the medical or educational services. Were they revolts whose aims were merely material? Or contradictory revolts: against the obsolete, but also against comfort; against the warders, but also against the psychiatrists? In fact, all these movements-and the innumerable discourses that the prison has given rise to since the early nineteenth century-have been about the body and material things [...] In fact, they were revolts, at the level of the body, against the very body of the prison. What was at issue was not whether the prison environment was too harsh or too aseptic, too primitive or too efficient, but its very materiality as an instrument and vector of power; it is the whole technology of power over the body that the technology of the 'soul'-that of the educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists-fails either to conceal or to compensate, for the simple reason that it is one of its tools (1975: 30).

A Foucauldian analysis helps to frame the riots within a broader political and economic context where it is possible to draw parallels with other similar contexts worldwide, as well as with local class structures and other historical patterns of rule. By situating the body as a site of resistance, the physical rioting and the *hakuru* induced state of many of the protesters can be conceived of as "revolts at the level of the body against the body of the prison" (ibid.). Foucault's (1975) analogy of the carnival substantiates the temporary inversion of power relations in which "rules were inverted, authority mocked and criminals transformed into heroes" and shame bestowed upon ruling authorities and not upon *deviant* youths (61). The inversion of meanings at the riots could be perceived of as a temporary reversal of power relations that ultimately played into the political strategy of the authorities who stood back and used the opportunity for surveillance and the identification of "rebels", rendering these youths participants in their own victimization, exploited through drugs and caught up in a cycle of politically harmless crime and arrests.

Obviously the riots are reflective of the complex interaction of multiple conflicting discourses at local, national and global levels, and the culmination of a more generalized anger towards the abusive penal system. However, while it is crucial for any theoretical attempts at analysis to be embedded within the context of broader power relations and local cultural politics, to situate areas of resistance requires a deeper level of understanding and interpretation.

For example, anomalous to the vicious circle one would expect to unfold, whereby

youths lose respect for the law and continue to commit low-level crimes and being arrested for

them, as envisaged by Foucault (1975), the youths protesting at the riots also held Gayoom

accountable for the illegitimacy of the penal system and human rights violations. This is where

resistance enters the equation, and another layer of understanding unfolds.

7.2 Community and Solidarity

A striking feature of the riots was the solidarity among the rioters, the targeting of only

government property and the absence of any looting or stealing, attesting to the social

consciousness and social cohesiveness of the protesters' political resolve, and to the nonviolent

nature of Maldivians in general. The exposure of Hassan's body and the public outrage it

triggered entailed a great deal of support from a significant portion of the community. Most

people in Male' had relatives and friends that had been unfairly victimized by the penal system

and their participation, although less vocal, demonstrated a certain solidarity with the rioters.

Foucault, in reference to Richet (118-19) comments:

> ... The people never felt closer to those who paid the penalty than in those rituals
> intended to show the horror of the crime and the invincibility of power; never did the
> people feel more threatened, like them, by a legal violence exercised without moderation
> or restraint. The solidarity of a whole section of the population with those we would call
> petty offenders - vagrants, false beggars, the indigent poor, pick-pockets, receivers and
> dealers in stolen goods - was constantly expressed: resistance to police searches, the
> pursuit of informers, attacks on the watch or inspectors provide abundant evidence of this
> (1975: 63).

Informants also emphasized the sense of brotherhood characterizing the tightly knit

hakuru subcultural groups. Mamma commented:

> *Most of them are drop-outs and before they could find any work they got into this and*
> *you know, and the parents, it was a vicious cycle because then the parents got fed up of*
> *them. The more they got into that they found that their family was not at home, it was*
> *their brown, it was one big family of, this brown sugar family, they belong together and*
> *everything was revolving around this group of people that they did this with, a very*
> *alienating thing for them, my brother my sisters because they were all the time angry with*

them. Because of this eventually came to a point where they dropped out of society, out of their family and everything was the friends they did it with (W: 1: 30).

7.3 Communication Technology and ideological resistance

The high level of communication and networking among protesters at the riots, as well as between inmates in jail and people in Male' facilitated the protest. Inmates that had managed to sneak their mobiles into prison kept their friends and families updated on what was going on. It was by communicating with contacts in Male' that inmates were able to confirm Hassan's death, and learn that he was being hidden by the NSS. Moreover, during the protest youths actively networked with one another, particularly on SMS, because lines were busy that day and because SMS messages were harder to trace.

During the riots the Internet and mobile phones were used to disseminate information rapidly, secretly, and without international boundaries. Public secrets were also challenged by photographs such as those taken at the funeral and at the riots that were put on the Internet and widely disseminated. Mobile phones with cameras were particularly useful for taking pictures discreetly. Digital cameras made it possible to show photos immediately to others, and quickly download them unto computers and put them up on websites. They were then put on CDs, and the files were deleted from their computers to get rid of the *evidence* in case of a raid.

Following the riots the government attempted in vain to frame the protest as the work of hooligan drug users and separate it from a human rights issue, an effort to create yet another "public secret". The clean up of all the debris all night long after curfew on the night of the riot was intended to erase the event from people's minds by erasing all physical traces. However, because the population was active in putting pictures of the riots on the internet (that became censored in the Maldives shortly thereafter), discussing the riots in chat rooms, contacting international bodies such as news broadcasters like BBC or CNN and amnesty international,

getting updates on inmates and the situation in prison after the riots and calling or sending SMS messages all over the world, the event could not be contained. After the riots the cutting off of Internet connections and occasional black outs reflected the subversive potential of communication technology.

The two articles featured on the first page of chapter 4 taken from *Time* magazine and an MDP newsletter show photographs of Hassan Eevaan taken off the Internet. The articles demonstrate the far-reaching effects of the Internet and digital photography, beginning at an individual's desk top in Male' and expanding to international news broadcasters and the Maldivian Diaspora. Websites such as DO (Dhivehi Observer), Friends of Maldives and Minivan News started by Maldivians in exile have established a counter discourse in political terms that has united political dissidents, both among the international Diaspora as well as among locals that have firewalls installed in their computers to access the censored sites. Websites changed rapidly and effective networking spread new and obscure website names that helped to extend their survival in the Maldives before they were discovered and censored locally.

7.4 Hakuru and resistance

The more general absence of expressive restraint during the riots (e.g. criticizing the government, attacking government structures and police, some youths taking drugs publicly, a homosexual couple being "open" in the street) constituted an inversion of behavioral restrictions. Furthermore, what was perhaps meant to be an instrument of social control, *hakuru*, was appropriated and transformed by many youths into an instrument of revolt. The tendency for heroin addicts to "drop out of society" and form their own subcultural communities seemed incommensurate with the solidarity and organized resistance reflected in the riots. The vicious cycle of drug addiction often assumed to create passivity towards other aspects of life, including politics, contradicted it being perceived of as a form of resistance.

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A historical approach might help to clarify why some of the protesters *chased* hakuru (smoked it on tin foil) prior to rioting. The belief in supernatural beings called *dhevi*, commonly referred to as *jinnis* predates Islam and is widely believed by many Maldivians to this day. Jinnis are often held accountable for misfortunes and behavioral transgressions. Raloo informed how on one island a local teenage girl ran around the beach naked, claiming to be possessed by a jinni. That month roughly twenty teenage girls were "possessed," and did the same. Although a female exposing her body would normally lead to a social stigma of being *badi* ("fast", "promiscuous") that would last her lifetime, being "possessed" rendered the subject a victim of an external force, and in need of community support. It may be argued that in some cases holding jinnis accountable displaced the blame from the actor and eliminated the social consequences of transgressing behavioral expectations. In a few interviews displacing the blame unto jinnis appeared to be a coping mechanism adapted to social and cultural norms. For example one informant told of how a jinni raped her, describing the jinn as looking like a large man. The link between jinnis and sexual violations was echoed in similar narratives.

The tendency for the legal system to disregard rape cases, the difficulty for women under Shari'ah law to prove rape cases, and the legal sanctions against premarital sex could lend explanatory value to the pragmatism of holding jinnis accountable. When looked at from a historical and cultural perspective the use of *hakuru* by many youths prior to rioting could be seen as a contemporary manifestation of a traditional mechanism for displacing accountability, by blaming their *deviant* behavior on an induced state triggered by an external factor.

Zygmunt Bauman (1992) links agency with social structure, defining agency as constrained by what is available in one's habitat, a perspective shared by Giddens (1979) who interprets social structure as both reflecting and shaping the practices occurring within it. From this perspective, induced states perhaps provide an expressive space for 'acting up' and for displaced resistance, responding to a social structure that both socially and politically prohibits and severely punishes 'deviant' behavior. Feierman elucidates that while long-term cultural

continuities and active cultural creation may seem incompatible in peasant discourse, in actuality

enduring cultural traditions and active cultural creations are compatible (1990: 3).

Underlying all these readings of the riots is the relationship between resistance and

expressing public secrets to expose social realities. These expressions were often ambivalent, as I

have shown with the examples discussed in this thesis: political t-shirts that were not worn as a

group, a political film that indirectly criticized the government through parody but was made for

home viewing only, or notions of empowerment that linked *hakuru* with resistance. They are

demonstrative of many youths' need to express their feelings of injustice and their ambivalent

positioning at the crossroads of capitalism and socialism. The lack of flexibility in the system or

forums for public expression accounts for ambiguous or ambivalent statements of resistance.

These examples challenge and problematize standard definitions of resistance that

revolve around notions of success, both in terms of the forms resistance takes and its ability to

directly alter existing structures (Ruddick, 1998; Butt, 2005). They situate resistance as a state of

mind and not necessarily an overt social movement for emancipation (Reynolds: 1995), and show

the paradoxical, ambivalent and sometimes self-destructive forms resistance can take. In the

contexts of the film, t-shirts, and conversations with friends that criticize or mock the

government, resistance related to expression and to collective efforts grounded in a common

purpose and perspective. In the social context of youth subcultures addicted to hakuru,

expressions of resistance were made manifest by appropriating dominant meanings and

redefining hakuru use as a form of revolt. Hansen and Stepputat comment:

> The category of resistance remains a very unclear and opaque term in spite of the
> enormous literature on the subject in all the disciplines of the social sciences. [...] The
> very definition and conceptualization of resistance, of defiance or insurgency is vitally
> dependent on the character and clarity of the regime, or state, that is opposed.
> Resistance, most anthropologists, historians, and sociologists agree, is a category and a
> type of social practice that cannot be understood or presupposed outside its historical
> context (2001: 32).

> If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the state can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the state to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the state.

> Joseph Goebbels, German
> minister of propaganda,
> 1933-1945

Resistance is contextual and responds to local political contexts. Foucault states, "Where there is power there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (1978: 95-6). Most of those interviewed in this research had been to jail and had been beaten and violated for "social deviation" and "disobedience." The resentment felt towards the government and law enforcement bodies led to a counter cultural movement expressed in a variety of forms of resistance directed towards exposing public secrets and challenging state propaganda. Public secrets have allowed the president to perpetuate social mythologies that mask the actual social reality of the country, and construe various "truths" that are being overtly and covertly contested. The limited spaces for expression and the censorship laws protecting public secrets have made exposure and the dissemination of information, the very focuses of resistance. Foucault, in his discussion of the status of truth and the economic and political role played by truth, comments:

> Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (1980: 131).

Reynolds in her discussion of tactics of resistance in the context of South African youths and the disruption of education in the "Black Consciousness Movement" explains how the protest of 1976 was a struggle for "control over legitimate representations of the social world" (1995:

229-30). Reynolds emphasizes how South African youths, once they were university educated, became more politically aware and critical of the system, challenging the monopoly of the government over knowledge and representations of social reality (1995: 235).

Increased education, wireless communication and exposure to other cultures and human rights discourses have led to greater awareness of human rights violations in the country, especially among youths as they have experienced the greatest transition in lifestyles, values and ideologies. This increased awareness has led some to critically question government policies. The anger that had been repressed erupted in the youths' uprising in prison when the NSS tried to secretly dispose of Hassan Eevaan Naseem's body after beating him to death. Inmates were able to confirm his death by communicating with contacts in Male' via mobile phones that were snuck into prison. Wireless communication also enabled them to contact Hassan's family in Male' to let them know what had happened. Hassan's family then demanded to have his body returned to them and exposed him in the funeral room to show the atrocities he had suffered.

The covert and overt examples of resistance discussed in the previous chapters show how covert or unconscious forms of resistance can, at times, create political instability. They also demonstrate how resistance is not clear-cut and can come from odd sources, with both negative and positive consequences. The informants I was with at the riots were torn between their frustration with the hakuru problem in the country (that has affected their families), and their excitement at the prospects of mobilization. The research conducted by the CCCS, by narrowly focusing on working class, white, male youths, assumed that ambivalent acts of resistance were futile. The riots show that resistance is far more complex; at times manifesting itself as apathy and at other times leading towards more organized forms of resistance.

The riots gave rise to public gatherings and other more organized forms of resistance that have materialized since. For example, Dhondatha described a plan devised by youths belonging to a subcultural group to stage a coup on the eve of the presidential elections less than a month after the riots. The youths involved were hakuru abusers that had been arrested before and were

involved in the September riots. Determined to prevent Gayoom form entering his sixth

presidential term (each term lasts five years) they planned to have prisoners invade the armory on

the prison island, hi-jack a resort near Male', cut the electricity to the country and take control of

the airport. However, their plan never materialized due to an internal leak that alerted the

government in advance. Those involved in the plan were arrested.

A founding member of the Maldivian Democratic Party in exile stated in a Newsletter,

Since the riot of 20th September the law and order situation in Male', the capital of Maldives has steadily deteriorated. The present unprecedented acts of violence make the once peaceful streets of Male' a dangerous place. Recent acts of violence include the burning of stalls in a carnival, cutting a person to death and the beating of a petty thief to death by an angry mob and daily incidents of violence (MDP Press Statement, 2004: 1).

It is important to analyze "deviant" behavior among youths in the Maldives relationally,

as an expression of existing systems of power and authoritarian control. From this standpoint,

apparently contradictory acts of resistance become more understandable. The deterioration of

political legitimacy and the social injustices that are wielded to maintain authoritarian control,

have engaged a form of resistance grounded in challenging dominant social representations, the

exposure of public secrets and the demand for 'truth'. The sense of injustice felt by many youths,

encouraged by the arbitrary enforcement of power and violence within the penal system, has led

to a strong resentment towards local authorities that are above the law, and for them, the legal

system has lost its legitimacy.

One of the main reasons for this deterioration of law and order is the widely held perception among Maldivians that Mr. Gayoom does not now have the moral authority to rule. His legitimacy was recently further strained when he publicly lied to the people of Maldives about the role of the National Security Service (NSS) in the killing of prisoner Evan Naseem and the NSS shooting to death of unarmed prisoners. He also manipulated the findings of the Sattar Commission on custodial deaths in order to protect, it is widely believed, the senior personnel of NSS and Ministry of Defense and National Security who gave the orders to shoot. As Commander-in-Chief the ultimate responsibility, lies with Mr. Gayoom himself (MDP Press Statement, 2004: 1).

This thesis has looked at local forms of resistance among a group of youths in Male' and

their correlation to social changes in the country and the censorship of expression. I have

analyzed various forms of resistance among some youths in Male' as reflective of what Foucault

(1980) describes as "battles for truth." The acts of resistance reviewed challenge dominant social representations by exposing government propaganda or public secrets. The forms of resistance looked at are distinctive in the sense that they were often ambivalent or ambiguously stated, challenging common perceptions of resistance as positive, conscious and directed to particular desired outcomes, such as emancipation. By deconstructing the riots I have argued that resistance is not always so clear-cut and definitions must relate to particular social and political contexts. I have shown that the ambivalent forms of resistance discussed relate to the expression of public secrets and reflect the social transformations that have occurred as a result of rapid social change. A comprehensive understanding of these ambivalent acts of resistance must be embedded in an analysis of the complex interaction of multiple factors; the socio-political reality of the country, economic restructuring, unemployment, overcrowding, increased movement, Internet, satellite television and wireless technology, and the ideological shifts that have resulted from these transformations.

7.6 Raised consciousness

Appadurai emphasizes the new power exercised by the imagination in contemporary social life, pointing out that increasing amounts of people worldwide contemplate a broader range of 'possible lives' than ever before (1996: 53). He recognizes the media as an important factor, in that it presents ". . . a rich, ever-changing store of possible lives, some of which enter the lived imaginations of ordinary people more successfully than others (ibid.). Exposure to television, the cinema, the Internet and video technology, as well as to news, gossip and stories of neighbors, friends and family in far-off places, broaden the horizons of the possible lives imaginable (ibid.). All these global phenomena have led to a growing awareness of the choices available to the individual in developing the identity and life they want. Many people in the Maldives have seen or read about social movements and human rights discourses on television or the Internet and have critically questioned why the same has not occurred in the Maldives.

An informant, in discussing the dissemination of information about the MDP in the

Rajjethere islands, explained how in any island there are a handful of opinion makers that spread

the news, which the rest either agree or disagree with. He described how these "opinion makers"

are no longer the island chiefs, but rather hardworking young fishermen who have studied in

Male' for a few years, and merchants that run doonis back and forth to Male'. He stated:

> *I don't think they, the, the younger generation, no longer uh wants to just digest what is
> spoon fed for years and years and years, they've seen something better, and they know
> that things can be better. If you go to the islands you see many islands a lot of houses
> have been built, uh this is something came about in mid 80s because they have this
> picture of how a house looks like, or of how a house can be built [...] so it's because they
> have seen it and so they have built it themselves [...] Because they have seen the pattern
> they can (pause, assertive tone) you have to see something for you to be able to
> investigate it, you know to start saving money for it, [...] you need the idea [...] and they
> are getting more ideas, they are getting exposed to more, forms of information, more
> forms of communication than ever before" (A: 1: 53).*

Traditionally a house in the Maldives would consist of a large room shared by the

extended family. Today, many walls partition most houses as the notion of the nuclear family has

taken hold and each family feels the need to have their own private space within the family

compound. Similarly, the notion of human rights and protest are new ideas that have been

introduced as people have access to more forms of information and communication.

The 1990s were a very pivotal decade in the Maldives. Gayoom consolidated his power

and advocated that he wanted to open up the Maldives to the world. For a four-month period,

freedom of expression was granted. During that period many individuals in Male' became

politically vocal and roughly ten reformist parliamentarians became very active and collaborated

on a political magazine, *Songul*, that addressed issues of corruption and human rights violations

in the country and argued for the decentralization of power. Soon after the magazine was banned,

the reformists arrested and censorship laws stiffened. However, the reformists stirred up many

people and political corruption became the buzzword in teashops in Male' (however because

certain communication technologies were not yet available the rest of the country was for the

most part not informed of these political activities). Several years later satellite television,

computers, the Internet and mobile phones proliferated and educational levels and literacy levels augmented. Al-Rasheed identifies the 1990s as pivotal years in Saudi Arabia when state efforts to silence dissidents and opposition movements were challenged by increased literacy, education, availability of new communication technology and modernization allowing for the organization of counter discourses (1999: 150). The decentralizing and diffusing effects of the Internet on power and hierarchical structures of authority are exemplified in the works of Miller and Slater (2000) and Al-Rasheed (1999). Miller and Slater comment, "The internet has both produced new freedoms (of information and of speech) and come to stand as a symbol of potential freedoms" (2000: 16). Field (1995) and Bell (2001) stress the importance of technology in ideological resistance. Field states: "The "monopoly of knowledge" is no longer in the hands of a foreman, teacher, or section chief, but in computer chips" (1995: 74n.21). The use of communication technology to mobilize people is discussed by Bell (2001) with the use of the radio in the Haitian democracy movement. Bell describes the importance of the radio as a tool of resistance towards the government's monopoly over knowledge (2001: 63).

In the introduction to this master's thesis I quoted an informant saying that once the country opened up to the world with international news and Internet "now there are no boundaries and it is impossible to control people" (Bs: 1: 43). Exposure to foreign media, the Internet, travel abroad and tourism has expanded people's awareness, their ability to reflect on their experiences and their rights, and to think critically. Communication technology such as the Internet, mobile phones, SMS, as well as mobile phone cameras and digital cameras, have provided the means to disseminate information rapidly to other islands within the country and internationally, in secret. Raised political consciousness has made people more critical of government practices and information technology has provided the necessary tool to challenge dominant social representations and to organize a protest in Male'. Saunders, in discussing the role of the press in post-apartheid South Africa states:

One of the pillars of democracy in any country is information and its effective distribution. Without reliable and balanced information about what happens in government and society, it is difficult if not impossible for people to participate in the running of their country (1999: 1).

The Internet, mobile phones, SMS and photography are communication mediums used to expose the truth and disseminate information that are adapted to the power structure in the Maldives. Similar to the way in which print allowed for the 'imagining' of the nation (Anderson, 1991), wireless communication and the internet have enabled a group of people to create a sense of connectedness, community and shared ideological representations.

Promoting technological advancement has been a double-edged sword for state control. On the one hand technology has helped the government spy on civilians (through bugging systems in public venues such as restaurants and cafés, by hiring informers, tapping phone lines, and monitoring electronic mail and the local chat room, *Kotari*). On the other hand the people have put a new spin on the notion of "public secrets" by using wireless communication and the Internet to reach the public, in secret. A powerful example of this is the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), a rival, cyber political party that is not recognized by the Maldivian government and is based in England where founding members are now in exile. Members are just a click away from joining the MDP and are assured autonomy, their membership being both public and a secret.

Exposing Hassan and Clinton's bodies unleashed a chain of events that led to the confrontation of many public secrets. The exposure of their tortured bodies unambiguously expressed the stark reality of penal tactics and obliterated any space for propaganda. The families' intention was to make it *real* by making it public, to challenge the government's attempt to cover-up their murders. Although people were aware of the torture that went on in prison and other covered-up realities, the true source of death was never explicit, and often made to seem "accidental" or "suicidal." Reynolds (1995) describes how in South Africa the killing of inmates

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by prison guards were often meant to look like suicides and bed sheets would be tied around the necks of prisoners.

The exposure of Hassan and Clinton's bodies should not be seen as an isolated event responsible for the protest. It was rather the trigger. Less than a year prior to September 20th another adolescent boy was killed in prison and the president delivered a speech promising that it would never happen again. Hassan and Clinton's murders and subsequent public exposures confronted the reality of the system, rendering government propaganda no longer tenable.

In Dhivehi there is an expression, "*Aiy nulaa adhdho kiyurvun*" which loosely translates to "hands without ouch saying."[79] In other words the expression means to cause pain, "ouch" without touching, through words and innuendos. This expression is significant when discussing the forms of resistance occurring in Male'. It is indirectly and ideologically that corrupt government practices are being contested, through satire, irony, innuendos and humor, covert ways that can be nonetheless effective in creating instability in dominant discourses. The formation of a cyber opposition party, the use of communication technology to disseminate information, filmmaking and political t-shirt making represent some of the ways people have found to resist the government based on what is available to them. Instances where expressions of resistance were ambiguously stated, as with the political t-shirts, exemplify the careful mediation of political expression within this political context. In other instances, such as with hakuru and the riots, resistance manifested in ambivalent, risky and self-destructive ways. These examples reflect the interaction between social changes and the censorship of expression. Youths cannot be exposed to an era of new ideas yet deprived of the right to express. With limited forums for expression, ambiguous or ambivalent acts of resistance comprise the ways some youths have negotiated to express themselves.

The exposure of Hassan and Clinton's bodies, political t-shirt making, filmmaking and the formation of a cyber opposition party could be described as examples of "*Aiy nulaa adhdho kiyurvun.*" Additionally, the drug problem, also a public secret, was made manifest publicly

through the body with many adolescents and youths being high on drugs while protesting. These acts delegitimized official discourses and challenged public secrets, by making the private, public, by indirectly and explicitly making manifest through the body the drug problem and its relation to oppression and political corruption.

These expressive outlets are discussed as forms of resistance based on informants' interpretations of their actions. Some may argue that these actions are not empowering but rather redolent of their powerlessness. Others may posit that by taking drugs youths are recreating themselves as an underclass. Such perspectives fall into the CCCS's interpretations of ambivalent, self-destructive forms of resistance as ultimately futile. This thesis demonstrates that resistance can on some days manifest as indifference or compliance, and on other days lead to overt challenges to the system. For example, youths belonging to a hakuru subcultural group destroyed government files and computers in the police stations and high court during the riots, challenging the panoptic view of the state. Their subsequent effort to stage a coup also demonstrates the potentially far-reaching consequences of small ambivalent acts of resistance. Furthermore, since the riots, opposition parties like the MDP, the Wahhabis (Islamic extremists), and underground business organizations have become more organized and have put increasing pressure on the government to decentralize power.

A broad perspective of resistance that recognizes its interactions with national and international political economies can help to identify new risks affecting youths.[80] Part of that risk assessment includes paying greater attention to acts of resistance that are self destructive, and attempting to understand how they relate to national and international discourses.

Afihun: Refers to opium, a resin collected from poppies.

Atoll: A ring of coral reefs and/or coral islands surrounding a lagoon. Derived from the Dhivehi word Atollon.

Badi: Recent slang word that refers to promiscuous women that are *easy*. Literally means bullet, meaning a girl who fires several rounds. Also the word bullet refers to a capsule filled with hakuru that costs about 5 thousand Rufiyaa (over 400 USD).

Bhang, Bangu: Marijuana.

Bileiy: A leaf from the betel tree. After dinner many Maldivians chew a combination of Foah (areca nut), cloves, cinnamon stick and lime paste wrapped in bileiy.

Breadfruit tree: Breadfruit grows locally and is a staple in the Maldivian diet. Some youths smoke the roots of the breadfruit tree, which creates a very strong pungent burning sensation and intoxicates them.

Brown Sugar: Impure heroin is further adulterated with "Minikashi" or dried human bones or sawdust.

Buruqaa: A scarf worn by women and female children that covers the hair completely.

Charas: Hashish, a derivative of marijuana.

Chasing: Smoking hakuru or hashish oil on a piece of tin foil.

Cola Water: Eau de cologne with varying alcohol content (up to 70 percent or more). Refers to a brand of cologne that is called "cola" from which alcohol is distilled and either mixed with soft drinks, coconut juice or fresh fruit juice or swallowed straight.

Dhevi: A word originating from Sanskrit and Pali for supernatural beings. Maldivians use the word *jinni* to describe the dhevi.

Dhiraagu: The telecommunications server to the Maldives, jointly owned by the government and the British company Cable & Wireless.

Dhivehi: The language of the Maldives, an Indo-Aryan language most closely related to an early form of Sinhala that incorporates elements of Arabic and Persian, evident in the local script, *Thaana*.

Dho: often follows a statement for affirmation from the listener, similar to "eh" in Canada.

Dooni: A traditional family fishing boat that has a tall, curved prow at the front where a man stands when traveling in shallow water to spot the reefs and direct the skipper. The dooni has been modified in shape and size for use as an ocean freighter, delivery truck, local ferry, inter-atoll cruiser, dive boat, tourist excursion boat, live-abroad safari yacht and mini-fuel tanker. Formerly sail powered, many are now equipped with a diesel engine.

Dunlop: Refers to a brand of glue that is either sniffed or chewed. Some youths stated that chewing "Dunlop" glue with dried coconut gave a quicker high then sniffing.

Fanditha man: Local healer that uses potions and charms to call on sprits to resolve the personal problems of his clients. Using prayers from the Qur'an the fanditha man also exorcises the spirits possessing an individual by identifying the religion of the spirit and converting it to Islam.

Fith'r Eid Day: Celebrates the sighting of the new moon that marks the end of Ramadan. Known as Kuda (Dhivehi word for 'small') Eid, this is traditionally a day of feasting and relaxation.

Fushi: The Dhivehi word for "island."

Garudhia: A soup made by boiling tuna fish and salt that is a staple in the Maldivian diet.

Hadd al-zinaa: The punishment for females guilty of having pre-marital sex as prescribed under Shari'ah law. The punishment includes public lashes and banishment as well as the social consequences for bringing disgrace to her family.

Hakuru: the Dhivehi word for "sugar" but also signifies a low-grade form of heroin that is not refined and locally available.

Hawitta: ancient mounds found in the central and southern atolls that are the remnants of sun-worshipping temples built by the *Redin.*

Hedhikaa: "Short eats," the little sweet and savory snacks displayed on the counters of local teashops.

Jinni: In Islam these form a third group of created beings, the other two groups being humans and angels. Many Maldivians believe these spirits live all around them and can exert supernatural influences on their everyday lives. Maldivians that believe in jinnis do not see this as conflicting with their beliefs in Islam.

Joalifathi: Hammock-like chairs found either within or outside house compounds as well as in shady areas of beaches on some local islands.

Kili: a sweet tasting mixture of spices and sometimes tobacco wrapped tightly in a paper cone, a common habit after eating a meal.

Maldives: Initially called *Mahal Deeb. Deeb* derives from *dvip*, the word for island in Sanskrit. The name later became *Mahila Dvipika, Mahal Dvip, Maal Dip* (after the Portuguese incursion), and *Maldiva*, after the British. *Mala* is the Sanskrit word for garland, and refers to the geographical positioning of the islands, which form a double helix shape resembling a garland.

Minikashi: Exhumed dried human bones.

Oshani: A locally available medicinal herb that grows wild in the islands and is used to get intoxicated. The small oshani fresh fruit is mixed with fresh fruit juices and swallowed or is cooked in rice porridge and eaten.

Public secrets: Defined by one key informant as social issues that everybody knows about but that are politically taboo to discuss. Public secrets relate to most aspects of society, including aspects of the country's history, government corruption, premarital sex, literacy levels, prostitution, drugs, domestic violence and child abuse.

Rajjethere: Means "inside islands." When Maldivians speak of "the islands" or "the Atolls" they are referring to the Rajjethere islands, and not Male'. Locals from Male' often perceive the people from Rajjethere islands as backward and refer to them derogatorily as Rajjethere, an offensive term similar to "Indian" and signifying someone from a fisherman's family. Many locals from Male' also find it more desirable to date or marry women from Rajjethere islands that are not exposed to city life and are more faithful, staying at home most of the time and not gallivanting about.

Ramazan: The Dhivehi word for the Muslim holiday, Ramadan. Ramadan is the month of fasting observed by Muslims. Fasting is the fourth pillar of Islam and abstinence from food, water, cigarettes and sex from sunrise to sunset is expected.

Redin: Ancient race of sun-worshipping people that are the earliest recorded inhabitants of the Maldives.

Rihakuru: A highly nutritious fish paste made from tuna fish. The tuna is boiled in water with salt to make *garudhiya*, and then boiled until the garudhiya is reduced to a salty paste.

Roshi: Flat, unleavened bread.

Shelvar Kameez: An outfit worn by both Hindi and Muslim women and female children that consists of a dress that reaches the knees and is worn over pants, with a scarf draped over the shoulders and usually covering the breasts.

Songul: The Dhivehi word for conch shell, traditionally used to announce island gatherings.

Stupa: Buddhist dome-shaped mounds that now resemble small hills of coral rubble and are found on various local islands, at times built on top of *hawittas* that were built by the *Redin*.

Undhoali: Traditional swing often found inside Maldivian households, which fits roughly three people sitting, and is also used by some individuals as a bed. It consists of a rectangular, wooden board covered in material with pillows on top, suspended from the ceiling. It is common to enter a home and see elders and family or friends chatting and swinging gently.

List of Acronyms

FASHAN: Foundation for the Advancement of Self Help in Attaining Needs.
LDC: Least Developed Country.
MDP: Maldivian Democratic Party.
NCB: Narcotics Control Board.
NSS: National Security Service.
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Fund
URC: Unit for the Rights of the Child.

Appendix 1: List of interviews

Respondent	Location	Time	Date
HR: 1: 1	TV room, Male'	13:00-14:00	21/08/03
NR: 1: 2	Balcony, Male'	14:30-16:00	23/08/03
MR: 1: 3	Cyber café, Male'	9:00-10:00	25/08/03
Ms: 1: 4	Kitchen, Male'	14:30-18:30	30/08/03
SR: 1: 5	TV room, Male'	15:30-16:15	31/08/03
I: 1: 6	Women's Ministry, Male'	11:00-12:30	02/09/03
V: 1: 7	Kaashidhoo guest house kitchen	19:30-20:15	04/09/03

HR: 2: 8	On Dooni ride to Vilufushi	9:00-11:00	05/09/03
F: 1: 9	Health center Vilufushi	16:45-18:00	05/09/03
Z: 1: 10	Health center Vilufushi	20:00-21:10	05/09/03
R: 1: 11	Health center Vilufushi	22:00-23:00	05/09/03
Nm: 1: 12	Health center Vilufushi	10:00-12:00	06/09/03
R: 2: 13	Her bedroom, Vilufushi	18:30-20:00	06/09/03
Nz: 1: 14	Her bedroom, Vilufushi	21:00-23:00	06/09/03
F: 3: 15	Prayer room in health center, Vilufushi	10:00-12:00	08/09/03
HR: 3: 16	Guest house, Kahdhoo	17:00-19:00	09/09/03
Ms: 2: 17	My bedroom, Male'	20:00-23:00	10/09/03
Ms: 3: 18	My bedroom, Male'	19:00-21:00	12/09/03
HR: 4: 19	Kitchen, Male'	12:00-14:30	14/09/03
A: 1: 20	My bedroom, Male'	20:00-23:00	16/09/03
Is: 1: 21	Movenpick café, Male'	17:00-19:00	18/09/03
HR: 5: 22	TV room, Male'	19:00-20:00	20/09/03
K: 1: 23	TV room, Male'	23:00-24:00	20/09/03
D: 1: 24	TV room, Male'	1:00-2:00	20/09/03
HR: 6: 25	Office in her apartment, Male'	14:00-16:00	23/09/03
Ht: 1: 26	My bedroom, Male'	22:30-24:20	25/09/03
Fl: 1: 27	His office at IGMH (hospital), Male'	9:00 10:00	27/09/03
A: 2: 28	My bedroom in Male'	21:00-23:30	28/09/03
HR: 7: 29	Office in her apartment, Male'	14:30-17:00	30/09/03
B: 1: 30	TV room, Male'	24:15-2:20	07/10/03
W: 1: 31	Her bedroom, Male'	21:30-24:30	09/10/03
T: 1: 32	Kitchen, Male'	14:00-15:00	14/10/03
HR: 8: 33	Office in her apartment, Male'	13:30-15:00	15/10/03
T: 2: 34	Kitchen, Male'	18:00-19:30	16/10/03
D: 2: 35	Her bedroom, Male'	10:00-12:00	27/11/03

B: 2: 36	TV room, Male'	23:30-1:00	30/11/03
G: 1: 37	Bedroom, Male'	1:00-1:30	01/12/03
D: 3: 38	Bedroom, Male'	16:00-18:00	02/12/03
K: 2: 39	Bedroom, Male'	20:00-23:00	03/12/03
NM: 1:40	Linguistic center	13:30-14:30	05/12/03
Mr: 1: 41	Bedroom, Male'	20:00-22:00	05/12/03
AF: 1: 42	URC, Women's Ministry, Male'	10:00-11:30	06/12/03
SH: 1: 43	Office, Dive Center, Male'	11:00-13:00	10/12/03
Bs: 1: 44	West park Café, Male'	11:45-13:30	12/12/03
Mr: 2: 45	Bedroom, Male'	20:00-21:00	12/12/03
Nh: 1: 46	Islaahiyya Reformatory, Maafushi	13:00-15:30	16/12/03
K: 3: 47	Dooni ride from Maafushi to Male'	15:30-18:00	16/12/03
S: 1: 48	Outside, artificial beach, Male'	16:00-17:15	18/12/03
Ns: 1: 49	Esjehi Café, Male'	14:00-16:30	20/12/03
As: 1: 50	Conference room, Youth Ministry, Male'	13:30-14:30	23/12/03
Ah: 1: 51	Conference room, Youth Ministry, Male'	14:30-16:00	23/12/03
GI: 1: 52	Recreation area, Youth Center	21:00-23:30	26/12/03
T: 3: 53	Living room, Sri Lanka	23:30-1:00	28/12/03
An: 1: 54	Patio, Sri Lanka	19:30-21:00	04/01/04
M: 1: 55	Living room, Sri Lanka	21:30-23:15	04/01/04
Ak: 1: 56	Rooftop, Male'	13:00-16:00	06/01/04

Appendix 2: Photography Assignment:

Take photos according to the following themes and provide a short explanation of why you took each one.

Themes:

1-5:   Things that reflect you, your identity, how you see yourself.
6-10:   Things that reflect your role within society.
11-15:   Things that make you feel free.
16-20:   Things that make you feel trapped or restricted.
21-25:   Your future dreams

[1] Interview Bs: 1: 43. Department of Tourism (1983) *Maldives A Nation of Islands*, Male': Media Transasia Ltd., 26. Gayoom made a policy statement to the Majilis in February 1979, were he committed himself to a more open and democratic government, and greater freedom of the press.

[2] For example the nepotism of the government and island chiefs, the embezzlement of funds drawn from foreign aid and the country's budget and the unlawful arrest of political reformists. An example frequently mentioned is the President's brother-in-law, Illias, who while occupying a post as Minister of Defense embezzled large sums of money and fled to Malaysia, only later to return and be named Minister of Transport. It is argued by some that the president only gave the people freedom of expression for the brief four-month period so that Ilias' corruption would be revealed as the president felt threatened that his brother-in-law might replace him as president. Others argued that it was a trick and that Gayoom never intended to free up expression but used this strategy to identify political reformists who were then imprisoned or banished.

[3] Gayoom was inaugurated as president of the Maldives in 1978 and was unsurprisingly re-'elected' in October 2003 with over 90% of the vote, beginning his sixth five-year term. Gayoom is now Asia's longest-serving "elected" leader.

[4] The education system in the Maldives is divided into primary, middle, lower secondary (grades 8-10) and upper secondary (grades 11-12). Lower secondary education is available in some Atoll Education Centers (AEC's) and Atoll Schools (AS's), as well as in two regional secondary schools located in the North and South.

[5] Husna Razee, *Gender and Development in the Maldives: A Review of Twenty Years 1979-1999* (Male': UN Theme Group on Gender, 2000), p. 22.

[6] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 9-10.

[7] Ibid.

[8] In some cases the opposite occurs and processes of change and acculturation are overemphasized. In either case a balanced perspective is often lacking and the agency of youths dismissed. For a full outlining of these critiques see edited volumes by Amit-Talai, Vered and Helena Wulff (1995) *Youth Cultures: a cross-cultural perspective*, or Skelton, Tracy and Gill Valentine (1998) *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Culture*.

[9] At this time the southern atolls, Gaaf Daal and Addu, attempted to form a separate government. In response the president at the time, Ibrahim Nasir sent a convoy of police officers to Thinadhoo and several islanders were instantly shot while many others died of their injuries while in prison. Locals were ordered to evacuate the island within a day or two and all that remained on the island was burned down.

[10] FASHAN stands for Foundation For the Advancement of Self Help in Attaining Needs. The areas addressed by this NGO include drug abuse, HIV awareness and gender equity.

[11] National Planning Agency (1980) *Report on The Survey of Island Women Republic of Maldives 1979*, 15.

[12] This testimony was given to an MDP (Maldivian Democratic Party) representative to publish in their bi-weekly newsletter. The statement was written while the prisoner was recovering from his injuries from the Maafushi prison uprising in a hospital in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

[13] Loosely translated by an informant as "beat them up and throw them out!"

[14] Ministry of Planning & UNDP, *Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment 1998*, 100.

[15] UNDP (1999) *Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment 1998*, 3. The total number of islands is constantly changing as islands disappear and new islands form. Because of the coral foundation the islands are flat, the highest points rarely exceeding six feet above sea level. Protecting the islands from the elements are atoll reefs.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ministry of Planning and Development, *Maldives 2000 The Official Year Book of the Republic of Maldives*, 7.

[18] Helen Seidler (1980), *Report on The Survey of Island Women Republic of Maldives 1979*, 11.
[19] Ministry of Planning and Development, *Maldives 2000 The Official Year Book of the Republic of Maldives*, 7.

[20] UNDP (1999) Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment 1998, 3.

[21] Ministry of Planning and Development, *Maldives 2000 The Official Year Book of the Republic of Maldives*, 7.

[22] Ahmed Niyaz (2002) *Tourism in the Maldives*, 1.
[23] Rajjethere include all the rural islands that are undeveloped and where life continues in a more-or-less traditional way. Rajjethere is a term also used to refer to the locals of these islands, often carrying derogatory undertones of "primitiveness."
[24] Ahmed Niyaz, (2002) *Tourism in the Maldives*, 1.
[25] UNDP (1999) *Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment 1998*, 3.
[26] Naseema Mohamed, *Pre-Islamic Maldives*, 109.

[27] Heyerdahl (1983), while during archeological excavations on various islands, observed that most mosques in the country face the sun, rather than Mecca. These mosques are built on the stylized stone foundations of ancient sun worshipping temples. In some of the oldest mosques in the country diagonal lines are drawn on the floor to indicate the direction in which people should pray, kneeling diagonally to the rear wall (1983: 132-3).
[28] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui (1985), *Maldives: winds of change in an atoll state*, 10.

[29] The Maldives remained relatively isolated as sailors preferred to avoid navigating in the waters with the strong currents and innumerable coral reefs responsible for many shipwrecks. In fact, it was while shipwrecked from 1502-1507 that the first westerner wrote the history of the Maldives, a Frenchman by the name of Pyrard, and HCP Bell in the 19th century whose book is the most referred to historical work on the Maldives. These are among the limited historical accounts of the country. The Portuguese arrived in the sixteenth century and staged a coup in 1558, killing Sultan Ali V1 and taking over the country for fifteen years until they were defeated by Mohammed Thakurufaan. In the seventeenth century the Maldives came under the protection of first the Dutch and later the British, although neither developed a colonial administration. In the 1860s, Borah merchants from Bombay came to dominate foreign trade in Male', causing the Sultan to retaliate by signing an agreement with the British in 1867 that confirmed the island's independence, turned the Maldives into a British protectorate, and allowed the British to set up defense facilities. For a more detailed description of the country's history see Phadnis and Luithui (1985).

[30] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui (1985), *Maldives: winds of change in an atoll state*, 4-5. However, spoken Dhivehi has regional variations in different atolls.
[31] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: winds of change in an atoll state*, 10.
[32] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: winds of change in an atoll state*, 11.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: winds of Change in an Atoll State*, 22. For example at the time of adoption of the first constitution of 1932, in the cabinet Amin Muhammad Farid Didi was Prime Minister, his brother was Minister of Finance and Foreign affairs, his cousin's son was the Minister of Commerce, brother-in-law the Minister of Justice, his uncle was the Minister of Home Affairs and of Education, and the list goes on. After the adoption of the third constitution, Amin Didi became the president, the Chief Minister, Minister for Home and External Affairs, Commerce and Public Safety, Finance and Education and leader of the Majilis (parliament).
[35] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: winds of Change in an Atoll State*, 21.
[36] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: winds of Change in an Atoll State*, 22. Letter of R.E. Stubbs, Governor of Ceylon to Sir Philip Cunliffe Lister, Secretary of State, dated May 1, 1934, Confidential, CO 54/921/8, 34243/1934.

[37] All laws are based on Islamic Shari'ah, and personal laws, such as family and inheritance laws are governed exclusively by Shari'ah Law, while others are enacted by parliament. Laws and legal processes are based on Islamic law with aspects of English common law that are enmeshed mostly in commercial matters. The minimum voting age is 21 years of age and all citizens, except police officers, can vote. Various courts under the Ministry of Justice and the High Court of the Maldives carry out the administration of justice, and there are courts located on each inhabited island. (Ahmed, *CEDAW Report: Achievements & Challenges In The Maldives*, 19).

[38] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: winds of Change in an Atoll State*, 26.

[39] Urmila Phadnis & Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: winds of Change in an Atoll State*, 30-1.

[40] Aneesa Ahmed, *CEDAW Report: Achievements & Challenges In The Maldives*, 20.

[41]. Ibid.

High fertility rates are largely responsible for the high birth rate. Completed fertility was at six to seven children per woman from 1985 until 1990. Young women in the twenty to twenty-four age group had an average of seven or eight children by the time they were 45 to 49 years old. Census data for 1995 revealed that by the age of thirty-nine women had an average of 6.15 children from which 5.28 survived (Razee, 2000: 9).

[42] The Maldives have high rates of marriage, remarriage and divorce as a result of early marriage practices and easy divorce procedures among other factors. Ahmed (2001) informs that the Maldives have one of the highest divorce rates in the world. She elaborates that it is easier for men to ask for divorce although the new family law gives women the freedom to set conditions in prenuptial agreements that can restrict men☐s privilege to divorce or enter in polygamous unions (2001: 14). Women can file for divorce on the grounds of battery, assault or on the basis of prolonged absence of the husband (i.e. six months without contact or knowledge of his whereabouts) but obstacles such as forensic evidence, photographs and medical reports being inadmissible in court make such accusations difficult to prove (Ahmed, 2001: 15). Between 1977 and 1981, the crude divorce rate doubled from twelve to thirteen per 1000 people, to twenty-five, with a higher concentration in Male' (Razee, 2000: 12). In 1998, a sum of 2195 marriages and 1546 divorces were registered in Male☐, proportionally translating to seventy divorces per 100 marriages (ibid).

[43] *CIA-The World Factbook, 2002: Maldives* [document on-line] (March 2003); available from http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mv.html#issues; Internet.

In the early phase of tourism, Maniku, one of the local entrepreneurs comments, "We had nothing in the Maldives then, nothing. No banks, no airport, no telephones, only ham radio or Morse code with Colombo." (Niyaz, 2002: 14).

Ham station and some pilots sent messages to Colombo to make travel arrangements for tourists traveling from Sri Lanka to the Maldives. Walkie-talkies were used to communicate from the islands.

Communication technology improved in 1977 when the British company, *Cable and Wireless*, established a telecommunications service, linking Male' to remote islands. Later the company entered into a joint venture with the Maldivian government and began upgrading and development in 1980. For more information on the development of telecommunications see Ahmed Niyaz (2002), *Tourism in the Maldives*, 43.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ahmed Niyaz (2002), *Tourism in the Maldives*, 43-4.

During the 1970s and early 1980s backpackers and hippies frequently stayed in these low budget guesthouses, providing a good proportion of the incomes of certain Rajjethere islands.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] UNDP (1999) *Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment 1998*, 3.

[49] UNDP (1999) *Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment 1998*, 3, 93.

The life expectancy for the country is estimated at 62 years, and in the atolls, 60 years, with individual atolls falling between 52 years (Raa) and 69 years (Addhu).

[50] Ibid.

However, the criteria in the assessment of literacy can lead to misleading figures, with a differentiation between functional literacy, and literacy. The report explains that literacy levels are assessed based on

ability to recite basic texts, and functional literacy levels, meaning comprehension of the text, are in fact lower (UNDP, 1999: 73).

[51] UNDP (1999) *Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment 1998*, 91-2.

[52] UNDP (1999) *Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment 1998*, 8.

[53] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives* (2003), 11).

[54] The IWC is usually comprised of twenty people within one atoll, working out to roughly five people per island. I recall an interview with a representative of the Women's Ministry, where she criticized how the women in the IWC are not following the Women's ministry's mandate by doing stereotypical work like cleaning the island or garbage disposal, defeating the purpose of the committees, which is to achieve greater autonomy and encourage community development. She conceded that while the establishment of IWC's is a progressive step in that it emphasizes women's participation in development (previously IDC's, Island Development Committees were comprised of only men), the women do not speak of their problems, the challenges they face nor do they raise their opinions. The IWC in Vilufushi is considered strong in comparison with other islands. She commented, "the women's ministry is trying to encourage women to talk and not simply answer the "right answers" that the government would want to hear" (I: 1: 3).

[55] Helen Seidler (1980), *Report on The Survey of Island Women Republic of Maldives 1979*, 18.

[56] Female youths do not normally fish although some continue the traditional task of drying fish. Female youths are responsible for preparing food, caring for the younger children in the household and cleaning. Some may also work in administrative positions in addition to these domestic tasks.

[57] UNICEF (2000), *Young People In Changing Societies*, 94.

[58] Ministry of Youth and Sports (2003), *Male' Youth Employment Survey Report 2003*, 6.

[59] Ibid.

[60] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 105. FASHAN stands for Foundation For the Advancement of Self Help in Attaining Needs, and aims to increase awareness of drugs, gender equity, and HIV/Aids.

[61] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 29. "Cola water" is Alcohol that is distilled from products like cologne.

[62] The FASHAN, NCB & UNDP results should be taken as indicating patterns to show the gravity of the drug problem and the public secrets obscuring it, rather than as offering statistical fact.

[63] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 69.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 64.

[67] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2002) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 103.

[68] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 49.

[69] Ministry of Youth and Sports, *Maldives National Youth Policy 2003*, 16.
(Young people in these figures refers to youth under the age of 35 years old).

[70] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 14.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Out of the 200 people interviewed with regard to family drug use 88 (44 percent) reported drug use by a family member. Most respondents (98 percent) stated that they had friends that abused drugs, half of whom had ten friends or more struggling with addictions.

[73] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 13.

[74] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 18.

[75] FASHAN, NCB, UNDP (2003) *Rapid Situation Assessment of Drug Abuse in Maldives Report*, 17.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Taken from article http://207.148.237.92/news/heroinonthebeach.html, context of the article is heroin shipment that washed up on the shores, local children in Vilingili found it first and allegedly took significant amount.

[78] The significance of wearing the color red was to symbolize passion and rage, as well as the blood on the hands of the President.

[79] Interview (HR: 7: 29)

[80] Sharon Stephens (1995) *Introduction: Children and the Politics of Culture in "Late Capitalism"*, 8.

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