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I Am What I Say I Am: Racial and Cultural Identity among Creoles of Color in New Orleans

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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in
History

by

Nikki Dugar

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This project is dedicated to the Creole of Color community.

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Abstract

This paper examines the generational changes in the culture and racial self-identification of Creoles of Color of New Orleans. This study argues that the key to understanding Creole culture is the role that isolationism has played in its history. While White ethnics pursued a path of assimilation, Creoles of Color pursued a path of isolationism. This path served them well during the Jim Crow era, but it suddenly became undesirable during the Black Power era. Now, however, new values of multiculturalism have resurrected Creole identity as a cultural asset.

Keywords: Creoles of Color, racial identity, generations, isolationism

The Pot Calls The Coffee Pot…

Hey, Cajun
and you, Creole,
how come you call yourself
white or black? Who gave you these names?
We are descendants of the French, the Spanish,
the Africans, the Indian, the Acadian, the Haitain, and
all the other Gombo People who came to
Louisiana. These spices made the Gombo.
Our rich culture serves as our common bond.
We are of the same paprika blood, and that
blood connects us with the world.
If racists want to stick paper stars on our
skins to tell us what we are, let them
boil in hell with their foolishness.
We are the Louisiana French, proud of
the French and African heritage. We are
European, African, Asian, and American.
Cajun, Creole. Let us dare to say it.
And all the worst for those who do not like
what we are. How long can they look at us and tell
us we do not exist?
But my friend, do not throw away the spice
because it is too light or too dark.
If you do that you will not have Gombo
ever again, but a foul melted stew made up of
the denied flesh of our ancestors,
your grandmother, your grandfather, your mother,
your father, your sister, your brother,
your aunt, your uncle, your cousin, your niece,
your nephew, your children, or
yourself.[1]

[1] Sybil Kein, *Gumbo People* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, Inc., 1981), 31.

Introduction

"I'm too white to be black and too black to be white," remarked Ronald Ricard, a New Orleans Creole of Color, in an interview in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* in 1977.[2] Ricard was expressing a sentiment that many Creoles of Color continue to have about themselves. The feeling of not quite belonging to one race or the other has been an issue for many since the antebellum period. Since that time, the Creole community has gone through many political and social changes, which have affected not only the community's structure but also ideas about its racial identity. This study will focus particularly on three generations of Creoles: those who came of age before World War II, here called "Traditional Creoles" (born during the colonial period up to the 1930s); those who matured in the post war years, designated "Civil Rights Creoles" (born between 1940s and 1960s); and "Contemporary Creoles" (born in the 1970s to present day). In comparing these pre- and post-war groups, this study will explore how generational differences exist in how Creoles racially identify themselves.

To complicate matters further, Contemporary Creoles do not share a monolithic racial identity, for older and younger members of this category view certain issues very differently. This is to be expected, because identity is a constantly evolving phenomenon influenced by many external factors. Rather than gloss over their differences, this study will examine them closely in search of trends and patterns that will illuminate the entire history of Creoles of Color in New Orleans.

Primary sources used in this study include newspaper and magazine articles, maps, census data, and interviews conducted by the author. The latter were comprised of written

[2] J.E. Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community," *Times-Picayune*, August 14, 1977, Sybil Kein Creole Collection (MSS 334), Louisiana and Special Collections Department, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

questionnaires and follow-up oral interviews administered between Spring 2008 and Spring 2009. The sixteen interviewees were Creoles of Color, meaning people of mixed French-, African-, Spanish-, and Native-American ancestry, most of whom reside in or have familial ties to Louisiana. On the questionnaires, respondents supplied background information on themselves and family members including name, age, gender, current and previous neighborhood residences, and schools attended. They were then asked their opinions regarding Creoles of Color in New Orleans: what traits define the group, what racial and cultural differences separate Creoles from other African Americans, and what racial identity they and their families claim. After completing the questionnaires, participants were invited to contribute additional details, stories, and comments. These interviews, combined with other primary materials noted above, constitute the core of this research endeavor.

An array of secondary sources also informs this study. Secondary sources include works that examine the development of Creole culture. Sources on New Orleans history are used to place the different generations of Creoles within a historical context. Sources on multiculturalism, American popular culture, and Whiteness studies were also used to discuss the generations of Contemporary Creoles.

On the basis of the aforementioned primary and secondary sources, this study argues that the key to understanding Creole culture is the role that isolationism has played in its history. While White ethnics pursued a path of assimilation, Creoles of Color pursued a path of isolationism. This path served them well during the Jim Crow era, but it suddenly became undesirable during the Black Power era. Now, however, new values of multiculturalism have resurrected Creole identity as a cultural asset.

Historiography

Scholarship on Creoles of Color has progressed in recent years. Discussion of Creoles has come a long way from the very romantic, monolithic portrayal of them in Roldolphe Desdunes' 1908 work, *Nos homes et notre histoire* (Our People and Our History), in which Desdunes pays tribute to the community by highlighting its accomplishments and favorably contrasting it with the Anglo-African community.[3]

Kimberly Hanger's *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* examines New Orleans free blacks, whom she refers to as *libres*, during the Spanish colonial era. She states that examining the libres in New Orleans during the colonial period is very important because it was under Spanish rule that skilled free Black workers in New Orleans had the most rights and opportunities. Spanish laws, the demographics of the city, and Spanish views on race all allowed for New Orleans free Blacks to prosper more than in most slave-holding communities.[4]

In her book *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862*, Judith K. Schafer examines how free people of color's fight for equal rights became harder under American rule. She shows how slaves and free people of color used the New Orleans judicial system to "gain, maintain, or surrender their freedom." After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, life for slaves and free people of color changed dramatically. American laws proved to be more restrictive and oppressive than Spanish laws. Free people of color continually worked to preserve their status.[5]

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[3] Rodolphe Desdunes, *Our People and Our History*, 1908, trans. and ed. Sister Dorothea Olga McCants (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).
[4] Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 3-4, 6, 11, 90, 105, 15-16, 95-97.
[5] Judith K. Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), xxii, 3.

Caryn Cossé Bell's *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868* provides many examples of how free people of color in Louisiana worked to preserve their rights and freedoms. In her book, Bell attempts to show how the revolutionary ideas of France and the United States helped to foster a biracial protest tradition in postwar Louisiana. She argues that the "driving force" behind this movement was "the most politicized and articulate free black community in the South, the French-speaking black Creoles of New Orleans."[6] The traditions and customs of this free Black community have piqued the interest of many scholars.

Scholars have shown growing interest in the study of Creoles of Color of New Orleans, especially in exploring Quadroon Balls and plaçage relationships. Quadroon Balls were elegant social events that were attended by upper-class White men and free quadroon women.[7] Two recent works examine this intriguing New Orleans practice: Monique Guillory's dissertation, *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls*, and Noël Voltz's thesis, *Black Female Agency and Sexual Exploitation: Quadroon Balls and Plaçage Relationships*. In his thesis, Voltz examines how many free quadroon, Creole women used Quadroon Balls and plaçage relationships "to become active agents in their quest towards social mobility." They used their "sexuality as a means of gaining social standing, protection, and money." At these balls, "interracial sexual liaisons" were established "in exchange

[6] Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana, 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 8, 2.
[7] In 1724, French law forbade marriage between French men and African women. Many French religious ignored the laws and performed the marriages anyway, favoring sacramental marriage over concubinage. Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 165.

for financial 'sponsorship'." These interracial relationships, known as plaçage, were similar to common law marriages.[8]

Guillory takes a different approach to examining the balls in *Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block*. She views them as "one small step from the slave market." She attempts to "historicize depictions of the New Orleans quadroon balls from an array of texts." She states that the balls "embody a unique historic moment of institutionalized race mixing and resonate with questions of identity, racial categories and classification which lie at the heart of the contemporary racial climate throughout the nation."[9] The use of these New Orleans practices to discuss questions of identity and racial categories represents a growing trend in scholarship on Creoles of Color.

Instead of solely focusing on Creole culture or early Creole history, many contemporary historians are beginning to explore generational questions of racial identity. Virginia R. Dominguez was one of the first historians to examine some of these themes. In her book *White By Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana*, Dominguez highlights the political and social events that played a part in the changing racial classification of Creoles of Color. She tackles the definition of "Creole" and describes how the term was defined and redefined before and after the Louisiana Purchase.[10] Historian Wendy Gaudin takes this a step further by examining the progression of this battle of identities through generations.[11]

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[8] Noël Voltz, "Black Female Agency and Sexual Exploitation: Quadroon Balls and Plaçage Relationships" (master's thesis, Ohio State University, 2008), 1, 20.
[9] Monique Guillory, "Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block: The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls" (PhD diss., New York University, 1999), ix-x.
[10] Virginia R. Dominguez, *White By Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 24, 134, 141-142, 146-147.
[11] Wendy Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints: Migration, Memory, and Modern Creole Identities" (PhD diss., New York University, 2005), viii.

In her dissertation *Autocrats and All Saints: Migration, Memory, and Modern Creole Identities*, Wendy Gaudin discusses how Creoles' "self-policed spaces, identities, and visions of the segregated past were vividly affected…by historical changes that occurred throughout the twentieth century." Focusing on the Civil Rights Creole generation, Gaudin argues against previously held notions that all Creoles share a monolithic culture and racial ideology. She states that throughout the Jim Crow years, an "ideological chasm" existed which divided Creoles into two basic groups. The first did not view themselves as different from other Blacks and did not necessarily live in Creole communities. The second group viewed themselves as very different from Anglo-African Americans and sought to distance themselves by establishing their own institutions and organizations. The latter group, whom Gaudin refers to as separatist Creoles, is the primary focus of her dissertation.[12]

Gaudin argues that the experiences of these segregation-era Creoles not only affected how they racially identified themselves, but also influenced the racial ideology of future generations of Creoles. She lists the many changes that contributed to the ideology of the Civil Rights Creoles: "the long process of desegregation, great out-migration, growing secularization and cultural changes within some colored Catholic Churches, the increasing political and occupational inclusion of black people into formerly 'white' spheres, changing marriage and child-rearing practices," the rhetoric of the Black Power Movement, and the "unmaking of Creole communities." These changes caused the Civil Rights Creoles, many of whom had separatist Creole parents, to develop a racial identity that was very different from previous generations of Creoles. Many of

[12] Ibid., 15.

them "adopted a new blackness, a new sense of belonging within a larger population of colored people," a sharing of common struggles and identities.[13]

The present study builds and expands upon Gaudin's groundbreaking research on contemporary generations of Creoles (most work on Creoles examines them during the colonial era up to the nineteenth century). Yet her work does not go far enough. Although the experiences of the segregation-era Creoles represent a highly significant component of her scholarship, the changes that have occurred since the 1970s are too vast and fascinating not to explore. Unlike Gaudin, this thesis will focus more on Contemporary Creoles and will include varying viewpoints, not just the separatist view.

This thesis is not a challenge to Gaudin's research, rather an expansion of it. It intends to give a more comprehensive examination of the generational changes in the way Creoles of Color of New Orleans racially identify themselves by showing how isolationism allowed for the survival and enrichment of Creole culture and how the new multicultural movement has now begun to challenge the way Creoles of Color racially identify themselves.

Early Debate

Debates surrounding what defines a "Creole" have been going on since the colonial period**.** It has been argued that the term "Creole" derives from the Portuguese word "crioulo," which generally meant native-born but which was usually used to describe a slave of African descent born in the New World. In contrast, "Creole" was also "used to designate a native Louisianian of pure white blood descended from those French and Spanish pioneers who came directly from Europe to colonize the New World." Another definition states that persons are Creole if they are native-born Louisianians.

[13] Ibid., 19, 16-17, 79.

This definition includes persons of any race.[14] Lastly, there is a definition of Creole that is used by Creoles of Color of New Orleans, a definition that has been defined and redefined by both Black Creoles and White Creoles.

A debate between Black and White Creoles on the definition of Creole emerged when the United States obtained New Orleans with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. When American Protestants began to arrive in New Orleans, they did not like what they saw. They did not like the very European, relaxed, and open atmosphere of the city. The Americans disapproved of the drinking, gambling, and festivals, like Mardi Gras, that went on in the city. These were things that were not in accordance with their Protestant way of life.[15] From the beginning, when New Orleans was a French colony, there was a great deal of intermingling of races. In early New Orleans, all the different races even lived amongst each other.[16] In their work patterns, sexual relationships, and racially mixed neighborhoods, all the races in New Orleans were in close contact with one another.[17]

When the United States obtained New Orleans, new settlers brought with them their Anglo-American views on race. Before the Americans entered New Orleans, White Creoles did not have a problem with being grouped along with the Creoles of Color. The Americans argued that White Creoles' willingness to be grouped along with Creoles of Color meant that they were admitting that they were mixed with African blood. The

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[14] Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., "Creoles and Americans," in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 132, 141.
[15] Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans 1850-1900," in *Creole New Orleans*, 236-237.
[16] Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, "Introduction," in *Creole New Orleans*, 198.
[17] Jerah Johnson, "Colonial New Orleans: A Fragment of the 18th Century French Ethos," in *Creole New Orleans*, 53.

Americans began using this as proof of White Creoles' unsuitability to govern.[18] Already losing their social, political, and economic control over the city due to the growing influx of Anglo-Americans, White Creoles could not afford to lose the little influence they had left by risking being associated with free people of color. By the 1840s, White Creoles began using a definition of Creole that excluded free people of color. Later, the Civil War helped to solidify this new definition of Creole.[19]

After the Civil War, the White Creoles lost what little power they had left in New Orleans. Many White Creoles made common cause with Anglos in order to suppress the growing influence of Blacks, both Creole and non-Creole. Some Creoles of Color were elected to office, but were no longer legally viewed as separate from other freed Blacks. Virginia Dominguez states that the "social identity of both was seriously in question." She argues that "the abolition of slavery, the polarization of north and south over the issue of slavery, the economic disarray of the immediate postbellum years, the enfranchisement of the numerically dominant colored population, and its recruitment into northern carpetbagger administrations all served to create racial polarization." As a result of this new environment, anti-American sentiment diminished and many White Creoles began to identify more with the Anglo-Americans. Both groups started to view the entire colored population as a common enemy and the White Creoles adopted the Anglo-Americans' white supremacist ideology. They began to publish books and articles and deliver speeches disproving the notion that White Creoles and Black Creoles were connected and that White Creoles had African ancestry. They redefined "Creole" and

[18] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture," in *Creole New Orleans*, 60.
[19] Dominguez, *White By Definition*, 125, 134.

created a definition that excluded free people of color.[20] The White Creoles were so committed to redefining Creole that in 1886 they established the Creole Association of Louisiana. They organized this association for the promotion of "Mutual Aid, Assistance, and Protection" of its members and to "disseminate knowledge concerning the true origin and real character…of the Creole race of Louisiana." Membership in the association was limited to "white persons of age and good standing."[21] This being said, the definition of Creole was not solidified by this decision.

Distinctly Creole

The debate over the definition of Creole continues today among Creoles of Color. Most contemporary Creoles would define themselves as a people of mixed French-, African-, Spanish-, and Native-American ancestry, most of whom reside in or have familial ties to Louisiana.[22] Some would also include practicing Catholicism as part of the definition. This is generally the standard definition used among Creoles of Color and it holds true across generational lines.[23] For many, being Creole is not just about racial ancestry; it is also about traditions and customs. Creoles like Tiffany Dugar believe that "Creole is a combination of the mixed ancestry and living the culture which includes specific foods, language and traditions." She goes on to say that "there are many people of mixed ancestry throughout the country and the world. However, the Creole culture is very specific. Without the element of the Creole traditions, someone is simply mixed."[24] Rachel Moore agrees, stating that a Creole is a "person of French or Spanish descent born

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[20] Ibid., 134, 136, 141.
[21] Tregle, "Creoles and Americans," in *Creole New Orleans*, 182.
[22] Louisiana Creole Heritage Center, "Definition of Creole," http://www.nsula.edu/creole (accessed December 1, 2007).
[23] Clifford Dugar, Tiffany Dugar, Rachel Moore, interviews by the author, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA and Houston, TX.
[24] Tiffany Dugar, interview by the author, February 11, 2008, questionnaire, Houston, TX.

in Louisiana that embraces the culture and history of the Creole people."[25] So, for many Creoles, it is not just racial ancestry that makes a person Creole, it also includes traditions and customs, a Creole way of life.

Creole neighborhoods and institutions play an important role in the construction of Creole identity. Ulysses Ricard, a Creole archivist, stated that the "standard life" of a Seventh Ward Creole "meant going to Corpus Christi Church (11 a.m. mass was frequented by the lightest skinned Creoles), grammar school at Corpus Christi or St. Peter Claver and high school at Xavier Prep Uptown or St. Augustine, after it opened in the 1950s. It meant shopping at the Circle supermarket, attending social functions at the Autocrat or Bon Temps. It meant patronizing banks and businesses within the neighborhood rather than outside it."[26] "Seventh Ward Creole" refers to the section of the city, the Seventh Ward, which was known as the "Creole section" of the city. That being said, this was not the only section of the city where Creoles resided.

In the early nineteenth century, Creoles lived in the original section of the city, which is the French Quarter area. By the end of the nineteenth century, they moved below and behind the French Quarter. They moved to the Faubourg Treme and Marigny sections of the city and farther into the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Wards. Both Figure 2 and Figure 3 map out the wards of the city where Creoles tended to reside, and Figure 3 specifically shows the movement of Creoles in New Orleans from 1800-2000.

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[25] Rachel Moore, interview by the author, February 13, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[26] Linda Easterlin, "Creoles of Color," *New Orleans Magazine*, December 1988, 53, Sybil Kein Collection (MSS 334), Louisiana and Special Collections Department, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

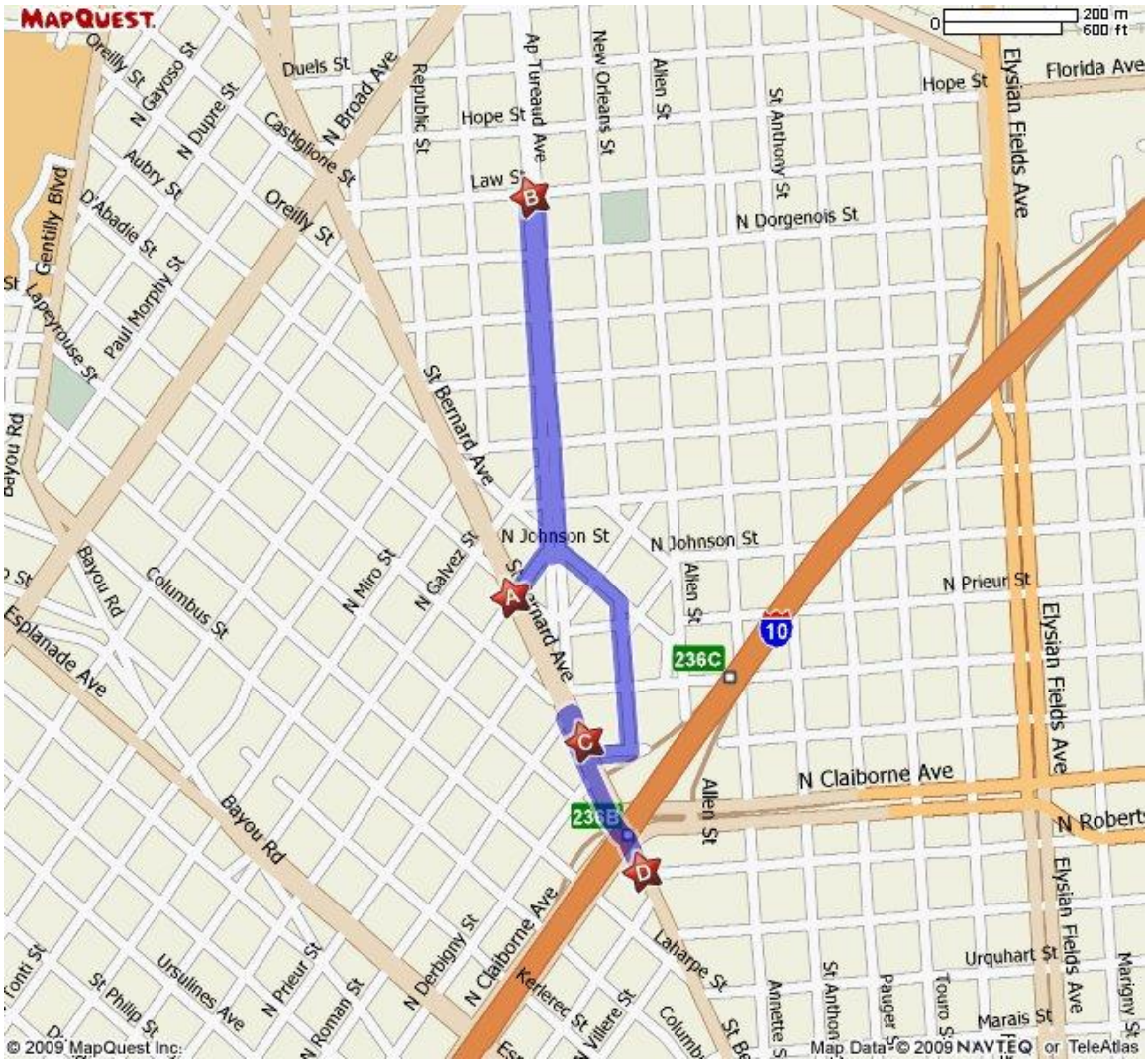

Figure 1. Map depicting the proximity of traditional Creole institutions to each other: A. Corpus Christi Church, B. St. Augustine High School, C. Autocrat Club, and D. Circle Food Store

Figure 3 also shows that historically Creoles tended to reside in the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Wards. Included in the Sixth Ward are St. Philip Street and Esplanade Avenue. The Seventh Ward is bounded by Esplanade Avenue/Bayou St. John, Lake Pontchartrain, Elysian Fields Avenue, and the Mississippi River. The Eighth Ward encompasses Elysian Fields Avenue, the Lake, Almonaster Boulevard, and the River. The Ninth Ward includes Almonaster Boulevard, the Lake, the St. Bernard Parish Line, and the River.[27]

After World War II, Creoles moved out of the faubourgs (areas adjacent to the original French Quarter) and into the suburbs of the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Wards. A large number of them moved into Pontchartrain Park, which was one of the first Black subdivisions in the United States. In recent years, Creoles began moving in the Gentilly Woods area of the city (which is adjacent to Pontchartrain Park) and into New Orleans East, each of which are in either the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, or Ninth Wards.[28] This being said, Creoles also live in other areas of the city and many non-Creoles live in the so-called "Creole sections" of the city. The reason why the Seventh Ward is so synonymous with Creoles is because the community there was very large and close-knit.[29] When describing how it was when her father and grandmother lived in the Seventh Ward, Tiffany Dugar states, "Everyone was Creole on their block."[30]

These Creole spaces gave some Creoles a sense of protection from the racism outside of their neighborhoods. Because their neighborhoods often had everything they

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[27] Louisiana Public Library, http://nutrias.org/facts/wards.htm (accessed April 15, 2008).
[28] Richard Campanella, *Geographies of New Orleans: Urban Fabrics Before the Storm* (Center for Louisiana Studies, 2005), 215-217.
[29] Arthe' Agnes Anthony, "The Negro Creole Community in New Orleans, 1880-1920: An Oral History" (PhD diss., University of California, 1978), 143.
[30] Tiffany Dugar, interview by the author, April 2, 2008, questionnaire, Houston, TX.

needed, religiously, economically, academically, and socially, they did not have to venture out of them and deal with the segregationist and discriminatory governmental policies and attitudes of Whites in the city. When many did venture out, they were reminded of their true status, that of being Black, and faced the same Jim Crow society that non-Creole Blacks did.[31] The significance of these separate spaces is made clearer after reading Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball's article "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond." They examine the "dynamics of spatial relations among African Americans" in Richmond, Virginia. They state that immediately after the Civil War, Black Richmonders erected their own institutions, like schools, churches, and banks, within their neighborhoods. This "voluntary" segregation not only provided them with a place to congregate safely with minimal White interference, but also allowed them to prosper.[32] Creoles of Color in New Orleans were also able to establish institutions in their neighborhoods that allowed them to separate themselves not only from Whites but also from non-Creole Blacks.

Ulysses Ricard states that there were certain schools that large numbers of Creoles attended. He lists Corpus Christi, St. Peter Claver, Xavier University Preparatory, and St. Augustine as some examples. In addition, sizeable Creole student populations attended grammar schools such as Martinez Kindergarten School, St. Mary of the Angels, St. Raymond, and St. Louis Cathedral Holy Redeemer, as well as high schools, such as St. Mary's Academy.[33] As early as 1877, many Creole parents sent their children to

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[31] Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints," 96-97.
[32] Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond," in *The New African American Urban History*, ed. Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), 67, 83-85.
[33] Cheryl Frilot, Clifford Dugar, Gregory Pappion, Farrah Fathi, Christina Chapuis, Jarrod Frilot, Tiffany Dugar, Anjell Duplantier, Rachel Moore, interviews by the author, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA and Houston, TX.

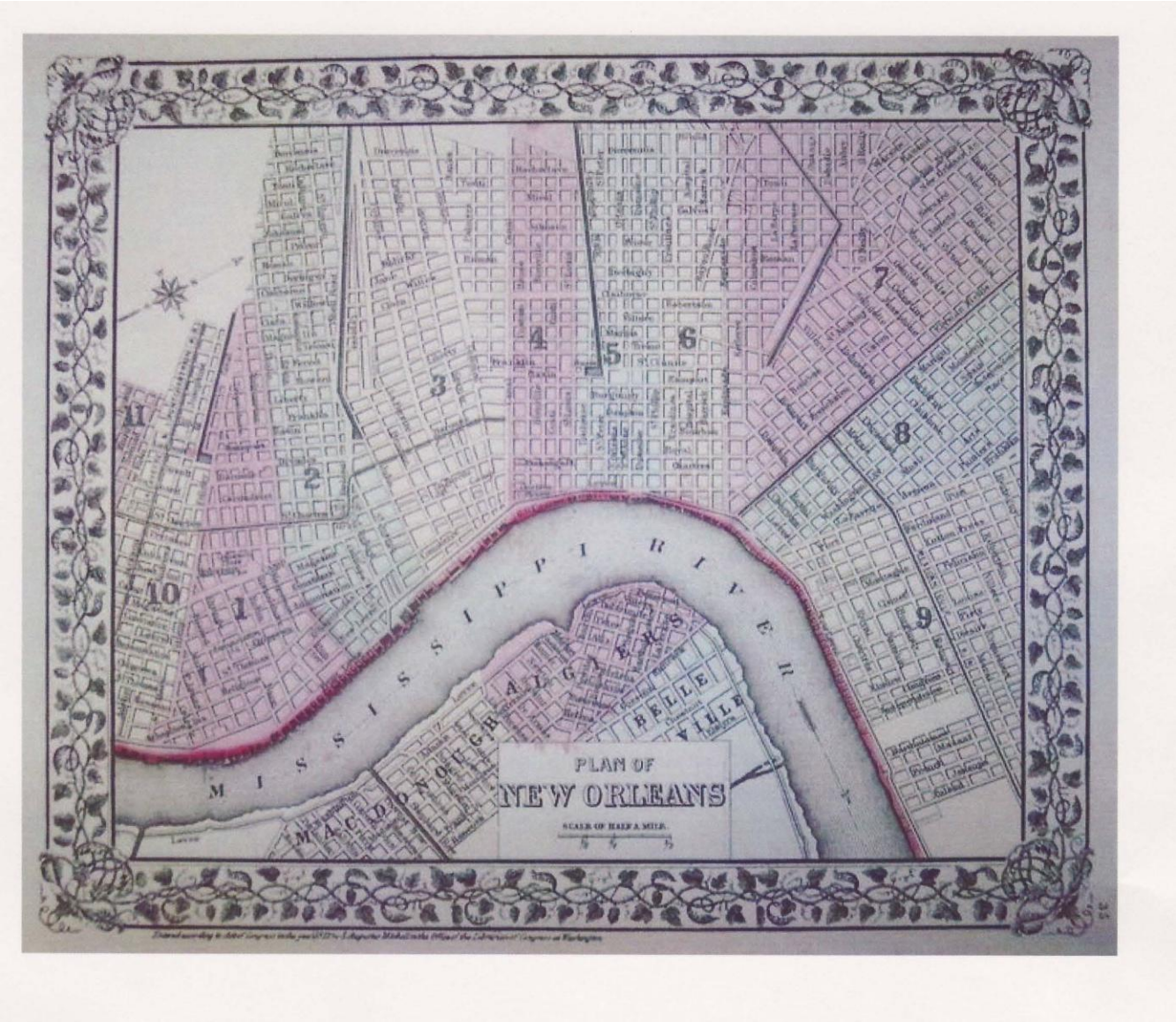
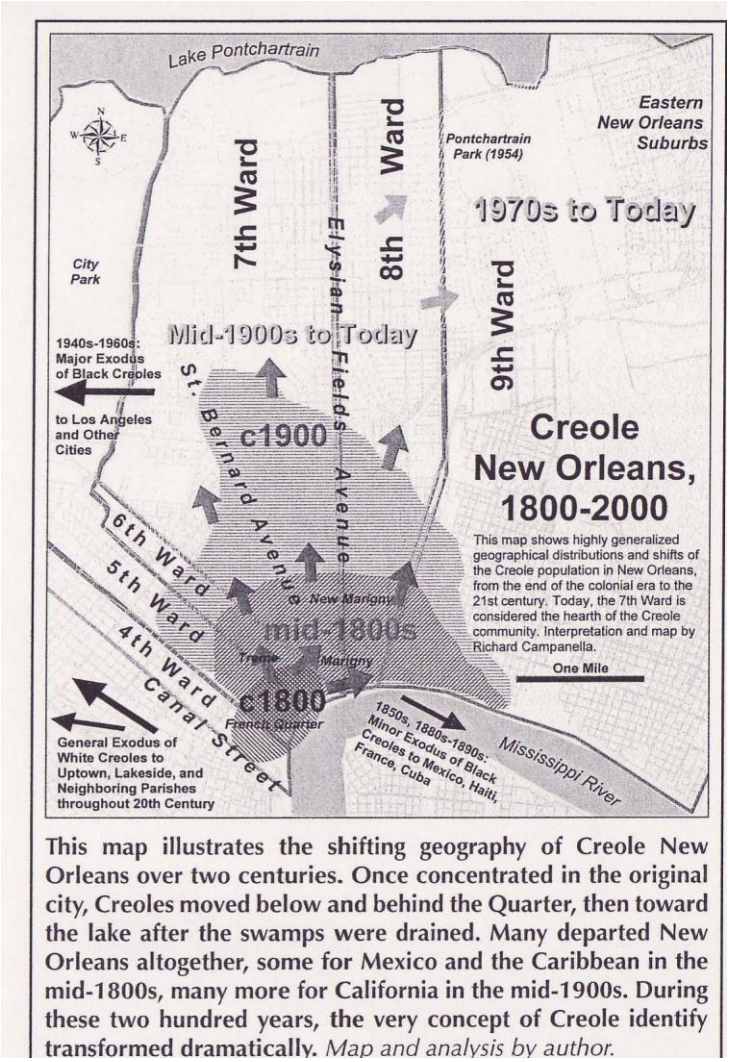


Figure 2. Plan of New Orleans, S. Augustus Mitchell, Jr., 1872[34]

[34] Murray Hudson Antiquarian Books, Maps, Prints and Globes, "Plan of New Orleans," http://murrayhudson.com/antique_maps/us_state_maps/05380m.jpg (accessed April 15, 2008).



This map illustrates the shifting geography of Creole New Orleans over two centuries. Once concentrated in the original city, Creoles moved below and behind the Quarter, then toward the lake after the swamps were drained. Many departed New Orleans altogether, some for Mexico and the Caribbean in the mid-1800s, many more for California in the mid-1900s. During these two hundred years, the very concept of Creole identify transformed dramatically. *Map and analysis by author.*

Figure 3. Geographic Distributions and Shifts of the Creole Population in New Orleans, 1800-2000[35]

[35] Richard Campanella, *Geographies of New Orleans: Urban Fabrics Before the Storm* (Center for Louisiana Studies, 2005), 215.

Catholic schools, in part because Creoles are predominantly Catholic, but also because many did not want to send their children to public schools with non-Creoles.[36] And because many White Catholics did not want to integrate their churches and affiliated parish schools, many Black parishes were created, and schools like the ones listed above were formed.[37] Many of these schools have a long history. Holy Redeemer was originally the Institution Catholique pour l'instruction des Orphelins dans l' indigence, which was founded in 1847 with money willed from the estate of a wealthy Creole woman named Marie Couvent to educate children of color. Many well-known nineteenth-century Creoles attended the school and it was staffed by the best minds of the Creole community. St. Mary's Academy was founded by Henriette Delille, a wealthy Creole woman, and the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1867.[38]

Ulysses Ricard, who gave his description of the "standard" Creole in 1988, is describing the school experiences of his generation, and maybe a little of his parents' generation. By 1988, he was in his late thirties, which means he grew up during the time that these "standard" or Traditional Creole institutions still prevailed. As the years passed, the ties to these schools diminished due to social and political changes in the city. Perhaps the most important of these changes was the integration of both public and Catholic schools during the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the Catholic schools that were previously closed to Blacks were now open to them. Many Creoles began attending these newly integrated schools, like Brother Martin High School, Jesuit High School, St.

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[36]Bliss Broyard, *One Drop: My Father's Hidden Life-A Story of Race and Family Secrets* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007), 303-304.

[37] John Bernard Alberts, "Black Catholic Schools: The Josephite Parishes of New Orleans During the Jim Crow Era" (master's thesis, University of New Orleans, 1990), 14.

[38] Mary Gehman, *The Free People of Color of New Orleans: An Introduction* (New Orleans: Margaret Media, 1994), 75-76 and Mary Niall Mitchell, "'A Good and Delicious Country': How Free Children of Color Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World," *History of Education Quarterly* 40 (Summer 2000), 123-144.

Mary's Dominican High School, Cabrini High School, and Ursuline Academy. This trend continues today, as many Contemporary Creoles continue to attend these predominantly White Catholic schools as opposed to the traditional Creole schools of their parents' generation. That being said, many Contemporary Creoles still prefer these traditional Creole schools, maintaining long-term family ties with these institutions where generations of family members have attended.[39]

The traditional Creole schools, like Corpus Christi and St. Augustine, were used as socializing agents by the Creole community. Most of the schools are located in the "Creole wards" of the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Wards. This allowed for the socializing process that began at home and in the neighborhood to continue at school. Integration would change this. As many Creole families chose to send their children to predominantly White Catholic Schools, like Brother Martin and Jesuit, and as more non-Creole Blacks began attending Creole schools, the latter schools became "less Creole." With the admission of non-Creole Black students who were not familiar with the Creole way of life, the schools could no longer be used as socializing agents for Creole children. The White Catholic schools that many of the Creoles attended also stifled the socializing process because like the non-Creole Blacks, they were not familiar with the Creole lifestyle and they were located in the "non-Creole" sections of the city. This affected the cohesion of the Creole community because they no longer had the extended network made up of not just Creole family members and neighbors, but also Creole teachers, priests, and other school administrators who brought their shared lifestyle to the school and reinforced it in the children.

[39] Clifford Dugar, Rachel Moore, Tiffany Dugar, Anjell Duplantier, Christina Chapuis, interviews by the author, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA and Houston, TX.

Creole parents also sent their children to public schools, particularly those with large Creole student populations, like Valena C. Jones, Joseph S. Clark, and McDonough #35. Emily Blanchard describes one such school called Bayou Road. She states, "Bayou Road was really somewhat select because the principal [in the 1910s] would not take anyone too dark if she could possibly get away with it. We were taught that we were just a little bit better than anyone else that attended the public schools."[40]

The Creole community also participated in a variety of social activities and organizations. For example, Ricard describes social functions at the Autocrat Club. Founded in 1914, the Autocrat Club was located in the Seventh Ward. Not merely a social club, the Autocrat was an important venue for local jazz musicians. Many musicians and residents claim that club members made potential recruits pass the "brown paper bag test," in order to determine if one was light-complexioned enough to join. However, there were always some dark-skinned Creoles who gained acceptance, by family, religion, hair, or "sharp features." [41] The use of the "brown paper bag test," at both Bayou Road and the Autocrat Club, are examples of how Creoles tried to isolate themselves from non-Creole Blacks. Because most Creoles tended to have lighter complexions and European features, the test ensured that these organizations and institutions remained as "Creole" as possible.

Many Creole traditions revolved around religious observances and communal meals. Religious activities included going to Mass every Sunday, observing the Holy Days, and being baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church.[42] In many Creole

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[40] Anthony, "The Negro Creole Community in New Orleans," 98-99.
[41] Jan Clifford, "The Autocrat Social and Pleasure Club, 1725 St. Bernard Avenue," *The Louisiana Weekly*, 22-28 November 2004, Sect. B, 6.
[42] Rachel Moore, interview by the author, February 13, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.

families, one could tell what holiday they were celebrating by the food served. Gumbo des herbes was served on Holy Thursday, crawfish bisque on Good Friday, and cowan (turtle) on Easter Sunday. For Christmas, most families attend midnight mass and serve gumbo.[43]

Traditional Creole culture was not just about where people went to school or church or what foods they ate; it also included ideas about family structure and economic standing. Much of the Creole community emerged from unions between quadroon and octoroon women and White Creole men. This union, referred to as a "plaçage," was established at the many Quadroon Balls that were held in the city in the antebellum period. Open only to White men and Creole women, these balls were an important venue for young woman seeking to become a "placée." At the balls, the quadroon women would try to impress the White men with their dancing and conversational skills. The women attended the balls along with their mothers, who determined if the young woman of color would enter into a plaçage with one of the men. If the mother and the daughter approved of the gentleman's social and economic standing, the young woman would be "placed" as his placée. Each quadroon woman "had a 'value' which depended on the attractiveness of the subject, the fairness of her complexion, and her mother's ability to show her off against the competition." If an agreement was reached, the placée was promised housing, money, and financial support for any children produced from the relationship. Many of

[43] Susan Saulny, "Cast From Their Ancestral Home, Creoles Worry About Culture's Future," *The New York Times*, October 11, 2005, www.nytimes.com/2005/10/11/national/11creole.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print (accessed April 18, 2009).

the women were given their own apartments, which would spur the development of the Creole sections of the city.[44]

The free status and financial support that some Creole children received from their White fathers enabled some members of the Creoles of Color community to be both socially and economically better off than other non-Creole Blacks in the city. Although most Creoles were of the lower and middle economic classes, some Creoles owned millions of dollars in real estate and owned their own schools. Some even sent their children, usually the boys, to France or the northern United States to be educated.[45] After the re-segregation of the public schools in 1877, many Creole parents did not want to send their children to school with non-Creole Blacks and some could not afford to send them to private school, so many Creole children left school after the eighth grade.[46] Some Creole families, especially the male members, were still able to prosper without formal education because they were trained in specialized trades and skills, like carpentry, tailoring, architecture, sculpting, and family businesses, which were often passed down to Creole children. Many of these businesses and trades had been passed down since the colonial years.[47] Even today, certain Creole families are associated with specific specialized trades, for example, the Barthé family and the plastering trade.[48] Some, like

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[44] Voltz, "Black Female Agency and Sexual Exploitation," 1, 39-40. See Emily Clark's *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834*.
[45] Gehman, *The Free People of Color of New Orleans*, 53.
[46] Broyard, *One Drop*, 303-304.
[47] Mary Gehman, "Visible Means of Support: Businesses, Professions, and Trades of Free People of Color," in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2000), 209, 213-221.
[48] Darryl Barthé, "The Barthé Family: Racial Identity, Plastering and Organized Labor in New Orleans" (American history seminar paper, University of New Orleans, 2009).

Lionel Ferbos, were skilled tradesmen by day and accomplished musicians by night.[49] In tracing her family history, for example, Bliss Broyard discovered that her father was actually a Creole of Color from New Orleans who passed for White in the North. Her French ancestor, Etienne Broyard, had been a master carpenter whose trade was passed down to every male Broyard until her father. [50] Similarly, in a *Times-Picayune* article, Ronald Ricard is recognized by the writer as "keeping with the traditional role of Creoles of Color in the city's economic life" because he is a self-employed businessman. This was highlighted because during the time the article was written, 1977, many of the traditional Creole customs and traditions had diminished.[51]

Traditional Creole family structure was very patriarchal. As Clifford Dugar states, the father was considered the main breadwinner.[52] Ideally, Creole women were not supposed to work; their family and their home was their only focus. But many Creole women did work. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Creole women did piecework in their homes. Because a woman's place was considered to be in the home, the piecework they did was seen as being an extension of their housework, and therefore not really employment. This allowed Creole families to preserve the image of the male as the main breadwinner. [53]

The Creole community was so centered on its neighborhood, traditions, and customs that until World War I, it was possible only rarely for Creoles and non-Creole

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[49] Lionel Ferbos, "From the Show: After the Storm IX: Katrina's Second Anniversary," *American Routes*, August 20, 2007, 12:10, http://americanroutes.publicradio.org/archives/atrist/509/lionel-ferbos (accessed April 20, 2009).
[50]Broyard, *One Drop*, 151.
[51] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."
[52] Clifford Dugar, interview by the author, February 20, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[53] Anthony, "The Negro Creole Community in New Orleans," 73-74, 76-77.

Blacks to socialize with each other.[54] This led to the view that Creoles were very clannish and regarded themselves as better than non-Creole Blacks. For example, Ronald Ricard asserts that many Creoles, especially the older ones, do not think of themselves as being Black. He says, "They just call themselves 'Creoles'." He goes on to say, "Older people wanted their children to associate with their own kind. We never associated with 'black' people, just like whites never did."[55] Many Creole families tried to instill this mentality of "stick with your own kind" in their children. Farrah Fathi, a Creole woman of twenty-two, recalls many of her older family members repeating this to her.[56] Rachel Moore, a Creole of thirty-four who married a non-Creole man, stated that although her family accepted her husband, her mother had always warned her not to date outside of her own kind.[57] Fifty-one-year-old Cheryl Frilot asserts that people simply tended to associate with individuals who were most like them.[58]

These ideas explain why many Creoles tended to attend the same schools, churches, and organizations. Fathi and Moore both highlight how ideas about this differed along generational lines. It seems that it was the older, more traditional Creoles that were advocating this mentality of "stick with your own kind." To many, like members of Cheryl Frilot's family, it just made sense to marry someone who had a similar upbringing and shared the same Creole way of life, which is also why most non-Creole Blacks married, socialized, and interacted primarily with each other.[59]

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[54] Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 14.
[55] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."
[56] Farrah Fathi, interview by the author, March 18, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[57] Rachel Moore, interview by the author, February 13, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[58] Cheryl Frilot, interview by the author, April 12, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[59] Ibid.

Staying within the Creole community could also be a form of self-protection from hostile comments from non-Creole Blacks. Gregory Pappion, a twenty-eight-year-old, fair-skinned Creole, describes being teased by his non-Creole Black friends about his color. He states that many of them called him "white boy" and it bothered him so much that he would try to "prove his blackness" to them. As he grew older and became more knowledgeable about his Creole heritage, the comments did not upset him anymore.[60] The attitudes of the older, traditional Creoles seem more understandable when viewed from the perspective of Creoles like Gregory Pappion. They chose to "stick with their own kind" so they would not have to deal with the hostility and judgment of non-Creole Blacks. Their light skin tone would not be questioned because they would blend in with other members of the Creole community and not have to prove their racial identity.

Many Creoles of the older, traditional generation viewed themselves as separate and different from Blacks. They were not Black, they were Creole.[61] Previous social and political circumstances influenced how this generation racially identified themselves. Wendy Gaudin argues that some "segregation-era Creoles employed their pragmatic vision of race as a tool to distance and differentiate themselves from blacks while drawing closer, theoretically, to whites."[62] Segregation strengthened the Creoles of Color community by forcing people to "turn inward, to seek solace and security within their own number."[63] Their neighborhood and organizations provided them with a safe space that shielded them from the racial injustice in the city during that time while also

[60] Gregory Pappion, interview by the author, March 26, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[61] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."
[62] Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints," 29.
[63] Arnold R. Hirsch, "Simply a Matter of Black and White: The Transformation of Race and Politics in Twentieth-Century New Orleans," in *Creole New Orleans*, 265.

providing them with greater opportunities for socializing future generations into the culture.[64]

Passing

Many Creoles of Color left New Orleans to escape the racial discrimination and segregation in the city. Bliss Broyard's grandfather, for example, moved to the North seeking better treatment and better wages. Many of them were "passant blanc," which Ronald Ricard describes as a French term meaning Creoles of Color who passed for White. Of course not all Creoles "passed" for White, but many did adopt this strategy either occasionally or permanently, or they knew someone in their family or a family friend that did. Ronald Ricard believed that passing for White had its advantages and he used to do it occasionally to get into the segregated Saenger Theater and Pontchartrain Beach. He also states that he has a relative who lives in New Orleans who is passing. Ricard believes that the decision to pass often caused painful disruptions in Creole families. If a person decided to pass, it was likely that they would not see their family again, especially those members with darker complexions.[65] Bliss Broyard learns about "passant blanc" while discussing her father's "passing" with his sister Shirley. Unlike her brother, Shirley did not pass for White. Bliss discovers that although they lived in the same city, her father rarely visited his sister and Bliss had never met her aunt as a child. Bliss also did not meet her paternal grandmother, whom her father sometimes visited alone.[66] Like other "passant blancs," her father could not risk others finding out that he was actually Black because the consequences could be life-threatening.

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[64] Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints," 97.
[65] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."
[66] Broyard, *One Drop*, 82-83.

When examined within a historical context, the practice of passing becomes even more complex. From 1890 to about 1940, Southerners lived in what Grace Elizabeth Hale calls a "culture of segregation." She argues that "whites created the culture of segregation in large part to counter black success, to make a myth of absolute racial difference." This myth divided the world into "absolute blackness and whiteness" and "required the creation of racial segregation as the central metaphor of the new regional culture." White-looking Blacks, like many of the Creoles of Color in New Orleans, challenged this myth, especially on railroad cars. Whites feared that they would cross the color line into the White railroad cars. This "absolute difference" was irrational due to the fact that some Whites could not even distinguish between who was Black and who was White.[67]

By the early twentieth century, America had become a consumer culture. Businesses sought profits and often ignored the "culture of segregation" in order to make money. Many Southern businesses could not afford to turn away customers, so many of them ignored the segregationist policies and served Black customers. Of course, most White business owners followed the policies of the time. In some cases, if a White-owned business would not serve them, Black customers could just go to the next store that would, and some Black communities even established their own businesses and commercial districts.[68] This was true in New Orleans, where Creoles of Color established their own neighborhoods, which gave some a sense of protection, and at times sheltered them from, the culture of segregation within the city.[69] This made many Creoles feel like it was not necessary for them to pass in order to live a good life.

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[67] Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), xi, 21-22, 46.
[68] Ibid., 8, 133, 188-89, 191, 193.
[69] Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints," 97.

Opinion is divided in the Creole community regarding passing. Some claim they do not have an opinion about a family member's decision, some are strongly against it, and others support the decision because it was usually done to gain better employment. Gregory Pappion's grandfather passed when his father was very young to gain employment. Gregory respects his grandfather's decision because he "did what he had to" in order to provide for his family.[70] Civil Rights Creole Lyle LaBeaud admits that he used to pass when he was younger, before he became comfortable with his racial identity.[71]

Light Skin With Good Hair

Any discussion of passing must lead to another sensitive topic among Creoles, that of skin complexions and hair textures. Most Blacks, especially non-Creole Blacks, envision a Creole person as having a certain "look." As Leroy Major states, "I really can't put my finger on it, but somehow Creoles can pick other Creoles out of a crowd."[72] The widely held description of a Creole is a person whose complexion ranges from tan to light brown to fair, accompanied with European features and hair texture. Or, as some would say, Creoles are "light with good hair." Many Creoles dislike this description because it focuses on physical rather than cultural factors and assumes that darker-complexioned people cannot be Creole. Tiffany Dugar believes that this is one of the "major misnomers regarding Creole people." She states that Creoles "come in all shades" and that "because of the ethnic mix, the variety of skin tones, hair textures and features

[70] Gregory Pappion, interview by the author, March 26, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[71] Lyle LaBeaud, interview by the author, March 5, 2009, questionnaire, Folsom, CA.
[72] Leroy Major, interview by the author, February 6, 2009, questionnaire, Ellenwood, GA.

are endless."[73] Yet though most Creoles acknowledge that group members come in all shades, the general description, amongst all generations, is still "light with good hair."[74]

For Blacks as well as Creoles, the issue of skin complexion and features is historically a sensitive subject. There are segregation stories about people not passing the "brown paper bag test," which meant that persons darker than the bag were not allowed, and the "comb test," which similarly excluded persons who could not easily slide a comb through their hair. Some Creoles have stories from their childhood that involved their older relatives warning them to stay out of the sun so they would not get darker. A reason for protesting a marriage with a non-Creole Black person was the fear that the children would inherit that parent's darker hue. There are also stories of older relatives pinching the noses of infants to ensure that their noses would be straight, more European looking, and not flat.[75]

Although skin complexion tended to be important in the Creole community, there were ways to "compensate" for not fitting the preferred mold. Family background was one way that all shades of Creoles determined who was "really" Creole. A "good Creole" family was one that spoke French or Louisiana Creole, practiced Catholicism, and lived the Creole way of life. Surnames were also important. Creoles are typically known to have French or Spanish surnames, which served as proof of their ancestry. If a person claimed to be Creole but did not have a French or Spanish surname, "inquiries had to be

[73] Jarrod Frilot and Tiffany Dugar, interviews by the author, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA and Houston, TX.
[74] Jarrod Frilot, interview by the author, February 13, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[75] Clifford Dugar, interview by the author, February 20, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.

made into an individual's background." The right family background and appropriate surname compensated for the darker complexions of some Creoles.[76]

Civil Rights Creoles

Beginning with the generation born after World War II, the Civil Rights Creoles, many community members began to differ from their parents' generation in the way they identified themselves. Some of them, like Ricard, would state, "I'm black. I'm Creole too." Ricard grew up considering himself Creole, but as he began his twenties, he realized that he was Black, and when he got to high school he worked with numerous civil rights groups.[77] Wendy Gaudin argues that "those who came of age during the 1960s revolution began questioning the doctrines, the labels, and the models of their known people" and began to emphasize the African part of themselves. Some of the young Creoles coming of age during the 1960s and 1970s totally abandoned the term Creole as they began to associate it with "ignorance or bigotry."[78] This generational change in identity can also be seen in the St. Julien family. According to Mitumishi St. Julien, who was forty-one years old in 1988, his grandmother never admitted that she had Black ancestry, yet she ended up having seventeen grandchildren and all but one of them had Swahili names.[79] Like St. Julien family members, many young Creoles came to terms with their Black ancestry, particularly as they faced and fought racial discrimination in a city that viewed them as being the same as the non-Creoles of the city, as being Black and inferior.

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[76] Anthony, "The Negro Creole Community in New Orleans," 107-108.
[77] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."
[78] Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints," 30, 87.
[79] Easterlin, *Creoles of Color*, 99.

The Civil Rights Creoles were coming of age during the Civil Rights Movement, a time when Blacks were fighting for equal rights all over the country. The city's school crisis in 1960 began with the "token school desegregation" of two elementary schools, McDonough #19 and Frantz. Whites boycotted the schools and harassed Black students as they tried to enter.[80] In April 1968, the NAACP held a "March of Truth" to protest against Governor John McKeithen's claim that racial harmony existed in the city. Things were not "harmonious" for Blacks as they were navigating through crowds of Whites protesting integration in "their" schools. Neither did they encounter "harmony" as they were dealing with a government that ignored their pleas for proper city services in their area, such as adequate street lighting, drainage, public transportation, health facilities, and police protection.[81]

The Civil Rights Creoles were also coming of age during the beginning of the Black Power Movement. Two components of the Black Power Movement were Black racial pride and Black liberation. The Black Panther Party started a chapter in New Orleans in the Desire Housing Project in the lower Ninth Ward section of the city. In addition to challenging the power and conduct of police in Black neighborhoods, the Panthers served the community by providing such programs as free breakfasts for the neighborhood children. In September 1970, the Panthers found out that two undercover policemen had infiltrated the party. Party members beat up these two men, the police later arrived, and a shootout ensued. Two months later, the police went back to the Desire Project, this time with 200 men and an armored car. But over 2,000 Blacks met them in

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[80] Ann Wieder, "The New Orleans School Crisis of 1960: Causes and Consequences," *Phylon* 48, No. 2 (2nd Qtr., 1987): 122, 130-131, http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-8906%28198732%2948%3A2%3C122%3ATNOSCO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-4 (accessed November 20, 2007).
[81] Kent B. Germany, *New Orleans After the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 132-133.

front of the apartment building that housed the Panthers' headquarters. The police pulled back, but in the next few days they arrested all the party members.[82]

Many of the older, Traditional Creoles did not agree with the ideology of the Black Power Movement or the rhetoric of younger radicals in the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Power Movement celebrated Black skin, thick lips, and "nappy" hair, as opposed to the more Eurocentric physical features that Creoles had valued. Both movements were also trying to unify Blacks. Many older Creoles did not subscribe to this rhetoric because they did not consider themselves Black, they were Creole.[83] That being said, although some Creoles opposed the rhetoric and ideologies of these movements, they were by no means opposed to equal rights. Creoles, like attorney A.P. Tureaud and former president of the New Orleans branch of the NAACP, Arthur J. Chapital, Sr., were leaders in the civil rights movement.[84]

The "success" of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements had a great deal to do with changes in Creole racial identity. By the late 1960s, images of Blacks were appearing in more advertisements, universities began offering African-American studies classes, Blacks gained voting rights, and schools were being desegregated.[85] However, "old-fashioned Creoles" like Ronald Ricard's mother-in-law did not change the way they identified themselves. What did change is that they tended to not discuss their Creole identity with "outsiders." When Bourgoyne interviews Ricard in 1977, his mother-in-law is present but she refuses to speak about Creoles or her Creole identity.[86] When Wendy Gaudin was conducting interviews, she came across a couple who called themselves

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[82]Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 424-425.
[83] Ibid., 383.
[84] Arnold R. Hirsch, "Simply a Matter of Black and White," in *Creole New Orleans*, 262-271.
[85]Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints," 87.
[86] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."

Creole, but never did so in "mixed" company, especially when non-Creole Blacks were present.[87]

Unlike Traditional Creoles, such as Ricard's mother-in-law, Civil Rights Creoles like Ricard, tended to view themselves as either Black and Creole or just Black. They no longer saw Creole as a distinct race separate from Blacks. Clifford Dugar, who was a young Creole adult in the 1970s, was drawn to the Black Power Movement and wanted to be a Black Panther. He was angry and ready for a change and felt that the Panthers would succeed at bringing about one. Jarrod Frilot recalls his father's experiences as a high school student in the 1970s. His father attended St. Augustine during a time when the campus was very militant and protests were common. Jarrod describes his father as very fair skinned, so much so that he could pass for White, but his father was very proud to be "a black man." His heroes were militant Black men of the time, like Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. He states that his father did not understand how Creoles could disassociate themselves from other Blacks when they were going through the same struggles and fighting for the same rights.[88]

One of those rights was the opportunity to be educated alongside their White peers. While some Creole students remained in the all-Black, mostly Creole environments of St. Augustine and Xavier Prep, others were active participants in the integration process. One Civil Rights Creole, Cheryl Frilot, attended integrated public schools in her district instead of going to the all-Black schools that her older brothers and sisters attended. Recalling her experience, she states that sometimes the atmosphere at school was difficult to deal with, and at other times it was fun. She comments that,

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[87] Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints," 276.
[88] Clifford Dugar and Jarrod Frilot, interviews by the author, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.

although there was a lot of tension between the Blacks and the Whites at her integrated junior high school, she easily became friends with many of the White students. However, over time, more Blacks began attending the school, eventually converting the school into a predominantly Black institution.[89]

Another Civil Rights Creole, Clifford Dugar, had a somewhat different experience. His high school, Brother Martin, a predominantly White Catholic all-male high school, was already integrated when the order to integrate the schools was implemented.[90] This was due in part to the fact that the Archdiocese was doing a better job at integrating their schools than the local government.[91] Over time, more Blacks began attending Brother Martin. Dugar states that there was "some tension," but there was "mostly not much interaction with some of the white students."[92] Although many Civil Rights Creoles' academic atmospheres were very different from those of the Traditional Creoles, they were still able to retreat to and retain their Creole culture and way of life within their neighborhoods.[93] The importance of the socialization that took place within the Creole neighborhoods becomes more apparent after examining the experiences of Cerlida Fletcher.

Although Civil Rights Creole Cerlida Fletcher attended many of the "traditional" Creole schools, she did not reside in a "typical Creole" neighborhood. Fletcher grew up in the lower Ninth Ward, which encompasses the part of the Ninth Ward closer to the St. Bernard Parish Line and the River.[94] Fletcher states that her home life with her parents,

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[89] Cheryl Frilot, interview by the author, February 2, 2009, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[90] Clifford Dugar, interview by the author, February 9, 2009, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[91] Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy*, 171-72, 204, 261.
[92] Clifford Dugar, 2009.
[93] Dugar and Frilot, 2009.
[94] Louisiana Public Library, http://nutrias.org/facts/wards.htm (accessed April 15, 2008).

both of whom grew up in Creole sections of the city, did not encourage her or her siblings "to be Creole per se." She states that while she recalls her family celebrating First Communion and Confirmation by having food, family, and friends over and her paternal grandmother speaking Creole, they were "encouraged to be children, not necessarily Creole children."[95] During the 1960s, she and her family became involved in a voter registration drive. She recalls how they invited some of the White volunteers over to their house. Some of their neighbors in their predominant Black Ninth Ward neighborhood did not approve of these visitors and many of them disassociated themselves from Fletcher and her family. Fletcher's mainly Black neighborhood was very different from Dugar and Frilot's neighborhoods which were not only very Creole, but also very racially and ethnically diverse.[96] Fletcher's experiences serve as another example of the importance of the Creole neighborhood as a socialization tool. Along with the fact that her parents did not raise her "to be Creole," not growing up in a Creole neighborhood caused her to racially identify as Black, not as Creole.

The change in racial identity of many Civil Rights Creoles**,** brought about by the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, was also fueled by the changes in the landscape of the city. Ricard discusses the fact that during this time, many Creoles moved out of the Seventh Ward, or Creole section, of the city.[97] As previously stated, as early as the 1920s, many Creoles left New Orleans for better social and economic opportunities. They began to migrate even more during the 1960s to other states and, like other Americans during this time, to the suburbs.[98] Also in the 1960s, the city began construction of the new

[95] Cerlida Fletcher, interview by the author, February 5, 2009, questionnaire, Slidell, LA.
[96] Fletcher, Dugar, and Frilot, interviews by the author, 2009, questionnaire, New Orleans and Slidell, LA.
[97] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."
[98]Gaudin, "Autocrats and All Saints," 98.

Interstate Highway 10. The interstate, according to geographer Richard Campanella, gave "birth to the modern metro area." The interstate also destroyed the beauty and utility of North Claiborne Avenue. This broad thoroughfare was the "main street of black Creole New Orleans," where many Creole-owned businesses were located and where Creole social gatherings took place.[99] These changes contributed to a diminishing and less cohesive Creole community. This trend continued into the 1990s when the city began to close many of its housing projects. Many evicted tenants moved into the Creoles' Seventh Ward neighborhood. This changed the atmosphere as non-Creole Blacks, some from lower economic backgrounds, moved into the area.[100] This caused even more Creoles to move to suburban areas of the city, like Eastern New Orleans and Gentilly.[101] Though some individual older Creoles refused to leave, the traditional Creole neighborhoods of the earlier generations disappeared.[102]

The breaking down of their neighborhoods and social spaces, and changing ideas about racial identity fostered by the movements of the 1950s-1970s, also affected the Louisiana Creole dialect. Many Creoles stopped passing down the Creole language to their children.[103] As Ricard states, "My parents, they're in their 60s now, used to speak French when they didn't want me to know what they were saying. But I never learned French and only a handful of young Creoles speak it."[104] Most Creoles of Ricard's generation do not speak Creole, and if they do, it is only a few words or phrases.

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[99] Richard Campanella, *Geographies of New Orleans*, 21.
[100] Broyard, *One Drop*, 206-207.
[101] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."
[102] Broyard, *One Drop*, 207.
[103] Anjell Duplantier, Christina Chapuis, Tiffany Dugar, Jarrod Frilot, Gregory Pappion, Farrah Fathi, interviews by the author, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA and Houston, TX.
[104]Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."

Figure 4. North Claiborne Avenue before the construction of Interstate Highway 10, 1966[105]

Figure 5. North Claiborne Avenue after the construction of Interstate Highway 10, 2009[106]

[105] Louisiana Photograph Collection, Municipal Government Collection, Department of Streets Series, http://nutrias.org/~nopl/exhibits/ccmem/trees.jpg (accessed April 18, 2009).
[106] Richard A. Webster, "Claiborne I-10 Corridor in Crosshairs of Draft Plan," New Orleans City Business, March 30, 2009, http://www.neworleanscitybusiness.com/APTImages/claiborne1.jpg (accessed April 18, 2009).

Lyle LaBeaud recalls how "the language was not encouraged in the home. If anything, it was discouraged."[107] Most Contemporary Creoles do not know any Creole and some were never even exposed to it. Tiffany Dugar states that her grandmother never passed down the language to her children, her father and aunt. Although they grew up in a Creole neighborhood, they only knew a few words, none of which they passed down to their children.[108] Many older Creoles only used the language to talk privately and had no intention of preserving it. Changing notions about racial identity in Ricard's generation also played a part, as many of them were distancing themselves from their "Creoleness."[109]

Contemporary Creoles

In contrast to previous generations, Contemporary Creoles tend to identify themselves as Black and they do not believe that Creoles are a distinct or separate race. However, some of them believe that Creoles are a sub-group or sub-race of Blacks because of the mixed ancestry and unique culture and dialect.[110] Jarrod Frilot does not like to define his or anyone else's racial identity. He prefers to "take one's individual characteristics into account rather than their race." But because society focuses on distinguishing people by race, he identifies himself as Black and not Creole. He grew up in a predominantly Black area and has mostly Black friends, including those who call themselves Creole, so he relates more to Black culture.[111] Tiffany Dugar, who identifies

[107] LaBeaud, 2009.
[108] Tiffany Dugar, interview by the author, February 11, 2008, questionnaire, Houston, TX.
[109] Bourgoyne, "Tradition is Losing Its Hold on Creole of Color Community."
[110] Christina Chapuis, Gregory Pappion, Farrah Fathi, Jared Brossett, interviews by the author, 2008 and 2009, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[111] Jarrod Frilot, interview by the author, February 13, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.

herself as Black, believes historically Creoles were a distinct or separate race, but are no longer so. She states that historically Creoles were very different from other Blacks in language and culture. But today, many of the Creole traditions, especially the language, have faded and blended into the general Black Louisiana culture. She believes that no one today should identify themselves as Creole, unless they grew up with the language and the culture and still practice the traditions.[112]

Contemporary Creole Denise Davis-Moore states, "I do not identify as Creole period." She believes that Creoles do not constitute a separate race, but that they are "regarded differently than other African Americans-both by African Americans and by members of other groups." She goes on to state, "Because of the way I was raised-by my mother, not necessarily by my extended family-I identified, and continue to do so, as African American, not Creole." Daughter of a Civil Rights Creole, Davis-Moore "was raised to believe that this was yet another way for Black folks to divide themselves unnecessarily."[113] Tiffany Dugar states that when she was in school no one even used the term Creole to identify themselves. She states that "identification with being Creole did not add value because everyone was Black and everyone wanted to be 'Black'."[114] Jarrod Frilot believes that identifying as Creole is no longer needed in today's society. In the past, it was beneficial both socially and economically to identify as Creole because the group members were afforded some opportunities that non-Creole Blacks were not. He states, "Just like people say money is the motivator behind everything, identifying as Creole is the same way. Claiming it could get you something or somewhere."[115] Dugar

[112] Tiffany Dugar, interview by the author, February 11, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[113] Denise Davis-Moore, interview by the author, February 16, 2009, questionnaire, Houston, TX.
[114] Tiffany Dugar, interview by the author, February 2, 2009, questionnaire, Houston, TX.
[115] Jarrod Frilot, interview by the author, February 18, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.

recalls how "light-skinned people started dating really dark-skinned people or started 'acting hard' just to try to be as stereotypically black as they could be. Claiming to be Creole (even if you were) would have made you more of an outcast because everyone else was Black." She argues that "Creole Pride" did not resurface until her twenty-three-year-old younger sister's generation.[116] This statement leads into a discussion that has yet to be adequately explored, the changes in racial identity and the differing racial ideologies among Contemporary Creoles.

Denise Davis-Moore and Tiffany Dugar are members of the older generation of Contemporary Creoles (between thirty and forty years old) whose shared experiences are very different from the younger generation Contemporary Creoles (mid to late twenties and younger). The older Contemporary Creoles were teenagers and young adults during the 1980s and early 1990s. Although Blacks had prospered economically since the Civil Rights era, "blacks in the 1980s, were, as a group, less educated, poorer, and died in greater numbers than ever before."[117] Much of this was a result of the Reagan administration's weakened commitment to equal employment opportunities and improving and rejuvenating inner cities and public schools. Added to this was the effect of "crack" cocaine on the Black community and the violence that ensued from it. Blacks were also reporting cases of police brutality.[118] One of the key issues for Blacks during the 1980s was representation, both social and political. It was during this time that Civil Rights leader Jesse Jackson ran for President, African-American studies scholars Karenga

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[116] Tiffany Dugar, interview by the author, February 2, 2009, questionnaire, Houston, TX.
[117] Mark Winokur, "Black is White/White is Black: 'Passing' as a Strategy of Racial Compatibility in Contemporary Hollywood Comedy" in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), 190.
[118] Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 332-334.

and Molefi Kete Asante advocated the inclusion of Afrocentricity as an academic program to counter the "Eurocentric educational bias," and the rap group Public Enemy was telling Black teenagers to "Fight the Power."[119]

Black teenagers in the 1980s were highly influenced by these and other social and political events. Like their parents' generation, older Contemporary Creoles felt a connection with non-Creole Blacks due to their shared experiences of struggle for representation and relevancy within American society. Tiffany Dugar states, "For my generation, we were doing everything in our power to be Black. I can remember I had a tee shirt which read, 'It's a Black Thing…You Wouldn't Understand'."[120] Dugar was among the first groups of Black females to attend the predominant white Cabrini High School. Because Blacks were in the minority, all of the Black girls, both Creole and non-Creole, socialized together at lunch and after school. Dugar recalls how many of her Creole friends, some of whom were light enough to pass for White, wore the "It's a Black Thing" tee shirt and hardly ever associated themselves with being Creole. Although many of the older Contemporary Creoles, like Dugar and Davis-Moore, grew up "very Creole" in the Seventh Ward and attended Creole schools like Martinez and Holy Redeemer Elementary School, the influences from their Civil Rights Creole parents and the culture of the 1980s caused many of them to disassociate themselves from their Creole identity.[121]

Another older Contemporary Creole, Leroy Major, had the reverse experience, moving from Black to Creole identity. Major recalls that when he was younger he was

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[119] Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 265, 279.
[120] Tiffany Dugar, 2009.
[121] Dugar and Davis-Moore, 2009.

taught to identify as Black, so much so that "it almost took on a 'Malcolm X' feel to it," an "us against them" kind of mentality. He states that when he got older, his Creole culture was explained to him and now he embraces it. He describes Creoles as being "a different class of people, of being of 'a different breed.'" He went from identifying as "Black" to checking "other" on the census.[122] Major's decision to racially self-identify as "other" occurred during a time when America's racial and ethnic demographics were changing dramatically.

American Racial Policy and Ideology

The United States' racial and ethnic demographics have changed a great deal since the 1800s, with the population of European immigrants decreasing dramatically. In 1810, the European population accounted for about 73% of the total United States population. By 1930, it was up to 88%. In 1990, however, the European population accounted for less than 80% of the total population. Early immigration policies account for the large European population between 1810 and 1930.[123] Before 1890, most immigrants were Northwestern Europeans, from Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Switzerland. By the early 1900s, most of the immigrants were from Southern and Eastern Europe, from Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Romania, were not Protestant like the majority of native White Americans, and spoke languages that were unfamiliar to most Americans.[124] These "new" immigrants were placed in a position where their racial

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[122] Leroy Major, interview by the author, February 6, 2009, questionnaire, Ellenwood, GA.
[123] Antonio McDaniel, "The Dynamic Racial Composition of the United States," *Daedalus* 124, No.1, An American Dilemma Revisited (Winter, 1995):183, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027289 (accessed February 3, 2009).
[124] Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 77.

identity was questioned. Many native Whites debated if the newcomers were "White enough," and many viewed these culturally different immigrants as "other." However, over time, their status as "other" changed and all of these groups, once perceived to be racially inferior, would "become White."[125]

Many social, political, and economic factors account for the process of European immigrants "becoming White." The great migrations of Blacks to the city that took place between 1910 and 1940, their protest during World War II against segregation in the military, and the racist notions of most White Americans convinced White ethnics that they should bond with native Whites. Similar to Southern Whites during the time, many White ethnics, many of whom had long established separate neighborhoods and niches within cities, protested the movement of Blacks into "their" neighborhoods. This bond between native and ethnic Whites was strengthened as the United States became more imperialistic. When the United States instituted its expansionist policies, the immigrants were placed in an interesting position.[126] They were viewed as both "supreme whites and non-Anglo-Saxon Others." The United States included them in its manufactured monolithic Caucasian race as they tried to conquer the "mongrelized" and "degenerate" Mexicans, Asians, and Filipinos.[127]

Whiteness was also tied to work. In his book *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, David Roediger states that during the colonial era, slaves and White servants performed much of the same work, sometimes even working alongside each other. Roediger argues that the many "gradations of

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[125] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 49-50, 207.
[126] Ibid., 95, 111, 277.
[127] Ibid., 207, 206.

unfreedom among whites," such as indentured servitude, apprenticeship, and convict labor, "made it difficult to draw fast lines between any idealized free white worker and a pitied or scorned Black worker." As the American Revolution approached, this began to change. Economic instability led to the decline in indentured servitude and the war was an opportunity for many Whites to obtain their freedom in exchange for military service. The language of the Revolution led to a change in the way White workers viewed themselves and how their work was labeled by other Whites. According to George Rawick's argument, European immigrants saw the social and economic benefits of whiteness, as being better than the alternative, "other," which was closely associated with Blacks. To disassociate themselves from Blacks, the "other," White ethnics appropriated many of the commonly held stereotypes native Whites had of them, for example, of the Irish being drunk and lazy, and applied them to Blacks. Through this process Blacks became the "other" and White ethnics became White.[128]

The process by which European immigrants became White shows how malleable and fluid the concept of race is and that it is not scientific, but merely a social construct. These immigrants, many of whom were viewed to be racially inferior to native White Americans, were eventually deemed White, thus becoming members of the invented Caucasian race. Because of their skin color, Blacks were viewed as "others," and no amount of White blood could make them White. This "one drop rule," which deemed any person with one drop of African blood to be Black, is the core of American racial ideology.[129]

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[128] David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), 19-20, 25, 32, 95.
[129] Carl N. Degler, *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: MacMillian Publishing Co, 1971), 102.

Creoles of Color know this rule all too well. The "one drop rule" has been an issue for Creoles since the United States took over Louisiana and the Americans imposed their racial ideology onto the White Creoles of New Orleans. If it was about skin color, many Creoles did not understand why they were being discriminated against and grouped with Blacks, considering that many of them were just as white as or whiter than some Whites. In recent years, the "one drop rule" has lost some of its significance. Changes in racial and ethnic demographics, communication, foreign policy, popular culture, and the media are all factors that have changed the way race is viewed in America.

Multiracial Chic

Most affected by these changes are the younger generations of Americans, ones born since 1985. Author Bill Katz calls this group the "Hey Kids," after a 1979 Coke commercial of the same name that aired during Super Bowl XIII, starring "Mean Joe" Greene. In the commercial, a little White boy, called "the Kid," looks up "in wide-eyed awe of the burly black athlete" and gives him his Coke. In return, Greene gives "the Kid" his towel. Katz argues that "Hey Kids" are "the first American generation certified as ready for non-white role models by corporate mass media." He states that this generation has the "deep sense that *American* is not a synonym for *white*," they believe that mainstream American culture is racially and ethnically diverse, and that the United States is not the center of the world. This generation is highly influenced by the media and is "perhaps the first generation that can truly be defined by the television they watched."

Their America has Blacks occupying a large space in American popular culture, in music and in the field of sports.[130]

The "Hey Kids" grew up during a time when the racial and ethnic demographics of the United States were changing dramatically. Novelist Danzy Seena argues that we have entered the "mulatto millennium."[131] Instead of "Generation X" this group is "Generation Mix." This generation has experienced the rise in the mixed race population and in the number of interracial marriages.[132] Added to this is the change in immigration policies since the 1960s, which allow for greater numbers of immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America.[133] Many of these new immigrant groups do not fit into the traditional Black/White racial dichotomy; they are not just one race, but are multiracial.[134] This is especially true for many Latino Americans, who are often not acknowledged as multiracial even though they are of mixed ethnic and racial descent.[135] Advances in communication and technology, like the internet, allow "Hey Kid" generation immigrants to stay connected to their family's country of origin, allowing them to maintain strong national and ethnic identities. These advances in communication and technology have given them the opportunity to explore other cultures of the world

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[130] Leon E. Wynter, *American Skin: Pop Culture, Big Business, and the End of White America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 180-182.
[131] Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas, "Introduction: Mixed Race in Hollywood Film and Media Culture," in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, eds. Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 1.
[132] Nancy McArdle, "Color Lines in a Multiracial Nation: An Institutional Demographic Overview of the United States in the Twenty-First Century," in *Twenty-First Century Color Lines: Multiracial Change in Contemporary America*, eds. Andrew Grant-Thomas and Gary Orfield (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2009), 42.
[133] Anthony Kwame Harrison, "Multiracial Youth Scenes and the Dynamics of Race: New Approaches to Racialization within the Bay Area Hip Hop Underground," in *Twenty-First Century Color Lines*, 208.
[134] McDaniel, "The Dynamic Racial Composition of the United States," 186.
[135] Mary Beltrán, "Mixed Race in Latinwood: Latin Stardom and Ethnic Ambiguity in the Era of *Dark Angels*," in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 251.

without even leaving their bedrooms.[136] These changes in racial and ethnic demographics can be seen in the popular culture of the times.

Beginning in the 1980s, American businesses realized that to be competitive they had to target their advertising towards this growing diverse population.[137] It was during the 1980s that Blacks became more visible in Hollywood movies, but multiracial actors remained either not visible or forced to play "tragic and/or villainous" figures. In the 1990s, as the country's population became more multiracial, the trend of "multiracial chic" began to take hold. Once viewed as something to hide, multiracial identity was now something to be revered.[138] Casting directors began to seek the "ethnically ambiguous" actors, ones whose appearance made their "heritage…hard to pin down."[139] Ethnically ambiguous multiracial actors are preferred because their look is "perceived as good, desirable, successful" because the audience can ascribe whatever racial identity that they choose to the actors.[140] Depending on the viewer, the actors can be perceived as mixed race, Black, White, Latino, or any number of other racial or ethnic identities.[141]

The increasing number and growing visibility of multiracial people have, in a way, made them the new norm of racial identification in America. Some scholars are even arguing that we are experiencing a "postmodern ethnic revival," where "individuals of

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[136] Harrison, "Multiracial Youth Scenes and the Dynamics of Race," in *Twenty-First Century Color Lines* 209-210.
[137] Dennis J. Downey, "From Americanization to Multiculturalism: Political Symbols and Struggles for Cultural Diversity in Twentieth-Century American Race Relations," *Sociological Perspectives* 42, No. 2 (Summer, 1999): 263, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1389629 (accessed February 3, 2009).
[138] Jane Park, "Virtual Race: The Racially Ambiguous Action Hero in *The Matrix* and *Pitch Black*," in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 184 and Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas, "Introduction: Mixed Race in Hollywood Film and Media Culture" in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 1, 184.
[139] Lisa Nakamura, "Mixedfolks.com: 'Ethnic Ambiguity,' Celebrity Outing, and the Internet," in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 64.
[140] Beltrán and Fojas, "Introduction: Mixed Race in Hollywood Film and Media Culture," in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 64.
[141] Gregory T. Carter, "From Blaxploitation to Mixploitation: Male Leads and Changing Mixed Race Identities" in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 207.

both European and non-European heritage [are] expressing a greater interest in their ethnic origins than Americans in previous decades."[142] This revival has caused many Americans to believe they do not fit into the traditional Black/White racial dichotomy of the United States. Many young Whites are now reclaiming their Italian, Irish, or other ethnic backgrounds that previous generations sought to bury in order to assimilate into "White American culture."[143] As bell hooks argues, ethnicity has become "spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture."[144]

This "postmodern ethnic revival" has challenged the traditional American racial classification system and has spurred a multiracial movement. One well-known manifestation has been the movement's effort to convince the government to add a multiracial category to the 2000 census. Although a multiracial category was not added, the "mark one or more" option was added, which allows Americans to select as many racial groups as they desire.[145] This group of Americans feels that they have the right to racially self-identify themselves. Although "Other" has been included as a racial category on the census since 1910, it is only since 1980 that people began racially self-identifying this way.[146]

The right to be able to racially self-identify oneself is an issue that Creoles of Color have been dealing with for decades. Similar to previous generations of Creoles, Contemporary Creoles were greatly affected by the changes going on around them.

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[142] Mary C. Beltrán, "The New American Racelessness: Only the Fast, Furious, (And Multiracial) Will Survive," *Cinema Journal* 44, No. 2 (Winter, 2005): 55, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3661094 (accessed February 3, 2009).
[143] Harrison, "Multiracial Youth Scenes and the Dynamics of Race," in *Twenty-First Century Color Lines*, 208.
[144] Park, "Virtual Race," in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 186.
[145] Kim Williams, *Mark One More: Civil Rights in Multiracial America* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 3.
[146] Alejandra M. Lopez, "Mixed-Race School-Age Children: A Summary of Census 2000 Data," *Educational Researcher* 32, No. 6 (August-September, 2003).

Influenced by the times, Contemporary Creoles like Leroy Major choose to select "Other" when asked for their racial identification. He feels that "Black" does not accurately describe his racial make-up because it excludes his Creole heritage.[147] Similar to Civil Rights Creoles, Contemporary Creoles do not share a monolithic racial ideology. Older Contemporary Creoles tend to not be as affected by the growing influence of multiculturalism. Older Contemporary Creole Denise Davis-Moore states, "I believe it as superfluous for Black folks to claim Creole lineage as it would be for non-Creole Black Americans to go back and claim the other random ethnic contributions to their gene pool."[148]

Younger generation Creoles tend to not share Davis-Moore's view, for many of them proudly claim their Creole lineage. While older Contemporary Creoles, like Tiffany Dugar, wore tee shirts that said "It's A Black Thing…You Wouldn't Understand," younger Creoles are wearing shirts that proclaim them to be "A Product of Louisiana: Certified Creole." The social networking website Facebook has many groups that are geared towards celebrating racial and ethnic identity, including groups for Louisiana Creoles.[149] Twenty-year-old Creole Anjell Duplantier describes a different high school experience from older Contemporary Creoles like Davis-Moore and Dugar. She states, "As far as I could see (in my class and the class ahead of me), outside of school, everyone was separated into their own groups… [T]he Creoles usually hung together and the non-Creoles usually hung together." That being said, she states that both non-Creole Blacks and Creoles frequented the same functions. Offering a possible glimpse into the future, Duplantier recalls that the younger girls at her school were not as racially or ethnically

[147] Leroy Major, 2009.
[148] Denise Davis-Moore, 2009.
[149] Facebook, http://www.facebook.com, 2009.

segregated. She states that "everyone was all mixed together, white, black, Creoles, non-Creoles and everyone in between."[150] However, like the Civil Rights Creoles, not all younger Contemporary Creoles share the same racial ideology. As previously stated, many Contemporary Creoles, like Jarrod Frilot, still self-identify themselves as Black and nothing else.

Multiculturalism has affected not only Contemporary Creoles. It was during the 1990s when Civil Rights Creole Cerlida Fletcher developed an interest in researching her genealogy. Because she did not live in a traditional Creole neighborhood or "grow up Creole," she sought out information on this unknown aspect of her lineage. It was also during the 1990s that Todd Broyard (the brother of author Bliss Broyard) discovered that his father was not White but a Creole of Color. Broyard states that prior to learning about his father's racial lineage, he thought of himself as "just another Caucasian from an affluent part of the country." He recalls how he "reveled in learning" about his "unique and varied racial make-up," and that it makes him a "more interesting person."[151] Broyard learned about his newfound racial make-up during a time when multiracial and multicultural people were becoming more visible, and in conjunction with the "postmodern ethnic revival" when many young Whites were reclaiming ethnic identities their previous generations tried to hide. Multiculturalism was now something to be celebrated; it was that "spice, seasoning" that bell hooks describes.

Conclusion

Isolationism plays a key role in the understanding of Creole culture. Currently, Creoles no longer have their own separate neighborhoods, schools, churches, or social

[150] Anjell Duplantier, interview by the author, March 3, 2009, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[151] Todd Broyard, interview by the author, February 5, 2009, questionnaire, Stow, Massachusetts.

institutions. They no longer have the necessary framework in place to properly socialize future generations into the Creole way of life. The lack of institutions is attributed to many social, political, and economic factors that played a part in restructuring Creole society. The Creole community of the colonial era is not the same Creole community today.

The factors that contributed to the changes in the Creole culture and community also had a profound effect on how this group racially identified themselves. Wendy Gaudin is one of the first scholars to explore the generational changes in Creole racial identity. She dispelled the notion that all Creoles share a monolithic culture and racial ideology. Through her examination of Civil Rights era Creoles, Gaudin shows that Creoles were divided on how they chose to racially identify themselves. This present study takes Gaudin's research a step further by taking the focus off of separatist segregation-era Creoles and broadening the scope to include the varying racial ideologies of Creoles. This paper shows how the development of Creole culture contrasts with the development of White ethnic culture, arguing that while White ethnics were trying to assimilate into White American culture, Creoles of Color were creating their own separate identity distinct from Blacks and Whites. This study also highlights the racial ideology of more recent generations of Creoles in order to show the continuing generational changes within the community and to dispel the notion that all Creoles have the same experiences and racial ideology.

Similar to Traditional and Civil Rights Creoles, Contemporary Creoles also have their own unique experiences that affected their ideas about their racial identity. Many share the ideas of the Civil Rights Creoles, viewing themselves as Black or as Creole and

Black. However, unlike Civil Rights Creoles, divisions regarding racial identity have more to do with the year in which they were born than where they grew up or what school they attended. Coming of age during the 1980s, their experiences led many older Contemporary Creoles to disassociate themselves from their Creole heritage and identify more with non-Creole Blacks. The rise in the multicultural population, the celebration of multiculturalism, and growing globalization has allowed younger Contemporary Creoles to openly embrace their Creole identity. The "postmodern ethnic revival" has given these younger Creoles the opportunity to create their own racial identity. This trend has also inspired the older generations of Creoles.

Many older generation Creoles have begun to rediscover their Creole heritage. Many are wearing the "Certified Creole" and Creole surname tee shirts to show their Creole pride. Many, like Cerlida Fletcher, are beginning to research their genealogy. Organizations like the Louisiana Creole Research Association not only assist Creoles of Color in researching their ancestry, but also educate the general public about Creole culture.[152] Inspired by the multicultural movement, some Creoles have joined together to propose a resolution to Congress to have Louisiana Creoles represented on the U.S. Census. They believe that Louisiana Creoles should be recognized as a "distinct ethnic/racial group" and that a "U.S. Census category for Louisiana Creoles…be used on all local, state, and federal forms."[153] Both society and academia have begun to recognize Creoles as a separate, distinct, multicultural group. For example, Sybil Kein's book *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* is categorized under multicultural studies. On the website mixedfolks.com, which is a forum for mixed-

[152] Louisiana Creole Research Association, http://www.lacreole.org/about.html (accessed March 18, 2009).
[153] Louisiana Heritage Connection. http://www.louisianaheritageconnection.com/creoleresolution.html (accessed March 18, 2009).

race individuals to share their experiences while also discussing and speculating on the racial identities of celebrities, they list Lalita Tademy's book on Creoles from Natchitoches, Louisiana, in their library of books to read.[154] This increasing interest in multiculturalism is exposing more people to Creole culture and is helping to ensure that the Creole culture is preserved.

So, is there any semblance of the traditional Creole culture today? Although Creole neighborhoods no longer exist, there are still areas of the city (primarily Gentilly and New Orleans East) in which many Creoles tend to reside. Even though Creoles have lost many of their institutions, some do persist. The first annual Gentilly Fest, held in October 2008, serves as an example of this. Upon meeting up with his family, Clifford Dugar proclaimed that "all of your people are here!"[155] By this, he meant that there were many Creoles in attendance and it almost felt like his old Seventh Ward neighborhood. Many older Creoles still ask the key questions to discovering if a person has Creole lineage: What's your last name? Where did your parents grow up? What school did they go to? As previously stated, many Contemporary Creoles have begun wearing Creole surname and "Certified Creole" tee shirts, embracing their Creole identity. Some Contemporary Creoles even speak of a "Creole Mafia," a reference to a clique of Creoles who both socializes and dates within the group. Members all go out to the same places and know or know of the same people.[156] The "Creole Mafia," albeit subconsciously, are

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[154] Nakamura, "Mixedfolks.com," in *Mixed Race Hollywood*, 66-67.
[155] Clifford Dugar, interview by the author, October 11, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.
[156] Daniel Braud, interview by the author, September 17, 2008, questionnaire, New Orleans, LA.

recreating the sense of community, cultural cohesiveness, and isolationism that previous generations of Creoles experienced within their Creole neighborhoods and institutions.

Although many Creoles fear that their community is disappearing, this study proves that even though Creoles are not a monolithic group, all sharing common experiences and ideas about their racial identity, many Creoles are still living out their culture. It seems that if the rising trend of multiculturalism continues, increasing numbers of Creoles will begin to identify more with their Creole heritage. Though no longer isolationists, these people's growing interest in Creole culture and racial identity will help preserve Creole culture and validate its relevancy to the rest of the country.

Epilogue

"New Orleans was our womb and for most of us, it was going to be our grave," remarked Timothy Bordenave, a New Orleans Creole, in an interview in *The New York Times* in 2005. Bordenave was expressing a sentiment that many Creoles had post-Hurricane Katrina, a longing to be back in New Orleans surrounded by familiar smells, places, and tastes. Although many of the traditional Creole institutions, organizations, and neighborhoods were gone long before Katrina, the storm added another blow to this fragile community. Creoles were scattered all over the country, some never to return to their homes again. Bordenave stated, "We can exist outside of New Orleans, but it's easier and more natural to live in an atmosphere that reflects our history, love of music and architecture, eating and celebrating." Many displaced Creoles have created small communities in an attempt to keep their culture alive. In a way, Katrina has resurrected Creole culture. Concerns about the community's demise grew after the storm, causing both Creoles and non-Creoles to find ways to preserve this distinctly Louisiana culture.[157]

[157] Susan Saulny, "Cast From Their Ancestral Home, Creoles Worry About Culture's Future," 1-2.

Vita

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