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**THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION
OF CREOLES IN SOUTH LOUISIANA: IDENTITY, CHARACTERISTICS,
ATTITUDES**

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

The Interdepartmental Program in Linguistics

by

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DEDICATION

This adventure would not have been possible without the love and support of my husband, Stephen Roger Parrish, my parents, Eria Faye and Lolan, and my siblings, Tammy, Marcy and Michael. Thank you all.

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One should never begin a project the magnitude of a dissertation without projecting the cost involved: emotional, spiritual, physical, monetary. But then one rarely appreciates how much of all of those attributes will be required to finish a dissertation. More important than all of these, though, are the people which support and help in the undertaking. In my case, Dr. Sylvie Dubois has been the major driving force of this project. It truly would not have been possible without her inspiration, her dedication, and her continual guidance. The best test of a teacher is that she be able to put theory into practice. Sylvie has achieved this and more, and, in the process, has aided and abetted the survival and renaissance of the Cajun and Creole communities in South Louisiana. Dr. Hugh Buckingham has provided support in the form of critical feedback, laughter, and liquid refreshment. Dr. Jill Brody has been both a rock and a shoulder to cry on at will, and the enthusiasm and energy of Dr. Janna Oetting has contributed greatly to the success of this venture. Thank you all.

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ABSTRACT

Most of the research done on the Louisiana Creole community has concentrated on the vocabulary and folklore of Creole French. To date, there has been no methodological examination of other parameters enveloping the community. In this dissertation, the previous findings will be extended by analyzing the results of a survey on the linguistic attitudes and cultural, ethnic, and racial identity of the African-Americans in South Louisiana who identify as Creole. Due to the presence of several varieties of French in the state, the ethnic and racial admixture among the people who speak these dialects, and the overwhelming presence of English in all facets of modern-day life, linguistic and social boundaries have been blurred. This is reflected in the attitudes and the self-identification of the informants. In this study, surveys were administered to 240 African-Americans in South Louisiana. The sample was stratified by age, sex, Creole ancestry, and degree of fluency in Creole French. The synchronic attitudes toward the language and the community were analyzed in light of the historical changes undergone by the community. The results show that Creoles in Louisiana today are still cognizant of the historical meaning attached to the term, but are also participating in the more general movement toward ethnic and racial pride, and are therefore largely identifying as African-American, while still showing some residual pride in Creole heritage, and a concomitant loyalty toward both Creole language use in daily life as well as viewing Creole French as a positive item for the community.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

The diminishment of Creole languages and cultures all over the world is well documented. In Louisiana, the Creole language and culture were, in the past, assigned high status, but this group has, in modern times, been racially, linguistically, economically and culturally marginalized, and today's Creoles are struggling to simply gain acceptance and recognition as a separate and viable ethnic and racial group. The lack of interest in the Creole culture is reflected in the dearth of methodical, empirically-based research done up to this point in time on the Creoles. Little research has been done on the Louisiana Creole community, and that which has been done has focused mainly on the historical aspects of the culture, or on the differences between Creole French and Standard French. The few studies which have focused on the language have been lexicographical in nature, and have yielded little insight into the community itself.

Misunderstanding and abuse of the term Creole, whether it refers to the language or the people, still abounds in both the literature of Louisiana French varieties as well as from the layman's point of view. The polysemous nature of the actual term adds to the jumble, since it can and does refer to both a language and a group of people separated from others by race, ethnicity, language and history, and since there exist Creole languages and people all over the world. Insofar as the situation in Louisiana is concerned, Dormon (1996: iv) accurately states, "...any discussion of Creoles and creolization (sic) must begin

with the clear understanding that the term has been used historically in an enormous variety of ways and has taken on a protean quality that can lead to great confusion in the absence of clarification.” The research done for this dissertation will provide some of the necessary clarification.

This dissertation entails extensive research both French and non-French ancestry African-Americans in South Louisiana. The ultimate goal of the study is to determine what factors affect identification as Creole, Creole characteristics, beliefs and attitudes about the language, and social and linguistic behavior. This will hopefully help discard stereotypical misunderstandings while simultaneously shedding light on the identity and beliefs of today’s Louisiana Creoles. The research conducted for this project is also intended to fill the gap in the methodological studies done on this community. Most of the research done on the Louisiana Creole community has concentrated on the vocabulary and folklore of Creole French (Klingler 1992, Ancelet 1994). In this paper, the previous research findings will be extended by analyzing the results of a survey on the linguistic attitudes and cultural identity of the African-Americans in Louisiana who self-identify as Creole.

This work attempts to ameliorate some of the confusion about the term Creole in Louisiana (and who can properly lay claim to it) by analyzing the responses from the sample of the 240 informants regarding their attitudes toward the Creole language, the characteristics necessary to be considered Creole, the language usage and maintenance within this speech community, identification as Creole, and the linguistic networks maintained among the respondents. The research criteria were established and conducted

on the basis of four major research questions. They are explained in greater detail in Chapter 4, but briefly, are to discover: a) to what extent the identity and characteristics of today's Creoles have changed from the original meaning of the term; b) whether the boundaries of the culture and what it means to be Creole have changed, due to historical, social, political and economic processes undergone by this community; c) whether the French-based Creole spoken by some of the members of this speech community has lost its importance as a symbol of the Creole group in Louisiana; and d) if these changes in identity and characteristics of the Creoles, the gradual loss of the language, and the lack of importance attributed to the language have caused the attitudes of this group toward their community and language to be reformulated. The answers to the questions posed above entail investigation into who in Louisiana today identifies as Creole, what the criteria are of a 'true' Creole in southern Louisiana, what the attitudes are of outsiders toward the community and the language, how the upheavals undergone by this community have affected the attitudes of its members, and whether or not the Creoles view their language as being as good as that of other varieties of French.

1.2 THEORETICAL BASIS OF THIS STUDY

This sociolinguistic study is based on the variationist approach to data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. Sociolinguistics takes as a major tenet that fact that linguistic structure and linguistic behavior(s) can be influenced by the social structure of a community. The variationist-based approach works from this belief, and more importantly, tries to determine the patterns of variation within a particular language or speech community. Linguistic patterns can be interpreted to show how dependent

linguistic variables are conditioned by independent *social* variables such as age, gender, geographical region, social class, or socioeconomic status, and the correlations between all the variables. Sociolinguistic studies have shown time and again that variation in language is patterned; speakers and hearers use language in particular ways (whether consciously or unconsciously) which reflect certain social characteristics, and that these characteristics can be correlated with linguistic use. This concept is taken as a baseline for the study, extended, and applied to the African-Americans with French ancestry in South Louisiana. The extension of the variationist approach includes, for this study, an examination of the effects of the diachronic events which have been experienced by this community and how they have shaped the synchronic Louisiana Creole identity. More specifically, the linguistic attitudes, environment and network of this group will be examined and correlated with independent social variables. This will enable the assessment of the maintenance and use of the French language in this speech community, the clarification of the culturally-driven attitudes and beliefs toward the language, and the identification of the characteristics and qualities which define Creoles in Louisiana today.

The methodology used was a questionnaire developed and administered to 240 African-Americans in the areas around Breaux Bridge, in St. Martin Parish, and Opelousas, in St. Landry Parish. These areas were chosen because they have retained a large percentage of the Creole population still existing in the state. The sample is stratified by age, sex, ancestry, and professed proficiency in Louisiana Creole French. The questions in the survey deal with the linguistic attitudes, language use, and cultural identity of people who have Creole ancestry as well as those who do not. As Labov noted, a

speech community is best defined through the sharing of a set of linguistic norms and values rather than through the usage of similar linguistic forms (1966, 1972). Dorian (1981) and others have noted that it is equally important that members of a speech community share strong feelings of belonging to, and participating in, a local network. The inclusion of African-Americans who claim no Creole ancestry in the sample serves as a backdrop from which to judge the responses of those who, presumably, participate in the local network, and who therefore consider themselves members of the community.

1.3 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

In presenting the research below, the matter of terminology must be addressed. There is some confusion concerning the status of the various French ancestry and language groups co-existing in Louisiana today, which is partially attributable to the fact that there are several mutually intelligible varieties of French in the state, and partially attributable to the mixture of ethnic and racial characteristics among the people who speak these varieties. Three types of French are generally posited in Louisiana: Colonial French, Cajun French, and Creole French.¹ With each code one could assume that an accompanying cultural, ancestral, and ethnic community exists also. That is the case for the last two varieties listed above, but not for the first. Colonial French is the name given to the variety of French spoken by the early French colonists and their descendants (white Creoles), although historical evidence shows that there were dialectal and regional differences as compared to the French of France in their speech even then, due to the

¹This tripartite division ignores the French spoken by the Native Americans in the state (which has rarely been studied) as well as the school-taught, Standard French variety.

disparate regions in France and in Europe from which the colonists immigrated. While it is generally noted that Colonial French is extinct in the state, it is more accurate to attribute the loss of this French code to a shift to English under the influence of the massive influx of Anglo-Americans who arrived in the colony after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Although the two groups originally were voluntarily isolated from one another (via different languages, different religions, and varied social and economic avenues), there was a gradual rapprochement between them (which is discussed in greater detail in a later chapter). As the social and economic ties among the Colonial French community and the Anglophones grew (particularly in the New Orleans area), the French speakers eventually adopted the code of the numerically dominant English-speaking community; this process was much more rapid and much more pronounced among this group than among the Cajuns and Creoles, who, for the most part, were located in rural areas and had little contact with English speakers for many years. In any case, we have encountered no one in the state who claims to speak Colonial French, although one can find older people whose French is quite distinct from the synchronic versions of the Cajun and Creole languages.

The largest surviving French speaking group in the state are the Cajuns, who are descendants of French settlers who moved into the area of Canada known as formerly known as Acadia (modern day Nova Scotia) in the early 1600's. For many years, this territory was ceded back and forth between France and England as spoils of war, and the settlers were left virtually undisturbed. In 1713, however, the treaty of Utrecht permanently sealed the fate of the small colony—it became, and remained, a possession of the British, and the British crown decreed that all persons of French ancestry must swear

allegiance to the British government. Beginning in 1755, those who refused to do so were deported and scattered across various coastlines in the American Colonies in what their descendants still refer to as *le grand d rangement* (the big upheaval). Many of the survivors of this diaspora ended up in the Louisiana Territory. Although the Acadian exiles (shortened by English speakers via phonological processes to ‘Cadiens and thence to Cajuns) represented a strong linguistic presence in the state at one time, the massive influx of English speakers into the area after Louisiana achieved statehood in 1803, government legislation against French, and increasing access to the ‘outside world’ after World War II all contributed to the rapid diminishment of French being spoken in the state. Today’s reality is that the language is not being transmitted from one generation to the next. The population of younger Cajun French speakers (50 and below) is considerably less than that of the older population. This is due in part to the stigmatization encountered by the older speakers throughout their lives as they spoke Cajun (who are thereby reluctant to see their offspring undergo the same treatment), and partly due to the fact it is possible to be accepted as a full-fledged member of the Cajun community without being a fluent speaker (Dubois 1997, Dubois and Melan on 1998).

This situation obtains to a much more severe degree among the third French ancestry and language group in the state - the Creoles. According to the literature, the term ‘Creole’ is derived from the Spanish word ‘criar’, which meant ‘to raise up’, and was then semantically adapted to ‘criollo’, meaning ‘person native to a locality’. European colonization during the 17th and 18th centuries gave rise to numerous Creole societies and Creole languages in many areas of the world, yielding many new languages and many

cultures being brought to the forefront of modern day society. In Louisiana, Creole historically referred to descendants of the original European colonists, whether white or black, slave or free. During this era, it served to differentiate the native born colonists from other groups newly inhabiting the colony. As Dominguez (1986:13) notes "... the Creole populations of these colonies and former colonies established diverse social, political and economic positions for themselves over the years, (and the term) Creole acquired diverse meanings." As is discussed in the chapters which follow, the semantic evolution of the term has continued up to the present day, and is now used in Louisiana to refer to French-speaking African-Americans, or African-Americans with French ancestry.

As far as the language is concerned, the theories of various researchers will be explored in a later chapter, but a brief history of the language can be given here. The first slaves arrived in the area which would become known as the Louisiana Territory in the early 1700's. Louisiana differed from other slave-importing areas at this time, however, in that almost all the black slaves brought to French Louisiana came within a decade (1719 to 1731). Added to this extremely short period of slave importation was the fact that the slaves who were brought in were from geographically and culturally homogeneous areas in Africa. Of the approximately 6,000 slaves brought to the colony, nearly 4,000 of them were Bambaras, from the Senegambia region of Africa, according to Hall (1992:33). She defines the region as being the area between the Senegal and the Gambia rivers, while also noting that "it (was) much more than a geographic area", due to the homogeneity of culture, history and language among the tribes inhabiting the area. She bases her argument for the Senegambian-African roots of Louisiana's Afro-Creole culture upon the

records of the extensive slave trade between that region and the newly developing colony in Louisiana. These conditions contributed to the rapid development and continued use of a Creole language in the colony since "...the slave culture (in Louisiana) was early and thoroughly Africanized and the first generation of creole slaves grew up in stable, nuclear families composed of African mothers and fathers and creole siblings" (Hall 1992:158-159).

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTERS

Languages and cultures, and the people who participate in them, must be grounded in and connected to both past and present. To examine a portion of society without accounting for the historical events which have shaped them would be to do a great disservice to the individuals involved. Therefore, in order to try to discover what Creole identity means in Louisiana and to identify its modern-day manifestation, both a diachronic and synchronic approach was used. In Chapter 2 of this work, the struggle between different ethnic groups trying to exercise choice over who and what they were during the French and Spanish regime, prior to and during the Louisiana purchase, and up through the last part of the 20th century is described. In addition, the current situation of the Louisiana Creole French community is discussed. A review of the literature previously published on Louisiana Creole is discussed in Chapter 3. A review of the relevant sociolinguistic literature and the hypotheses and goals which the research is based upon is discussed in Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 presents the methodology used for the survey and the communities chosen for the study. In Chapter 6, the status and identity of French-speaking blacks in Louisiana's Creole community are explored and analyzed vis-à-vis the

extensive social and economic changes undergone by this group since its inception.

Chapter 7 explores the interaction between the social network and the language use and maintenance of community by the respondents. The language attitudes of the informants regarding the status and importance of Creole French are explored and discussed in Chapter 8. In Chapter 9, a synthesis of the results is given, followed by directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

CREOLE FRENCH IDENTITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a synthesis of the history of the Creole French community. The diachronic review of the history of the state is drawn from studies done by Blassingame (1973), Dominguez (1986), Hall (1992), Hirsch and Logsdon (1992), Fairclough (1995), and Dubois and Melançon (2000). Compiling the works from these authors required knowledge and appreciation of a variety of fields, since some authors are historians, others are anthropologists, one (Fairclough) is a political scientist, and the remainder are linguists. However, this diversity helped broaden and add a variety of dimensions to the analyses, as well as enabling an integration of diachronic sociodemographic and sociopolitical factors into synchronic results. Taking into account such items as founder population statistics, geographical and environmental anomalies, political situations, and sociohistorical backgrounds have become more and more important in studies attempting to analyze the current situation of a minority language community. Since these items are rarely written about in history books (which tend to reflect the view of the majority), they must be pulled together from various sources. This chapter does precisely that in presenting a systematic summary of the evolution of the Creole identity in the Louisiana Territory. Since the Louisiana Creoles are the focus of this paper, no in-depth discussion of the Cajun and Colonial populations in the state will be presented. The synchronic overview of the situation of the Creoles in Louisiana is given toward the end of this

chapter, while the current situation of those who claim this identity is more extensively discussed in later chapters.

The genesis of the Creole people in Louisiana began when the huge valley drained by the Mississippi River (a part of which would eventually become the state of Louisiana) was claimed for France in 1682 by Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle. A self-sustaining colony was not established until 1699, and the land ownership of this vast area was disputed over and constantly passed back and forth between France and Spain for many years, sometimes in legal treaties and documents, sometimes with secret agreements between the two countries. France had the first claim and attempted to cement its rule by importing as many inhabitants as possible as rapidly as possible. Just as England did with Australia, the 'rejects of society' were sent to the newly established colony (Hall 1992). These prisoners and debtors were joined by the Canadian *courreurs de bois* (fur traders), who were strongly encouraged to settle in the newly established territory. These early ventures were less than successful, however, and it was not until the establishment of the Company of the Indies in 1720 that settlers voluntarily came from France in large numbers. By 1721, the population in the territory consisted of 7,020 French settlers. By 1727, as Hall (1992) noted, the African population in the area outnumbered the white population because of slave importations, and the situation would remain like this until after the Civil War.¹ It was into this early settlement, known today as the state of

¹It is important to note that in the early, mid and even late colonization years in the Louisiana Territory, blacks outnumbered whites only by a small percentage. This situation sets Louisiana's Creole heritage apart from other areas in the world where Creoles developed, in terms of maintenance of African cultural beliefs, religion, and, particularly, language development. See especially Mufwene (1998) for an overview of the

Louisiana, that the term Creole and those claiming this identity acquired the peculiarities found in few other Creole societies in the world.

According to the literature, the term 'Creole' is derived from the Spanish word 'criar', which meant 'to raise up', and was then semantically adapted to 'criollo', meaning 'person native to a locality'. European colonization during the 17th and 18th centuries gave rise to numerous Creole societies and Creole languages in many areas of the world, yielding many new languages and many cultures being brought to the forefront of modern-day society. In the Louisiana territory, Creole historically referred to descendants of the original European colonists, whether white or black, slave or free. At its inception, the term served to differentiate the native born colonists from other groups inhabiting the area. As Dominguez (1986:13) notes "... the Creole populations of these colonies and former colonies established diverse social, political and economic positions for themselves over the years, (and) Creole acquired diverse meanings." Dominguez (1986:95) also poses a very important question when she asks, "how is it possible for there to be no clear consensus about the racial identity of the Creole population in a state as persistent as Louisiana in defining its racial structure?" With the exception of Neumann (1985) and Klingler (1992), very little research has been done on this community. The definitions which follow show how the term Creole has evolved throughout time, and the research done for this paper explores the ramifications of this evolution and how it has affected African-Americans claiming Creole ancestry in Louisiana today.

sociohistorical effects of massive African influx into a white environment and the genesis of Creole languages. See also Wolfram (1995).

1. Larousse dictionary (1869) - those born into, or native to, the local populace.
2. Larousse dictionary (1929) - used as a noun, Creole correctly designates only a Caucasian population.
3. Lane (1935:5) - "this dialect ...is spoken by the greater portion of the negro population of French Louisiana and is known in both popular and scientific discussions as Creole. This is actually a misnomer (since the adjective Creole applied properly to persons of pure white race)."
4. Mills (1977:xix) - "(A)ny person born in the colony of French or Spanish descent (with the sole exclusion of the Acadian exiles, popularly called Cajuns). The term (is) not limited to Louisianians of pure-white descent."
5. Scott (1992:17) - "The Creoles, who maintain a dialect and culture separate from that of the Cajuns, are nevertheless erroneously regarded as synonymous with Cajuns."
6. Hall (1992) - "Creole has come to mean the language and the folk culture that was native to the southern part of Louisiana where African, French, and Spanish influence was most deeply rooted historically and culturally."
7. Eble (1993:13) - "Thus today the term creole has no one agreed meaning. The only element in common among the groups to whom the word applied is an ancestry of non-Acadian French speakers."
8. Informant 114 from this study- "Creole doesn't really have anything to

do with race. It's more a difference in culture and heritage. You know, they got their culture, we got ours."

Although the lack of agreement about the racial makeup of the Creole population in Louisiana has been exacerbated in recent years, I suggest that by looking at the sociohistorical changes and the circumstances of the everyday lives of the Creoles in Louisiana, definite conclusions about the racial, social, economic and cultural domains of the community can be achieved. The fluidity of the meanings of the term 'Creole' have shown that the racially undifferentiated conception of the term has changed, and the term has acquired a variety of connotations during the 19th and 20th centuries. This knowledge, combined with careful examination of the sociohistorical changes within the community, should yield important insights regarding the racial makeup of the community, and more importantly, the reasons behind the lack of consensus about the racial makeup of Creoles in Louisiana.

The meaning of the term Creole and the interpretation of the attitudes of those who choose this identification today cannot be understood without recourse to the historical changes which occurred in the territory and the state. As will be discussed in detail in this chapter, a relatively rapid evolution occurred in the Creole community in Louisiana. Beginning with the French conquest of Louisiana, the term Creole, and the people who claimed this identity, were assigned certain characteristics, the main one being considered as 'native to the colony'. These characteristics acquired new dimensions under the Spanish rule of the state, and an opposition began to be established between the 'colored' Creoles, black Creoles, and whites. This situation changed even more radically

as the Americans took over the area with the introduction of statehood in 1803, leading to a dichotomy of French Creoles versus the hated *Americains* (Americans). The Civil War and the subsequent focus on 'whites versus blacks' exacerbated the heightening tension between the races, and the previously 'racially undifferentiated conception of Creole' began to change during the last half of the 19th century. This process has continued unabated into the 20th century (Dominguez 1986).

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LOUISIANA CREOLE FRENCH COMMUNITY

2.2.1 Native to Louisiana/French Ownership

In 1678, the vast New World territory along both sides of the Mississippi River valley from the Gulf of Mexico to the modern-day Canadian border fell into French hands. The French established a tenuous hold on the area by founding a settlement in Mobile. This was later moved to the swampy quagmire known today as New Orleans. In addition to military personnel and settlers, the population at this time was composed of indentured servants sent from France as well as Native Americans captured in skirmishes between the conquerors and native inhabitants. The use of slaves and indentured workers established a precedent for labor practices which was to be followed for the next 200 years, at which time the Civil War ostensibly put an end to such practices. The early colonists decreed again that humans could be legally and morally bound to a lifetime of work with no pay and few benefits, as many societies had done all over the world hundreds of years before them (Bennett 1993). As the colony grew, the employment of slave labor (rather than that of the indentured workers) was aided and abetted by "socioeconomic forces - the limited

supply of poor whites, the political situation vis-à-vis the Indians, and the unprotected status of African-Americans” (Bennett 1993:35). Since there was a shortage of whites to serve as indentured servants, and the Native Americans could not be enslaved due to their superior numerical strength, the onerous burden of slavery was laid upon the backs of the imported Africans. Due to the short importation history and the small area from which the slaves were drawn, the slaves often spoke the same language or a similar dialect; once they arrived in the Louisiana Territory, they adopted or adapted to the French language.

In addition to language mixing and creation, miscegenation between whites and blacks was occurring in the colony from its genesis. Although the Colonial authorities attempted to halt the practice, the small percentage of women and much greater percentage of men and the more permissive attitude of the time guaranteed social acceptance of interracial relationships. Although the *Code Noir* which was established in 1725 forbade “marriage or concubinage of white or freeborn...with slaves”, the practice continued unabated for many years (Fairclough 1995:3). The children of these unions were never recognized as white; rather the terms ‘mulatto’, ‘quadroon’, ‘octoroon’, ‘high yellow’, etc., were applied to these people, regardless of their emancipation status. Many of those who were emancipated were the offspring of a white male and a black slave woman, this being the most common form of miscegenation. Anti-miscegenation laws were abolished during Reconstruction but reenacted in 1894, and an additional statute in the 1908 Louisiana constitution was which made concubinage between blacks and whites felony was not rescinded until the late 1960's. Louisiana was not alone in this attempt to legislate racial relations, of course; South Carolina rescinded a similar act in June 1999,

although state officials claim that it had not been enforced for many years. In spite of laws enacted by the states against such unions, however, they were still occurring.

The racial mixing in the colony led to a tripartite system composed of white, colored, and black people (Dominguez 1986, Hall 1992, Fairclough 1995). The significant distinction between the two non-white populations was based on the slavery status of a person. The term 'colored' was applied to free men and women with European and African ancestry; the terms 'black' or more pejorative terms denoted slaves, regardless of their ancestry. The first mention of the word 'Creole' in New Orleans was in 1745 in the death certificate of Robert Talon, who was described as 'the first Creole in this colony' (Dominguez 1986:96). The term carried little political meaning or significant social connotations during the first few decades of the colonial settlement, however, and manuscripts showed little evidence of an exclusive political or social group labeled 'Creole' (Dominguez 1986:97, 98). This is perhaps due to the fact that "French New Orleans was a brutal, violent place. Mere survival was on the line, and notions of racial and/or cultural and national superiority were a luxury" in the day-to-day reality of attempts to eke out an existence (Hall 1995:26). Whatever the reason, when the term 'Creole' was used in the early years of the colony, it was rarely capitalized and often alternated with the term 'native' (Dominguez 1986:96, 97).

2.2.2 French Louisiana Identity/Spanish Possession

As the result of an agreement between France and Spain, the Spanish government took possession of the Louisiana territory around 1768. The inhabitants of the area reacted with hostility, revolted and, finally, expelled the first Spanish governor. In order

to affirm Louisiana's French identity, they rallied behind the French flag as a symbol of their French culture and described themselves as the "inhabitants and merchants of the province of Louisiana" (Dominguez 1986:99). For the first time in the history of the colony, an opposition was established between the diverse linguistic and ethnic groups: the French and/or Creoles against the Spanish. Although Creole identity did not correspond to a racial division at the inception of the Spanish regime, it certainly began to acquire one; a process that was greatly accelerated by the time the colony achieved statehood and the Americans began coming into the area. Early during the Spanish reign, the term Creole had a strong connotation of being French or having been assimilated into the French culture, being wealthy and having higher status than other groups. Unsurprisingly, due to the desire by Spanish immigrants to acquire these last two attributes, it is at this time that the word 'Creole' also began to acquire the connotation of being of Spanish descent, or of being a mixture of Spanish heritage and of the groups now native to the colony (African, French, or Native American).² The Spaniards who wanted to remain in the area chose to integrate themselves, whether physically, (through intermarriage with the other groups in the area), or culturally, (by adaptation of the customs of the locals), and little remains of their culture or language in the state today. This chameleon-like process included not only physical, cultural, and linguistic integration, but also the adoption of the identity term (Creole) used by many wealthy inhabitants to distinguish themselves from the lower classes.

²This meaning for the term Creole was given to me in a separate, smaller survey which I conducted in the Lafayette area. The few respondents who gave this definition said it was what they had been taught in school.

Other groups coming into the area at this time also were brought into the 'Creole' fold, because of a significant population increase in the colony. This was due to a variety of factors. Sugarcane cultivation had finally become very profitable and brought more francophone groups into the area. There was an influx of displaced Royalists fleeing the remnants of the 1789 French Revolution, who ended up, for the most part, in the New Orleans region. In addition, beginning in 1755, approximately 700 Acadians were deported from the present-day area of Nova Scotia, Canada; many of them ended up in Louisiana. Twenty years later, an additional 1600 people were deported from the same area, and again found their way to Louisiana. Augmenting these Francophone groups were the refugees from the 1789 slave revolt in Haiti (formerly St. Domingue), who were mostly '*gens de couleur*' (people of color) of mixed Caucasian-African descent, along with a small white elite group of planters from the island. Of these groups, it was only the Acadians (present day 'Cajuns') who never adopted the term 'Creole' to describe their identity. The Haitian émigrés, for whom the term was already in use on the island, unanimously chose this label, regardless of physical appearance or racial characteristics, while the exiles from France adopted it or were assigned it because of their Gallic heritage. This slow but steady enveloping of the term Creole by other groups dramatically affected the meaning of the term and the racial, ethnic and social components comprising the community.

2.2.3 American Reign/Anglicization

A French victory in the endless wars between France and Spain forced Spain to cede the right to the Louisiana territory back to France in 1800. The United States

purchased the Louisiana Territory three years later for fifteen million dollars; a move which more than doubled the size of the original thirteen colonies. The new territory stretched from the present-day border between Canada and Montana and ran down the continental divide over to the Mississippi River and down to New Orleans, added 800,000 square miles to the new country, and was almost instantly invaded by land-hungry Anglophones. The social and political impact that this rapidly growing group was to have manifested itself almost instantly.

In order to achieve statehood (which it did in 1812), Louisiana had to approve its first constitution. Although French speakers were a majority in the state, the first constitution was written entirely in English and made no mention of specific rights for Francophones. One would have expected at least the highly educated New Orleans-based Creoles to mount a token resistance to this linguistic hegemony, but there was little or no outcry. Hamel (1984: 271) explains this in the following way:

“C'est en scrutant les journaux que l'on arrive à dégager les causes de cette nonchalance et ce manque de vision historique de la part des créoles: a) les créoles éprouvent le plus souverain mépris à l'égard des autres cultures en présence sur le territoire louisianais; b) imbus du libéralisme des débuts du XIXe siècle, ils croient que le fair play anglo-américain saura toujours protéger leurs valeurs culturelles; c) enfin, tout en profitant des exploits économiques des Anglo-Saxons, ces créoles vivent à l'heure de l'Europe, et n'ont pas pris la peine de se donner des racines 'pratiques' dans les domaines de l'économie américaine.”

“By looking at the newspapers of the time, one can discern the causes of the nonchalance and the lack of historical vision on the part of the Creoles: a) the Creoles held in the highest contempt the other cultures in the Louisiana territory; b) imbued with the freedoms granted to them since the beginning of the 19th century, they believed that the Anglo-American sense of fair play would always protect them and their culture; c) and finally, having profited from the economic explosion brought on by the Anglo-

Saxon presence, the Creoles lived as they had in the past, without partaking of the economic domains of the Americans.”(my translation).

The Anglo-Americans’ preemption of the linguistic, social, and cultural milieus of the French during this time can be seen in other ways. In New Orleans, the media (books, magazines and newspapers) began to change from French to English, including the strongly Francophone journal *Le Moniteur de la Louisiane*, which was forced to publish articles in both French and English. In addition, there grew to be clear geographical and architectural differences between areas of town where the Creoles/Natives lived and where the recently arrived Anglophones lived. The term ‘neutral ground’, which was meant literally at this point in history, was coined at this time and is still used today to describe the grassy median in a boulevard. In the political arena, Creoles associated themselves with Democrats whereas the English community supported the ‘Whigs’ or ‘Know-Nothing’ party. These latter two political parties (at this time, and up to, during, and shortly after the Civil War) were associated with anti-Catholicism, racism, and xenophobia. Since the Creoles often had a mixed racial background, were usually Catholic, and disdained the ‘new’ American culture, the attitudes of the two groups were quite dissimilar.

As the English-speaking community grew and the Creoles began to lose political, social, economic and numeric dominance, an anti-American sentiment also began to grow (Desdunes 1911). Interestingly it is at this point in time that one finds the most documents identifying people in Louisiana as Creoles, due perhaps to the rapidly growing awareness of the danger posed to the Creole culture by the Anglophone ‘outsiders’ (Dominguez 1986). As the tensions mounted between Francophone and Anglophone groups in the

state, the term Creole began to take on a new connotation. Cultural attributes such as French ancestry, the Catholic religion and the French language became crucial common denominators for Creole identity.

As the cultural attributes and the language became common denominators for Creole identity (and against American identity), the Haitian refugees, the free people of color, and, to some extent, the descendants of the Acadian exiles from southern Louisiana joined in with the anti-American movement (Desdunes 1911, Dominguez 1986). This was to change quite rapidly, however, due to the economic and political power exerted by the rapidly growing Anglophone population in the state. Although the term Creole previously had a strong connotation of being French or having been assimilated into the French culture, and of being wealthy and having higher status than other groups, as social strictures began to be imposed on the culture by Anglophones, white Creoles began to pull away from those Creoles with black or mixed heritage. Racial purity was becoming an important issue for whites, no matter what their ethnic background. The polarization which had begun to manifest itself between Anglophones and Creoles picked up speed with the approach of the Civil War, with one subtle yet vitally important change. Rather than language and culture being the defining factors of Creole identity, race became the primary issue. As racism between whites and blacks grew, the rivalry between white Creoles and the hated Anglophones lost momentum, and “(b)oth groups increasingly perceived the entire colored population (colored Creoles and black Creoles) as a common enemy” (Dominguez 1986:136). In spite of the common origins of all the Creoles in the state (in the original definition of being native to the colony), and despite the presence of a

common 'enemy' in the form of the Americans, white Creoles were increasingly unwilling to admit kinship with blacks. The 1852 state constitution was written in French and English, but, linguistically and culturally speaking, the inevitable process of anglicization had begun in Louisiana, and was never to be reversed.

This creeping racism was even more firmly cemented during (and after) the Civil War, which lasted from 1861 to 1865. The white groups began to campaign to change the previously ternary system of racial classification (white/colored/black) into a binary one (white/black). White Creoles in New Orleans began to mingle with Anglo-Americans in traditional areas such as festivals, balls, religion, and education. Loss of political, social and economic power by the white Creoles both accompanied and hastened this assimilation into the American culture. For the white population, Creole and Anglophone alike, there was no longer any distinction between colored Creoles and black Creoles. Although the poorer and more isolated black Creoles (who were, for the most part, ex-slaves) had little or no influence, colored Creoles were perceived as a threat because of their wealth, land-ownership and social standing. They became a target for frustrated whites, who sought various means to decrease the influence of the group as well as the potential influence of the recently freed large black population.³

Fairclough (1995) elaborates on two major social changes which were to change the fate of the Creole population in Louisiana forever. The first was the passage of the 1898 Constitution which stripped blacks and colored people of all political influence.

³Attempts were made to 'repatriate' free blacks to Africa, 'recolonize' them in Mexico and Haiti, and/or destroy them by the actions of the *comités de vigilance* (vigilante committees). See Brasseaux (1996:77-78).

Although the United States constitution guaranteed suffrage for the freed slaves, the state constitution additionally established *literacy* as a necessary and sufficient condition for voting. This was a highly effective denial mechanism, since only the elite members of the colored Creoles had access to education and were literate. The installation of a poll tax gave voter registrars additional ammunition to use against the newly freed slaves in the state as well as the colored Creoles, the former having very little of value, the latter losing property, valuables and cash at a tremendous rate. Unable to vote and participate in the political situation in the state, “blacks were in no position to mount an effective challenge to white supremacy” (Fairclough 1995:6). Of the extremely small portion of the black populace in the state who were literate, 90% of them were New Orleans Creoles. These men rose to power briefly during Reconstruction, but, in spite of the numerical superiority of blacks at this time, they were unable to rally enough support among the largely illiterate ex-slaves. Indecisiveness and in-fighting among themselves as to whether or not to throw in with the other blacks in the state hastened their loss of power and political influence. In the ever-increasing (American) white population, an extreme distaste for all things French was growing, and by the time of the passage of the 1921 state Constitution, the xenophobic American-driven ‘one flag, one nation, one language’ mentality had taken over, and Francophones (whether white or black) were almost entirely eliminated from the political process in the state.

The second decision which was to have a major impact on Creole identity was the campaign against miscegenation. By denying Creoles social and legal status as a separate race, as had been the case heretofore, and by making it a crime to live with or marry a

person of the opposite race, whites effectively forced the colored Creoles to claim either white or black heritage. Dominguez (1986:137) quotes an article in *Le Carillon* in 1873 which puts it very succinctly:

"Ce que veulent les fils de la Louisiane, le moment de le dire est venu: Il faut etre BLANC OR NOIR, que chacun se décide. Deux races sont en présence: l'une supérieure, l'autre inférieure...leur séparation est nécessaire absolument. Séparons donc, et dès aujourd'hui, en deux Partis bien tranchés: le PARTI BLANC et le PARTI NOIR. La position alors sera nette: La Louisiane blanche ou la Louisiane noire. Le Carillon arbore le drapeau des blancs, avec la conviction profonde que ce n'est que sous ses plis que l'on peut sauver la Louisiane."

The moment has come for the sons of Louisiana to declare themselves. It is imperative that everyone choose to be either white or black. Two races are here: one superior, the other inferior...their separation is *absolutely* necessary. Let us separate then, from this day forward, into two well-defined groups: the white group and the black group. The position will then be clear: White Louisiana or Black Louisiana. The Carillon will hang the flag of the whites, with the profound conviction that it is only under its folds that one can save Louisiana (my translation).

The demand for '*sang pur*', or absolutely pure white blood, 'untainted' by any hint of black blood, became the rallying cry for white Creoles seeking to distance themselves from black Creoles. It is during this period that the idealized and romanticized version of Creole identity came about. Writers such as Mercier (1880) and Fortier (1891) wrote essays and books portraying Creoles as, first of all, white, (and only white), and secondly as the languid, impoverished, yet proud descendants of French or Spanish heritage.⁴ This effectively denied the existence of Creoles who were also black, since blacks or people of racially mixed ancestry could no longer lay claim to the term (Fairclough 1995:2). These

⁴These authors are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

writers also reacted strongly to the works of George Cable (1898, 1910) who argued that Creoles in Louisiana could also be black or colored. According to Mercier and his colleagues, Cable was an aberration because of his acceptance of mixed blood among the Creoles. In the words of Tinker (1943:vii), Cable was “as much a misfit in New Orleans as a parson in a crap game”, and the highly influential group of writers and historians fought (both literally and figuratively) against the publication of any literature which implied that Creoles could also include people of mixed blood.

Accompanying this demand for pure-bloodedness was heightened scrutiny of bloodlines and ancestry. White and black Creoles were further polarized when other whites began to insinuate that white Creoles who continued to identify themselves as members of the same social group or category as thousands of colored people must have a ‘touch of the tarbrush’ or ‘skeletons in their closet’ (Dominguez 1986:141). It became the *de facto* law in the state that one had to prove white ancestry for the previous five generations (called the ‘1/32nd law’). In extreme cases, 1/64th black blood was enough to label a person as black. This caused the extremely tenuous relationship still existing between white Creoles and colored Creoles to disintegrate even further. The white community became extremely sensitive to the problem of purity of blood and ancestry.⁵

The aftermath of the Civil War included total economic disarray and massive destruction of social and political institutions in Louisiana (and in many other areas of the

⁵The flip side of the coin, of course, were those Creoles who chose to pass as white in spite of having African heritage. The *passeblanc* (passing as white) were generally reviled by both groups, however, and often moved out of the area to escape derision from blacks and whites alike. There is a large group of Creoles and their descendants from Louisiana who live in California because of this phenomenon.

South). Inept bungling on the part of the *de jure* installed 'Yankee' politicians during Reconstruction kept the state in chaos for many years. The divisions which had begun to be established before the war between blacks and whites grew, along with such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan, Knights of the White Camelia, the Caucasian Club and the Pale Faces. In spite of being legally enfranchised, a mass exodus of a portion of the black population of the state occurred, and Louisiana became predominantly white for the first time in years. It is in this environment that writers who insisted on a racially 'pure', white-only definition of the term 'Creole' such as Fortier (1891), Gayarré (1903), and Mercier (1881) flourished. As Hirsch and Logsdon note (1992:98), this "attempt to hijack the *creole* label for the exclusive white use not only furnished evidence of the white creoles' Americanization but also meant that, to the extent ...(that the) creole character survived at all, *it did so primarily among nonwhites*" (emphasis added).

From the early part of the 20th century until after the civil rights movement, segregation was increasingly legalized and formalized as a way of life in Louisiana, as well as in other areas of the South. For the former slaves, freedom from slavery did not mean freedom from racism, oppression and extreme poverty. The belief that the end of the Civil War in 1895 and emancipation from slavery meant equality for all was rapidly proven wrong, both at the state and the federal level. Racial segregation was legalized by the United States Supreme Court in 1896, insuring that schools, churches, public transportation and residential areas were to be 'separate but equal'. For the colored Creoles, whites' insistence on treating all persons with any African ancestry as members of a single class guaranteed that they, too, would experience this separation. In an effort to

combat this, some colored Creoles “determined that...they would be the social and political leaders of their race” (Brasseaux, Fontenot and Oubre 1994:104).

This was a “skilled, assertive and self-confident group” (Fairclough 1995:3) who resisted the legal sanctions imposed on them by whites with all the means available to them. They established the first branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in New Orleans in 1915, which provided legal aid and monetary support when possible. They also kept a tenuous hold on political power by keeping in contact with white Republicans, although the voting of blacks steadily declined from this point forward until after the Civil Rights movement. In the social arena, this group established a network of doctors, lawyers, bankers and insurance agents; all of which helped blacks who were unable to access these services elsewhere. In the educational realm, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation made dramatic improvements in the number and quality of schools which were established for nonwhites (Fairclough 1995).

In spite of these successes, however, the plight of both black Creoles and colored Creoles became worse. They viewed the small amount of interracial cooperation existing between blacks and whites as a stepping-stone toward complete equality, and, ultimately, the abolition of segregation. Whites (even those who fought hardest for blacks rights and equality), believed in keeping the races segregated, and concentrated instead on “improvements within the structure of racial segregation” (Fairclough 1995:12). In addition, there were social and economic divisions among the colored Creoles and black Creoles which were difficult to overcome. Black Creoles (former slaves living in rural

areas, for the most part) were extremely poor and viewed the New Orleans Creoles with suspicion. They were often isolated in remote, almost inaccessible communities and maintained the French language and cultural traditions, whereas the Creoles in New Orleans, both socially and linguistically, had become increasingly anglicized by this time.⁶

The lack of quality education in public schools and the discrimination experienced by the non-white Creoles led them to turn to the Catholic church for parochial education. Though they fought long and hard against segregated churches and parishes, they eventually acquiesced in order to have access to better schooling. As Fairclough (1995:14) notes, this, ironically, “preserved the church’s core support among black Catholics”. This allegiance to the Catholic church became more and more important as a marker of Creole identification.⁷

2.3 MODERN-DAY SITUATION OF THE LOUISIANA CREOLE FRENCH COMMUNITY

With the advent of the Depression in the early 1930's, any residual cooperation between whites and blacks ground to a halt. Around the same time the distinction between black Creoles, colored Creoles and black Americans without French ancestry became “increasingly blurred through intermarriage, social mobility, the decline of the

⁶At this point in time in New Orleans schools were using English almost exclusively (with the exception of some private and parochial schools), most church services were conducted in English, the ‘media’ (newspapers, gazettes, magazines and pamphlets) were usually printed in English, and business transactions (especially in the Anglophone part of the city) were conducted strictly in English. French had largely attained the status of a ‘family language’.

⁷This adherence to the Catholic Church among African-Americans with French Ancestry in South Louisiana is the subject of analysis in later chapters.

French language, and the sheer weight of white supremacy” Fairclough (1995:17). This rapprochement of the two black communities was aided and abetted by Louisiana’s laws of racial classification. The 1/32nd law was expanded in 1940 to say that “any degree of traceability was sufficient for Negro classification” (Brasseaux et al 1994:123), and remained in place until 1970, when the state legislature again passed an act stating that 1/32nd black blood was sufficient for African-American identification.⁸ Because they were being legally forced into choosing black identity, an increasing number of non-white Creoles began to look to black identification as a ‘badge of honor’ (Brasseaux et al 1994:124). This was aided by the enormous changes effected by Civil Rights struggle on America’s black population during the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s, which had as its cornerstone ‘black pride’. Smitherman (1998: 210) documents a concomitant change in the identity labels of the African-American community at large in the United States by detailing the changes undergone in the lexical items used to refer to this group. Ignoring the more derogatory terms which were used, socially acceptable terms to describe African-Americans changed over time from ‘African’ to ‘colored’ to ‘negro’ to ‘Negro’ to ‘black’ to ‘African-American’. As Smitherman (1998:211) remarks, “(n)ame changes and debates over names reflect (African-Americans’) uncertain status and come to the forefront during crises and upheavals...”. The situation of Creoles in Louisiana is not exactly parallel to that of blacks in general in the United States because of the unique

⁸The 1970 law was repealed in 1983 after being contested in court. The Louisiana Bureau of Vital Statistics (LBVS) today relies on racial self-identification and the assistance of social workers and nurses to establish race for newborns (personal communication with the director of the LBVS in New Orleans, Louisiana).

sociohistorical background of the area, but there has undoubtedly been a 'spillover effect' from the black pride movement. It has additionally been during times of 'crises and upheavals' which have changed the makeup of the groups of people claiming Creole identity in the state.

In Louisiana today, pride in Creole identity is still evident in some rural communities. Although the numerically dominant (white) Cajuns have recently forced an awareness of both the French language and cultural traditions still surviving in the state via efforts of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL), this revival has also (as an unintended side-effect) aided the Creoles. Creole activists in larger urban areas are increasingly taking an interest in reviving their language and culture. A corresponding movement for the preservation of the Creole culture was established by groups of Creole activists, such as C.R.E.O.L.E., inc. and the Un-Cajun Committee (both based in Lafayette), and the Southern Heritage Foundation (in Opelousas). These organizations claim that too much attention is being paid to the white Cajun culture at the expense of the black and Creole cultures.

In addition, there are still some colored Creoles who have a sense of pride in being different from black Creoles and black Americans with no French ancestry. Due to historical forces, this group (located for the most part in the Cane River/Isle Brevelle community near Natchitoches, Louisiana) geographically, politically and socially isolated themselves from the community of former black slaves, and had social and economic ties with the white community for many years. Paradoxically, the upheaval caused by the freeing of the slaves after the Civil War nearly caused the complete destruction of this

group. They lost social and political power, as well as wealth, status and property at an astounding rate due to both the changes in the racial environment of the state, and, as Mills (1977: xvi) notes, the gross ignorance on the part of the Americans of the “chasm which existed between the black and the part-black in Creole society...”. However, the Cane River Creoles pulled together, regrouped and today maintain the one constant which has driven their struggle for existence - pride in their heritage. The pride they exhibit in their bloodline and ancestry also entails that they continue to identify as Creole due to the prestige they were awarded in the past by being part of the ‘third caste’ of mixed racial heritage (Mills 1977).

It is the activists from this group who are mounting a campaign to try to get the U.S. Census Bureau to change the possible labels of identification on the census. The five options currently available are white, black, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native or Hispanic (the only truly ‘ethnic’ option). Rather than being forced to choose between the ‘black’ or ‘white’ label offered by the census, this group feels strongly that the label ‘Creole’, or at least, ‘multiracial’ needs to be added to the range of choices.⁹ Their emphasis on the cultural and ancestral part of their heritage has been to the detriment of the Creole French spoken by this population at one time, however, and no

⁹This is not the only group pushing for a change in the Census Bureau labels. According to an article in the *Sunday Advocate* (Baton Rouge, September 28, 1997), government researchers spent months developing Census questionnaires, then “trying them out on whites in West Virginia, *Cajuns and Creoles in Louisiana*, rural blacks in Mississippi, American Indians in Oklahoma, Hispanics in Texas and Asians on the West Coast” (emphasis added). In the long form (only) for the 2000 census, there was a racial/ethnic ‘write-in’ category. The short form had no such options. One in every six families received a long form.

one today claims to speak the language. Since their emphasis is purely on culture, and their culture is heavily invested in pride in European heritage (much more so than their African heritage), they strongly reject the labels 'black' and 'African-American'.¹⁰

The Lafayette tourist commission recently included the word 'Creole' in its tourist brochure for the first time. Dismissing any racial connotations, the head of the tourist bureau claimed that "this isn't about black and white or anything in between. This is about green. We're happy to promote everybody and everything as long as it helps the tourist business" (New York Times, Sunday Edition, November 23, 1997). That may be, but an article in The Advocate (Baton Rouge, July 1, 1998) specifically separates the people celebrating the 300th anniversary of French culture in Louisiana (called FrancoFête '99). After discussing the various Cajun groups which will be hosting family reunions, the writer included a separate paragraph stating that "(b)lack, French-speaking Creole families will also take part in FrancoFête, and so will members of the Native American Indian tribes who were to some degree assimilated into the French culture."

It is not just the Louisiana Creole *culture* which has largely been ignored by the mainstream Cajun activists and French revival supporters, but their language as well. Brown (1997), in discussing the French norms being established in the state in the educational realm, reports that the debate about which form of French to adopt is centered solely around Cajun French or Standard French - Creole French is not even considered a viable alternative. She comments that this is not surprising, "given the prescriptivist and racist bent of the dominant culture" (Brown 1997:222).

¹⁰See Mills (1977: 208-209 and *passim*) for an explanation of this phenomenon.

In this atmosphere, it is unremarkable that Creole advocates are not satisfied and preach a harder line. "You're either black or you're white. There is no easy way out", said one of the people interviewed for the New York Times article, echoing, nearly one hundred years later, the infamous declaration from *Le Moniteur* quoted earlier...*la louisiane blanche ou la louisiane noire* (a white Louisiana or a black Louisiana).

2.4 CURRENT SITUATION OF THE LOUISIANA CREOLE FRENCH COMMUNITY

Since the changes undergone by Creoles in Louisiana from the beginning of the colony, up to, and throughout the 20th century are key to the analysis of the research conducted for this paper, I will briefly recapitulate the history discussed above.

At the beginning of the colony, Creole identity included the first generation of native born European settlers as well as black slaves and free people of color. Opposition to the Spanish regime brought to the forefront the criterion of French ancestry and a socioeconomic connotation of wealth and higher status. In the American period, Creole identity became a counterpoint to American identity and expanded to encompass French ancestry, socioeconomic divisions, occupational differences, and religious and linguistic divergence. During the Civil War and Reconstruction only French ancestry, racial differences, and linguistic divisions were maintained as distinctive Creole features. This trend continued throughout the post-bellum and segregation periods. Due to social pressure, legislative 'initiatives', and the overwhelming presence of English in the state, French language use has subsided, leaving French ancestry and racial classifications as the key components of Creole identity in the late 20th century.

Neither the importation of 1,500 Canary Islanders in 1788 by the Spanish government (a belated and unsuccessful attempt to secure their hold on the area) nor the influx of refugees from the Haitian revolution in 1789 set up a sharply divisive political, social, or racial dichotomy between Creoles and non-Creoles. Although the process of establishing an 'us-versus-them' mentality was begun during the Spanish possession of the colony, it took newly arriving Americans to make identification as 'Creole' a social and legal affirmation of mixed blood. For those of African origin brought to French Louisiana, however, claiming 'Creoleness' was a losing proposition during the early years of the colony, up until and after the Civil War. Whites held political, social and economic dominance in their society, and those of mixed-race were only slightly lower on the socioeconomic scale. After the Civil War, when race rather than Francophone or Anglophone heritage became the knife with which to split hairs, whites abandoned their claim to the term Creole rather than be labeled a mixed-breed, and thereby a lower class person. This process was fairly slow, especially in the case of the New Orleans Creoles, but it inevitably led to African-Americans with French heritage being the progenitors and sole possessors of the 'new' Creole identity in Louisiana. This process has continued unabated up until the present, and "the value attachments of Louisiana Creoles to their ethnic identity has shifted notably over the decades of the twentieth century" Dormon (1996:11).

In the first volume of two pivotal books on race relations in the United States, Branch (1988: xi) says that "...as color defines vision itself, race shapes the cultural eye - what we do and do not notice, the reach of empathy and the alignment of response." Such

is the case in Louisiana at the turn of the 20th century. Whether or not the Creoles in the state view themselves and identify themselves as black, Creole, or something in between is a matter yet to be determined. What effect this choice of identity has on their cultural and linguistic attitudes will also be more clear when the responses from this research are analyzed. What is apparent is that there has been a slow, but certain, paradigmatic shift in the lives of Louisiana's Creoles.

A major question then becomes how this has affected the population, notably the younger Creoles who came of age in the years of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. Neumann (1985:fn 4) speculates that:

"(c)hez les jeunes Noirs surtout, on remarque une nouvelle conscience ethnique qui est sans doute liée au mouvement d'émancipation des Afro-Américains datant des années soixante. Ces jeunes se désignent volontairement du Créoles pour se distinguer des Blancs."

Especially among young blacks, a new ethnic conscience is noticeable which is no doubt tied into the emancipation movement of African-Americans dating from the 60s. These young people voluntarily designate themselves Creole in order to distinguish themselves from whites (my translation).

2.5 CONCLUSION

As is shown by the history given above, the situation of the Creoles in Louisiana is quite complex. Although African-Americans seem to be the sole owners of a linguistic Creole 'identity' in the state today, there are still pockets of blacks or 'colored Creoles', along with a small group of whites, who lay claim to this identity via cultural avenues. This survey reports on the language maintenance, language attitudes, and language use of the African-Americans with Creole ancestry in the two areas chosen for study.

Using special tabulations made by the U.S. Census bureau (discussed at length in a later chapter), it was established that there is no self-identified white Creole population parallel to the communities of African-Americans with Creole ancestry. These numbers show indisputably that it is the black population in the southern part of the state who make up today's Creoles - whether they live in Natchitoches, Point Coupée, Breaux Bridge or Opelousas. Given the historical changes and the massive changes exerted upon the Creole population, the numerical dominance of African-Americans who claim Creole heritage, the quasi-extinct white Creole population, long familiarity with the racial situation in the state, and the maintenance of Creole French only within the community of African-Americans with Creole heritage, it is evident that this group is the repository of the Creole culture, and, where it is still extant, the Creole language. It can be theorized that the strong social forces that the 20th century exerted upon young blacks mentioned in the Neumann quote above may have been accompanied a change in identity claims by *all* the members of this community, which in turn, may have had an effect on their linguistic behavior and language attitudes.

In the next chapter, a review of the pertinent literature on the Louisiana Creoles is presented. In later chapters, the diachronic and synchronic overviews presented above are tied in with both the previous research done on this group as well as the results of the study done for this paper.

CHAPTER 3

LOUISIANA CREOLE FRENCH LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 OVERVIEW

As was illustrated in the previous chapter, historical, linguistic, social and economic forces have acted upon the Creole community in Louisiana throughout its history. Beginning with the French conquest of the land, both the term Creole and the people were assigned certain characteristics. These characteristics acquired new dimensions under the Spanish rule of the state; the situation changed even more radically as the Americans took over the area with the introduction of statehood in 1803. As these changes occurred, the previously 'racially undifferentiated conception of Creole' began to be altered during the last half of the 19th century, and this process has continued into the 20th century. Unfortunately, these changes have not been taken into account in much of the research done on this community.

The literature on Louisiana Creoles to date consists of studies which focus either on history of the group, while excluding the language and culture, or studies strictly concentrating on descriptive linguistics (lexicons for the most part) without including or taking into account the social, economic and historical situation of the Creoles. Although there was series of studies done on the Louisiana French communities in the state (both Cajun and Creole) directed from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge in the early years of the 20th century, there was a hiatus in research during both world wars. After a brief resurgence in the late 50's and early 60's, there was a lapse of quite a few years

before any more research was attempted. The early studies done on the community were almost exclusively historical, with the exception of books of 'Creole' folk tales published in the New Orleans area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The earlier studies also focused primarily on the bifurcation between the races, and the arguments about whether Creoles were black or white were prominent in all the discussions about this group. Whites had political and social control, however, and the few voices raised in protest against the 'white-only' Creole movement were rarely heard.

Creoles were (and still are today, to some degree) often stigmatized, not only by Anglophones, but by other Francophones as well. This fact is reflected in the literature, and, with just a few exceptions, the earliest research which was done was 'Cajuncentric'. In recent years the renaissance of French culture in the state has diverted some of the focus to the Creole language and culture; as a result, both the quality and quantity of studies improved after the 1960's. What follows is a brief summary of the research which has been done on Louisiana Creole since the late 19th century.

3.2 EARLY STUDIES (PRE-1960)

One of the earliest studies of Louisiana French was done by Alcée Fortier in 1891. In spite of his picturesque use of poetic license, Fortier managed to adequately encapsulate the linguistic situation as it existed in the parishes of South Louisiana at that time when he noted, "French is essentially the language of the inhabitants...and it is well spoken by the educated class. The latter speak English also, but the lower class speak the Acadian

French mixed with the Creole patois and a little English” (Fortier, 1891:16).¹ He further noted that a large percentage of the population was “completely illiterate (but) education will, of course, destroy their dialect, so that the work of studying their peculiar customs and language(s) must not be long delayed ” (Fortier 1891:19). In positing a continuum of language varieties in this area, Fortier’s study foreshadowed research which would take place almost 100 years later (as is explained below). In addition, his astute comments about education leading to the diminishment of the dialects have also proved true, as both the Cajun and Creole languages have fallen victim to the ‘English-only’ policy which has been in place in Louisiana since the early 1900’s.² Fortier himself is guilty of promoting stereotypes, however, since he concentrated on writing about the ‘exotic’ aspects of the various languages in Louisiana.

Fortier and Charles Gayarré (1903) also set themselves up as vehemently anti-black and pro white-only Creole. They were historians rather than linguists, and, as Dominguez (1986:143) remarks, although they were intelligent men, they became “engulfed in the reclassification process intent on salvaging white Creole status”, thereby refusing to acknowledge the earlier racial mixing which had occurred in the colony. This stance led them to claim that the term Creole encompassed *only* white, French-speaking people from the colony/state. According to Tregle (1992:181), Gayarré in particular promulgated the ‘Creole myth’, which was “redolent more of racial fears than of ethnic

¹Fortier uses ‘French’ to refer to Colonial French, ‘Acadian French’ to refer to what I am calling Cajun French, and ‘Creole patois’ to refer to Louisiana Creole.

²Although both languages are still extant, they are in severe danger of dying out altogether.

pride”, and created the ‘falsehood’ of a racially pure, white-only Creole culture. It is from this time on, Dominguez (1986:146) claims, that a new, divisive meaning was attached to the term Creole. In an effort to ‘save’ their legal and social status, these historians, authors and researchers deliberately slanted or ignored historical evidence affecting Creoles, their identities, and the racial mixing which had occurred and was continuing in the state.

One of the contemporaries of Gayarré and Fortier who disagreed with them was Hearn (1924), who, (as did Cable 1898, 1910), refused to accept that the label ‘Creole’ only applied to whites. Hearn refuted Fortier’s euphemism of ‘Negro-French’ to describe the language spoken by people with African heritage by claiming that it was ‘hyper-sensitive’, and stated that “the original expression (Creole) is admirably significant and implies not only a form of language, but also the special conditions which give the language existence” (1924:11). For him, of course, the ‘original expression’ was inclusive, not exclusive, and both blacks, whites, and people of mixed race could be considered Creole.

Cable (1898, 1910), although reviled by his peers, in fact was one of the few supporters of the existence of a *black* Creole community (particularly in the New Orleans area). Cable (1910:41) agreed with the definition of Creole as being ‘native to Louisiana’, within limits, when he suggested that the term “came early to include any native, of French or Spanish descent by either parent, whose non-alliance with the slave race entitled him to social rank. Later, the term was adopted by - not conceded to - the natives of mixed blood, and is still so used among themselves”. He additionally identified the Creoles of

Louisiana as being 'both white and colored', and referred to them as the French speaking people of Louisiana. He also noted that although "there has been a strong inflow of Anglo-Americans and English-speaking blacks, the Creoles still receive religious education, and use French in the sanctuary and at home", English being used for law and trade (Cable 1910:3). His writings are viewed by many today as a gentle yet extremely ironic vilification of those whites who refused to accept as Creole the offspring of the interracial relationships which had been so prevalent in the colony among the early settlers. His extremely liberal reformist views led him to being denounced as a traitor, and he had to flee New Orleans to the North, where he lived out the remainder of his life (Webb 1983). Perhaps the strongest benefit which can be derived from Cable's work today is the contrast and conflict existing between the classes and races in late 19th century New Orleans, since his texts were interspersed with bits and pieces of Louisiana Creole as well as the French spoken in New Orleans of the time, and at times portray characters who are apparently fluent in both. Although most of his work was fiction, one can assume that he was attempting to reflect the life of the Creoles with whom he populated his tales.

Desdunes in 1911 published *Nos hommes et notre histoire* (Our Men and Our History) which he claimed 'was to pay homage to the Creole population, by remembering the famous men it has produced and the good things that it has accomplished' (title page - translated from the French). The majority of his 'famous men' were of mixed race heritage. Adding fuel to the fire, the anonymous writer of the foreword of the book unabashedly acknowledges his stance on the (at-the-time) raging controversy about white versus black Creoles by stating:

“J’aime le Creole de couleur. Je l’aime surtout quand il parle ma langue. Il est alors un peu mon cousin. Qu’importe la teinte de la peau? Son père était venu ici de Marseille peut-être ou de Bordeaux, (et) je ne veux pas...prétendre que mon sang latin se soit corrompu en se mêlant dans ses veines au sang de l’Africain.

I love the Creole of color. I especially love him when he speaks my language. Then it is as though he is my cousin. What is the importance of skin color? Their fathers came here from Marseilles, or perhaps Bordeaux, and I do not want to claim that my Latin blood is corrupted by being mixed in the veins and the blood of Africans (my translation).

Although the majority of this book is written in the Colonial French of the time, there are instances when Desdunes chooses to write in Creole, particularly when he is representing stories written by and about Creoles of color (i.e., when he reports the Toucoutou fable). The linguistic information imparted by this book is minimal, however, and the passages written in Creole are somewhat suspect, since they appear to contain many ‘standard’ French terms which were not likely to be a part of the Louisiana Creole French repertoire of the time. As noted by the anonymous author of the foreword, this probably derives from Desdunes’ classical education and his time spent in France and elsewhere in Europe. The most important contribution of this work was in the social arena, which reminded whites that Creoles with African heritage were a sizable portion of the population of New Orleans, and that these individuals still retained much pride in their Creole heritage.

In the 1930’s, articles by Read (1931), Ditchy (1932), Lane (1934, 1935) and Phillips (1936) appeared; all attempted to document the French language(s) spoken in the state, although social and racial issues were occasionally addressed. Lane (1935:5) in

particular appeared to pick up the gauntlet thrown down by Fortier and his followers. He referred to “the French which is spoken by the greater portion of the negro population of French Louisiana” as ‘Negro-French’, and continued by noting that although many people call it a Creole language, this was “actually a misnomer (since the adjective Creole applies properly to persons of pure white race).” In a masterful use of politically incorrect speech, (which was reflective of this time and the belief systems held by many whites), he additionally asserted that Creole languages arise from a parallel situation in which a more cultured language comes into contact with one of inferior culture. The article presents the “Negro-French dialect as spoken in St. Martinville” as the ‘inferior’ language, and uses actual speech samples, which are compared to the ‘superior’ language of the French of France. However, as the author mentions, the regularity of his data is suspect due to the code-mixing between the “Negro-French” and “standard Louisiana-French...particularly when white and black are conversing” (1935:9).

Reflecting the mixed actuality of the historical situation, all these authors experienced problems in differentiating between Colonial French, Louisiana Creole, and Cajun/Acadian French. This confusion led to a misinterpretation of the languages existing in the state at the time as well as ambivalence in the analyses of the various codes. In addition, these studies mainly focused on *lexical differences* between the French spoken in Louisiana and that spoken in France. In keeping with the type of research being done at that time in American linguistics, words were elicited in citation form, then compared with a ‘standard’. There was little or no analysis of any of the other facets of the language, and certainly few attempts to explore aspects of the culture and social factors which may have

affected language use. Phillips (1936) continued to publish works based on his original research, and as recently as 1986 published an article entitled "The Spoken French of Louisiana". However, this very brief treatment of Standard, Acadian and Creole French adds little or nothing to earlier analyses of the three varieties. His remarks on the Creole language include the unhelpful statement that Creole pronunciation is simplified and "has undergone various phonetic accidents", and he confines the rest of his remarks to lexical items which have "maintained certain archaic French forms." (Phillips 1986:146-151).

At this time, as reported by Oukada (1977) there were other unpublished M.A. theses being produced at Louisiana State University. For the most part, these works document the Cajun French lexicon and/or folklore and are essentially glossaries of the lexical variations of Cajun from Standard French, although they occasionally mention or describe the Creoles and Creole French.³ Tregle (1952), a historian on the other side of the coin from the 'white-only' Creole historians, has published and continues to publish articles in which he attempts to convince people once and for all that the term 'Creole' simply meant 'native to Louisiana' in its inception, and that the people who insisted that the term only applied to whites were simply unwilling to accept the historical evidence which had been compiled. With the exception of Ditchy's (1933) glossary, Voorhies's lexicography study of St. Martin Parish in 1949, and Wartburg's (1942) explanation as to the impossibility of creating an atlas of Louisiana French, there was a hiatus in the linguistically-oriented studies of Creole in the next decade, and research was not begun

³See e.g. Durand (1930), Bernard (1933), Lane (1934), Guilbeau (1936), Hurst (1936), and Jeansonne (1938).

again until the 1960s. This was largely driven by the renewed interest in the languages in South Louisiana, and can be linked also to the upsurge among blacks in pride in their heritage and the accompanying 'black-power' movement, and more generally, to the (re)claiming of ethnic and racial identities by linguistic minority groups throughout the United States.

Implicit in the linguistic imperialism philosophy which directed the work of earlier researchers in the French language communities in Louisiana was the careless assumption that accurate linguistic descriptions of the indigenous speech would not be matters of first priority (Oukada 1977:102). This lack of care and/or ignorance in data collection especially applied (and applies) to the Louisiana Creole speech community. As interest in the Creole language and culture has grown, however, more linguists and anthropologists have begun to take an interest in this dialect, yielding greater focus on the sociocultural and linguistic aspects of this group. The structuralist and prescriptive approach taken by earlier researchers has been replaced by a more descriptive framework which has broadened the field and allowed many insights into the language and community. Recent studies which utilize newer methodologies and incorporate social factors into the study of Louisiana's Creole communities are described below according to their major focus.

3.3 POST 1960 RESEARCH

3.3.1 Genesis Studies

Eble (1993:169) refers to Creole as the "second filament of the complex triglossic web in southern Louisiana".⁴ She follows Morgan (1970) in claiming that, although the

⁴English and Cajun French comprise the other two 'strands' of the 'web'.

Louisiana Creole language is similar to other French-based Caribbean Creoles, “it shares most of its vocabulary with Cajun French and has de-creolized in that direction.” Eble touches briefly on the complexity of the social relationships between Creole and Cajun speakers when she remarks that these intercultural relationships have led to mixed claims about the mutual intelligibility of the Creole and Cajun languages. She also suggests (citing Tregle’s 1952 research) that disparate meanings of the term Creole have developed over the years in the state, due to “the rather fluid and overlapping castes of creoles and non-creoles, whites, black slaves, free people of color, and people of mixed racial ancestry” (Eble 1993:171). Conrad (1981:1) concurs, and states “(t)he fact of the matter is that Louisiana does not possess a monolithic French heritage. What is perceived...as ‘French Louisiana’ has been and perhaps remains nothing more than a loose and sometimes antagonistic relationship between socially disparate Francophone communities.”

It is no mere coincidence that pinning down an actual definition of the Louisiana Creole French language is as problematic as coming up with a definitive explanation of who, exactly, comprises Louisiana’s Creole French population. Historical, social, political, and economic factors come in to play for both the language and the culture. Brasseaux et al (1994) give perhaps the most pared down definition of the language when they suggest that Louisiana Creole is a hybrid language which has French and African linguistic elements. Other authors such as Neumann (1984) and Klingler (1992) have given morphosyntactic and lexical summaries of this variety in an attempt to ‘fill in the gaps’ and come up with a concrete definition of what the language is. In the final analysis,

as is discussed below, linguists have resorted to trying to discover the genesis of the language in order to clarify the issue.

Those who have studied the genesis of Louisiana Creole include Marshall (1990, 1997), Speedy (1995), Valdman (1996), Klingler (1997), and Dubois (2000). These researchers all present excellent arguments for a separate genesis of the Creole which is spoken in Louisiana. Using textual evidence in the form of court records and marriage/death certificates, they all argue the fact that the 'original' Creole language spoken in Louisiana arose *in situ*, and evolved separately from the St. Domingue/Haitian Creole to which it is often compared today. However, the differences in their analyses are as striking as the similarities.

In *The Origins of Creole French in Louisiana*, Marshall (1990) presents extremely well-reasoned arguments against Louisiana Creole arising from Haitian Creole, and in favor of it being created *in situ*. She points out that blacks in the Louisiana territory were speaking Louisiana Creole from the middle of the 18th century. This long period of an established language which predated the influx of the refugees from Saint-Domingue as well as the sociohistorical forces in effect at the time confirm for Marshall that Louisiana Creole arose from the mixture of the African languages spoken by the slaves imported from Africa early in the history of the colony and the French of the local inhabitants. Her assertion that "comparative linguistic studies of Creole French in Louisiana and in Haiti do not substantiate the claim that Louisiana Creole emerged from Haitian Creole" is supported by other researchers. Klingler (1997), in particular, adduced both linguistic and demographic evidence to strongly dispute the claim that Louisiana Creole was imported

from St. Domingue. He based his conclusions on the fact that the Creole speakers living in Louisiana (regardless of the geographic region) already had an established linguistic code, therefore the arrival of the 10,000 plus slaves from St. Domingue in the early 1800's would not and did not necessitate the creation of a new Creole language.

Speedy (1995) suggests that there was not a single, unique origin for this language, but instead claims that there were *two* separate starting points for Creole in Louisiana. Her evidence consists of socio-demographic forces and the settlement history of the colony, which she asserts more accurately accounts for the two separate geographical origin zones for the language. She proposes the terms 'Mississippi Creole' for an entirely indigenous language which arose on the east side of the Mississippi, and 'Teche Creole' for the language which was birthed on the west side of the Atchafalaya Basin. According to Speedy (1995:130), Teche Creole emerged quite some time after Mississippi Creole and the Creole-speaking slaves from Saint-Domingue had a major input into this language. Neumann (1985: 21), whose research was conducted along the banks of Bayou Teche, explicitly mentioned this dialectal difference among Creoles in her dissertation, but she attributed the variability among the Creole codes as decreolization toward Cajun French.

Valdman (1996:156) in discussing the fact that a slave population existed in Louisiana long before the immigration of any other French groups, noted that "it is highly probable that a local French-based creole developed between (the earliest date of the slaves arrival) and the massive influx of speakers of Saint-Domingue Creole." In an attempt to prove similarities between Louisiana Creole and Haitian Creole, Valdman

(1996:158) proposes, as many Creolists have, that the earliest form of a French-based creole appeared on the island of St. Kitts. He postulates that this Creole language was exported to Guadeloupe and Martinique, and then, “from secondary disseminating points, to Saint-Domingue. Finally, it was introduced into...Louisiana”. He extrapolates from this diffusion theory to claim that the newest, most innovation form of Creole will be on those islands from which it first came - Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Saint-Domingue - since these areas exhibit the most innovative forms of the language. Those areas which were later recipients of the language (such as Louisiana) would retain the most conservative, older forms of the language.

The position of a separate genesis (or geneses) taken by these researchers is not without its dangers, since it is in direct contradiction to insistence of Creolists who claim that Creoles all over the world have a common origin (the monogenetic theory) as well as those who insist that Creoles are simply offspring of the language which forms the majority of its lexical items; more specifically, that the language is relexified (the substrate or relexification theory).⁵ Although most Creolists can support one of these theories by referencing either the settlement history or the sociohistorical background of the formation of a Creole language, the early settlement history and slave importation records of the Louisiana Territory cannot substantiate either one. Due to the dearth of early textual material, the linguistic analyses of early Louisiana Creole are, by default, incomplete. Errors on the part of the original recorder of the texts could also influence accurate

⁵There is also Derek Bickerton's research (1981) in which he promotes the 'bioprogram' as the basis for the genesis of Creoles. See Holm (1988) for an excellent overview of all of these theories.

analyses of these items. Marshall (1990, 1997) suggested this explicitly when she noted that the scribes recording the information could have enhanced the 'simplified', or more basilectal nature of Louisiana Creole in order to caricature the blacks speaking this code, or simply because they were unfamiliar with the speech variety being used.

These faults can be mitigated by compiling a solid sociolinguistic and sociohistorical overview of the situation in which a language arises and can strongly supplement any purely linguistic arguments. Dubois (2000) provides just such a demographic overview and shows that sociohistorical evidence, combined with demographic and linguistic evidence, does support the existence of multiple varieties of Creole French early in the history of the colony, which more or less closely approximated the 18th century French varieties spoken by the founder population. In addition, she argues quite strongly (Dubois and Melançon 1998, Dubois 2000) that researchers who make simple comparisons of 'typical' Creole markers to establish their proof of a decreolization of Louisiana Creole have not taken into account the fact that the French spoken in the Louisiana Territory since its inception was not, and had never been, the 'continental French' of the Parisian region of France. Only a diachronic study and an examination of the natural language change processes undergone by all languages (which were exacerbated in the case of Louisiana Creole due to its immense geographical distance from the *soi-disant* 'standard' French of the time) could show if the differences between the Creole code and that of the Cajuns or the white founder population are distinct. In perhaps the strongest statement calling for additional studies and caution when comparing the varieties of French in the state, Dubois and Melançon (1997:34) assert that:

“The francophone renaissance in Louisiana has led to a certain degree of fusion of Creole and Cajun traditions in the areas of music, cuisine and cultural celebrations. Whether or not this cultural rapprochement has been occurring at the linguistic level as well, and whether or not there has been a long history of linguistic mixture, is the subject of anecdote (including word lists of uncontrolled provenance), myth, uninformed opinion and wishful thinking. (...) In fact very little is known or can be known about these matters until there are a number of studies, in different categories of communities, of the type undertaken by this research team. It is clear that historically, the Creole and Cajun communities have different origins in ethnically distinct populations and have been concentrated in different geographical areas. For the moment, lacking any solid data to the contrary, the objectively safest working hypothesis is that, on the linguistic level, distinct Creole and Cajun varieties exist, that this distinction reflects at least a residual ethnic correlation, and that the continuum bridging them is sparsely populated.”

Bollée and Neumann-Holzschuh (1998) follow Chaudenson (1989) in rejecting both the substratist point of view of Creole origins as well as the monogenetic theory. Their claim, instead, is that all the French-based Creoles in general, and Louisiana Creole in particular, are ‘français marginaux’ (marginal French-based lects) which, due to specific historical, economic and social conditions, underwent an acceleration of natural language processes and language change which ‘continental French’ (their label) has also undergone, albeit much more slowly.

The issue of the origin of the language of the Creoles in Louisiana is far from settled. Whether one believes that there is a single Creole variety brought in by the Haitian refugees from the St. Domingue revolution, that there are two variants of Creole with much earlier starting points, or that Louisiana Creole is simply due to dialectal differences exhibited by Creole speakers in diffuse areas, the lack of detailed, contrastive studies on the language prohibits any definitive conclusion at this time, insofar as the

genesis of the language is concerned. Marshall (1990:7) notes that while Neumann (1985) 'carefully documented' the Creole spoken in Breaux Bridge, "no continuum study has ever been attempted" on Louisiana Creole. It is possible that "(o)nly with the discovery of a significant body of early attestations of vernacular speech may the issue of the indigenous versus external origins" of Louisiana Creole be decided (Valdman (1997:21). This is perhaps too strong a claim, but without a doubt, more research will continue to appear, yielding new and valuable evidence in support of the variety of claims for the origins of Louisiana Creole.

3.3.2 Descriptive Studies

The descriptive studies elucidated below concentrate on describing the Creole communities in Louisiana and the language patterns exhibited by these groups, rather than attempting detailed explanations of the language. The focus of the studies is on leveling, borrowing, decreolization, and other similar contact language phenomenon. The very basis of these studies is problematic however, given the fact that the varieties of Colonial French, Cajun French, and what is claimed to be Creole French are very similar in 19th and 20th century historical documents. In order to be able to claim that a particular language (Creole French, in this instance) is decreolizing, adapting to other varieties, borrowing lexical items, etc., it is first necessary to discern one dialect from another. Several factors make hard and fast categorizations difficult, however. The first is that Colonial French is poorly described in most research; the default explanation is often that it was the current language spoken in France at the time. This ignores easily accessed historical documents which show that the French spoken in Louisiana at the time of colonization by France was

that of the dialect areas in the Southwest and Central regions of France; according to research by Lyche (1996), some of this vernacular is still easily observable in France today. A second factor influencing the delineation of the dialects in Louisiana is that Cajun French has not been systematically investigated, and analyses of this language suffer much the same fate as those done on Colonial French. Third, it can be seen that, in the small amount of research which has been done on the Creole French language, up to three varieties have been suggested to exist: Teche-Creole, Mississippi Creole, and the German Coast dialect noted in Marshall (1982 et passim). These factors combine together with the overriding fact mentioned in Lyche (1996:38) that *“il ne faut pas perdre de vue l'essentiel c.-à-d. que ces similarités phonologiques sont partagées par d'autres variétés de français.* (One must not lose sight of the fact that these phonological similarities (between Cajun and Creole) are shared by other varieties of French). Given the complex linguistic situation described above, it is not surprising that many researchers in this area chose to concentrate on lexical items or the speech of very few informants.

In 1959, Morgan published an article in which he suggested (in contrast to the Creole continuum posited by other linguists discussed earlier) a *leveling* of the language varieties in Louisiana. His research was conducted in 1952 and was restricted to “Negro speakers of Creole in Saint Martin Parish” (Morgan 1970:51). He obtained speech samples from four informants, but he based his analysis mainly on the speech of a single speaker who was 89 years old and monolingual in French. In this study and others (Morgan 1960, 1970), he used his original data as well as that presented in Lane (1934, 1935) and the Conwell-Juilland Cajun French study (1963) to supplement the paucity of

his data. Although his work provides a more systematic analysis of certain aspects of Louisiana Creole than was shown by the simple comparisons of the lexicons of the languages which had appeared previously, his analysis has been criticized as being incomplete and slanted in order to prove that the dialects are, in fact, merging (Tentchoff 1977).

To the 'triglossic filament' of French identities in the state, (suggested in Eble 1993), Conrad (1981:2 et passim) would add a fourth strand. His claim is that for contemporary Louisianians of French ancestry, the four French groups in the state are comprised of the people who came directly from France in the first half of the 18th century, the Acadians, the refugees from the St-Domingue revolution in the 18th century, and the political and social exiles of post-Napoleonic France in the 19th century.⁶ Conrad's insistence is on the fact that there is no such thing as a 'monolithic French heritage' in Louisiana, and that those who research the Gallic groups in the state as though they are a single entity are automatically skewing their own data. He argues that the socioeconomic, geographical, racial and ethnic differences between the various French groups have led to the erection of barriers and the development of particular 'subcultures'. These subcultures developed in 'broadly dissimilar environments', and the differences between them are often stronger now than in the past, which he attributes more to voluntary isolation by the various groups rather than a desire to "perpetuate ethnic purity" (Conrad 1981:2). Due to the differences between the French ancestry groups, Conrad suggests

⁶He also notes that, most recently, Vietnamese refugees have added to the "Gallic culture" of the state (p. 2).

that forming an amalgam of Louisiana Gallic groups is nearly impossible at this juncture, due to the loss of grassroots support and the alienation caused by CODOFIL's use of standard French teachers in the classroom.⁷

Tentchoff (1977) also found that the social, racial and linguistic mixtures in the state led to a complexity in the interrelationships between the various groups. This ethnographic study addressed the speech of three 'villages' which she claims form a single speech community: Bienvenue, Patinville and Huval. As is very often the case in small South Louisiana communities, she notes that there are "two racially defined ethnic minorities - white Cajun and black Creole", both of which are in a subordinate position to the 'non-standard dialect of English' spoken by almost everyone. Her (somewhat ambiguous) claim is that the use of the two French dialects (Cajun and Creole) "is not delimited by race, but cuts across ethnic boundaries." (Tentchoff 1977:2). She also attempted to define the nature of the variation in the speech of community members, as well as define native value systems. Tentchoff's argument is that by looking at the speakers' value systems, one can shed light on why stigmatized speech persists, and that this information can be used to explain and interpret why the members of these communities use the varieties that they do. More specifically, she attempts to explain why

⁷Conrad (1981:9) does suggest that aspects of the French subcultures, such as cooking and music, will survive because of their popular appeal, unlike Fort (1973:40) who claims, with regard to New England Acadian French, "if the (French) language is lost, the Franco-Americans will no longer have any cultural identity." Dubois (1997) has shown that the Acadian descendants in Louisiana do not support this theory. Instead, self-ascription as Cajun is based on French ancestry rather than linguistic proficiency. The validity of these two opposing claims and their application to the Louisiana Creole community will be examined in detail in later chapters.

the Creole language is still used, given that: 1) it carries a certain stigma, even within the very community where it is spoken; and 2) it is superfluous in maintaining Creole group boundaries given the dominance of the Anglo-society in which these people live, especially since the members of the Creole-speaking community “are already marked by physical features” (Tentchoff 1977: 94).⁸ Drawing heavily on Wilson’s (1969) analysis of Caribbean communities, she posits that ‘respectability’ and ‘reputation’ value systems co-exist within these towns. The ‘respectability’ system, which she assigns to the Cajuns, derives from the French peasant system (and which therefore repudiates ostentatious displays of wealth), embraces the elite view of language and community, and is typically associated with women. The Creole speech is used to express values belonging to the ‘reputation’ system, which is associated with males, and involves the establishment of self-worth through individual performances, many of which involve undermining and disobeying the laws of the ‘larger society’ (Tentchoff 1977:102). She then analyzes the speech of her informants, taking into account this dichotomy as well as their socioeconomic status: unsurprisingly, given her theoretical construct, she concludes that white and black young males speak Creole, young black females speak English, unless they are angry, and older blacks, whites and younger white women speak Cajun.

In addition to these studies, there are also published and unpublished works by folklorists, historians, and anthropologists on Cajun and Creole.⁹ Among the most

⁸She does address the possibility that the Creole language is used to ‘mark off’ the French speaking Creoles from other African-Americans, but dismisses this notion because of the lack of non-French speaking African-Americans in this area.

⁹See Brasseaux (1992), Ancelet (1994), Smith (1994) and Sexton (1998, 2000).

interesting of these with regard to this dissertation are Dominguez (1986), Dormon (1996), Mills (1977) and Brasseaux et al (1994).¹⁰ Dominguez' research stands out because it is essentially an ethnography of the Creole community in New Orleans, Louisiana. She began the study with the intention of studying the "ethnic identity of Louisiana Creoles", but found herself enmeshed in the historical and social changes imposed on and adopted by the New Orleans Creoles. This book-length ethnographic study is particularly valuable for those interested in the New Orleans Creole community, although the relevance to the Creoles in other areas of the state and to linguists is lessened due to the relative isolation of those communities from *la ville* (New Orleans), the reluctance of the New Orleans Creoles to acknowledge anyone else as Creole, and the near complete Creole language loss which has occurred in this area.

Mills (1977) also takes an in-depth look at a particular (and, in this case, extremely isolated) Creole group in the state - the 'Creoles of Color' in the Cane River region near Natchitoches, Louisiana. The book makes for fascinating reading about the small community which developed from the relationship of a white planter and one of his female slaves. Their descendants still inhabit the area today, and for the most part cling strongly to their roots and their Creole heritage, although, as I discovered on several trips to the yearly 'family reunion' held along the banks of the Cane River, the language is completely gone. Again, (as with the Dominguez study), the focus on an extremely small, close-knit group makes the relevance of the results difficult to apply across-the-board to all the

¹⁰See also Woods (1972) and Hirsch and Logsdon (1992) for more information on the New Orleans based Creoles and the group in the Cane River/Isle Brevelle area.

Creole groups in the state. Similarly, Brasseaux et al (1994) and the edited articles in Dormon's (1996) book deal with the history of the Creoles and of South Louisiana, although a few authors also discuss cultural issues such as the prairie Mardi Gras. The most relevant article in this Dormon's collection insofar as the research for this dissertation is concerned is his article in which he explores the ethnicity and identity of today's 'Creoles of Color'. This article is essentially a distillation of the works of Woods (1972), Spitzer (1977), Mills (1977), and Dominguez (1986), although Dormon adds historical and anecdotal evidence.

3.3.3 Continuum Studies

A common theme among Louisiana Creole researchers recently is that the language varieties in the state constitute a continuum of 'power and prestige' with Standard French on one end of the continuum, followed by Cajun French, Creolized Cajun, Cajunized Creole, and Creole (Marshall 1982, Neumann 1981, 1985, Brown 1993, Klingler 1992, 1997, Valdman 1996).¹¹ This common thread that runs through the more recent linguistic studies suggests that Creole is on the 'bottom' of this linguistic continuum, Cajun French is in the middle, and Standard French is at the 'high' end of the continuum.¹²

¹¹Several of these researchers have also noted the presence of lexical and phonological differences in the *English* speech of Creoles and Cajuns. Since this issue is well beyond the scope of this study, it will not be discussed. In addition, Valdman (1996 et passim) says that English occupies the topmost level of the language varieties in the state, due to its overwhelming presence.

¹²See Dubois et al 1995 for a refutation of this claim. Her research shows that among the Cajun population Standard French is not the variety of French most favored by this population.

Marshall (1982) imposes another paradigm by stating that Louisiana Creole (LC) is the basilect in the community she studies, Acadian (Cajun) French is the mesolect, and Riverfront French is the acrolect, all of which have a 'superimposition' of English (1987: 74).¹³ She is not alone in this analysis, as Neumann (1985), Klingler (1994), Speedy (1998) and others attribute typical creole features to 'basilectal' Louisiana Creole, while claiming that any deviation from typical creole markers (verbal morphology, lexicon, etc.) is due solely to the influence of decreolization. Klingler (1994) and Marshall (1987) also claim that the decreolization of Louisiana Creole is due to, and moving in the direction of, the French spoken by the descendants of the Acadian exiles, the Cajuns, or at least to a code intermediate between Louisiana Creole and Acadian (Cajun) French. Neumann (1985) carries this comparison even further by comparing Louisiana Creole to Standard French. Since most of these researchers found that aberrant grammatical and lexical features existed in the speech of their white speakers, the argument could be made that their white informants were simply using the Cajun French code particular to their geographical region.

Marshall (1982) provides examples of this continuum in the languages of the state in her research done in and around the Vacherie area in which she conducted a sociolinguistically oriented survey of this area in South Louisiana. She used both a

¹³The continuum normally posited for areas in which Creoles have developed is that the source language constitutes the acrolect, the most creolized variety of this language the basilect, and a code between the two the mesolect. The conundrum posed in the Louisiana situation is there are two potential acrolects with which to compare to basilectal Creole: 1) English, which can be viewed as the present-day acrolect; and 2) Standard French or Cajun French, which were the diachronic acrolectal linguistic role models.

questionnaire and free-speech samples to elicit data from eighteen informants, who were between 40 and 92 in age, and included both blacks and whites. Her stated goal was to obtain information on language change and variation and to ascertain the degree of code-switching and interference present in the speech of the bilingual speakers of the area. By taking into account the linguistic repertoire, social factors and the interaction among the code-switching and interference, in terms of which code a speaker chooses to use, she was able to distinguish three codes among the areas' inhabitants: Louisiana Creole, Cajun French and Riverfront French. These codes, according to Marshall, are still distinguishable, and therefore still form a continuum, but are merging "along the lines of Morgan's (1970) description of the St. Martin area" (Marshall 1982: 313).

In expanding on her earlier fieldwork in the Vacherie area, Marshall (1987) uses data from 10 informants gathered by using the same methodology to elicit speech samples. She then analyzed speech variation and used the data to "determin(e) the range of features which characterize the different French-based lects", with the focus of the analysis being on the tense-aspect system (Marshall 1987:71-72). She used five 'typically basilectal' Creole tense-aspect markers to establish the dialect spoken by her informants and its place on the continuum she posited (Louisiana Creole, Cajun/Acadian French and Riverfront French). Although there is a great deal of variation exhibited by the speakers in this area, Marshall argues for a Creole speech continuum existing in the Vacherie area whose variation is systematic and explicable by 'principled description' (Marshall 1987: 93).

Another publication which includes the continuum argument is Neumann's (1985) morphosyntactic exposition on the Creole spoken in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana. It is by far

the most quoted and well-known work on Louisiana Creole, mainly because it is the first and only thorough, well-grounded linguistic study of the Creole spoken in this area. This study of the speech of the Breaux Bridge inhabitants included both whites and blacks of varying ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. The author created a substantial corpus of speech samples using interviews, causal conversation, and folk tales which she elicited and taped. In this study Neumann posited a continuum of the speech varieties in the state: specifically, she claimed that Louisiana Creole is decreolizing toward the direction of Cajun French. Since this study never established boundaries between the various factors affecting language use and change (i.e. age, socioeconomic position, geographic location, etc.), nor attempted to differentiate speech differences between the races, the results may be interpreted as valuable hypotheses, but ones which are perhaps not particularly well-grounded. In addition, (and unfortunately), her claim that there were 60,000 to 80,000 speakers of Louisiana Creole at the time of her research in 1983 remains unsubstantiated. This figure has been widely repeated in most of the Creole and Pidgin 'surveys' (see e.g. Holm 1988) as well as by most researchers of Louisiana Creole since the time of her original research.¹⁴ They are not supported by either anecdotal evidence or statistics from the census bureau. Dormon (1992:624) offers a much more reliable, although still perhaps inflated, figure of 22,000-28,000 Creoles in the state. Still lower, and probably more accurate, given insider knowledge and present-day reality, are the numbers compiled by the Census Bureau for Dubois and Melançon (1998, 2000), which show that 6,310 people

¹⁴When contacted, Neumann could come up with no explanation of how she arrived at the figures she quoted.

in the state claim to speak Creole French (although there is no way to know the proficiency levels of these speakers). In spite of promulgating a picture of a much more secure linguistic group by suggesting large numbers of speakers, Neumann's study is certainly the most comprehensive morphosyntactic exposition done on the Louisiana Creole language to date, and, as such, is a useful starting point for further explorations of the language. Klingler's (1992) dissertation was an extensive lexical survey on the French spoken by the Creole population in Pointe Coupée Parish. He also includes a grammatical 'sketch' which provides a comparison/contrast to Neumann's (1985) study of the Breaux Bridge Creole area and a background for the explanation of the lexical items he presents. Although Klingler claims in his introduction (Klingler 1992: vii) that his work is a description of the Creole "as it is spoken by African-Americans in Pointe Coupée Parish", he has both whites and blacks contributing to his database. In his 'primary group', he included 19 blacks and two mulattoes; his 'secondary group' consisted of 14 whites, two blacks, and two mulattoes. Although he claims to be testing the speech of the primary group, he also reports (Klingler 1992:335) that "while the focus of this study is on the speech of the primary group, I have frequently relied on speech sampled from the secondary group to illustrate grammatical structures and specific lexical items", which somewhat limits the usefulness of his findings. Although this study falls short of providing definitive answers about who speaks Creole to whom in the state, (and, in fact, muddies the water a bit due to his conglomeration of data from both blacks and whites) it provides an invaluable lexicographic base for further study of the language of this community. This research also served as a basis for the recently released Dictionary of Louisiana Creole

(1999). In addition, he has published articles on the writing of Louisiana Creole, the symbolism of the Creole language, and the Creole spoken by whites in Louisiana (Klingler 1994a, 1994b, 1997).

Klingler (1998:206) picks up the theme presented in his dissertation when he claims "*(une particularité) à remarquer est qu'à la Pointe Coupée la langue créole est nettement mieux maintenue chez les Blancs que chez les Noirs*" (One thing that really stands out is that the Creole language in Pointe Coupée is better maintained among whites than blacks.) He is among a very small group of researchers who insist that there still exists a white Creole population which speaks Louisiana Creole French, and claims that there are more fluent white speakers of Louisiana Creole than black speakers in Pointe Coupee. In this area, "(white's) active knowledge of the lexicon is often greater, and their speech is marked by fewer switches to English" than the speech of blacks (Klingler 1992:7). He proposes three factors to explain this: 1) black Louisiana Creole speakers had more exposure to English because the 'American' planters who bought land in the area used the black Creoles as slaves early in the state's history, and later hired the ex-slaves and their descendants; 2) many of the African-Americans left the community in search of jobs after World War II; and, 3) the French revival movement in Louisiana centers around Cajun, and "has not struck a chord within the African-American community of Pointe Coupee" (1994:8). Klingler does not make clear why the departure of African-Americans from the community would increase whites 'active knowledge of the lexicon', and the very fact that the Cajun-based French renaissance in Louisiana 'strikes a chord' in the white speakers of Pointe Coupée suggests that they identify as Cajun,

whatever they call their code. Rather than insisting that whites in the area speak Creole French, a more convincing case could perhaps be made that whites in the area speak Cajun French, while blacks use their Louisiana Creole French code.

Although not explicitly stated in this early work, Klingler follows Valdman's (1977) theory that the Creole language in Louisiana is set in the midst of a continuum. Valdman (1996:144) contends correctly that "it is difficult for the observer to assign particular features to any of the three traditional speech varieties in contact: Louisiana French (LF), Cajun French (CF), and LC (Louisiana Creole)." This statement renders Valdman's 1977 (*et passim*) claim of a continuum in the French varieties in the state almost superfluous. Without having a base of solid data from which to work, it is impossible to assign labels to one individual's speech code; the difficulty is highly compounded when attempting to delimit the speech of a community. If it is difficult to assign 'particular features' to Louisiana French, Cajun French and Louisiana Creole, how is it possible to claim that Louisiana Creole is one of the two "clearly idealized speech norms" (Valdman 1996:144)?¹⁵ His position becomes even more vague when he claims that the severe attrition undergone by the Louisiana Creole language is due to its position at the bottom of the "range of language varieties in use in francophone Louisiana" (Valdman 1996:145). He asserts that "from the perspective of power and prestige the top position (of languages in the state) is occupied by English and SF (Standard French), the latter reintroduced through the various revitalization actions launched by CODOFIL and

¹⁵Valdman says that 'Standard French' is the other idealized speech norm in the state.

the bilingual education programs of the 1970s.” In fact, the introduction of standard French speakers into the state’s education system has caused disruption and harm to the local languages; this is accepted as fact by every other researcher who has studied French in Louisiana.¹⁶ To place standard French in a position of ‘power and prestige’ in the state is a dramatic departure from the work of other researchers, and appears to be an admission of little or no knowledge of the actual situation of the dialects, diachronically or synchronically. Another position adopted by Valdman, which is a direct contradiction to those (including himself) who would claim that blacks are decreolizing their speech in the direction of the white (Cajun or Standard) French speech, is evidenced when he states “the devalorization (sic) of Louisiana Creole...stems in large part from its association with slavery. The low esteem in which it is held by white speakers explains why they will often deny their habitual use of it.” (Valdman 1996:145). Although whites may have ‘devalorized’ Louisiana Creole, the Louisiana Creoles themselves do not necessarily view their language in a negative light.¹⁷ If in fact whites hold Creole in contempt and are therefore reluctant to use it, this begs a question - why would whites ever speak Creole if they are ashamed of it and reluctant to use it? Could it be that perhaps these whites were using their Cajun vernacular and could simply be classified as Cajun French speakers? If

¹⁶The reintroduction of standard French by CODOFIL sponsored teachers from Belgium, Canada, and France was problematic from the beginning. The small elite, wealthy, politically-connected people who pushed this agenda were perhaps well-meaning, but they failed in their attempt to ‘introduce’ this brand of French into an area in which other forms of French had been thriving for nearly 300 years. See Conrad (1983), Ancelet (1988), and Brown (1997) for more information.

¹⁷This issue is explicitly addressed in a later chapter.

so, it makes the identity claims of the two groups even more important. If you self-identify as Creole, will you also call your vernacular Creole? Conversely, if you self-identify as Cajun, will you refer to that term when discussing what dialect you speak? Dubois' research (1995 et passim) showed that the white Cajun informants in that study valued their code more highly than the standard or 'school-taught' French, that they viewed Louisiana Creole as the second best code for themselves and their children to learn, and that their self-identification labels were highly correlated with their language ability.

3.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The continuum arguments leave much to be desired. First and most importantly, in order for the postulated shifts and/or decreolization in the languages comprising the continuum to occur (Standard French, Cajun French, Creole French), a definitive boundary between each French variety would have to be established. This has not been done, and it can be shown that, historically at least, the languages were more similar than different.

In addition, a simple yet effective argument can be made that the sociohistorical processes which shaped the various ethnic and linguistic groups in the state also would effectively prevent the codes of these groups from mixing. The most recent division undergone by the Louisiana Creole group - that of near complete separation (linguistically and culturally) from whites in the state due to the *de facto* and *de jure* segregation which existed until the 1960's - is an excellent refutation of any claims of 'mixing', whether linguistically, socially, culturally, or physically. In the research done in the Pointe Coupée

area, for example, there would be no pressing reasons for the majority of the Creole speaking field slaves to abandon their code in order to get along with an extremely small minority of American planters in the area researched in Klingler's (1992) study, although the massive influence of English in everyday life of this community is an accepted fact now.¹⁸ Nor has there been much motivation or opportunity since before the Civil War for Louisiana's Creoles to adopt the French language of the social group which had, in essence, rejected them. The flip side of that coin, of course, is to ask why white speakers would voluntarily adopt a code (Louisiana Creole) associated with slavery, when a supposedly less-stigmatized code (Cajun) exists and was/is higher on the 'prestige and power' continuum cited by some authors? Although some researchers have shown that speakers will often adopt a non-standard code to enhance their 'solidarity' and 'status' in a group (see e.g. Milroy 1980), it is difficult to imagine a white Southerner from Louisiana, even at the end of the 20th century, wanting to emphasize solidarity and status among the black population of the state. Nor would they want blacks acquiring their code, which has, due to the recent French renaissance movement, gained them acceptance as a viable minority in the state.

Rickford (1998) concurs when he expounds on the fact that motivation and attitude toward acquiring a more 'standard-like' language must be added to the data on the numbers of blacks and whites (in contact/Creole genesis situations) and the amount of contact between the two groups. He states (Rickford 1998:12) that "(w)e have striking

¹⁸The house slaves would probably have picked up English much more quickly, but they were a minority compared to the large amounts of slaves required to work in the fields.

contemporary examples of White individuals in overwhelmingly Black communities and Black individuals in overwhelmingly White communities who have not assimilated to the majority (language) pattern because of powerful cultural and social constraints.” In Louisiana, given the ever-increasing rigid racial structures isolating blacks (and their language and culture), from whites (and their language and culture) the situation was ripe for retention of the Louisiana Creole code, rather than a supposed reaching toward the ‘standard’ French spoken by whites. Although there certainly is variation among the Cajuns speakers in various regions in the state, the delineation between the three codes (the original French spoken in Louisiana, Cajun, and Creole) is still noticeable, and still potentially verifiable. To simply say the Creole dialect in the state is moving toward the Cajun dialect which is moving toward the Standard French dialect is to ignore the variety of sociohistorical processes which have had affected these language communities. More principled studies and more detailed analyses must be undertaken before establishing *sine dubio* that Louisiana Creole is decreolizing in the direction of Cajun French and that the languages in the state are in a continuum situation.

As noted, the earliest studies done on Louisiana Creole and the Creole communities in the state consisted largely of either a) contrastive lexical surveys, or b) ‘historical’ studies, which were often blatant attempts to persuade people of the validity of the ‘white-only Creoles’ vs. the ‘mixed-race Creoles’ debate. Although many of the authors of more recent studies have addressed either the social, historical and political issues as they apply to the Creole community, or the morphological and lexical status of the Creole language, a comprehensive explanation of why the community and the language

have changed in the directions that they have still needs to be explored. Due to the evolution and unusual genesis of the Louisiana Creoles, the studies described above often fell short of adequately describing the community. The genesis and continuum controversies and the variant uses of the terms Creole, Cajun, Standard French, International French, and Louisiana French by researchers have only added to the confusion about these terms and the people who claim them. A comprehensive definition of each and every French language and ancestry group in the state is far from being realized, and this situation pertains even more strongly to the Creoles, due to the racial mixing and past history as well as recent and pervasive stigmatization by other French groups and Anglophones.

Given the historical background presented above, as well as the contemporary data shown in the review of the research done on Louisiana Creole, this research will concentrate on African-Americans with French ancestry. It is precisely this group which the synchronic and diachronic data show to be the most likely to have been assigned the label 'Creole'. In the next chapter I will present a brief sociolinguistic overview of quantitative research done in the variationist tradition, and will explain why this approach applies to the community under study. In addition, the goals and foci of this study will be further explicated.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIOLINGUISTIC LITERATURE REVIEW/GOALS AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this chapter is to 'frame in' the analysis of the research for this dissertation. The carpentry metaphor is appropriate, for the analyses will be built upon and supported by previous sociolinguistic investigations into ethnic minority communities. The criteria which underlie the research for this dissertation were based upon two components: 1) the questions and issues which were left unanswered in prior investigations into the Louisiana Creole community, and 2) the established research protocols of the sociolinguistic approach. This chapter combines a brief literature review of variationist-based sociolinguistic studies (section 4.1) and gives a presentation of the goals and hypotheses which informed and directed this study (section 4.3).

Many of the variationist studies to date consist of correlating language variation and the significant social factors which affect language use. This method can be extremely useful as well when the envelope is pushed to include not just language use, but language attitudes and social identity, and their connection with members of a speech and cultural community. Chambers (1995) comments that linguistics, among other disciplines, should give up the 'axiom of categoricity', by which everything (including language data) is regularized and all variation is removed from the 'equation'. That this has happened in the field of linguistics is due largely to the impact of the variationists and their approach to the study of language; it has also led to the variationist movement becoming "one of the most significant in the intellectual history of our time" (Chambers 1995:32).

4.1 SOCIOLINGUISTIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Implicit in the variationist approach is the concept of the 'speech community', which traditionally referred to a group of people who were delimited solely by linguistic criteria. The classic definition of a speech community in the variationist approach puts much less emphasis on language as a necessary and sufficient condition for group membership, and instead suggests that the three key requirements are (adapted from Patrick 1998):

- 1) the existence of a social community;
- 2) that patterns of language use are shared by its members;
- 3) that norms for the social evaluation of speech are shared by community members.

These shared set of social attitudes posited for a speech community were proposed in what has come to be known as the classic variationist research, Labov's (1966) study of New York City speech.¹ In this work, he established a range of speech styles which included word lists, minimal pairs, reading passages, interview style and casual style. He postulated that the linguistic variable which was under scrutiny (r-fulness or r-lessness, for example) would reveal *patterned* variation by speakers which could be correlated with the independent variable of stylistic range. His hypothesis was that, since the amount of attention paid to speech is highest (more closely monitored, in Labov's terms) while

¹This study and further works by Labov are so well accepted as being the linchpins of variationist research that the concepts contained in them are often simply referred to as the 'labovian framework', with no capitalization or any attribution as to the year or the research involved. See e.g. Milroy and Milroy (1992).

reading lists of words, and the least amount attention is paid to pronunciation in a casual setting, there would be a range of variation going from the most 'standard-like' pronunciation in the most highly monitored speech (the word lists) to the least 'standard-like' pronunciation in the least monitored speech (the casual style).

In *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, Labov (1972) set out to prove yet again that language should not be separated from the culture and society in which it finds itself.² He carried this idea a step further by applying it not just to synchronic processes of language change, but to diachronic processes as well. He used data from a series of studies done on 'change in progress' to show that various functions of language can determine and force language change, that grammar rules can (to a certain extent) be affected by changes in society, and that linguistic evolution or change is not dysfunctional, or as he puts it "(not a) massive testimony to original sin" (p. 323).

Labov (1972) also examined the philosophy and views of various linguists about accepting and using social factors as one explanation of linguistic change. He suggested the following dichotomy: 1) Group A is the 'social' group who believes that one can see change in progress, follows the 'wave model' of linguistic evolution, and believes that social factors can and do affect language; 2) Group B is the 'asocial' group who disregards the effects of linguistic diversity and contact between languages, works with a *stammbaum* or family tree model of linguistic evolution, and does not believe that social

²Labov was certainly not the linguist to advocate this concept. Older works by Meillet (1921) and Fischer (1958), and more recent ones by Fishman (1970), Gumperz (1971), and Bailey (1973) also recognized the fact that social factors and language use are inextricably intertwined and suggested that one could not be adequately described without accounting for the influence of the other.

factors can help explain linguistic change. After giving this dichotomy, he goes on to explain why twentieth century linguistics has relied so heavily on the theories and writings of the Group B linguists in spite of the extremely influential writings of Saussure (1962) and his ilk. Labov, of course, places himself squarely in Group A, and argues persuasively that in fact social variation does have a place in not only synchronic but also diachronic description of change. These musings on philosophy and its interconnection with language are carried even further in Labov (1994), in which he compares linguistic change to geographical change, and notes that both can be either gradual or catastrophic. He refuses to take a definitive position for either case, but, in a statement relevant to this dissertation, remarks that the recent emphasis on demographic history (evidenced in the works of Baker and Corne 1982, Bickerton 1984, Rickford 1986, Singler 1987, and Mufwene et al 1998) may put linguists "in a better position to correlate the two profiles - social and linguistic - and respond to Meillet's suggestion" that social change is the only possible alternative to explain linguistic change (Labov 1994:24). For Labov, variation is a reflex of change in language. It occurs both throughout time and in the present, and can be shown by studying language change in 'real time', as he did in his Martha's Vineyard study (Labov 1972), or by studying language change in 'apparent time', as he did with his study of the evolution of New York City vowels (Labov 1966, 1972).

Along with Labov, other linguists have chosen to view language variation as a potentially measurable item. Rather than variables being in free variation (or random), they suggest that variables have been and are conditioned by certain social and cultural factors. Chambers (1995:17) puts this quite strongly when he states "(c)orrelating

linguistic variation as the dependent variable with independent variables such as linguistic environment, style or social categories is the primary empirical task of sociolinguistics.” In addition to Labov, this philosophy is reflected in the works of numerous authors who have contributed much to the field. For this literature review, I will concentrate on works which have the dual qualities of being variationist based while focusing on language attitudes and language use among ethnic and racial minority communities. Both qualities are needed, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, in order to synthesize the sociohistorical and sociocultural data collected for this research. Although the sociolinguistic field is huge, and growing rapidly, it would be an impossible task to survey the entire range of literature produced by researchers in this field. The remainder of this overview will therefore be limited to works by authors which reflect the relevant theoretical framework mirrored in this dissertation. This can be found in works by Gal (1979), Sankoff and Laberge (1978), Milroy (1980), Lippi-Green (1989), Edwards (1992), Milroy and Milroy (1992), Harwood, Giles, Bourhis (1994), Landry and Allard (1994), Beckford (1996), and Dubois (1997) which will be briefly described below.

Since the time of Labov’s seminal research (anthologized in Labov 1972), social class has achieved success as the preeminent marker of the interaction of society and language use. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998:154), in remarking upon this fact, note that “(i)deally, a valid assessment of social class differences should combine both objective and subjective measurements of many types of behavior roles and values, but this is often easier said than done.” They continue by discussing both Sankoff and Laberge’s (1978) concept of a ‘linguistic marketplace’ as well as the notion of social network. They also

discuss the difficulty of establishing the social classes, social networks and linguistic marketplaces in speech communities, as well as the difficulties imposed by the interrelation of these factors with “additional factors pertaining to community life and relationships” such as regional differences, age, and gender - all of which can affect the attitudes and linguistic behavior of the members of a community (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998:154).

Gal (1979) encountered some of these obstacles in her study on language shift and style reduction among speakers who had both Hungarian and German as first languages in Oberwart, Austria. She utilized a very effective methodology by incorporating a language-use survey which targeted her sample population and gathered both language-use data as well as attitudinal information from her informants. In addition, she supplemented and validated the results from the survey via participant observation. This dual sociolinguistic/ethnographic approach enabled her not only to describe the correlations between social factors and language use, but also to posit explanations for “the processes that bring about, maintain, or change these correlations” (Gal 1979:13). She found that generational and gender differences accounted for a massive shift to German which is occurring in some portions of the population of this area. Formerly important factors which influenced language use, such as ethnicity, family traditions, and geographical loyalty, were overridden by social factors such as upward mobility. Her claim was that the younger women in this speech community wanted to marry German-speaking men due to the negative prestige allotted to the Hungarian language and the evaluation of German as a high status language. This in turn led to younger (Hungarian-

speaking) men to seek mates among the German-speaking population of women, who would then (presumably) speak German to their offspring in order to avoid the stigma associated with Hungarian. According to Gal (1979), both of these trends could lead to a reduction or loss of Hungarian in a very short time in this community.

Milroy's 1980 study also added an important dimension in the field of sociolinguistics by utilizing social 'networks' as an additional tool with which to analyze linguistic and social behavior in speech communities. Although Gal (1979:14) had earlier suggested the notion of "networks of informal social interaction" by which speakers impose linguistic norms on each other, this concept was clarified and expanded in Milroy's 1980 book.³ Simply put, a network is a tightly structured, homogeneous social unit which does not exhibit any class differentiation (hence making the idea of social class unworkable for analyzing results from these type of communities). The social network model she proposes attempts to explain the spread of linguistic innovations, and has been very influential in the field by allowing an accounting for many heretofore unexplained linguistic phenomena among speech communities. The work for this particular book was based on research done in three communities in Belfast, Ireland: Ballymarcarrett, Clonard, and Hammer. By utilizing the concept of the strengths and weaknesses in the social network of the people participating in the various networks, Milroy moved beyond assigning linguistic variation as being due to the 'traditional' social class divisions of low, middle and high-class suggested in earlier sociolinguistic research. This differed from the

³In fact, she borrowed the concept from sociology and devotes a portion of the book reviewing the work of prominent authors from that field.

'linguistic market index' theorized by Sankoff and Laberge (1978), in which they suggested that the socioeconomic life histories of speakers may correlate more highly with their use of standard language than the traditional social classifications (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998). The concept of a 'network' includes the use of statistics to correlate social variables with linguistic variants. Tying these objects together into a coherent whole to explain the linguistic behavior of a community was accomplished by showing that, although previous sociolinguistic research had relied (implicitly) upon the notion of a status-based model, in fact, "competing sets of vernacular norms" exist in every speech community (Milroy 1980:195). Accompanying this concept was the idea that researchers need to account for both the use of standard speech as being the driving force in achieving upward mobility and the use of the vernacular to reflect the values of 'solidarity' versus 'status' in a speech community. According to Milroy (1980), a loose-knit network will lead to a speaker going outside of the 'norms' of the community, whereas a close-knit network tends to reinforce the norms already in place, while also guiding and driving the (potential) changes occurring in the language or dialect. Most importantly however, for both Milroy and the research contained within this dissertation, is that "it is important to note...that change in network structure alone does not appear to be a sufficient condition to predict a movement towards any clearly defined legitimized norm" (1980:196). The constantly changing social, economic and linguistic situation of the Creoles in Louisiana has led to a social network which is in flux, and which could, therefore, exhibit signs of rejection of the vernacular linguistic norms of the community as well as a rejection of the attitudes and identity values which accompany those norms.

The emphasis on social categories to the (perceived) exclusion of other factors affecting linguistic communities led researchers to target other methods and theories in order to explain linguistic attitudinal and behavioral differences. In an excellent review of the impact of 'vitality' upon ethnic minority language groups, Harwood et al (1994) integrate psychological concepts with social factors to account for attitudes and linguistic behaviors expressed toward speakers with varying speech styles. The work is based upon previous publications by Tajfel and Fraser (1978) and other social psychologists who posited that the differences expressed by members of an 'ingroup' allow the individuals who comprise this group to retain and demonstrate distinctiveness from 'outgroup' members via language use. The concept of linguistic vitality is an attempt to make more objective the admittedly subjective concept of group membership by arguing that the strength of the identification of the group members varies in accordance with social factors. Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) developed a taxonomy of structural variables affecting ethnolinguistic vitality which show diagrammatically the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of vitality. These authors argue that rather than acting as "isolated individuals", group members instead utilize a subjective assessment of the ingroup/outgroup vitality to govern their attitudes and linguistic behavior. They additionally suggest four factors which contribute to ethnolinguistic vitality: social status, economic status, sociohistorical status and language status (Giles et al 1977:308, 310). These factors, and the claim by Giles et al (1977) that social identity involves knowledge of membership of social categories and the values that are attached to that membership will be interpreted in light of the results of this survey in later chapters.

Landry and Allard (1994) utilized the notion of linguistic vitality in conjunction with the concept of 'linguistic capital' suggested in Bourdieu (1980) to investigate the 'demolinguistic realities' and the vitality of the French language among the Acadians in New Brunswick.⁴ The paper is divided into four sections: the first part gives a sociohistorical overview of the Acadian people, the second describes a model which attempts to account for language maintenance and loss by measuring the ethnolinguistic vitality of the group, the third part applies the ethnolinguistic vitality factors to the sociolinguistic realities of the francophone situation, and the fourth part describes the use of real data as it is applied to the model to test its efficacy. Although their results are substantial and support the use of their analytical methods, the larger impact of studies like these and those of Giles et al (1977) is that they provide additional methods with which to unravel the skeins of language and society, whose interactions are often less than clear, and even more often quite difficult to interpret.

Lippi-Green (1989) achieved success along these lines with her study of 42 informants in the rural Alpine village of Grossdorf, Austria. Previous studies had either ignored variation in small, conservative communities by assuming there was none, or had gone to the opposite extreme by claiming that the variability was so chaotic that it was impossible to pin down. While agreeing that the early sociolinguistic emphasis on 'socioeconomic measurement of status' was successful, Lippi-Green noted that later, post-Labovian methods such as those which had been demonstrated in Gal (1979) were largely

⁴For a stunningly vitriolic rejection of the post-modern theories of Bourdieu, Foucault and others, see Chomsky as quoted in Barsky (1999).

ignored. In this research, (Lippi-Green 1989) the author integrated the methods used in previous network studies along with incorporating the social 'matrix' of her informants, thereby taking into account the aggregate (or larger social class) level as well as the microlevel network norm enforcement of her subjects. Although she found that Milroy's (1980) work with social networks provided a departure point, she also discovered that she needed to 'fine-tune' her methodology and analytical tools to match the specifications of the community she had chosen to study. She established a 16-point 'network strength scale' to determine the degree of density and multiplexity of the local networks, and ascertained that the degree of integration into the local networks as well as degree of kinship were key factors in the network strength of her respondents. Chambers (1995:94) criticizes the results of this study as not being particularly insightful as far as language variation in Grossdorf is concerned, but two main contributions came out of this research. First, the author showed that small, rural communities (who are usually viewed as conservative users of language) in fact do exhibit language variation and change. Secondly, she showed that this variation is quantifiable along the lines of recent variationist-based methodologies and analytical tools in sociolinguistics, if one takes into account the local network structure and the integration into the community by both the informants and the researcher(s). These conclusions are important to the methodology adopted in this study.

Two additional studies (Beckford 1996, and Edwards 1992) also impact upon the analysis of the results of this research. Beckford's research (1996, but published as Beckford-Wassink 1999) was done on Jamaican Creole - which she refers to as Patois -

corresponds very closely to the issues investigated in this dissertation. She adapted Lippi-Green's (1989) 16-point network strength scale to determine native speaker attitudes toward Creole varieties (basilectal, mesolectal, and acrolectal) to assess network density and multiplexity on the island. Her sample consisted of 49 people (men and women) aged 6 to 81, who underwent tape-recorded interviews, a 37-point attitude indicator schedule (adapted from Li 1994), and the network strength scale of Lippi-Green. She determined respondents' attitudes toward language usage as well as their attitudes toward hearing the language in radio and television broadcasts. Her research yielded five main findings: 1) her respondents were willing to acknowledge Patois as a 'language'; 2) the ability to speak this language was regarded as an asset; 3) domains of usage for Patois were found to be appropriate in casual and peer group settings, and inappropriate for formal and 'outgroup' settings; 4) informants responded more positively to questions *about* the language than they did about the actual *language use*; 5) females were less favorably disposed toward Patois than were males. Beckford approached her study with questions and attitudes which did not "assume a pro-English predisposition". This, combined with the realization that the attitudes possessed by speakers of this variety would reflect multivalued overt and covert attitudes toward their language, allowed her to quantify what had previously been the subject of anecdote and myth (Beckford-Wassink 1999:60).⁵

⁵Rickford (1987:15 et passim) in particular bemoans the fact that many researchers take the 'traditional view' that the 'standard' language is the best variety, and consequently base their methodologies and interpret their results in light of this prejudice. He also notes that most of the early attitudinal studies done on Creoles were based on middle or upper class speakers who had been socialized to believe that the standard was the language to which they should aspire. His major question then becomes, if the 'standard language' is held up as the pinnacle of language acquisition, why does a Creole

Edwards (1992) also used an ethnographic approach based on the social network theory, with some changes in the methodology. He modified the tools used to collect data for two reasons: 1) in order to more accurately reflect his target populations' attitudes; and 2) because of his belief that the degree of integration of an individual into a neighborhood depends less on his or her social contact with whites (as argued in Labov and Harris 1986) and more on the attitudes held toward the neighborhood in which they live. His respondents consisted of 66 black inner-city residents divided equally by gender to whom he administered a Vernacular Culture Index (VCI) consisting of ten statements relating to their attitudes toward their neighborhood.⁶ According to the author, the first five statements on his index measured physical integration into the neighborhood; the last five measured their psychological integration into the neighborhood as well as their "racial isolation." In addition to assessing their social network in the 'standard' fashion, this author also measured the strength of their desire to continue living in the area, the level of disapproval of the street culture in the neighborhood, and their attitudes toward the suitability of raising children in the neighborhood (Edwards 1992:96-97). In a rather dramatic departure from previous 'network' studies such as Milroy (1980) and Cheshire (1982), Edwards chose to allow his respondents to rate themselves, because of his belief that "the respondent is the best judge of his or her attitude toward neighborhood values

continue, or even prosper, to the detriment of the standard, in languages such as Haitian and Tok Pisin?

⁶Cheshire (1982:97-102) also used a VCI, although it was based on quite different criteria than those of Edwards (i.e. possession of weapons, skill at fighting, swearing, job aspirations, and criminal activities.)

and the most knowledgeable expert on his or her demographic characteristics, social history, and other cultural experiences" (Edwards 1992:96). That belief and the way in which Edwards conducted his research are reflected in this dissertation. His respondents were chosen randomly and were visited briefly by the interviewer, and his interviewer acquired a familiarity with the process which allowed something of a 'friend-of-a-friend' status.⁷ This allowed him to claim that:

"(a)lthough extensive personal interactions between researcher and informant is an excellent, essentially anthropological, methodology for collecting sociolinguistic data in socioeconomically homogeneous communities, this study showed that survey methodology can yield well-motivated and empirically valid results if the research instruments are sensitive to the nature of the community or neighborhood and the variables used are tested and refined in pilot studies" (Edwards 1992:111).

The research for this dissertation has been particularly inspired and influenced by the recent works of Dubois et al (1995), and Dubois (1997, 1998) on the Cajun French community in South Louisiana. Although separate French communities exist in the state, there is considerable attitudinal homogeneity about the varieties of French among the Cajuns and Creoles. It has been shown in Dubois' research that the variation which does exist can be correlated with the respondents' linguistic and French ancestry as well as the more typical sociolinguistic variables of age, gender, geographical region, and social class. The establishment of an index to assess the effect of the respondents' linguistic ability and background (LAB) was used as a tool in measuring attitudinal diversity and its correlation

⁷This obviously differs from the more anthropological approaches of authors such as Gal (1979) and Lippi-Green (1989), yet is also justified by the results obtained in the works of Labov (1972) and others. This is not a simple case of 'quality' (Gal, Milroy, etc.) vs. 'quantity' (Labov, Wolfram, this study, Dubois), since all of these studies contain elements of each. It is more a case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

with social factors (Dubois 1997). The LAB index will be explained in more detail in the following chapter when the methodology for this research is described.

Because variationist sociolinguistic methodology has been firmly established and shown to be a valuable tool in linguistic analyses, particularly in minority speech communities, it was used as the basis for this dissertation. The classic definition of a speech community, however, was a bit more difficult to establish in Louisiana's linguistic, ethnic, and racial mixture. In order to fully delimit and firmly establish the boundaries of the research envelope, I compiled statistical evidence, reviewed previous variationist studies, and used insider knowledge of the communities to ensure maximum quality in the findings. In the next section of this chapter, the justification for the project is presented in terms of the goals and hypotheses upon which it based.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF GOALS AND HYPOTHESES

This section of the chapter sets out the goals which motivated the study as well as the hypotheses which underlie the research presented herein. One reason this project was undertaken has been suggested in the two previous chapters, namely, that few Creolists have taken into account historical changes when analyzing their results. After the brief review of sociolinguistic literature presented above, it is also apparent that no one in the variationist field has attempted a sociolinguistic survey of this scale on the community of African-Americans with French ancestry in Louisiana. The goals were established to address the deficits in the previous studies, and, along with the hypotheses, are based on the sociolinguistic perspective and take into account social, economic, political, and historical factors for the analysis of the results.

Although we are far from a definitive breakdown of who speaks what type of French in Louisiana and what groups make up these various linguistic communities, I have suggested in earlier chapters that Creole ancestry is largely linked to the African-Americans with French ancestry. In Chapter 2, arguments were provided showing that the permutations undergone by the term Creole throughout Louisiana's history have forced an evolution into a modern-day manifestation in which African-Americans are the focus of the Creole identity in the state today.

In Chapter 3, a thorough review of the literature on this group revealed that researchers are often confused, and confuse, the terms applied to the various French groups in the state. As was shown in that chapter, some researchers have suggested that there is no racial or linguistic basis on which to differentiate between Cajuns and Creoles, essentially claiming that *anyone* who speaks *any* type of French in Louisiana can be either Cajun or Creole. Others researchers have concluded that there is a continuum of French in the state, and, in particular, that Creole French is decreolizing toward either (depending on the bias of the researcher) Cajun French or Standard French; additionally, they claim that there are many whites who speak Creole and many blacks who speak Cajun. A few have acknowledged that there has not been enough methodologically sound sociolinguistic research conducted to come to any definite conclusions about the makeup of the various groups.

Rather than imposing arbitrary and unsupported definitions upon French groups in the state, I have chosen to examine the attitudes and self-identity of the group which is the most obvious community which can lay claim to the 'Creole' identity, given the historical

and contemporary data presented above. The historical changes previously described, the confusion exemplified in earlier research, and the manifestations of these issues in the French-speaking African-American community in South Louisiana are the foci of the analyses chapters of this dissertation. Given the historical changes and the effects that they have exerted upon the Creole population, the numerical dominance of African-Americans who claim Creole heritage, the quasi-extinct white Creole population, long familiarity with the racial situation in the state, and the maintenance of Creole French only within the African-American population, it is evident that the black population in the state is the repository of the language and the culture. Since the number of French-speaking white Creoles in the state is statistically insignificant and does not represent a large enough group to ensure a scientifically controlled methodology, the database for this study was built using solely African-American informants of French ancestry who could identify as Creole. The research conducted for this paper will thus fill the information gap which exists on African-Americans with French ancestry (today's Louisiana Creoles) and will provide a basis for comparison and contrast when similar research is conducted on the other French groups in the state. The overarching goal of this research (to determine the synchronic attitudinal and identification changes exhibited by Louisiana's Creole population due to the effects of the diachronic changes undergone by this group) entails examination of this group's attitudes toward their language and other forms of French, the characteristics which comprise current Creole French identity, the traditional markers of Creole ethnicity, and language usage. The goals which direct this examination and the hypotheses which stem from those goals are described in the following sections.

4.3 GOALS AND HYPOTHESES

4.3.1 Identification and Characterization as Creole

For the research conducted for this project, it was first necessary to establish whether or not several Creole populations - white, black, and descendants of the former *gens de couleurs libre* (free people of color) - still existed. The research of Mills (1977) on the colored Creoles of Cane River, and Neumann (1985) and Klingler (1992) on the white and black Creoles of Breaux Bridge and Point Coupée, respectively, established that, at one time, there was a group of white Creoles parallel to the communities of colored and black Creoles. It can be hypothesized that it is the black population in the southern part of the state who make up today's Creoles - whether they live in Natchitoches, Pointe Coupée, Breaux Bridge or Opelousas - and that these groups are the repository of the culture, and, where it is still extant, the language. It can be further hypothesized that this is a rapidly shrinking minority group which, given the long-standing racial stereotypes and stigmatization imposed upon it, considers itself distinct from the other French groups in the state. Societal pressures in the late 19th and 20th centuries (as was shown in Chapter 2) made it impossible to retain a *racially* undifferentiated social category of 'Creole'. In addition to this, the self-identification of African-Americans with French ancestry may have been affected by the tumultuous changes wrought on African-Americans in general by the black power and Civil Rights movements in earlier decades. This, in turn, could theoretically have affected the characteristics considered necessary or important for identification as a Creole. Given possible choices of ethnicity and racial identity, it is possible that the respondents in this study would exhibit an age-graded

phenomenon, with the older informants choosing to remain loyal to their Creole identification label, while the younger blacks would follow the more general trend in America at large of proclaiming pride in black identity.

The main goal for the section of this study which deals with these issues, then, is to discover what effect this postulated identity shift has had on African-Americans in the state today. The 15 questions on the survey which pertain to identity and characterization as Creole were created to establish how the Creole groups (African-Americans with French ancestry and French-speaking African-Americans) in the chosen geographical areas define themselves. Specifically, the objectives are to determine what the characteristics are which demarcate the boundaries of this group, to determine what the traditional definitions of what it means to be Creole are, and to ascertain how the evolution of the term Creole throughout time is represented within different generations of those who self-identify as Creole today.

4.3.2 Linguistic Environment and Linguistic Network

The next goal is to determine to what extent the diachronic changes have affected synchronic language use and maintenance among Creoles in Louisiana today. Who uses the Creole French language and when? Where is this language used, and for what purpose? Has the French-based Creole spoken by some members of this speech community lost its importance as a symbol of the Creole group in Louisiana due to many years of governmental repression and the massive influence of English in recent years? If so, is the use of Creole French on the decline, and are the domains in which it is used shrinking?

It can be hypothesized that the French-based Creole spoken by some of the members of this speech community has lost its importance as a symbol of the Creole group in Louisiana, largely due to years of repression, the invasion by the English language into nearly every domain of life (church, school, media, etc), and by the disinterest, deliberate or not, exhibited by both the majority Anglophone population in the state as well as the Cajuns. As a consequence, it seems logical that the use of Creole French is on the decline, and the domains in which it is used are steadily eroding. If the pattern exhibited in the Cajun community holds true, (as shown in Dubois et al 1995) the active language users of the Creole community will be the older generation, and their use of the language will be restricted to those their own age or close family members. The historical miscegenation previously noted between European derived ethnic groups and those of African or black Caribbean descent entailed that these groups mixed much more freely and without the many legal or social consequences which were the case in the post-bellum years. This racial mixing led to the establishment of groups of people who could not readily be identified by physical characteristics as being either one race or the other. Instead, these people chose to differentiate themselves for many years from the other inhabitants of the region via their *language* as well as their culture. Given the massive social changes imposed upon the black French-speaking population in the state, there have undoubtedly been concomitant linguistic changes.

Large-scale, contextually-based, methodologically sound linguistic research has yet to be carried out on the actual Creole language. Due to the years of repression by societal and political forces and the toll which they have taken on this community, many who self-

identify as Creole may have little or no knowledge of the language. It can be hypothesized that the proficiency continuum posited by Dorian (1981:26) and other researchers is borne out in this particular language community. There probably exist many 'semi-speakers' who have minimal control of the language, but excellent receptive competence. They generally can productively manipulate expressions and sentences (Dorian 1982). It can also be assumed that there are 'near-passive bilinguals' who are able to produce and comprehend ritualized jokes, greetings, and formulaic utterances, but whose competence does not extend much beyond that. It can be further hypothesized that the lack of linguistic competence in French for these speakers does not affect their status in the speech community, and in fact allows them to verify their solidarity with other members of this culture and language community (Milroy 1980 and Milroy and Milroy 1992).

4.3.3 Language Attitudes

The third major goal is to delineate language attitudes of the community members toward the varieties of French in the state, the teaching and learning of French, and the importance of the French language. In addition, the linguistic environment and linguistic network of the respondents will be established. If the hypotheses presented above hold true, (the changes in identity and characteristics of the Creoles, less importance attributed to the language, and the gradual loss of the language), this may have caused the attitudes of this group toward their community and language to be reformulated. This begs several questions. Will the traditional foci of the community, such as religion, close-knit social groups, and language go by the wayside? Will less tangible items (such as ancestry and pride in the Creole heritage and language) be held up as the most important culture icons,

and as an *entrée* into this community? If so, what will the interaction among the social and linguistic network of the respondents be when compared with their language attitudes and their linguistic environment?

Moreover, what would the community members participating in this survey choose as being the best choice for the French language to be taught to their children? Given the prestige accorded the 'Standard' variety of French since, essentially, the founding of the colony, it is possible that this would be seen as optimally good for young French learners in Louisiana. This issue is more complex, however, because the results ask for two different concepts of language attitudes: a) attitudes toward the best French for the community, and b) attitudes toward the best French in an educational situation (teaching and learning). Therefore, it is possible that the respondents in this survey will choose their own code for teaching and learning, while not viewing it as being the best French for the community. Alternatively, they could decide that Standard French is best for educational purposes and/or view it as best for the community at large. If Creole French is chosen by the respondents, it may be due to special efforts on the part of both politicians and private citizens which have led to the French language and culture in Louisiana undergoing a shift in recent years from being denigrated and viewed as unacceptable to the majority English speaking population in the state to being accepted as a viable culture in its own right. The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) was a major influence in getting the Louisiana legislature to pass a law in 1968 making Louisiana the only official bilingual state in the United States, and succeeding, in part, in establishing Cajun French as an acceptable alternative to English. Brown (1993:75) notes "in the wake of the ethnic

revival of the 1960's, the French language - and almost anything Louisiana French, for that matter - has suddenly come into vogue. Consequently, the French culture with its language is enjoying new-found status."

Given the above proposed shifts in identity and language use by the Creoles, a shift in the attitudes of the community insofar as the value they place on the teaching and learning of the French varieties and the quality of their language as compared to the other varieties can be expected. Since education has acquired a greater degree of importance for the members of this community, due to both the governmental involvement in education in general and the societal emphasis on, at the minimum, gaining a high school degree, it is probable that the already massive influence of English in French households in Louisiana will have increased. Will this change the attitudes of the people in this speech and cultural community with regards to their language and other varieties of French in the state? Or have these attitudinal changes already occurred and been passed on to younger generations? It was certainly acknowledged many times by the respondents in this survey that one needs English to 'get ahead' in America today, but the putative French revival in the state may also have an effect in this area, yielding more interest in a renewal of speaking, teaching, and learning Creole French. The caveat, of course, is whether or not the Creole French language and culture will actually benefit from the new-found interest in the Louisiana French culture. The Zydeco music of the Creoles and Creole cooking are probably the most visible signs for many people that the group even still exists in the state. As these cultural symbols begin to be adopted by people all over the world, however, it is probable that even they will lose their connection with the Louisiana Creole community.

To recapitulate before moving to the next chapter, this research is grounded in both the quantitative methods of the variationist perspective as well as a thorough review of the sociohistorical background of the community under study. By combining the two, a more complete picture will be obtained of the identity, attitudes, language use, beliefs, and language maintenance of those who call themselves Creole in Louisiana. Given the hypothesized shift in identity and language use among Louisiana's Creoles over several centuries, one can expect an accompanying change in the attitudes exhibited by the present day members of the Creole communities. The results which will be presented in the next two chapters will concentrate on verifying or disconfirming the hypotheses enumerated in the goals of this research. Before the results are presented, the methodology which was utilized for this research is explained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

The groundwork for the methodology used in this research has been laid with the overview of the literature on the history of the Creole French community in Louisiana, it's synchronic and diachronic evolution, and the review of the relevant sociolinguistic literature given above. In order to determine the linguistic attitudes, characteristics and beliefs of those who self-identify as Creole *today* in South Louisiana, I used the sociolinguistic methodology presented in Dubois (1997) to construct a questionnaire which measured the cultural identity and linguistic attitudes of the respondents of the community under study.¹ It was based on the insights gained from previous sociolinguistic research into the ethnic minority communities discussed in the previous chapter, and was modeled on a template of the Linguistic Ability and Background (LAB) index presented in Dubois (1997). The instrument was then tuned to fit the characteristics of the community under study - African-Americans with French background in South Louisiana. A pilot questionnaire was first created and administered to 20 informants; using these pilot

¹Dr. Sylvie Dubois, with the aid of a National Science Foundation grant and the support of Louisiana State University, is undertaking a large-scale survey of the varieties of French in the state. To date, a survey of the Cajun French population in four representative communities has been conducted. The results have been analyzed and published (see, e.g. Dubois et al 1995, Dubois 1996, Dubois and Melançon 1997). In addition, a second phase of the project has been conducted. This phase consisted of the collection of 120 three-hour long interviews from fluent Cajun speakers. The results from this study are under analysis at the present time. These studies, combined with the information contained herein and the ongoing project in French-speaking native American communities in South Louisiana should effectively present the current picture of the French situation in the state.

responses as a guide, a final version of the questionnaire was designed and administered to people in two communities in South Louisiana. The sample population consisted of 240 African-American individuals, divided equally by sex, age, Creole ancestry and professed degree of fluency in Creole French, and geographic location. Since both census bureau statistics and anecdotal evidence clearly show that only a negligible number of French-speaking people or people with French ancestry inhabit the north part of the state, the areas chosen for this study were in South Louisiana. The selected communities were the areas around Breaux Bridge and Parks, in St. Martin Parish, and the city of Opelousas and surrounding communities of Plaisance and Leonville, in St. Landry parish.

5.1 JUSTIFICATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

In attempting to establish the most effective and efficient methodology to use, it was decided to use a detailed questionnaire which would be administered to members of the selected Creole communities. The use of questionnaires has been a valued research instrument in many fields. Most pertinently for this dissertation, questionnaires have been used extensively to research affective variables such as attitudes, identity, beliefs and motivation, particularly in the realms of psychology, language acquisition and sociolinguistics. Lambert, in particular, has made important contributions to the field in his works which blend social and psychological methods (Lambert 1972, Gardner and Lambert 1972, Lambert and Tucker 1976). His research, and that of those who followed him, has shown that methodological tools and insights of psychology can impact the study of language in positive ways. This point is explicitly stated in Giles (1979:1) when he asserts that "social psychological theory and methodology have important implications for

the development of sociolinguistics.” By using such techniques as the ‘matched-guise’ test and correlating the judgments obtained with social factors, it is claimed that social psychological studies may be able to increase the explanatory power of sociolinguistic analyses by contributing to a greater understanding of the dynamics of attitudes, motivations, identities, and intentions (Giles 1979).² Perhaps the most important impact of the early works of researchers such as Gardner and Lambert (1972) is that it was the first research which proved that language attitudes, motivation, and (for many social-psychologists, language acquisition) could show statistically significant relationships which could be correlated with independent (social) variables.

The incorporation of and accounting for social variables is what distinguishes the sociolinguistic method from other methodologies used in linguistics and other fields. The method itself has gained much more acceptance in recent years, due to both the quality and quantity of research which has been published utilizing this tool. Simply put, this method takes into account social factors in the communication systems of the world’s people rather than looking at language from the ‘ideal speaker-hearer’ postulated by Chomsky (1957). Empirical quantitative analyses are combined with the results, which are then used to make broad-based evaluations of a group based on a stratified sample. The

²The matched-guise technique (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum, 1972) asked listeners to judge various characteristics of speakers using different languages (Canadian French and English in the original survey). The speakers were bilingual, and the same speaker recorded both the French and English portion of the message. Although the listeners were admonished to disregard language which was used, results showed that in fact more favorable judgements were given according to which speech code was utilized.

conclusions reached in this dissertation will be grounded in the results obtained from responses to questions about attitudes and identity and will use the quantitative method to correlate these with significant variables. By using an approach which incorporates social factors with language attitudes and identity, quantitative data can be obtained which allows a precise description of a community. This in turn helps operationalize the concepts under study, which allow generalizations between the target community other similar communities. The research conducted for this dissertation was with the view of being verifiable, generalizable, and comparable to other studies of minority language groups. Given the fact that the Creole French community is quite small (the actual number of speakers of the language is debatable, but the 1990 census shows that only 6,310 people claimed to speak Creole at home) and is undergoing a rapid shift from bilingualism in Creole and English to monolingualism in English, any and all research is invaluable. Although the data are self-reported, the self-perception criterion is a necessary and sufficient condition in unstable language communities (Dorian 1981). Research conducted by Blom and Gumperz (1972), Gal (1979) and others bear out this statement. The research results obtained were also optimized by: 1) administering the questionnaire in a face-to-face interaction of the interviewer and interviewee (93% of the questionnaires were administered by an interviewer on a one-to-one basis); and 2) the fact that many of the responses in the survey were multiple choice, with the additional option of 'fill in the blank' or 'other' added to the choices. In addition, the questionnaire was extensively rewritten after analyzing responses from the pilot survey, and the possible choices given used the labels selected by the people in the pilot phase. There were very few instances in

which the informant filled out the questionnaire him/herself. This was done to ensure that each and every question was answered. Since Louisiana has the second highest illiteracy rate in the country, this also helped avoid a potentially awkward situation in which someone who cannot read was asked to do so.

5.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire which was constructed used Dubois (1997) as a template, but various changes were made to reflect the target population as well as to be a 'community sensitive' instrument.³ A pilot version was first created and administered to 20 people. This instrument consisted mainly of open-ended questions (those which the informants could fill in the answer themselves or have it filled in for them by the investigator). For each question there was an 'other' option, allowing the informant to answer in his/her own words. Ultimately, these questions were changed to multiple choice questions and questions with Likert-type scale responses.⁴ By compiling the data collected in the pilot questionnaire and getting feedback from those who participated in it, the questions were reevaluated, rewritten and adapted to the responses given in the pilot. In its final version, the questionnaire consisted of 46 questions. The questions on the first page established the 'credentials' of the informant: the sex, age, geographic area and Creole French ancestry

³See Wolfram (1997) for an extensive overview of the need for ethical, community sensitive data collection instruments in linguistics.

⁴A Likert-scale, as it was originally conceived, consisted of a range of responses (normally numbered one through five) which indicated the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed with a statement (i.e. 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'strongly disagree', etc.). I refer to my adaptation of it as a *Likert-type* scale, since I am seeking other information rather than simple agreement or disagreement with a statement.

and self-assessed fluency. Other issues were addressed such as education, the value of Creole French to the state, who speaks French to whom, the French image of Louisiana, and which type of French is best or worst for the state. In addition, there are questions about cultural associations where French is spoken, the French image of Louisiana, the quality of Creole French, the learning and teaching of the varieties of French (Cajun, Creole, Standard), the criteria necessary to be considered Creole and various questions about the social network of the individual. The entire questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix A.

The precedents for establishing two of the categories in the questionnaire were first presented in research by Dubois (1995). As noted in Dubois and Melançon (1997:75) “the degree of linguistic ability and (ancestry) constitute the two most important descriptive dimensions of the...communities being investigated.” Just as in the Cajun French community in Louisiana, social mores and legislative directives have influenced the Creole French community to such a degree that there are: a) many older individuals who speak fluent Creole; b) a middle-aged generation which was subjected to stigmatization for speaking and being French; and, c) a younger generation which was exposed to mixed linguistic and cultural models as a result of the above. In the questionnaire for this research, informants were asked about their Creole ancestry and their ability in the language. They were asked to state whether or not they were proficient in French on ten communication tasks ranging from exchanging greetings to discussing issues such as the death penalty and gun control. The informants were asked if they were capable of performing certain linguistic tasks, including the ability to:

- count to ten
- name the days of the week
- give the date (month and year)
- order a meal in a restaurant
- give biographical information (date of birth, family information, description of your studies)
- speak to people in social situations using appropriate expressions (church, meeting, party, wedding, funeral, etc.)
- describe their hobbies in detail using appropriate vocabulary
- describe current employment, educational opportunities, and main social activities in detail with native speakers
- describe what they hope to achieve in the next five years using future tense verbs with native speakers
- give opinions on controversial subjects (abortion, religion, pollution, nuclear safety) with native speakers

The responses given showed that the informants fell naturally into four linguistic ability/ancestry categories. Those respondents who said they were capable of performing all ten communicative activities were classified as 'fluent' speakers. The informants who indicated that they could perform only the first seven attributes listed were classified as 'semi-speakers'.⁵ Those who claimed ability only in the first three categories were termed

⁵Dorian (1983:fn 1) says that semi-speakers "are distinguished from passive or near-passive bilinguals by their ability to manipulate words in sentences, and from fully fluent bilinguals by the presence in their speech of forms which are explicitly labeled

'passive' speakers. The fourth category consisted of people with no Creole French ability and no Creole French ancestry.

The four categories, which will be referred to as the LAB (linguistic ability and background) index (see e.g. Dubois 1995, 1997), have 60 informants in each category, consisting of, as detailed below:

- 1) Individuals who speak Creole French fluently and have Creole French ancestors (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.)**
- 2) Individuals who speak Creole French but not fluently, and have Creole French ancestors.**
- 3) Individuals who only speak English and have Creole French ancestors**
- 4) Individuals who only speak English and have no Creole French ancestors.**

The fourth category of respondents was included to tap the range of linguistic attitudes and beliefs of both Creoles and other individuals who live in the same area. This allowed examination of the values and attitudes of the entire community. Given that both towns have a population of around 30% of people with French heritage (according to census data) the respondents who *could* fill category four were quite numerous. There were also many people who had lived in the community for years who had French language ability, but who had no Creole ancestry. Since they presented a different sociolinguistic profile - which would have skewed the data comparison - and since I wanted to work on a numerically representative sample from both communities, these individuals were not accepted into the study. Table 5.1 illustrates the cells in the LAB index.

'mistakes' by the oldest and most competent speaker."

Table 5.1 - The LAB Index and the Database Totals

LAB Index	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Fluent Creole speakers, Creole ancestry	60	25
Non Fluent Creole speakers, Creole ancestry	60	25
No Creole French, Creole ancestry	60	25
No Creole French, no Creole ancestry	60	25
TOTAL	240	100

The second criterion by which the sample was divided was age. Three age groups were established: a) 20-39 years of age, b) 40-59 years of age, c) 60 and older, yielding 80 respondents for each age group. Two factors were taken into account when establishing the age groups. Although this research does not prove or disprove the existence of people under the age of twenty who speak French, and there are certainly people younger than twenty who speak French in South Louisiana, census bureau statistics and local information indicate that this group is quite small. In fact, it was quite difficult locating young people with Creole ancestry who spoke Creole French. The middle age and older age groups, although subject to legislative directives which changed the course of the learning and teaching of both Cajun and Creole French in Louisiana, were easier to locate. It is during the school-age years of the middle-aged group that all forms of French in the state moved from the realm of being used in social, educational and religious arenas and became a 'secret language' used only in the home; this group, consequently, did not teach or pass on the language to their offspring.

The questionnaires were also equally distributed among the sexes: 120 females and 120 males. Much research has been done on the supposed differences between male and female speech, attitudes and beliefs (see e.g. Tannen 1990). By choosing to interview both sexes equally, comparative analyses of the responses from both sexes could be made. Table 5.2 illustrates the complete database.

Table 5.2 - The Creole Stratified Sample

FACTORS	BREAUX BRIDGE	OPELOUSAS	TOTAL
Women 20-39	20	20	40
Women 40-59	20	20	40
Women 60+	20	20	40
<i>Subtotal</i>	60	60	120
Men 20-39	20	20	40
Men 40-59	20	20	40
Men 60+	20	20	40
<i>Subtotal</i>	60	60	120
TOTAL	120	120	240

5.3 THE TWO CREOLE COMMUNITIES

The two communities were chosen after a search was conducted using census bureau data from 1990 the following parishes: Acadia, Calcasieu, Evangeline, Lafayette, Lafourche, Pointe Coupee, St. Landry, St. Martin, Terrebonne and Vermilion. After the statistical results were compiled, it was determined that a larger proportion of people in St. Landry and St. Martin parishes claimed to speak Creole French at home than in the other parishes. In addition, these parishes contained the largest percentage of African-

Americans relative to total population in the southern part of the state. The 1990 census bureau data also showed that the socioeconomic level of the two areas is vastly different: the Breaux Bridge area is rural and relatively poorer, the Opelousas area is more urban and more economically advantaged. This ensured that a sampling of all socioeconomic levels was obtained. The decision not to circumscribe the areas of study to a single town or community is due to the fact that the smaller communities within the parishes often have retained a larger percentage of French-speaking and French ancestry people. By choosing to sample the populations of the communities surrounding Breaux Bridge and Opelousas, as well as the two towns themselves, the study was assured of a more representative sample. Insider knowledge of the linguistic and social situations in many South Louisiana communities added an admittedly anecdotal yet valuable element to the choice of the two areas chosen for the survey. In addition, as noted in Chapter 3, Neumann (1985), in the most detailed linguistic research done to date on the Creole language, chose to concentrate on the area around Breaux Bridge, and, although Klingler (1992) targeted the parish of Pointe Coupée for his research on the lexicon of Creole French, this area contained too few people for an adequate representation of the required population for the study. In addition, it would obviously be an impossible task to survey the entire state in one study, due to time, interest, and monetary considerations. The criteria mentioned above when added to the more scientific census bureau statistics provide a sound justification of the areas chosen for study. The two areas chosen (Breaux Bridge/St. Martin Parish and Opelousas/St. Landry Parish) are detailed in the map in the Appendix B.

5.3.1 Breaux Bridge

Breaux Bridge, founded 138 years ago, is a small town (population 6,515) located east of Lafayette just off the east-west Interstate which connects the southern part of the state. Geographically speaking, it lies east of the huge prairie covering most of the western part of the state, and west of the Mississippi delta. The Atchafalaya Basin, a huge swampy area surrounded by levees, is a short drive away and provides a large range of wildlife, fish, and crawfish. Bayou Teche runs through the town, and played a large role in the establishment of the town, beginning with the actual settlement of the area, and continuing to contribute for many years to the establishment of commercial ventures. The bayou provided (and continues to provide today), an efficient method of transportation for those with boats. In the past, boats loaded with produce, sugar cane, textiles and other goods plied their trade along the bayou. Today the people in the region use it for going to Mass, visiting with friends, water-skiing and fishing.

The banks of the bayou are lined with large, beautiful old homes built long before the oil boom of the 1970's, the industry which sustains much of the working populace today. There are in addition many small farmers who specialize mainly in sugar cane and soybeans. Crop farmers supply the area with fresh produce, but are on such a small scale that they rarely sell outside of the area. Crawfishing, which was at one time conducted only in the Atchafalaya basin, has also become a cash crop. There are crawfish 'farms' all around the area, which are in reality rice fields being utilized in the off season to raise this most precious of Louisiana delectables. Although the level of income for many families is often above simple 'subsistence', weather can cause a major economic setback in this area.

The downtown area of Breaux Bridge is small, and struggling to remain viable. There are still a few family-owned businesses, a bed and breakfast, and various antique stores in this area; they are juxtaposed with abandoned and boarded up buildings. There appears to be no citizen's group or town council pushing for the revitalization of the downtown area. Instead, most of the efforts toward promoting tourism focus on the annual Crawfish Festival. Unlike Abbeville and other villages surrounding Lafayette, Breaux Bridge has not become a commuter town. There is a small weekly newspaper, but no television or radio station. There are two nursing homes, one is majority black, the other majority white. With no movie theater, few restaurants, no hospital or other services required by the mobile population of today, Breaux Bridge has little to offer. Because of this, many of the residents of the town choose to go out of the area for recreational and social activities, higher education opportunities and long and short-term health care.

The town's claim to fame in the annual Crawfish Festival held in a small park near downtown. This festival is immensely popular with locals and out-of-state visitors alike. The two-day event normally draws between 20,000 and 30,000 people each year. Breaux Bridge promotes this event heavily, since it is virtually the only reason for tourists to come to the town.⁶

The town is racially polarized in regards to housing, parks, schools, grocery stores, nursing homes and festivals. This is shown by the fact that in another park in the 'black

⁶Maps and brochures handed out by Louisiana tourist offices steer visitors to St. Martinville, Avery Island, New Iberia and Lafayette and rarely mention Breaux Bridge.

area' of town there is another, smaller festival concurrent with the larger one. It is an accepted fact, by both African-Americans and whites, that the 'Mason-Dixon' line in town is the railroad track, and the Creole Crawfish Festival is staged on 'the other side of the tracks' in a nearby park. When asked about this sharp division between the two racial groups, whites stated that both groups wanted it that way, and African-Americans generally shook their heads and shrugged. This alternative festival was begun by the Creole Crawfish Association, a group of African-American leaders in the community who felt that their culture and music were being subsumed in the crush of the tourist-laden Crawfish Festival and the recent trend to label any and everything in South Louisiana 'Cajun'. The Creole Crawfish Festival is attended almost solely by African-Americans, the music played is exclusively Zydeco, and the food served is substantially different than the 'white' festival. They have their own Mardi-style ball in which a king and queen are selected and attended by the children selected to be the "Lil' Pinchers". The 1996 pamphlet put out by the association claims that the success of the festival is due, in part, "to the cooperative spirit of the citizens of Breaux Bridge, African-Americans, as well as European-Americans. From the very first celebration...the African-American community has carried on activities which have added to the entertainment of visitors and contributed to the 'Joe (sic) de Vivre" (Creole Crawfish Association pamphlet, 1996). The success of this festival was questioned in an article in the Daily Iberian (May 16, 1996) however, when the author noted that the "alternative Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival" owed the city \$3,000 before it even sold the first ticket to the 1996 event. The cooperative spirit between African-Americans and whites in the town comes into question when looking at

the history of the two organizations. Many of the agreements reached between the Crawfish Festival Association and the Creole Crawfish Festival Association have not been upheld due to lack of community support, according to the members of the Creole Crawfish Association.

5.3.2 Opelousas

Opelousas (population 18,161) is located north of Lafayette, west of Baton Rouge, and close to the farthest edge of what is traditionally considered the 'French-speaking zone' of South Louisiana. Founded in 1720 by the French as a trading post (originally named the Attakapas post), Opelousas served as a stopping point for travelers going between Natchitoches (also a French outpost) and New Orleans. Opelousas' claim to fame, according to tourist brochures, is that the town is the 'Yam Capitol of the World'; the 'Yambilee' festival accompanying this title is attended mostly by whites.

There are pockets of Creoles in and around Opelousas in towns such as Plaisance, Frilot Cove, and Leonville. Downtown Opelousas is larger than that of Breaux Bridge, but it is also somewhat decrepit and striving for rejuvenation. The modern day center of town is Creswell Avenue which is filled with the requisite fast food restaurants and grocery stores. There are two hospitals which serve a large area in and around Opelousas, and a vocational-technical school serving the younger age group in the area as an alternative to a university education. Opelousas has a daily newspaper, *The Daily World*, two radio stations, and a small cable television station.

Opelousas lies in what geographers refer to as the West Gulf Coastal Plain, and what locals call the 'Cajun Prairie'. For the most part, rice farms and cattle farming

occupy the top rung in the agricultural industry in this area. In addition, Opelousas is on the edge of the (very) small range of foothills which cross the middle of the state, and therefore benefits from having pine and other hardwood trees available for harvest. Tony Chachere's Cajun Food plant and the various Fruit of the Loom plants located near the town have traditionally provided the major source of non-agricultural income, but with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), many of the textile plants are closing or severely curtailing their output.

Given its proximity to Lafayette and its history as one of the first outposts in the Louisiana Territory, the push to accept tourists and embrace tourism as a viable economic opportunity is strong, beginning with the mayor's office and going all the way through to the owners of the local Zydeco clubs. There is a visitors information center located just beside the Interstate which is supported and subsidized by many of the local businesses, clubs and restaurants. The services offered in town, such as hospitals, movie theaters, good restaurants, hotels and fast food outlets have served to make Opelousas much like 'anyplace USA', yet the areas surrounding the town have maintained much of their originality.⁷

An example of this is Plaisance, a very small town north and slightly west of Opelousas. It is host to both the Louisiana International Goat Festival and the Zydeco Music Festival. The Goat Festival publishes a brochure which promotes goat meat as a source of high quality dietary protein. They list their goals as "promot(ing) the need for the Goat Industry, and ...educat(ing) the public on the nutritional value of Goat Meat and

⁷The phrase 'anyplace USA' is taken from a billboard advertisement in town.

all of its products” (Goat Festival brochure 1996). The Zydeco Festival started twenty years ago and struggled to remain viable for years. It has gained much more attention in the past ten years as interest in Louisiana culture has increased. This festival features local groups, and also strongly encourages young musicians learning to play Zydeco.

Both of these festivals are sponsored by the Southern Development Foundation, which is a group of prominent African-Americans in the community who banded together to save their music and heritage nearly 20 years ago. Just as the African-American community in Breaux Bridge did, this group saw the trend that was emerging which put emphasis on any and everything ‘Cajun’, and began to fight to preserve their Creole heritage. These activists were the most ‘pro-Creole’ of any group encountered during the administration of the surveys. This group and other people throughout the research period insisted that Zydeco music is Creole, *not* Cajun. Though both are sung in French, and both use similar instruments (harmonicas, accordions, spoons, etc.) the rhythm is different, according to those ‘in the know’. To the uninitiated, the difference is so subtle as to be nearly undetectable. As a means of differentiation, however, and the source of much pride, Zydeco music is the one tangible cultural item that Creoles claim as their own.

Perhaps the greatest source of pride of the African-Americans interviewed in the Opelousas area was the Holy Ghost Catholic Church. This church, established in 1920, is the largest black Catholic Parish in the United States (Andrepoint 1992:169). The church is indeed beautiful and occupies a space in the same huge square near downtown in which the biggest white Catholic church in town stands. In addition, the Zydeco clubs in the area are extremely popular and are attended by both whites and African-Americans. They

serve as a venue for young Creole musicians trying to break into the business, as well as those groups and individuals who have already established themselves as Zydeco musicians.

The racial differentiation manifested and openly discussed in Breaux Bridge was not as apparent in Opelousas. This is perhaps not surprising given the town's history, size and proximity to larger urban areas. The racial balance has shifted somewhat over the years, however, as the percentage of African-American residents of the area has risen. Even so, their presence in the area has always been strong and fairly visible, especially when compared to other, more rural areas in Louisiana. Sexton (1997:49) notes that although (in the nineteenth century) the eastern portion of the state consisted of a plantation economy run by a white Creole and Anglo-American elite, the western (prairie area) of the state was "a frontier setting with a largely subsistence based economy" which was far more egalitarian than the large plantation settlements in the eastern portion of the state.⁸ In addition, in the early history of Opelousas there was an established Creole 'elite' consisting mainly of professionals such as doctors and dentists. This group of "educated, organized and economically independent" professionals and their successes may help account for the fact that Opelousas was the site of the first attempted biracial farmer's union in 1936 (Fairclough 1995:72), although this group had limited success. Fairclough goes on to note that Opelousas and St. Landry parish had a particularly brutal history with

⁸Sexton defines 'Creole' as "Louisiana born colonial-era...French or non-Acadian ancestry and their descendants", but also notes that although the term was used by non-Acadian French to distinguish themselves from Cajuns, Anglos often used the two terms (Cajun and Creole) interchangeably.

regards to black voting privileges. In spite of the presence of blacks in nearly all areas of the parish, most of whom were (at this point in time) Catholic and French-speaking, just as were their white counterparts, efforts to register to vote were met with much white hostility initially (Fairclough 1995:124 et passim). This of course, happened all over the state, and all over the south for many years.

5.4 THE FIELDWORK

After having established the layout and socioeconomic background of the communities, graduate students in the French Department and the Linguistics program at Louisiana State University (LSU) who were enrolled in the field methods course of Dr. Sylvie Dubois were given extensive training in methods of administration of the instrument, including judging the respondents willingness to participate, how to deal with refusals, and basic interview etiquette. Familiarization with the questionnaire occurred during the course of the first month of class by piloting it on students around the campus of Louisiana State University.

A majority of the questionnaires were administered during two weekends in the month of February. Much of the groundwork for contacting Creole speakers had been laid in the prior month via telephone, fax, newspaper articles and radio announcements, so the people in the two areas were not totally unaware of the presence of researchers from LSU being in their hometown. Deeming it both unreliable and potentially unsafe to go 'door-to-door', the investigators went to such places as large shopping centers, grocery stores, laundromats, beauty parlors, barber shops, churches, and (especially on Fridays) downtown areas, such as Civic Centers, museums, town halls, etc. Although some

researchers have reported extensive xenophobia attributed to the French populations in Louisiana, none was experienced during this project. Lack of time was the reason cited most often for choosing not to participate, and if people chose not to participate, they were not pushed. There were very few refusals, however, and the welcoming attitudes of the people interviewed very quickly reduced any anxiety on the part of the investigator(s). The questionnaires of the categories of informants which remained unfilled from the original research weekends were collected over a period of three months (March through May). These categories consisted of people who were generally the most difficult to locate, i.e., finding a young, female, fluent Creole French speaker in Opelousas. However, telephone calls and advance contacts proved to be very beneficial during this phase of the investigation.

Since Opelousas is a more urban area than Breaux Bridge, the techniques for getting interviews had to change somewhat. It was mistakenly assumed that because Opelousas was bigger than Breaux Bridge, it would be easier to begin the fieldwork there. In fact, Breaux Bridge proved to be much easier for finding willing informants who fit the categories. In Opelousas, (just as in Breaux Bridge), some groundwork had been laid beforehand, so the residents were not completely taken by surprise. As a general rule, Fridays were devoted to going downtown in each town and accessing civil servants, lawyers, storekeepers, and anyone else who happened to be downtown on a Friday afternoon. Saturdays were devoted to cafes and breakfast places in the early morning, shopping centers, parks and whatever businesses were open in the afternoon, and bars and restaurants at night. Sundays were consecrated to churches. Permission was sought from

the priest or preacher to address her/his congregation after the service was over. This proved to be very fruitful for getting the attendees involved and filling out categories which had previously been left open.

The usefulness of telephone interviews came as an unexpected bonus during the fieldwork. Many times an interviewee would indicate that they knew a relative or friend who would be willing to fill out a survey, and would give a name and telephone number. These contacts proved to be a valuable source of respondents, and very often the person interviewed on the phone would give further contacts, creating a 'snowball' effect.

An important directive in the research process was to respect the wishes of the informant at all times. Tantamount was to adjust the rhythm of the interview to fit the respondents' needs and to obtain the most reliable interview possible. It was anticipated that each survey would take approximately 15 minutes to fill out, although this varied greatly, often depending on the age of the informant and the physical context in which the interview was being conducted. Surveys taken in Ruby's Café in downtown Opelousas, for example, took longer to complete than those obtained outside Wal Mart in Breaux Bridge. Surveys conducted outside the courthouse in Opelousas with the people waiting for their day in court provided some of the most amusing responses. Most of the interviews were conducted in English, although very often the informant would verify that the investigator knew French by throwing out phrases or greetings *en français* (in French) to see how the interviewer would react.

Contacts with nursing homes, hospitals, vocational-technical schools and high schools also played a very important role in gathering the requisite surveys. In the nursing

homes, many of the older residents were fluent Creole French speakers. An unexpected bonus was that the people who worked at the nursing home were usually fluent also, due to the large number of French-speaking residents in the homes. These became an important source for the middle-aged informants. The Vocational-Technical school in Opelousas proved fruitful for gathering questionnaires from younger people, as well as the high schools in and around both towns.

In general, a positive attitude and helpfulness was encountered again and again throughout the fieldwork. As an example, toward the end of the fieldwork, I went into the only store in Plaisance, Louisiana and pleaded, "Do you know any young French-speaking women around here?". The response was instantaneous. The young (black) man behind the counter wheeled around, picked up the telephone, called his cousin and asked if she had time to talk to someone in French. When that interview was completed, I was driven to four houses in which I found more respondents.

5.5 CODIFICATION OF THE DATA

The responses were codified by hand onto data sheets, then typed into a computer to create a database. The statistical program StatView was used to conduct analyses on the data. Frequency distributions were first performed on each variable to verify that there were no errors in codification. Cross-tabulations with two and three variables which compared a dependent variable with multiple independent were performed. The significant results are discussed below, and I summarize those which are weak or insignificant.

Following Dubois' method established in her 1995 and 1997 research, the linguistic ability and ancestral background of the informants, the LAB (Linguistic Ability

and Background) index, was factored into the statistical analysis and proved to be significant. Age, sex, the LAB index, socio-professional level and place of residence were considered independent variables, and were cross-tabulated with the dependent variables - the responses to each question in the survey.

Labov's theory of the quantitative conditioning of inherent variability and his epistemological principle of accountability, especially as it pertains to linguistic variability 'above and beyond' phonology, are the quintessential attributes which define 'variation theory' in sociolinguistics. However, the relation between a single independent variable (e.g. age) and the different factors (e.g. responses to the questions 'how do you consider yourself' and 'what language do you use with relatives') is more controversial whenever there are nuances in meaning and function of the factors, or when there are several sub-categories for one factor (e.g. responses to the first question above - African-American, American, Creole-American, Creole, and the second questions above - Creole French, English, or both). In the computation of the rate of use or the significance of a factor such as age, the prototypical statistical calculation for variable rule and other analyses such as p-value, chi-square, etc., required dividing the frequency by a number of eligible contexts (as an example, the sub-categories of the answers to the first question listed above in parentheses). In contrast to categorical variables, there is generally no principled way of identifying real statistical relationships when factor groups are: 1) non-binary (more than two sub-categories), and 2) nominal (factor groups which contain no strict order or some unknown degree or ordinality). As can be seen, answers to the questions listed immediately above cannot be ordered by increasing or decreasing complexity.

How, then, did we determine the existence of strong, weak, or no relationships?

Our approach follows Dubois and Sankoff's method (1997) which involved the tedious examination of two-way and three-way tabulations to detect spurious associations. First, responses were codified by hand onto data sheets, then computerized using StatView to conduct analyses, then age, sex, and the LAB index, socio-professional level and place of residence were added to the database. Frequency distributions were performed on each variable (the 46 questions yielded 73 variables) to verify that there were no errors in codification. Second, we systematically worked out the associations among the factor groups, in terms of pairwise tabulations (for example, age and responses to question 1). In addition, three-way tabulations were done for the more complex connections (for example, age and responses to question 1, split by parish).

How can we (and how did we) decide which indicated real relationships between factor groups or between individual factors, and which could not be statistically distinguished from cross-tabulations of independent factors? There is no simple answer to this question and no statistical criterion that serves in every case, including the traditional chi-square test. With many rows and columns, a degree of subjectivity is inevitable. In one cell of a table (e.g. African-American identity) representing the association between two factors (e.g. age and identity), one cell from each of the two groups may contain a value completely out of line with the values in the same row and column, indicating a strong relationship, while the other cells show no relationships (Creole or American identity with age). When this happens, a statistical test of significance will not necessarily be significant. In conclusion, instead of imposing particular asymmetrical relationships on

the data beforehand, the relationships, and to some extent their directions, emerge during the data analysis itself. Although unquantifiable, prior linguistic considerations help us recognize the importance of the results.

CHAPTER 6

IDENTITY AND CHARACTERIZATION AS CREOLE

In this chapter, I will discuss the results dealing with Creole identity and the characteristics which are seen as necessary for taking part in the Louisiana Creole French identity. In Chapter 2, it was shown that the identity and characteristics of today's Creoles have changed radically from the original meaning of the term. It was suggested that the sociohistorical events in Louisiana and their effect on the Creole community would be reflected in the self-identification and the criteria viewed as necessary to be Creole by participants in the survey. The tasks then, were to determine what the repercussions were on characteristics and identification as Creole and how these diachronic and synchronic permutations have affected the community. Are the African-Americans with Creole ancestry truly the recipients of the Creole identity today?

The identity labels and Creole in-group criteria chosen by the respondents are presented, discussed, and analyzed below. Only those factors which were significant for selected questions about identity and criteria seen as necessary in order to be Creole are described. The results are based on the responses of the 240 respondents, and were analyzed using step-wise regression and cross-tables with two and three variables.

6.1 CENSUS BUREAU STATISTICS

To determine to what extent African-Americans claim Creole identity in Louisiana today, special tabulations were made by the Census Bureau which cross-tabulated race, language and ancestry. Table 6.1 shows that only 1.2 percent of the state's African-

American population claims some form of French ancestry, compared to 37% of the whites. Of the African-Americans who claim French ancestry, 54 percent claim French ancestry other than Acadian or French-Canadian. Most of the people who claim to speak Creole French identify as African-American (89%), and 95% of these Creole speakers claim no French ancestry. Unfortunately there was no possibility of identifying as Creole on the Census Bureau questionnaire.¹ Along with the historical evidence presented in earlier chapters, these results show that the French ancestry which was claimed at earlier times in the history of the state (particularly post-Civil War) is no longer a pivotal issue for this group.

This is not the case for the white Creole population, which is substantially reduced due to the historic (and ongoing) process of cultural and linguistic assimilation. There is no longer any pressure or advantage to champion their Creole identity, while advocating French ancestry is much more common (52% do so). In addition, although French ancestry has lost some of its value in the black community, (as shown by the fact that 95 percent of those who speak Creole French claim no French ancestry at all), this does not mean that there is no black Creole community in existence. The Creole language (as is discussed in Chapter 8) is an important cultural identification marker for this group, is still used in Louisiana, and is strongly linked to race, contrary to what other researchers have claimed (Chaudenson 1974, Tentchoff 1977, Neumann 1985). Although the ancestry results do not allow a positive determination of those who identify as Creole, the language

¹The 2000 census did not include Louisiana Creole as an identification label, but there was a write-in option available.

questions do. If language is viewed as a fundamental cultural marker for a community, then it can be seen from the results of the linguistic questions in the Census Bureau data that it is the black population in the state which is the repository of the language, and, correspondingly, the identity.

Table 6.1 - Percentage of Blacks and Whites Cross-tabulated with Language and Ancestry

White	Black
Percentage of people in Louisiana who claim some type of French ancestry	
37%	1.2%
960,401/2,582,041	14,352/1,165,880
Among those who claim French background or ancestry, percentage of those who claim only French ancestry (other than Acadian and French-Canadian)	
52%	54%
497,721/960,401	7,713/14,352
Percentage of people who claim to speak Creole French regardless of ancestry	
9.6%	89%
607/6,310	5,610/6,310
Percentage of people who claim to speak Cajun French regardless of ancestry	
94%	4%
25,830/27,613	1,167/27,613
Percentage of people who claim to speak Standard French regardless of ancestry	
83%	14%
189,046/227,755	32,257/227,755
Percentage of people who claim to speak Creole French but no French ancestry	
16%	95%
100/607	5,326/5,610

Various questions were asked about particular facets of the respondents self-identification (as Creole or otherwise). The results were analyzed using factors such as age, gender, place of residence, and the Linguistic Ability and Background (LAB) index. The results are given in sections 6.2 and 6.3 and discussed in sections 6.4 and 6.5.

6.2. IDENTITY AS CREOLE

When asked “Which of the following do you consider yourself? American, African-American, Creole-American, Creole, or Other?”, a majority of the informants chose to identify themselves as African-American. As can be seen in Table 6.2, 57% claimed African-American identity, followed by 22% who chose the American label. Ten percent claimed to be Creole-American, while only 8% of the respondents identified as Creole.²

Table 6.2 - Self-identification

LABELS	#	%
African American	137	57
American	52	22
Creole-American	25	10
Creole	18	8
Other	8	3
TOTAL	240	100

All of these responses were cross-tabulated with Creole ancestry and linguistic ability in Creole French (the LAB index), gender, and place of residence. Neither gender, place of residence, nor linguistic ability and Creole background play a role in the choice of identifying as African-American to any significant degree.³ The respondents without

²Among the ‘other’ self-identification option, responses included ‘human’, ‘mankind’, ‘Indian’, and various forms of refusals.

³In the following tables, Creole and Creole-American are grouped for statistical purposes.

Creole ancestry and with no language ability do not show any significant difference from those who are fluent Creole speakers (with concomitant Creole heritage, 50%), semi-speakers (62%), or those with no French language ability (58%), and 58% of the respondents with neither language ability nor Creole French background claimed to be African-American.

Nonetheless, age has a strong influence on self-identification as African-American, regardless of linguistic ability. There is a clear distinction between those under sixty and those over sixty, as shown in Figure 6.1. The younger and middle age groups tend to adopt the African-American label more than the older age groups. Seventy percent of the young respondents (aged 20-39 years) and 69% of the middle age group (aged 40-59 years) considered themselves African-American, and 32% of the older respondents did so.

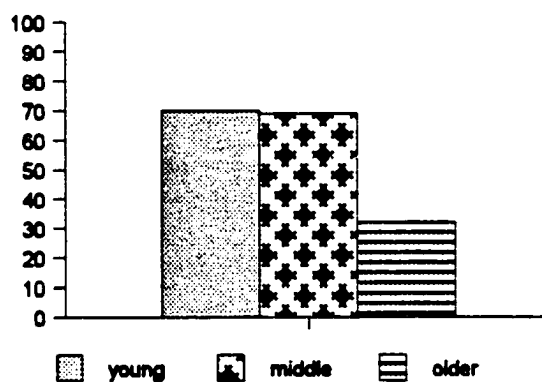


Figure 6.1 - African-American Identification and Age

As far as the labels American and Creole are concerned, the LAB index does play a very important role. This is shown in table 6.3, in which the LAB categories, (fluent speakers, semi-speakers, people with Creole ancestry but no linguistic ability, and people

with neither ancestry nor language ability) are abbreviated, respectively, as 'Fluent', 'Semi', 'No CrF', 'No CrF, no CrA'. The abbreviations will be used in the tables throughout the remainder of this chapter. The discrepancies in the total column are due to the respondents who refused to answer or who did not give an answer which was among the categories offered.

The more fluent one is, the more one self-identifies as Creole: 38% of the fluent speakers claim Creole identity. Conversely, those with no linguistic ability in Creole French and no Creole background tend to consider themselves African-American. Interestingly enough, none of these 'outsiders' (those with no linguistic ability in Creole French and no Creole ancestry) called themselves Creole; the 42% who did not adopt the African-American label considered themselves American.

Table 6.3 - Self-identification and Linguistic Ability and Background (LAB)

LAB INDEX	AFRICAN-AMERICAN		AMERICAN		CREOLE		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fluent	30	50	7	12	23	38	60	100
Semi	37	62	5	10	10	18	53	100
No CrF	35	58	14	23	10	17	59	100
No CrF, No CrA	35	58	25	42	0	0	60	100
TOTAL	137	59	52	23	43	19	232	100

Combining the results, it can be seen that the LAB index is the only significant factor which influences the American and Creole identification labels, while age is the strongest determining factor in self-ascription as African-American.

6.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF CREOLE IDENTITY

Respondents were asked to evaluate what the necessary characteristics were in order to be considered a 'true' Creole in Louisiana: 1) speak Creole French; 2) have learned Creole French as your first language; 3) speak some form of French; 4) to have Creole ancestors; 5) have parents or grandparents who speak Creole French; 6) live in a Creole city or town; 7) live in Louisiana; 8) be a particular race; 9) be a member of a certain religious group (if yes, which one). The responses were rated in order of importance as given by the informants and are detailed in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 - Criteria Necessary to be Considered a Creole

CRITERIA	YES		NO		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	
to have Creole ancestors	188	78	52	22	240
to have parents/ grandparents who speak Cr. French	180	75	60	25	240
speak some form of French	145	60	95	40	240
speak Creole French	126	53	114	47	240
live in Louisiana	102	43	138	57	240
learn Cr. French as a first language	86	36	154	64	240
live in a Creole town	80	33	159	67	240
Race	48	20	192	80	240
Religion	18	7	222	93	240

Creole ancestry was selected by a majority of the respondents as the most important defining characteristic of Creole identity. Of the 240 informants in the study, 188 (78%) of them said that this was the most necessary characteristic. Having

grandparents and parents who speak French was also considered important by a large percentage (75%) of the respondents. A majority of the informants also list having some form of French as being relatively important. Of the 240 people surveyed, 145 (60%) said that this was a significant criterion. The respondents were almost equally split on the issue of speaking Creole French. Fifty-three percent claimed that it was necessary in order to be considered a true Creole, 47% viewed it as less important.

Living in Louisiana seems to be relatively unimportant as a criterion for Creole membership for a majority of the informants, as only 43% of them claimed that this was a necessary criterion. There was an almost equal match among those who saw learning Creole French as a first language (36%) and living in a Creole town (33%) as important characteristics for identification as Creole, leaving 64% and 67%, respectively, who stated that these two criteria are largely unimportant when considering characteristics of a 'true' Creole.

Only 20% of the informants claimed that one had to be a certain race to be considered Creole; 80% responded negatively to this question. This shows that the criterion of race is viewed by a majority of respondents as having a minor impact on the necessity of being considered Creole, and show that the respondents do not attach a specific race label to the Creole identity, contrary to other racial groups in Louisiana.⁴ Of

⁴In a secondary research project undertaken in the Acadiana region, 70 white people were asked about the race criterion. Seventy-five percent (52 people) said that to claim to be Creole meant that one was mixed racially; eleven people (15%) out of the total chose 'black' as being the sole race which could claim to be Creole; seven stated that to be considered Creole one has to be 'white' (10%). Those who said the term applied only to whites said that was the historical definition that they had learned in school.

the 48 people who said race was a necessary criterion for 'Creoleness', 32 of them (67%) said that a marker of being Creole was to be mixed racially; 16 people (33%) said that only African-Americans can identify as Creole.

Some researchers have claimed that religion was and still is a cornerstone of Creole identity (Mills 1977, Brasseaux et al 1994). However, the analysis of the results above show that religion is no longer an important criterion of Creole identity: 93% of the respondents selected the criterion of religion as being the least important. The 18 people who said it was stated, as expected, that being Catholic was necessary to be considered Creole. Many respondents, (although responding 'no' to the question), did note that 'in the old days', being a Catholic would have been considered a very important marker of Creole identity.

Although the influence of age and gender on the results presented above was not significant, the LAB index and place of residence affected the two criteria dealing with language (speaking Creole French and having Creole French as a first language). This is shown in Table 6.5. For those who are fluent in Creole French, these two criteria are seen as more necessary, especially speaking Creole French. The semi-speakers deviated quite a bit in their responses from both the fluent speakers as well as those with neither ancestry nor linguistic ability. Only 35% of the semi-speakers stated that speaking Creole French was important, contrasting with 53% of those with Creole ancestry but no Creole French and 50% of those with neither attribute who said that it was necessary.

Fifty-three percent of the fluent speakers thought learning Creole French as a first language was necessary, while only 27% of the semi-speakers consider learning Creole

French as a first language important. Those with little or no language ability but who have Creole background showed that this was more important to them as a marker of Creole identity - 35% claimed that it was a necessary characteristic. The responses of those informants with neither language ability nor background almost matched the semi-speakers, as is shown by the fact that 28% thought this vital for being considered Creole.

Table 6.5 - LAB Index, Speaking Creole French, and Learning Creole French as a First Language

LAB INDEX	Speaking Creole French is Important		Learning Creole French as a first language is important	
	#	%	#	%
Fluent	43	72	32	53
Semi	21	35	16	27
No CrF	32	53	21	35
No CrF, No CrA	30	50	17	28

When the criteria results were broken down according to geographic region, the respondents in Opelousas consistently had higher percentages of 'yes' responses for every question except one, (although they were almost identical for the question about Creole ancestry). The one exception in which Opelousas respondents had a smaller percentage of 'yes' responses was the question about whether it was necessary to live in a Creole city in order to be considered a true Creole. Although the percentage difference was fairly small, it goes against the tendency of the respondents from this area to have stricter standards as to what constitutes a true Creole. It also seems to indicate that there may be some geographical insecurity exhibited in the fact that Opelousans (living just south of the apex

of the traditional 'French triangle') consider living in a highly Creole-centric area to be less important than do those respondents in Breaux Bridge, considered by many to be the heart of Creole country in South Louisiana.

6.4 ONGOING CHANGES IN CREOLE IDENTITY

All of the respondents (including the 60 people with no ancestry or language ability) had to be from Louisiana, or had to have lived in the state since the age of 15 in order to be able to participate in the survey. Given the choice of options between claiming French or Creole ancestry, or putting emphasis on the African part of their heritage, the responses from the majority of the informants in this study seem to indicate an inexorable movement toward claiming African-American identity. Although it was shown earlier that Creole identity is linked to African-Americans in Louisiana, the label Creole is not claimed by a majority of the respondents in this study, regardless of their ability in the language and/or their ancestry; instead, the respondents in this survey chose to identify as African-American. Why would this be?

In looking at the identification processes undergone by the Louisiana Creole French community, many factors must be taken into account. At the most basic level, identification as Creole, American, or African-American seems to be based on linguistic ability in Louisiana Creole French and intertwined with age. Those who are older and more fluent claim to be Creole more than those who are younger and less fluent. This is not a surprising result, although some would claim that the French renaissance in Louisiana could or should have raised ethnic pride in French heritage to such an extent that even the younger people are buying into the French identity (whether Creole or

Cajun). What apparently mitigates the effect of the revival (to whatever extent it has an effect on the Creole population) is the more powerful 'black-pride' movement begun in the 1960s, and which is still creating ripples in the fabric of society in the 1990s. The importance of ethnic or racial identification in the maintenance of a speech community has been shown to be invaluable, but in the case of Louisiana Creoles, both ethnicity and race come into play. As Paul Cluse, a Louisiana Creole who spoke no English when he began school, says in an article in the *Sunday Advocate* (11/12/89), "I was worried that the French part of black history (in South Louisiana) would be lost. Some people think maybe it should be, but we don't deny the importance of our African history. We just want (to preserve the French culture) as well". This sentiment is illustrated in the results about characterization and identification as Creole presented earlier.

From both the Census Bureau statistics, (which showed that 95% of Creole speaking people did not claim French ancestry), as well as the results from the criteria considered necessary to be Creole (in which the respondents overwhelmingly claimed that Creole ancestry was the overriding factor for characterization as Creole) it can be seen that French ancestry among the Creole population is no longer seen as a deciding factor in their self-identity. Instead, pressure from black activists combined with social coercion from whites who want(ed) complete separation of the races (in spite of earlier and continuing miscegenation in the state) goad African-Americans with Creole ancestry to identify as African-American. Those who are fluent in speaking Louisiana Creole French tend to identify as African-American to some degree as well (60%), but their linguistic ability, although not a necessary one, is a sufficient condition for them to demonstrate

their Creole identity. This is supported by the history of the group which was discussed in Chapter 2. The label Creole was appropriated by or assigned to blacks and was less strongly associated with the historical definition of 'white and of European descent', thereby giving birth to the modern-day term which is more culturally and racially based than ethnically based. What, then, do the informants consider 'Creole' ancestry to be? Is it considered to be the same 'French' ancestry which was referred to in the Census Bureau statistics, or is this viewed simply as a linguistic component of identity? And what does identification as African-American have to do with either of these? Race in America today is not an easily dismissed item, and one which surely factors into claims of identity. The interplay between Creole and French ancestry, identification as Creole and/or African-American, and the linguistic affiliation of the groups seems to be quite complex. Today's Louisiana Creoles do not acknowledge their French heritage, but some do see Creole identity as being important. They view French ancestry, which they refuted in the census bureau statistics, as a marker of whites (due to historical factors), and instead choose to view themselves as African-American .

Mills (1977:xvi) also remarked on this phenomena when he stated that "the modern emphasis upon 'black brotherhood' leads many to think that all nonwhites feel, and have always felt, a bond of unity". Although Mills claims that this is a fallacious assumption, (and it has been shown in earlier chapters that the black Creoles in Louisiana certainly did *not* feel a bond of unity with other blacks of the elite Creoles of Color until the Civil War and its accompanying social upheavals), the fact of the matter is that the younger generation in this survey is self-ascribing as African-American in overwhelming

numbers, as are those from the generation before. The twenty years which have elapsed between the research of Mills and the current work may help explain this, as well as the fact that the older generation from this survey claims the African-American identity much less than the younger generations. The fact that the respondents in this study apparently feel like they have more in common with their African roots rather than their French, Spanish, and European roots may be a reflection of what the poet W. E. B. Dubois (1961 [1903]) referred to as the 'twoness' of African-American consciousness. Spears (1998) states that "twoness is basically the dual personality caused by the cohabitation of two consciousnesses or cultural systems within one mind, the White and the African-American, the hegemonic and the subaltern." Applying this more succinctly to the situation in Louisiana, African-Americans with French ancestry (today's Creoles) seem to be struggling with a trifecta of identities: American, African, and French. How do they resolve the potential ambiguities in their identity claims? One way in which this is accomplished is by claiming an African-American identity, yet still indicating pride in their Creole heritage, which no longer seems to be linked to French ancestry. Their perception of themselves may be that they are Creoles (which they had to admit to in order to take part in the survey), but the reality is that societal forces (from both within and without) and Census Bureau labels force them to claim to be African-American.

On the other hand, if the issue is not as simple or clear-cut as white versus black, the explanation for the paradoxical identification claims may be seen in the distinction between self-identification and identification as a symbolic marker of community pride. Ancestry is seen as being Creole and French-based, and it is still a viable factor, as shown

by the fact that some claim Creole identity; for these people, Creole ancestry retains historical symbolic importance. By identifying as African-American and identifying the Creole community as being based in French historical roots, these respondents are embracing the whole community - both the (fading) French historical link and the modern-day Creole identity, with all of its accompanying variation.

6.5 THE IDENTIFICATION AND SHAPING OF THE CREOLE COMMUNITY

When the respondents were asked about the characterization of a true Creole, it was somewhat of a surprise to find that the emphasis put on Creole ancestry was so great, given the above. It would seem logical that if they indicate pride in Creole heritage, they would also claim this ethnic label as self-identification. The analysis of these particular results became clearer, however, when other results from the section asking about the necessary characteristics to be considered Creole were compiled and compared to the diachronic changes in the community.

When the respondents claimed that having grandparents or parents who speak French was very important for characterization as Creole, a part of the Creole and/or French ancestry paradox was solved. The ancestors of the older respondents (and to some extent the middle age respondents) who raised them were fluent, if not monolingual, in Creole French, therefore they were surrounded by the Creole language and culture, and hence associate these two things with the identity label. Societal upheavals, however, later imposed other strictures upon 'blackness' and 'Creoleness' in America. Although Louisiana Creoles were perhaps more isolated than many minority language communities,

due to extreme poverty and racial segregation, the outside world has had a growing influence on this group, as it has had on many others throughout the world.

Although having linguistic ability in some form of French and speaking Creole French were not viewed as being quite as important as having Creole ancestry and having close relatives who speak French, these were the other two most important factors in identifying as Creole. For all four factors, the percentage of responses was over 50% of the total sample. Most of the respondents have ancestors who speak Creole French (in the case of the younger respondents, it was typically grandparents and great-grandparents), and, although they do not all speak Creole (or some form of) French, their older relatives do, and it is with these people that they identify when they think about being Creole. Again, their perception of the community resides in one particular vision - that of the Creole community - while self-identification is linked to the African-American community.

As far as those who do not speak the language fluently are concerned, they are aware that they are semi-speakers of the language (as shown by the responses they gave on the question about their linguistic ability in the language), but they are hesitant to suggest criteria which would put them outside the boundaries of the community. This could help explain their somewhat aberrant behavior in many of the results. They are probably reflecting the linguistic and social insecurity which often accompanies an incomplete knowledge of a language. Instead of linguistic competence, they compensate by claiming pride and belief in every other aspect of the language. Conversely, the other two groups (those with ancestry but no linguistic ability, and those with neither) claimed to a larger extent that speaking Creole French was necessary. Why would this be? These

two groups without any language ability might in fact be reflecting the fact that the 'French revival' movement is working in the state, even for the previously marginalized Louisiana Creoles.⁵ However, it is easier to let someone else 'do the work' (of actually learning to speak the language), so that these respondents do not actually claim that *they* themselves have to speak French, and in fact could not legitimately lay claim to being Creole, since they do not possess the ancestry characteristic anyway.

Living in Louisiana was seen as relatively unimportant as a characteristic of Creole identity by 43% of the informants. This is due to the fact that many of the relatives of the Creole respondents to this survey have outmigrated to California (among other states) for economic and social benefits. This is also reflected in the relative unimportance assigned to the characteristic of living in a Creole town or area, although, as noted, the Opelousas respondents may be exhibiting a bit of linguistic insecurity and reflecting the fact that their area is on the 'fringe' of what is considered French Louisiana.

Learning or possessing Creole French as a first language was seen as fairly unimportant, being sixth on the list of nine possible characteristics. This is especially noticeable among the semi-speakers in the LAB index, who exhibit a pattern which was established in much of the data. In it, the semi-speakers deviated quite a bit in their responses from both the fluent speakers as well as those with neither ancestry nor linguistic ability. This tendency was particularly noticeable in the results from the question

⁵Trepanier (1991:164) discusses the French revival movement in more detail, and claims that the choice of presenting the image of the French groups in South Louisiana as a monolithic entity under the label 'Cajun' could only be interpreted "as the desire for the French Louisiana elite to assure for the region a 'white' identity."

about learning Creole French as a first language, in which they showed very little interest in this particular characteristic as a necessity for being considered Creole. This is no doubt due to the bilingual nature of Louisiana's French groups today. In order to survive, one must speak English, and the contact between the two languages (and Cajun French) has been long and intense. Although having one's own language is viewed by many groups as being a necessary criterion for acceptance as a viable linguistic and ethnic/racial entity, the French speakers in Louisiana have long had to accept that they are second (and third) tier in the language ladder in the state. Since the invasion of the Anglophones after the purchase of the territory by the United States, English and Anglophones have dominated in all aspects of life. Given this, knowledge of Creole French as a *first* language would not be viewed as necessary for Creoleness - bilingualism or at least a passive knowledge of Creole French are probably viewed as much more necessary for Creole criteria.

In addition, the influence of the LAB index comes into play here. The further removed the informants are from language ability and connection with the Creole culture, the less they believe that these two things are necessary in order to be considered Creole. This is perhaps natural, since they want to be considered insiders to the community, yet lack the vital assets of Creole language ability and immediate (if any) Creole ancestry. If their acceptance into the community resided on possessing these traits, they would not 'pass muster'. Conversely, by lowering the standards for 'true' Creole identity (by *not* insisting on Creole heritage or ability in the language as characteristics of being considered Creole), they build a niche for themselves as valid and valuable members of the community.

The data also show that, insofar as racial claims are concerned, respondents in the two Creole communities perpetuate the interpretation (by African-Americans in Louisiana today) of Creole identity which was hypothesized in earlier chapters; that is, the term is based on a non-racially divided meaning driven and supported by ancestry and Creole heritage, rather than on race, language or religion. Although these results refute the claim of columnist William Raspberry (1998) that “race is, and race matters”, they echo his argument that “not too long ago, the argument of virtually the entire civil rights community was that race didn’t matter, that beneath our variously hued skin, we were all the same.” In the struggle to be accepted at all levels of society, Louisiana Creoles have come to believe (or convinced themselves) that race really does not matter, and that pride in Creole heritage and ancestry takes precedence over racial or linguistic claims about the group. This is in direct contrast to the results of the identity question, in which people in the survey were asked, “what do you consider yourself”. The fact that 57% of the respondents considered themselves as African-Americans reflects the views presented by Lemann (The Atlantic Monthly, Jan. 1993, pp. 31-47) that the ethnic assimilation hoped for by many people (particularly whites) in fact has led to ‘cultural nationalism’, in which “members of every rising group feel intensely conscious of their ethnic identity at the moment that they enter the majority culture...”. In the case of Louisiana Creoles, the cultural nationalism apparently has led them to claim the identity label of African-American, while still proclaiming pride in Creole heritage and ancestry. Although the results from the smaller research project done with whites in Acadiana showed that they believe that the term ‘Creole’ properly designates someone with some African heritage,

the African-Americans in this study (those with *and* without Creole heritage), believe that the term is not based on racial divisions, but rather on ancestry. The identification of Creoles as having African heritage and a mixed race genotype has been influenced and propagated by long-standing racial distinctions in the state, as well as by the historical processes previously discussed. Walton's (1994:43) work among white Cajuns in Terrebonne Parish confirm this as well. For her respondents' identification as Cajun, "clearly, the most important thing to communicate was racial affiliation. Once that was settled, people felt free to express ethnic identification (as Cajun), just as long as it wasn't seen as being in opposition to...being white".

Religion, which has traditionally held an extremely important place in not only the society of Creoles in Louisiana, but in the black population in general in the United States, was assumed to still maintain its importance as a coherent and cohesive device in retaining traditional community values, and in helping to keep the boundaries of the community intact. What has been shown in this study is that the Catholic religion, which, in earlier times was the only religion practiced by Creoles, no longer has a stranglehold on this community, and religion has acquired a low status as far as characterization as Creole is concerned. This is quite a departure from 'the old days', both in South Louisiana, where Catholicism was embraced by practically everyone since the genesis of the colony, as well as in the African-American community at large, who generally followed the Baptist faith, rather than the Catholic, but for whom religion was very important. Smitherman (1998:210) discusses the role of the church in the life of African-Americans in American today. She claims (p. 209:footnote) that "the Black church has no challenger as the

cultural womb of the black community”, and also has no equal as both a religious and a social unit in the community. Clarence Page, a nationally known columnist, concurs when he writes “(a)mong black Americans, the church has been a center of social and political activism and an incubator for black culture for as long as there have been black people in America”. This was certainly true in the case of non-white Creoles earlier in the history of the state/colony, but just as certainly, the results of this study prove that, like many other Americans of all ethnic and racial groups, Louisiana Creoles have pulled away from the church, and no longer view it as a necessary condition for being considered Creole.

The combined results from this chapter on identity and characterization as Creole show that Creole is not an inclusive label; rather, it is a term which has several dimensions, particularly when viewed from the standpoint of self-identity versus community identity. The term serves as an attribute of the ethnic community, but is shown to be symbolic because, rather than claiming this as a self-identification marker, all but the fluent speakers reject it. One can ask if, by claiming the label African-American and rejecting the Creole identity (while embracing Creole ancestry as an important characteristic for being a Louisiana Creole), the informants will have a correspondingly diminished interest in the actual language. If so, this could have a ‘spillover effect’ of the attitudes of the Creoles toward French, the status of the language within the community, and the linguistic (in)security exhibited by its members. These issues will be explored in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 7

LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT AND LINGUISTIC NETWORK

In this chapter, results from questions about the linguistic environment of the informants, language maintenance and use, who speaks French to whom, and the linguistic network of the respondents are discussed. In order to establish when, where, how, and why the informants used Creole French, a series of questions dealing with linguistic use and maintenance were asked. The questions are listed in Table 7.1

Table 7.1 - Linguistic Use and Maintenance

1.	What language was usually spoken to you when you were a child?
2.	What language do you speak most often every day?
3.	Do you speak another language often? If yes, which of the following languages?
4.	What language are you most comfortable with?
5.	What language do/did you usually speak with the following people? (See possible responses above).
6.	Which of the people in this list can speak Creole French? (See possible responses above).
7.	With which of the people in this list do you speak Creole French? (See possible responses above).
8.	Do you know cultural associations where people speak Creole French? If so, do you go often or are you a regular member of one of these associations, or do you know somebody who is a member?
9.	Are you able to have transactions in Creole French in your daily life (e.g. grocery store, post office, the cleaners)?
10.	Do you believe that Creole French is going to disappear in Louisiana? Why or why not?
11.	Do you believe that all Creoles are proud of speaking Creole French?

Possible responses for the language use questions included 'English', 'Creole French', 'Another variety of French', and 'Not Applicable'. For the questions about language use within the respondents' network of interlocutors, possible responses included 'spouse or partner', 'brother(s) and sister(s)', 'children', 'distant relatives', 'friends'. These were the most frequent categories given in the pilot survey, and as such were included as responses in the final version of the questionnaire.

Although fluency in Creole French was self-reported, it was later verified by correlating the results of the extensive question about the respondents linguistic ability (discussed in Chapter 5) with the LAB index. A simple comparison of the responses to the questions above did not yield a fine-grained enough picture of who speaks French to whom, and, most importantly, whether or not the opportunity for speaking French existed, so these results were recompiled using the Statview statistical package which allows cross-tabulations between nominal variables. The analyses of the results follow.

7.1 LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT

Before measuring the linguistic behavior of Creole French speakers, it was essential to determine the type of linguistic environment they live in - specifically, does the opportunity exist for them to use the language? Are they able to have transactions in Creole French on a daily basis, and if so, where? Most importantly, with whom do they interact, and in which language? In addition, we asked questions which explored the linguistic background of the speakers - what language were they raised in, which language they used in everyday life, and the linguistic background of those with whom they interacted on a day-to-day basis.

Only the 60 fluent Creole French speakers interviewed for this study were asked who could speak Creole French among the five categories of interlocutors (friends, children, spouses, brother/sisters, and relatives). After analyzing the results, it was apparent that nearly all of the relatives of the 60 fluent speakers can speak French (95% overall), while only about half of their children speak French (52% overall), as shown in the 'total fluent' row in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 - Linguistic Environment of Fluent Speakers

Age	Relative		Siblings		Friends		Spouses		Children	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Young fluent	19/20	95	15/20	75	10/20	50	8/18	44	8/19	42
Middle age fluent	19/20	95	18/19	95	19/20	95	8/16	50	9/18	50
Older fluent	19/20	95	19/19	100	18/20	90	16/19	84	12/19	63
Total fluent	57/60	95	52/58	90	47/60	78	32/53	60	29/56	52

This pattern holds in each age group, though there are significant differences between the number of Creole French-speaking interlocutors in the older fluent group and the other age groups, particularly among the categories of friends, spouses, and children. There is a two-dimensional gradation pattern apparent which goes from older to younger (with the older group consistently showing greater percentages, the middle age group slightly less, and the younger the smallest percentages of all), and in which it is the relatives, siblings, friends, spouses, and children who can speak Creole French, respectively. The discrepancies in the totals are due to the fact that some of the respondents do not have siblings, spouses, or children.

These results point up the fact that it is the extended family (siblings and other relatives), rather than the nuclear family (spouse and children), which shares the language skills of the respondents. This tendency is more sharply demarcated between the older group and the other two age groups: the middle age and younger respondents have almost identical numbers in the categories of spouses and children who can communicate in Creole French.

Only the respondents who have Creole speaking interlocutors were taken into account. It is impossible to tell from the data who chooses not to speak French in an interactive situation, i.e. the respondent or their interlocutor(s). What the following results show is the type of linguistic interaction - English only, Creole only or both languages - which usually takes place between the speakers and the various categories of interlocutors who speak Creole fluently, or as fluently as the respondents.

Table 7.3- Language Usage of Older Speakers with Interlocutors

Language	Relative		Siblings		Friends		Spouses		Children	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Only Creole	16	84	13	68	16	89	11	69	6	50
English and Creole	3	16	4	21	1	5.5	2	12	2	17
Only English	0	0	2	11	1	5.5	3	19	4	33
Total	19	100	19	100	18	100	16	100	12	100

Table 7.3 illustrates that the older respondents tend to speak only Creole with all their interlocutors, although this trend holds more for relatives and friends than children, siblings or spouses. When they do not speak Creole, they adopt a bilingual behavior with

their relatives and siblings, but tend to speak English with their spouses, and more so with their children. As can be seen, the older age group has a majority of French-speaking interlocutors in each category - relatives, siblings, friends, spouses, and children.

Table 7.4 - Language Usage of Middle Age Speakers with Interlocutors

Langauge	Relative		Siblings		Friends		Spouses		Children	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Only Creole	11	53	7	39	8	42	4	50	3	33
English and Creole	7	37	6	33	6	32	2	25	3	33
Only English	1	5	5	28	5	26	2	25	3	33
Total	19	100	18	100	19	100	8	100	9	100

Like the older age group, the middle age group also a significant number of relatives, siblings and friends who speak French, but show differences in the percentage of spouses and children who speak French. Table 7.4 also illustrates that the middle-age respondents claim to speak Creole nearly half of the time with all the categories of interlocutors except their children, although much less than the older speakers. They also distinguish themselves from the older age group by demonstrating a stronger bilingual behavior, as well as a strong English only usage. When children are the interlocutors, all three language behaviors are equally adopted (33% across the board). These two tendencies are based on a small number of respondents who have Creole speaking spouses and children.

Table 7.5 shows that a relatively high number of young respondents speak only Creole with their relatives, but only half of them chose to do so with their siblings and

friends. Contrary to the two older groups, the bilingual setting with all the interlocutors is very low in the this age group. Young Creoles, (especially with spouses and children) use English, rather than both languages. Although only a small number of respondents who have Creole speaking spouses and children, it can be noted that a higher number of the young will speak only English to their spouses and children, while retaining their Creole speaking behavior with their extended family.

Table 7.5 - Language Usage of Younger Speakers with Interlocutors

Language	Relative		Siblings		Friends		Spouses		Children	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Only Creole	17	89	8	53	5	50	3	38	2	25
English and Creole	0	0	2	13	1	10	0	0	2	25
Only English	2	11	5	34	4	40	5	62	4	50
Total	19	100	15	100	10	100	8	100	8	100

7.2 LINGUISTIC NETWORK

The link between language maintenance and close-knit social networks has been shown by many researchers (Labov 1966, Gal 1978, Cheshire 1978, Milroy 1980, Romaine 1995). In close-knit language communities, it is claimed that the closer the network ties, the more similar the language to the local vernacular norm. When a correlation exists between the scores on the network scale and other factors (such as age, sex, language use), that correlation is based on the function of the close-knit network as a norm enforcement mechanism. Milroy (1980:177) uses supporting evidence for this claim from other studies to suggest that linguistic use is connected with language *loyalty* - to the

non-standard vernacular in Blom and Gumperz (1972), and to bilingualism in Gal's 1979 study in Oberwart, Austria - and that those who exhibit this loyalty are members of a close-knit network. Milroy also mentions Gumperz' (1977) claim that members of a close-knit network often share 'communicative preferences' for the non-standard language, which he attributes to the fact that these individuals are 'insiders' to the community, and the persistence of the non-standard vernacular emphasizes and enhances their solidarity in the community.

All of these processes seem to work together to insure that members of a close-knit network exhibit similar behavior and attitudes and "are able to form a cohesive group capable of resisting pressure, linguistic and social, from outside the group" (Milroy 1980:178). It follows from this that those individuals who participate in more open networks will exhibit more 'diffuse' speech (Le Page 1979). In Milroy's terms (1980), the informal social relationships contracted by these individuals tend to be outside of the community, and therefore out from under the supervision and control of the close-knit group. The social relationships established on the periphery of the community do not enforce community norms, either linguistically, socially, or (very often) economically. It must be noted that the extreme effects of the network - whether closed or open - may be mitigated to some degree by the type of community under study. The opportunities for an open network of an individual in an extremely rural small town will differ considerably for someone in a larger urban area. This may affect the generalizability of the effect of the network and make comparisons between social networks of large cities and small towns more difficult.

If the respondents in this study exhibit extremely closed social networks, this may be due to the lack of opportunity to establish peripheral social connections, and may lead to a propagation of the customs, mores and language embraced by the Louisiana Creole community in general. In Milroy's (1980:50) terms, there may be clusters in the community, which consist of "segments or compartments of networks which have relatively high density". These clusters of family members, friends, clergy, and neighbors tend also to be 'multiplex' units, i.e., the individuals involved in the network clusters are linked in many ways (job opportunities, church activities, community service, etc.). On the other end of the scale would be those individuals who participate very little in community life, and instead chose to establish links and relationships with outsiders.

In order to measure the impact of network integration on the respondents' linguistic behavior, an index was built based on five essential network characteristics.

Table 7.6 - Network Characteristics

Time: how long the respondent has lived in the area
Proximity: is the respondent's spouse a member of a longtime local family in town;
Occupation: does the respondent work in town
Activities: how many of the respondent's recreational activities take place in town;
In-group: how many of the respondent's friends live in town.

As listed in Table 7.6, these characteristics assess a continuum ranging from a very close-knit network to one which is much more open. In setting up the network scale, points were assigned to each answer - 'always/all' received a score of one, 'usually/most' a score

of two, 'sometimes/some' a score of three and 'never/none' a score of four - yielding a scale ranging from five (the densest network) to 18 (the most open network). After the scores were tallied, the respondents were grouped into a three level continuum, based on very obvious breaks in the general index. Those with very low scores were grouped in the 'close' network, indicating that these individuals are longtime residents of the area whose activities and occupation are in the area, and whose spouse may or may not be from the area. At the other end of the scale, those with the most 'open' networks rarely work in town and have friends and a spouse who is/are from somewhere outside of the area. The network is comprised of forty-five individuals in the close network group (index numbers 5, 6 and 7), thirty-eight individuals in the midrange network (index numbers 8 and 9) and thirty-seven individuals in the open network (index numbers 10 and above), as presented in Table 7.7. The results were computerized and analyzed using Statview as a statistical tool.

Table 7.7 - Linguistic Network Scale

NETWORK SCALE	TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS
Close-knit Network (indices 5,6, and 7)	45
Midrange Network (indices 8 and 9)	38
Open Network (indices 10 and above)	37

When the results were analyzed, it was shown that those who use only Creole with all interlocutors appear to belong to the closest knit network category, indicating that the strength of the social network strongly influences the maintenance of Creole French. Table 7.8 shows the results from the speakers in the close-knit network who use only Creole

with the interlocutors in the five categories. Children comprise the highest percentage of those with whom French is spoken, followed by siblings, friends, relatives and husbands and wives. This explains the relatively strong maintenance and use of Creole with children in the young age group as compared with the middle-age and older age groups shown earlier in tables 7.3 and 7.4.

The strength of the network of all the age groups affects their linguistic behavior with their interlocutors. However, the effects of the network are less strongly influential on the spouses and relatives of the middle-age and younger age groups, who show a progressive tendency toward less use of Creole with all categories. This tendency can be explained by the fact that the linguistic background of the spouse may not match that of the informants; in other words, the mother tongue and family environment of the spouse may not have included French. In fact, the younger the person, the less the chance that people in his or her environment speak Creole French, due to the language attrition which the community is experiencing.

Table 7.8 - Number of Respondents in a Close-Knit Network in a Creole Only Interaction with Interlocutors

Creole-only/ Age/Close- Knit Network	Relatives		Siblings		Friends		Spouses		Children	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Young	13/17	76	7/8	100	5/5	100	2/3	67	3/3	100
Middle age	9/11	82	6/7	86	5/7	71	3/4	75	3/3	100
Older	15/14	94	13/13	100	15/16	94	10/11	91	6/6	100
Total	37/44	84	26/28	93	25/28	89	15/18	83	12/12	100

7.3 DISCUSSION

Overall in Louisiana, the population of younger Creole French speakers (40 and below) is considerably less than that of the older population. This is due in part to the linguistic behavior of the older speakers who encountered stigmatization and ridicule throughout their lives as they spoke French, and who were reluctant to see their offspring undergo the same treatment. As Ancelet (1994:xxii) asserts, for Creoles in the 1930's and 40's (particularly in the rural parishes), "...the French language became the symbol of a cultural stigma they were trying to overcome". In order to avoid stigmatization, they simply did not speak Creole French to their offspring. If the language was used at all, it was generally used to convey information that the adults wanted to keep away from the children, thereby acquiring the status of a 'secret language'. The effects of this language attrition have been accepted by those who were the recipients of the lack of language transmission, however, and it is possible to be accepted as a full-fledged member of the Creole community without being a fluent speaker. Language attrition and loss among this speech group can also be ascribed to years of societal, political, and educational repression, resulting in many Creole speakers who have little knowledge of the language, or alternatively, have lost what knowledge they had through disuse.

Among those who do retain and use Creole French, as was shown, it is the extended family, rather than the nuclear family which shares the language skills of the respondents. There is a corresponding pattern of the gradual loss of Creole French use among and with all the interlocutor categories. Fishman, Gertner, Lowy, and Milan (1985) discussed this phenomenon in which the 'native' language is used by older speakers

for a communicative function, but has largely assumed a symbolic role in the younger generations. This tendency is troubling for the future of the language, for, as Romaine (1989:42) remarks, "(t)he inability of minorities to maintain the home as an intact domain for the use of their language has often been decisive in language shift".¹ There has been a general disruption of the traditional language domains and patterns of transmission in this speech community, although some positive signs of language renewal can be discerned.

There are two issues which could possibly signify a resurgence of the language, or at least a renewed interest in it. The first is that, when asked if they believed Creole French was going to disappear, 75% of the respondents said 'no'. When asked if Creoles were proud of speaking Creole French, it was again 75% who said that this was a source of pride for this community. These two items are more symbolic than a reflection of reality, but as far as the language is concerned, the use of Creole French of younger fluent respondents was fairly high among their family members. The fact that their peers and siblings do not interact with them in French is probably due to the inability of those people to do so. This could be linked to Fishman's (1991) suggestions about reversing language shift. He proposes an eight-stage scale (the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) in which the highest end of the scale represents a community whose language is no longer spoken by the younger members. He goes on to suggest that if the language is being spoken in the home environment (as the younger speakers pattern shows), there is a much stronger chance for survival as compared to being a tool used for symbolic or ceremonial

¹Fishman et al (1985) go on to suggest that an 'ethnic revival' is possible in some cases, leading to a corresponding linguistic revival.

purposes by government or educational agencies. Mufwene (1994 et passim) has suggested in many article and paper presentations that perhaps the question to be asked about language maintenance and loss should be why some speakers retain the language, rather than why others lose it. The influence of English in all aspects of life is irrefutable. How has Creole French survived at all? Our results suggest that close-knit sociolinguistic networks established and maintained by members of this community is one possible answer.

Milroy's (1980) concept of social networks and their utilization as a measure with which to evaluate a speech community is quite relevant when applied to the situation of Louisiana Creoles. A network is a tightly structured, homogeneous social unit which does not exhibit any class differentiation, such as the traditional social classifications used in urban sociolinguistic research. Although social class values were plugged into all the results discussed in the analyses chapters, none were significant, showing that social class as a tool for analysis for this particular community is moot. This is not surprising, since African-Americans occupy the lowest socioeconomic rung in the areas investigated, and, although there are undoubtedly differences in their social classes between the more rural Breaux Bridge area and the more urban Opelousas area, it is insignificant in terms of language usage. Although Milroy (1980) used statistics to correlate social variables with linguistic variants, the same can be done with linguistic attitudes. Tying social variables together with linguistic attitudes into a coherent whole can help explain the linguistic behavior and social networks of this community. It has been established that looser-knit and closer knit networks exist among the group of fluent speakers, and that the differences

between the age groups are striking in terms of linguistic behavior. All of the groups in the network are reflecting the values of 'solidarity' by using their language with insiders to the community, specifically with close family members and friends.

Giles et al (1977) claimed that social identity involves the knowledge of membership in particular social categories. This is reflected in the results of this research. The social networks established among the respondents indicate that they are cognizant of the fact that the values which are attached to their membership in the Creole community are not reflected in the community at large; hence the use of the language with insiders only. The differences exhibited in the responses of the various social network groups in the two communities in this study also match those of Beckford (1996), in which domains of usage were found to be appropriate in casual and peer group settings, and inappropriate for formal and 'outgroup' settings. They also confirm Lippi-Green's (1989) assertion that small, rural communities can and do exhibit variation in language use, and that this variation is quantifiable. The fact that informants responded more positively to questions *about* the language than they did about the actual *language use* itself was also a reflection of the findings from Beckford (1996) and others.

Insofar as actual use of the language is concerned, the tendencies in the maintenance and loss of Creole seem to reflect a generational pattern going from monolingualism in Creole, to a bilingual phase in which both languages are used with relatives first, then siblings and friends. This would be followed by an English monolingual phase with in which young Creole speakers only use English with their spouses and children. Although a large percentage of the respondents in the study

indicated pride in Creole French and apparently desire its continuation, the use of English is pervasive in the community: Creole French use, even in South Louisiana, is not presently valued as an asset among non-Creoles, and to some extent, among Creoles themselves. At this point in time, Creole French is strongly maintained only with relatives, but it can be seen that the young have replaced the bilingual behavior of the middle-aged group with an 'English only' use of language (with the exception of relatives). The effect of a close-knit network apparently slows down the tendencies just described, however, and helps explain the behavior of those speakers, who, against all odds, maintain a Creole linguistic behavior with other members in their community.

CHAPTER 8

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

The focus of this chapter is the language attitudes of the respondents toward different varieties of French; the quality, which is best for the state, and the teaching/learning of French. Although there has been a renaissance of the French culture in Louisiana, the concomitant linguistic revival has been weak, and its proponents rarely address divisive issues such as the types of French spoken in the state, demographics of Louisiana French populations, Louisiana French educational materials, and the use of native Louisiana French speakers in classrooms. The varieties of French which have been re-introduced into the public schools in the state have been foreign French varieties taught by teachers from Belgium, Quebec, France, or academic (school-taught) French based on the standard written system.¹ Brown (1993:77) asserts that, in Louisiana, "International French and the varieties are, for the most part, mutually intelligible, but the differences are marked". Even within the numerically dominant Cajun community there are those who rail against the 'foreigners' teaching French in Louisiana. Insiders in the Cajun community such as Ancelet (1988:346) brought attention to the fact that the indigenous language and culture of the Cajuns and the Creoles was being "forced into the shadows" once again by the using outsiders rather than developing a native (to Louisiana) corps of French

¹The labels 'International French' and 'Standard French' are often used interchangeably in the work of researchers to refer to an academic or school-taught written French code. Brown (1997) gives an excellent discussion of the terms used to describe the varieties of French in Louisiana as well as the labels given to the Francophone world at large.

teachers. In fact, the introduction of a 'standard' French into schools has caused dissension on both the political and sociocultural fronts. It is possible that the language attitudes of the Creole speakers in Louisiana are adversely affected by the fact that their code is not recognized or taught in schools. Conversely, since Creole French is undergoing severe language attrition, heightened awareness of language loss among members of this speech community and correspondingly positive attitudes towards its revival could emerge. It is also possible that, as a form of resistance to being taken over by things Cajun, the respondents in this survey might choose instead to actively cultivate a sense of community pride. This would be reflected in their attitudes toward their language, leading to Creole French (re)acquiring the status of an important facet of community life, rather than the language just being a symbolic remnant of earlier times.

More problematic than the idea of a 'standard' being taught and promulgated is the representation of the French groups in the state as being a single monolithic entity which has been subsumed under the 'Cajun' rubric. Linguistic insecurity may be fostered among Louisiana Creoles by the fact of their African heritage, their dialect (which is different from Cajun French), and the lack of institutional or educational support.² Non-Creole (Cajun) speakers may feel that they can further distance themselves from the black (Creole) community by claiming differences in dialect, since language is a very important marker of identity. On the other hand, many researchers have shown that the assignment of 'prestige' to one code over another can work two ways. Although the naive belief is

²The extent of the difference between Creole French and Cajun French has not been empirically shown to date. This represents an area of research which is severely understudied.

that one is always striving toward a standard, Labov (1972), Milroy (1980) and many others have shown that group membership in a network is (or can be) an overriding factor in the force that drives language use; moreover, group membership may be insured by use of the vernacular or minority language, rather than a socially designated 'prestige' dialect (such as Cajun might be considered when compared to Creole). This situation, of course, would promote linguistic security, which would be revealed by attitudes of loyalty toward the language and its use, as well as positive attitudes toward the teaching/learning of the language. Negative attitudes and disdain toward the language would, in turn, convey the respondents' negative attitudes and denote lack of status assigned to Creole French and the community in general. In this chapter, the results about the quality of French varieties in the state are detailed in section 8.1, the analysis and discussion of the best type of French for the state are given in section 8.2, and the learning and teaching of French varieties is discussed and analyzed in section 8.3. General conclusions are in section 8.4.

8.1 CREOLE FRENCH VERSUS SCHOOL-TAUGHT FRENCH

Informants in this study were asked how they would characterize the quality of Creole French, and given the options of 'as good as French learned in school', 'not very good French', 'very bad French', or 'not French at all'. These categories were built using the responses of Creole who participated in the pilot survey (as discussed in Chapter 5). Given that Creole French has been overwhelmingly stigmatized for many years, (a situation which led to only a few of the older speakers using the language with younger speakers) one would expect this group to display indifference toward the language. In fact, responses given indicate that Creole French is considered as good as the school

taught variety by 154 of the informants (67%), while only 33% viewed it more negatively. No one chose the responses 'very bad French' or 'not French at all'. Eleven respondents chose not to answer.

Although neither the influence of age or geography affected these results, when they were analyzed using the LAB index, the distinctive behavior of the semi-speakers (which was discussed in Chapter 6) can again be seen, as shown in Table 8.1. Although a high number of fluent speakers (35%) claim that Creole French is not very good French, only 26% of the semi-speakers do so, leaving 74% of the semi-speakers who believe their code is as good as the school-taught variety. Those with no linguistic ability in Creole French, but who have Creole heritage, show similar beliefs to the fluent speakers. It is the informants with neither Creole linguistic ability nor ancestry who show the harshest judgement toward Creole French; 40% claim that it is not very good French. This is not surprising, given that it is this group which has the least contact with Creole French.

Table 8.1 - Quality of Creole French and the LAB Index

LAB	AS GOOD AS		NOT VERY GOOD		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fluent	37	65	20	35	57	100
Semi	43	74	15	26	58	100
No CrF	41	70	18	31	59	100
No CrF, No CrA	33	60	22	40	55	100

The responses of those who believe that Creole is as good as Standard were cross-tabulated with the LAB index and age. This is shown in Figure 8.1. Although the pattern

is not completely clear, due to the interaction between the variables, the important tendency is that the middle age and older fluent speakers demonstrate less positive attitudes than do the younger fluent speakers.

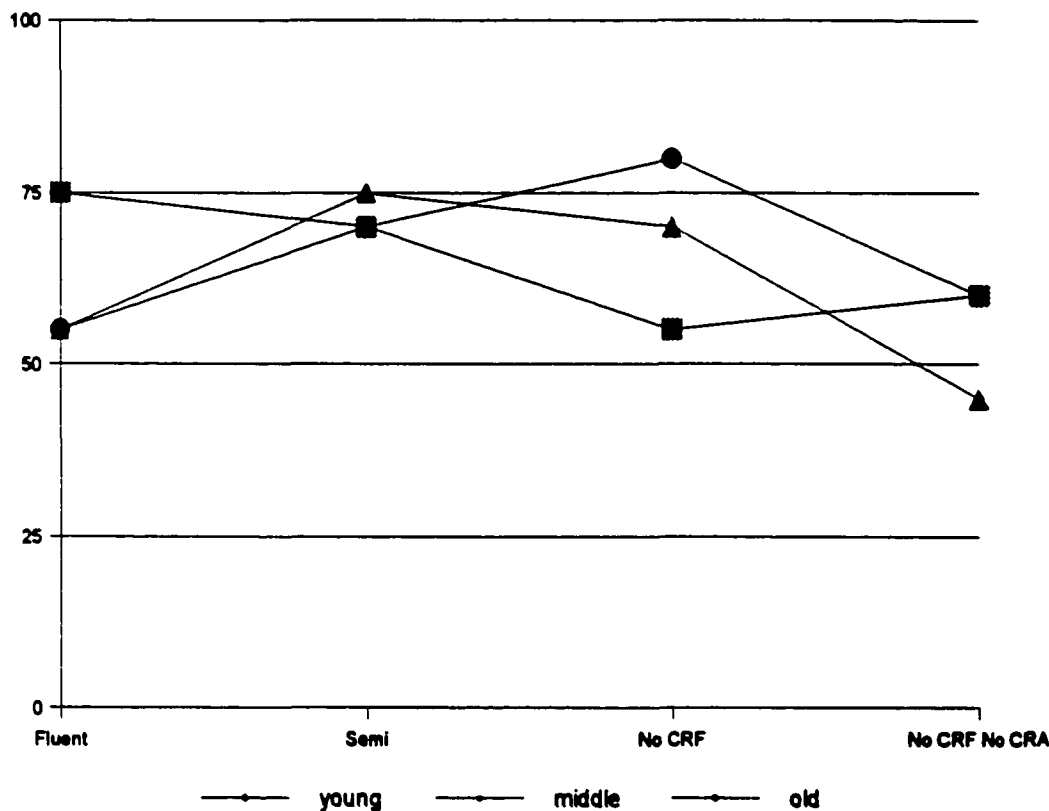


Figure 8.1 - Influence of the LAB Index and Age on the Quality of Creole French

Fifty-five percent of the older groups indicated that Creole French is as good as the school-taught variety, while 75% of the youngest group claimed this, indicating a more positive attitude. The LAB index is not significant for the semi speakers in any age group: all show a strong positive attitude. This pattern of the younger group holding more positive attitudes is reversed among those with no Creole French language ability. For

this group, it is the older respondents who indicate that Creole French is as good as the school-taught variety (80%), followed by 70% of the middle age group, and a slight majority (55%) of the young age group. For those with neither ancestry nor language ability, the judgement is most harsh among the middle age group (only 45% of them claim that Creole French is as good as the school-taught variety), while 60% of both the older and the younger age group respondents claim that Creole French is as good as the school-taught variety.

8.2 LINGUISTIC SECURITY AND INSECURITY

The pride evinced in Creole heritage which continues to manifest itself in today's Louisiana Creole population is shown by the results on the quality of the Creole French language. For Creoles, exhibiting pride in the quality of their code is equivalent to showing linguistic pride, or, more generally, linguistic security. Even though speakers of Creole experienced the racism exhibited toward blacks in general in South Louisiana for many years, and Creole was (and is) portrayed as a debased form of French, our results confirm the hypothesis that Creoles would still view it as a source of pride, while more traditional foci of this speech community, (such as the Catholic religion, actual language use, and the strength of social connections) have been left by the wayside as the less tangible, culturally-driven items such as pride in the language have assumed more importance.

The large majority of respondents who said that Creole was as good as the school-taught variety (67%) verify the 'rule of thumb' promulgated by Holm (1988). He asserted that people's attitudes toward a speech variety tend to be very similar to their attitudes

towards the speakers of that variety. The values and belief systems of the Creoles and their attitudes toward their language may in fact be grounded in their attitudes toward Standard French and speakers of that language. Apparently, given the choice between accepting the 'prestige' language or keeping their dialect in order to identify with other group members, Louisiana's Creoles are choosing the latter. The LAB index had a strong influence upon the responses to this question, however, and closer analysis revealed that the semi speakers hold the most positive attitudes toward the language and exhibit the most linguistic security (74% say it is as good as the school-taught variety), while those who are fluent tend to group together with those with no language ability at all (65% and less). The results were honed even more when age was factored in with the LAB index: the younger fluent speakers showed slightly more positive attitudes than did the middle age and older fluent speakers. This overall trend toward positive attitudes is held by almost everyone (over 50%).

The young respondents with no Creole ancestry at all show much more negative attitudes; this is magnified even more in the behavior of those in the middle age group with no Creole ancestry. When viewed as a whole, it is this group who demonstrates the most mixed attitudes toward the quality of Creole French. It could easily be assumed that, due to their status as outsiders to the community, they would comprise the majority of the 33% who claimed that Creole French was not as good as the school-taught variety. When tabulated with the LAB index, however, the results showed that this group exhibited nearly the same behavior as the fluent speakers. It is age which is the defining factor for those outsiders who believe that Creole is not as good as the school-taught variety;

specifically, it is the middle age group among those with no language and no ancestry who show the least positive attitudes.

The explanation for the *positive* attitudes overall (in all age and LAB groups) lies in the fact that, regardless of age and of the insider or outsider status of the respondents, the common denominator of race seems to override differences and insure that all Creoles exhibit similar attitudes. The same factors which exerted a tremendous force upon the black Creoles have affected the black community at large. Although some blacks view any ties with the French community in general to be a remnant from slavery days, the outsiders and those without linguistic skills in Creole French are backing the language community. The middle age group, who demonstrate more negative attitudes, are behaving as a block, whether they speak Creole or not. It is precisely this age group which was the most heavily stigmatized in the rush to embrace English in the early 20th century, and, to a lesser extent, in the push to revive Cajun French in the 1960s. Creole speakers were viewed as second class citizens, and the language became a badge of shame rather than an ability to flaunt or use. The older speakers escaped the worst of the ravages of this stigmatization: their earliest linguistic environment was still heavily French dominant, and they were no longer in the work force nor as mobile as the middle age group during the linguistic repression of French. The younger respondents, on the other hand, have benefitted from the more recent push to accept and acknowledge French heritage and background in the state.

So, with the exception of the tendency shown by the middle age group, the respondents, in general, indicate positive attitudes toward the Creole language. It was

hypothesized earlier that, in spite of the need for English-language skills to be able to 'get ahead' (via expanded economic, social, and educational opportunities), the French renaissance movement might have led to a strengthening of the linguistic security of Creole speakers. This appears to have been the case. The resurgence of pride in the Creole French language can be attributed to the fact that the Creole French groups have profited from the 'spill-over' effect of the rush to embrace everything French in the southern part of the state. Although primarily driven by elite Cajuns and supported by Cajun advocates (Dubois and Melançon 1997), the very fact that Creoles speak French and participate to some degree in the French network in South Louisiana has guaranteed them some access to this spectacle. Ancelet (1994:xxii) remarked on this when he stated "(a)mong the black Creoles, long preoccupied with racial issues, the linguistic renaissance has been much slower, though an interest in this part of their heritage has begun to emerge as the problems of segregation are increasingly resolved."

The interesting question is has this attitude always existed, or did this group demonstrate more linguistic insecurity in earlier times? Although a real-time analysis of the responses from the informants in this study with the attitudes of Creoles in earlier times cannot be made, (since no such data exists), the sociohistorical factors discussed in previous chapters show that this group was doubly insecure, in both the linguistic and social realms. In addition, the steadily declining rate of Creole French users is an indication that the language acquired the status of a network language - one used only among insiders to the community wishing to exclude outsiders - and was/is not being passed on to younger generations. The language use data discussed in the previous

chapter add strength to this argument, but the bottom line seems to be that there has been a reversal of negative attitudes among some members of this speech community, and that a weak revival movement is underway insofar as linguistic insecurity is concerned.

Our results contradict those of Neumann (1985) and reflect, to some degree, those of Klingler (1992). Klingler claimed that the Creoles in Pointe Coupee were not ashamed to speak their language, and in fact, showed little or no effect of the general stigmatization assigned to the Louisiana Creole code by many non-speakers, and, in some cases, by speakers of the language. He actually found evidence of a residual linguistic pride, and an eagerness to speak Creole among some of his informants (particularly the white Creole speakers). He attributed this to the fact that there is no other form of French available to the speakers in that area, and that they only have access to English or Creole French. Neumann, in contrast, posited that Creole French is much more stigmatized in the Breaux Bridge area in which she conducted her research because of a wider variety of languages available to the speakers of French (Cajun, Creole, and a mixed code, which she termed 'broken French' or 'patois'). In her estimation, having other 'levels' of French to speak created a linguistic insecurity among the black Creole speakers, who assumed that their code was being judged against another type of French, and who, according to Neumann, are aware that their particular brand of French is on the bottom-rung of the French varieties in the state (reflecting her belief of a linguistic continuum consisting of Standard French, Cajun French, and Creole French). The results in this dissertation suggest that the existence of a continuum in which Standard French is considered the 'best', and Creole French the 'worst' in the state is no longer applicable. In addition, having a separate form

of French available (whether it is called Cajun, patois, or broken French) does not necessarily inhibit the use of Creole French in these communities, nor, as is discussed below, the desire for younger people to learn this variety. Racial tensions and negative attitudes about a language spoken can trigger linguistic insecurity. To the extent that this is the case in South Louisiana among the Creoles, it is probably due to race and the stigmatization experienced by all African-Americans, regardless of French ancestry or background.

It must be noted that, as far as comparing Creole French to a 'standard-like' French language is concerned, nearly all the respondents were aware that their language was 'different' in some way. This was revealed when the question "what is the most striking linguistic feature of the Creole French language" was asked during the survey. Although the question had to be explained more often than not, once the informants understood what was being asked, their responses were quite illuminating. The answers to this question showed that the informants were aware that what they speak is not considered standard, and their use of expressions such as 'broken French' and 'bad French' showed beyond a shadow of a doubt that they were linguistically quite savvy. This question forced them to remove the symbolic status from the language in order to make a more practical assessment. When the abstraction became concrete, much of the linguistic self-stigmatization which has been noted by other researchers was revealed (e.g. Neumann 1985, Trepanier 1991, Klingler 1992, Walton 1994).

Even though few people claim to speak Creole French in the state (6,310 out of a total population of 4,219,973) and there is no way to measure their fluency levels, any

type of positivism shown toward their code is striking for the future of both the language and the culture, since speakers of a dialect or language quite often see it as a favorable factor in cultural maintenance. Affirmative attitudes toward a language are necessary for its maintenance, but their presence does not guarantee the continuity of the speech community. The linguistic pride evinced by claiming that Creole is as high a quality language as school-taught French bodes well for language maintenance, but linguistic security goes hand in hand with social and ethnic security: all three must be propagated for the cultural and linguistic health of this minority language group.

8.3 BEST TYPE OF FRENCH FOR LOUISIANA

When asked which type of French is best for Louisiana, respondents were able to choose from the labels Standard French, Cajun French, Creole French, all three, or a combination of the languages. Thirty-six percent of the respondents chose all three languages in combination, 29% chose Creole, 12% selected Standard, 10% chose Creole and Cajun, 6% picked Creole and Standard, 4% chose Cajun, and 3% refused to answer the question. Of the people who selected a single language option, (either Creole French, Standard French, or Cajun French), 64% chose Creole as the best, 27% chose Standard, and 8% chose Cajun.

The influence of the LAB index on these responses is shown in Table 8.2. Seventy-two percent of the fluent speakers and 83% of the semi speakers view Creole French as the best type for the state. A majority of those with Creole ancestry but no linguistic ability in Creole French claimed this (62%), while those with neither characteristic viewed it more negatively (43%). The respondents with no Creole ancestry

contain the largest percentage of those claiming that Standard French is best (46%).

Much smaller percentages of Standard French adherents are shown among the respondents with Creole ancestry: 27% of the non-speakers chose Standard as optimal, while only 17% of the fluent and semi speakers selected this. There is little or no deviation among the small number of informants who claimed that Cajun French is best for the state; the only exception being the semi speakers. None of this group chose this option. The fluent speakers, non-speakers, and outsiders indicate similar behavior: 11% of each of these groups chose Cajun as the best language for the state.

Table 8.2 - Best Type of French for Louisiana (Single Language Option)

	Creole		Standard		Cajun		Total	
LAB	# = 69	%	# = 29	%	# = 9	%	# = 107	%
Fluent	21	72	5	17	3	10	29	100
Semi	20	83	4	17	0	0	24	100
No Crf	16	62	7	27	3	11	26	100
No CrF, No CrA	12	43	13	46	3	11	28	100

When these results were broken down to include the combination options for the best type of French for the state (as well as Creole and Standard), and cross-tabulated with the LAB index and age, a different picture emerges, as shown in Table 8.3. The first tendency shown by these results is that age influences the responses of the fluent speakers. Of this group, 22% of the older speakers, 35% of the middle age fluent speakers, and 50% of the young fluent speakers selected Creole only, again indicating a gradual increase in more favorable attitudes toward Creole going from old to young.

Table 8.3 - Best Type of French with LAB Index and Age

	CREOLE		COMBINATION		STANDARD		TOTAL
YOUNG	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Fluent	10	50	10	50	0	0	20
Semi	2	10	16	80	2	10	20
No CrF	6	31	11	58	2	11	19
No CrF, No CrA	2	11	11	61	5	28	18
MIDDLE	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Fluent	7	35	8	40	5	25	20
Semi	11	55	8	40	1	5	20
No CrF	5	27	13	68	1	5	19
No CrF, No CrA	6	30	10	50	4	20	20
OLDER	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Fluent	4	22	14	78	0	0	18
Semi	7	35	12	60	1	5	20
No CrF	5	25	11	55	4	20	20
No CrF, No CrA	4	21	11	58	4	21	19

The only fluent speakers who chose Standard as best for the state were the middle age group (25%), while none of the older or younger fluent speakers exhibited this behavior. A second tendency is the choice of a combination of languages as being most representative for the state by all the age and LAB divisions except for the middle age fluent and semi speakers (only 40% opted for this). Those with no Creole French and those with no Creole French and no Creole ancestry all chose a combination of languages

as best, regardless of age. Their second option tends to be Standard French, while the strongly preferred option of the fluent and semi speakers (not choosing a combination) is Creole. This behavior is most extreme among the young and old fluent: none of these people chose Standard as a good choice for the state.

8.4 THE MULTILINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE OF LOUISIANA

Questions about what language are 'best' for a particular community or society at large can generally be seen as questions about linguistic and ethnic pride and status, but at a level much closer to home - the local level. The abstract questions about the quality of a language is brought down to a more basic level of *what is best for the community?* What should the linguistic repertoire of the community be? Is/are there a particular language or languages which would benefit the community?

Given the general trends in the results above, in which it was shown that the choice of a combination of languages was most beneficial for the community, it is apparent that the respondents in this survey are choosing a multilingual approach to the languages around them. Historically, French was the preeminent language in the state. This position was solidified with the arrival of and rapid increase of the Acadian refugees, but was overturned in a relatively short amount of time once English speakers began arriving in the area. The French spoken by the Creoles, the Cajuns, and the original colonists, along with the variety taught in schools, have all been given a place of importance in the minds of Louisiana Creoles. These attitudes differ from those of the Cajuns (as discussed in Dubois 1997a). Cajun speakers in that study all chose Cajun as being the best language for their community (rather than the combination of languages, as 36% of this survey group did),

and gave Creole French very short shrift. Awareness of the numerical dominance of the Cajuns, of the 'low' status assigned to their code, and of the difference between their language and that taught in schools has forced recognition and acceptance of the multilingual quilt which blankets South Louisiana.

When further analyses were undertaken, a more fine-grained look at these results and their interaction with the LAB index detailed the breakdown of those who think that Creole and/or Standard are important to the community at the local level. A majority of the respondents with Creole ancestry (regardless of their linguistic ability) chose Creole instead of Standard French when stating their opinions about the status of the local languages (discounting those who selected the languages in combination). This flies in the face of the 'linguistic insecurity' suggested by some researchers as a trait often exhibited by minority language speakers in a diglossic language situation (e.g. Fishman 1969), in which speakers of a low-status code favor the high-status code in certain situations. The opposite can also occur; the greater the language loss, the more the language becomes a source of pride, and the more status is attached to the code. This seems to be the case for those with Creole ancestry.

When these results were broken down further and compared with the LAB index and age, the most apparent patterns that emerged were: a) that it is the young fluent speakers who are leading the drive to vindicate the status of Creole French; and b) that the 'outsiders' (those with no ancestry) exhibit a more positive attitude toward Standard French only. The behavior of the young fluent speakers is undeniably attributable to the French revival movement in the state. Even if this renaissance has seemingly failed (or

failed to affect) older Creole speakers, the younger Creoles seem to be reaping the benefit of the positive enforcement of Louisiana French in general. The French culture, the French 'language' (whatever it may be), and French music (both Cajun and Zydeco) are emerging as important facets of the fabric of South Louisiana culture, and this positivism is evidenced by the attitudes among the young speakers in this survey.

How should the behavior of those with no Creole ancestry be interpreted? Their responses show sharp divisions from those with Creole ancestry. Two possibilities exist. Linguistic, racial, ethnic awareness run high in the state, even among those with no language ability in French and no French heritage. Their lack of ties with the linguistic and ethnic community leads to a lack of loyalty to either one. In spite of the lack of linguistic ability, it is possible that they are aware, on some metalinguistic level, that Creole French is seen by some as being 'bad French', and therefore one which would potentially benefit the state the least. In addition, simply labeling the French of France 'Standard', as Brown (1993 et passim) has bemoaned so often, gives it a certain *panache*, while adding legitimacy in the eyes of non-speakers. Even though the question was worded to ask about 'the French taught at school', it was impossible to avoid the appearance of comparing and contrasting the school-taught version with the 'unschooled', orally transmitted Creole. The second possibility is more along the lines of a Gordian knot solution. Perhaps the respondents with no Creole language ability and no Creole ancestry are not exposed to (and familiar with) Standard French, but are instead simply unfamiliar with Creole French; as a result, they exhibit more sensitivity toward the 'institutional' use of language, and therefore select the standard language as their preferred code.

8.5 LEARNING AND TEACHING OF CREOLE FRENCH

Another question which was posed to the respondents was whether all young people should learn to speak French in Louisiana; if so, what type of French should they learn? Nearly 94% of the informants indicated that young people should learn French. When asked what type of French young people should learn, the highest percentage of those picking a single option embraced Creole French (28%, 68 people), followed by Standard French (23%, 54 people). Given the option of combining the varieties of French, 53% of the responses included Creole as a part mixture (i.e. Creole, Cajun and Standard, Creole and Cajun or Creole and Standard).

When cross-tabulated with the LAB index, the results show that having linguistic ability in Creole French strongly influences the choice of Creole as being the language the young should be taught. As shown in Table 8.4, 73% of the fluent speakers chose Creole as the preferred language of instruction.

Table 8.4 - LAB Index and the Choice of French to be Taught

LAB Index	Creole		Standard	
	#	%	#	%
Fluent	24	73	9	27
Semi	13	62	8	38
No CrF	14	47	16	53
No CrF, No CrA	17	44	21	56

In contrast, those having no Creole ancestry and no language ability tend to choose Standard French as the language of instruction (56%). There seems to be a fairly strong division established between those with any language ability at all (the fluent and semi

speakers) and the informants with no language ability (with and without Creole background). A majority of those with no language ability claimed that Standard was the language of choice for the young (53% and 56%, respectively), while only 27% and 38% of the fluent and semi speakers selected this option.

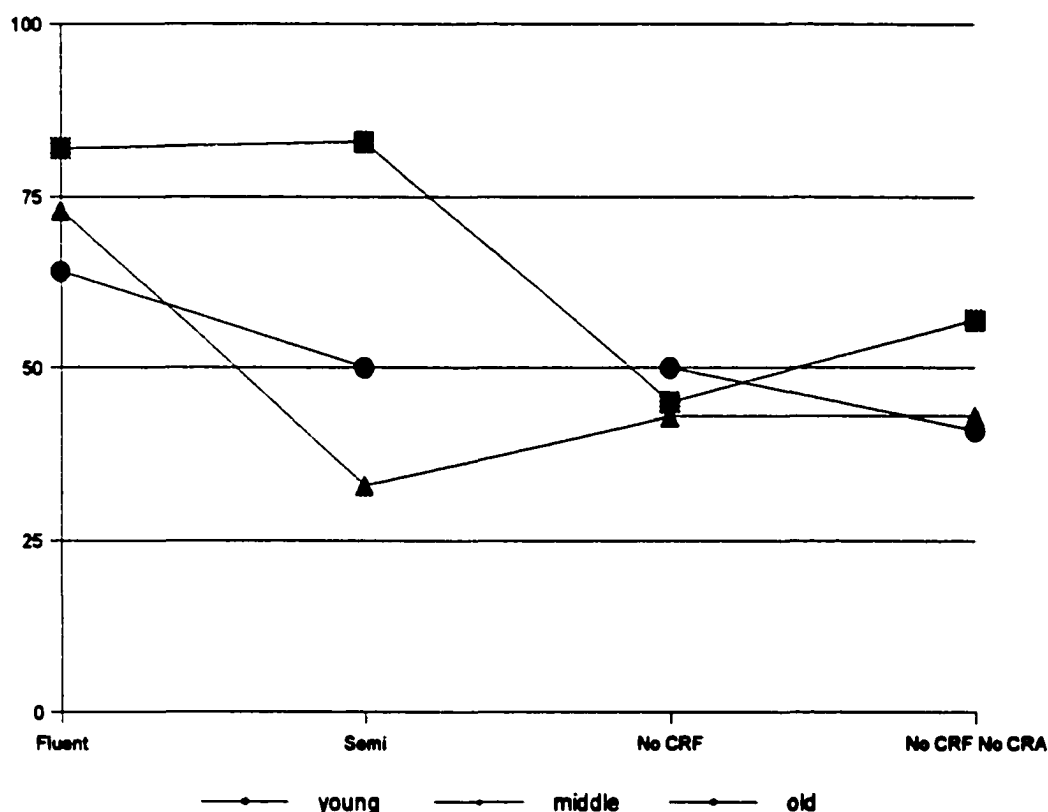


Figure 8.2 - Learn French by LAB Index and Age

When these results were cross-tabulated with age, as shown in Figure 8.2, it can be seen that it is the young fluent (82%) and semi-speakers (83%) who demonstrate the most positive attitudes toward the teaching and learning of Creole French. The fluent speakers in the other two age groups demonstrate similar positive behavior, as is shown by the fact that 73% of the middle age and 64% of the older age group claim this. The middle age

semi-speakers show somewhat deviant behavior, as only 33% of them claim that Creole is the language which should be taught to the young (compared to 83% of the younger semi-speakers and 50% of the older semi-speakers). This graph also shows that it is the fluent speakers and the young semi-speaker who tend to cluster together on the positive side of teaching Creole, while those of the groups with no linguistic ability are bundled together on the lower end of the scale (this is also a tendency for the middle, older, semi-speakers).

8.6 FLUENCY AND EDUCATION IN CREOLE

The already small population of fluent Creole speakers is shrinking, there are no schools which teach this variety, and very few of the older, fluent speakers use the language with the members of their nuclear family. There has also been no overt Creole language revival effort, and very low visibility of Creole activists in general, other than those attempting to preserve and expand Zydeco music. Given these factors, one would expect the attitude of this populace to be one of indifference toward the institutional facets of Creole language maintenance. A positive factor which mitigates these negatives is that Creoles are linguistically aware of (and acknowledge) the multilingual repertoire existing in the state. This is shown by the fact that a majority chose a combination of languages as the best for the state and the optimum choice for the teaching and learning of French. The differences revealed by the slight majority of speakers who chose an option which included Creole and other codes (Cajun and/or Standard) is an exhibition of the linguistic sanguinity of this community. For many years, they have been forced to accept the linguistic plurality of the state, in which varieties of French co-exist side by side with English. Having had to deal with people of varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds has

apparently led to an acceptance of other codes, and perhaps to a greater acceptance of the people who speak those codes.

However, there is a strong tendency for some Creoles to view their language as preferable, both as a boon for the state, and as a language which young people should learn. Since the language renewal efforts in the educational arena have been centered only on the Cajun language and culture, the presupposition was that the revival would have little or no direct effect on the Creole language and culture. However, positive attitudes are still being exhibited, and, in fact, may be growing among the younger fluent Creole speakers. This is in spite of the fact that very little support was given to higher institutions of learning to promote study of the other dialects or cultures, since the primary focus of the French renaissance was on teaching French to students at the elementary level. The same problems which afflicted the Cajun French educators (lack of materials and sufficiently trained native Cajun speakers) were exponentially increased for the smaller Creole group. The numerically dominant Cajuns and their culture, however, were at least given a certain legitimacy via the mainstream media, while the Creoles were completely marginalized, and all but left unacknowledged as a cultural or linguistic entity. CODOFIL's use of non-Louisiana French speakers, coupled with the informants knowledge that what they speak is not the 'French of France' enhanced this.

Given this, why would Creole French speakers exhibit such strongly positive attitudes toward the teaching and learning of Creole French? The spillover effect of the revival movement has again exerted a more positive force on social acceptance for both the Cajun and Creole cultures, and, although linguistic ability has always been given short

shift in the political rhetoric and monetary gains of CODOFIL, it has come to be regarded as somewhat of an asset. Speakers of both forms of French are expressing regret that they did not teach their children, and efforts toward establishing immersion schools in Creole and Cajun are underway. Although it can be assumed that the speaking of Creole French would have been more important in earlier times, the results from Chapter 6 showed that only 53% of the informants considered it a necessary criterion for Creoleness today; more specifically, the LAB index results showed that it is important only for those respondents who have ancestry *and* language ability. This group is demonstrating the distinction made by Gardner and Lambert (1972) of 'integrative' versus 'instrumental' reasons for learning a language. The integrative function would enable the younger generations to acquire the language naturally and use it to interact with other speakers of the language for social purposes. The fluent and semi speakers are aware this has not and may not ever happen again, and so suggest that their offspring, or young people in general, learn the language as a way to maintain pride in Creole heritage - the 'instrumental' function. For those with little or no skill in Creole French, the language has become an abstraction, and has achieved a symbolic status. The fact that they indicate less pride in the language and suggest that other types of French should also be taught and learned by younger generations is a reflection of the reality of their status as outsiders to the linguistic community. However, they also appear to tend to embrace an instrumental function for Creole French, albeit to a smaller degree than those with fluency in French. This was shown in the responses to the question of whether or not young people should learn French (which were overwhelmingly positive). The fact that 94% of the respondents in

the survey believe this is a good sign for the future that some sort of French language ability will be maintained if measures are taken and the entire community supports these efforts.

8.7 CONCLUSION

The picture which emerges about Louisiana Creoles' language attitudes is complex. However, several trends can be discerned. There seems to be an overall effort on the part of Louisiana's Creoles (especially the fluent speakers and the young Creoles) to maintain and (re)establish pride in the language, culture, and ancestry. Rather than simply 'passing' as Cajun by accepting the media and CODOFIL-driven push to be subsumed under the monolithic Cajun label, some Creoles seemingly are maintaining, and perhaps even growing, their diversity. By remaining unintegrated into the larger group, these Creoles are promulgating their cultural distinctiveness. Other members of the community seem to embrace a linguistic, racial, and/or institutional insecurity which reflects itself in their attitudes toward their code, their usage of it, and their identification as Creole.

It was suggested earlier that the language attitudes of the Creoles in Louisiana could be negatively impacted by the lack of institutional support. Conversely, the language attrition apparent in the community as well as an overall French renaissance in the state could increase awareness of the lack of inter-generational transmission, and that positive attitudes would be dominant as a result. If these positive attitudes did appear, it was suggested that they would lead to Creole French (re)acquiring a higher status in the community, that the members would feel more linguistic security, and the language as a

teaching tool would be highly valued. All three of these possibilities appeared in the data, depending on what facet of the community the respondents were taking part in: linguistic, ethnic/ancestral, or racial.

These different behaviors can be explained by looking at the results obtained in light of the type of question asked. When the questions were based on the linguistic security or insecurity of the group as a whole, the responses reflected the allegiance of this group to their race. Questions about the quality of Creole French were influenced more heavily by the fact that the informants were African-American rather than by other social factors. When asked about the language status as the local level, ancestry was the overriding factor; those with Creole ancestry assigned a higher status to Creole French and considered it best for the state, while the outsiders indicated that Creole French was a lower status language. For these questions, the informants in the study with Creole ancestry were treating 'being Creole' as being part of an ethnic group, and one which outsiders have no claim to because they lack Creole ancestry. The respondents' answers to the questions about the teaching and learning of Creole were divisible in yet another way. It is the separation between those with language skills in Creole French and those without which seems to be *the* defining factor in the attitudes about the teaching and learning of the varieties of French. Although race was the driving force behind the linguistic security exhibited by the respondents, and ancestry was the dividing line for the beliefs about the language at the local level, or what is best for the state, it appears that it is linguistic commonality which drives and motivates the beliefs of the respondents for the questions about learning and teaching Creole French.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 OVERVIEW

This study used a questionnaire to survey the attitudes, identity, and characteristics of 240 African-Americans in South Louisiana. Seventy-five percent of the sample claimed Creole ancestry and 25% had no Creole ancestry. The synchronic attitudes toward the language, sense of belonging in the community, identity, linguistic competence in Creole French, and the networks of Creole speakers were explored and analyzed in conjunction with the concomitant historical changes undergone by this community. By taking into account the sociohistorical processes and the evolution of both the term Creole and the various groups who laid claimed this identity, the analyses presented in this study give a more complete picture of the Louisiana Creole community than had been given heretofore.

The results were analyzed with regard to traditional sociolinguistic factors: age, gender, and place of residence. Although gender is a social factor traditionally considered important in sociolinguistics in general, and in language variation studies in particular, (many studies have shown quite substantial differences among males and females in their language use and attitudes), the results from this survey showed little or no variation between the sexes with regards to language attitudes, identification as Creole, criteria for Creole membership, social network, or in their views of the teaching and learning of Creole French. Place of residence also had very little effect on the results. Although Breaux Bridge is much more rural than Opelousas, and studies have shown that rural areas

tend to preserve minority languages and cultures longer than do urban areas (Appel and Muysken 1987), there were only slight variations among the responses from the two groups. Of all the factors, age proved to be the most significant. The influence of age and the significant effect it had on many of the results can be largely attributed to the evolving status of the Creole French community in Louisiana and the concomitant changes in the way in which the French groups in the state have been viewed. In addition to the more basic factors studied in sociolinguistic research, the linguistic network of the respondents in this survey was examined, and another category (labeled 'linguistic environment') was established; both of these were evaluated in light of the results obtained. The most significant independent variable by far for this study was the Linguistic Ability and Background (LAB) Index (Dubois 1995a, 1997). This index combined these two factors and enabled a grouping of the respondents into four categories: the fluent speakers, semi-speakers, and non-speakers of Creole French (all with Creole ancestry), and the respondents with no linguistic ability and no Creole French ancestry. The influence of these categories impacted many of the results and allowed a finer-grained analysis of the data than would have been achieved otherwise.

The overarching goal of this research was to determine the synchronic attitudinal and identification changes exhibited by Louisiana's Creole population due to the effects of the diachronic changes undergone by this group. The attitudes of the Creoles toward their language and other forms of French led to an analysis of the linguistic security and language loyalty of the informants, and yielded data on the beliefs about the status of the language at both the local and the community level. The characteristics which comprise

current Creole French identity, and the traditional markers of Creole ethnicity allowed a view of the respondents self-identification and community identification and helped clarify some results about race and ancestry. It was determined that the historical division of Creoles into white, colored, and *gens de couleurs libre* (free people of color) was no longer pertinent. It is African-Americans with French ancestry who make up today's Creole population in Louisiana, whether they live in Natchitoches, Pointe Coupée, Breaux Bridge or Opelousas, and that it is this group which is the repository of the culture, and, where it is still extant, the language.

9.2 CONCLUSIONS

It was suggested in earlier chapters that the identity and characteristics of Creoles have changed, and that along with this there has been a concomitant change in the boundaries of the culture and what it means to be Creole. The strong social forces which the 20th century exerted upon young blacks mentioned has been accompanied a change in identity claims by *all* the members of this community, which in turn, has had an effect on their linguistic behavior and language attitudes.

Respondents overwhelmingly identified themselves as African-American rather than Creole, even though Creole ancestry was the defining reason for their participation in the survey, and 75% of them could technically claim this. The force behind the choice of identifying as African-American is the tremendous effect exerted on the black population in the United States since the Civil Rights movement to claim pride in black heritage. The younger and middle age groups who were raised in this environment are reflecting the social changes which the American society at-large has undergone in the past thirty years.

Many of the older respondents, who see no value in buying into the black pride movement at this point in time, are content to call themselves Creole or American. The interplay between ancestry and racial identity is shown most clearly in the older fluent speakers: although a large percentage of this group self-identified as African-American, they also indicated pride in their Creole heritage and considered it the most important element of ethnic identification. Unlike many of those interviewed for this study, their holistic view of the community encompasses the linguistic, racial, and ethnic components which make up the Louisiana Creole community today.

The racial and ethnic characteristics seen as important by the respondents for claiming Creole identity are a reflection of this. The admixture of racial and ethnic groups in Louisiana is a well-accepted fact and has existed since the founding of the colonies in the 1600's. Though not legally recognized by law, marriage between blacks and whites occurred throughout the history of the state, and many couples who were never legally married produced children. In addition, first generation immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Spain, and various South American and Caribbean countries intermarried with Louisiana's colonial populace, as did the surviving Native Americans in the region. Although whites in the state today may choose to attach the requirement of African heritage to the term Creole, due to the social pressures exerted on them since before, during, and after the Civil War, blacks see no need to claim that race is a necessary and sufficient condition for being considered Creole. Rather, the emphasis is on ancestry. Creole ancestry ensures that one also has had an African admixture into his or her genotype, leaving aside the necessity to claim that one has a particular race in order to be

Creole. This is confirmed by the results showing that only 6.6 percent of the total sample said that one has to be African-American to identify as Creole. It was posited that the ability to speak Creole French would have been relatively important skill to possess in order to claim Creole identity. However, just over fifty percent of the respondents indicated that it was important. This percentage is mitigated somewhat due to the trend shown in analyzing the interplay of the LAB with speaking Creole French, and having it as a first language. It is, in fact, precisely those who have both ancestry and language skills in Creole who claim that these are important criteria.

It was hypothesized that this rapidly shrinking minority group, given the long-standing racial stereotypes and stigmatization imposed upon it, would consider itself distinct from the other French groups in the state, and would exhibit this via racial, ethnic, ancestral, or linguistic behaviors. It is undeniable that the self-identification of African-Americans with French ancestry was affected both by earlier sociohistorical stresses and the tumultuous changes wrought on African-Americans in general by the black power and Civil Rights movements in later decades. This was shown when the characteristics considered necessary or important for identification as a Creole were addressed. Given possible choices of ethnicity and racial identity, respondents exhibited an age-graded phenomenon, with the older informants choosing to remain loyal to their Creole identification label, while the younger informant followed the more general trend in America at large of proclaiming pride in black identity.

These changes have contributed to a reformulation of Creole identity in Louisiana today. The combined results from this chapter on identity and characterization as Creole

show that Creole is not an inclusive label; rather, it is a term which has several dimensions, particularly when viewed from the standpoint of self-identity versus community identity. The term serves as an attribute of the ethnic community, but is shown to be symbolic because, rather than claiming this as a self-identification marker, all but the fluent speakers reject it.

If pride in black identity is so prevalent, particularly among the young, how does this affect the status and use of Creole French? Do the informants still profess pride in their language and use it on a daily basis, or has it instead become a symbolic code, one which is claimed as an important aspect of being Creole, but which, in reality is seldom used? The hypothesis was that the language spoken by some members of this community has acquired a symbolic status. From the results on the linguistic environment and language usage of the respondents, it was shown that it is the 'insider' versus 'outsider' to the linguistic community which determines Creole French use, and, even among those who know and use the language, it is used more often with relatives than with friends or children, especially among the young. Connected with this, and essential for the continuity of the language, if not the community itself, is whether or not Creoles take enough pride in their language to insist that their children learn it. Although the push for young people to learn French was strong, the complete lack of institutional support and the push to revive only the Cajun French culture contributed to the mixed responses about what type of French the young should learn and what type is most representative of the community at large.

It was possible that by claiming the label African-American and rejecting the Creole identity (while embracing Creole ancestry as an important characteristic for being a

Louisiana Creole), the informants would show little interest in the actual language, and that these attitudes could affect the speaking, teaching, and learning of Creole French. If the actual language is no longer viewed as a necessity to be maintained, one would expect fewer people to speak it, and the teaching and learning of it to be given low status in terms of relative importance to the community. In fact, although the Creole language in Louisiana is in serious danger - both attrition and language loss phenomena can be noted in the speech of Creoles - the positive attitudes of the Creoles toward their language and community may help reverse or diminish the language loss situation.

The language attrition is still troubling, however, and is shown in great detail from the results on the language use and linguistic environment of the informants. There is a general age-graded phenomenon at work in the community due to the simple fact that there are fewer young Creole speakers than there are older Creole speakers. This was reflected in the extreme difficulty in locating younger speakers who were fluent in the language. Among the fluent speakers, regardless of their age, it is the extended family which shares the language skills of the respondents, meaning that the fluent speakers use Creole French more often with their relatives than with a husband, wife, or children. This disruption of traditional language transmission patterns and the influence of English via the media, schools, churches, and other social outlets bode ill for the continuation of the code. Although the speakers of Creole French are presumably establishing their solidarity with the community by using this language, the status attached to English apparently exerts a stronger pull. This is completely understandable, given the dominance of English in all facets of life, and its importance in economic advancement in American today.

One unexplained 'blip on the radar screen' (and something which may preserve at least the culture, if not the language) is the extreme behavior exhibited by the semi-speakers. Time after time, these respondents had a higher percentage of positive responses than the fluent speakers in questions about attitudes, language use, and language preservation and teaching, even in instances where, logically, the fluent speakers should have shown the most positive behavior toward Creole culture and language. This smacks of some desperation on the part of the semi-speakers; because of their linguistic insecurity, they more fervently embrace other aspects of the Creole identity.

Beliefs about the importance of a language, the use of a language, what the language is labeled (by insiders and outsiders alike), and who uses the language can, in effect, become a linguistic 'line drawn in the sand', as well as a very effective device for either separating from, or claiming allegiance to, a certain group. In Louisiana, the ethnic, racial and linguistic consciousness has been raised practically since the founding of the colony, although this has not mitigated the near-total extermination of any language variety but English. This means that, to some extent, the respondents in this survey were proclaiming, not just their beliefs and attitudes about their language and their community, but were also reflecting the attitudes which have permeated the atmosphere for many years (most especially since the French 'revival' movement in the state). This was shown by their acceptance of the choice of a variety of French codes when asked about the types of French which best represented the state, the community, and the individual.

This was also evident when it was shown that the attitudes of the outsiders reflected those of the fluent speakers when the questions were about quality, whereas the

outsiders distance themselves when the question is about the status of the community at the local level. For the issue of linguistic security and claims of quality about the language, *race* was the nexus which joined all of the ancestry and language groups together (although the semi-speakers exhibited some extreme behavior). The results from the questions about quality, which are reflections of a larger vision of the Creole community, show that it is the racial factor which impacts this group the most, and the informants claim allegiance with Louisiana Creoles. For the questions about language status and the best type of French for the state, it is *ancestry* which is the common denominator among the groups, and who, therefore, exhibit behaviors which are concomitant with that factor. The outsiders seem to favor school-taught French when the question bears on Louisiana because they are outside the Creole community. Those who possess some linguistic ability value the language in the traditional linguistic sense - for use among speakers to communicate, to strengthen and further social ties, and as a cultural vehicle to pass on to the young. The social networks established among the fluent speakers indicate that they are cognizant of the fact that the values which are attached to their membership in the Creole community are not reflected in the community at large; hence the use of the language with insiders only. As far as the teaching and learning of the Creole language, fluent Creole speakers would maintain it via the 'instrumental' use suggested by Gardner and Lambert (1972), and their responses indicated that it is Creole which should be taught to the young. Among those with little or no language ability (whether they have Creole heritage or not), the language has become an abstraction. They see little or no value in it, and instead view the school-taught variety as a higher status language.

9.3 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Both the Creole community, and the Cajun community (to a much greater extent) have been studied in Louisiana, but have realized very little benefit from most of these studies. Given the prescriptivist bent of the earlier studies, and possibly the racial bias shown by the lack of research on the Creole community, it is to be hoped that future researchers will be both more ethical and more willing to return something to the focus of their research - the informants. As Wolfram and Schilling-Estes noted (1995:175), “(t)he relatively short history of sociolinguistics has shown that it is quite possible to combine a commitment to the objective description of sociolinguistic data and a concern for social issues.” In terms of the Cajun and Creole languages and cultures in Louisiana, we should, to paraphrase Wolfram (1993:231) be sensitive to the symbolic role of language, and archive and preserve the current state of Cajun French, Creole, Cajun English, and Native American French communities for present and future generations by documenting the apparent time changes that are represented in the current population.

The genesis and continuum controversies and the confusion among researchers about the terms Creole, Cajun, Standard French, International French, and Louisiana French have added to the confusion about these terms and the people who claim them. A comprehensive definition of each French language and ancestry group in the state is far from being realized. Future research should be done in order to aid in the delineation of the French groups to determine where, how, and if they overlap in the linguistic, cultural, and social arenas. Is decreolization occurring or not? If so, in which direction is it moving? What has the impact of the introduction of ‘Standard’ French teachers had

among the Creole, Cajun, and Native American French-speaking groups? It is important that this type of research take into account the social, racial, and cultural differences exhibited by the French-based groups in the state, and the present-day realities of the groups should be grounded in their sociocultural and sociohistorical backgrounds.

Perhaps the most obvious project to be undertaken on behalf of the Creoles in Louisiana is a methodological documentation of their language, with the ultimate goal of creating an extensive database which can be preserved and distributed to researchers, members of the community, educators, and other interested parties. If the language can be adequately recorded and analyzed, it is likely that the educational establishment in the state would be more willing to accept Creole French as a valid field of study at both the college level and at the primary and secondary levels. With certified 'proof' of the language, written materials could be (re)created and disseminated. The Creole French dictionary (Valdman et al 1998) is an example of this type of research: it is a visible piece of evidence that the language exists, that it is different than Cajun French, and that it therefore is a legitimate object of study.

The total lack of institutional and governmental support among the Creoles in Louisiana is undoubtedly the reason that the social network was the only significant factor for language maintenance and use. This aspect of the research could be expanded upon in a variety of ways, including enlarging the pool of fluent speakers, expanding the geographical region from which they are taken, and ensuring that an equal number of men and women participate in the survey. Along these lines, the domains of usage of Louisiana Creole, English, or a mixture of the two should be investigated more fully to find out in

what situations speakers use which language. The impact of the social network and the restriction or expansion of linguistic domains of Creole French could then be extrapolated to predict potential language maintenance, loss, or death, and could be compared to other studies which have been done on Cajun French (such as Rottet 1995), as well as other studies done on language death and/or revival in minority language communities.

Apart from the language aspect of the Creole community in South Louisiana, more information on the remnants of the historical groups would be a big step in compiling a more complete overview of the community as a whole. Although small scale studies have been done in other Creole enclaves, if the questionnaire used in this survey were administered to these groups, a more complete picture would be obtained. The survey instrument could also be given to people in a wider geographic region, allowing the results to be applied to the Creole community at large with a bigger degree of certainty. It would be especially interesting to conduct research in the New Orleans area. This was the nexus for the change from French to English (linguistically, socially, economically) at the earliest time in the history of the state. The attrition seen in the outlying areas of Creole communities is probably more severe in the New Orleans area, and more linguistically-oriented information about both diachronic and synchronic New Orleans speech varieties could yield information on the future of Creole French and Creole English in the state.

By far the most important aspect of this community and this culture to be focused upon, however, is that of the interaction between the sociohistorical processes undergone by this community and the effects of those processes on the present-day Creole groups in Louisiana. At the cultural level, self-identification, community identity, and 'other'

identification is strongly affected by diachronic forces. On the linguistic level, a true picture of the Creole spoken by African-Americans in Louisiana today cannot be fully understood without recourse to the language of the founder population and examination of the linguistic changes which have occurred in this variety. Acknowledgment of the importance of the history of the group could lead to a re-analysis of the data collected to date, and could help cement some of the more basic attitudes toward the French varieties in Louisiana in a more permanent foundation. Expanding the research to include the remnants of the other Creole groups in the state as well as looking at other geographical regions can only aid in a better understanding of these groups. The cultural and linguistic transformations undergone by these groups could then be viewed with a clearer focus, yielding better and more accurate research for future generations.

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APPENDIX A

SOCIOLOGICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

- A. NAME OF HOMETOWN (where you were raised)
- B. RESPONDENT'S BACKGROUND (check the appropriate box)
1. Individual who speaks Creole French fluently and has Creole French ancestors (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.)
 2. Individual who can speak Creole French but not fluently, and has Creole French ancestors.
 3. Individual who only speaks English and has Creole French ancestors.
 4. Individual who only speaks English and has no Creole French ancestors.
- C. SEX
1. Female
 2. Male
- D. AGE GROUPS
1. Between 20 and 39 years old
 2. Between 40 and 59 years old
 3. 60+ years
- E. NAME OF THE INVESTIGATOR

(Please circle or underline the appropriate answer and fill in the blanks)

To answer this questionnaire, the respondent must have been born in Louisiana or have been living in the state since at least the age of fifteen

1. What language was usually spoken to you when you were a child?
 - a. English
 - b. Creole French
 - c. Another variety of French _____
2. What language do you speak most often every day?
 - a. English
 - b. Creole French
 - c. Another variety of French _____
3. Do you speak another language often? If yes, which of the following languages?
 - a. English
 - b. Creole French
 - c. Another variety of French _____

4. What language are you most comfortable with?
- English
 - Creole French
 - both
 - Another variety of French _____
5. What language do/did you usually speak with the following people? Check the appropriate box.
- | Creole French | English | Another type of French | Not applicable |
|-------------------|---------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Spouse or partner | | Brother(s) and sister(s) | Children |
| Distant relatives | | Friends | |
6. Which of the people below can speak Creole French? Check the appropriate box.
- | no | yes | not applicable |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| spouse or partner | most of your brothers/sisters | most of your children |
| most of your distant relative | most of your friends | |
7. With which of the people below do you speak Creole French?
- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| spouse or partner | most of your brothers/sisters | most of your children |
| most of your distant relative | most of your friends | |
8. Do you know cultural associations where people speak Creole French? If so, do you go often or are you a regular member of one of these associations, or do you know somebody who is a member?
- no
 - never
 - go often
 - regular member
 - know somebody _____
9. Are you able to have transactions in Creole French in your daily life (e.g. grocery store, post office, the cleaners)?
10. Do you believe that Creole French is going to disappear in Louisiana? Why or why not?
11. Which of the following do you consider yourself?
- American
 - African-American
 - Creole-American
 - Creole
 - Other

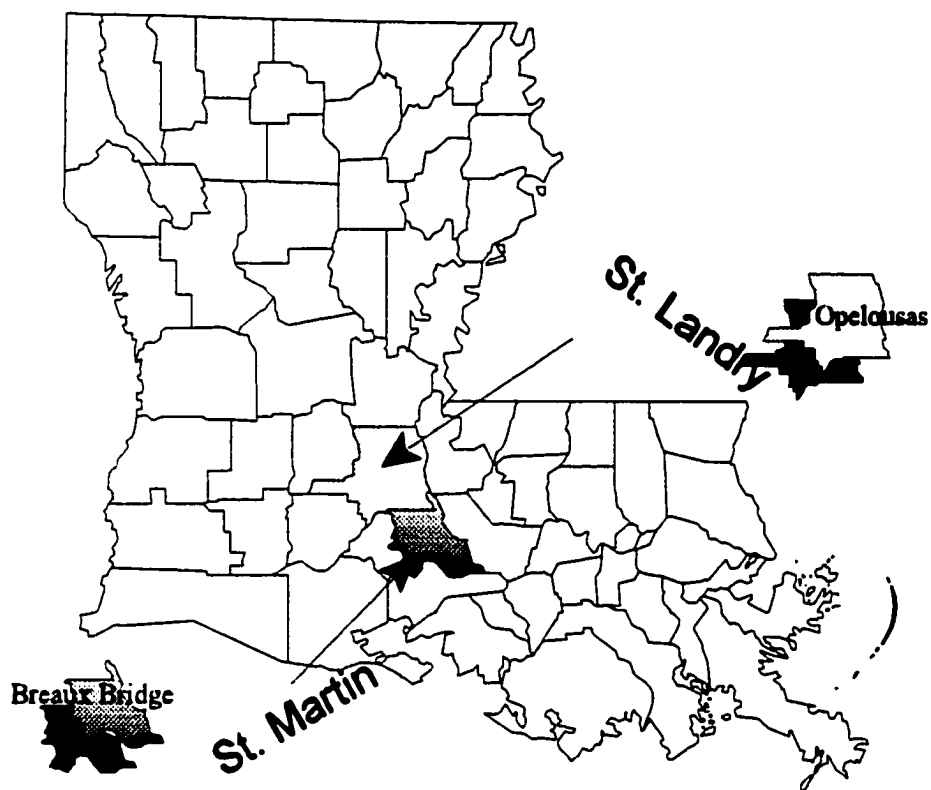
12. Do you believe that the French image of Louisiana is an important thing? Why or why not? Yes No
13. Which type of French is best for Louisiana?
 Standard French
 Cajun
 Creole French
 both Standard and Cajun
 Both Standard and Creole
 All three
14. In which language(s) do you have sufficient competence (enough knowledge) to do the following:
 Cajun/Creole
- count to ten
 - name the days of the week
 - give the date (month and year)
 - order a meal in a restaurant
 - give biographical information (date of birth, family information, description of your studies)
 - speak to people in social situations using appropriate expressions (church, meetings, parties, weddings, funerals, etc.)
 - describe hobbies in detail using appropriate vocabulary
 - describe present employment, studies, and main social activities in detail with native speakers
 - describe what you hope to achieve in the next five years using future tense verbs with native speakers
 - give your opinion on a controversial subject (abortion, religion, pollution, nuclear safety) with native speakers
15. Do you believe that all Creoles are proud of speaking Creole French?
16. How often do people use Creole French in your community?
17. Which language is more useful to speak in your community?
18. Which language is more useful to speak in your home?
19. Which of the following language do you believe is the worst variety of French spoken in Louisiana?
- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Creole French | 2. Cajun French |
| 3. Standard French | 4. Other _____ |

20. If you do not know the Standard French that is taught at school, would you like to learn it? Yes No I speak it already
21. If you do not know Creole French, would you like to learn it?
22. If you do not know Cajun French, would you like to learn it?
23. Should all young people learn to speak French in Louisiana?
Yes No
24. If yes, what kind of French should they learn?
Creole Cajun Standard French Creole and Standard Creole and Cajun
25. How would you characterize the quality of Creole French?
As good as French learned in school
Not very good French
Very bad French
Not French at all
26. What is the most striking linguistic feature of the Creole French language?
27. Where do the more 'genuine' Creole French speakers live in Louisiana? Explain your choice. (Parish or city)_____ Explain_____
28. Is it an advantage to speak Creole French in Louisiana? Explain.
Yes No _____
29. What does Creole French mean to you? Please circle just one.
-a distinct variety of French
-a mixed variety of French and English
-a mixed variety of French, English and Spanish
-Similar to Creole French spoken in the Caribbean
-Other_____
30. In order to be considered a true Creole, is it necessary to speak Creole French?
31. In order to be considered a true Creole, is it necessary to have learned Creole French as your first language?
32. In order to be considered a true Creole, is it necessary to speak some form of French?
33. In order to be considered a true Creole, is it necessary to have Creole ancestors?

34. In order to be considered a true Creole, is it necessary to have parents or grandparents who speak Creole French?
35. In order to be considered a true Creole, is it necessary to live in a Creole city or town?
36. In order to be considered a true Creole, is it necessary to live in Louisiana?
37. In order to be considered a true Creole, do you have to be a certain race?
38. In order to be considered a true Creole, is it necessary to be a member of a certain religious group? If yes, which one? _____
39. Do your family members live in the area?
All Most Some None
40. Do/did you work in the area?
Always Usually Sometimes Never
41. Is (are) your spouse/parents a member of a longtime local family in town?
Yes No
42. How many of your recreational activities take place in town?
All Most Some None
43. How many of your friends live in town?
All Most Some None
44. What kind of work do/did you do?
45. What is the highest level of education you achieved in school?
46. Did you fill out this questionnaire yourself or was it read to you?

APPENDIX B

MAP



VITA

Megan E. Melançon was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and has always had an interest in the various cultures and languages in the state. After obtaining a bachelor of arts and a master's degree in Secondary French Education, she decided to continue her studies by concentrating on an area of great interest to her - Linguistics. Upon receiving a master's degree in linguistics from the University of Kansas in 1995, she continued her studies and completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Louisiana State University. Close proximity to Cajuns and Creoles as well as invaluable research and teaching experiences were gained during her tenure as a research assistant for the Cajun French Project and as an instructor in the Interdepartmental Program in Linguistics at Louisiana State University. Her publications to date have focused on the field of sociolinguistics in general, and on the Cajun and Creole communities in South Louisiana in particular.

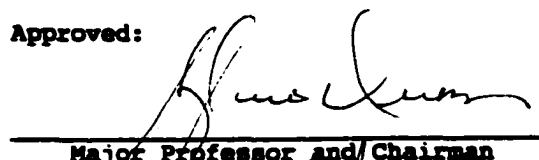
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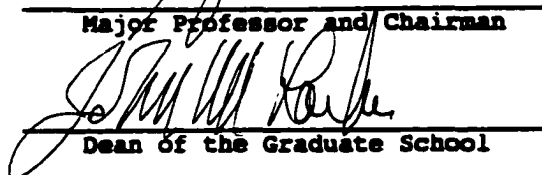
Candidate: Megan Elizabeth Melancon

Major Field: Linguistics

Title of Dissertation: The Sociolinguistic Situation of Creoles in South
Louisiana: Identity, Characteristics, Attitudes

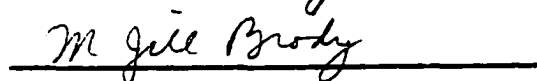
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Major Professor and Chairman

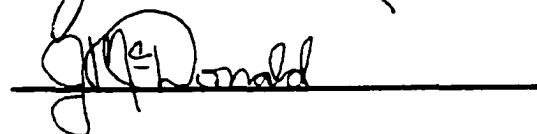

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:









Date of Examination:

22 April 2000
