

Segregation of the Free People of Color and the Construction of Race in Antebellum New Orleans

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Louisiana and the city of New Orleans have a complicated colonial and racial history. A large free population of color living amidst enslaved people of color attests to fluidity in racial constructions present in the colonial period in Louisiana. Throughout the French (1682–1763) and Spanish (1763–1803) colonial periods and the first five decades of U.S. statehood (1803–1850), racial constructions changed remarkably. Cultural conflict, an increasing number of American whites, and fear of insurrection contributed to growing hostility toward the free people of color and remaining colonial racial practices. Historical evidence, state and municipal legislation, and 1850 U.S. Census data show that free people of color tended to reside in specific “Creole” areas within the city, demonstrating that free people in the city were segregated by race.

KEY WORDS: New Orleans, construction of race, free people of color

INTRODUCTION

Louisiana passed through the hands of the French, the Spanish, the French again, and finally the Americans in its complicated colonial history. Throughout this history, enslaved Africans and people of African descent powered the agriculture-based economy, as they did throughout the American South; however, the cultural blending of French, Spanish, and African

traditions and customs before the colony came into U.S. control (1803) created an atmosphere of racial openness (Hall, 1992) in Louisiana and particularly New Orleans that stood apart from much of the rest of the South. Aspects of this unique racial atmosphere included a tripartite racial structure and racial fluidity, in part facilitated by French (1682–1763) and particularly Spanish governance (1763–1800). French and Spanish colonial policy sought the classification of a mixed-race people of both European and African ancestry who legally and socially existed between those considered white and those considered black. Persons in this “middle tier” were referred to as the *gens de couleur libres*, or free people of color. As free people, the *gens de couleur libres* legally had many of the same privileges that whites enjoyed. The free people of color in New Orleans were famous for their wealth, culture, and education until after 1830, a year that roughly divides a period of relatively elite status from a period of diminished privilege and increasing hostility against the free people of color (Gehman, 1994).

This research investigates social constructions of race in New Orleans during the transition from colonial rule to early statehood (1803–1850). In particular, this article examines the segregation of the free people of color and the geographic

distribution of the institution of *plaçage* (a legally sanctioned “mistress” relationship between a white man and free woman of color) as markers of the changing construction of race in New Orleans. Contributing to geographical work on race in New Orleans and the American South (Hoelscher, 2003; Crutcher, 2006; Schein, 2006) this research utilizes a sample of the 1850 census data to demonstrate that free people of color resided in specific wards within New Orleans and that the institution of *plaçage* likely occurred in bounded geographical areas as well. Municipal and state legislation provides further evidence of increasing attempts to legally reify racial boundaries and remove colonial systems of racial fluidity. Because the social constructions of race changed during the processes of Americanization in New Orleans (Hirsch and Logsdon, 1992), an overview of the history and changing ethnicity and culture of the city provide both the context and partial explanation for these changing racial perceptions.

GEOGRAPHY AND RACE

A growing number of geographers and other scholars have increasingly looked at race with a critical eye, beginning their investigations with the concept of race itself in addition to social and geographical effects of race. Scholars utilizing this social constructionist view of race in their work assert that race does not exist as a biological category but is a social construction used by some to define a social and geographical place for persons in an increasingly complicated society. As social constructions, racial categories are dependent upon context, i.e. elements such as soci-

etal perceptions, historical events, economic variables, and *geography* (Anderson, 1987, 1988; Jackson, 1987, 1988, 1998; Roediger, 1991; Robinson, 1996; Delaney, 1998, 2002; Pullido, 2000; Gilmore, 2002; Schein, 2002, 2006; Hoelscher, 2003; Kobayashi, 2003). These racial constructions include constructions of white racial identities as well, something overlooked frequently in past research on race (Roediger, 1991; Hoelscher, 2003; Schein, 2002, 2006; Essex, 2002; McCarthy and Hague, 2004).

One way those with power use the concept of race is to regulate and control the activities and privileges of those racialized persons through laws, institutions, and social customs. Segregation of the ostensibly racialized group is often one component of this type of attempt at regulation and control (Anderson, 1987, 1988; Parrillo, 1994; Robinson, 1996). The effectiveness of racial constructions and segregation to maintain boundaries and power differentials between groups raises some interesting questions with respect to historical populations within the U.S. Because Louisiana was a slave state and used race as a social marker, the relative success and elite position of the free people of color in New Orleans until the 1830s provides an exceptionally illuminating case for the study of the construction of race, particularly within the U.S. South. I contend that the relative status of the free people of color hinged on both their racial categorization—whether or not legal and social structures defined them as “black”—and the social and legal consequences for this categorization. The construction of categories of race and the classification of free people of color changed as New Or-

leans and Louisiana as a whole made a transition from colonial governance toward white “American” governance.

THE COLONIAL PERIODS:
GROWTH OF THE FREE
POPULATION OF COLOR

The French Regime: 1682–1763

The French began utilizing African slaves for agriculture in 1712 for African knowledge of irrigation systems and rice cultivation in tropical environments. The first slave ship arrived in Louisiana in 1719 (Hall, 1992). With the introduction of Africans into the colony, the French colonists adopted a series of laws—called the *Code Noir*, or Black Code—to govern relations between Africans and Europeans and to regulate the emancipation of slaves. Importantly, these laws clearly distinguished free persons of color from slaves. Free persons of color as well as emancipated persons held the same rights as those held by white Europeans. The Code listed many ways in which a slave could become free, including “earning” one’s freedom through defending the colony or teaching a master’s children (Sterkx, 1972, 17). During the period of French governance, a complicated understanding of race that took into consideration (among other things) free or enslaved status, skin color, and place of birth emerged in reaction to difficult colonial conditions and the disproportionate number of European men to women within the colony (Hall, 1992).

*The Spanish Regime:
1763–1800*

When the Spanish took control of the Louisiana colony, they continued the poli-

cies outlined in the *Code Noir*, but the new governing regime faced an enormous challenge in maintaining the loyalty of the colonists. To prevent insurrection by a growing population of African slaves and to ensure the loyalty of a significant number of people living within the colony (i.e. the free people of color), the Spanish colonial regime developed additional opportunities for the emancipation of slaves in the *Code Noir* and attempted to create separate social groupings within the free population of African descent (Hall, 1992). A component of Spanish policy was the acceptance of sexual relationships between white Europeans and persons of African descent (Hall, 1992; Hangar, 1997). This helped to generate a significant population of color that was loyal to the Spanish Crown. During Spanish rule the number of free people of color in Louisiana nearly doubled in size. From 1791 to 1805, the free population of color grew from 862 to 1566 (Hangar, 1997, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2001).

The Spanish, like the French, had a *fluid* concept of race that considered many factors, including skin color and ancestry. For example, in areas within the Louisiana colony such as Pointe Coupee northwest of New Orleans, a “rigid socioracial hierarchy” was not followed by the colonists, and a number of people with mixed-race ancestry were accepted by those of European descent as “white” (Hall 1992, 239). This is not to say, however, that a racial hierarchy did not exist in other places or in other contexts. Within New Orleans itself, Spanish government records and policy distinguished between light-skinned (*pardo*) and dark-skinned (*moreno*) in-

dividuals of color. Additionally, a hierarchical distinction developed between Creole people of color (those born in the colony) and persons born in Africa (Gelman, 1994; Hangar, 1997).

Plaçage: The "Left-Handed Marriages" of Creole Society

A key social practice in the blending of African and European ancestry and the building of the free population of color was the formalized mistress relationship, called *plaçage*, between white European men and free women of color. This practice began in the French period, was encouraged by the Spanish, and continued into the early 19th century. Reflecting the complicated understanding of race in colonial Louisiana, this relationship resembled a legalized marriage in practice; for the white man often bought a house or apartment for his mistress of color and financially supported her and any children they conceived. While historians debate whether most of the men involved in *plaçage* relationships also participated in regular marriages with white women, the children produced by this sexual and legal arrangement were considered "natural," lying somewhere in the legal framework between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" (Martin 2000). Children of these legal relationships could inherit wealth from their white fathers (*ibid.*, 68), which contributed significantly to the growth and financial successes of the free people of color. According to historians (Tregle, 1992; Martin, 2000), the culturally "cherished" practice of *plaçage* occurred in geographically bounded locations, along Rampart Street or in other Creole areas of the city.

THE AMERICAN PERIOD:
THE GOLDEN AGE AND THE
GROWTH OF RACISM

The Golden Age of the Free People of Color

The period between 1813 and 1830 is called the "Golden Age" for the free people of color in Louisiana because it was during this time period that their numbers, wealth, and prestige peaked as a group. In 1830, the free people of color constituted approximately 24 percent of the total population in New Orleans, up from 17 percent in 1820, and higher than the 19 percent it would come to constitute of the total population in 1840 (Table 1). Furthermore, when Louisiana passed from French to American hands, an influx of both whites from elsewhere within the U.S. and immigrants (primarily Irish and German) caused a growth in the white population from 43 percent of the total population in 1805 to 58 percent of the total population by 1840 (Table 1). This influx of Americans and non-Gallic immigrants caused white and Black Creoles (free people of color) to unite in defense of French/Spanish (or Creole) culture and language (Campanella, 2002, 2006). Unity with white Creoles against American "intruders" also gave the free people of color in New Orleans a measure of social and political power (Logsdon and Bell, 1992) that helped characterize the first three decades of the nineteenth century as their Golden Age.

The free people of color had accumulated considerable wealth and were famous for their skilled labor throughout the city. Free people of color outnumbered whites in percentage of skilled labor and

Table 1. Total Population by Year, Race, Sex, and Status

Year	Total Pop.	Total Whites	White ♀	White ♂	Total Free Color	Free Color ♀	Free Color ♂	Total Slaves	Slave ♀	Slave ♂
1791	5037	2386	912	1474	862	538	324	1789	918	871
1805	8222	3551	1650	1901	1566	942	624	3105	1767	1338
1820	41351	19244	7569	11675	7188	4326	2862	14946	7615	7331
1830	49826	21281	8681	12600	11906	7042	4864	16639	9651	6988
1840	102193	59519	24616	34903	19226	10788	8438	23448	13653	9795
1850	119460	91431	38553	52878	9961	6006	3955	18068	10672	7396
1860	174491	149063	71330	77733	10939	6356	4583	14484	8477	6007

Source: Hangar, K.S. (1997), *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places*; and Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, Historical Demographic, Economic, and Social Data: The United States, 1790–1960.

worked in many professions including carpentry, cigar making, masonry, shipping, embalming, hairdressing, nursing, and midwifery (Sterkx, 1972; Gehman, 1994). LaChance (1996) argues that as a percentage of overall city assets, the wealth of the free people of color in New Orleans increased from 14.5 percent in 1810 to 23.4 percent in 1840, reflecting a growth in both numbers and economic power of the free people of color. Free people of color also owned slaves in some cases, reflecting the complicated construction of race in Louisiana.

Between 1809 and 1812, the two Faubourgs, or “sub-divisions,” lying adjacent to the French Quarter were developed (Evans, 1974), and many free people of color chose to reside in these areas. The Faubourgs Treme and Marigny also consisted of recent immigrants to America (including whites, free people of color, and former slaves fleeing the violence of revolution in Haiti during the 1790s) (Crutcher, 2006) and other immigrants

from France and French-controlled areas (Logsdon and Bell, 1992, 207). By the 1830s, 40s, and 50s, racial lines within the French Quarter and the Faubourgs Marigny and Treme remained blurred as these recent immigrants had not yet learned to function under the increasingly rigid racial lines adopted by the Americans. Additionally, these neighborhoods remained staunchly rooted in French and Creole culture and tradition in opposition to American culture with which it came in direct conflict (*ibid.*).

Fear and Racism: Insurrection and Americanization

As Americans moved into New Orleans and Louisiana began to adopt “American” laws and social practices in place of colonial traditions, a general geographic separation of Anglos from Creoles occurred. Creoles continued to reside in the French Quarter, Treme, and Marigny. Anglos (or Americans) generally resided in the area west (or upriver) of Canal Street (Figure 1

for street locations), although as Campanella (2002) explains, the geographic separation of the two groups was rarely as complete or severe as popular histories have described (118–119).

Gehman (1994) argues that racial segregation in New Orleans was complicated by colonial familial connections between whites and people of color, and this seems to have been the case in the Creole-controlled areas (Toledano and Christovich, 1980; Ryan, 1997, 35). According to Tregle (1992) white Americans abhorred many of the colonial racial practices, such as *plaçage*, considering them immoral and contributing to the “debasement of other human sensibilities as well.” These political and cultural divisions between the Creoles and Anglos became so severe (Lewis, 1976; Tregle, 1992; Gehman, 1994; Rousey, 1996; Ryan, 1997) that in 1836, the American government divided the city into three *municipalities*: first, the French Quarter and part of Faubourg Tremé; second, the American Sector (west of Canal Street); and third, Faubourgs Tremé and Marigny. The obvious inefficiency of governmental coordination was, as Rousey (1996) claims, a sacrifice the people of New Orleans were willing to make in the name of ethnic separatism.

The American Municipality differed in very significant ways from the Creole Municipalities. First, there was a significant income gap between the American and Creole residents in the city, which increased with the division of the city into the different Municipalities (Dominguez, 1986). The First and Third Municipalities continued to keep their records in French, while the Second Municipality kept its records in English. In addition, European immigrants, mostly Irish and German, re-

sided near the warehouse district in the Second Municipality. These groups had no experience with “racial” mixing and had a stake in differentiating themselves from free people of color in order to compete for jobs, housing, and status as “white” (Roediger, 1991). Concomitantly, fewer slave owners resided in the American sector of the city, and well-off American residents may have preferred white domestic help. Berlin (1974) argues that this lack of interracial contact contributed to white preference to live segregated from the free people of color.

In addition to cultural preference and lack of experience with people of color, white Americans in New Orleans (as well as white Creoles to a significant degree) were particularly frightened by a number of insurrections among free people of color in the American South and in the Caribbean. From the point in time when Louisiana became a U.S. territory in 1803, many U.S. and Louisiana governmental officials feared that ties to France and French colonies such as St. Domingue (Haiti) would result in a Black revolution in the United States under the slogan of liberty, equality, and fraternity (Aptheker, 1943, 28). The revolution in St. Domingue caused an influx of 3000 people into the state between 1809 and 1810 and showed that militants of color could defeat white armies and overthrow racial orders (Gehman, 1994). Additionally, despite the fact that it was quelled without much difficulty, an insurrection in 1811 by slaves of the German Coast area of Louisiana (west of New Orleans) left the memory and the fear in white minds of rebellion by people of color (Rodriguez, 1992). The violence of the Nat Turner Rebellion in Virginia in 1831 caused the thoughts of whites

throughout the South, including New Orleans, to be dominated by the fear of insurrection by people of color (Aptheker, 1943; Ford, 1999).

During this period, as pointed out by scholars, a transition occurred from the fluid racial constructions from the colonial period to a more polarized “American” understanding of race. I argue that racial constructions became more rigid as more Americans moved into the city, and that this more rigid understanding worked upon the basis of a bipolar conception of race. This dual racial construction, in which individuals were legally categorized as either white or black, differed significantly from French and Spanish colonial perceptions of race that functioned along a racial spectrum and took other factors into consideration.

SEGREGATION IN LAW AND PRACTICE IN THE AMERICAN PERIOD

The 1850 Census: Distribution of the Free People of Color in New Orleans

Historians, using many sources, have described the division of the city along cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and racial lines; however, thus far little evidence of racial segregation itself has been provided using actual Federal Census data. This could be in part because of problems inherent in the use of census data. For instance, Cramer (1997) shows significant inconsistencies in racial categorization in the 1840 Federal Census, particularly as one compares racial assignment for individuals across Census years. Individual census enumerators often used their own judgment when assigning racial identity to persons, in some

cases taking local racial constructs or local knowledge into consideration, but not always. Other problems, such as census enumerators overlooking individuals or receiving incorrect information for a host of reasons (including language barriers), also detract from the accuracy of the Federal Census Schedules as data sources.

Problems with the census aside, it nevertheless does provide an invaluable source of information divided along municipal and ward boundaries, which is very important in the study of race in New Orleans. While looking at one specific Census year does not provide a picture of increasing or decreasing segregation, it does give some insight into the result of those cultural and racial practices and constructs within New Orleans. In other words, a sample of the 1850 Federal Census Schedules provides a geographic snapshot of the city at that time that clarifies other historical and geographical work.

Census data support the conclusion that free persons of color largely resided in the Creole Municipalities (Municipalities 1 and 3) in 1850. Table 2 indicates the number of free persons of color living in each ward (a unit of each municipality) as a percentage of the *total free population* (all racial groups, excluding slaves) in that ward. Wards 7 and 2 in the First Municipality, with 28.6 percent and 18.6 percent respectively, have the highest proportion of free people of color at the ward level within that municipality. Wards 1 and 4 in the Third Municipality, with 33.4 percent and 19.9 percent respectively, have the highest percentage in that municipality. In the “American” Municipality, the Second Municipality, the ward with the largest percentage free population of color of the total free population of

Table 2. Total Free Persons of Color as a Percentage of Total Free Population
(all racial groups, excluding slaves) per Ward

Municipality 1 (French Quarter)	% Free Persons of Color	Municipality 2 (American Sector)	% Free Persons of Color	Municipality 3 (Creole Faubourgs)	% Free Persons of Color
Ward 1	15.4	Ward 1	0.8	Ward 1	33.4
Ward 2	18.6	Ward 2	4.4	Ward 2	9.1
Ward 3	15.8	Ward 3	1.1	Ward 3	6.4
Ward 4	11.4	Ward 4	4.5	Ward 4	19.9
Ward 5	17.8	3rd Rep. District	2.7		
Ward 6	7.9				
Ward 7	28.6				

Table 3. Total Free Persons of Color per Ward as a Percentage of
Total Citywide Free Population of Color

Municipality 1 (French Quarter)	% Total Free Popu- lation of Color	Municipality 2 (American Sector)	% Total Free Population of Color	Municipality 3 (Creole Faubourgs)	% Total Free Population of Color
Ward 1	9.3	Ward 1	0.3	Ward 1	26.6
Ward 2	5.8	Ward 2	1.4	Ward 2	3.2
Ward 3	4.0	Ward 3	0.9	Ward 3	3.4
Ward 4	4.8	Ward 4	2.4	Ward 4	4.0
Ward 5	10.0	3rd Rep. District	6.0		
Ward 6	7.0				
Ward 7	10.5				

that ward is Ward 4 with only 4.5 percent. These data show that the percentage of free population of color in each ward clearly supports the assertions by scholars that free persons of color lived in specific “non-American” wards of the city.

This distinction in racial composition between the municipalities can likewise be seen by looking at the free population of color in each ward as a percentage of the total *citywide free population of color* (Table 3). This analysis considers the free

population of color in the city as a whole and then examines what proportion of this population resides in each ward. As Table 3 indicates, the wards with the highest percentages of free people of color are Wards 5 and 7 in the First Municipality and Ward 1 in the Third Municipality. Wards 5 and 7 in the First Municipality correspond to the Faubourg Tremé area, while Ward 1 in the Third Municipality corresponds with Faubourg Marigny (see Figure 1). Scholars (Hirsch and Logs-



Figure 1. Percentage of Total Citywide Free Population of Color. Source: This map originally printed in Sumpter, A. 2002. Segregation of the Free People of Color in Antebellum New Orleans in 1850 and the Changing Nature of the Construction of Race between the Colonial and Antebellum Periods, 1718–1860. Base map originally published in Wards of New Orleans. 1961. Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc.

Table 4. Location Quotient by Ward

Municipality 1 (French Quarter)		Municipality 2 (American Sector)		Municipality 3 (Creole Faubourgs)	
	LQ		LQ		LQ
Ward 1	1.48	Ward 1	0.08	Ward 1	3.20
Ward 2	1.79	Ward 2	0.42	Ward 2	0.88
Ward 3	1.52	Ward 3	0.10	Ward 3	0.62
Ward 4	1.09	Ward 4	0.44	Ward 4	1.91
Ward 5	1.71	3rd Rep. District	0.27		
Ward 6	0.76				
Ward 7	2.75				

don 1992; Gehman, 1994) have described these areas as refuges for Creoles (including both those classified as white and colored) during the process of Americanization in the early nineteenth century.

Scholars frequently use *location quotient* as a ratio to compare the occurrence of a trend in component areas (or pieces of an area) to the area as a whole. For the purposes of this study, the location quotient compares the percentage free population of color in each ward (of the total number of all free people in each ward, all racial groups) with the percentage free population of color in the entire free population of New Orleans. A score of 1 indicates that the ward percentage is exactly equal to the citywide percentage free population of color (an equal distribution across wards). A score of less than one indicates that the ward percentage is less than the citywide percentage, and it follows that the white population would be disproportionately large in that ward when compared to the overall racial composition of the city. A score of more than one indicates that the percentage is more than the total citywide percentage free people of color, or a spatial concentration of free people of color. The location quo-

tient is useful because it compares specific areas to the whole, demonstrating the *location* and numerical direction in which a particular statistic diverges from the general trend.

Table 4 presents the location quotient by ward. As might be expected from the previous two measures, the location quotient for wards in the First and Third Municipalities far exceeds the location quotient for the Second Municipality. More importantly, the majority of scores in the First and Third Municipalities indicate that these areas of the city contained a higher concentration of free people of color than the city as a whole. Nearly all of the First Municipality, again representing the areas of the French Quarter and part of the Faubourg Tremé, demonstrates a score greater than 1, indicating a concentration of free people of color higher than the proportion of free people of color in the city as a whole (see Figure 2). The wards with the highest Location Quotient are Wards 7, 2, and 5. In the Third Municipality, the ward with the highest location quotient is Ward 1, which correlates to the Faubourg Marigny. The entire Second Municipality demonstrates scores less than 1; in other words, the “American” Municipality



Figure 2. Location Quotient by Ward. Source: This map originally printed in Sumpter, A. 2002. Segregation of the Free People of Color in Antebellum New Orleans in 1850 and the Changing Nature of the Construction of Race between the Colonial and Antebellum Periods, 1718–1860. Base map originally published in Wards of New Orleans. 1961. Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc.

within the city in 1850 was disproportionately white in comparison to the racial composition of the city as a whole.

These first three statistics give considerable clout to the arguments of scholars that free people of color largely resided in specific areas of the city, primarily those parts of the city with large numbers of people with French or Creole cultural influences (Tregle, 1992). While statistics themselves do not reflect the actual conditions or causes of this general segregation of the free people of color, they can give a sense of the degree and location of segregation in 1850. In addition, the distribution of the practice of *plaçage*, the French and Spanish cultural tradition of a formalized relationship between a white male and free female of color, may provide insight into the acceptance, adoption, or continuation of colonial racial practices by residents throughout New Orleans in this transitional period in Louisiana's history.

To measure the distribution of *plaçage* throughout the city, I again utilized the Federal Census Schedules for 1850. By looking at household composition, I categorized relationships as *plaçage* if they met certain criteria. Admittedly, in using census data, there is no way to verify whether or not these relationships were considered *plaçage*; nevertheless, they do point in the direction of acceptance of interracial relationships at the very least. The first criterion is that the household must have been composed of a white male living with a woman listed as Black or mulatto (a classification representing a person of both "white" and "Black" ancestry). Second, if any children lived in the house, they must have been classified as "mulatto" by the Census Enumerator showing an understanding, at least on the

part of the Census Enumerator, that the children were of mixed race ancestry. In some cases, children identified as mulatto had the same surname as the white man living in the household, which clarified that the white male in the household had probably fathered those children with that woman of color. Third, the ages of any children must have corresponded to child-bearing years for the woman of color living in the household, in order to eliminate elderly women of color working as housekeepers or other live-in occupations. If the household did not fit these particular criteria, it was not considered as an indicator of *plaçage* (or acceptance of interracial relationships). I did not consider any female of color living with more than one white male, for instance, because this may have indicated that the female of color was working as a live-in servant. Furthermore, this contrasted with descriptions provided by historians that *plaçage* was practiced typically by one white man living with one female of color.

Problems with "guessing" at the nature of relationships using census data aside, the geographic distribution of the households that fit the above criteria does have some interesting results. Table 5 demonstrates that the possibility of *plaçage* per 100 people was very low throughout much of New Orleans. In fact, the only ward in the entire city that had a significant number of these households was Ward 2 within the First Municipality (Figure 3). This could possibly reflect a tradition of *plaçees* living along Rampart Street (Gehman, 1994), which runs through this Ward. Interestingly, these data also suggest that interracial sexual relationships did not occur in the wards with the largest number of free people of color. This itself

Table 5. Possibility Scores of Interracial Relationships by Ward

Municipality 1 (French Quarter)	Score %	Municipality 2 (American Sector)	Score %	Municipality 3 (Creole Faubourgs)	Score %
Ward 1	1.2	Ward 1	0.0	Ward 1	0.6
Ward 2	19.3	Ward 2	0.0	Ward 2	0.0
Ward 3	0.6	Ward 3	0.0	Ward 3	0.0
Ward 4	0.3	Ward 4	0.0	Ward 4	0.4
Ward 5	0.8	3rd Rep. District	0.0		
Ward 6	0.1				
Ward 7	0.6				

may indicate that participants in *plaçage* relationships did not follow increasingly reified racial boundaries either spatially or socially.

Evidence of Segregation in Law

Free people of color in many cases chose to reside in the Creole sectors of the city to avoid American culture and racial practices and to protect their own language and culture. But once Louisiana became a U.S. state with a large number of American “immigrants” state and municipal legislative bodies began to pass a series of laws to make certain that the “races” remained separate according to increasing belief in a biologically-based racial hierarchy that imbued much white American political and social thought (Roediger, 1991; Ford, 1999). Hirsch and Logsdon (1992) argue that free people of color clustered in the Creole wards because increasingly hostile legislation against them was not enforced as strictly as in the American Sector of the city.

These laws protected white privilege and status with the knowledge that it would be impossible (if not financially destructive) to remove people of color from Louisiana. Segregation became increas-

ingly important in the urban setting of New Orleans where whites would have daily interactions with people of color (Ryan, 1997), particularly in public accommodations such as restaurants and transport (Fischer, 1969). Beginning in 1830, governments at the state and municipal level passed a series of laws (Table 6) requiring the social and spatial segregation of whites from people of color in many aspects of life and even into death.

Fischer (1969), Sterkx (1972), and Berlin (1974) describe some of the ways that the New Orleans municipal government attempted to prevent social interactions between the races that might threaten the existing racial hierarchy. Sexual relationships between whites and people of color became an area of increasingly intense municipal regulation. For instance, whites and slaves were not permitted to enter balls held by free people of color. An 1840 ordinance attempted to disrupt the popularity of the Quadroon Balls (balls held primarily for the arrangement of *plaçage* relationships) by making it illegal to attend balls where “notorious and lewd women and other abandoned characters” would be present. Additionally, a munici-

Table 6. Chronological Summary of Major Legislation Passed after 1803
Affecting Social and Spatial Segregation

Year	Area of Regulation	Provisions	Level of Gov't
1806	Treatment of Whites	A free person of color could not legally strike, insult, or show disrespect to whites.	Territory (not a U.S. state until 1812)
1816	Theater Seating	Whites, free people of color, and Blacks required to sit in separate boxes at the theater.	Municipal
1830	Cemetery	Cemetery in Bayou St. John divided into one half for whites, one fourth for free people of color, and one fourth for slaves.	Municipal
1830	Immigration of Free People of Color	All free persons of color who had arrived in Louisiana after 1825 were required to leave the state.	State
1830	Emancipation of Slaves	An owner who emancipated a slave was required to pay \$1000 bond.	State
1835	Transportation of Corpses	The owner of the railroad that carried corpses to the cemetery was required to carry the corpses of whites, free persons of color, and slaves in different cars.	Municipal
1840	Ball Attendance	Neither whites nor slaves could attend a ball designated for free people of color.	Municipal
1840	Ball Attendance	Balls designed for "notorious and lewd women and other abandoned characters" were made illegal.	Municipal
1852	Gambling	Gambling was illegal between white men, free men of color, and slaves.	Municipal
1852	Emancipation of Slaves	Owners who emancipated their slaves were required to send them to Liberia.	State
1857	Brothels	Whites could not solicit brothels in which free women of color worked.	Municipal
1857	Emancipation of Slaves	Emancipation of slaves was made illegal.	State
1859	Taverns	Free people of color could not own businesses that sold alcohol.	Municipal

*Note: As secondary sources provided some of the information concerning legislation, the official names of the laws frequently were not readily available. As such, the area of regulation has been used in the table as a guide to the laws. Sources: Fischer (1969), Sterkx (1972), *Analytic Digest* (1846)

pal ordinance of 1857 even relegated men to brothels of women of their own race, preventing interracial sexual relationships and perhaps offspring. While *plaçage* remained an acknowledged institution in the city (although less frequently practiced), police intervention frequently quelled any activity between white women and men of color (Everett, 1952).

Other social interactions between whites and people of color became segregated as well. Legislation (in 1816) made it illegal to sit in the section of the theatre designated for a racial group other than your own (Dormon, 1967; Dunbar-Nelson, 2000). Additionally, a municipal act in 1852 forbade whites and people of color to gamble at saloons with persons of another race. In social practice, people of color used special "star cars" to travel by streetcar around the city. The star emblazoned on the side of the streetcar for people of color became so prominently recognized that the word "star" eventually became used for other facilities designated solely for use by people of color (Fischer, 1969).

Segregation of the free people of color to the point of expulsion was also utilized, as demonstrated by the State legislation that required that all free persons of color who had arrived in Louisiana after 1825 leave the state. By 1852, the State of Louisiana required that all manumitted slaves be sent to Liberia, and in 1857 made slave emancipation illegal. All of this legislation demonstrates, even if not fully enforced, an intention by the government at a state and municipal level to maintain racial boundaries that were increasingly drawn between the categories of "white" and "black." The free people of color were problematic in this American scheme of race because more often than not they could claim

mixed ancestry and had achieved a relatively elite position in society. This clearly did not fit into a bipolar understanding of race in which whites lived atop the social hierarchy and blacks lived at the bottom as slaves.

A summary of legislation demonstrates that government in Louisiana, at both a state and municipal level, passed laws that restricted interaction between whites and people of color, preventing social interaction while at the same time reifying racial boundaries between the categories "white" and "black." The passage of laws preventing the manumission of slaves or the entrance of free people of color into the State further demonstrates how threatened whites at the helm of the political system felt by the presence of the free population of color in New Orleans.

CONCLUSIONS

Census data, a review of municipal and state legislation, and analysis by scholars all suggest that the segregation of the free people of color increased as Louisiana passed from the hands of the Spanish and French into the hands of the Americans. Whites in New Orleans, particularly whites that had immigrated from elsewhere within the United States and those recent white immigrants such as the Irish and Germans seeking to assimilate (Berlin, 1974; Logsdon and Bell, 1992), looked at the fluid racial practices of the French and Spanish with disdain and fear. And so they generally resided in the "American" part of New Orleans, separate from those Creoles continuing racial practices based on fluidity and openness. Census data show that the segregation of free people of color strongly correlates to the Cre-

ole areas of the city—the French Quarter and the Faubourgs Tremé and Marigny—where they could live more freely and less vulnerable to the enforcement of increasingly hostile legislation.

The limited distribution of *plaçage* throughout the city, or at least a more “open” family structure that included both white men and women of color, reflects a clearly bounded area of the continuation of colonial inter-racial practices. Its strength in the wards without the highest numbers of free people of color may suggest that this population began to abandon this type of interracial practices as well, seeking refuge for themselves in an increasingly hostile environment.

This research has contributed to the vast literature on race in the U.S. South and on the construction of race by demonstrating changing racial understandings and practices in New Orleans, a place that both scholars and residents believe to be unique based on its colonial and racial heritage. The change from a fluid tripartite racial structure—both legally and to a less verifiable degree socially—during the colonial period to a more rigid dipartite racial structure in the first fifty years as a State in the U.S. verifies that racial categories change over time and context, even within a particular place.

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