

The Music of Louisiana: Cajuns, Creoles and Zydeco

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INTRODUCTION

The music and cuisine of southern Louisiana experienced a renaissance during the 1980s. Zydeco musicians and recording artists made appearances on morning talk shows, Cajun and Creole restaurants began to spring up across the nation, and celebrity chefs such as Paul Prudhomme served as a catalyst for the surge in interest. What was once unknown by the majority of Americans and marginalized within the non-French speaking community in Louisiana had now become a national trend. The Acadians, originally from Acadia, Nova Scotia, were expelled from Canada and gradually became known as Cajuns. These Acadians or Cajuns proudly began teaching the lingua franca in their francophone communities as Cajun French, published children's books in Cajun French and school curricula in Cajun French. Courses were offered at local universities in Cajun studies and Cajun professors published scholarly works about Cajuns. Essentially, the once marginalized peasants had become legitimized. Cajuns as a people, as a culture, and as a discipline were deemed worthy of academic study stimulating even more interest.

The Creoles of color (referring to light-skinned, French-speaking Negroid people born in Louisiana or the French West Indies), on the other hand, were not acknowledged to the same degree as the Cajuns for their autonomy. It would probably be safe to assume that many people outside of the state of Louisiana do not know that there is a difference between Cajuns and Creoles – that they are a homogeneous ethnic or cultural group. Creoles of color and Louisiana Afro-Francophones have been lumped together with African American culture and folkways or southern folk culture. It is not difficult to come to the conclusion that the general culture of the Afro-Francophone community in Louisiana is inaccurately perceived as having no culture and no autonomy. Research conducted for the purpose of writing a curriculum unit on the topic of music in southern Louisiana has proved otherwise. French and Spanish ownership of the Louisiana Territory prior to the Louisiana Purchase, for example, suggests innate differences. The differences in French and Spanish traditions would directly affect social institutions, thus cultural aesthetics. Under French rule for example, the formal arrangement of female Creoles of color as long-term concubines for wealthy European men known as *placage* flourished, especially in New Orleans. The effects of this practice and the importance of skin gradations were felt across the state however and are still a subtle part of the social structure in Louisiana. The practice was so widespread and problematic for European women that laws were enacted to protect the social status of European women belonging to the elite class established in Louisiana.

The Cajun and Creoles of color have different, yet similar histories. The Cajuns were expelled from Nova Scotia by the British first, because they refused to swear allegiance to the king of England. They chose to affirm their loyalty to the Catholic Church. The

Cajuns made their way to Louisiana. They left with few possessions, were looked upon negatively by the franco Creoles with lineages descending directly from France, developed a method for cooking and blending spices, were uneducated, spoke a different language from other white French speakers, were socially isolated from other whites and produced music born out of these experiences.

Similarly, Africans brought to Louisiana were either from the west coast of Africa or from the French-speaking Caribbean. They had few material possessions. They did, however, bring their religion, song, music style and aesthetic values. Because of their non-European phenotype appearance and cultures, they were viewed with contempt and disgust and were reduced to chattel. Traditional cuisine was modified to accommodate foods items readily available, literacy was prohibited and language differed. As slaves, Afro-Francophones were not permitted to socialize with whites, nor could they dress as whites. Afro-Francophones were accepted only in the role as servants, slaves or concubines for whites.

The music of the Afro Caribbean was transplanted and blended with the style of music of Louisiana's Afro-Francophone community, the music of the European colonizers and the music from local marginal groups. The added suffering of issues directly related to the African diaspora and transatlantic slave trade caused this new musical expression to take on its own distinct style. The French-speaking Acadians who had begun to settle in southern Louisiana as early as 1755 in the Mississippi region were met by a group of French-speaking slaves from the Caribbean in 1809 who also settled the area. Over a period of time, cultural exchange took place between the two groups, causing a blurring and in cases a blending of some traditions. One of the traditions is early Cajun and zydeco music. No one knows for sure the degree to which Cajun music was influenced by black Creole slave songs. The music played together by Cajun Dennis McGee and Amede Ardoin, a Black Creole, was not recognized as Cajun or Creole. It was simply French music. The white Cajuns played in dance halls for whites only and black Creoles were restricted to dance halls designated for blacks. A clear distinction was not made until the 1940s, when zydeco became more influenced by blues and rhythm and blues, whereas Cajun music went more in the direction of country music.

UNIT OVERVIEW

Purpose

In the curriculum unit I will offer methods and strategies in which library research can be taught to facilitate the integration of ethnic music and English. The subject covered in this unit is the culture and music of southwestern Louisiana and its influences on the evolving of what we now know as zydeco. Upon the completion of the unit, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast and employ the critical thinking skills in analysis and synthesis when writing a research paper; they will be able to successfully conduct library research, organize data collected from various sources,

paraphrase the work of an author and finally compose a well-written research paper on the given topic. For instance, students may be asked to examine similarities and differences with Acadians in Acadia, compare and contrast Nova Scotia and Cajuns in Acadiana or critique the *code noir* in Louisiana before and after the Louisiana Purchase. In the process, students should also be able to display progress with each successive task. As a result of exposure to such information, students will be expected to have increased in their awareness and appreciation of music from southwestern Louisiana and other cultures as well.

In the curriculum unit, I would like to submit strategies in which advanced middle school students can effectively integrate ethnic music as a topic and English as a medium. By developing library skills needed for research papers students will gain more experience, self-discipline and confidence. Students will not only improve reading, vocabulary, summarization, and writing skills but also geography and history through exposure to a series of projects and assignments specifically developed to master the intended skill over a six-week period. The unit finale will consist of a field trip to a crawfish boil at a local Cajun/Creole restaurant where students can learn basic zydeco two-step and zydeco to a live zydeco band (if available in your area). If Louisiana cuisine or music is not readily available to you, options include downloading zydeco music from the Internet and substituting the crawfish boil for a shrimp boil or making jambalaya as a class project.

Music in the Context of the Inner City

Unfortunately, for many inner city teen and young adults, music holds no value unless it is top forty and played on their favorite radio stations. To those unfamiliar with urban culture, it may appear as though inner city youth are a culturally deprived group of people who view things only from their perspective of limited exposure to aesthetics and value standards outside of their own culture group. In other words, to mainstream society, these youth are stereotyped as culturally deprived. While it is true that this segment of society does, in fact, suffer from cultural, educational and physical isolation directly related to poverty and discrimination, these negative forces have trained them to think in the manner in which they are perceived. Many reject academic achievement and other standards they believe are reserved for the dominant culture. To these youth, becoming assimilated to mainstream culture means they have turned their backs on their own cultural group with whom they have identified since birth and that they have embraced the cultural standards of "the oppressor." What they do not realize is that their way of thinking about themselves has been imposed upon them by the circumstances of impoverishment. Once they have refused to accept the culture of poverty, the inner city population can begin to do what Carter Woodson suggests and become the constructive force in the development of the group with whom they identify (1993).

The conditions faced by inner city youth have generated a culture of poverty and traditions that continue to perpetuate the myth that they will never amount to much in

life. They have been taught that the contributions made to civilization were not made by their ancestors. This has inadvertently been etched in their minds on a daily basis. For many, unless a teacher brings new information to them they will continue to have a minimum or nonexistent scope of knowledge in a world full of diversity. By introducing and presenting music and cultural elements to students who consider elements different and unusual because it is something with what they are unfamiliar, the teacher stimulates a heightened awareness of diversity. Students must be encouraged to have the motivation to be enlightened to the world beyond the parameters to which they have become accustomed.

Demographics

Currently, I teach English to sixth and seventh grade students at James D. Ryan Middle School in Houston. These students hold either an advanced placement or pre-advanced placement status, based on state mandated and national standardized test scores. Ryan is composed of three separate buildings—the Main Building, the Sixth Grade Building, and the Vanguard Building. These students attend most classes in the Vanguard building. The school is located in Houston's Third Ward. This is a community rich in culture and historical tradition. Ryan was the former site for what was formerly known as the Houston College for Negroes. The college is now Texas Southern University, a historically African American senior institution. When TSU expanded and relocated, the building was converted to a high school. After becoming Jack B. Yates High School, which also expanded and relocated, it became and is currently serving as Ryan Middle School. The aging, yet beautiful red brick building that houses Ryan is seventy-five years old and still bears the name Jack B. Yates High School for Colored Children. In fact, several buildings in the community continue to display the word "colored" as a reminder of the past. It is not a painful memory, but rather an indicator of progress and the advancements that have been made.

Many of Ryan's students come from around Houston to participate in the Vanguard Program. Most, however, are neighborhood children zoned to Ryan. The school has an African American population of ninety-one percent. The school is located in a cultural and ethnic enclave situated in an area marked with generational poverty. In this context, poverty is not defined as or limited to income level. For these students, it is a way of thinking. It is a lifestyle and it is a culture that creates values. Just making it through high school or securing a job upon graduating from high school is more important than attending college for four years. Living in a nice apartment is more important than working hard, saving money and buying a house. They have chosen the path of least resistance because it something with which they are comfortable. For many members of the community, poverty is all they know and is a result of their poverty-driven experience.

Within this enclave lies another characteristic inherent to African American communities across the United States. This enclave is a socially stratified society in the African American community, which mirrors much of the same social stratification found in mainstream society. In the past, because of restrictive covenants and housing discrimination, American blacks have been limited to specific areas in which to live. Therefore generally speaking, middle class African Americans have been traditionally limited (until the 1970s) to residing in working class neighborhoods. This led to the forming of Sugar Hill, a colloquial term often used in pejorative manner, for affluent African Americans living in a predominantly upscale community. From a traditional perspective, the primary factor that separates the black bourgeois from other members of the community is the level of education. Additionally, there are a disproportionately large number of professional African Americans with careers in education residing in these areas as well. This is due in part to greater opportunities for advancement for African Americans in the field of education. It is also the result of the awareness and respect African Americans have toward education. What was once a punishable crime has become a right.

Members of this elite group may include doctors, lawyers, businessmen and women, members of the clergy and education administrators. Often times, this group tends to send their children to private schools rather than public schools to which they are zoned. This is important because it directly relates to the lack of diversity existing in inner city schools that these children potentially bring to the classroom. Personal experiences shared in the classroom thus enhance the learning environment of any school in any community. Suburban or elite schools do not share in this particular disadvantage.

Many students at inner city schools such as Ryan never hear stories of the summer their peers spent in London or the family cruise to the Bahama Islands or the leisurely shopping trip to Mexico. So when the teacher asks a pre-activity question such as, "What do you know about William Shakespeare?" a student response might be something like "We went to England one summer and we saw Shakespeare's house. It was old and close to a river. All the buildings in England are old. When we were there, it was cloudy the whole time." This is an actual response to a question posed to students at a school with a racially and economically diverse population. One student responded with, "Hey Suzie. Didn't you say you were from England?" Suzie said, "No. My mother was born in England." Another student said, "I thought you were from Ghana." Suzie (not her real name) replied, "My father and my mom's parents were born in Ghana. My grandparents moved to England. My mom was born in England and went to school there." A third student asked why her grandparents went to England. Suzie explained that Ghana is a former British colony and that there was more of a selection of school for girls in England at that time than in Ghana. A fourth student wanted to know where Ghana was located in relation to England. Suzie then pointed out Ghana on the map. This type of discussion helped motivate students to become even more interested in background information not only about Shakespeare, but also social studies. The following day a student brought in a Shakespeare video while another handed me a copy of one of

Shakespeare's plays and asked if the class could choose characters and roles and wear costumes.

The chances of such a discussion at the typical inner city school would be slim because of typical inner city experiences within the realm of a culture of poverty. In rural areas the same thing would also be likely to occur. This is not intended to indicate that all inner city schools or rural areas lack enriching classroom discussions. Nor is this meant to imply that all suburban schools have such an atmosphere. Scenarios and generalizations described are not all-inclusive and should not be taken out of context. The point I am trying to make is that poverty is the extent to which an individual goes without resources (Payne, 1998). Poverty transcends phenotype. People are bound to such communities by a culture encompassing identity and linguistics, attitudes toward educational institutions, and traditions. As a result of this bondage there is very little contact with those outside of such a community and therefore a lack of understanding of standards or values of mainstream society. This does not mean that mainstream values are superior. It does signify that norms and standards have been established for schools and businesses by the middle class, and anyone who does not follow these "rules," which incidentally are not actually taught in school, will not be successful in either institution. Sure, it can be challenged, but it is important to abide by the standards while in those particular environments.

As an educator with a passion for bringing as much information as I possibly can to the classroom, I feel compelled to supplement the education of my students, so that they will not be handicapped with a lack of knowledge of the norms established in schools and businesses. It may not be fully appreciated until their academic or business careers demand it, as they are put in potentially embarrassing or detrimental positions of being expected to know something. It is my responsibility that they will receive the same quality of instruction and enrichment as students from less impoverished and more affluent areas. I know what lies ahead; they do not and in many cases, the parents do not know. The path I have chosen to give my students all that I can is through this curriculum unit because it will prepare them for high school, college and job careers.

Louisiana, Creoles and Houston

The relevance of marginalized people and its association with poverty, language and ethnic identity can be seen throughout the world in places such as in Canada with the Catholic Francophone community, in Latin America with its Amerind populations, in Australia with the aborigines, and the Negritos in the Philipines. It exists in the United States among the people of Appalachia. It can be seen in the Creole and Cajun populations in the state of Louisiana. The Cajuns of rural southern Louisiana were isolated and had little contact with members of mainstream Louisiana society. Originally from Acadia, Nova Scotia, these descendants of exiles known as Cajuns, eventually settled along the waterways of Louisiana and remained distant from the French Creoles whom they considered snobs (Ancelet, 1991). Cajun food preparation consisted mainly of

boiling and was very similar to the diet of poor whites of the Deep South. Furthermore, feelings of reluctance and mistrust of political issues, according to Carl Brasseaux, surfaced as a result of the opposition of the Creole elite to Cajun interests (Brasseaux, 1992). Cajuns continued to speak French, although the government legally required schools to provide instruction in English in 1921 (Shane, 1996). In fact, Brasseaux points out that the majority of Cajuns remained illiterate during the nineteenth century (Brasseaux, 1992). It was not until 1916 when education became compulsory, that Cajuns began to become literate according to Ancelet. With little knowledge about the outside world, this closed community continued to live apart from society because of their peasant status.

Likewise, the Creoles of color, or free people of color, shared a similar history. Their ascriptive status was imposed on them by the ruling elite, mostly due to physical differences associated with levels of intelligence. They too, spoke French, were socially isolated and had limited access or were legally restricted from participating in educational, political and religious institutions. A major difference between the Cajun and Creoles of color is the Cajun community has historically been self-sufficient and Cajuns were therefore in a position to choose to withdraw from society. Conversely, free people of color were eager to assimilate and join the ranks of society, but were not permitted. After all, they played an integral part as labor in the social and economic development of the plantation economy of Louisiana.

I became interested in the origins of the Creoles of Louisiana culture initially while I was a graduate student at the University of California at Los Angeles. I quickly learned that I could not study the historical culture of Louisiana without also studying events surrounding Canada, Nova Scotia and Acadia, Spain, Portugal, France, Central and West Africa and the francophone Caribbean. In other words, in order for me to have a complete understanding of the dynamics of western Europe, North Africa, West Africa, the West Indies and European colonization, I became even more curious about the interrelationships of the people from these areas and its impact upon the development of Louisiana and its distinctive culture.

After relocating to Houston and teaching with the local school district, I noticed that names such as Broussard, Guillory, Guidry, Batiste, Fontenot, Richard, Boudreaux, Joubert, Dupre, Francois, Le Blanc, Thierry and other francophone surnames frequently appeared on my class rosters. Moreover, I became attentive to patterns of speech that were not typical of the South. My students had Texas accents for the most part, but as I listened closely, I heard a few Caribbean phonemes and was unfamiliar with what I thought was some part of the Caribbean I had not been exposed to in previous linguistic courses. After speaking with a few fellow teachers, I learned that many of my students were either born in Louisiana, had family roots in Louisiana or had family members who spoke or speak French. I also found out from my peers that many people in Houston, Beaumont, Port Arthur, Orange and perhaps to a lesser degree, other areas in east Texas, originally migrated from the Atchafalaya and Sabine regions of Louisiana to Texas

several decades ago in search of work. I was also informed by a history teacher about the promise of improved economic conditions in the Golden Triangle cities of Beaumont, Port Arthur and Orange that became the destination for many from Louisiana. Furthermore, Houston is about seventy miles west of Beaumont and relatively close to the Golden Triangle geographically situated along the coastal plains of Texas, not far from the Louisiana state line and thus not far from home.

One Saturday as I was driving in south-central Houston, I saw a group of people in a church parking lot selling crawfish, shrimp creole, boudin, jambalaya, crawfish etouffee, and gumbo. I knew that these foods together were associated with something festive from Louisiana and also sensed much excitement. In the background I could hear the sound of an accordion playing with people dancing an unusual two-step. Initially, I thought because the accordion was being played, the music was a type of polka or some type of French music. This was my point of reference because most accordion music I had heard up to this point was either German or French folk music. I discovered that the music and dance were both referred to as zydeco. These types of parking lot dances are held quite frequently in Houston during the spring – that is, crawfish season. Zydeco is favored by many Creoles of color or black Creoles with Louisiana origins.

The church dance was instituted as a means for fund-raising in 1958. John Minton explains that in Houston's Frenchtown, St. Francis of Assisi was experiencing financial difficulties and in need of a fund-raiser. This was a Catholic Church with a predominantly Creole parish. Originally from Opelousas, Clarence Gallien, a member of the parish suggested a dance be held in the church school. Gallien based his suggestion on his success in Louisiana when he converted his front lawn to a dance hall, filled to capacity on a regular basis (Tisserand, 1998). The church dance at St. Francis produced a family crowd and was a financial success. Tisserand continues to add that Clifton Chenier was hired the next month with phenomenal financial results. Other churches followed suit across the city as well as California. The reason for its popularity was not only because of the love of the music, but also because it brought unity to people who left their family and homes in search of work. Later, the Catholic diocese in Houston rotated the zydeco dances held Saturday nights specifically for black Creole parishioners. The schedule is updated weekly in the *Catholic Herald* and via the Internet (Minton, 2001).

I had no idea until I began researching this topic for my curriculum unit that there was a great surge of people from southwestern Louisiana beginning as early as 1919, according to Roger Wood in his article, "Southeast Texas," that peaked during World War II. This explained, in part, the frequency of students with French derived surnames. Those who left Louisiana were in search of work because the industrial needs of World War II warranted the relocation of people from rural Louisiana to the oil refineries of the Gulf Coast and to the shipyards of southern and central California (Abernathy, 1996). These rural people took with them their accordions and their French songs (Wood, 2001). Moreover, in the state of California, Oakland and Richmond became the common breeding grounds for such artists as Queen Ida, a Grammy Award winning accordionist

and vocalist. Port Arthur spawned the birth of blues by white recording artists, Janis Joplin and Johnny Winter. Out of Houston came none other than the King of Zydeco himself, Clifton Chenier.

Language and Ethnic Identity: Creole Defined

Until recently, the issue of language and cultural identity were viewed as unimportant and not worthy of study among the Francophone population and to those outside of Louisiana's French-speaking community. Unless some aspect of French culture was directly from France, it was marginalized. With a newfound interest in Creole and Cajun cuisine in the mid-1980s, an appreciation of ethnic Louisianans has developed. As a result, franco-Americans in Cajun communities now teach Cajun French in Cajun schools. University professors proud of their Cajun heritage have created materials equivalent to other teaching material for foreign languages. Cajun French is now a legitimate language and field of study. It does not however go without controversy. There are some individuals within the Cajun community who contrarily believe that Cajun French is nothing more than French spoken by illiterates.

The importance of ethnicity in Louisiana has continued to intrigue me. At one time, I understood the meaning of the term *creole* to have only one of two meanings. *Creole* was either used to refer all light-skinned African Americans from Louisiana or it was a language spoken in Haiti. During graduate school while enrolled in my first socio-linguistics course, I gained a much more broad and complete perspective of the usage of the term, *creole*.

First, *creole* is derived from the Latin word, *creare* meaning to create. Spaniards used *criollo* in reference to those born in the New World and European ancestry. In colonial Louisiana, Creoles were people of French ancestry born in Louisiana. This also distinguished them from the Acadians who were exiled from Nova Scotia. Later *Creole*, as it applied to the black population in Louisiana, was used to refer to blacks born in the United States, rather than those brought directly from Africa. This differentiated them from the acculturated French-speaking African American population. *Creole* was then later dropped by whites, to refer to African Americans of mixed ancestry (French, Spanish, Native American and African), in response to the mulatto population also using *Creole* to identify themselves. *Creoles of color* is derived from *gens de couleur*, that is, free people of color. Not only were the mulattos were of mixed ancestry, but also free. In the 1980s many African Americans from Louisiana with French-speaking backgrounds began using the term *black Creole*, directly related to the rise in popularity of zydeco music. They were proud to be Catholic, speak French, to be of French ancestry, to receive credit for their culinary skills and to identify with a music genre with indigenous roots in Louisiana. *Creole* is still used by some whites in Louisiana wanting to preserve cultural and ethnic identity with France. Whether *Creole* is used as a proper noun or *creole* is used as an adjective, the definition is conveyed by the context.

Interestingly, there are at least three different spellings of this peculiar word: *creole* as it is used most frequently, *krio* as it is spelled in Sierra Leone and *kreyol* as it is spelled in Haiti. As I encountered more information about language and ethnic identity and cultural history, I eliminated the words patios, broken language and dialect from my lexicon. Haitian *kreyol* and *creole* languages in general, are the result of at least the admixture of two languages. They are not broken languages alluding to something that need to be fixed. In many cases, the colonial language becomes the vocabulary while the pronunciation, grammar and syntax follow the linguistic structure of the original language of the colonized people. The *r* for example, is not pronounced in West African languages. Hence, the name *Carole* would be pronounced as *Cal* in areas with descendants from West Africa. Another example is the *th* in the word *the*. Again, in West African languages, the morpheme *th* does not exist. The morpheme *de* is part of West African languages and as a result, replaced *th*. A statement such as “*De man de go om*” translates to “The man is going home” in formal English. Furthermore, dialect is a pejorative laymans’ term because it implies modification of a formal or standard language by the underclass, thus making the language substandard. It sparks controversy. This becomes clear when authors publish material in dialect. Mark Twain exemplifies such interpretations in his books containing southern characters and their speech patterns.

The preface to *Juneteenth Texas* makes it a point to disclose what is described as a continuum for debate in folklore scholarship because of the perceived stereotype when using dialect spellings. Even though those who choose dialect spellings to preserve the integrity of the context, the setting and the speaker, it remains an unsettled argument (Abernathy and Satterwhite, 1996). The combining of the two languages to form another, in this case, becomes a creole language. The creole languages spoken in Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, and Jamaica are actual languages. Individuals are not speaking bad Spanish, bad French, bad Portuguese or bad English. With this being the case, there is Haitian *kreyol*, French *creole*, Spanish *creole*, English *creole*, etc. Therefore the *lingua franca* or language of the masses is a *creole* language. The official language of each New World colonial society is that of the former colonial power. The one exception is British Honduras where *creole* is the official language. Moreover, people who speak *creole* languages are also referred to as *Creole*.

Zydeco, Cajuns and Creoles

The Creole population was formed as the result of the byproduct of miscegenation. Although miscegenation in itself is nothing new, it is the circumstances surrounding the blending of genotypes leading to the creating of a social class and caste system based on phenotype that raises issues. The first miscegenated individuals in colonial Louisiana were born to African women during the late eighteenth century. The product of the union between Francophone male colonists and African slave women formed a new class of people. African slaves held a status equivalent to chattel or property. Offspring born from these liaisons were identified by as *noir Creoles*, meaning black Creoles. This was especially important because in a socially and racially stratified society wherein skin

gradations have substantial weight, *noir Creoles* were distinguished from Africans born in Africa. Confusion was eliminated when identifying white Creoles born in Louisiana as it separated them from the emerging peasant class of white ethnic Cajuns.

As the population of the emerging class of *noir Creoles* increased and as they were manumitted, they were subsequently identified as *les gens de couleur libres*, the “free colored people.” They represented a mixture of genetic and physical characteristics and were economically, socially and politically recognized by the ruling class as significantly different from other descendants of African slaves (Wood, 2001). It also laid the foundation for the development of *placage*, a practice that was instrumental in the structuring of a three-tiered society (e.g. black, white and mixed).

An interesting parallel can be made with this type of stratified system of caste and class in Louisiana. Some of the same circumstances took place in France that led up to the French Revolution thus causing the friction between the proletariat and bourgeois. French aristocrats, priests and members of nobility restricted and exploited the rights of the underclass. Similarly, French Creoles assumed the role of the ruling elite and placed heavy restrictions on enslaved Africans, black Creoles and to a lesser degree, Cajuns. After all, the priority of the elite class was to protect their economic interests and to provide an inheritance for family members and descendants. Therefore, planters and slaveholders were required to ensure a viable labor force.

The term *Cajun* became associated with the socioeconomic classification of several cultural and linguistic groups (Brasseaux, 1992). To many, Cajuns are rural, poor and uneducated Francophone whites living along the bayous and waterways of Louisiana. *Cajun* is a word thought to be a mispronunciation or corruption of Acadian. Apparently, because of linguistic differences, the British pronunciation of Acadia (uh-KAYD-ya) sounded very similar to the pronunciation *uh-KAY-juh*. Understandably, they had difficulties pronouncing *dy*. To a group of French-speaking people nonliterate in English or French, it eventually became *Kay-juhn* and spelled as *Cajun*.

Cajuns were considered white trash and supposedly ate raccoons. White Creoles who married into the peasant class of Cajuns were as equally impoverished and absorbed into the Cajun culture. Because of their lower socioeconomic status Cajuns were derogatorily referred to as *coonass*, according to folklorist Barry Jean Ancelet. He also points out that Cajuns, as poor whites, were considered below the status of African Americans or *coons*, a racial epithet. Consequently, Cajuns were branded with this ethnic slur. By using the slur *coon* and adding *ass* to form *coonass*, it literally made reference to the backside of a raccoon. The word *coonass* made it quite clear that any group of individuals holding social position lower than blacks was despicable and grotesque. Many Cajuns on the other hand, wear the term *coonass* as a badge of pride in much the same way as Mexican Americans view the term *Chicano*.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Cajuns were increasingly becoming exposed to mainstream American culture due to the discovery of oil along the Gulf Coast. Cajuns enjoyed the country and western music they found among Anglo workers. Cajuns had limited contact with Anglos prior to this time. *Americains*, as they were called at one time, were not to be trusted because they lacked integrity. In order to emulate the music of the Anglos, Cajuns sacrificed the accordion for the steel guitar, drums and bass until after World War II. The accordion made a comeback in the 1940s, but the instruments of the Anglos remained.

The Cajun communities in southern Louisiana are not only descendants of the expatriates of Canada. They also intermarried with the Germans, French, Anglo-Americans, Celts and Spaniards settlers as well as Native Americans. This *mélange* of cultures can be seen in traditional Cajun cooking. Cajuns have fused the regional cookery of Europe with Native American, African and other local particulars and created their own style of cooking. *Gumbo*, a West African word for okra, is often used along with *file*, a blend of seasonings made from sassafras borrowed from Native Americans. Crawfish, also known as mud bugs (crayfish to those unfamiliar with Louisiana cuisine), are freshwater crustaceans with the appearance of a small lobster. They are a common ingredient in Cajun and Creole dishes. A traditional crawfish boil consists of friends and family preparing the live crawfish in large pots similar to lobster, with potatoes, corn-on-the-cob and Cajun herbs and spices. Once it is cooked, the crawfish is placed on newsprint or newspaper. The head is separated from the tail and the tail is peeled and eaten. Crawfish season lasts from late January or February through mid-June. Shrimp boils replace crawfish when not in season.

Placage and Gens de Couleur Libre in Louisiana

Procreation became the solution for replenishing the enslaved population in Louisiana. One method took place in the form of *placage*. The result of the union between the exploits of European men and African women produced a third group of people who were neither black nor white, neither completely slaves nor completely free, whose phenotype and social status was somewhere in between (Kein, 2000). (It is important to note the usage of *genotype* and *phenotype* as part of the lexicon whenever possible because they more accurately describe the interaction of genes resulting in physical appearances. Science of course, has proven that there is only one race, which is the human race. The connotation of *race* is essentially linked to economic and political matters related to institutionalized discriminatory practices. Although institutionalized racism is discussed in this narrative it is not used synonymously with genotype or phenotype. Genetic makeup and background lead to an infinite number of physical features.)

Mixed-blood people played an integral role in the history of Louisiana. It was initiated by the Spaniards who imposed a rigid hierarchy which erroneously linked intelligence to skin color. Hence, the more white blood present, the more intelligence an individual has. Division of labor was based on this racist assumption. As a result,

fieldwork was reserved for Africans and darker blacks whereas skilled and domestic work was assigned to the quadroons. Skilled workers and artisans required training which placed them closer in proximity to slaveholders, their families and other whites. This proximity afforded many, within the mulatto class, the opportunity to become literate. The slave population and poor ethnic whites were not given the same access to education. The preoccupation with phenotype and genotype went as far as establishing a racist system of ranking amounts of “contamination” levels. The “one drop blood” method has been used throughout the United States, though a much more elaborate system has been used in Louisiana. One drop of Negroid blood determined by percent was used by the French to categorize genotype and diversified ethnic makeup to maintain a caste. Ancestry was traced to the eighth generation. The genotype of the 128 ancestors determined if an individual was *colored* – that is, colored with Negroid blood. Examples include the following who share the same status as free people of color: mulattos ($\frac{1}{2}$ black, $\frac{1}{2}$ white), grifs ($\frac{1}{2}$ black, $\frac{1}{2}$ Native American), quadroons/quarteroon ($\frac{1}{4}$ black, white) and octoroons ($\frac{1}{8}$ black, white), with each identifying the amount of Negroid blood present. (Mulatto and quadroon will be used interchangeably to denote a lighter gradation of skin color associated within a three-tiered society.) *Placage*, a practice responsible for the procreation of mixed bloods, was prevalent in Spanish and French Louisiana and including their colonies across the world with lingering effects present today. In fact, according to oral history, in many cases the mixed-blood population was “bred” deliberately. Free women of color were denied the option of marriage and entered into long-term formal relationships with European men (Kein, 2000). Furthermore, Kein argues that as the miscegenated population increased, identifying the amount of white blood also increased and the mulatto population took on a visible role in society. The well-publicized quadroon balls, otherwise known as *Bal de cordon bleu* were similar to debutante ball and were common in New Orleans. However, the values attached to the gradation of skin color and the quasi-status of this permeated the entire state. Closed blue blood societies were established to prevent the amalgamation with darker skinned blacks. The brown bag and blue vein tests were used for this purpose. For example, blacks were not accepted into certain social organizations if their skin was darker than a brown paper bag. And, if the color of an individual’s veins could not be identified as blue or even green because of the amount of pigment, access to membership to such social organizations was denied.

The *placage* consisted of a financial agreement made with free quadroon concubines or *placee* who were sought out for their beauty and grace, specifically to serve the purpose as a long-term concubine. The actual terms of agreement among Creoles of color were known as *mariages de la main gauche*, translated to left-handed marriages. Such relationships were not clandestine and socially accepted by white men and women (Hall, 1992). Similarly, the marriages of white men and women were known as *mariages de convenance* and always included a dowry (Kein, 2000). Children born from *placage* unions were free, thus not legally defined as bastards and consequently inherited property, a practice sanctioned by the Catholic Church. The importance of this social practice required the *placee* and the children by her white common-law husband to be

free because of inheritance laws. Perhaps the right to an inheritance justified long-term concubinage or provided a compromise for a quasi status. It was also understood that men provide equally for both “wives.” This custom may stem from Islamic rule in Spain and France pertaining to marriage laws and multiple wives. Whether descendants were from such consensual left-handed marriages or unwanted unions, miscegenation established a new group of people based on skin gradations, fundamental in the shaping of the culture and history of Louisiana.

The values and standards among the free people of color emulated that of the white Creoles including their biases (Brasseaux, 1994). This is evident in their appreciation of music. Many studied classical music in Paris and became composers. In New Orleans, one of the largest free black populations in the country was stratified by language, religion and socioeconomic status, and ethnicity – Creole and American (Kein, 2000). It is very likely that because of the cultural association with white Creoles, which led to a formal education in music, New Orleans possibly produced the largest number of composers of African descent with the exception of jazz composers.

Zydeco Emerges

The word zydeco is thought to be another Louisiana phenomenon. With its roots in the Atchafalaya and Sabine river basins in southwestern Louisiana, zydeco has become synonymous with Louisiana just as Mardi Gras has with New Orleans. Zydeco has evolved from a set of rural, isolated and impoverished conditions into a commercially viable genre as did the blues (Wood, 2001). Although zydeco’s antecedents, French slave and Caribbean music, can be traced to colonial Louisiana and la la music to the end of World War II, it did not grow into its present form until the 1950s.

Linguistic and religious aspects gleaned from African and French cultures were intermingled by black Creoles. The Afro-Francophone community of Louisiana society became acknowledged for world-renowned culinary skills as well as musical ingenuity. The revival of black French music reserved a space for the recognition of zydeco in the popular music circle.

The term *zydeco* actually comes from French, *les haricot* meaning the snap beans aren’t salted. This idiomatic expression stems from the hard economic times. There was no money to buy salt or salt meat to add flavor to the snap beans. Those who left Louisiana in search of work with little more than hope for a better life expressed themselves through music. According to the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, Francophones enjoyed evening parties and dances. The social gathering or *bals de maison* would take place at the dancehall or *fais do-do*. At these gatherings the music was commonly called la la or zydeco. La la and zydeco not only made reference to a certain type of music, but also a specific type of dance.

As stated earlier, Cajun French music and black Creole French music both had beginnings in folk music. Cajun music combined continental French, Acadian, Anglo Southern and Afro musical elements (Spitzer, 1998). The Old World French folk songs were mingled with music of Acadian peasants and black Creoles. These traits produced a musical tradition in southern Louisiana consisting of love ballads, lullabies, game songs and drinking songs. Cajun bands tend to play more waltzes, place an emphasis on melody and include the violin, steel guitar, small iron triangle and the diatonic accordion. Less frequent are the washboards and horns. As rock n' roll and rhythm and blues rose in popularity among young Cajuns, fais-do-do was combined with the old-style Cajun music and a new genre called Swamp Pop was born. In Bernard's *Swamp Pop*, it is described as fifty percent Fats Domino while the remaining half is fais-do-do. Again, New Orleans and Cajuns have made another imprint in music history. After World War II when the accordion was reintroduced to Cajun music and the guitar and fiddle were featured less, rhythm and blues and rock n' roll were becoming more popular.

Lyrics in black Creole music were filled with satire and ridicule directed toward light-skinned Creoles who passed for white or arrogant white Creoles. Black Creoles however drew from French slave songs, Afro Caribbean rhythms and African American blues (Brasseaux, 1994). La la is essentially a Cajun two-step, but is faster and more syncopated with an emphasis on rhythm. No zydeco band is complete without *le frottoir*, a rubboard/rubboard vest, and a three-row button piano accordion. The three-row is important because without the three-row button, blue notes cannot be played to produce the component of the blues found in zydeco. Between 1790 and 1803 many Francophone refugees, including those from France and the French West Indies, fled Santo Domingo and settled in Louisiana. They brought with them the Caribbean polyrhythms, religious practices, spicy cuisine and the French language. Continental French lullabies, ballads, game songs, field chants and songs were fused with the music of the Cajuns, black Creoles and the slaves. A particular form of dance song known as *jure* singing, derived from the French word, *jurez*, meaning to testify, played an important role in the music played in the house party of the rural black Creoles. *Jure* was sung a capella was commonly associated with the Lenten season in black Catholic communities with the restriction of instruments (Spitzer, 1998). Spoons, bottle openers, the washboard and other makeshift instruments as traditions based in *jure* moved away from the religious realm as it matured to the secularized la la (Wood, 2001). Minton writes in his article, "Houston Creoles and Zydeco," that *jure* is a local form of African American ring shout, involving clapping, shuffling, stamping and sometimes metal-on-jawbone scraper, a percussion instrument closely related to the washboard and the '*tit fer* or small iron triangle. Percussion instruments in Louisiana were not banned in Louisiana as they were in most of the southern states and consequently added a unique characteristic to music that cannot be found anywhere else in the South (Minton, 1996).

A secular dance associated with jawbone scraper is the *calinda*. Unlike the *jure*, which involves singing and dancing, the *calinda* is only a dance. It is suggestive in style and originally linked to the Afro population in New Orleans, is now the *colinda*

according to Spitzer's findings, with a fast, syncopated, two-step in zydeco dancing. The *Coonjai* is a dance performed regularly at Congo Square in New Orleans as well and is described in 1818 as having two women holding a handkerchief by each corner, moving hardy their bodies or feet (Rose, 1977). Black Creole singer and accordionist Amede Ardoin played to audiences that would dance on handkerchiefs while they stayed in place (Tisserand, 1998). Evidently, the object of the dance was not to disturb the handkerchief. Ardoin made his first recording of French music in 1929 with Dennis McGee, a Cajun fiddler for Columbia Records. The duo set a precedent because up to that time, biracial teaming in all-white dance halls was not done. Furthermore, Ardoin was known for his Cajun-style music. Chris Strachwitz, founder of Arhoolie Records, indicated that Ardoin's music was indistinguishable from Cajun music. Strachwitz has been documenting zydeco and Cajun music since the early 1960s and was unaware of Ardoin's ethnic background until informed by Clifton Chenier (Wood, 2001). He sang with a high-pitched classic Cajun voice and played waltzes, one- and two-steps on his single row diatonic accordion popular in Cajun music. Spitzer believes that Amede Ardoin and other black Creoles had more of an influence on Cajun music than previously thought (Spitzer, 1986). He argues the presence of polyrhythmic and syncopation inherent in black Creole music.

Spitzer continues to point out the possible circumstances under which Ardoin made his first recordings. First, the 1930s were precarious times for African Americans and overt racism was legally sanctioned. It is highly possible that he placed more emphasis on the Cajun style for whites and switched to more of a blues sound for blacks in order to appease his audiences. Spitzer argues that Ardoin sang in French for both groups and continued his foot tapping for both groups, but minimized it when performing for Cajuns. Clearly, foot tapping replaced percussion instruments found in earlier forms black Creole music. If Ardoin did in fact modify for his audience, it would make perfect sense because the two cultural groups did not have the same aesthetic values—Cajuns preferred more melodic tunes whereas blacks wanted a bit of the blues and faster syncopated music with a strong rhythm. With the combining of traditional Cajun and Afro French music, black Creole *la la* was brought forth with strongly accented Afro Caribbean polyrhythms.

Wood states that it was in Texas that Creole immigrants and their descendants first fused traditional Louisiana French music with blues and urban rhythm and blues to create the new sound made possible only with the accordion and washboard. Zydeco made its first mark in Houston during the post war era. Houston was the first site where the word zydeco appeared. Spellings were inconsistent at the time: *zolo go*, *zittico*, *zarico*, *zoridico*, *zodico* and *zadacoe* were perhaps erroneous English phonetic substitutions because people lacked formal instruction in the French language.

The majority of black Creoles were concentrated in Frenchtown in Houston's Fifth Ward where they continued to speak French, play French *la la*, practice Catholicism, and *boucherie* (slaughtering of hogs or cows and distributing portions to neighbors). The close society of Francophones in Houston was the result of linguistic and cultural

differences. House parties were becoming increasingly rare while nightclubs increased in popularity. When Willie Green began the nightclub circuit, French music experienced a rebirth (Minton, 1996). Other Frenchtown accordionists were L.C. Donatto, Jesse and Joseph Reynolds, Alfonse Lonnie Mitchell, Charlie Johnson, Herbert Good Rockin' Sam, Albert Chevalier and Mack McCormick. But it was Clifton Chenier who took zydeco to another level, becoming the genre's first superstar. He popularized the music and sound of zydeco and apparently popularized the name zydeco as well. Mack McCormick was responsible for documenting the term and standardizing the spelling, but Chenier is unequivocally recognized as the King of Zydeco (Wood, 2001).

Chenier made his first recording in 1955, "Zodico Stomp." His 1964 recording, "Zydeco Sont Pas Sale"—the snap beans aren't salty replaced *les haricots*—the beans. The metaphor in its entirety is "*les haricots sont pas sales*," a figure of speech expressing financial hardship. The snap beans aren't salted is also figurative language, represented with sexual imagery pervasive in jazz and blues. The substitution of food for sex in the jazz and blues lyrics can frequently be found in lyrics used in the post war era. In fact, the word, jazz, was originally a slang term in the black community for sex. Food, sex and salt in traditional African American music with references made to sweets as jelly rolls and candy (Tisserand, 1998). Jelly Roll Morton, Red Hot Peppers, T-Bone Walker, Blind Lemon Jefferson are just a few well-known metaphorical names. Additionally, the songs entitled, "Mama's Little Baby Loves Short' n' Bread" and "My Woman Is a Salty Dog" are typical examples of sexual imagery during the 1940s.

Zydeco and Cajun music represent ethnic identity and cultural experiences from marginalized groups in southern Louisiana. Renewed interest in the French music from the Atchafalaya and Sabine areas has established music from this part of the United States as worthy of recognition in its own right. Whether zydeco or Cajun, urban or rural, traditional folk music from Louisiana has been influenced by current popular music, but has not strayed too far from its origins. Despite adversity and social exclusion, Louisianans have the overwhelming to desire to remain close to home. The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) was established to preserve and promote Cajun culture, music, teaching Cajun French in public schools of southern Louisiana and publicly responding to pejorative statements directed at Cajuns including stereotypes in the media. The council also works on behalf of Creoles and the preservation of its culture.

CURRICULUM UNIT

In the past I have integrated ethnic music from such places as Greece, the Caribbean, Latin America, Israel and Louisiana to teach reading, social studies and English. Dance festivals included pre-activities such as dance lessons or demonstrations and a presentation of musical instruments. Students were then given a topic for a research project requiring historical background. Because of the depth, scope and nature of this assignment, students often included family members and friends. As a result, all those

contributing to the project were able to walk away with an appreciation for music with which they were unfamiliar.

Here, I am particularly interested in French and Spanish colonial Louisiana and its effect on the music of Creoles and Cajuns. I want students to find more information about the historical circumstances that led to the development of zydeco which is the focus of this curriculum unit. After careful research, students should be able to write a paper about the significant events in colonial Louisiana under British and French rule and evaluate the economic and political issues leading to ethnic and religious discrimination against French-speaking Catholics in Acadia. Students will be expected to compare and contrast the conditions of intolerance faced by ethnic groups such as African Americans and Cajuns in Louisiana and cultural traditions brought to Louisiana by French and Spanish West Indians. Additionally, data collected on colonial Louisiana will prepare students to evaluate the reasons why cultural differences and the unique set of experiences by the ethnic population in Louisiana contributed to the making of zydeco. The unit will conclude with a zydeco music festival and sample-sized portions of crawfish gumbo and boudin.

Lesson One

Objective

- Record bibliographical information using given guidelines.
- Demonstrate ability to paraphrase and use own words.

Materials

- Index cards
- Highlighter
- Library (preferably a research library)
- Samples of different genres of music

Time

This assignment is to begin on a Monday can be completed in three weeks, depending on the number of sources required by the teacher.

Allow students to listen to samples of music from the following genres: Southern folk, country, jazz, Blues and French waltz music. Ask them to identify instruments if known and suitable setting for each genre. (If not readily available, use the Internet.)

Students will select **seven sources** and record **bibliographical** information on index cards from **three books, two encyclopedias** and **one journal** *from the library not the Internet, unless it is an online system*. Each index card must include the following:

- Books
Record author, title, place of publication, publisher, year and pages/chapters used.
Highlight the above information.
- Encyclopedia
Author (if signed), name of encyclopedia, edition (year).
- Periodicals
Author, title of article, name of journal, volume, month, year, pages.
Highlight the above information.

Topic for Research

Cultural values toward music among the French, Cajun and African Americans in Louisiana.

Students should record five facts from each source on one index card. By the end of the week, students should have at least one source. It will not be necessary to check books out. Students can photo copy a minimal number of pages or take notes while in the library. In 1-2 class periods students will receive instructions on paraphrasing, practice from a classroom text (any subject will do) and submit several examples. Once students have the first few sources at the end of the first week, they can begin to paraphrase from the index cards. Organization, elaboration, etc. are not required. After paraphrasing exercise is complete, students will work in cooperative editing/proofreading groups, make corrections and submit for credit.

Lesson Two

Materials

- Computer
- Completed index cards from previous assignment
- Video of Cajuns, Creoles or Zydeco
- Cajun music

Time

Two weeks

Objective

- Demonstrate organizational and analytic skills when developing a paragraph.
- Compare and contrast circumstances leading to the development of zydeco in Louisiana.

Students will continue working on research and paraphrasing. They will also take notes while watching the video. Students must choose two facts from each index card and highlight. There should be no more than 14 facts that must be paraphrased. Facts must be organized and in complete sentences referred to as a fact sheet. Students will work in cooperative editing groups, make corrections and submit for credit.

Lesson Three

Materials

- Computer
- Zydeco music
- Samples of Louisiana cuisine

Time

One week

Objective

Evaluate and synthesize relevance of information obtained in research in written form.
Extract unimportant details when gathering research in written form.

Students will develop and type three paragraphs, double-spaced from fact sheets examining the reasons behind the forming of zydeco.

Students should feel comfortable with paraphrasing and be able to write at least three paragraphs about the circumstances under which the development of zydeco in Louisiana took place. This should be completed independently. Cooperative groups can be used for feedback, rather than for editing or proofreading.

Zydeco Festival

I have never had a problem requesting a parent or someone in the community providing a simple lesson on dance forms or techniques in zydeco. Of course, Houston is a city where zydeco music and dance are common. If this is unavailable to you, options may include obtaining zydeco instructional videos via the Internet or simply using zydeco music as a backdrop while students enjoy the Louisiana food of your choice.

If you do not have access to authentic Louisiana food items in your area, listed in the appendix are two simple recipes for jambalaya. You may cook this ahead of time for your students or cook it as a class project.

APPENDIX: Jambalaya Recipes

Note: Making jambalaya is idiosyncratic—there are no two cooks who prepare jambalaya exactly the same way. Jambalaya is also the counterpart to paella of Spain.

Jambalaya Recipe #1

4 cups cooked rice
1 can Cajun spiced stewed tomatoes, chopped (save sauce)
½ cup finely chopped onions, sautéed
½ cup finely chopped bell peppers, sautéed
½ cup pre-cooked cubed chicken
½ cup pre-cooked shelled, deveined shrimp (thawed)
½ cup crawfish (crayfish) tails (thawed)
1 hot link or smoked sausage thinly sliced
2 dash hot sauce or cayenne
Seasoned pepper
Olive oil

Use heavy Dutch oven. Pour enough olive oil to cover bottom of pan. Heat oil until grain of rice sizzles. Do not over heat. Add precooked rice, sautéed onions and peppers and stir. Add chopped stewed tomatoes and bring to a boil. Add precooked chicken and sausage. Cover and simmer until done. Season to taste with hot sauce and seasoned pepper. When done add shellfish and cover until ready to serve. 6-8 servings. Quantities and selections of meats and shellfish may be modified or eliminated.

Jambalaya Recipe #2

1 box Mediterranean preseasoned rice pilaf, precooked (*or box of rice and vermicelli mixture associated with cable cars and San Francisco*)
All meat and shellfish in recipe #1
1 can chopped tomatoes with green chiles

*Sautéed vegetables from Recipe #2 are optional

Follow same directions as above. You may not need to add seasoning.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Teacher Resources

Abernathy, Francis E. and Carolyn Satterwhite, ed. *Juneteenth Texas*. Denton, Tex.: North Texas UP, 1996. pp.139-49.

This collection of essays concentrates on the traditional folk aspects of zydeco music and Creole culture in the city of Houston. The author discusses the economic reasons for the migration of African Americans from southwestern Louisiana to Houston and Port Arthur. Comparisons and contrasts are made with zydeco, Cajun, blues, country western, West African and seventeenth century French folk music.

Ancelet, Barry, Jay D. Edwards, and Glen Pitre. *Cajun Country*. Jackson, Miss.: Mississippi UP, 1991.

This book is one in a series of southern folk life as it interestingly discusses the expulsion of the exiled French-speaking Acadians of Nova Scotia who were forced to migrate to the Louisiana territory because of their refusal to swear allegiance to the king of England. The history of the Cajun culture including religion, festivals and foodways and music is brought forward in this book. The author is able to provide the reader with information about Cajun folkways, norms and mores from a Cajun's perspective.

Blassingame, John. *The Slave Community*. New York: Oxford UP, 1972.

The origins of slave work songs in English and French is covered by Blassingame. Dancing, music and representative symbolism performed by the enslaved African Americans at New Orleans Congo Square (now known as Armstrong Park) held each Saturday afternoon served as recreation for African Americans but frowned upon by whites is interestingly interpreted by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists.

Brasseaux, Carl. *Acadian to Cajun*. Jackson, Miss.: Mississippi UP, 1992.

Brasseaux covers an enormous amount of history of Nova Scotia the persecution of the Acadians and how they made their way to Louisiana. As a Cajun, the author is able to offer some insight about the closed Cajun community and the reasons for the negative misconceptions of Cajun society both linguistically and culturally.

Brasseaux, Carl, Keith Fontenont, and Claude Obre. *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country*. Jackson, Miss.: Mississippi UP, 1994.

The importance of the evolvement of a color gradation system in Louisiana under French rule is brought forth in this source. It offers reasons for the significance of ethnic identity in Louisiana and its origins in the French Caribbean three-tiered society. This study uncovers innately esoteric material privy to the closed societies of Louisiana and essentially rewrites an otherwise deficient body of knowledge of the history of Louisiana.

Broughton, Simon, Mark E. Ellingham, David Muddyman, and Richard Trillo. *World Music*. London: Rough Guides Ltd., 1994.

Biographies of individuals who left an imprint in the music history are featured in this book. Although the book has been used for this unit almost in its entirety as a comprehensive study, the information presented effectively unravels the overlapping characteristics common to Cajun and zydeco music. The backdrop is depicted with the joint efforts of Dennis McGee, a Cajun and Amedee Ardoin, an African American who were both of whom were bilingual (French and English) and sang the old-style Creole music known as la la, in Cajun, all-white dance halls. Of course, this was unwelcomed by whites during the 1920s. This book is will enlighten readers with its itemized coverage.

Din, Gilbert C. *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves*. College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M UP, 1999.

Din studies the history of Louisiana from 1763 to 1803 and focuses on the relationship between Spaniards, planters and slaves under the Spain. The author compares and contrasts the treatment of slaves between the colonial powers of Spain and France. Frank Tannebaum's thesis and Stanley M. Elkins' support of the view that slavery was less harsh in areas colonized by Spain is debated. Furthermore, Din disproves the previously held belief that French law was retained under Spanish rule in Louisiana and therefore had little or no influence on language, culture or laws.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State UP, 1992.

The author furnishes the reader with a supplemental history of the South often left unmentioned in American history. Hall argues that the major reason behind the failure of historians to give proper attention to colonial Louisiana is largely because such early colonial documentation is written in Spanish and French. The French slave trade, Spanish rule and the origins of Francophone slaves, family and oral traditions are discussed extensively. This information is essential for a more complete understanding of colonial Louisiana and the unique set of circumstances leading to the birth of music and cuisine found only in Louisiana.

Kein, Sybil, ed. *Creole*. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana UP, 2000.

The common trait for this collection of essays lies with each writer's ability to systematically scrutinize issues surrounding the position of Louisiana Creoles as a marginal group with fervor and passion. Of particular interest is the chapter about Susie Phipps Guillory who was denied the right to be classified as white because the courts uncovered legal documents dating back to the late 1760s, indicating that her great-great-great-great-grandmother was an emancipated slave. In addition to gens de couleur and the importance of ethnic identity in Louisiana, the book confronts encounters the folklore, music and dance of the Francophone community.

Litwack, Leon. *Been in the Storm So Long*. New York: Random House, 1979.

This book provides a comprehensive study of the role miscegenation has played in the development of aristocracy between the mulatto population and African Americans in the South. This information is important because became and integral part of Louisiana history. In addition, Litwack analyzes the results of forcing the slave population to continue speaking French when mainstream society speaks English.

Manuel, Peter, Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey. *Caribbean Currents*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple UP, 1995.

The music of Louisiana cannot effectively be studied without obtaining musical knowledge of the Caribbean, European colonialism, slavery, ethnic and class conflict, nationalism and North American imperialism. This book also challenges the argument made by scholars that Africa had very little culture and therefore the archipelago population created its own Caribbean culture. Elements of African-born culture and music present in Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean societies are dissected and studied amidst the admixture of European cultural practices.

Minton, John. "Houston Creoles and Zydeco: The Emergence of an African American Urban Popular Style." In *American Music* 41, no. 3 (1996): 480-526.

This article is written by a folklorist who looks at the historical impact of Creoles of color from rural southern Louisiana and how this culture was preserved as these Creoles migrated from Louisiana to Texas. Interviews are conducted with French-speaking Creoles of color.

Payne, Ruby. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Texas: RFT Publishing Company.

The argument of individuals failing to learn such middle-class principles and norms by which schools and businesses are run as detrimental to their success in these institutions is fascinating. The significance of unspoken rules of conduct and values having been internalized by individuals based on their socioeconomic background is analyzed statistically.

Quarles, Benjamin. *Black Mosaic*. Amherst, Mass.: Massachusetts UP, 1988.

Essays on African American history and historiography are presented by Quarles in this book as extremely fundamental to an accurate understanding of the role of African Americans in the making of the United States history as more than marginal. He further argues the importance of African Americans successfully writing about their past objectively despite skeptical critics who believe otherwise.

Rose, Willie Lee, ed. *A Documentary History of Slavery in North American*. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.

Rose provides a volume of primary sources for the emergence Afro-Francophone slave communities in Louisiana, coupled with the importance of miscegenation. One account of the Anglo interpretation of the events held by the enslaved at Congo Square in New Orleans is quite interesting, but also representative of the ways in which the Anglo population ethnocentrically viewed the culture of African Americans with contempt.

Shane, Bernard. *Swamp Pop*. Jackson, Miss.: Mississippi UP, 1996.

Swamp Pop is defined by the author as a biracial genre with English lyrics and the sound of the 1950s and 1960s. It is described by the author as a hybrid indigenous to southeast Texas and Acadiana with roots in New Orleans rhythm and blues, country and western and Cajun and black Creole music.

Spitzer, Nicholas. *Zydeco and Mardi Gras: Creole Identity and Performance Genres in Rural French Louisiana*. Austin, Tex.: Texas UP, 1998.

The research conducted in this study is based on an ethnohistoric and ethnographic approach centering on rural Black French Creoles of southern Louisiana. Cultural identity and aesthetic values can be observed in traditional music and dance known as zydeco. Spitzer clearly illustrates the impact of French Caribbean refugees in colonial Louisiana seen in dances such as the calenda and bamboula. He also includes the influences from the Afro-Mediterranean, Cajun, French and Spanish cultures which are equally important in the developing of Black French Creole music and dance in Louisiana.

Taylor, Joe Gray. *Negro Slavery in Louisiana*. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana Historical Association, 1963.

This source examines slavery during the antebellum period. Some reference is made to colonial aspects of Louisiana history. However, little is mentioned regarding the effects Spain and France have had on slave culture. Slave codes, slave religion and race relations are carefully examined. This book is considered to be a major contribution in this field because it is one of the first comprehensive studies which confronts slavery in colonial Louisiana.

Tisserand, Michael. *Kingdom of Zydeco*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998.

This book gives the reader an extensive historical base for the making of zydeco music. The author traces the development of music in the state of Louisiana beginning with the colonial period. Of equal importance is the emergence of cultural factors contributed by different ethnic groups from France, Spain, Africa, Germany, the Caribbean and Native America which is directly related to the forming of music genres.

Tregle, Joseph G. "On That Word Creole Again." In *Louisiana History* 23, no. 2 (1982): 193-98.

Interestingly, the term creole is defined with several different meanings and the historical factors leading to such differences. Because language is dynamic and not static the meanings of words change over time. This article clearly indicates that the term creole is relative to time, cultural and ethnic identity as well as geographic location. Cajuns for example, French-speaking African Americans and the early social elite of Louisiana are considered Creole.

Van Sertima, Ivan. *They Came before Columbus*. New York: Random House, 1976.

This book explains the deliberate systematic exclusion of Negroid peoples in the writing of world history and anthropology. The author conveys the relevance of such information as vitally important to ancient America. Van Sertima stresses the need of careful examination of Africa as continent and as a people with major contributions to world civilization before European expansion took place. His comments on Napoleon and the European rediscovery of Africa is fascinating.

Vernon, Paul. *African American Blues, Rhythm and Blues, Gospel and Zydeco on Film and Video, 1926-1997*. Vermont: Algate Publishing Ltd., 1999.

For those with an affinity toward film, this book is perfect. It captures the essence of African American music recorded on film. Vernon documents the highlights and breakthroughs of African American music in the entertainment industry

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. New York: Perigee Books, 1980.

This book is considered a classic and is an economic study of the origins of the African slave trade as vital to the establishing and financing of the British Industrial Revolution and its contribution to the development of capitalism. The argument presented discusses economic factors rather than racism as the fundamental reason for development of slavery as a result of the triangular slave trade. It explores the circumstances of the differences in colonial powers from an economic perspective, leading to the creating of differences among slave societies throughout the United States, the Caribbean and South America.

———. *From Columbus to Castro*. New York: Random House, 1984.

A history of the Caribbean is presented with careful attention given to the overlapping economic factors between Napoleon, the French Revolution, the Haitian Revolution, colonial Louisiana and the Louisiana Purchase. The author exposes biases in the writings of the Caribbean by historians. The book also includes cultural elements unique to each country that colonized the New World and its importance to the sharp inter-colonial contrasts and rivalries.

Wood, Roger. "Southeast Texas: Hothouse of Zydeco." In *Texas Music Journal* (2001): 33-44.

This article provides an explanation of the history and the development of the conditions, which led to the unfolding of what is now known as zydeco music. Folk origins, as well as documented historic accounts are offered by the author leaving the reader with a thorough sense of understanding of the evolution of zydeco.

Filmography

J'été au bal. I Went to the Dance: Cajun and Zydeco Music of Louisiana. Dir. Les Blank and Chris Strachwitz. Brazos Films, 1990.

Cajun and zydeco music are featured in this video; however Cajun music is given more attention. Much of the music is in French. Cajun and Creole musical pioneers explain how Cajun and zydeco music is defined.

New Orleans: Queen of the Mississippi. Dir. Douglas Brown. Charlton Douglas Brown Productions, Inc., 1993.

This is a wonderful overview of the history of Louisiana. Most material on music presented focuses on New Orleans jazz and overlapping elements of Dixieland and ragtime music. However, some attention is given to the music and food of the Creoles and Cajuns of the Sabine and Atchafalaya regions of southwestern Louisiana.

Discography

Cajun Songs from Louisiana. Folkways Records, FE4438 1956.

This recording consists of Louisiana French folk music. Many of the songs featured are sung to Cajun French lyrics. There is a mixture of a cappella and vocals accompanied with the accordion, violin and guitar. A folk history of the origins of Cajun music and instruments used is given.

Crossroads: Southern Routes: Music of the American South. Smithsonian Folkways, SF CD 40080 1996.

This source offers several genres of southern music and the influence each has had on popular music. The fiddle-playing music of the Cajuns is a central component representative of southern Louisiana. The circumstances behind the origins of this particular genre are not to go unnoticed.

Excursions in World Music. Prentice Hall, Inc., 28656426 1989.

Music includes genres of music throughout the world. The Cajun music selected for this recording offers the listener a good sample of what is typical of traditional southern Louisiana music.

Sing Me a Song. Texas UP, 10359524 1983.

Various folk songs recorded during the 1930s and 1940s are sung by different southern ethnic groups of the Texas and Louisiana areas. Traditional Cajun songs are characterized with the strong flavor of the accordion and fiddle.

Swamp Pop. Mississippi UP, 34080195 1996.

Many of the Cajun and Creole rhythm and blues songs featured in this recording may not sound like the music of southern Louisiana. Many American all time favorites such as “Breaking Up is Hard to Do” and “I’m Leaving It up to You” from the 1950s and 1960s era were actually arranged and recorded to as what is now known as swamp pop and add a wonderful flavor to southern Louisiana music. It is a marvelous accompaniment to the book.

Student Resources

The following includes a list of books for elementary and secondary levels. Most however, are not written for the secondary levels and therefore may not be age appropriate reading material. Moreover, these books are written in dialect or Cajun French. It does however, give the reader a chance to become familiar with the culture and lingua franca spoken by the Cajuns and Creoles of Louisiana.

Other Student Resources

Most of the books in print for children and adolescents are predominantly about Cajuns. Literature for children written about Creoles of color or black Creoles was extremely limited. Upon such rare occasions when such printed material was painstakingly discovered, the Afro-Francophone community of Louisiana was consolidated and either placed in the Southern folktales and African American folktales categories.

Amoss, Berthe. *Three Little Cajun Pigs*. New Orleans, La.: Forest Sales Books, 1999.

Bial, Raymond. *Cajun Home*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

Collins, Sheila Herbert. *Petite Rouge: A Cajun Twist to an Old Tale*. Louisiana: Pelican Books, 1997.

Fontenot, Mary Alice. *Clovis Crawfish and Batiste Bete Puante*. Louisiana: Pelican Books, 1993.

Goodrum, Don. *Lettres Acadiennes: A Cajun ABC*. Louisiana: Pelican Books, 1992.

Hoyt-Goldsmith, Diane. *Mardis Gras: A Cajun Country Celebration*. New York: Holiday House, 1995.

Moss, Jenny Jackson, and Amy Jackson Dixon. *Cajun Night after Christmas*. Gretna, La.: Pelican Books, 2000.

Jacob, Howard, ed. *Cajun Night Before Christmas*. Louisiana: Pelican Books, 1992.

———. *Gaston the Green Nosed Alligator*. Louisiana: Pelican Books, 1992.

Rice, James. *Cajun Alphabet*. Louisiana: Pelican Books, 2000.

San Souci, Robert. *Talking Eggs*. New York: Dial Books, 1989.

Soper, Celia. *Cajun Folktales*. Louisiana: Pelican Books, 1997.

Stewart, Elisabeth Jane. *Bimmi Finds a Cat*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

Other Musical Resources

Listed below are names of a few prominent Cajun and zydeco recordings that may be of interest to students and teachers.

Cajun Creole Music. Morris and Dex Ardoin. (2000)

The Big Squeeze. Clifton Chenier. (1996)

Louisiana Spice. Clifton Chenier. (1995)

Music from Zydeco Kingdom. Keith Frank and Chris Ardoin. (2000)

Out West. Clifton Chenier. (1991)

Sean Ardoin and Zydeco Pullin'. Sean Ardoin. (2001)

ZydeCajun. Wayne Toups. (1988)

Internet Resources

Some of the following material contained in the web sites listed below may be more popular and humorous rather than scholarly in content. They may however prove not only to be beneficial, but also informative and intriguing.

http://www.lib.odu.edu/anss/preserv_social.html

http://www.lpb.org/programs/swappingstories/cultures_bib.html

http://www.crt.state.la.us/folklife/main_recommended_read.html

http://www.crt.state.la.us/folklife/main_bibliography.html

http://www.crt.state.la.us/arts/folklife/creole_art_state.html

<http://www.crt.state.la.us/crt/ocasola.htm>

http://www.crt.state.la.us.arts.folklife/creole_ritual.html

<http://www.cajunculture.com/Other/creolization.htm>

<http://www.cajunculture.com/reference.htm>

<http://www.cajunculture.com/Other/CODOFIL>

<http://www.cajunculture.com/Other/wedding.htm>

<http://www.cajunculture.com/Other/creoleofcolor.htm>
<http://www.cajunculture.com/Other/coonass.htm>
http://www.lft.k12.la.us/chs/la_studies/Music/tiffany.htm
http://www.lft.k.12.la.us/chs/la_studies/Cajun_Articles.htm
<http://www.gumbojam.com/history.html>
<http://www.iberia.org/history.html>
<http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/world/A0861231.html>
<http://www.alahwe.org/History.html>
<http://www.louisianahistory.ourfamily.com/history.html>
<http://www.haitiglobalvillage.com/sd-kreyol/Creole.htm>
<http://www.gumbopages.com/being-creole.html>
<http://www.lsu.edu/acadgate/music/history/htm>
<http://www.musicweb.uk.net/encyclopedia/z/Z6.HTM>
http://www.library.miami.edu/archives/slaves/san_domingo_revolution/individual_essay/david.html2/5/02

