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Acadian in the Southern Imagination: Race and Identity in Reconstruction Louisiana Newspapers 1862-1877

Jessica DeJohn Bergen
University of Texas at El Paso

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ACADIAN IN THE SOUTHERN IMAGINATION IDENTITY AND RACE
IN RECONSTRUCTION LOUISIANA NEWSPAPERS 1862-1877

JESSICA DEJOHN BERGEN

Doctoral Program in Borderlands History

APPROVED:

Jeffery P. Shepherd, Ph.D., Chair

Brad J. Cartwright, Ph.D.

Paul Edison, Ph.D.

Light Cummins, Ph.D.

Robert Gunn, Ph.D.

Stephen L. Crites, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

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2022

Dedication

To Olivia, Sophia, Emma, Eddie, and the chip on my shoulder

ACADIAN IN THE SOUTHERN IMAGINATION IDENTITY AND RACE
IN RECONSTRUCTION LOUISIANA NEWSPAPERS 1862-1877

by

JESSICA DEJOHN BERGEN, B. S., B. A., M. A.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The emergence of Acadian identity as a reaction to Southern imagining has received little attention from historians of Louisiana Acadian history. Many scholars align with a narrative that centers American cultural adaptation which describe a process that begins with a split along class, not race lines, to form a Cajun identity which becomes, like other American immigrant stories, an element of American identity. The dominant historical narrative suggests that all elements of Acadian are incorporated into the overarching American identity. The Acadian-to-Cajun-qua-American-assimilation narrative implies and reinforces that the Cajun-American identity is superior and more socially acceptable than the Acadian identity. This study examines mostly English-language Louisiana newspapers of the Civil War and Reconstruction eras' Acadian-related articles of various genres and subsequently uncovers patterns that trouble commonly held beliefs about Acadian identity in the Southern imagination.

Louisiana editors and journalists did not portray Acadians as an economically disadvantaged class; rather, they depicted the population as racially inferior, foreign, and incapable of self-governance via a post-emancipation rhetoric that attributed to the ethnic group an ethos of violence, ignorance, indifference, and subhuman status. Anglos, regardless of political party, were determined to legitimize and prioritize their superior position in the national racial hierarchy. Editors and journalists' rhetoric served multiple political agendas by making Acadians the scapegoat of the period. Editors and journalists' scapegoating was a reaction to a crisis in the legitimacy of Acadians as part of the dominate American narrative. Anglo-run newspapers posit that Acadians were the existential threat to the country by describing the racially inferior Acadians as foreign which kept them on the racial periphery. Cajuns capitalized on the skewed narratives by commodifying their unique, but American, identity to attract tourism

and patronage. This study is part of a growing corpus of work that rethinks Acadian identity as one shaped by an insidious Southern imagination and includes theories that recognize Acadian as a nuanced and fluid identity.

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Introduction – The Acadian Question

On March 7, 1884, New Orleanian George Washington Cable responded to a reporter's question about the character of Louisiana Acadians. Cable answered the question by referring to research he was compiling for an upcoming fictional novel which would feature Acadian characters. Cable, who was born to 'Creole' parents, was familiar with the Acadian way of life. As he worked as a surveyor and research assistant in Attakapas, a region with a considerable Acadian population, to gather data for the US census, he grew more familiar with Acadian culture. The editor of the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* published Cable's response because Cable was a respected writer and authoritative voice about the Acadian situation. Even though Cable's remark appears complimentary at first glance, it is a romanticized and essentialized portrayal of the Acadians. Cable responded to the interviewer's question with confidence. In contrast to his contemporary writers' racist discourse, he argued:

The Acadians are frequently confounded with the Creoles, but they are an entirely different type of people, and in my mind vastly more interesting. I made a careful study of them a number of years ago, intending to write about them at that time. Other people more intelligent and wealthy are encroaching upon them and crowding them out. Even now their old simplicity is giving place to civilization. They are a bright, intelligent race and capable of high culture.¹

Although some journalists questioned the significance of Acadian culture, Cable and the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* embraced their culture, despite the intolerance that existed toward non-Anglo Southerners. Cable understood white society's agenda to maintain their dominate place in Southern culture. Cable's essentialization, like racial discrimination, reduced Acadian identity to a few dubiously flattering characteristics. Cable desired to preserve and elevate

¹“The Next Work of Mr. Cable,” *The Times-Democrat*, March 7, 1884, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/130925826/?terms=%22Mr.%20Cable%22%20and%20Acadian&match=1..>

Acadian culture and people, but he overlooked the prevalent racial discrimination of Acadians. He intended to counter conventional class stereotypes of Acadians, but his argument that Acadians had the potential to become civilized reinforced, instead of negating, deleterious perceptions. Similar doubts had been raised about Native peoples and newly liberated African Americans.² Many socially and politically important Southerners in Louisiana believed that non-whites would rule Anglo-Southerners if they were granted full citizenship and the opportunity to vote. Even though Acadians were granted legal citizenship under the conditions of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, their capacity to self-govern, let alone govern others, was widely contested.³ The unsuitable self-government issue reinforced negative perceptions that harmed Louisiana Acadians' social and political position.

The public discussion about Acadian effectual participation in civil discourse and duties, which was contested in Louisiana newspapers, confirmed and reaffirmed community perspectives, reinforced Acadians' inferior social status, and ratified Southerners' judgment of them as unfit to self-govern⁴ When Cable ostensibly defended Acadian culture, he acknowledged that the Southern imagination viewed Acadians as barbaric and foreign, a perception that was fervently perpetuated by editors and journalists who wrote about Acadians. Together, Cable and the press laid the groundwork for future writers of Acadian history and fiction to develop an exile and discrimination narrative that would plague the way writers portray

² W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1941)..

³ Katharine A. Burnett, "Moving Toward a 'No South': George Washington Cable's Global Vision in 'The Grandissimes,'" *The Southern Literary Journal* 45, no. 1 (2012): 21–38; George Washington Cable, *The Silent South: Together with The Freedman's Case in Equity and The Convict Lease System* (C. Scribner's Sons, 1885); George Washington Cable, *Bonaventure: A Prose of Acadian Louisiana* (International association of newspapers and authors, 1888); George Washington Cable, *The Negro Question* (C. Scribner's Sons, 1890). George Washington Cable's speech titled "No South," but he was no different from other New South advocates because he was interested in a modern south but claimed regionalism should be eradicated. He was advocating for the South socially, culturally, and economically be on the same page as the North.

⁴ Cash, *The Mind of the South*.

Acadians as a kind of noble savage. Writers who choose to identify as Cajun knew their works would be more valuable if they reimagined their ancestry. Subsequently, Cajun writers of Acadian history chose to rewrite their parents' stories, thus creating a narrative that fit the broader American narrative. Elite Acadians and a few emergent Cajun scholars place poor and racially non-white Acadians at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, present Acadian identity as rigid and unchangeable, and mythologize Acadians as simple and uneducated⁵

SOUTHERN STEREOTYPES BY ANY OTHER NAME ARE STILL LIMITING

While Cable's writings appear to advocate for Acadians as intelligent and capable people, he perpetuated several negative stereotypes by romanticizing and essentializing Acadian character and insinuating that Acadians were less civilized than their Anglo neighbors. The collected works of Cable are representative of a post-Civil War literary tradition that simultaneously denigrated and glorified the Acadian people. Newspapers in southern states like Louisiana reported on events, and contained literary essays, short stories, local histories, editorials, and articles expressing popular opinion. I contend that many editorial decisions were motivated by editors and journalist's desire to retain a distinct Southern identity which relegated Acadians' to the bottom levels of society.⁶ The source of the journalistic debates focused on Acadians ability to participate in a civic society.

Cable's analysis of Acadian culture exemplified a long-standing argument about the Acadians' capacity for self-government and shows that Acadians were no more assimilated than

⁵ Leanna I. Thomas, "A Fractured Foundation Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement, 1755-1803," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 55, no. 2 (2014): 198–227.

⁶ Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism and Race in Louisiana, 1862-77*. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1984), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1125300>; Ben M. Debney, "Theorizing Panic-Driven Scapegoating," in *The Oldest Trick in the Book: Panic-Driven Scapegoating in History and Recurring Patterns of Persecution*, ed. Ben M. Debney (Singapore: Springer, 2020), 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5569-5_1.

other non-Anglo ethnic groups. Even though Acadians had become citizens under Article III of the Louisiana Purchase since 1803, Southern Anglo journalists viewed non-Anglo Southern populations on the Confederate frontier as foreign. Like Cable, the other regional writers saw Acadian actions through the lens of intense journalistic competition, which forced writers to cater to the preferences and preconceptions of their audience regardless of the literary medium.⁷ On closer inspection, Cajun historians have yet to explore Southern attitudes toward Acadians which reveal racial discrimination, as opposed to class discrimination.

SOUTHERN SOCIAL-POLITICAL PRESSURE RESHAPES ACADIAN IDENTITY

Louisiana Acadian identity formation begins with the early French Acadian settlements on the tidal flats of present-day Nova Scotia. Imperial competition between England and France escalated and in 1755, the British expelled the French Acadian settlers from their settlements which scattered them throughout British North America, the Caribbean, the South American coast, the Falkland Islands, or back to France. Thereafter, many Acadian exiles traveled to Louisiana and were welcomed by the Spanish crown who hoped to increase the territory's population. Many Acadians settled in the southern half of the state, along the Gulf, and near African slaves, Canary Islanders, Germans, Anglo-Americans, and Native Peoples. Establishing themselves as farmers and sometimes slaveholders, Acadians lived in a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic world that was deeply influenced by British, French, Spanish, and Native rivalries.

⁷ Richard H. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of Chicago Press, 1993); Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jerry W. Knudson, "Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Sources | Perspectives on History | AHA," *Perspectives on History*, October 1, 1993, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-1993/late-to-the-feast>; Richard H. Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

Although Acadians quickly established themselves in the borderland between North America, the Caribbean Basin, and the Atlantic world, their communities underwent significant transformations as a result of the transfer of their lands from the Spanish to the French and then to the United States government in accordance with the terms of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, which marked the emergence of the United States as a nation-state. With the Purchase, Acadians entered a new era of their history, marked by Louisiana statehood, the shadow of chattel slavery, wars against Indian nations, and the expansion of the United States. Although these occurrences dominated the majority of the nineteenth century, the American Civil War, Emancipation, and Reconstruction profoundly altered perceptions of Acadians in the public sphere.⁸

During and after the Civil War, southern newspapers, journals, and travel pamphlets employed racist tropes and cultural polemics to construct a mythical Acadian that was incapable of self-governance. Like their Northern counterparts, Southern editors and journalists were essential to each other in determining who the other was and out of that North-South dialogue, Acadians were the scapegoat and made foreign.⁹ Anglo Southerners portrayed Acadians as their social and cultural inferiors. For example, Southern periodicals portrayed Acadians as uncivilized and unassimilated by publishing stories that depicted Acadians as simple, violent, and of dubious national loyalty. Furthermore, because these scholars predominantly focus on Acadian socioeconomic status, they overlook the salient manifestation of racism, which also played a significant role in the motivations of editors, reporters, and columnists. Thus, the

⁸ Historians of Acadian history argue at the end of Reconstruction Acadians became Cajun, but what emerged was more Southern than anything else. Editors and journalists along with Cajun boosters worked hard to promote a romantic version of Louisiana's past.

⁹ Comer Vann Woodward, *American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue* (Oxford University Press, 1983).

narrow and often sentimental perspective of contemporary researchers perpetuates the historically negative conceptions of the Acadians.¹⁰

Perhaps two different identities (Acadian and Cajun) formed because of the war, emancipation, and Reconstruction. I do not necessarily disagree with this notion; however, in the minds of Anglo-Southerners, a different third Acadian image emerged post emancipation. The Anglo Southerners to whom I am referring were Louisiana newspaper editors, writers, and columnists who were politically divided but together believed Acadians were unsophisticated, savage, and incapable of effectively ruling themselves –much less participation in national government. From their editorials, political commentary, local histories, reports on local happenings, and short stories, these writers increasingly portrayed Acadians as self-governing misfits, an attitude which persisted far into the 21st century. Even though class played a significant role in Acadian social status, white supremacy was the bedrock of Southern thought and the rationale for identifying Acadians as racially sub-par. Although Acadians had held citizenship since 1803, they were considered white prior to Emancipation and had a social and political elite. The Southern imagination of editors, reporters, and columnists characterized Acadian identity as far too barbaric to participate politically since the pre-emancipation social hierarchy had been inverted; Acadians were now considered -if not black – at least not white. Louisiana Anglos, regardless of political party affiliation, were determined to maintain their social position and relegated Acadians to the margins..¹¹

¹⁰ Thomas, “A Fractured Foundation Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement, 1755-1803.”

¹¹ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

CONSIDERING LOUISIANA ACADIAN IDENTITY IN THE SOUTHERN IMAGINATION

In her essay “A Fractured Foundation Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement, 1755-1803,” Leanne Thomas, who quotes the renowned Acadian novelist, scholar, and playwright Antonine Maillet, astutely claims,

In the coming years, through the continued influence of Longfellow’s *Evangeline* and their struggles in recovering from the [Civil] war, Acadian descendants on . . . [either side of the social sliding scale] . . . started filling the gaps of their foundation as they began adopting memories of their formal sufferings. This repaired foundation of Acadian society in Louisiana has since become a cultural sacrament, “an oratory, church, a cathedral.” Sadly, attempts to preserve the sacrament have in many ways inhibited studies of Acadian- Cajun history by not allowing earlier settlers[‘] differences from their former society to be recognized.¹²

Cajun boosters and historians promote a culture and wrote histories not all decedents of Acadian ancestry agree with, and those cultural and historical texts dominate common perceptions of present-day Acadians. Historians have questioned and evaluated who the Acadians of Louisiana are for years, yet few primary sources containing the voices of non-elite Acadians are available, and most times the voices of the elite only are heard. Among those debates, scholars question the parameters of Acadian identity such as which characteristics created social cohesion and which ones did not, and, most historically important, when and why Louisiana Acadian identity split and formed a group, the Cajuns. Cajuns are the descendants of Acadian pioneers in Louisiana.

The Cajun School is comprised of historians who identify as Cajun and who stress the Acadian to Cajun to American narrative.¹³ The primary works of these historians, notably Carl

¹² Thomas, “A Fractured Foundation Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement, 1755-1803,” 227. Celeste LeBlanc Norris, *Cajun by Blood: A Thibodaux Family Story* (Independently Published, 2018).

¹³ I coined the Cajun School category. Those that acknowledge their Cajun origins are distinguished from those who do not. The exile and discrimination narrative is the basis of Cajun identity and inspires the literature of the Cajun School.

Brasseaux, his son Ryan Brasseaux, Shane Bernard, and Maria Hebert-Leiter, all concur that Acadians became Cajuns and, eventually, Americans, but they disregard the teleological error inherent in this reasoning.¹⁴ Those historians outside of the Cajun School who question this history, such as Leanna Thomas andCarolynn McNally, tend to complicate the Cajun School's assumptions.¹⁵ Although historians of both schools of thought have made significant contributions to the study of Acadian and Cajun history and furthered our understanding of identity, not one of these historians has considered the effects of the Southern imagination on the transformation of Louisiana Acadian identity during the post Emancipation period.

The Cajun School delves into the era, but none of them investigate the impact of Southern ideas on Acadians. According to these academics, Acadians in Louisiana are French, not Southern, because Southern signifies Anglo and Protestant. Although R. Brasseaux's *French North America In the Shadows of Conquest* portrays Acadians as persecuted Francophones in an Anglophone world and C. Brasseaux's *Acadian to Cajun* implies that non-elite rather than elite Acadians became Cajun, both scholars disregard the impact of Southern ideas during the period under study. The work of these scholars portrays Acadians as white but after Emancipation, however, they were viewed as non-white because in the public sphere Acadians were French but foreign and simple, colonial subjects. Responses to Southern views of Acadians would prop up a deportation and discrimination narrative which has come to occupy the historiography since.

¹⁴Maria Hebert-Leiter, *Becoming Cajun, Becoming American: The Acadian in American Literature from Longfellow to James Lee Burke* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009). Carl A. Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a People, 1803-1877* (University Press of Mississippi Jackson, 1992); Carl A. Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia: The Beginnings of Acadian Life in Louisiana, 1765-1803* (LSU Press, 1997); Shane K. Bernard, *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2003); Ryan André Brasseaux, *French North America in the Shadows of Conquest* (Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003094920>.

¹⁵ Thomas, "A Fractured Foundation Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement, 1755-1803"; Carolynn McNally, "Acadian Leaders and Louisiana, 1902-1955," *Acadiensis*, May 5, 2016, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/view/24580>.

However, in the views of the Brasseauxs and Hebert-Leiter, they were destined for the bottom rungs of the social ladder, and the only way to complicate the story, according to these academics, was to focus on class rather than race. Simply, just because they were considered white does not mean racial ideology did not shape them.

Both schools of thought place great emphasis on the European or "white" origin of Louisiana Acadians; yet, Louisiana Acadians were not considered Southerners, and according to the Southern conception of race, anybody who was not Anglo was foreign, barbaric, and unfit to rule themselves. The exception to this is that Louisiana Acadians were an exiled people who faced discrimination, and when paired with their inferior position on the Southern social hierarchy, cultural boosters could only perceive Acadians as discriminated against and not as Southern ideology carriers. Also, even though Louisiana Acadians received citizenship in 1803 under the terms of the Louisiana Purchase, their history somewhat aligns with European immigration race history in the U.S. and Reconstruction newspapers placed them lower on the social hierarchy.

The focus of this research on race and Acadian identity in the Southern psyche illuminates the gap that has occupied the historiography up until this dissertation. The scholarship of both schools of thought ignores the period between the end of Reconstruction when the Cajun School argues Acadian identity split into an elite and non-elite and the non-elite became Cajun and then American during World War II is a teleological weakness. Bernard did claim that the post-Civil War period had an influence on Louisiana Acadian identity, but he agreed with C. Brasseaux that the identity instability was caused by Cajunization rather than Southernization and that Americanization did not occur until World War II. R. Brasseaux's study of Cajun music and Acadian transnational history is superficially promising because he is

sensitive to race and encourages us to consider Acadian identity in new ways. However, he lacks an understanding of the impact of regionalism on post-Emancipation Acadian identity which would be shaped by Jim Crow and scientific racism.¹⁶

Although non-Cajun School historians, Thomas and McNally complicate conventional views on the making of Acadian identity, on closer examination their studies could go further. According to McNally's research, despite repeated attempts to unite, Maritime and Louisiana Acadians could not find cultural common ground, thus the hope for a group identity was unsuccessful because they did not appreciate one another's cultural differences. Maritime Acadian leaders saw Louisiana Acadians as beneath them, thus no further attempts at forming cross region connections occurred, which would suggest common notions of Acadian insularity is weakly supported. I agree with McNally that Louisiana Acadians are distinct from Acadians outside of the state, but her rationale indicates something else. I find we cannot adequately appreciate Acadian depictions until we acknowledge the influence of southern racial theory on the identity formation. Post emancipation Anglo whites fought hard to maintain their social ranking at all costs through violence and political dominance, but this had more to do with race than class. Anglo Southerners who dispute Acadian fitness to self-govern not only label Acadian individuals as dubious, but by doing so in newspapers, they stereotype all Acadians and their descendants. Editors and journalists engaged in some smoke-and-mirrors tactics to create a racial barrier between Anglo Louisianians and Acadians. McNally did not want to criticize her

¹⁶ Shane K. Bernard, *The Cajuns: Americanization of a People* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2003); Ryan A. Brasseaux, *French North America in the Shadows of Conquest* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003094920>; Carl A. Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a People, 1803-1877* (University Press of Mississippi Jackson, 1992); Hebert-Leiter, *Becoming Cajun, Becoming American*; Shane K. Bernard, "Ryan André Brasseaux. Cajun Breakdown: The Emergence of an American-Made Music.(American Musicspheres.) New York: Oxford University Press. 2009. Pp. Xv, 317. \$35.00," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 1 (2011): 196–196.

Maritime Acadian elite for their pretentiousness toward Acadian Louisianians, but I believe she would come to a different conclusion if she considered the regional, and maybe even global, impact of white racial ideology, who claim to be superior to all other ethnicities.¹⁷ Elite Louisiana Acadians would adopt race ideology and perhaps make decisions that made sense to the southern way of life as opposed to an Acadian one.

As a result, I believe a re-examination of the Civil War and Reconstruction era is necessary and I ask scholars to reconsider the impact of Southern identity formation on Acadians. In an effort to maintain political power, Anglo Louisianian's questioned the capacity of the Acadian populace to make civic-minded decisions not because Acadian low socioeconomic status but Anglo Louisianians believed Acadians were not white. I do not necessarily disagree that wealthier Acadians kept their distance from the poor, but it is plausible that Cajun historians emphasized this class distinction over race not only to explain away non-Acadian racist stereotypes, but also to deny their white privilege. Through these narrative adjustments, Cajun historians attempt to control the historical narrative, ignore that some Acadians held racist beliefs, and obtain authenticity, which makes Cajun history more relevant. I suspect, to protect the language, reject racist views, and challenge group failures, culture boosters have deliberately promoted the Cajun culture.¹⁸ As a response, other ethnicities, like present-day Louisiana Acadians, reject Cajun and claim to be Acadian. Their renouncing of one identity over another repeats the Reconstruction era pattern in which the "north represented

¹⁷ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Critical Perspectives on Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁸ Jacques M. Henry and Carl Leon Bankston, *Blue Collar Bayou: Louisiana Cajuns in the New Economy of Ethnicity* (Praeger Publishers, 2002); Alain Larouche, "The Cajuns of Canal Yankee: Problems of Cultural Identity in Laforuche Parish," in *French America: Mobility, Identity, and Minority Experience Across the Continent* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

the combined forces of an intrusive, unsettling, and faith and tradition-shaking modernity as well.”¹⁹ This unforgiving approach to Cajun verse Acadian perpetuates a century of identity crisis.

Thomas disagrees with C. Brasseaux’s argument about what traits make Acadian. Thomas finds that the mid-1700s Acadians were without the traits that eventually defined them as an ethnic group. The attempt to maintain racial position is revealed in two letters written by former Louisiana Governor Alexandre Mouton (1843-1846) and Governor Paul Octave Hebert (1853-1856). Each advocate that blacks deserve political power, but each had very different approaches in their attempts to secure civil rights for their minorities. Mouton fought for political power through homegrown terrorist groups, but Hebert chose non-violent and political means to empower the Acadian people.

As newspapers racially denigrated Acadians, Thomas argues that Acadians did not “turn to neutrality as a means of security” but they “failed to fully reconstruct their former system of self-rule, and began to define classes differently.”²⁰ James Cobb argues that “identities have not existed in isolation, but always in relation to other perceived oppositional identities against which they are defined.”²¹ When newspapers attacked, Othered, or essentialized the Acadians, the collective identity morphed in response.

Thomas and Cobb discovered that the process of constructing one's identity is not fixed and is dependent on the individual and historical context. Although Maritime Acadians and Louisiana Acadians attempted to form a cohesive identity, they could not find common ground

¹⁹ James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.

²⁰ Thomas, “A Fractured Foundation Discontinuities in Acadian Resettlement, 1755-1803.”

²¹ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 6.

during the Acadian national conventions held throughout the early 19th century and therefore that which is the Acadian identity has been and is still in flux.

Other historical research of different time periods has reached the same conclusion: The Acadians did not perceive themselves as a coherent community. McNally contends that the Louisiana Acadians could never close the cultural divide with their Maritime counterparts due to their vast cultural differences. She confirms that Acadians in the Maritime provinces grew up under different circumstances than the Louisiana Acadians. However, despite the impossible divide, McNally's 1902-1955 research relies upon Brasseaux's suggestion that Acadians became Cajun and ultimately American. While she is uncertain as to why their cultural differences were so great that neither group could align, she does not believe that their differences are entirely insurmountable.

The assessment of Acadian history and identity is dependent on the time periods that scholars are investigating. Historians writing about earlier periods come to different conclusions about Acadian identity than scholars focusing on later periods. Moreover, the arguments offered by many of the leading historians of Acadian identity have generally overlooked primary source documents, such as newspapers, particularly during the Louisiana Reconstruction period. By ignoring the unfavorable portrayals of Acadians by Reconstruction-era editors, journalists, and columnists – many of whom had an anti-Acadian agenda – historians have missed what I consider to be a pivotal moment in Acadian identity formation. I have relied on the scholarship of the Cajun School, but it is the work of recent scholars outside of the Cajun School's Louisiana lens that shows promise. Cajun history is both an uncriticized and unrecognized conceptual apparatus that has ignored race for fear of being called racist because they are unable to see the

“relationship between race as a conceptual category and race as a perceptual category;” thus, Cajun historians are unable to be critical and disassociate themselves from their own histories.²²

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes local, state, and federal government notices, local histories, editorial columns, event reports, obituaries, short stories, travel logs, and letters found in Civil War and Reconstruction era Louisiana English and French periodicals. Democrat and Republican editorial and journalistic discussions about Acadians often favored a common political ideology rather than opposing political viewpoints. Although Republicans tend to sensationalize Acadian events more so than the Democrats, Acadians were a topic of debate when discussing the potential of a New South. The discussion frequently centers on the Acadian question: Rather or not the Acadians had a place in the crafting of a New South and a place in an emerging national narrative.

COVID-19 restrictions, and hurricane destruction limited my access to archives of primary sources other than online repositories. If I had waited for conditions to improve, the study would have been delayed. After consulting with my chair, I decided to limit my sources to largely English and French-language newspapers that represent a spectrum of Democrat and Republican Louisiana political viewpoints. A once-in-a-lifetime pandemic and an undeniable climate change event have significantly impacted my perspective, and I believe that these events, together with the society's partiality toward Trump-era news sources, made me question my objectivity. I was influenced by historians who were inspired by the postmodernists of the linguistic turn who saw their sources as culturally created and considered historical writing to be a type of fiction. Cultural constructionists disrupted my understanding of race by asserting that

²² Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*.

identity was culturally formed and that, as a result, race is not biological, but an ideology and should be considered within its specific historical circumstance.²³ This problem has been the subject of controversy in several history departments and even in my courses; I agree with those who decide on a “qualified objectivity” of history.²⁴ I knew I needed to think about history through an objective lens that observes the changes of identity over time.

This dissertation's methodology is best illustrated by comprehending the silences, conceptions of an imagined community, and perhaps agency at times through discourse analysis. I saw linguistic patterns that reflected Southern ideals, found in the sentiments of editors and journalists who described Acadians as violent, simple, or incapable of self-government. Many Republican newspapers and some Democrat placed Acadian-related articles on the front page or in the headlines. Newspapers are salient actors in this historical dramas. In his article titled “Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Sources, Perspectives on History,” Jerry W. Knudson cites Lucy Maynard Salmon's book *the Newspaper and the Historian*, which states that the historian is “concerned not simply with the accounts of material events” but “is equally interested in the interpretation of the spirit of a time or place” and that “this spirit is revealed both by the true and the false accounts given by the press.”²⁵

I believe that newspaper revenues had an effect on editorial choices, but the implication that all participants in an event were Acadian diminished the objectivity of newspaper sources. At times, editors and writers who romanticized the culture depicted Acadians as noteworthy due to their simplicity (which is early evidence for culture boosters and profiting from tourism). Sometimes Acadians defended themselves or made decisions based on a situational logic, but

²³ Sarah C. Maza, *Thinking about History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 218.

²⁴ Maza, *Thinking about History*.

²⁵ Knudson, “Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Sources | Perspectives on History | AHA.”

agency does not count strongly in my research since interviewees may be misquoted or "reliable" sources may be incorrect. I am aware of the downsides of newspapers, but when it comes to north-on-south or south-on-north rhetoric, Acadians are change agents.

Because there is little journalistic evidence indicating the voices of average Acadians, deciphering the silences is critical when evaluating my sources. Although Acadian aristocrats such as Paul Octave Hebert are regularly mentioned in the news, most Acadian narratives are linked with violence or anger. Although other researchers have used analogous and very different techniques, none depend as much on newspapers as I do. However, a story develops if one looks at the in between or behind the rhetoric of Democrat or Southern writers and editors in post-Emancipation Era writings. Despite the fact that there are far too few Acadian voices, I am able to piece together an alternate story. Acadian oyster rakers, for example, brutally attacked Austrian oyster rakers in Baratavia Bay, claiming their rights had been infringed. Or Acadian vigilantes of all classes got together to combat military occupation, safeguarding their white Southerners' rights. The actions and language surrounding the community reflected a Southern point of view. My method adds to the history of Acadian identity by emphasizing race and the effect of Southern ideas on Acadian characterizations by editors and journalists, while also challenging Cajun historians' emotive, teleological, and Eurocentric judgements. Acadian historians who profess to be Cajun frequently write with emotion or nostalgia. Cajun historians portrayed Acadians positively, never depicting them as racists or Southerners.

The newspaper had a significant impact in the lives of Southerners and was the only mass medium.²⁶ Consequently, Southerners relied on the newspaper as their sole source of information at times. Although the government supported Republican publications by printing

²⁶ Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*, 2.

announcements, ex-Confederates did not trust them. I am cautious when using newspapers for information, because editorial decisions and content show popular interest or express the community's viewpoint. Editors and journalists frequently blurred the line between reality and opinion, a common issue even in newspapers today. If you pay equal attention to what is and is not in the source, you may piece together the emergence of a southern Acadian identity. Much of what I say or argue is "must have acted," but my reading and use of newspapers is only one way to this problem; rhetorical analysis has been employed but not when considering newspapers. Yes, I am examining the editor and journalist interaction with their readership, and the readers response to the current situations is significant because when combined with other research, it presents a whole picture. I am not the only one who approaches research like mine in this manner. Although some may assume that my knowledge of newspapers is limited, the rhetorical nature of newspapers may reflect changes in history, particularly during critical events such as emancipation and rebuilding. So, one could argue that this dissertation borders on historical fiction, but that is because historical figures, such as former Governor Paul Octave Hebert, use the paper at their disposal, and the reasons why you can infer from what they write in the paper are both relevant and strong. The history of Acadian identity is one of codification, particularly during the Civil War and Reconstruction. In Heteroglossia of a phrase an Acadian that characterizes what Cajuns are now, but the reality is that not all Acadians viewed themselves as Cajuns, and in a post-reconstruction age with elevated Jim Crow racial standards were locked in until the mid-century civil rights movement.

In the context of a time when views on race and regionalism were becoming increasingly visible, these accounts from historical characters such as politicians, editors, and journalists and get a sense of their views outside of the newspapers, or in everyday life. The tale of Acadian

identity throughout rebuilding is a jumbled one. This endeavor serves as a springboard for rewriting Hebert's biography. Despite being immensely significant, my preference for newspapers above other sources. However, the pandemic, while restricted to the websites available to me online due to archive closures, validated my evidence acquired previous to the epidemic. Despite the fact that I was impacted by cultural constructionism as a result of the nature of the epidemic. Cultural constructionism, as described by Sara Maza in *Thinking About History*, is "even though those identities that seem to us the most self-evidently biological are defined by the way people speak, write, and think about them."²⁷

Examining the impact of Southern attitudes held by newspaper editors and writers on the establishment of Acadian identity was consistent throughout the research period, although there were certain constraints. The word Acadian appears in the columns of Louisiana newspapers at least once and up to 20 times every year. Acadians were depicted brutally at times, while the writer's romanticism painted Acadians as simple as others. Although my evidence is limited to the voices of editors, reporters, and columnists, because the majority of the Acadian population was illiterate at the time, former governors Paul Octave Hebert and Alexandre Mouton provided occasional letters to provide a glimpse into the perspectives of Acadian politicians. Although some historians argue that it is impossible to tell if newspaper editors, reporters, and columnists influenced their readers' impressions of Acadians, the press, like other community leaders, influenced political sentiments. Rural towns relied on the major city daily's editors, correspondents, and columnists, and those who read the newspapers were people in positions of power who affected others' beliefs. The editor was critical, according to Richard H. Abbott in his book *For Free Press and Equal Rights: Republican Newspapers in the Reconstruction South*,

²⁷ Maza, *Thinking about History*.

since he had to preserve readers' trust and could not break from established community ideas and social tradition.²⁸

Some academics argue that concentrating just on newspapers is biased and incomplete. While this may be true in some circumstances, I have not asked for anything more from my evidence than what I am providing, which is a historical examination of Acadian identity in the Southern imagination. I discovered that newspapers had a role in the establishment of Acadian identity during Reconstruction; it was not the only function, but it was an overlooked one. Acadian identity experts would complicate the idea that Acadians became Cajuns or Americans by observing that Southern political and social ideas influenced how they were perceived and that Paul Octave Hebert's opinions were influenced by Southern tradition and custom. Furthermore, Reconstruction newspapers were the "only mass medium" for the South and the "only source of information" from outside the area, according to Abbott.²⁹ According to another historian, Carl R. Osthaus, the influence of Southern editors on their readership resulted in a closed society, with "a closed press reinforcing and reiterating community views."³⁰

Newspaper proprietors, editors, and journalists developed close connections with political parties, often sought office themselves, and generally played a prominent role in politics. Federal government officials patronized favorable periodicals that included announcements, policy changes, or other governmental events. Because localized newspapers were limited in the number of voices contributing, an editor could control each issue. Whether in support or opposition to

²⁸ Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*; Charles F. Ritter, "The Press in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina and the End of Reconstruction, 1865-1877: Southern Men with Northern Interests." (Ph.D., United States -- District of Columbia, The Catholic University of America), accessed March 31, 2022, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/302768147/citation/CEE3F95780F1407DPQ/1>.

²⁹ Abbott, *For Free Press and Equal Rights*.

³⁰ Abbott, 2.

Acadians' place in society, newspaper stories frequently reflected a Southern mentality of defensive superiority, deeply rooted bigotry, and a romanticized past. Polarized political discourse grew less contentious as Reconstruction efforts decreased. By the conclusion of the Reconstruction era, proponents of a New South attempted to align with the national narrative by ignoring racial concerns, behaving as though racial boundaries and segregation were acceptable compromises that would halt the discrimination. Unfortunately, the settlement was not between whites and minority ethnic groups, but rather between whites who wished to codify white supremacy and white advocates for minorities; minorities' opinions were mostly ignored.

Both Republican and Democratic editors utilized their newspapers to sensationalize the Acadian people's social and political struggles. Republican editors utilized the social tragedies of Acadians to suggest that their lack of civilization is the type of conduct and attitudes that still keep the New South stuck in bad habits. Democratic editors were less dismissive of Acadians, but their publications still portrayed the ethnic group as noble savages vital to reviving the fading South. Editors "molded but also reflected, reinforced, and legitimized" their audience's beliefs.³¹ While it is difficult to quantify these editors' influence on their audiences' views, the ramifications of negative attitudes toward Acadians are met with enthusiasm and are perpetuated in an ongoing debate between states struggling to find political power in a not-quite-post-Civil War ethos where Confederate political power had not yet been quelled.

Essentially a Race Question

Intolerance of opposing views dominated both political sides and all social circles. Southern editors, whether Democrat or Republican, sought to maintain a social hierarchy based on racial discrimination. These divergent viewpoints not only indicate a contradiction in southern

³¹ Abbott, 1.

literary cultures, but they also present dramatically diverse interpretations of events. However, Republicans and Democrats reached similar conclusions regarding the role of the Acadians in the developing south. Acadians' social and political conflicts were sensationalized for the purpose of attracting, shocking, and swaying readers. The Republican papers embraced this insidious pattern more vigorously than Democrat editors, but not by much.

Political and Social Cultural Fall Out

In the still contentious North-South borderlands of Louisiana, editors wrote in a time where Emancipation was not popular, and the remnants of Civil War violence still erupted around them. Many Republican leaning Louisiana editors primarily came from the North and had preconceived negative views of Southern culture. The Acadians were especially anomalous, and their exploits stood out as particularly barbarous and different from their sophisticated Northern culture.

The literary culture around them, even after the end of the Civil War, continued to be affected by a certain set of racial and political biases. Brodhead argues that “writing has no life separate from the particularized mechanisms that bring it to public life.”³² At once, editors bring together their particular audience and hope to identify other reader interests in other social interests, such as race. In the same region or state, there are diverging group interests that converge at times when both sides question the civility and intelligence of Acadians.

Editors and journalists generally orient themselves in relation to their readership. The purpose of Acadian-related articles was to polarize readers and portray Acadians as incapable of self-government. Regardless of political and ethnic affiliations, their descriptions were the same

³² Richard H. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), 5.

for the most part, because they were viewing Acadian culture and life through a Southern identity lens. The Southern identity is constantly in debate with the northern viewpoint, influencing the perspectives of editors and journalists, regardless of their loyalty to a political party or some other group. In the North-South Louisiana borderlands, the us-verses-them dichotomy would come to dominate political ideology. The polarization would remake society's racial hierarchy by assigning Acadians to non-Anglo, subhuman categories.

Most Southerners believed Anglo's were the only fit people to rule a civilized society, which relegated the non-Anglo Acadians to the lower rungs of the racial hierarchy. Nonetheless, Acadians made social and political choices that aligned themselves with other Anglo Southerners, an alliance that lasted until Acadians began thinking about how to negotiate the future of the South and the end of Reconstruction. They were thinking more like a Southerner than a Northerner or American by maintaining racial boundaries between themselves and other groups. But eventually, much like Anglo whites who saw themselves as the propagators of all that is good, Acadians began to rewrite their history and reassert their exceptional nature of their culture because modern day Acadians care more about the construction of an Acadian identity than did their Reconstruction ancestors. This study utilizes some of the same sources modern Cajun historians used to qualify an editor or journalist's article on an event or examined the necessary backstory which involved Acadian governors Alexandre Mouton and Paul Octave Hebert or other historical characters with Acadian surnames. The analysis of the aforementioned sources is at the heart of the project's methodology, which aims to answer important questions that emphasize the themes of race, identity, and regionalism.

In the majority of the source newspapers, the editors were Anglo, thus, regionalism should be considered a salient player in the shaping of racial categories during the

Reconstruction era. Curiously, one of the only platforms upon which the polemic parties could agree was that Acadian's ability to participate in government was dubious at best. Acadians often made distinctions between themselves and others by adhering to the identity that gave them the most political and social power.

I sorted newspapers into rural/urban, Republican/Democrat, and English/French and looked for themes in the columns and editorial boards. The editors were frequently also the journalists in Louisiana newspapers of the Civil War and Reconstruction period. Most Democratic newspapers supported the views of the Old South, and when reading the Republican newspapers, the editor's view confirmed the existence of those views and a desire to challenge the Democrat perspective.

I recognize editorial bias, and bias proves my point that newspapers shape and are a reflection of public opinion. Public opinion was often ambivalent about what it meant to be an Acadian, and the prevailing conclusion is that Acadians were just as torn. The letters published by Acadians in newspapers provide insight into the mixed Acadian viewpoint. When Acadian groups or surnames appear in the narrative, I employ the clustering technique, established by Calder M. Pickett, in which I collect articles that contain the word Acadian. Acadians entered the record under certain circumstances, and each time I searched ten days before and ten days after. At times, Acadian reports are associated with violence, politics, or ridiculed subjects.

SOURCES

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Hurricanes Laura and Delta, the materials utilized in this study are largely digitized Louisiana newspapers of the Civil War and Reconstruction era and, to a lesser degree, documents housed at depositories in Louisiana and Texas and collected before these natural disasters. Although Acadian identity studies have adopted the same chronological

perspective, few consider the development of a Southern identity that emerges after Emancipation. Consequently, considering the various perspectives of rural/urban, Republican/Democrat, or English/French newspapers is crucial for analyzing the adaptation of Acadian identity. The materials utilized in this study are mostly Louisiana newspapers and, to a lesser degree, other state newspapers that are digitized and available through *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, a Library of Congress site, and *Newspapers.com*.

For *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, the search was limited to Louisiana newspapers, although other state newspapers were made available. In conjunction with LSU Libraries, *Chronicling America* makes available 128 Louisiana newspaper titles dating from between 1836 and 1922. *Newspapers.com* held newspaper titles and issues that overlapped with *Chronicling America* to ensure a large sample and would hold papers not found in *Chronicling America*. The sources used to a lesser degree are found through *Google Books* and *HathiTrust Digital Library*. Both sites hold congressional records and periodicals that reach a national audience. I used these sources to verify variations within the political conditions in the newspaper narrative. The significance of newspapers in general and Louisiana newspapers in particular provides a window into public opinion during the Civil War and Reconstruction era, where emancipation occurred earlier than in other southern states. These sources played a role in shaping public opinion about Acadians and, at times, revealing the politics of elite and non-elite Acadians.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This study traces the evolution of Acadian identity in both Democrat and Republican newspapers from wartime reconstruction to the restoration of the Democratic Party (1862-1877). Following a chronological order, this work spans the period when Union soldiers took control of

New Orleans (1862) and continued fighting in the Confederate borderlands until the failure of Reconstruction (1877) and the success of Southern Democrats. Taking the starting point of both overtly negative and covertly negative images of Acadians during intense conscription and economic depression, these images mark the beginning of a second Acadian identity change and forms the platform for which future Acadians will claim their uniqueness as Cajuns. This trend is traced through the end of Wartime Reconstruction into Presidential and then Radical Reconstruction, ending with Southern Democrats seizing control of Louisiana politics. This study concludes with the failure of Reconstruction when white Republicans chose race over political party loyalty and the loss of federal intervention. The overarching narrative, found in the five chapters of this work, seeks to highlight the interaction of the larger processes of the Union-Confederate Borderlands, mentioned above, with local forces in the state of Louisiana.

Chapter 1 1862-1865

In Chapter 1, I explore the years from 1862 to 1865, in which Acadian identity undergoes changes and challenges under wartime reconstruction. Although New Orleans had been captured by the Union Army, the rest of Louisiana had not. Two groups were formed as a result of ideological conflicts over the ownership of slaves, but this is only one factor dividing Acadians. Union sentiment did exist among Acadian planters and not all Acadian planters who owned slaves desired secession, for example, Paul Octave Hebert. Paul Octave Hebert, like Alexandre Mouton, owned slaves, but Hebert opposed secession while Mouton did not, implying that not all Acadian planters were necessarily pro-Southern. We cannot be sure that non-elite Acadians were not only not interested in fighting because they had no property or investment in slaves, but also because they did not want the disruption in their lives. The writings of non-elite Acadians are far and few between but combining all the sources reveals other conclusions. Perhaps

Acadian opposition to conscription had more to do with apathy than resistance to planter's slaving ideology; simply put, many non-elite Acadians were disinterested. Life did go on in the Confederate borderlands, along with battlefield reports, estate succession, selling of slaves, salt selling, or concerts and parish ordinances to close all drinking establishments. The rhetoric of editors and journalists contrived Acadian neutrality or Acadian identity into one that was a straggler or rascal. Conversely, writers' sentimentality and reverence characterized Acadians as simple or culturally untouched, thus representing the racial views of their readers.

Chapter 2 1866-1868

In Chapter 2, I explore the years from 1866 to 1868, in which Acadian identity undergoes changes and challenges under both Presidential and the beginnings of Radical Reconstruction. The study of how editors and journalists portray Acadians in relation to various events is the main focus of this chapter. Acadians enter the newspaper record as either primitive “Wanders” and persecuted immigrants, or as accomplished elite. As Acadians enter the Presidential reconstruction period, editors and journalists begin to write about them more frequently. Editors, journalists, and writers of history or literature seem to think about Acadians in different ways. An obvious pattern emerges, but apart from class, editors, journalists, and writers of different genres at times refer to the Acadians as a race, which would suggest other influences exist. These articles contained evidence of a North- South dialogue.³³ These themes complicate our understanding of Acadian identity and their capacity to remain an insular group. I also want to point out that the division also reflects the Acadians' racial attitudes and the general public opinion of Acadians.

³³ Woodward, *American Counterpoint*.

Chapter 3 1869-1871

In Chapter 3, I explore the years from 1869 to 1871, in which Acadian identity undergoes changes and challenges under Radical Reconstruction. The study of how editors and journalists portray Acadians in relation to various events is the main focus of this chapter. Acadians enter the newspaper record as either revered or violent. As Acadians enter the Presidential reconstruction period, editors and journalists begin to write about them more frequently. Editors, journalists, and writers of history or literature seem to think about Acadians in different ways. An obvious pattern emerges, but apart from class, editors, journalists, and writers of different genres at times refer to the Acadians as a race, which would suggest other influences exist. These articles contained evidence of an old South and new South dialectic. These themes complicate our understanding of Acadian identity and their capacity to remain an insular group. I also want to point out that the division also reflects the Acadians' racial attitudes and the general public opinion of Acadians.

Chapter 4 1872-1874

In Chapter 4, I explore the years from 1872 to 1874, in which Acadian identity undergoes changes and challenges under Radical Reconstruction. The study of how editors and journalists portray Acadians in relation to various events is the main focus of this chapter. Acadians enter the newspaper record as either revered or violent marauders. As Acadians enter the Presidential reconstruction period, editors and journalists begin to write about them more frequently. Editors, journalists, and writers of history or literature seem to think about Acadians in different ways. An obvious pattern emerges, but apart from class, editors, journalists, and writers of different genres at times refer to the Acadians as a race, which would suggest other influences exist. These articles contained evidence of an old South and new South dialectic. These themes complicate

our understanding of Acadian identity and their capacity to remain an insular group. I also want to point out that the division also reflects the Acadians' racial attitudes and the general public opinion of Acadians.

Chapter 5 1875-1877

In Chapter 5, I explore the years from 1875 to 1877, in which Acadian identity undergoes changes and challenges under Radical Reconstruction. The study of how editors and journalists portray Acadians in relation to various events is the main focus of this chapter. Acadians enter the newspaper record as either revered or violent marauders. As Acadians enter the Presidential reconstruction period, editors and journalists begin to write about them more frequently. Editors, journalists, and writers of history or literature seem to think about Acadians in different ways. An obvious pattern emerges, but apart from class, editors, journalists, and writers of different genres at times refer to the Acadians as a race, which would suggest other influences exist. These articles contained evidence of an old South and new South dialectic. These themes complicate our understanding of Acadian identity and their capacity to remain an insular group. I also want to point out that the division also reflects the Acadians' racial attitudes and the general public opinion of Acadians.

Chapter 1 1862-1865

The rights of the Southern States, the rights of the native country of A. [Adolphe] Olivier were contested and menaced, and a sectional President Lincoln ascended the seat honored and consecrated by Washington. Then South Carolina began to form the kernel of a vast Committee of Vigilance. What the Attakapas Parishes had done, seven states did successively by forming the Confederate States of America.

Alexandre Barde, 1861

The Vigilante Committees of the Attakapas: an Eyewitness Account of Banditry and Backlash in Southwestern Louisiana

VIGILANTE SECESSION

Editors and journalists concerned about the political and social instability of Louisiana frequently promoted a Southern identity or virtuous Southern citizen: one who was honorable, fit to self-govern, and not black. Although class consciousness shaped thinking, racial ideology would determine the political and social order of the new south. At first, Acadian identity would be viewed as racially dubious and inferior because Acadians did not fulfill the Southern criteria. However, throughout time, Acadians would perform southern-type things to challenge the dominant perspective, which is likely why the Cajun identity emerged. Editors and journalists sharpened their political and social views by using Acadians as a foil to the success or failure of a reconstructed Louisiana.

Barde was a French journalist for the *Opelousas Courier* in Vermillion Parish. He had written articles about vigilante activities after 1858 about the prairies west of the Mississippi River and perceived the vigilantes as French Revolutionaries.³⁴ A vigilante himself, he was tasked by vigilante members—most of whom were Acadian—to compile a history of the

³⁴ Alexandre Barde, David C. Edmonds, and Dennis A. Gibson, *The Vigilante Committees of the Attakapas: An Eyewitness Account of Banditry and Backlash in Southwestern Louisiana* (Lafayette, La.: Acadiana Press, 1981), 265.

committees.³⁵ Both his newspaper articles and his book stressed that, as Southerners, it was the obligation of civic minded well-meaning Acadians to protect their communities. The Attakapas region had been plagued by marauders, so the residents formed local militias and took matters into their own hands to defend their communities. It was racial ideology that determined who was accepted and who was not by the vigilantes. Historians argue that the formation of vigilante groups had less to do with justice and more to do with their political beliefs. Although the Attakapas region has a long history of instability due to warring sovereignties and disputed borders, what was emerging was a distinct southern identity. This story is about a group of settlers, Acadian settlers, in a period of time that was significant to their identity as southerners.³⁶ These parishes are home to a distinct group of French settlers who moved from Acadia prior to the 1803 purchase of the Louisiana Territory. Barde frequently reported on the activities of the vigilance committees and wrote in support of the vigilantes while disparaging vigilante opponents. Quoting Sarazan Broussard, Captain of the Committee of Vermillion Parish, Barde wrote,

I am only an Acadian, and I am not educated, but I have a heart which beats and at each pulsation, tells me that there are chiefs who have already accord mercy. I shall not accord any. There are leaders who punished robbery only, as if robbery was the only evil of society. There are leaders who have thrown bails on the misdeeds committed by men that they have had to charge. I shall throw no veil on my act whatsoever, nor any name. I have punished and shall punish perjury, rape, murder, forgery in all the acts which the code will repute as crime the code which the committees have momentarily thrown their disapproval on I shall punish crime summarily.³⁷

³⁵ Carl A. Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a People, 1803-1877* (University Press of Mississippi Jackson, 1992), 174–75.

³⁶ H. L. Griffin, “The Vigilance Committees of the Attakapas Country; or Early Louisiana Justice,” in *Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association* (Mississippi Valley Historical Association, Torch Press, 1915).

³⁷ Alexandre Barde, David C. Edmonds, and Dennis A. Gibson, *The Vigilante Committees of the Attakapas: An Eyewitness Account of Banditry and Backlash in Southwestern Louisiana* (Lafayette, La.: Acadiana Press, 1981).

A brief discussion of vigilantism during the secession crisis is required to understand the Acadian identity transformation from the mid to late nineteenth century. Southwest of the Mississippi, Louisiana parishes were experiencing their own civil war between vigilantes and non-vigilantes in the Attakapas region prior to the election of Abraham Lincoln. The Attakapas region was home to a large Acadian population, and the formation of these groups was to counteract increasing criminal activity, for they believed it was necessary to protect themselves and their property. Acadian vigilantes believed they had no choice but to protect the region from lawlessness caused by widespread criminal activity or unstable political institutions.

Superficially, the vigilante committees were a reaction to lawlessness and an ineffective government. The vigilantes wanted to control the region and create social boundaries around certain groups in order to maintain their racial superiority. Acadians were among the vigilantes, and these same Acadians would later support Louisiana's secession from the union and fight for the southern cause. Supporting the Confederacy and waging civil war would provide enough anarchy for them to assert their political dominance and control over the region. In southwest Louisiana, Anglo newspapers would define what it meant to be southern. Anglo editor and journalists would scapegoat Acadians to define what it meant to be a southerner. Non-Acadians were determined to marginalize and undermine Acadian political strength.

Despite the secession debate leading up to the start of the Civil War, the Louisiana newspaper community was reporting on vigilante committee activities in the Attakapas region, which is home to the state's large Acadian population. Acadians fled conscription, Brasseaux argues, but other Southerners did as well. Acadians were among many individuals avoiding conscription. By April of 1862, Confederate Governor Thomas O. Moore informed President

Jefferson Davis that “disloyal men” existed.³⁸ In his support of Acadian beliefs that the Civil War was not their war, perhaps Brasseaux relies on George C. Harding’s portrayal of Acadians to do so.³⁹ Most importantly, if you consider the rest of the article, it reveals negative stereotypes. Other journalists would continue to use it. He's relying upon an account from someone who is not Acadian but is considered a northerner or is a Union soldier. But what I find most interesting is what he left out and what scholar Ethel Taylor used.

This account of who the Acadians were is one of the earlier accounts that represent the negative views of the Acadians of Louisiana. Acadian related articles seem to stem from a discourse that existed after secession, and although the Civil War had ended, reconstruction had begun in parts of Louisiana. The creation of the Acadians as uncivilized simply shaped the various views that Southerners had at the time. Many were deserting, not just Acadians, so I am not sure this is an indication that Acadians believed the Civil War was a war for the elites. Due to the activities of Jayhawker raiders and Union raiders, Confederate seized cattle from locals, Black, white stragglers who terrorized Acadians, and Acadians observing families going through hardship. They believed their circumstances determined their beliefs in the war because they did find the Southern cause their cause. The Union thinks they can adopt Confederate conscripts into the Union Army. Among non-slave holding or planter Acadians, there was little support for the war, which is best demonstrated by the ongoing challenges to fleeing conscription.

January of 1861, Louisiana seceded from the Union and became a part of the Confederate States of America but by April of 1862, the Union Army occupied New Orleans then Baton

³⁸ Ethel Taylor, “Discontent in Confederate Louisiana,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 2, no. 4 (1961): 410–28, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4230635>.

³⁹ George Canady Harding, *The Miscellaneous Writings of George C. Harding* (Carlton & Hollenbeck, printers, 1882).

Rouge and the sugar parishes of southeastern Louisiana. President Abraham Lincoln predicted that areas conquered by Union soldiers, like New Orleans, would serve as a test bed for Reconstruction policies and relied upon “cooperation” between carpetbaggers and scalawags.⁴⁰ Unionists organized the Free State General Committee in the spring of 1863, and Lincoln relied on this organization to form a loyal government. Most of the members were from either New Orleans, North, or immigrants argues historian Ted Tunnell but what about Acadian planters.⁴¹ For example, Acadian planter and former Governor Alexandre Mouton married an Anglo woman and spent significant time in Washington as a Louisiana senator prior to the Civil War, which would meet Tunnell's Unionist criteria. However, Mouton was a live or die secessionist and leading into the Civil War he had a membership and supported vigilante activities in his region. Scholars suggest that vigilante committees were the basis for Civil War militia formations and a means of community mobilization.⁴²

Both historical claims cannot be entirely accurate. Another Acadian, once Governor Paul Octave Hebert spent a significant amount of time outside of the south. Although Carl Brasseaux believes that he was closely associated with Creole planters of French and Spanish ancestry, he ignores Hebert, who was also a unionist and was not a member of a vigilante committee, according to the evidence.⁴³ While Mouton had secessionist support of the lower class Acadians and the lower classes were misled by the Southern elite, Hebert's political and social life

⁴⁰ Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*.

⁴¹ Tunnell.

⁴² Jonathan Obert and Eleonora Mattiacci, “Keeping Vigil: The Emergence of Vigilance Committees in Pre-Civil War America,” *Perspectives on Politics* 16, no. 3 (September 2018): 608, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S153759271800107X>.

⁴³ Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*, 59.

warrants further examination; perhaps he was more Southern than Acadian or Creole for that matter.⁴⁴

Surprisingly few general histories of the Civil War and Reconstruction Louisiana mention Acadians; however, Cajun historians and Louisiana Acadian historians accepted the challenge. When Louisiana entered Wartime Reconstruction, Lincoln had hoped Southern Unionists would support the Republican cause, but what he did not foresee was the force of white loyalty to a Southern identity. Louisiana was located on the fringe of the Confederate borderland and perhaps relative to other southern states most divided over secession. In Louisiana, dissenters did exist. There were professionals with few slaves who were opposed to secession. At first sugar planters were interested in cooperation but eventually got on board when emancipation was possible. New Orleanian ethnic and socioeconomic makeup was highly diverse, and most were from the north. Most Unionists in Civil War Louisiana were either born and raised in the North or abroad or where slavery was the weakest is argued by Ted Tunnell.⁴⁵ His argument makes sense, however both Brasseaux and Tunnell do not consider Hebert could be a Unionist. Hebert did marry a woman from Louisiana, her father was a planter. He was a sugar planter.

Brasseaux emphasizes Hebert was Creole but the biography from which he is referencing also argues he was a unionist. But Tunnell's formula for Unionists that has some relationship to the North should also include Paul Octave Hebert. Hebert had fought in the U.S. Mexico War after he attended West Point. I would not consider him a bulwark for the Republican party, but he eventually came around in support of the Unification Movement; thus, I would argue he was a

⁴⁴ Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*; Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*.

⁴⁵ Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*.

Unionist, even though he fought for the Confederacy. I also think the role he played in the war was motivated by his experience in the U.S. Mexico War because many of these officers had that experience. Hebert did not qualify as a scalawag under historian Frank J. Wetta's standards, even though he was born in Louisiana but had foreign ancestry. His ideological leaning was more influenced by his involvement in the US-Mexico War, West Point, and political ambition.⁴⁶

In May 1862, General Benjamin Butler took command of New Orleans, which began wartime Reconstruction. Confederate government pass the Conscription Act in April of 1862 Acadians an isolated people limited to parish boundaries argued by Brasseaux and only Acadian slave holders cared about the war to save their property but instead of their diverging interests could this war remind them of another forced removal from land and loss of property. There was a large Acadian planter and large farm population wanted to differentiate themselves from the Acadian yeoman farmer and the planter sought support from these small farm Acadians. For example, Alexander Mouton was elected as a delegate to the Democratic party, but not all Acadians supported secession and wanted to cooperate. Brasseaux argues that the poor non-slave-holding Acadians were an insular group and wanted to be left alone not wanting any part in the war.

The formation of a southern identity from a conversation between Northern and Southern perspectives, with Acadians in the middle, is depicted in the newspapers. As early as the late 1840s, or possibly even earlier, fewer negative stereotypes of Acadians appeared in Louisiana newspapers, but the nature of the stereotypes were similar to the Civil War and Reconstruction labels. For example, on March 30th, 1847, an article appeared in the New Orleans *Daily Delta*

⁴⁶ Frank J. Wetta, *The Louisiana Scalawags: Politics, Race, and Terrorism during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

referring to Acadians as “the poorer part of the Creole population.”⁴⁷ However, the frequency of Acadian characterizations changed because of secession and the Civil War. In an 1862 article, Cajun, a racist derivation of Acadian, or an alternative spelling was mentioned along with an explanation of why Cajun is connected with Acadian. Early articles with derogatory references to Acadians describe who they were, however, Acadians became American citizens by 1803 and arrived in 1785 as French settlers brought by the Spanish Empire.

Anglo newspapers reflected the racist views and ideas of their readers, which were mostly white and validated the views of the newspaper. Editors and Journalists wanted to make money by writing sensational articles. When writing about speculative, gossip, or eye opening or investigative reporting, editors, journalists, and writers would often mention Acadians as either a tourist attraction or unfit to self-govern. Alicia P. Long argues that Civil War New Orleans began to exploit the “difference and decadence” to profit from it and increase tourism.⁴⁸ Journalists and editors were very clear as to what Acadians were. Financially supported by the federal/union government, editors/proprietors wrote about Acadians in negative ways. Perhaps they even contrived events and people to fit the views of their readers and controlling partner. Acadians appear directly referred to or the group referenced are Acadians. On December 8, 1863, President Lincoln announced the 10 percent plan. This plan allowed for 10 percent of the voters, who sided with the Union, to create a loyal government. On December 24 he asked General Banks to establish a free-state government.

During 1862-1863, Louisiana newspapers did not center the Acadian question; however, in 1864, there is a resurgence of attention to Acadian culture. Various Acadian surnames,

⁴⁷ “Suffering in the Prairies,” *Daily Delta*, March 30, 1847, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/261614182/>.

⁴⁸ Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920*, Louisiana pbk. ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

including Hebert, appeared such as report of a missing slave owned by an Oscar Hebert, the estate settlement of Therese Hebert, a lost dog of Jos Hebert, prisoner of war release of Louis Hebert's cousin, and the death of Achelle Hebert cousin of P.O. Hebert. Lastly P.O. Hebert, who would eventually lose his son, Lt. Thomas Paul Hebert, his eldest son would be news. Although the most important reference to Acadians was written outside of Louisiana for the period, there are few useful references to Acadians or Acadian surnames. Outside of the years 1862, 1864, and on, there are few references to Acadians by editors or columnists. Editor and columnist references to Acadians exist, but they are scattered throughout the time period preceding the end of Wartime Reconstruction. In some instances, Acadians appear as political officials, suffering from starvation, or as divorced, but the most relevant are columns relating to the impending secession.

While pre-Civil War Acadian newspaper references are limited, they increased in the after the Civil War began and evidence of scapegoating and tourist attraction emerges. For example, in an 1860 *Sunday Delta* editorial titled "The Cause in St. James," Acadians are used as a pawn to make a case for Southern rights. Apparently, the writer was implying that if it weren't for some unionists, Acadians would support southern rights or secession. Nonetheless, the author implies that Acadians are illiterate, stating that "when they read at all,..." and agency less. The article suggests that the group already holds an opinion about secession and eventually would fight for the right to maintain ownership of slaves, even though the article refers to states' rights.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Colonel, "The Cause in St. James," *The Sunday Delta*, December 23, 1860, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/legacy/281679214/?terms=Acadian&match=1>.

Furthermore, the author describes the possibility of participating in secession “en masse.” Perhaps when the writer wrote “en masse,” he was referring to the vigilante groups of the Attakapas region. When considering the events of these “vigilante” groups located in regions where a large number of Acadians participated in and even led some of these groups, one must consider that Acadians were interested in establishing their self-rule. Or as Johnathan Olbert and Elenora Mattaiacci argue, attempting “to confer new civic identities in conditions marked by high levels of ethno-nationalist heterogeneity and institutional instability...social frontiers.”⁵⁰ These vigilante committees determined who was in and who was out. It was a race to see who was more representative of the local population, and Acadians were determined to make their mark. If it hasn't already been stated, Acadian vigilante groups took control of the region's politics, and with secession and the establishment of the Confederation, Acadians saw this as an opportunity to seize control. I think Hebert did not take part in the vigilante committees because, despite being a local sugar plantation owner and Acadian like Governor Mouton, Hebert served on President Ulysses S. Grant's board of Commissioners of Engineers after the Civil War, a role a saboteur could not obtain. The north-south dialogue played a huge part in the choices people made in the south, even for Acadians like Hebert, who was a unionist during succession or a sympathizer or perhaps a scalawag during reconstruction.⁵² Perhaps few references to Acadians entered the newspaper record because the war began, but we do see an important reference to Acadians in 1862. The article was based on the testimony of a POW Union soldier held at Camp Pratt.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Olbert and Eleonora Mattiacci, “Keeping Vigil: The Emergence of Vigilance Committees in Pre-Civil War America,” *Perspectives on Politics* 16, no. 3 (September 2018): 600–616, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S153759271800107X>.

⁵² I describe P. O. Hebert as a skalawag because he was a leaning advocate for the Unification Movement. In his study, one historian mentions him but minimizes his participation in the movement.

1862

Born in Tennessee, George C. Harding moved to Paris, Illinois, and after a failed attempt to find employment in St. Louis, Missouri, returned to Illinois, where he learned the printing trade.⁵¹ Harding became the editor and owner of the *Courier* and then started the *Ledger*, but because of family issues, he left and moved south to Houston, Texas, where he worked as an associate editor for the *Telegraph*. Prior to the Civil War, he left the south and went north, “desiring to be on the right side.”⁵² After joining the Twenty-First Indiana regiment, he continued to send letters from the field to the Cincinnati *Commercial*, and after resigning as a Second Lieutenant in 1864, he began working for the New Orleans *Times* but was short-lived.

During the war, Harding was a prisoner of war and imprisoned in New Iberia, Louisiana. After the Union Army occupied New Orleans in 1862, the Confederate Army established Camp Pratt as a facility to train conscripts and house prisoners of war. On December 12, 1862, the Cincinnati *Commercial* printed Harding's letter titled "The Louisiana Cajuns." He wrote about his time at Camp Pratt and his interactions with Acadian conscripts.⁵³ His piece characterized Acadians as primitive and uncivilized, implying that they are unqualified to rule themselves. He wrote the following,

Camp Pratt was filled with Cajun conscripts. You don't know what a Cajun is? Of course you don't, but I will try and tell you. A Cajun is half- savage creature, of mixed French and Indian blood. They live in the swamps, and subsist by fishing and hunting and cultivating a small patch of corn and sweet potatoes. They are sallow, dried-up and. . . like in appearance, and stolid and stupid in expression. The wants of the Cajun are few, and his habits simple. With a bit of corn-bread, a potato, and a clove of garlic, with an occasional indulgence in stewed crawfish, he gets along quite comfortably, and for luxuries smokes husk cigarettes, and drinks rum when he can get it. The Cajun has great powers of endurance, but not much stomach for a fight. Of the herd at Camp Pratt

⁵¹ George Canady Harding, *The Miscellaneous Writings of George C. Harding* (Carlton & Hollenbeck, printers, 1882).

⁵² Harding, 6.

⁵³ Harding, *The Miscellaneous Writings of George C. Harding*.

desertions we're quite frequent, sometimes as many as 30 or 40 stampeding in a single light. But they would be caught, brought back, made to wear a barrel for a week or two, and finally broken in. . . but were driven back further and further by the advancing tide of civilization into the swamps, where they live like savages and bred like rabbits. They were called 'Cadians by the better settlers, and looked upon in something of the same light as the sand hillers and dirt-eaters of the Carolinas—poor white trash. The rebel authorities do not expect much service from them, but distribute them about to fill up old regiment. While I was at Camp Pratt I saw more than 2,000 of these marched off at different times, always under a Calvary guard.

I cannot say we were abused by the Cajuns. They did not insult, but exasperated us dreadfully. In the cool evening they would gather about our quarters, and stand, or sit squatted on their haunches, for hours, not saying a word to ourselves or to each other, but regarding us with a grim, stupid stare, reminding me strongly of the manner in which the lower class of Choctaws, in the Indian Country, sit and gaze at a circus bill.

Occasionally, the Cajuns would come up to have a look at the Yankees—generally elderly females, in dingy wrappers, fastened only at the throat. Occasionally, however, we would see jolie demoiselle, nut brown, but lithe and graceful in appearance, hanging lovingly upon her gallant's arm, and shrinking timidly from too near an approach to the Yankees, reminding me of the fascinated but terrific expression of a schoolgirl regarding the lions in a menagerie.⁵⁴

Although Harding's article was not found in a Louisiana newspaper the quote is relevant and is perhaps one of the most offensive. His perspective as a northerner in the South, but not unfamiliar with the South, creates a foreign image of Acadians, and his perspective emerged from a dialogue between northern and southerners. At its core, the debate between Northerners and Southerners was over slavery, and each side firmly believed that the other was foreign to the other. The Civil War threw the regions into disarray and the political and social boundaries collapsed. Beginning with the secession debates, Northerners saw themselves as innately superior to the south and Louisianians, which served to categorize Acadians and helped shape Northerners' identities. By racializing Acadians, non-Acadians emphasized their racial superiority by constructing an identity based on being honorable, cultured, and fit to self-govern.

⁵⁴ George C. Harding, "The Louisiana Cajuns," *Delaware Gazette*, December 12, 1862, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/329795289/>; Harding, *The Miscellaneous Writings of George C. Harding*.

1863

On May 15th, an article in the New Orleans *Times Picayune* announced the arrest of ex-governor Alexandre Mouton at his plantation near Vermilionville. Mouton, a member of the local vigilance committee, refused to hand over his plantation to Union troops. Perhaps challenging Union soldiers is further evidence of his perception of a schism between the North and the South, or the Union and the Confederacy. As early as August 29th, 1863, editors began reporting that Southern papers were no longer in existence. The papers were also reporting on jayhawkers, a term coined by Confederates fleeing conscription in the region, which was home to many Acadians.

The *New Orleans Times* published an article titled "War and Incendiarism" on September 24th, 1863. The author suspected that the fires that destroyed several steamboats on the Mississippi River were the result of vigilante activity. Although he does not express a southern identity directly in the following quote, he does refer to an American identity, which may imply that a southern identity does not exist; however, American to this author means Northern.

According to the author,

We do not mean that the people should take the law into their own hands, in such cases as we have now to deal with; for we are fortunate enough to have those now watching over us who are both willing and able to protect us. What we do assert, however, is that if such events as we are now alluding to should threaten to become anything like chronic, it will be the duty and interest of all good citizens to combine and form themselves into "Vigilance Committees;" not to inflict punishment but to hand detected villains over to the proper authorities, to mete out the due reward; and it is to be hoped that the latter—seeing the enormous danger and misery that such practices involve—will make the punishment of a nature to strike terror to the hearts of malefactors.

We repeat that we have no fears whatever of the possible inauguration or continuance of such a disgraceful and barbarous mode of warfare. When things come to such a pass, it is no longer a question between North and South, between this, that, or the other ism, but simply a matter between Americans on one side, and wild beasts on the other. No men--we care not where he comes from, or what his notions maybe about the Negro or anything else-- is going to tolerate a state of things that is to continue cosigning to the

flames the products of man's industry, the fruits of God's fair earth, and mingle friend and foe in one universal desolation; for what?-- that a comparative handful of scheming and rascally political Southern leaders shall succeed in destroying our country, establishing in its stead an oligarchy based upon human slavery, and trampling forever upon the liberties *not only of black men but the white.*⁵⁵

It is interesting that the author's argument is to identify with Americans, but he still suggests forming a vigilance committee to combat the "wild beasts" the author refers to. His argument continues to imply that there are two groups based on those who support the Union and those who support the Confederacy.

By the year's end in 1863, the topic of Confederate conscription and dereliction had begun to be discussed. One of the earliest articles that appeared in the *Opelousas Courier* published an article in English, not French, titled "Stragglers." Whom the author has in mind are the civilians who have yet to take up arms in support of the Confederacy. Through the publication of this piece, the editor is calling attention to the importance of supporting the Confederacy as a patriotic duty for Southerners. Nobody knows why the French version of the article titled "Stragglers" was never printed, but the editor thought it was interesting enough to reprint from the *Clarion* in Meridian, Mississippi.

Much, too, depends upon the people to correct this fatal evil. There is, there can be, no vindication for men who neglect the most solemn duty they owe to mankind and absent themselves from their post at a crisis like the one transpiring. The people of the country should you with relentless and undisguised disapprobation any attempt upon the part of any man, whose health and Aid call him into service to shirk the duty he owes his native land.⁵⁶

A central tenet of the author's argument is that anyone of fighting age who is not actively serving in the Confederate military should be disregarded as a Confederate supporter. The editor's

⁵⁵"War and Incendiarism," *The New Orleans Times*, September 24, 1863, Morning edition, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/legacy/202179889/?terms=%22vigilance%20committees%22&match=1>.

⁵⁶"Stragglers," *The Opelousas Courier*, December 5, 1863, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83026389/1863-12-05/ed-2/seq-1/>.

decision to publish this piece in a region with a sizable Acadian population is indicative of the consensus among his audience. Finally, his listeners imagine that they are genuine Southerners.

An editorial titled "A Card" and signed by Dewitt C. Israel appeared in the final issue of the English-language *Opelousas Courier* that year. After being called a "skulking individual in good health and a good fighter," Israel defends himself against the accusation by "un soldat" that he deserted the Confederate army in an editorial published the previous weekend, on the 12th of December 1863. Perhaps because Israel's editorial was in English, he was Anglo, and he referred to the other writer as "un soldat" which means soldier in French. Israel was responding to an editorial a week earlier, in which a writer signed Soldat claimed Israel evaded conscription. He stated,

Ne serait-il pas absurde ou insensé, le Général qui exempterait un skulking individual se portant bien, se battant bien, comme il est arrivé dans cette ville a un M. Dewitt C Israel, et qu' on trouverait un M. Edmond Guidry fit for duty, ayant en une main d'emportee sur les champs de bataille de la Virginie? O liberté, equité. justice!!! que deviendrez-vous, vous qu'on admirait, vous qu on rêverait autrefois? L' avenir le dira.⁵⁷

Wouldn't it be absurd or insane, the General who would exempt an individual skulking who is doing well, fighting well, as has happened in this city to a Mr. Dewitt C Israel, and that one would find a Mr. Edmond Guidry fit for duty, having in one hand carried on the battlefields of Virginia? O liberty, equity. justice!!! What will become of you, you whom we admired, you whom we would once dream of? The future will tell.⁵⁹

One could assume because the author was well versed in French, he was of French ancestry.

While the article does not give us a clear indication whether or not he was an Acadian, he does expose M. Edmond Guidry. Guidry is an Acadian surname. Two weeks later and in the English edition of the *Courier* Dewitt Israel responded to "Soldat" in an editorial titled "A Card." Israel asserted,

⁵⁷Soldat, "Au Sujet De La Conscription," *The Opelousas Courier*, December 12, 1863, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/legacy/161600340/>.

⁵⁹ Jessica DeJohn Bergen translation.

The conduct of 'un soldat,' whoever he may be, does not appear to me very soldier-like inasmuch as he has assailed My character in an article written in French, when everyone who knows me, knows that I do not understand that language.

But Mr. 'Un Soldat.' declares his intention of answering to anyone, who may feel offended at his article. Now I do feel deeply offended at that article, and make the issue with its writer. I am no skulking individual, and I charge M. "Un Soldat" as having stated a willful and malignant falsehood, and if he does not answer this charge as a soldier should do I will add a stronger epithet.

I regret having to appear before the public through your columns, in this unpleasant attitude, yet my reputation has been ruthlessly and unprovokedly attacked by someone over an anonymous signature, and it is a duty I owe to my manhood, to unmask the creature, however hideous he may appear, who has coveted this exposure, and hold myself in readiness to answer to him for doing whenever it may suit his fancy to call upon me.⁵⁸

First, the *Courier* editors thought the conversation between Israel and "Un Soldat" was newsworthy. Whether it was a misunderstanding or a direct attack, by printing the editorials, they sensationalized real issues. In this case, "Un Soldat" was not considering Guidry or Israel as representatives of an ethnic group. "Un Soldat" regards Israel as dishonest and unpatriotic, which in itself is a move to distance himself racially from Israel. "Un Soldat" refers to revolutionary zeal of the French by referring to democratic values. The author, like other Southern men, reacted to attacks on their honor. Perhaps war equalizes ethnic views, but from Israel's perspective, he distances himself from anything French and claims superiority, just as "Un Soldat's" claims Israel was un-Southern. Even though Union and Confederate sympathies divided Louisianians, regardless of ethnicity, race was extremely important.

⁵⁸ Dewit C. Israel, "A Card," *Opelousas Courier*, December 26, 1863, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/legacy/161600377/>.

1864

The interaction between colonized and colonizer was especially significant during the Civil War, when the US government was attempting to protect its territory while avoiding intervention by other imperial powers. The Secretary of State, William Henry Seward, was a fervent imperialist who was unshakable in his commitment to the expansion and defense of American territory in the late nineteenth century. During this time, we can see how race and empire intertwined, how empire shaped racial categorization, and how various components of the system played out in determining whether people could rule themselves. Despite Walter Nugent's argument that the Civil War "resurrected" territorial expansion notions in 1865, Seward wrote and spoke of expansion as early as the 1840s, and maintained these ideas of empire which meant the subjugation of non-Anglos and Anglo Americans' racial superiority.⁵⁹

Historians may disagree on the motivations for US expansion, but the evidence suggests that ideas of American superiority shaped debates about the perceived capacity for people to self-govern. It was the idea of "manifest destiny" that gave Anglo Americans their sense of superiority. Many researchers have focused on how Manifest Destiny affected Native Americans, African Americans, and Mexicans as the United States grew, but few have considered how the ideology also affected the Acadians. "Noble savage" rhetoric served to essentialize and objectify the Acadian people and simultaneously advocated for their preservation. Because so few Acadians could read and write, travelers' accounts often perpetuated stereotypes about their people and provided a platform for advocates of colonial rule to advance their cause. The United States' treatment of the Acadians, like that of other ethnic

⁵⁹ Walter T. K Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 238–39.

groups, was racially motivated and based on a false dichotomy between civilized and barbarian. Some editors and journalists portrayed Acadians in a racist light, while others increasingly argued for the preservation of Acadian culture.

When compared to other years of Wartime Reconstruction, 1864 witnessed much more newspaper mentions of Acadians. For example, on April 22nd, the New Orleans *Daily True Delta* published "Secretary Seward on the Louisianians." In the first few paragraphs, the author states that Secretary Seward was pragmatic, putting to rest fears about French Louisianians' commitment to France. Despite the journalist's belief that Creoles—of French and Spanish ancestry—are loyal to the union, the author was wrong in his estimation of Creole union loyalty. The journalist wished to debunk Creole loyalty to France, but at the Acadian's expense. The author argues,

The Creoles of this State and city have always been the most sincere patriots, and consequently the very best Americans. They were the last to give in to the heresy of secession, stood longest by the Union, and shamed the Anglo-Americans by their devotion to the country, as they are the first, now that an opportunity is offered them, to come forward and sustain the government in all its acts. They cheerfully yield up an institution which had almost become sacrificed in their estimation, and without murmuring, are willing to surrender even their slaves at the demand of patriotism to save their country. They have furnished but few soldiers to the Confederacy willingly, and those that were forced to bear arms against country sought the first available opportunity to escape from the thralldom in which they were held by their conscript masters and return to their allegiance and now the loyal inhabitants in the city and in the country.⁶⁰

According to Ted Tunnell, a historian of Louisiana's Reconstruction era, most unionists had some connection to the North and lived in the southeastern region of the state.⁶¹ The author argues that Louisianians of French and Spanish descent were loyal to the union and France, but

⁶⁰"Secretary Seward on the Louisianians," *The Daily True Delta*, April 22, 1864, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/354663034/?terms=Acadian%20or%20Acadians&match=1>.

⁶¹ Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*.

in his defense, he singles out the Acadians. The Acadians become the subject of the author's attention. He asserts,

So bitterly have the Confederates felt this defection, that with them, the term Acadian (or Cajun as it is pronounced by learned and unlearned, indiscriminately,) has become a term of reproach, and it is by this epithet the Creoles in the country parishes in Western Louisiana are known. These unfortunate people have suffered much during this war, and particularly since their "pleasant seats" on the beautiful banks of the Teche have been made the theater of hostile operations, but they are still true to their country, and so is the same or similar class which comprises the largest portion of the population, known as the "ancient people." The Acadians have passed through many tribulations, and would seem to be pursued by the wrath of some relentless deity. . .⁶²

The writer's intent was to disprove rumors that French Louisianans felt sympathetic toward the French monarchy. The author's negative portrayal of the Acadians is an attempt to win over unionist and anti-secessionist readers. Despite the fact that the article refers to Louisianians of French descent as Americans rather than Southerners, the writer was thinking in terms of the Union.

In the following quote, the author appeals to another notion to reinforce the credibility of his dogmatic assertions. Perhaps the editor draws a parallel between Seward and Thomas Moore since Seward like Moore was an intellectual or authority. The author claims that Tom Moore was objective in his judgment of his subject. The writer explains,

could you describe the people, institutions, customs, character, as well as the geographical in topographical positions in nature of countries he had never visited, more truthful and much more poetically and even travelers who had been eyewitnesses to that which they described in route from personal observation.⁶³

The author is commenting on an excerpt from Secretary Seward. The author is alluding to impartiality in travel writing, yet many writers do not visit the locations they write about, giving

⁶²"Secretary Seward on the Louisianians."

⁶³"Secretary Seward on the Louisianians."

the reader a false sense of objectivity. However, the author claims, Seward “is somewhat gifted in the same way [as Thomas Moore]” as “he understands and appreciates our local political character as well.”⁶⁴

Travel literature, like other forms of cultural artifacts, reveals the rhetoric and narrative of race. Travel writing elucidates the “meaning-making powers of empire.”⁶⁵ Race and empire have a symbiotic relationship, both justifying each other. The author goes on to say “although he [Seward] has never, to our knowledge, visited Louisiana, at least not for a great many years, still he appreciated our local political character as well,” then he reifies his authority by claiming that he is as knowledgeable as “most of our oldest citizens.”⁶⁶ The premise of the article is to reject the question that Creoles are Americans. After quoting Seward, the author argues his points of whether or not the French in Louisiana are committed Americans by placing them on the racial hierarchy by saying “we mean by that term the American born descendants of French or Spanish ancestry.”⁶⁷

In the next quotation, the author emphasizes, in combination with his previous opinion, that not all non-whites are Creoles. Louisianians’ sense of race was shaped by their notions of expansion and governance, which is clear when the author writes:

There is now no more a hook for a French intervention to grapple to in Louisiana than there is in any other state in the union. The respect or love for France among our creole population—and we mean by that term the American born descendants of French or Spanish ancestry—is this same as that felt by the American born descendants of English forefathers, and nothing more and we all know how far is that goes.⁶⁸

⁶⁴“Secretary Seward on the Louisianians.”

⁶⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes : Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁶⁶“Secretary Seward on the Louisianians.”

⁶⁷ “Secretary Seward on the Louisianians.”

⁶⁸ “Secretary Seward on the Louisianians.”

By highlighting the relationship between Creoles and Americans, the author suggests the formation of identity in the setting of the Civil War, but Acadians as a tool to identify racial hierarchy was hardened, and racial thought impacted all thinking. The author argued,

so bitterly have the Confederates felt this defection, that with theme the term Acadian or Cajan as it is pronounced by learned and unlearned, indiscriminately, has become a term of reproach and it is by this epithet the creole in the country parishes in western Louisiana are known.⁶⁹

The author is making a statement those who supported the Confederacy described those who did not support the confederacy as “Acadians,” which for the purpose was to prove the Creoles support the Union, but Acadians did not. In addition, the discourse creates some racial difference between Anglo and Acadian cultures by referring to Acadians as "these unfortunate people" and "ancient people." These descriptions demand there be some oppositional term to counterbalance term such as a fortunate people or modern people to “charge it with polarized discursive energy.”⁷⁰

These terms “created a point of polarity that enabled manipulative control of any subject to which it was attached in the system of colonial politics.”⁷¹ The adoption of these phrases led to the increasing stereotype of Acadians as savage and uncivilized, and so Cajun. Describing Acadians as noble because they are an ancient people and unfortunate because of their savagery was a means of controlling and lowering them in the racial hierarchy. Similarly, to how colonial rulers constructed a taxonomy of imperial subjects in order to govern them, editors and journalists did the same for southerners in order to manage people. This implies that by doing so,

⁶⁹ “Secretary Seward on the Louisianians.”

⁷⁰ Terry Jay Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 219, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520925922>.

⁷¹ Ellingson, 220.

Acadians would be reduced to Cajun status, becoming less sophisticated, noble, and savage. Even more persuasive was the employment of empire or imperial agents as supporters of empire to boost Unionist feeling or override sectional divides, as argued by Shelley Streeby in “The Dime Novel, the Civil War, and Empire.”⁷² She argues that rhetoric produced by southerners that claimed some type of allegiance to the Union” made visible “the imperial and transnational power relations.

In the weeks that followed, Acadian references by editors and journalists took on a fascination with the exotic nature of the community. On April 29th, in the *New Orleans Times* in an article titled “National and Local Peculiarities,” the author refers to Acadians. The article begins by arguing that attitudes toward ethnicities have shifted.

Common observation recognizes marked distinctions among the tongues and peoples of the earth; sometimes national, sometimes only local. The gay Frenchman and the metaphysical German are alike different in body and in spirit; and the sons of the Rose, the Thistle and the Shamrock are so marked in manner and in make that one can scarcely be mistaken for the other.⁷³

The author's point is that in some places, it would be impossible to tell one ethnic group apart from another, but in Louisiana, the ethnic makeup is quite unique. The writer claims that the Acadians are not only unlike other Louisianans, but also lack dignity. He argues,

Even in different portions of our own country, there are characteristic differences among the people. The origin and religion of the inhabitants continue, through hereditary and social channels, to influence generation after generation, and even the most broadly recognized principles of democratic equality have failed to remove those fundamental and ingrained tendencies.⁷⁴

⁷² Shelley Streeby, “The Dime Novel, the Civil War, and Empire,” in *American Sensations*, vol. 9 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 214–48, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520935877-010>.

⁷³“National and Local Peculiarities,” *The New Orleans Times*, April 29, 1864, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/legacy/204091085/?terms=Acadian&match=1>.

⁷⁴ “National and Local Peculiarities.”

According to this interpretation, Acadians are still uncivilized because they do not share republican ideals. The author continues his argument of a peculiar group. He states,

Among the peculiar people of Louisiana are those denominated Acadians, or *Cajans* as the vulgar have it. In the past of this people there are many elements of romance, though but little which is calculated to dignity or embellish history. Their ancestors were the earliest settlers of what is now called Nova Scotia—then Acadia. Judge Haliburton, in his “History of Nova Scotia,” and Longfellow, in his “Evangeline,” have glanced at the story of their expulsion in quite a sentimental and pathetic manner, weaving with the warp of facts the woof of much fine fiction⁷⁵

The quote is an example of the way Southern journalists and editors attracted readers. In doing so, they made Louisiana more appealing to potential settlers by romanticizing some aspects of Louisiana culture, portraying Acadians as harmless and encouraging controversy. Articles like this one paint Acadians as passive and harmless because it was believed that Acadians were not hardworking. In the following excerpt of the same article the author refutes Longfellow’s perspective of Acadians by arguing that,

But in all this, we verily believe, there was a great deal more of fiction than of fact. In the more remote settlements, the Acadians were not disturbed, and they remain to this day the same peculiar people—indolent, contented, unambitious—but they are by no means so pure or so temperate as the limners have painted them.⁷⁶

The author claims the Acadians are backward and uneducated because their culture prioritizes religion above all else and they have failed to make good use of the land.

And those that were brought to Louisiana—what of them? Their lines [lives] were certainly cast in pleasant places. The rich lands of Iberville and the fertile prairies of Opelousas became their heritage. For a sterile soil in an inhospitable climate they received a land of milk and honey in a “clime of the Sun.” But even with these changed external conditions they too retained their old peculiarities—their old lightheartedness—their old indolence. As Sam Slick says of their cousins, the *habitants* of Lower Canada, “they give their souls to the priests, their businesses to the notary, and all that they keep for themselves as fiddling and dancing.” We have seen and studied them both in their northern and southern homes, and in the one place they are neither more successful as agriculturalists nor useful as citizens than they are in the other. Indolence and careless

⁷⁵ “National and Local Peculiarities.”

⁷⁶ “National and Local Peculiarities.”

indifference follow them under all changes of circumstance, marking them as by a type; following them with the pertinacity of a shadow. And in these respects they differ materially from the rest of the Creole inhabitants of Louisiana. The men who came here with Iberville, Bienville, and Carondelet, claim a different ancestry. In their constitution they had something of the Norman element, and that still survives, for—we say it not irreverently—in people, as in stock, “blood will tell.”⁷⁷

The Acadians are singled out as the unlucky ones in the author's view of Louisiana's multiethnic population. The author thinks that Acadians are not hardworking or ambitious, and that their lack of sophistication and lack of willpower will prevent them from helping the South recover from the effects of the Civil War.

The New Orleans *Daily Picayune* published an article titled "Our Old Folks" in October 1864. This column, like many before it, failed to give any sort of credit to its author, and it, too, provided a summary of Acadian history and a description of the people's humble lifestyle. The Acadian people and their way of life could serve as a tourist attraction. The author begins discussing why climate and creole ability to acclimate but debunks this theory based on the Acadian population.

The clinching argument, however, against the climatologists and in favor of the theory which we maintain—that health and long life depend more upon habitat, upon a proper observance of the true principles of the science of living, and the adaptability of the mind and body to physical changes, than upon climate, is to be found in fact that those persons, of what race so[]ever and from what climate so[]ever they may come, who on settling here assimilate their mode of life to that of the old population, attained a like old age and like preservation of their faculties. Such was the case with the emigrants to this city from the Northern States and its early days. When they settled here the Creole habits and fashions predominated; Creole and French ideas controlled in all social customs and modes of living. The emigrant quickly fell in with the prevalent fashions. Many intermarried with the old populations, and raise large families accumulated great wealth, and live to a good old age.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ “National and Local Peculiarities.”

⁷⁸ “Our Old Folks,” *The Daily Picayune*, October 2, 1864, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/legacy/27271541/?terms=Acadian&match=1>.

The author is arguing that the South does, in fact, has a different culture and a long history.

They who are living, and the others named, who have but recently departed this life, are historic illustrations of the truth of our proposition, that a healthy and vigorous old age is as attainable in this climate and locality as in any other, by those who have good sense and self command to adapt their habits to their circumstances who have either an intuitive or acquired comprehension and appreciation of the secrets of what Montaigne styles “*Mon métier et mon art de vivre*”[My job and my way of life.]⁷⁹

A couple of points this particular article emphasizes the South and Southern identity as something distinctive and maybe our understanding of Southern is different even based on its position in the south. We see that the author criticizes the American system. But one glaring detail to understand this is Acadian’s did not a similar perspective adaptation and the author believes that this reasoning is the result of their unsuccessful place in society.

1865

With the exception of a reference in the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* in 1865, there are few references to Acadians in the newspapers. The author, a special correspondent of the *Picayune*, uses the pseudonym "Gleaner" in an article titled "Letter from Plaquemines," which is appropriate given that the author discusses the image of a French Louisiana colonist, Joseph Villere, associated with the attempted overthrow of the Spanish Louisiana government in the 1760s, as well as a retelling of a two-century overview of the cold weather patterns. Finally, before concluding his article, the author mentions a trip to the "Great West." The "Gleaner" referred to two opposing viewpoints on Villere, one positive from Judge Martin and one negative from historian Charles-Étienne Arthur Gayarré. Gayarré authored the first comprehensive history of Louisiana in 1866, but before the Civil War, he was a member of the Know-Nothing

⁷⁹“Our Old Folks.” “*Mon métier et mon art de vivre*,” is translated by Elise Ramacourt and Jessica DeJohn Bergen.

Party and held several political roles. Although the perspectives are not important, Gayarré's reference to Acadians is relevant. He states,

. . .one of those modest and unpainted little wood structures which are, to this day to be seen in many parts on the banks of the river Mississippi and in the Attakapas and Opelousas parishes. They are the tenements of our small planters, who owned only a few slaves, and they retain the appellation of the *maisons d' acadiens* or Acadian houses.⁸⁰

Historians such as Gayarré wrote about the Acadians negatively, often criticizing their impact on history and correspondents would reiterate negative images, which has led to prevailing views of Acadians. "Gleaner" repeats Gayarré's perspective of Acadians as simple or incapable of success.

Throughout the period of 1862-1865, editors and journalists referred to Acadians as barbaric and unsophisticated. Regardless of the romanticism of Louisiana's past, publications presented Acadians as racial inferiors by describing their culture as "ancient." Whether they were portrayed as inconsequential at time in Louisiana's history, as political pawns of the time, or as derelicts of duty, they were exploited as scapegoats for supporters of Southern identity. The rhetoric implies that Acadians were not quite white and that they "were not adequately prepared to engage in the audacious experiment of self-government," is predominate in the racial rhetoric of today. Despite the fact that this thinking maybe perceived as Americanization, non-Anglos would labeled as racial inferiors under Southern customs throughout this time period. A constant theme was Acadians were uncivilized, with experts afterwards reinforcing these notions to challenge the belief that Acadians were not an insular group, in fact, they were fractured, and identity was fluid.

⁸⁰ Gleaner, "Letter From Plaquemines," *The Daily Picayune*, December 3, 1865, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/25561909/?terms=Acadian%20or%20Acadians&match=1>.

Chapter 2: 1866-1868

This chapter covers the years between 1866 and 1868, during which the formation of secret societies and terrorist organizations in Louisiana was responsible for a tremendous amount of death and destruction. The escalation of constitutional disputes between extreme Republicans and the rebel assembly resulted in yet another street battle in New Orleans, the Republican congress passing the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, which disenfranchised the majority of white males, and the election of delegates who were sent to a constitutional convention in 1868. I think that the political and physical conflicts between Southerners and those influenced by Northern politics are strongly founded in honor and hostility, which resulted in the adoption of the Reconstruction acts of 1867. A North-South dialogue shaped debates regarding Louisiana history, a circus, traveler's experience, a fictional story, and a scathing cultural analysis where Acadians were the author's subject.

By the close of 1865, President Lincoln was reelected and then was assassinated, and Andrew Johnson ascended to the presidency. Although a Republican, once democrat President Johnson issued his reconstruction plan, which was far more forgiving than Lincoln's plan. His restoration plan offered amnesty to Southern who would take an oath of allegiance, a provisional governor appointed for each southern state and invite delegate to write another state constitution, no number of qualified voters were needed, but would have to pass by a majority. Re-admission was contingent upon the state reversing the secession legislation, abolition of slavery, repudiation of Confederate and state war debts, election of a new government, and sending representatives to Congress. Wartime Reconstruction had ended and presidential had begun.

For the period of 1866 through 1868, one of the more significant events was Congress ratifying the 14th Amendment. Importantly, the 14th Amendment made all persons born or

naturalized in the United States citizens and prohibited the states from abridging privileges, depriving any individual of "life, liberty, or property," or denying equality under the law.⁸¹ Although states like Louisiana did not pass the 14th Amendment immediately, radical Republicans gained influence and passed Reconstruction bills in 1867, establishing a coherent strategy for Reconstruction. Congress divided the southern states into five military districts with a military commander as governor, had to register qualified voters which was all black males and whites who did not participate in the rebellion. Voters were then required to elect conventions to draft new state constitutions containing provisions for black suffrage. By 1868, Louisiana had fulfilled these conditions.

After the official end of war in 1865, Louisiana, like other southern states, saw a high death toll, a drop in commerce, a decrease in food production, and the liberation of slaves, which resulted in a significant economic loss. As soon as Governor James Madison Wells took office, he called for a new election, and the voters elected officials who either fought for or supported the Confederacy. As a result, Louisiana began establishing Black Codes intended to subjugate the newly liberated Blacks. These codes would force the new freed into unfair work contracts, allowed for them to be apprehended if not tied to a work contract, fine them for vagrancy, and then hired out.

Throughout the south, governments were establishing Black Codes, but like Florida the Louisiana the legislature developed the convict lease system, which basically re-enslaved African Americans by leasing their labor for a year. Ex-slaves, former free persons of color, and carpetbaggers concluded in 1866 that they could not obtain control of the state without an

⁸¹ The 14th Amendment penalized southern state participation in Congress and the electoral college if the state did not acknowledge suffrage for all adult males. Former members of Congress or federal officials who aided the Confederacy were barred from holding state or federal office unless granted a pardon by two-thirds of Congress.

expansion of the franchise. Responding to the activities of the newly minted Republican party, those who did not want African American to have the vote, began to aggressively attack by causing riots. After the New Orleans Riot and the Race Riot of 1866, the Reconstruction Act of 1867 was passed by Congress. With the passage of the new state constitution in 1868, Henry Clay Warmoth was elected governor and Oscar J. Dunn, a black lieutenant governor, began office.⁸²

The election of Governor Warmoth ushered in the Louisiana perception of the carpetbagger, a northerner or usurper who assumed leadership of the state's Republican party, which was previously comprised of white Unionists and educated blacks.⁸³ The activities of the Republican party, the election of Warmoth, and the efforts of carpetbaggers infuriated whites without voting rights. These individuals concluded that the only way to retake control of state and local governments was to either intimidate blacks at the polls or persuade them to vote Democrat. Like the Ku Klux Klan, organized terrorist groups such as the Knights of the White Camelia intimidated black voters in areas with a high Acadian population, such as the Attakapas region.

Combined with war destruction, economic instability, and most profoundly the political and social upheaval of the period, Acadians just as other Louisianians experienced loss. Acadians, both affluent and poor, strove to return to their pre-war lifestyles, such as former Governor P.O. Hebert, who resumed his planting business, and former Governor Alexandre Mouton, who concluded his vigilante activities.⁸⁴ The Jayhawker organizations began to

⁸² James K Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10509388>.

⁸³ Carpetbaggers integrated public schools and accommodations, rewrote the LA Civil Code to permit interracial marriages, and eliminated texts that defended slavery.

⁸⁴ Albert Leonce Dupont, "The Career of Paul Octave Hebert, Governor of Louisiana, 1853-1856.," 1948.

disperse, and the majority returned to their homes by the end of 1865, but extralegal violence continued among poor whites and blacks. Acadian professionals who supported the Confederacy found it difficult to secure the backing of Republican officeholders, except for P.O. Hebert, who had some political connections. Much like P.O. Hebert, Louis Hebert was also a West Point graduate, state engineer, and son of a municipal politician, however, he was unable to find employment after the Civil War except as an editor with the *Plaquemine Weekly Iberville South* in 1867.⁸⁵ Hebert died a pauper. Although historians conclude that other Acadian professionals avoided the Hebert end, indicating that they wished to resemble Anglo-American business leaders, race had a greater impact than class.⁸⁶

A close examination of the period newspapers reveals Louisiana newspaper writers, including an Acadian editor, who either coordinated articles or wrote on matters from a southern perspective. Regardless of their political or social leanings, whether they were Rebels or Radicals, editors and journalists desired to maintain a readership and accurately reflect the opinions of their audience. Most readers or white Louisianians were proud to be Southerners. Originating from a conversation between Northerners and Southerners in which each side pitted one against the other, the concept of Southern exceptionalism emerged.⁸⁷ Editors and writers of the time characterized Acadian references in newspapers as either a tourist attraction or a scapegoat, archetypes that persist today.

1866

On February 10, 1866, the *West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter* ran a story titled "A Confederate Show at Natchitoches" that attempted to racialize Acadians. This was another

⁸⁵ Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*, 97.

⁸⁶ Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*.

⁸⁷ The dialogue between Northerners and Southerners precipitates the formation of Southern identity.

example of examining the racial make-up of Acadians and was a reflection of the racial project and the emergence of racial borders during the reconstruction of the South. In this article, the author discusses a circus that came to town, but used it as an opportunity to comment on the alleged racial characteristics of the performers. The circus was a place where race played in the forum that created boundaries between blacks and whites, and the newspapers reinforced the boundaries, which are reflections of their readers. The author asserts, “the inhabitants are mostly, of French descent, of that primitive stock called Acadians, who, for several generations, have preserved a guileless, contented simplicity as rare as it is remarkable in this land of enterprise and improvement.”⁸⁸ The author describes the Acadian circus participants as simple, reflecting both the writer's and the reader's perspectives. The quote exemplifies how writers relegated the Acadians to society's uncivilized, which includes newly freed people.

Acadians were acknowledged in the historical narrative, and we witness this in numerous articles published during the era under consideration. The group's immigrant status was a common theme, and authors used that narrative in divergent ways in conjunction with discussions about Acadian and Cajun identity. Similar to previous articles, I believe Acadians made judgments based on their surroundings. In a series of articles titled "The Environs of New Orleans" one being published on June 9, 1866, in the New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, the author, possibly J. O. Nixon, editor and proprietor of the newspaper, provided an overview of the political foundations of New Orleans and the surroundings of the city.⁸⁹ Despite being numbered, the articles are not presented in chronological order. On February 5th, the author referred to Acadians as advantageous immigrants, implying that European settlers were effective

⁸⁸ “A Confederate Show at Natchitoches,” *The Sugar Planter*, February 10, 1866, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86079096/1866-02-10/ed-1/seq-4/>.

⁸⁹ “Environs of New Orleans: Number Seventy One,” *The Daily Crescent*, June 9, 1866.

at cultivating land. The author states, "We would therefore suggest to our legislature the propriety of appointing proper agents, who should see to it that no other immigrants do receive the favors and special gratifications of our local or state governments than such as are actually from the agricultural or field laboring classes. This is the main suggestion, with respect to the immigrant society now about to be formed."⁹⁰ The example above elucidates the perspective author regarding immigration in Louisiana. According to the author's point of view, early laborers which included Acadians, "have continued to this day their garden and other agricultural labors," but no others with the exception of Germans he argues was successful.⁹¹ Given that Acadians were "white laborers," the author argued that they lacked the appropriate work ethic for the fields. Although the author may believe the labor issue is related to the worker's class, he was implying that race was crucial. Among the ethnic groups he referred to, Acadians racial standing was low and restricted. Following the previous articles, the author reiterates the Acadians' historical roots and distinct language. The articles demonstrate that the Acadians in 1866 were historically relevant but insignificant.

That same year, on October 20th, a scathing article appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, titled "Acadians of Louisiana."⁹² Like other articles, the writer portrayed Louisiana Acadians as unsophisticated and unfit to self-govern. Aside from their Catholic faith, the correspondent who was perhaps skeptical of Catholicism argues they lacked motivation in every other element of their lives, and Louisiana Acadians make little addition to the region's culture. This article contributed to the way Acadians were seen and reflected the views of those who were not

⁹⁰ "Environs: Number Fifteen," *The Daily Crescent*, February 5, 1866, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/legacy/167436995/?terms=Acadian&match=1>.

⁹¹ "Environs: Number Fifteen."

⁹² Alfred W. Waud, "Acadians of Louisiana," *Harpers Weekly* (Harper's Magazine Co., etc., October 20, 1866).

Acadians or observers outside of Louisiana. The way Acadians were portrayed had less to do with their economic standing or class and more to do with race and the making of a Southern identity. The author of this article was Alfred Waud. Like other Northern correspondents, Waud viewed the South as a foreign place. Waud was sent on assignment to report on the state of the South and to cover Reconstruction in Louisiana. His coverage promoted the trope of Southern backwardness in contrast to Northern modernism.

Waud elucidated the distinctions between the South and the North and the continued discussion of self-government. Many writers of the time, especially in newspapers, formed boundaries between the north and south, employed language of the civilized and uncivilized, and lastly, those who could self-govern or not. The North clearly believed the south could not, and Waud made that distinction when it came to Louisiana Acadians. They were not writing to objectively report on the situation in the South; instead, they were attempting to create a reality by establishing new expectations with which to occupy the South. The northern views of the South, including the negative stereotypes of Louisiana Acadians, contributed to the political and racial landscape, and they shaped the decisions made and formed the attitudes of both sides. In the aftermath of the Civil War and Emancipation, socially and culturally manufactured divisions served as a topic of contention between Northerners and Southerners, especially when addressing Louisiana Acadians. Acadians are marginalized or relegated to the margins of Northern perspectives, making them not American but southern and Acadian.

The same article titled “Acadians of Louisiana,” is particularly interesting and representative of Anglo perspectives on Acadians. In a written account, Alfred Waud recounted his tour of post-Civil War Louisiana. Due to the historical relationship between the English and Acadians, this Englishman most likely had preconceived notions about Acadians. Waud felt

compelled to quantify and account for his ideas during his journey through the post-bellum South. Although the entire essay was incredibly derogatory towards Acadians, I could scarcely quote it in its entirety. Waud states,

These primitive people are the descendants of Canadian French settlers in Louisiana; and by dint of intermarriage, they have succeeded in getting pretty well down in the social scale.

Without energy, education, or ambition, they are good representatives of the white trash, behind the age in everything. The majority of all the white inhabitant of these parishes are tolerably ignorant, but these are grossly so—so little are they thought of—that the niggers, when they want to express contempt for one of their own race, call him an Acadian nigger. Their views of the future life are principally confined to the prospect of meeting Monsieur Vulsin, a prominent man among them, who departed this life a good while ago. Some of them are devout Catholics, to which church they are all attached.

To live without effort is their apparent aim in life, and they are satisfied with very little, and are, as a class, quite poor. Their language is a mixture of French and English, quite puzzling to the uninitiated. During the civil war, although forced into the Confederate ranks, they were considered Unionists, and were kind to those who needed their help.

With a little mixture of fresh blood and some learning they might become much improved and have higher aims than that possession of land enough to grow their corn and a sufficiency of the “goujon” (gudgeon). They suffered a great deal by the overflowing waters, even to making their escape from their houses in boats, or knocking the upper works off and floating to safety on the floor for a raft.⁹³

From the perspective of a northerner writing for a northern and worldwide audience, the Acadians were somewhat intriguing and perhaps a tourist attraction.

The Waud article represents a way in which Northern views served to represent the South as a region unable to be reconstructed, Waud immigrated from England in 1850, seeking employment as a set designer in New York City. Although his plans fell through, Waud found a job as an illustrator and then a journalist covering the Civil War for *Harper's Weekly* and traveled to the South after the Civil War and depicted the lives of Acadians. Among Cajun

⁹³ Waud.

historians, Waud's article and illustrations are perhaps the most referred to and many times referenced as an example of the discrimination towards Acadians. While I agree, I also see other important details. The article begins by describing Acadian ancestry, much like other works. Waud makes note of Acadians as “these primitive people are the descendants of Canadian French settlers in Louisiana; and by dint of intermarriage, they have succeeded in getting pretty well down in the social scale.”⁹⁴ Waud indicated that Acadians intermarried with non-Acadians over time, implying that dilution of one's ethnicity signifies weakness or authority. Louisiana Acadians had been citizens since 1803, due to the U.S. purchase of the Louisiana territory, but he makes an immediate reference to the fact that Acadians are suspect and should not be trusted. Recasting the Acadian place in society did not leave any argument confusing; however, being primitive and intermarrying posed a problem to Acadian culture. In the same manner as southerners, northerners, such as Waud, questioned the loyalty of Acadians to the Union and those who chose to live in the South; their political perspective was clear. A regional identity cannot be excluded, who was loyal to the south was northern and those loyal to the north were considered southern.

Many of the illustrations he drew were Acadians from Louisiana. His collection contained a drawing of a washerwoman, and he spoke contemptuously about her. In his article, Waud described his subject as,

These simple folks have no experience, apparently, with the washboard, nor do they employ their knuckles. Placing their clothes upon a plank, either on the edge of a pool or the bayou, they draw their scanty drapery about them with the most Reckless disregard to the exposure consequent, and squatting, or kneeling, beating them with a wooden bat. The approach of a stranger does not disconcert them much, if at all.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Waud.

⁹⁵ Waud.

The author's observation was representative of the racial formation in its historical context in order to achieve a social and political agenda. The racial ideology expressed in newspapers was a racial project that provides a framework for the way society operates, meaning there are racial implications for the way an Acadian operates. In addition to how writers conceived the roles newly liberated people could play in politics and society, the same idea was applied to Acadians. This is merely another strategy to perpetuate racial boundaries and culture while validating northerners' impressions of the south. These conversations exposed the nature of race in the southern borderlands reinforcing the idea that Acadians were uncivilized and incapable of assimilation.

1867

Several articles about Acadians appeared in Louisiana newspapers in 1867. The year would reflect this and the desire for cultural authenticity, with a touch of tourism particularly in the literary field. Acadians continued to appear in newspapers, but despite the fact that the argument centered on Louisiana's potential to profit from the cultural capital of Acadians, writers continued to utilize the same script. Reconstructing the South or determining what the South would look like after the Civil War, which also included the social make up of Louisiana constituted the prevailing understanding in the South at the time. As much as war and social turmoil had ripped down racial boundaries, Louisianans began to rebuild them, and in their discovery of the new South, they attempted to uncover their true identities.

On January 30, 1867, the New Orleans *Times* published an article titled "Where the Romance of Louisiana May Be Found" by an unidentified literary critic, possibly the editor or even proprietor, William H. C. King. There is evidence in Andrew Johnson Papers, that King was consulting with Johnson. In the opening paragraphs, the author refers to the South's

“literary future” and was concerned with the outcome of the Civil War. The author argued for the significance of the South, focusing on Louisiana and citing Acadians as the most interesting subjects. Similar to other newspapers of the time, the *New Orleans Times* contributed to the formation of Acadian stereotypes. Due to the Acadians' exotic nature, the term "Acadians" is typically associated with negative connotations. In this case, however, the author claims that Acadians have some authority due to their primitive or unsophisticated nature; this perspective was widespread in the Southern borderlands after independence from the Union. The author argues, “in reflections on this truth set forth by this eloquent and thoughtful writer, we grow hopeful of the intellectual future of a country which has been convulsed enough Heaven Knows its compulsions are requisite to bring to the surface pearls from inner depth.”⁹⁶

Articles like this appeared often in newspapers across the region. The south, including Louisiana, represented the ideals of their audience in an effort to retain and attract readers. The articles previously have followed various themes, but “Where the Romance of Louisiana May be Found” is different. The author wanted readers to believe in the rebirth of Southern literary culture. The author states,

A fanciful analogy irresistibly suggests itself between the inanimate and animate forces of nature, and we do not see why, with such dazzling gleams of Southern intellect as at intervals have delighted us, we have not good reason to look forward hopefully to the establishment of a local literature. . .by the side of her skill lagoons, or intermittent marshes, there have been acting epics which awaken the interest of the whole world. . . man has hoped loftier hopes, and sorrowed in deadlier anguish, within her border, than in any other portion of the North American continent.⁹⁷

The author is discussing the once allure of Southern literary culture and the intellectuals who dominated the culture, before which there was no significant scholarship in the South. This

⁹⁶ “Where the Romance of Louisiana May Be Found,” *The New Orleans Times*, January 30, 1867, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/201931693/?terms=Acadian%20or%20Acadians&match=1>.

⁹⁷ “Where the Romance of Louisiana May Be Found,” 30.

quotation demonstrates the significance of southern scholarship and refers to the northern-southern divide and that Louisiana has lost some cultural capital as a result of the Civil War.

Throughout the piece, the author emphasizes numerous topics, such as a boundary-setting and Anglo-Saxonism, a prevalent practice after the liberation of Louisiana's slaves, and the audience's imagination of the region. Lastly, the chronicler depicts Acadians as exotic, which makes Louisiana enticing to outsiders and is a common theme in many articles written about Acadians, Louisiana, and the South. Even though there was pressure to fall in line behind the Union or Radical government, many of the written articles promoted a southern identity. Thus, their imagined community was fluid, capable of assuming either a Southern or national identity based on the situational context. The article continues,

But it is principally from the past of Louisiana that materials of the highest interest can be drawn. Even though it is an interest growing out of our sympathy with the strain hopes, the disappointed expectations, the baffled ambition of her first settlers. We have, perhaps fewer local, original characteristics than any other state in the Union.⁹⁸

The author argues that the past is crucial to Louisiana's significance and that writers have contributed to the state's development in this way. The author contends that Louisiana has little to offer in terms of significance as a part of the United States or Union. The author believes that a persistent connection to the past may suggest an outmoded image. This evidence proves that Acadian identity was formed by erected boundaries of race and region. In addition to attempting to create a regional image, the author emphasizes that the region is Anglo-Saxon, drawing a line between the North and the South, or Louisiana. The journalist concludes by imagining the Southern borderlands as Anglo, so racializing Acadians and rendering Acadians and Louisiana as strange, thereby reinforcing borders and distinguishing Acadians.

⁹⁸ "Where the Romance of Louisiana May Be Found."

Further down in the article, the author seems to make the argument for Acadian significance. Portraying them as exotic or regionally distinct. The author argues,

But with one class, and with one alone, in Louisiana, remains distinctive traits which arrest attention and address themselves forcibly to the imagination. With them we think the poet and the romancer may deal, and give us truths which sound like fiction, an original characteristics, which would stamp their localities with an enduring interest. We mean the early Acadian settlers who are now nearly extinct, and only to be found in any numbers on the broad Opelousas prairies, or in the lately known Calcasieu. We have seen something of these people and their legends and traditions, their primitive manners and customs, the loyal faith and simplicity of their characters, impressed us like a charming idyl. Progress has at last reached them and we fear it will be a questionable good.⁹⁹

In the preceding quotation, Acadians are distinguished from other groups on multiple occasions. The author not only describes them as possessing unique qualities, but also asserts that the group is nearly extinct. Perhaps the author is alluding to the lengthy history of Acadian settlement or the extinction of Acadian bloodlines, but at the very least, the meaning refers to them as aliens without a distinct identity. Additionally, the excerpt demonstrates the Anglo-Saxon origin of the article; it sets boundaries between whites and other social groups, such as Acadians, and it emphasizes racial categories, in which Acadians were low in the racial hierarchy, and portrays Acadians, or Louisiana more broadly, as an exotic place to draw their audience in or stimulate interest and possibly economic development in the war-torn region.

In the following section of the article, the author references Acadians in what appears to be a positive light. However, like other texts, the Louisiana Acadians were viewed as a group incapable of self-governance, and the negative images of them as uncultured or barbaric shaped their collective identity. Acadians remained unassimilated in the borderlands. The author states:

They are growing ashamed of old superstitions and old customs, and we fear new fangled vices will soon cease to astonish their simplicity. But they still exist, and the romance of Louisiana with them. The romance which belongs to her grand forest and rivers into her wonderful natural forces of which these untutored people have had many glimpses

⁹⁹ “Where the Romance of Louisiana May Be Found.”

although they have not had sufficient energy to develop them fully.¹⁰⁰

Similar to other descriptions of the Acadians of Louisiana, this article describes them as barbaric. For the journalist, this evidence meant cultivating a regional image of exoticism, a strategy the Anglo-Saxons frequently employed to maintain their power and define racial boundaries. In imagining a border region as white and southern, describing Acadians as exotic, uncivilized, but assimilable solidifies racial divisions.

The author concludes with a reference to Longfellow's "Evangeline" as an illustration of the Anglo-American attraction to Acadian culture and life and its distinct significance to Louisiana culture. Although the author was arguing for the Acadians as a mysterious culture within Southern society, this point bears repeating. The writer asserts,

Those however, in Louisiana, who are familiar with their peculiar patios, their customs and manners, can add a great many individual characteristics to the Acadian of the poet's fancy. They are poetical enough to address themselves to the idealism of the dreamer and in the tenacity with which they have clung to the old and social customs of Passage. The philosopher of this Hasting on resting age can pause and wonder at this Marvel of the 19th century this remnant of a people who, by stern military decree were transferred from their quiet villages in Nova Scotia to the broad prairies of the Attakapas.¹⁰¹

The author is making a case for the importance of the Acadians to writers, while also emphasizing their primitive nature and the need for sympathy. Continually delineating racial boundaries between Anglo-Americans and Acadians cemented their position in the racial hierarchy, but also reveals the fluidity of identities in the north-south borderlands. Those who promoted a southern identity or carved a space for Louisiana in the south also sought to establish cultural exclusivity, which casts Acadians as exotic.

The Baton Rouge *Gazette and Comet*, a Democrat biased newspaper, published another

¹⁰⁰ "Where the Romance of Louisiana May Be Found."

¹⁰¹ "Where the Romance of Louisiana May Be Found."

article about Acadians on August 15, 1867, by H. The author signed his or her name but was more likely a man, much like in the previous article. Like many newspaper appearances, Acadians are referred to as primitive or uncivilized. As with numerous other articles on Acadian life and identity, H. describes himself as a "quiet sojourner," indicating he comes from a position of privilege and authority. He characterizes the Parish of Iberville, as a place of limitless opportunity and a primordial state, but out of this, Civil War, the once place of "grandeur and prosperity" was now "family mansions dilapidated and untenanted, in the mist of what were once trim gardens. . . [represent] a bygone period when that [French] Coast was in its bloom and prosperity."¹⁰² However, some historical context is necessary to understand these derogatory stereotypes or racial designations.

Perhaps the author is asking his audience to feel sorry for Louisiana or the South as a whole because of all of these other issues, which are frustrating the region's efforts to recover from the devastation of the Civil War. The author draws a parallel between the deportation of the Acadians and the fears of the Civil War. The author describes the region as decimated, but he describes it in this way because the Civil War wreaked havoc on Louisiana. It appears that the author considers this war to have been unnecessary due to its impending effects on the region in which it was fought. The author argues, "and where are the once opulent processors of the many fine estates now abandoned— and where are the hearts that breathe beneath yon lowly tenements, once the peaceful and happy abodes of the honest, simple-hearted descendants of the Acadians?"¹⁰³ The author is writing with both the state of Louisiana and the south in mind, from the "window near which I am seated" or from a position of privilege, imagining the north and

¹⁰² "Editorial Correspondence," *The Gazette & Comet*, August 15, 1867, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/354139571/?terms=Acadian%20or%20Acadians&match=1>.

¹⁰³ "Editorial Correspondence."

south borderlands as white or European.¹⁰⁴ Throughout the article, the author implies that the South is a blank slate and that the unsophisticated Acadian should be a symbol of Louisiana and Southern culture as a fresh start. Acadians are portrayed as idealistic settlers, rather than diasporic refugees or hapless migrants.

One of the few references to Acadians found in newspapers during the year 1867 seemed to challenge views about Acadians and confirm that the evolution of Acadians was incomplete. Although the article was a critique of "Anglo-Saxonism," which seems to be about a different topic, debate continued as to whether or not Acadians were socially superior to other groups. Similar to other references, whether Acadians were associated with a specific event or mentioned in a history book or political commentary, they were either used as a foil or scapegoat. Anglo-Saxon perspectives on race started to become more prevalent during this time. Anglo-Saxonism emerged out of the perceptions of indigenous peoples and would be applied to Acadians. The only way Southerners could comprehend the world around them was through the words of newspaper journalists, which represented the views of their audience. After emancipation, Anglo-Americans, especially journalists and chroniclers, debated the Acadian question.

Whether the article was alluding to the impact of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery on the economy of the South, the author makes the comparison of Acadians and to the emancipated. Attempting to sell newspapers, chroniclers and journalists frequently used Acadians as a foil in a range of discussions about culture, race, and social development. As a result, publications in the southern borderland published inconsistent information about non elite Acadians often opposite to the behavior of those considered to be Acadian elites. Nevertheless, the Civil War devastated the region and worked as a social equalizer, which occurred in post-war

¹⁰⁴ "Editorial Correspondence."

regions, and the Union administration played a role in forming these perspectives. I argue this because the majority of the papers were owned by people who were from the north, not the south, and had union views about politics, they supported emancipation and conveyed a particular perspective about life and culture in the South. Some of the newspaper proprietors were receiving financial support from the Union government. The union used these newspapers as a way to communicate with and about the south. Possibly, these newspapers were perceived by their readers as authoritative or as news sources with an authoritative voice. These documents contributed to the formation of a post-World War II racial group identity that was antagonistic or less neutral and comprised subservient individuals. The image of Acadians was shaped by chroniclers and journalists, who frequently portrayed them as foils or scapegoats, or simply erecting boundaries of difference between groups.

Similar to other references to Acadians in other newspapers, Acadians were frequently used to captivate readers outside of Louisiana and the borderlands of the South, whether as violent nativists or as romantic characters. On December 7, 1867, Acadians were referred to in *Le Louisianais*, a newspaper located in Convent and owned by Jean Sylvain Gentil. After immigrating to the United States in 1852, Gentil taught French, Spanish, Latin, and Greek at Jefferson College, a Catholic school, and published his first article in 1865. The paper was mostly written in French, but at times was written in English, and was it used to antagonize local clergy. Prior to immigrating to Louisiana, Gentil was imprisoned for writing incendiary articles while in France, and when he arrived in Louisiana, he continued to provide political commentary. As a freemason, Gentil would often criticize the local clergy, comment on the Civil War recovery in the South, race relations, and suffrage. Before immigrating to the United States, Gentil was exiled and imprisoned for writing controversial articles about politics in

France. In addition to writing controversial articles about the clergy in Louisiana, he commented on state politics. For instance, because Gentil criticized the Louisiana reconstruction government for installing blacks in office, Governor Warmoth removed the newspaper as the official journal of the parish.

Gentil began publishing articles about the Acadians in November 1867, and although the author used the pseudonym X, it is possible that he wrote the articles or at least approved their publication in order to make a point against the Anglo-Saxons. Gentil argued in the December 7th issue, “the persecutions of Acadians, merely glanced at in recent issues of the ‘*Louisianais*,’ are but a faint sketch of the heartless cruelty to which Anglo-Saxon blood has subjected its victims in every spot of the habitable earth on which the Anglo-Saxon cloven foot has been planted.”¹⁰⁵

Before diving into the article titled "Anglo-Saxonism," it is necessary to review other *Le Louisianais* articles containing references to Acadians from the preceding months. Under the “Local” column titled “Acadiens,” an article announced the publication of a history of Acadians, under a pseudonym. Perhaps X, the author, was Gentil, argued for the defense of Acadian identity and the cultural capital others should extend to the group. In the first paragraph, the author writes about the upcoming history, which will be published in *Le Louisianais* and the purpose behind writing the history of Acadians. The journalist, possibly Gentil, explains,

Tel est le titre d'un roman historique qui paraîtra prochainement dans le "Louisianais." L'auteur X a été poussé à écrire cette œuvre par une pensée éminemment nationale et généreuse. Il entendait certains ignorants dire autour de lui: "Dammés Cadiens!--Les Acadiens ne sont pas Américains.--Les Acadiens sont des demi-créoles, etc." Et comme il aime ceux qui portent ce nom, il revendiquera, l'histoire en main, l'honneur, le courage et le patriotisme des fils de l'Acadie.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ X, “Anglo-Saxonism,” *Le Louisianais*, December 7, 1867, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/320950679/>.

¹⁰⁶ “Local,” *Le Louisianais*, November 2, 1867, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/320950322/?terms=Acadien&match=1>.

Such is the title of a historical novel which will soon appear in the "Louisianais." Author X was driven to write this book by an eminently national and generous thought. He heard some ignorant people say around him: "Dammed Cadians!--The Acadians are not Americans.--The Acadians are half-creoles, etc." And as he loves those who bear this name, he will claim, history in hand, the honor, courage and patriotism of the sons of Acadia.¹⁰⁷

By presenting the history of the Acadians, the author aimed to oppose the prevalent idea of Anglo-Saxonism and take the side of the Acadians. In fact, most articles written by English speakers with Acadians as the subject were derogatory and referred to them stereotypically. An interesting element is what the author does not express. Making the point that "Il entendait certains ingnorants dire autour de lui" or he overheard some people speak of Acadians as "les Acadiens ne sont pas Américains" or that they are not loyal to America would suggest the author believes Acadians are in fact loyal citizens.¹⁰⁷

Whether support existed for Acadians or whether some believed Acadians remained neutral is significant, but not the focus. Scholars have studied the relationship between Anglo-Saxonism and Southern identity. One scholar contends that white southerners perceived Anglo-Saxon as intrinsic to their identity and established a link to their ancestors through the study of Anglo-Saxon Studies during the post-reconstruction era. Post-emancipation journalists and chroniclers used phrases like "uncivilized" and "simple" to imply that Acadians are not ideal Anglo Saxons, thereby portraying them as neither southern nor culturally or racially significant. These words were part of the Anglo-Saxon discourse. Like other chroniclers of the time, this author exemplifies how newspaper articles can execute significant cultural and political work and validates the author's worldview. Much of what was written after emancipation and the Civil War about Acadians was influenced by the Southern defeat. By not being a member of or

¹⁰⁷ Jessica DeJohn Bergen and Elise Ramcourt translation.

¹⁰⁷ "Local."

descended from the Anglo-Saxons, Acadians were deemed inferior to whites. Most newspaper articles about Acadians reflected the social and cultural anxieties of Southern journalists and chroniclers. Southern journalists and chroniclers' views about Acadians were viewed through the lens of Anglo-Saxon thought, which reveals that Southern culture and Acadians, a part of Southern culture, perpetuated views of Acadians from before and thereafter. It also played an important role in shaping national identity. By making a connection to the Anglo-Saxon commitment to democratic equality, the impression was created that racial homogeneity was essential, and the language surrounding democratic equality reinforced Anglo-Saxonism as the barrier to racial reconstruction.

In the case of Gentil's articles about Acadians and his emphasis on recreating Acadian history to defend their culture, it was to assert that Acadians were superior to Anglo people. In the southern borderlands, groups such as Anglos battled to the death for racial and cultural superiority and validated that superiority by claiming one's authenticity as native to a place. In the social superiority battle, Anglos were determined to win and put some distance between them and the French and the Acadians. The publication of the Acadian article revealed that Acadians were not assimilated, and their identity was debatable, and their location in the Southern racial landscape was questionable. However, the quote above makes the argument that Acadians are patriotic people and were loyal to Acadia, and because they were loyal to one nation, they could be loyal to another, such as America. Implying that identity formation was complete by the conclusion of Reconstruction oversimplifies their group identity and prevents any Acadians from continuing to be Acadian and persist in being Cajun. Most historians of Louisiana Acadian history argue the group split based on class, and the elite were absorbed into the Anglo group, while the non-elite Acadians became Cajun. It also does not answer to the fact that

Acadians continued to be described as unfit to self-govern. Gentil's article can mean two things: either he was X or X was supported by Gentil in the publication process.

When academics emphasize similarities among Acadians, they oversimplify the Acadian identity. After the Civil War, did Acadians not turn to neutrality as a form of protection, or were they neutral when it was necessary? On both the elite and non-elite levels, they became a group with a strong political presence. Elites took sides, some sided with the north, such as Paul Octave Hebert, who became part of the unification movement, but believed the emancipated were intrinsically unfit to self-govern. Non-elites would fight for the right to use public land to rake oysters and, while doing that, beat up the Austrian oyster rakers to defend what they saw as their right to use public land. These discontinuities allowed some flexibility under certain situations to choose between different identities. However, Anglos' belief that Acadians were not entirely white and Acadian desire to attain white status occurred under situational circumstances which serve as a reflection of their constantly evolving collective identity.

The Acadians were unable to reconstruct their former system of self-government as colonial settlers far away from the metropole it is argued. Whether or not the Acadians were fit for self-government was an intriguing topic of debate among the Anglo-Saxons. Due to their inability to reestablish a system of self-government, the Anglos frequently cited this fact when describing them as barbaric. Acadians advocated for themselves, but were also described as barbaric, because advocating for themselves entailed assaulting others while claiming it was their right to do so. Acadians were considered violent, which was contradictory to democracy, suggesting that they were neither white nor Anglo. As Thomas argues, they were in the process of building a society, but when the Civil War and emancipation occurred, society was once again torn apart, and Acadians became southern; this is the topic of this dissertation. The region's

southern borderlands plays a role in the development of their identity.

1868

On May 23, 1868, *Le Louisianais* published an article under the title of “Il Tombe Des Doublons.” The author was discussing the likelihood of a profitable harvest due to favorable weather conditions and referred to Acadians. *Le Louisianais* wrote for a reading public that had a significant audience. Like Gentil the editors and journalists wrote largely with a purpose for the French-speaking community, criticizing local politics, the clergy, as opposed to the Acadian, which Gentil fiercely supported. Perhaps his support stemmed from an interaction he had with someone who described Acadians as inept. Although Gentil is defending Acadians, this proves that negative images existed and Acadians were not assimilated into American culture. In the north-south borderlands, Acadian images, in the newspapers, much like the others, were used as a political means. Even though Gentil referred to them in a positive way it was in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon image. For example, the article stated,

Il tombe des doublons--Les Acadiens de St. Jacques, braves gens qui ne sont point étrangers aux beautés et aux poésies de la nature, disaient l' autre jour "qu'il tombait des doublons." En effet la pluie a tombe. Et la terre était quelque pen altérée.¹⁰⁸

Doublons Are Falling– The Acadians of St. Jacques, brave people who are no strangers to the beauties and poetry of nature, said the other day that "doublons were falling." The rain actually fell. And the earth was something else altogether.¹⁰⁹

He challenged Anglo perceptions of the Acadians by emphasizing or employing words that highlighted the Acadians' "organic" nature. He was opposed to Anglo-Saxonism in his writing. He wanted Acadians to be considered American and not Southern, but he was writing against

¹⁰⁸ “Il Tombe Des Doublons,” *Le Louisianais*, May 23, 1868, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/320889315/?terms=Acadien%20or%20Acadian&match=1>.

¹⁰⁹ Jessica DeJohn Bergen Translation.

Anglo-Saxonism because he was French; he did not view himself as anything other than French or Creole, and absolutely not American. He believed that Acadians were French. Acadians should not be categorized according to their identity. In certain instances, Acadians were French, American, Southern, Union, or Confederate citizens.

For the period of 1866 through 1868, I conclude that as the violence against freed people increased social categories would begin to harden. Rebel officials at all costs wished to prevent blacks from casting their votes in future elections that would protect them at the ballot box. By the end of 1868 a new constitution was ratified that elected many Republicans, both black and white. Henry Clay Warmoth was elected governor, while Oscar J. Dunn, the first African American, was elected lieutenant governor. Warmoth's presence in office outraged white southerners because he represented a Northern or carpetbagger influence that seized control of the Republican Party. White southerners increased North-South discourse regarding Acadians, which reified the social categories that will continue to develop over the following three periods.

Chapter 3: 1869-1871

Between 1869 and 1871, politicians, newspaper editorials, and other cultural commentators continued referring to Acadians in a negative light, blaming them for a range of social problems. Public officials viewed them as alternatively violent protagonists and criminals, or as lazy vagabonds living off government largesse. Their increasing racialization during this era was important because it coincided with the appointment of a federal commission established by President Grant to investigate the extreme violence in the South, and thereby induce moderate Democrats and Liberal Republicans to find a middle ground on race relations. During these years, editors and journalists, regardless of political affiliation, situate Acadians at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. White supremacist newspaper editors in the South employed various tropes to cast Acadians as a negative foil in their articles about a range of issues. During this extremely partisan era, where White Southerners buckled under federal mandates, newspaper editors frequently used Acadians as a scapegoat for various issues.

Historians studying the Reconstruction South, as well as specialists on Acadian social history, take various sides on Acadians' status during this time. Some scholars claim that Acadians split into two broad categories, with one group maintaining critical elements of their culture while the other disappeared or "assimilated" into the dominant Anglo host culture. While these two broad categories may resonate in popular public discourse, they fail to reflect the more complex and nuanced strategies of Acadians and their responses to racial hegemony and Southern political culture. Acadians at all socio-economic levels had to confront racial stereotypes and Southern social norms, and the wealthier groups navigated them with better results; but both groups faced stereotypes that doubted their ability for self-governance and that doubted their citizenship and allegiance to the state. As we will see in the analysis of newspaper

articles between 1869-1871, dominant views of Acadians continued to construct them in ways that reflected the complex racial dynamics of the South and the oppressive hierarchies that characterized life in Reconstruction era Louisiana.

In April of 1866, Congress adopted the Fourteenth Amendment which provided protection for the rights of blacks by declaring that all persons born or naturalized in the United States were citizens of the nation and of their state. Furthermore, individual rights could not be violated because they were now guaranteed by law. The amendment set the stage for the coming period when Republicans gained control of congress on both the federal and state level and the South was divided into five military districts. Southern states, such as Louisiana, enacted new constitutions under the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and 1868, and upon doing so, gained readmission to the Union by 1868. Seeing the necessity to defend black voters' voting rights, Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment, which outlawed denial of suffrage based on race, color, or past circumstances of slavery. Although the Republicans went to great efforts to protect liberated people's rights and rebuild the south, the White majority in the south that constituted the Democratic Party, challenged Republican efforts. In defense of their efforts, Democrats argued that Republicans were wasteful and unscrupulous, for example by pocketing state monies.

Democrats, particularly in Louisiana, fought a rhetorical battle against Republican efforts to expand black political participation and enfranchisement, which Democrats termed “negro domination.” The attempts of terrorist groups such as the Knights of the White Camelia to restrict the black vote, reinstall white supremacy, and overthrow Reconstruction governments resulted in extreme violence in Louisiana. In response to the violence, the state turned to the federal government and in May of 1870, Congress passed the first of three Enforcement Acts to protect black voters. The Second Enforcement Act, approved in 1871, established federal

oversight of elections, and the Third, passed in 1872, enhanced the penalties for anyone who blocked blacks from voting.¹⁰⁹

The ratification of the Louisiana Constitution in 1868 also heralded the establishment of a new Republican administration led by Henry Clay Warmouth, who appointed the state's first Black Lieutenant Governor. For white Louisianians, such as Acadians, who formed the larger part of rural vigilante groups, the new government angered them, and they retaliated. From their viewpoint, the northerners were carpetbaggers who had invaded the state's government, integrated public accommodations such as schools, and legalized interracial marriage. In response to the violence, the Republicans created the Returning Board, which decided on the outcomes of disputed elections. Thus politics became incrementally polarized along the lines of race as Democrats as argued with Republicans and viewed Republicans as "oppressive usurpers without legitimacy and wanted them replaced," making resistance to Northern rule one of the foundational pillars of Southern identity.¹¹⁰

AMATEUR HISTORIANS AND LITERARY CRITICS 1869

In the article headed "Dramatic Scenes in the History of Louisiana," published in the 14 February 1869 issue of the *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, the newspaper romanticized various pivotal events in Louisiana's history. Though the author does not directly indict Acadians, they do so in an indirect manner by referencing the romantic tropes of an idyllic antebellum South, and by implying the Acadians were at least partially to blame for the War itself. The author states, "no faint, uncertain tinting, colors that record of early Southern life" suggesting that before the Union invaded the South, Louisiana had a respectable history and a "dramatic

¹⁰⁹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 2018, https://ebooks.infobase.com/e_ViewEbook.aspx?ISBN=9781438192673; Hogue, *Uncivil War*.

¹¹⁰ Light Townsend Cummins et al., *Louisiana: A History*, 2014, 215.

passion.”¹¹¹

Citing John Lothrop Motley, a historian and ambassador to Austria and Great Britain during the American Civil War, the author of the article offers a lecture on progress that focuses on Louisiana and its place in the future. The author uses Ambassador Motley to suggest Louisiana’s legacy will be one of “immortal beauty”¹¹² and although the role of Acadians in that future was unclear, parish culture seemed important.

So with all the incidents of a national life. They never strike the actors and spectators, or the times contemporaneous with them, with half the dramatic power which will invest them in some future age. Heroism which stalks about in clothes of our own fashion, votes in our own language and in our own parish, comes to near our local prejudices for the elevation which befits it. Admire and honor we certainly do, but an entire surrender of homage time alone can give.¹¹³

The quote shows a preoccupation with politics but, as found in other literary type articles, makes an argument for a “rich treasury whence the poet and dramatist will draw material.”¹¹⁴ The author's reference to Acadians is not entirely obvious, he implicitly seems to value them in a romanticized way through his embrace of French history and culture.

One interesting aspect of this article is the author’s perspective of Acadian pride in their culture, which contributes to the cultural fabric of Louisiana. The author states “here an exiled Acadian, who had followed the ‘Lilies’ to the only shore in America where he might keep loyal faith to his beloved France, stood in stunned despair; there, a French soldier, like a baited bull, glaring defiantly at the insolent Spaniards. . .”¹¹⁵ According to the author, Acadians were not loyal to the Spanish, implying that they were not loyal to any nation other than France. The

¹¹¹ “Dramatic Scenes in the History of Louisiana,” *New Orleans Times*, February 14, 1869, Quadruple Sheet edition, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/201645053/>.

¹¹² “Dramatic Scenes in the History of Louisiana.”

¹¹³ “Dramatic Scenes in the History of Louisiana.”

¹¹⁴ “Dramatic Scenes in the History of Louisiana.”

¹¹⁵ “Dramatic Scenes in the History of Louisiana.”

author was arguing for the value of pre-Civil War Louisiana history, saying that the French heritage of Louisiana should be essential to Southern literary culture in a manner that romanticizes and perhaps exoticizes Acadian culture itself while failing to provide equality to Acadians in the post-Civil War era.

In the same edition, the *Times-Democrat* reported on Ulysses S. Grant's successful election as president, although Unionists were pleased, some Louisianians, particularly Acadians, were disappointed. In the parishes where the strongest opposition occurred, many Acadians who were members of the Knights of the White Camelia intimidated Black voters, prompting the Republican administration to form a Returning Board to determine election results. The author contends that just as the French formerly battled Spanish control, so too did the Acadians reject Union occupation, but in the name of democracy, a political ideology that placed freedom at its foundation. Although Lincoln liberated the slaves, politicians in Louisiana still questioned who was fit for self-government, and white elites, regardless of their origin, were constructing a government based on the exclusion of non-whites. The author implies that Acadians were southern based on his appreciation for the region's dramatic history and his conviction that one should be proud of Louisiana's unique past. Like other historians and literary critics, I argue editors and journalists were suffering from an ideological crisis. Southern writers contemplated the future of Louisiana's culture and began highlighting its various unique characteristics and in the process they constructed an increasingly important regional myth. The myth combined elements of the "Lost Cause," northern aggression, Southern cultural and social genius, and the unique history of Acadians in Louisiana. As many authors began to do after the Civil War, the author of this article implicitly portrayed Acadians as wanderers, ignorant of democratic ideas and unfit to self-government, but also important for their cultural contributions

and occasional support for White supremacy. This depiction of Acadians symbolizes the discourse upon which elements of the myth southern identity was founded.

Six days later, on February 20, 1869, the *Opelousas Journal* published an article titled "The Capabilities of the Parish of St. Landry" that was like the *Times-Democrat* piece. Even though the piece was first published in the *New Orleans Times*, the editor of the *Opelousas Journal* thought it significant for his readers. The article references a leaflet prepared by the Immigration Society of St. Landry Parish and praises the pamphlet for a positive review of the parish's agricultural and cultural benefits, which would be of interest to settlers. The paper appeared benign at first look, but the author favored white settlers over former slave settlers. The article referred to a particular type of settler: "there is no season the white man cannot work with perfect safety in the fields."¹¹⁶ Further on, the author states "in fact, at all periods in the history of the parish, white laborers have cultivated the soil."¹¹⁷ First the author wanted to make it obvious that only whites are welcome in St. Landry Parish. Without reservation, in the excerpt, the author opposes the notion that slaves labored in the parish, which suggests the author regarded emancipated labor still as slave labor.

The author also suggests that Acadian farmers were inefficient and wasteful. He states that they "only took in enough of [the] land to yield produce for their daily wants," suggesting that Acadians did not make use of the land they owned because they were lackadaisical or indolent, and unable to look into the future and plan for their own needs.¹¹⁸ The author's underlying argument indicates that individuals who are not prosperous or do not possess the

¹¹⁶ "The Capabilities of the Parish of St. Landry," *The Opelousas Journal*, February 20, 1869, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86079077/1869-02-20/ed-1/seq-1/>.

¹¹⁷ "The Capabilities of the Parish of St. Landry."

¹¹⁸ "The Capabilities of the Parish of St. Landry."

intelligence to develop the land are less strong and hence unable to rule themselves. In contrast, Anglos embraced an unabashed sense of their own independence, consistently emphasizing the power to self-govern.¹¹⁹ This sort of speech denigrated Acadians and portrayed them as lazy and wasteful, which is intrinsically racial. And now that slaves have been freed, this language supports views about Acadians being unfree, inferior, and incapable of contributing positively to American political institutions.

Much like the articles discussing regional history or cultural geography, on June 6, 1869, the *Times-Democrat* published an article titled “Legendary Lore of Louisiana.”¹²⁰ The author stresses what should be American literature and historians' interest in Louisiana and argues that the culture and history should be appreciated. Acadians are featured prominently in the essay and are compared to Native peoples. He stated,

. . . you will hear wild tales and legends, which remind you of Proven[ç]al superstitions. Some have probably been transplanted to this country by the Acadian emigres. For instance, we have a modified form of the [?] de la caps, godless Millers of Camargue—craftsmen who refused in life to keep the holy days of the church and are made to work unceasingly in the other world. Others again have grown up indigenous to the soil, and we think with a peculiar idyllic grace of their own, as sweet and subtle as the aroma of the native til[l]andsia, which hangs up on every forest tree.¹²¹

While appreciating Acadian folklore, the writer suggests that Louisiana was unique for that reason and a valuable story background for writers of fiction. It does, however, essentially characterize them as simple or nonthreatening and provides fodder for novelists to portray Acadians as cartoonish outsiders who contribute nothing more than a “colorful backdrop” to

¹¹⁹ “The Capabilities of the Parish of St. Landry.”

¹²⁰ “Legendary Lore of Louisiana,” *The Times-Democrat*, June 6, 1869, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/201945691/>.

¹²¹ “Legendary Lore of Louisiana.”

Louisiana's unique history.¹²² The writer's perspective is representative of the time. The writer portrayed Acadians as inferior to Anglo Louisianians, perhaps projecting an ideological crisis regarding the boundaries of Whiteness, while simultaneously and perhaps unknowingly setting the stage for a future cultural heritage tourism industry based on an imagined and mythologized past.

Approximately four months later, in the October 2, 1869, edition of the *Opelousas Journal*, a column titled "The Prairies of South" described the geography and culture of south Louisiana. Booster pieces extolling Louisiana riches were common in Reconstruction-era publications and the author frequently idealized and essentialized the subject they wrote about. Many articles, whether authored by the editor, correspondent, or an excerpt from a publication, followed this path, so it should come as no surprise that an article by a professor at the University of Mississippi, Eugene W. Hilgard, echoed these tropes. Hilgard conducted research into Louisiana history and reported some of his findings in the *American Journal of Science*, funded by the Board of Immigration for the State of Louisiana. Although allegedly impartial, his study of geography clearly serves as a foundation for stereotypes about Acadians and Louisiana culture more broadly. Importantly, Hilgard published excerpts of his research in the *Opelousas Journal*, which lent a degree of authority to the article. Hilgard investigated the prairies' settlement potential, resources, and cultural characteristics of the region. However, his analysis was a little skewed and outside of his expertise. He argued, referring to a region of South Louisiana, which consists of a large community of Acadians, "well might the Teche be styled by its enthusiastic inhabitants the 'Garden of Louisiana.' But a large part of this peculiarly agricultural region is now merely a range for herds of cattle, and in its northern portion, where

¹²² "Legendary Lore of Louisiana."

intelligent culture is more necessary, as the soil is less thrifty, a quarter or half bale of cotton per acre is oftentimes raised where an entire bale should be the minimum, if justice is done to the soil.”¹²³

Importantly, during Reconstruction, the area surrounding the Teche was largely populated by many Acadian families. Research like Hilgard’s often characterized Acadians as unproductive and helped to shape public perception of Acadian culture and people. Ideas like these were widely held and were used to categorize persons deemed incapable of functioning in a civilized society, hence a democracy or self-government. Hilgard's cultural understanding, or lack thereof, of the region demonstrates not just his ignorance, but also how racial re-categorization developed throughout the Reconstruction period.

In the same edition of the *Opelousas Journal*, the editor republished an article from the *St. Louis Home Journal*, titled "Creole Music." The author describes the Acadians in the following way,

The Acadians in the Opelousas and Attakapas country of Louisiana are the most peasant-like of all our rural people. Simple and frugal in their tastes, their only cares are their herds, their fields and their boats. They have the superstitions in reverence of the French peasant combined with docility and a certain latent fire not unlike the Italians. Strong in feeling, with hot blood easily excited, they have a vein of passion and sentiment running through their fibers which makes them peculiarly susceptible to the influence of music. They have among them many quaint and wild songs, full of pathos and tenderness, which are not unlike Moorish songs when heard at night on the lake or amidst the tropical luxuriance of a forest. Their music is all more or less sad and plaintive, and generally sung in a minor key. The airs of their songs are always simple and totally devoid of ornamentation, and are not to be confounded with the nervous, irregular dance music of the negro population, whom they detest. One could well imagine himself in the Bay of Naples when listening to one of the boatmen of the Barataria singing as he floats homeward.¹²⁴

¹²³ Hilgard, “The Praries of South Louisiana,” *The Opelousas Journal*, October 2, 1869, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86079077/1869-10-02/ed-1/seq-1/>.

¹²⁴ “Creole Music,” *The Opelousas Journal*, October 2, 1869, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86079077/1869-10-02/ed-1/seq-1/>.

The first sentence refers to Acadians, as did other articles, as uncivilized and exotic. The author generalized and essentialized Acadian culture and people. The author convinces the reader that the characterization is natural or biological. The writer's use of "our," suggests the author was either from Louisiana or had some knowledge and considered himself an authority on the culture. Thereafter, the author makes a comparison to Italians, as "they have the superstitions and reverence of the [F]rench peasant combined with docility and a certain latent fire not unlike the Italians."¹²⁵

The author's vocabulary echoed past newspaper articles that familiarized and exoticized Acadian culture. Similar to the travel diaries of the day, newspaper journalists attempted to authenticate the Acadian culture, because travel diarists thought they spoke from a place of expertise. The amateur ethnographer established racial disparities but also parities between Acadians and other ethnic groups, such as Italians and the "negro population." The ethnographer defines Acadians as "strong in feeling, with hot blood easily excited, they have a vein of passion and sentiment running through their fibers which makes them peculiarly susceptible to the influence of music."¹²⁶ The author's depiction of the Acadians resembles the noble savage myth, but as I have noted in this dissertation, under the historical conditions, Anglo-Saxons included Acadians in their racial classification. Alternatively, due in part to an ongoing post-Civil War ideological crisis, Anglos excluded and categorized various Louisiana groups within the context of dominant Southern racial customs. This crisis anchored Anglos' goal of "home rule" and white supremacy, and due to this goal, they sometimes needed Acadians to be white -- yet still inferior -- while at other times they excluded them from the benefits of whiteness and simply

¹²⁵ "Creole Music."

¹²⁶ "Creole Music."

categorized them as an exotic other. By constantly providing pictures of Acadians as the racial Other, newspapers contributed to the formation or reassertion of Southern racial customs. White supremacy was the standard at the period, and the inclusion of unfavorable stories about Acadians underscores that Anglo-Saxonism was the gold standard.

The next year, in the 10 April 1870 issue of the *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, an editorial titled "Letter from Pelican" describes the history and positive characteristics of the Bayou Teche region of Louisiana. The text describes Acadians in this region as follows: "to these natural advantages, add a good, kind, generous, and hospitable people [Acadians] who are reasonably dispersed throughout the country."¹²⁷ Additionally, the author notes that the "people of the country are mostly descendants of the Acadian exiles, though some are of Spanish descent, and have retained the faith of their ancestors, with nearly every town or village and many of the more significant communities having their own church and resident priest," which assumes Acadians operated as a group or were insular at the time.¹²⁸ What is intriguing in this article is what is missing from the description. By defining them as "a good, kind, generous, and hospitable people," it is implied that they are simple and maybe capable of self-governance.¹²⁹ Regardless of the author's interpretation of the region or the morality of Acadians, the characterization of Acadians as two-dimensional historical actors who do not participate in change, or as conservative figures who remain static or unchanging or who are uninterested in adapting to the American way of life is reduced to a few words.

Thus, the power of the newspaper and writer to shape the Acadian identity and to influence public opinion is clear. Instead of focusing on Acadian wealth in the short history, the

¹²⁷ Pelican, "Letter From Pelican," *The Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, April 10, 1870.

¹²⁸ Pelican.

¹²⁹ Pelican.

author emphasizes Acadian morals. Reading this article closely reveals a perception of the community that is common to outsiders regarding the borderlands as less white, curious, foreign, exotic, or even dangerous. The statement employs race rhetoric to give an understanding of Acadian culture as antiquated or inept. By stating “though not a few are of Spanish” descent the author suggests that Acadians have intermarried or not purely French, but of a mixed ethnicity. According to Anglo Saxons, mixed ethnicity is neither pure nor Anglo on the racial spectrum, because Spaniards and southern French are closely connected and so racially suitable.¹³⁰ Perhaps the author is an amateur anthropologist or historian, educated in the study of culture, or are just a local who finds himself or herself an expert, but using the word “though” and corrals the Acadian people into a racial category based on the idea that to be white means Anglo Saxon, i.e. of British descent, not French.

The Black Legend undoubtedly had an influence on amateur researchers of history. A common theme among researchers had to do with the negative image of the Spanish and French influences on the history of the United States.¹³⁰ So after the positive interpretation or description of Acadians as “good, kind, generous, and hospitable people, tolerably well dispersed over the country, with their towns, villages, schools and churches. . .”¹³¹ As I quoted before, the writer states “mostly descendants of the Acadian exiles, though not a few are of Spanish origins,” suggests that many Acadians have intermarried with the Spanish and making the distinction suggests one should make note before coming to the region.¹³² I believe it reflects a

¹³⁰ Pelican.

¹³⁰ Historians such as Herbert Bolton and those who rewrote Bolton’s Spanish Borderland blamed Parkman and Parkman started the image of Acadians as ignorant. I find it interesting that historians in the 1990s wrote against this image, but at the same time reaffirmed the image by challenging it.

¹³¹ Pelican, “Letter From Pelican.”

¹³² Pelican.

previously hostile attitude toward Spanish colonization among Louisiana French.¹³³ The French Creoles, had issues with Spanish colonization, but more so Anglos regarded Spain as backward.¹³³

Although the previous short cultural and environmental analysis of the Bayou Teche seemed to describe the region and the people in a positive way, the political nature of the newspapers raises questions about this conclusion. Like many other writings about Acadians, the authors often offer stereotypes that cast doubt on Acadians as a race in the context of the fitness to self-govern. The *New Orleans Republican* supported the Republican party and enjoyed the role of the official organ of the Louisiana Republican party, but it also described local views of various groups, which sometimes went against the philosophy of the paper. Its purpose, argues the editors, was to “organize the patriotic sentiment of the state into a harmonious relationship with the Federal Government,” but its anti-Black, somewhat White supremacist leanings sometimes ran afoul of its pro-Union national mission.¹³⁴

Statements in this article raise questions about the racial views of the editors and the author. For instance, one wonders about the intent of this statement, that Southerners should not have to “readjust in accordance with those changes the relations between the white and colored races in the State.”¹³⁵ Interestingly, the editor refers to more than one “colored” race, perhaps there were other races Anglos considered non-White.¹³⁶ A revealing point, as one of the reasons why the *New Orleans Republican* and Republican party failed the freed slaves was the swift and

¹³³ The Insurrection of 1768 was French Creole rejection of Spanish administration.

¹³³ Richard L. Kagan, “Prescott’s Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain,” *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (1996): 423–46, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/101.2.423>.

¹³⁴ “What Republicanism Has Accomplished in Louisiana,” *New Orleans Republican*, November 10, 1878, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1878-11-10/ed-1/seq-2/>.

¹³⁵ “What Republicanism Has Accomplished in Louisiana.”

¹³⁶ “What Republicanism Has Accomplished in Louisiana.”

violent actions of whites, especially those who were Confederates who held beliefs of the “extreme ignorance of the colored population, the natural effect of generations of enslavement.”¹³⁷ Just as slavery set the stage for race making, the emancipation of slaves complicated the racial hierarchy and simultaneously raised questions about the place of Acadians in relation to freed blacks. In Louisiana where a large population existed of blacks and non-Anglos, specifically Acadians, they often were perceived as black and the making of who they were was influenced by the way Acadians were represented in the newspapers.

Although the author could not perceive the Bayou Teche region as anything idyllic, in the following months, the region would become the site of murder and conflict over the months of May and June. Newspapers, like editors and journalists today, seek to satiate their readers' appetites, and many Reconstruction articles reveal the use of Anglo Saxons to create a superior image. Anglo editors and journalists created a self-image in the minds of the readers, allowing them to picture themselves as Anglo Southerners. The writers made these distinctions by categorizing race based in part on. Many times, these borders were reified by describing others in a way that exoticized them, like “come see the ignorant and authentic or untouched Acadians.” In the following months, Louisiana newspapers would report on a murder of two Louisianians in Vermillion Parish. As with the other numerous writings on Acadians, the newspapers categorize Acadians. The usage of the term "Acadian" to characterize "stock thieves" suggests that Acadians are violent and behave as a group, implying that Acadians are violent by nature.

ATTACK OF CAPTAIN SAUNDERS AND MR. WILLIAMS BY “ACADIAN STOCK THIEVES” 1870

In 1870, from May 25 to June 4, many Louisiana newspapers reported on the "heinous

¹³⁷ “What Republicanism Has Accomplished in Louisiana.”

murder" of a steamboat captain, John Saunders of Franklin, Louisiana, and the wounding of Benjamin Williams. The first stories to emerge, which were reprints from the *New Orleans Times*, were brief but unambiguous as to who should be held accountable for the murders. Although following stories revealed additional information about the murder, including the names of the victims and the alleged sequence of events, the identities of the murderers did not appear in any public newspapers. However, what was intriguing was an editorial response to the murder published in the June 1st *Planters' Banner*, a newspaper from the city of Franklin. From this editorial, one gains insight onto the temperament of the parish and the living conditions of its residents. Prior to the attack, in the town of Franklin, "whites entered a hotel... and publicly murdered the sheriff and judge with knives and pistols," one of the several political events that led to bloodshed in Reconstruction Louisiana and the adoption of Black Codes in other towns.¹³⁸

A brief summary of the importance of borderlands history for southern Louisiana is required to understand the importance of this incident. Traditional histories of Louisiana Acadian identity throughout the Civil War and Reconstruction period do not consider the Union-Confederacy line to be a frontier. The Union-Confederacy borders are seen in a national framework or as an internal situation. Similar to Resendez's understanding of U.S.-Mexico history, "traditional histories of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands have tended to assume that frontier residents had clear national loyalties from the beginning."¹³⁹ A borderlands perspective lets us foreground apparent allegiances or voices not found in standard histories. The closest approximation to a borderlands framework in traditional histories of North-South differences is the carpetbagger and scalawag argument that refers to their "invasion" of the South. The South

¹³⁸ Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 2287.

¹³⁹ Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*.

had a large influx of Northerners, and Louisiana is a suitable example that may be compared to the frontier. However, one cannot assume that all Louisianians retained their Southern viewpoints, nor can one assume that all Northerners maintained their northern perspectives. In contrast, I am examining Southerners with a distinct, non-Anglo lineage who had a history of Anglo tyranny and behaved in a manner that is opposed to that of the Anglo oppressors.

This region has a history of multiple boundaries and conflicts. The population of Louisiana Acadian descent saw the borderlands differently and responded differently to the US Mexico War and the American Civil War. During the Union-Confederacy War, Acadians in Louisiana reacted in a variety of ways, with some – but not all – siding with the Confederacy. Reconsidering Louisiana, particularly south Louisiana as a borderland, permits a reconsideration of Louisiana in 1870. Borderlands spaces are the complex result of war, conflict, invasion, and other tensions between cultures, peoples, nations, and empires. Social and political conflict are two forms of conflict that might exist. Conflict between two sides reveals power imbalances, and the identities selected are frequently influenced by their perspectives on political interests, class allegiance, and race and whiteness.

The Union/Confederacy borderlands were frequently a location of "opposing forces," particularly in Louisiana, where Reconstruction began early under military control and residents resisted the new social order, which they claimed was imposed by Republican government officials and property loss. Under the conditions, Louisiana Democrats fought the emancipation of slaves and were sometimes violent: this was a typical occurrence in the post-Civil War era when its residents rejected state politics and emphasized the paradoxical realities of south Louisiana. These factors frequently exposed allegiances and altered their perception of who they were. Conflict at the border was almost always influenced by race, which served as a criterion

for judging who was afforded citizenship or not. Louisianians and Acadians were similarly influenced by "local, national, racial, and ideological categories" when they were designated Americans or pro-Union. Race and nation are intertwined, and the era and location of the borderlands provides an excellent illustration of this phenomena.

The May 24, 1870, article in the *Times-Picayune* stated that the Bayou Teche had potential to become an important port or waterway for the area and the nation. Congress requested a reconnaissance of the canal, and Captain W. D. Duke determined that if the federal government allocated funding to open the bayou to boat traffic, it would improve regional trade and prosperity. Increasing affluence and immigration were crucial to the safety and settlement of Louisiana during the Reconstruction period in order to reintegrate it into the Union. Throughout the subsequent weeks, several publications repeated and reproduced the *Times Picayune's* May 24, 1870, article under the headline "Atrocious Murder." The fact that the victims were described as "peaceful citizens" as opposed to "hostile victims" shows that they did not deserve to be murdered.¹⁴⁰ Behind this piece, which was republished in multiple newspapers across the state, the reporting provides some insight into how the readers view themselves and people around them. The editors of newspapers understand what sells papers, and the publications of the era mirrored the tastes of their readers and new readership. The newspapers reified Anglo-Saxons as the superior race while exoticizing Acadians by characterizing them as lower on the racial hierarchy and less white; they also emphasized boundaries by calling them as unique or genuine.

It is essential to recall the separation between the North and South and the remnants of a lost war. The New Orleans *Republican* described Acadians as stock thieves without recognizing

¹⁴⁰ G. N., "New Iberia: Atrocious Murder," *The Daily Picayune*, May 24, 1870, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/26667943/?terms=Acadians%20or%20Acadian&match=1>.

the ideology they preached as a phenomenon of the borderlands, when individuals who chose to consider themselves and the allegiances they portray or support the creation or remaking of the nation. Unhesitatingly, the New Orleans *Republican* published an article without a title recounting the murder and injury of a citizen. The article discusses the murder and presents the newspaper's conclusion regarding who perpetrated the crime.

The *Republican*, as reported by the *Picayune* similarly describes the “atrocious murder.”¹⁴¹ Following the pattern established by other papers, the *Picayune* asserted that “two peaceable citizens were shot down by a party of Acadian stock thieves--one being instantly killed and the other severely wounded.”¹⁴² Conflict frequently reveals power and those attempting to seize it, and it often stems from racial position, which influences one's identity or is reciprocal. Race and the nation are linked and it's at the border where we see this phenomenon the most. Since the border was a place where one was designated in or out and Acadians were out. Much like other borderlands the paper reported that “the citizens of St. Landry are excited on the subject, and the Sheriff and a posse have gone in search of the murderers.”¹⁴³ During the Reconstruction period, loyalties are fluid, but perceptions are often filtered through the prism of a heated journalistic rivalry, which drove writers to cater to the preferences and prejudices of their readers. Thus, examination of the language calls into question our comprehension of historical events or non-Anglo history.

On May 28, 1870, three days later, the *Opelousas Journal* reported on the same crime with the caption "Atrocious Murder." Although the lead is in the first phrase, the second sentence describes the killers' ethnic background. In contrast to the previous article, the *Opelousas*

¹⁴¹ “No Title,” *New Orleans Republican*, March 11, 1876, Saturday edition.

¹⁴² “No Title,” *New Orleans Republican*, May 25, 1870, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/325983416/>.

¹⁴³“No Title.”

Journal now includes the names of both the injured and the deceased. Again, what is essential is the use of language such as "peaceable citizens" and "who leaves a wife and family," which humanizes the attack, but in comparison to the perpetrator, they are a "party of Acadian stock thieves."¹⁴⁴ This article similarly repeats previous ones by stating that "the citizens of St. Landry (?) are excited [on the] subject, and the Sheriff and a posse have gone in search of the murderers."¹⁴⁵

On May 31, 1870, both the *Times-Picayune* and *New Orleans Republican* reported on the murder, but both this time provided more details for their readers. Both papers held a caption in bold, while the *New Orleans Republican*'s "Outlaws in Vermillion Parish: Brutal Murder and Outrage: Sequel to Hog Stealing," and the *Time-Picayune*'s caption is "The Murder in Vermillion: the Particulars" sets the stage for the paper as an authority on the subject. Although both the *New Orleans Republican* and *Times-Picayune* is republishing the article from the 28th of May *New Iberia Times*, the report states, the caption speaks for itself because the captions from each paper are different and because the *New Orleans Republican* is more aggressive than the *Time*'s in this case, which would suggest that the *Republican* came up with their own title, to make the article more salacious for their readers. The goal of these newspapers was to construct an uncivilized thus unfit to self-governing Acadian.

These articles reveal important points regarding race relations, racial hierarchies, and borderlands identity formation in southern Louisiana. The nature of the North-South borders facilitates the selection of diverse identities, a typical occurrence in such locations. In instances of tension, at the border, choosing a side, and developing an allegiance, can be complicated. We

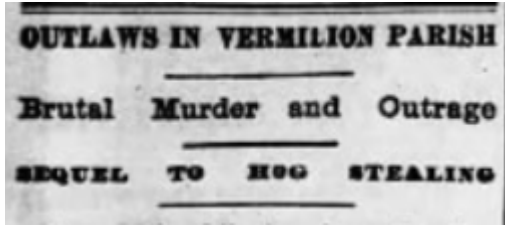
¹⁴⁴ "Atrocious Murder," *The Opelousas Journal*, May 28, 1870.

¹⁴⁵ "Atrocious Murder," *The Opelousas Journal*, May 28, 1870.

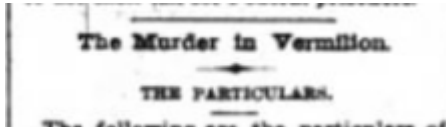
see that borderlands conflict reveals power, and the identities adopted are frequently influenced by race. In each conflict there are reactions that are frequently based on race, and in the case of Acadians, included questions about their capacity for self-governance. Drawing upon these general trends, we see that the newspapers racialized the alleged killers by denigrating their Acadian identity.

The *New Orleans Republican* and *Times-Picayune* were influenced by North – South political tensions that influenced their reporting. However, they reprinted stories from other papers, and they both claimed that the selection was copied from *New Iberia*, with one claiming *New Iberia Times* and the other claiming the article is from *New Iberia*, and both including the exact same item with different headings. The *New Orleans Republican*, a frequent source of Republican news, has consistently attacked the South, and New Orleans's political establishment has long backed the radicalism of Republicans and Northern allies in the South. The *New Orleans Republican* is vastly different from the *Times Picayune*. In contrast, the *Times Picayune* version was less detailed and spectacular than other newspapers. The *New Orleans Republican* characterizes the suspects as "criminals," implying their guilt prior to trial.¹⁴⁶ Second, describing the murder as "brutal" and "outrageous" highlights the community's response, because the police respond by assembling a posse, which perhaps describes the community as uncivilized, and the suspects' response as being unable to control their actions, which suggests they are less white and incapable of self-governance.

¹⁴⁶ "Outlaws in Vermilion Parish: Brutal Murder and Outrage: Sequel to Hog Stealing," *New Orleans Republican*, May 31, 1870, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/325985384/>.



New Orleans Republican May 31, 1870



Times Picayune May 31, 1870

For five more days in June, various newspapers from around the state reported on the matter. Some such as the *South-Western* and that *Bossier Banner* adopted the caption of “Atrocious Murder” and perpetuated the tone and temperament of previously published articles. The *South-Western*, founded in Shreveport and edited by Lewis Dillard, formally the editor of the *New Orleans Native American*, opposed Southern secession. Interestingly, Shreveport served as the capital of Louisiana and after 1865 and was the last capital of the Confederacy. Its political opposite was the *Bossier Banner* established in Bellevue, Louisiana but moved to Benton, the parish seat of Bossier. Its content provided religious motivated articles and cottage literature, much like lost cause literature. Both papers reported on the Vermillion murder in the same way and referred to the murderers as “Acadian.”

An editorial response to the murder of Capt. Saunders and the beating of Williams, was found in the *Planter’s Banner*. On June 1, 1870, an editorial was published with the caption “A Deed of Blood” that went beyond the incident and questioned the increasing amount of violence

in south Louisiana, where the majority of Acadians lived.¹⁴⁷ The author appears to be questioning the circumstances behind the violence and relates the recent killings of a long-running rivalry and the death of Capt. Saunders. The most intriguing aspect of the editorial is the author's reference to a local rivalry, which historians refer to as the "Black River Feud" or as the "Lyddell-Jones" dispute. The allusion to the conflict is essential. Although the conflict begins from one of the players, Liddell, desiring to preserve the dignity of a friend of Liddell whom Jones disgraced, Jones was the one who dishonored Liddell's acquaintance. Liddell and his companion confronted Jones, with the friend shooting Jones. The feud began when Liddell's friend attempted to purchase the Jones' property, which exacerbated the situation. Jones then said derogatory things about the friend because he had to sell his plantation as a result of the war and emancipation of the slaves, and he suspected that Liddell was attempting to acquire the property for a low price.

Despite the seriousness of the tragedy, the conversation around this event reveals a great deal about how some see others and how others perceive some. Newspapers contributed to the rhetoric of modernism and ability to self-govern at the intersection of a North-South dialogue. In the first few paragraphs of the editorial, signed by "Justice," the author after comparing the murder to the Liddell-Jones feud murders describes the circumstances of murder as "such horrid acts to be settled by the *lex talionis*."¹⁴⁸ "Justice" combines the religiosity of murder and civilization rhetoric to deflect and describe the violence as coming from a certain type of people who are uncivilized. Many times, this has to do with the way historical characters perceive themselves, which reifies the border between individuals and cultures.

¹⁴⁷Justice, "A Deed of Blood," *The Planters' Banner*, June 1, 1870, 2, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/174508464/?terms=Planter%27s%20Banner%20and&match=1>.

¹⁴⁸ Justice, "A Deed of Blood."

Not until June 11, 1870, did the *Lafayette Advertiser* provide some opinion about the incident. The *Lafayette Advisor*, established in 1865, was located in Vermilionville, present day Lafayette. The editor of the newspaper was William B. Bailey, who had prior printer experience at the *Echo* of Lafayette and from 1863-1893 he was sole editor. From a political standpoint, the newspaper tended to be democratic during the Reconstruction period, but interestingly the paper was bilingual. The French edition was far more superior as opposed to the English version which seemed to be neglected. After the June 4th edition and report of the murder, the June 11th edition with the byline “The Prairie Gregg Difficulty” seems to provide some opinion regarding the murder of one victim and a beating of another. Although the article was shared by the *New Iberia Times*, the *Lafayette Adviser* printed it, thus sharing the view communicated by the *New Iberia times*.

The article begins with a curious statement that raises questions about the integrity of the investigation into the murders. Quoting the paper, “we are told that, but little effort has been made to arrest the murderer of Capt. Saunders, for some strange reason, and that so far none have been found who are known to have been with the band.”¹⁴⁹ In addition to the frustration with the inability of law enforcement to catch the suspects, the writer seems to suggest some motive behind not catching the murders.¹⁵⁰ After stating a potential suspect’s name, Nicolas Meux, the writer, describes the character of the community in which this murder happened. The *New Iberia Times* author writes from a place of arrogance, describing “that . . . neighborhood“ of “some citizens” as having “bad character.”¹⁵¹ But in the following sentence, the writer asserts “that none of them would have any difficulty to prove an alibis,” which suggests any of the

¹⁴⁹ “The Prairie Gregg Difficulty,” *The Lafayette Advertiser*, June 11, 1870.

¹⁵⁰ “The Prairie Gregg Difficulty,” *The Lafayette Advertiser*, June 11, 1870.

¹⁵¹ “The Prairie Gregg Difficulty.”

inhabitants of Prairie Gregg would lie for one another or provide an alibi.¹⁵² It appears the author of the article is presumptuous and prejudiced, and the statement imparts some difference between them and the residents of Prairie Gregg. The author goes on to say “we know nothing of the people of that section of the country except from hearsay,” which suggests the writer admitting to his ignorance, but goes on to say “and hope to find them much better than represented[.]”¹⁵³ Although the author admits to his ignorance, he emphasizes again, that “the good citizens of that locality should do their utmost to put down lawlessness, for their own credit.”¹⁵⁴

On September 1, 1870, the *Opelousas Courier* published a follow up article from the Lafayette Advertiser about the murder of Capt. Saunders and the beating of Mr. Williams. The *Opelousas Courier*, in 1870, was published in both English and French and remained partial to the Democratic party and platform. The paper carried local and state news, along with literary essays and fictional stories. As a whole, the article published about the recent murder, although the article was republished by the *Opelousas Courier*, the *Lafayette Advertiser* accuses the suspects of participating in a gang, names the suspects and then goes on to describe them as “scamps” and “should be [just] cause and dealt with by all means.”¹⁵⁵ In the preceding article the newspaper accuses the men.

Although, the author does not literally write that he finds the Acadians as less white, but by describing the situation to the violent nature of the Liddell-Jones feud, they compare the community in which the violence occurred with the other conflict. This implies that the

¹⁵² “The Prairie Gregg Difficulty.”

¹⁵³ “The Prairie Gregg Difficulty.”

¹⁵⁴ “The Prairie Gregg Difficulty.”

¹⁵⁵ “No Title,” *Opelousas Courier*, October 1, 1870.

predominantly Acadian community was prone to violence and that its closed nature reflected an uncivilized culture that condoned murder. The editorial referring to the violence is a confirmation that the use of Acadian was used in a derogatory way and also shows that out of these conflicts or editorial response is shaped by the writers imaginings of Acadians as a race and less than white but above black. Although not clearly evident, activity such as this, commenting on the circumstances of the murder, reveals that people commenting are white and powerful, and creates in the minds of readers the notion that Acadians are less civilized and not of the Anglo-Saxon group. The piece enhanced both the author's and the reader's sense of authority. By describing them as Acadians as uncivilized which suggests they have the inability to self-govern, a common way to categorize during the reconstruction era.

Chapter 4: 1872-1874

In newspapers between 1872 and 1874, Acadians publish political letters, frequently appear related to violence, as historical actors, and inexperienced typesetters. P. O. Hebert's inclusion is crucial to the historical narrative because, even though some historians view him as Creole and make little mention of his Union sympathies, Hebert was key to the Unification Movement but would consider himself a Southerner. Hebert would appeal to Southern sentiments by encouraging a coalition of liberal Republicans and moderate Democrats to vote for Horace Greely and hopefully prevent Grant's election.

By 1872, both the Republican and Democrat parties were undergoing factional strife on a national scale, but some Democrats questioned the party's identity and began to accept the reality of black suffrage, which signaled a "New Departure" as argued by Foner.¹⁵⁶ Foner discovered that some Democrats began to accept black suffrage and a readiness to tolerate Southern lifestyle changes, but only to a certain extent.¹⁵⁷ On the surface, it appeared that the Democrats were influenced by, but this was actually a political strategy as they began to promote disaffected Republicans and the restoration of civil rights for former Confederates. A political movement would result in the foundation of the Liberal Republicans, who would join forces with the New Departure Democrats to oppose Grant's reelection. The Liberal Republicans nominated Horace Greely, an editor and publisher of the New York *Tribune*, but Grant won a second term.

From December 9, 1872, until January 13, 1873, PBS Pinchback was the first African American governor. He replaced Henry C. Warmoth, who had been suspended because of the impeachment proceedings. Overall, blacks were represented in parish and local governments

¹⁵⁶ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 412.

¹⁵⁷ Foner, *Reconstruction*.

even though they were underrepresented in state governments. Mardi Gras would include both black and white people, implying that there was more inter-racial interaction during Louisiana Reconstruction, which may have led to the hardening of racial boundaries rather than more fluid boundaries. Louisiana's civil rights laws were not being enforced. Corruption harmed Reconstruction among blacks as well; PBS Pinchback engaged in some insider trading that benefited him financially. Democrats had something to campaign on against Republicans since both the north and south Republican parties were corrupt.

Until 1876, Louisiana remained under military occupation, but redemption was gaining momentum and scalawags (Southern white Republicans) were interested in economic progress. Opinions on the South's survival appeared to hold enormous weight, and how Louisiana would accomplish also remained contested. Democrats in Louisiana began to shift their focus away from the war and began to accept its outcomes; thus, increasing legitimacy in the Northern perspective. Louisiana's carpetbaggers, such as Henry Clay Warmoth, who was impeached and replaced by Pinchback, integrated schools and repealed portions of the 1864 constitution that protected slavery and permitted interracial marriages. Even though revolution appeared in response to carpetbagger changes, disenfranchised whites ratcheted up violence against blacks. As new departure politicians found themselves focusing on economic issues, planters continued to influence the democratic party and they could not accept blacks as their equals. During this time, New South ideology emphasized planters' continued power, and race was the defining factor. Planters had had enough of black work because they wanted to have the same labor discipline, thus they accepted black labor and maintained that immigration was required. Some Louisianians despised military control and wished to "restore" municipal administrations, restoring self-government. The demise of radical politics, some would argue was due to several

moderate Democrats allied with the Liberal Republicans resulting in the Unification Movement. The Liberal Republicans and moderate Democrats charted a course for politics that would weaken the Radicals while strengthening the Democratic Party but the movement was short lived because blacks and whites could not find common ground.¹⁵⁸

The Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871 had seemed to quiet the vigilante groups. The vigilante groups, such as the Knights of the White Camelia had disbanded by mid 1869.¹⁵⁹ Brasseaux claims voter fraud happened, but Democrats began to divert their attention owing to coalitions formed between Liberal Republicans and Democrats called the Fusionist ticket in the 1872 election between John McEnery the Fusionist candidate and William P. Kellogg. Although McEnery won the race unofficially, Republicans challenged the outcome, and after both Kellogg and McEnery created their own governments, President Grant sided with Kellogg. McEnery sympathizers or Fusionists in the state militia attempted to gain possession of the Cabildo, home of the Louisiana State Supreme Court, but were thwarted by the Kellogg administration. The conflict between McEnery and Kellogg supporters appeared to be fading, but Acadian areas outside of New Orleans did not. The White League was established in Opelousas and Breaux Bridge in 1874 and of the 15 chapters that were organized 10 presidents were of Acadian ancestry.¹⁶⁰ They attempted to fight quietly by organizing a tax-resistance movement, but it failed, so they turned to intimidation, in which Alcibiades DeBlanc, as recounted by the *New York Times* as “King of the Cajuns,” restarted hostilities. The White Leaguers attempted to

¹⁵⁸ Vincent J. C. Marsala, “The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1962), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2641838251?pq-origsite=primo>; T. Harry Williams, “The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873,” *The Journal of Southern History* 11, no. 3 (1945): 349–69, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2197812>.

¹⁵⁹ Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*.

¹⁶⁰ Brasseaux, 183.

remove Radical Republicans from office. Brasseaux argues white supremacist organizations were “perhaps the most enduring legacy of nineteenth century violence in Louisiana’s Acadian society.” I don’t necessarily disagree, but I consider that the White League organization’s aim was to protect a southern way of life, and Acadians were going to win the debate between the North and the South. Northerners attempted to win the argument through newspapers and portray Acadians as uncivilized and unable to self-govern.¹⁶¹

The major theme of Radical Reconstruction, according to Ted Tunnell, author of *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana 1862-1867*, is a “crisis of legitimacy.” His observation is especially astute for the period of Radical Reconstruction, but I believe the crisis of legitimacy emerged earlier during the secession crisis. Democrats and planters considered radicals as “criminal usurpers,” but the crisis of legitimacy in Republican measures against Republicans was obvious between 1872 and 1874. Questioning of then North and South’s legitimacy was nowhere more visible than in newspaper columns and editorials. Tunnell does not investigate how newspapers engaged in political, psychological, or ideological warfare, but I discovered that editors and journalists would use Acadians as a foil against the other, indicating the existence of a North South dialogue. Both Southern Unionist or Northern-biased newspapers and Secessionist or Southern-biased newspapers used Acadians to validate their respective points of view.

Lincoln determined that emancipating slaves would be the best way to end the Civil War and set up a process for the Confederate states to reenter the Union through pardons. Under the direction of General Nathaniel Banks, Louisiana assembled to establish a new constitution under Lincoln’s Ten Percent Plan, which forced Southern states to vow devotion to the Union. The

¹⁶¹ Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*.

1864 constitution included the abolition of slavery but did little to guarantee the newly liberated slaves civil rights. Thereafter, Louisiana Reconstruction was proving more difficult and Tunnell argued astutely that “the crux of the matter, however, was a question of cultural identity. . .[and under Radical Reconstruction or Congressional Reconstruction]. . .defined Louisiana as a biracial society belonging to white and black alike.”¹⁶² Tunnell argues that the study of the Reconstruction period in Louisiana has not focused on the Radical leaders who were mainly Unionists, but he rightfully draws attention to the unionists because other histories fail to understand who they were when scalawags and carpetbaggers were the focus. Like Tunnell, I question whether Acadian Unionists existed and if they had any influence on politics or society.

The Reconstruction Acts of 1867 defined the criteria under which the Southern states may be readmitted. The results were the southern confederate states, with the exception of Tennessee, were divided into 5 military districts, each state had to write a new constitution, which extended suffrage for men to be approved by a majority, and lastly Louisiana had to ratify the 14th Amendment, which granted African Americans citizenship and equal civil and legal rights.¹⁶³ Following the passing of the Reconstruction Acts, Louisiana held a constitutional convention, and then the Louisiana legislature passed a new constitution in 1868. The residents of Louisiana followed this process closely, reading about it in the newspapers, which were quite partisan at the time. As an example of the influence Louisiana newspapers had on public opinion in regards the politics or specifically the racial makeup of delegates, as argued by Tunnell, was that the New Orleans *Tribune*, the official newspaper of the Republican party, “deliberately

¹⁶² Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism and Race in Louisiana, 1862-77*. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1984), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1125300>.

¹⁶³ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 2018, 276, https://ebooks.infobase.com/e_ViewEbook.aspx?ISBN=9781438192673.

miscounted.”¹⁶⁴ Although the breakdown of delegates was fifty black members to forty-eight white members, the *Tribune* stated delegate race was equal.

My motivation for drawing attention to the newspaper differs from Tunnell's. He suggests that the *Tribune*, a black owned newspaper, was “mainly responsible for the traditional belief that the convention was equally divided between white and negro delegates.”¹⁶⁵ Tunnell believes the *Tribune* intentionally reported incorrect delegate counts to make a statement or rebuff “Negro-rule-in-the South propaganda,” but I believe Tunnell understood the rhetorical power of newspapers.¹⁶⁶ The *Tribune's* objective was, and rightly so, to expose the cruel character of the South, but to study of the influence of Black newspapers on the North-South conversation is not my aim. Tunnell's example is pertinent to my research because Black editors and journalists identified racist discourse and disputed Northern and Southern white propaganda, implying that the north and south were conversing without Blacks. Regardless of the orator or audience, newspapers reflected their readers' opinions and helped shape the regional identities of the South and North.¹⁶⁷

The *Tribune*, the official newspaper of the Republican Party, was not alone in politicizing the news throughout the era. Like the period newspapers, historians in the early 19th century offered a Southern biased version of the origins, course, and legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The North, according to the William Dunning school scholars, loathed Southerners, ignored Southern governments, and exploited the South, yet the South was

¹⁶⁴ Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*.

¹⁶⁵ Tunnell.

¹⁶⁶ Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 1680.

¹⁶⁷ Tunnell's example is pertinent to my research because Black editors and journalists identified racist discourse and disputed Northern and Southern white propaganda, implying that the north and south were conversing without Blacks.

redeemed when home rule was restored. Most relevant to my study was the belief that freed people lacked the capacity to exercise the political rights the Northerners gave them, a perspective foisted on Acadians also. Behind Dunning came the Progressive school, who centered the economy over politics, where carpetbaggers pandered to blacks, and the south was subordinated as a result of black voting rights. W. E. B. Dubois chastised historians for ignoring the freed slave as proof of their racial prejudice.

LAYMAN HISTORIES/EDITOR/JOURNALISTS POLITICAL OPINIONS: 1872

Louisiana editors and journalists degraded and employed the term Acadian as a propaganda tool to complicate Reconstruction politics and subvert political gains on both sides. In the name of freedom and democracy, Louisiana editors and journalists used rhetorical maneuvers to reflect the attitudes and views of white southerners under Radical Republican rule. Newspapers often used Acadians as scapegoats in their publications to reflect and perpetuate Reconstruction public opinion: Acadians were unfit to self-govern. Negative depictions played a part in shaping reconstruction politics because they attached connotations of poverty, inadequacy, and barbarity to the term, and thus the people, Acadian. Challenges to Acadian's ability to self-govern, I think citizenship rhetoric functioned much like the use of the words scalawags and carpetbaggers to resist Reconstruction and contributed to the demise of Reconstruction. I was not just race and class alone, but Louisiana editors and journalists capitalized on the "openness of democracy" to gain power and attack existing Reconstruction policies and politics.

Between 1872 and 1875, the term Acadian, Acadian references, or Acadians were frequently found in Louisiana newspapers. Whether these references were related to white supremacist terrorist organizations or used as a political scapegoat, Acadians found themselves

clearly defined. Negative or general references connected to violence reached a peak in 1873 and 1874, which included Alcibiades DeBlanc, cofounder of the Knights of the White Camellia and Acadian followers. Although a present-day historian describes him as a “Creole” attorney, newspapers of the time such as the *Atchison Daily Champion* in Atchison, Kansas referred to him as the “King of the Cadiens” on account of his influence with the rural French population, the descendants of the Acadians.¹⁶⁸ The claim perhaps is not that he was Acadian, but well respected among Acadians of Louisiana. Perhaps the *Atchison Daily Champion* has good intentions, but in early images of Acadians by Louisiana editors and authors, they are represented as followers and the term “Acadian” was often used in a derogatory manner to refer to Acadians.

When reporting on local events and depending on the newspaper’s politics, Louisiana editors and journalists generalized about Acadians regarding the anti-Republican and racist violence during the period by local terrorist groups. Along with other Louisiana newspapers, the *New Orleans Republican* reported on the local violence, politics, many times using Acadians to complicate Reconstruction politics and support. The *New Orleans Republican* was the official journal of the United States, as it claims. Its claim as being the official journal was supported by the fact that the *New Orleans Republican* was chosen by the federal government to publish official notices. For the state of Louisiana, the *New Orleans Republican* was that vehicle in which “United States court or judge thereof, or by any officer of such courts, or by any executive officer of the United States” could publish and the federal government compensated these newspapers.¹⁶⁹ For publications like the *New Orleans Republican*, whose editor and journalists

¹⁶⁸“No Title,” *The Atchison Daily Champion*, November 13, 1883.

¹⁶⁹United States Quartermaster’s Dept and E. D. Townsend Assistant Adjutant General, “General Orders ...,” 1868, 2–3. Other newspapers were included in E. D. Townsend’s order, the *New Orleans Tribune* and the *Homer Iliad*. S. L. Brown and Company is owned by Brevet Brigadier General S. Lockwood Brown. Although he was mustered out on March 20, 1867, and then was given the contract by the federal government for his newspaper as an official US

supported Radical Republican ideology, portraying Acadians as uncivilized or unfit to self-govern.

The New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, a Democrat biased newspaper, and the *New Orleans Republican* argued about Louisiana politics related to Northern "adventurers" and racial relations in early February 1872. Much like past news articles, writers emphasized Northern and Southern ideologies and both writers used Lieutenant Governor Oscar Dunn as an example in their postmortem articles and Acadians were used as a scapegoat. The article is racist at its core, opens with the significance of the south's issue of slavery and then emancipation and described white southerners as saviors of the freed men and women, but goes on to suggest reasons why slavery should return. The story included "adventures," or carpetbaggers, who are at the heart of Southerner difficulties. The writer of the *Daily Picayune* in an article titled "Hon. Oscar Dunn" stated,

There is but one impediment to this cordial competence of the colored people in the whites. It is that certain political adventurers invaded the country after the soldiers had withdrawn. They were those who, like Judas, carried the bag. They made the unfounded claim that they had enfranchised the colored people. They made the equally unjust assertion that the white people wish to re-enslave them. Under these false pretenses these adventurers assumed all the offices in the southern states. Instead of dividing those offices with colored people they have duplicated and even triplicated them among themselves.¹⁷⁰

At first look, the piece is an obituary or tribute to Lieutenant Governor Dunn. However, as the essay progresses, it reveals the editor's perspective on the situation in the south, namely in Louisiana. The article's argument places blame on those, who are considered carpetbaggers and trying to dispute Governor Warmoth's "respect for Dunn" via testimony of Blanc Francois

paper is interesting.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/General_Orders/13fG42vM1H4C?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=S.%20L.%20Brown

¹⁷⁰"Hon. Oscar Dunn," *The Daily Picayune*, February 11, 1872,

<http://www.newspapers.com/image/32162192/?terms=%22adventurers%22&match=1>.

Joubert, free person of color and the United States Internal Revenue Assessor. The writer quotes several arguments of the nature of common belief about carpetbaggers or those perceived as outsiders. "To Mr. Speer—I regard the carpetbag element as the worst in the south. The state would be blessed, and the colored men rejoiced if we were ridden by them."¹⁷¹ This is compelling because the New Orleans *Republican* responds directly to the *Times-Picayune*, in an article titled "Astonishing Adventures." The *Times* accused Governor Warmoth, along with other carpetbaggers as morally questionable politicians. Along with the word carpetbagger, the *Republican* newspaper responded to the *Times*.

On February 13, 1872, the New Orleans *Republican* editors and writers offered their political opinions on Reconstruction with other articles headlined "Threats," "The World and The South," and "Can it Be So?" On the same page, an article titled, "Astonishing Adventurers," describes those white citizens as "astonishing adventurers," in other words, carpetbaggers. The journalist's opinion criticizes the *Picayune's* view or accusation of the issues at hand in their present day. These articles essentially blame the problems that Louisiana was facing on carpetbaggers and then using the Acadians as scapegoats to make their argument.

The New Orleans *Republican* responded to the carpetbagger article with questions. Although responding to a question with a question and although the point of the article is not about Acadians but believes that without the carpetbaggers, Acadians would be less of a challenge. Responding to the *Daily Picayune*, the New Orleans *Republican* responded to the *Daily Picayune's* accusation in an article titled "Astonishing Adventurers." The New Orleans *Republican* editor stated, sarcastically,

Docile negroes! Innocent old elites! Wonderful adventurers! Here is a tableau to excite our astonishment. We of the South were a happy family before these carpetbaggers came

¹⁷¹ "Hon. Oscar Dunn."

along among us to revolution our kindness towards the negroes, which allowed them to sweat and toil for us from the first day of January to the 31st day of December on two suits of clothes and regular rations of hog and hominy. We had no contentions then. None of us wanted office or would consent to accept their of, except after earnest persuasion. Factions, riots, know nothingism, political rings, jabbing legislation, in such things, were unknown to our people, and every individual man lived on the sweat of his own brow—if he did not have a ‘nigger’ to sweat for him. The needy adventurers changed his Acadian situation into the present unhappy condition of affairs and in return charged and received the services of the negroes and the favors of the ‘oldest and best’ for their work of demoralization. And the picayune is unhappy threat. It even demands the expulsion of the adventures, the abasement of the colored citizens, and the restoration of that primitive simplicity which limited citizenship to a few and made the mini subservient and profitable to the few. Will the wonderful adventures insist on remaining where they are—will the docile negro surrender their leaders—will the respectable citizens give up their seducers or shall the picayune have its will? Shall the country retreat or advance? These are the questions?¹⁷²

Like earlier articles, Acadian was used as a negative connotation and as a scapegoat in the North-South dialogue.

The essay contends that the South has yet to recognize who they feel in Louisiana is to blame for the South's plight. Although the journalist does not refer to a specific “Acadian situation,” it seems reasonable to conclude that the author is referring to Gen. Alcibiades DeBlanc.¹⁷³ DeBlanc was an important figure who caused a degree of controversy within the highly politicized and volatile Reconstruction Era. For instance, the clashes between DeBlanc and the Metropolitan Police in 1868 caused Governor Warmoth to strengthen the police force with Algernon Badger in 1870.¹⁷⁴ Warmoth’s activities were the second of what democrats call the obnoxious laws. The creation of the obnoxious laws had to do with curtailing the violence in

¹⁷² “Astonishing Adventurers,” *New Orleans Republican*, February 13, 1872, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/325966055/?terms=Acadian&match=1>.

¹⁷³ Despite the fact that the Battle of the Cabildo had not occurred, DeBlanc had clashes with the Metropolitan Police, a militia made up of both blacks and whites which also combined the parishes of Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard into a single force led by Lt. Governor Oscar Dunn and enacted in 1868 by the Metropolitan Police Act.

¹⁷⁴ Hogue, *Uncivil War*.

the rural parish wishes headed by Deblanc's Knights of the White Camellia. These issues both in and outside of Orleans parish and Warmoth's activities provide the context of the argument found in the New Orleans *Republican* and the *Times-Picayune*. The *New Orleans Republican* responded to various articles in the New Orleans TimesPicayune attacking democrat beliefs and accusing democrats of political wrongdoings, but as is typical, Acadians were used as a scapegot. Journalists stated that Acadians are disorderly and hence incapable of self-governance, creating parallels to Reconstruction politics and confusing political discourse, but what happened was that Acadian negative imagery was exploited to represent white southern ideas or to blame the North. Acadians' negative images were used to further or strengthen both Republican and Democrat agendas and allowed for whites to further themselves racially from blacks at the same time claiming Acadians are unfit to self-govern.

Regardless of political party affiliation, a series of newspaper articles concerning former Governor Paul Octave Hebert and letters written by him appeared in the summer of 1872. In the letters he does not refer to himself as an Acadian but as a Southerner. Hebert uses North South jargon to argue for the improvement of the levee system and to remark on the politics of the Unification Movement. Hebert, son to an Acadian father and grandson to Acadian exiles, attended West Point and graduated an engineer. Thereafter, he would serve as state engineer, appointed by Governor Alexandre Mouton, also of Acadian ancestry. He would eventually participate in the U.S.-Mexico War before becoming governor in 1852. As secession approached, Hebert sided with the Unionist, but ended up fighting for the Confederacy. During the Civil War, Hebert appeared in various newspapers, but following the Confederacy's defeat, he became involved in Reconstruction politics.

Hebert was a Reform Democrat and a delegate to the Liberal Republican State Convention held in New Orleans. Hebert backed Horace Greely for president and John McEnery for governor of Louisiana, but when Grant sided with Kellogg over McEnery, Hebert switched his allegiance to Grant, resulting in a gubernatorial appointment to the Board of State Engineers. During this time, Hebert published several letters in the newspaper, which reveal him engaging in rhetoric of the North South dialogue.

Paul Octave Hebert replied to the sectional politics surrounding the New Orleans levee system in the first of two letters published by both Democrat and Republican biased newspapers during the summer of 1872. In the opening sentence of his letter, headlined "To the Editor of the New Orleans Times" and published in the New Orleans Republican as a reprint from the New Orleans Times on May 19th, he criticized editors and journalists for inflaming political controversy by publicizing incorrect ideas.¹⁷⁵ The political hairsplitting on the part of Hebert was no different to the backbiting of Democrats. Hebert was committed to demonstrate that Radical Republicans were morally and ethically inferior, a recurring issue in the North-South discussion. Even though his letter to the editor was less significant than the other two, Hebert contributed to the formation of a Southern identity. The following week, on May 23rd in the New Orleans *Republican*, Hebert responded to a column written by the New Orleans *Times*. He began,

I have felt that the Democratic Party, unaided by a fragment of the opposition, was utterly powerless to cope with the administration in its gigantic struggle to protract its power. Remembering in the course of our people in Virginia, Tennessee and Missouri, I have watched and waited for the hour and the opportunity when we could nationalize the policy under the sign of which they have been delivered from Radical bondage and oppression. The hour and the opportunity have come. A portion of the Republican Party,

¹⁷⁵ National Endowment for the Humanities, "New Orleans Republican. [Volume] (New Orleans, La) 1867-1878, May 19, 1872, Image 1," May 19, 1872, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1872-05-19/ed-1/seq-1/>; "Governor Hebert--The Levees and Mr. Greely," *New Orleans Republican*, May 19, 1872.

we read and disgusted with the excesses and or GS of the national administration has boldly renounced its support and challenged to conflict in the entrance of good government and national reform. It has denounced the course of general grant in adopting an unexceptional platform, has nominated its candidates and put itself upon the country¹⁷⁶

Further on, he makes an appeal to the Southern sympathizer,

We so the South have lost much by the war, but we trust we have saved our honor. We can not afford to make ourselves liable to the suspicion of want of faith, which a third ticket, at this time, would lay heavily at our door. No, I say, we should take this ticket and support it cordially and earnestly and not only that but we should say to our northern democratic friends that if they wish to maintain any influence or authority over us they must come up and do likewise. We are in no situation to subject ourselves to the charge of shuffling or equivalent equivocation, nor do I think our northern allies are either.

The southern people are at this hour aliens in this government. Out of the 14 states South of the Potomac, there is not one represented in general Grant's administration. On the supreme bench they have not one member domiciled, even in their mist they have no representatives abroad. The national government treats them as provinces, and appoints its officials, not from among their own citizens, but sends down set traps from the north. all this we could stand except as showing the sectional tendencies of the present government this is the least of our troubles but soldiers are kept in our mist and the sunset gun and the shoulder straps remind us daily that the war is not over in every now and then the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus admonishes us that the citizen is not safe from seizure everyday witnesses the arbitrary arrests in the states of Mississippi and South Carolina of unoffending citizens and their confinement in low some jails.¹⁷⁷

Hebert's above statement demonstrates his appealing to Southerners' emotions in order to promote Horace Greely, the Liberal Republican. He's talking about Northern oppression, and the only people who can assist are Southern Democrats. He alludes to Southern persecution by the North, and the only individuals who can aid are Southern Democrats.

1873

At the beginning of 1873, which contained the battle between dueling governors, the federal government created a special committee to investigate the recent Louisiana election

¹⁷⁶ "Letter from Governor Hebert--Political Situation Reviewed," *New Orleans Republican*, May 23, 1872.

¹⁷⁷ "Letter from Governor Hebert--Political Situation Reviewed."

between Kellogg and McEnery. McEnery and Kellogg both ran for governor in a highly heated race. Although Kellogg had President Grant's blessing, McEnery rejected this on the pretense of a fraudulent election and established his own office and legislature.¹⁷⁸ In the months leading up to a New Orleans Republican article titled, "A Decided Letting Down," violence increased. Whites continued to oppose Reconstruction policies and confront carpetbagger control, whether in the Battle of the Cabildo or the Colfax Massacre. Both attacks on white and black Republican legislators and voters by paramilitary white Louisianians. Louisiana editors and journalists reported on the violence with fact and opinion, and as much as carpetbaggers were the object of their hostility, this article did not necessarily reflect that tone. Governor Warmoth, criticized as a carpetbagger by his opponents, appointed General Badger, also considered a carpetbagger, to serve as the superintendent of the Metropolitan Police in 1870. Over the next several years, General Badger and Colonel De Blanc would have multiple violent interactions. Editors and journalists would denigrate DeBlanc's Acadian soldiers and use "Acadian" to designate something as undesirable or as a scapegoat in the North-South dialogue.

The *New Orleans Republican*, like other newspapers, when referring to Acadians, characterized them in a degrading way whether with racial descriptions, questionable morality, or lack of self-governance. Over the next few years, references to Acadians had to do with the activities of Colonel De Blanc, "the King of the Caidiens." Although historians of Cajun history do not believe him to be Acadian, but Creole, the title is relevant especially during the Reconstruction period, setting the context for not only a realignment of class hierarchy, but also race. Louisiana society, regardless of race, class, or politics, felt marginalized by the federal government and fought to carve out a space regardless of the political persuasion of an individual

¹⁷⁸ Uncivil war 1940

or subgroup within the state. The succession, war, and emancipation of slaves set the context for competing politics and many fought back both physically and within political opinion in newspapers. Editors and journalists reporting on people and events, as do newspapers today, would wrap the event in opinion. Newspapers were and remain political institutions and a place where society's views are placed on exhibition. Reconstruction newspapers were incredibly influential as Tunnell argues, "in 1867 Congress nullified the postwar governments created by President Andrew Johnson, leaving the Democratic press as the only institution in the South fully under the control of native whites and in a position to oppose northern policy."¹⁷⁹

White southern editors and journalists attempted to attack what they saw as a northern invasion. White southern editors and journalists, as Tunnell argues, "coupled ["Negro Rule"] with the new symbols scalawag and carpetbagger" to "seize the rhetorical high ground."¹⁸⁰ White southern editors and journalists, both Republican and Democrats, engaged in rhetoric that cast those opposite to recovering pre-emancipation the way it was in negative ways. Acadians, for example, were exploited as scapegoats to create arguments against enabling anybody to enjoy their citizenship rights to the best of their ability. What is most compelling was Republican leaning newspapers, such as the *New Orleans Republican*, which published and republished articles with degrading Acadian connotations. Republican leaning white editors and newspapers opened/created a discursive public space where the ability to self-government was always up for debate and no one escaped, such as Acadians. Critics infused the term Acadian with negative overtones and deep set ideological meanings by denouncing Democrat violence and wrongdoings which labeled them as unsuitable.

¹⁷⁹ Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 790.

¹⁸⁰ Tunnell, 790.

The *New Orleans Republican*, claiming it as the official newspaper of the United States, which had a Republican president in office and paid the newspaper for publishing federal notices, represented the government, and referred to Acadians in a negative way. Regardless of political views, race above all shaped the writing and views of the editors and journalists. Take into consideration the May 11, 1873, page 4 edition of the *New Orleans Republican*. Of the longer and political articles, most are opinion on various politics and policies in which partisanship was at its height, for example on the same day in which “A Decided Letting Down” was published, other articles were published titled “How Politicians Gull the People” and “The Public,” the title in quotes by the editor.

On May 11, 1873, the article “A Decided Letting Down,” appeared in the *New Orleans Republican* is an example of the ways in which “Acadian” word itself became a negative stereotype, but historical context is needed. The author begins with a political commentary regarding the disputes among Republicans leading up to the 1872 election. The Fusionist the writer refers to are Warmoth supporters which included conservative Republicans, Democrats, and “Reformers.”¹⁸¹ He relates a conversation between the superintendent of the Metropolitan Police and Colonel De Blanc, although he was protecting Southern customs and made it more difficult for blacks to register to vote via intimidation. As it relates to “Acadian” used in the *Republican* article, the article states,

“We would like to be informed how the resistance to the State government could be maintained without shedding blood?” Did Colonel DeBlanc hope to frighten General Badger and his well armed thoroughly disciplined forces, with their fearful seventeen shooter rifles, by a display of a half thousand Acadians armed with shotguns and mounted on mustangs.”¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Tunnell, 2526.

¹⁸² “A Decided Letting Down,” *New Orleans Republican*, May 11, 1873.

The piece does not appear to be threatening or stereotypical, but why refer to DeBlanc's soldiers as Acadians. Although many may have had Acadian ancestry, the article denigrates DeBlanc by implying that his men were not of the same caliber as the Metropolitan police and that DeBlanc soldiers were responsible for the violence. One can therefore conclude that the article disparages Acadians and portrays them as barbaric and incapable of self-government.

In the following months, various newspapers covered the political tumult of the era. On May 17th, the *New Orleans Republican*, reporting often on the racial violence in Louisiana, published an editorial article having several titles under the one title: "The Troubles in Attakapas," along with the bylines "Their Origin and Progress" and "Statement of Facts by a Resident Planter."¹⁸³ The point the author was making had to do with setting himself and other citizens apart from the "political clique." The author, Teche was referring to Alcibiades DeBlanc and those who follow him and made a point of distancing himself from the DeBlanc group. Much like in other articles, Teche makes a point to argue that it was Acadians who were at the center of these issues and violence. Teche states, "In the first place, the trouble in St. Martin Parish was originally started by a political clique, whose leaders openly boasted, prior to the election of 1873, that they would install their nominees if they only received ten votes at the ballot-box."¹⁸⁴

After Teche explains the political context to the violence, the author explains, "the parochial offices have been held for a period of more than thirty years by two or three Acadian families and their connections, so that they have long regarded them as hereditary rights."¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Teche, "The Troubles in the Attakapas--Their Origin and Progress--Statement of Facts by a Resident Planter," *New Orleans Republican*, May 17, 1873, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1873-05-17/ed-1/seq-3/>.

¹⁸⁴ Teche.

¹⁸⁵ Teche.

What is interesting is the way the author uses the word Acadian. Clearly these families could be of Acadian ancestry, but the use of the word Acadian to describe these families has a negative connotation. The author's claim suggests that there is some inherent or innate trait Acadians have which is uncivilized. There is the possibility that the author was right, but the author goes on to describe these families as "employed which are not strictly justifiable in law or morals."¹⁸⁶ The author ties together "Acadian" and "not strictly justifiable in law and morals" which reshapes the word Acadian into a negative word. The purpose is to question this group's dedication to democratic principles. They are uncivilized, much like blacks, the thinking went, which further supported arguments of both sides, Republican and Democrat. Both sides would use the word Acadian to support arguments and used Acadians as scapegoats to make their arguments. Editors and journalists of Republican support would argue that Acadians are uncivilized and the problem in Louisiana as inherent to who they are, "morally," that they are somehow suspect.

In July, the *New Orleans Republican* published an article titled "French Intervention." Although the article was a reprint from the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, it was originally published in the *New York World*, a democrat-leaning newspaper. However, the journalist was based in New Orleans, and the *New Orleans Republican's* editor chose to publish it because its content was relevant to the citizens of Louisiana and/or to support of the Democratic nomination. Whereas the article does not describe Acadians in a negative way, it does make them suspect in the eyes of American citizens. The article responds to a question regarding French intervention in the affairs of Louisiana because the French president at the time, MacMahon, described Acadians as being once again, "subjected because of the domination of thieves and savage blacks, to assert

¹⁸⁶ Teche.

their rights defined under this treaty and invoke the intervention of France.”¹⁸⁷ An article such as this one, does not on the surface describe Acadians in a negative way but does cast a shadow of suspicion or the reading public sees them as suspects and scapegoats. That the violence in the region could be the reason Acadians are participating in the violence because there is some other reason motivating them.

Once again, DeBlanc and his colleagues entered the *New Orleans Republican* and into the columns of other newspapers. Probably the most scathing of all of the articles, the author, E. Leet not only describes Acadians as “illiterate,” but simple and politically opposed to anything American. The author places Acadians at the center of the issues in and around St. Martinville, Vermillion Parish. The author and editor, by choosing to include the article in the edition and trusting that facts are true, but are really opinion, degrades Acadians on several levels, which contributes to the evolution of the word Acadian. By including this article, the editor and journalist is throwing caution to the wind when including featured articles that question Acadian ability to self-govern, a common method of Reconstruction Anglos in an unstable society. Much of this type of writing was propaganda to sway readers and complicate an evolving situation, which was historically relevant. Newspapers and violence were the only ways those not in support of freedmen voting rights and social equality could accomplish their goals, so Acadians became a scapegoat. These political opinions were not much different than earlier views about Acadians.

In the article titled, “The Vigilantes of Vermillion,” the author Mr. [?]. E. Leet, is described by the *New Orleans Republican* as reliable, by describing him as once living in and

¹⁸⁷ “French Intervention,” *New Orleans Republican*, July 8, 1873, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1873-07-08/ed-1/seq-3/>.

visited Vermillion Parish, which identifies the article as opinion and politically motivated. In the first few sentences, the author describes Acadians, involved with DeBlanc as cattle owners and “are generally illiterate, keenly adverse to agricultural pursuits, fond of their pastoral life, which brings them a rude living without labor, and intensely opposed to American immigration into the country, because Americans have a way of going to work and fencing up the “range,” a historically relevant issue during Reconstruction and evidence of the developing ideas of American identity.¹⁸⁸ Leet connects this idea to Acadian identity, which was a common issue among cattle owners and those who rejected the idea of roaming cattle and American freedom. First, the author is suggesting quite clearly, because their professional pursuits place them in a category of ignorant suggesting that agriculturalists are intelligent and American thus cattle owners are not American or professional demands require some intellect. The author argues the cattle rancher does not need work, thus there is no need for immigrants to come to Louisiana to become agriculturists and increase the number of people who may potentially erect fences.

Leet goes on to describe the ancestry of the participants of the vigilante committee and claims they are all relatives arguing that “the cattle thieves belong to the same class.”¹⁸⁹ Leet said that, among individuals who profit from cattle theft, there is a black market similar to the mafia, because they are all Acadians who share an internal or intrinsic trait that makes them criminals. He states, “in many cases it is hard to draw the line of demarcation between them, and to say how many cattle a man is justified in stealing before he becomes sufficiently respectable to join the vigilance committee.”¹⁹⁰ Then Leet goes on to describe the group based on their

¹⁸⁸ “The Vigilantes of Vermillion,” *New Orleans Republican*, November 16, 1873, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1873-11-16/ed-1/seq-1/>.

¹⁸⁹ “The Vigilantes of Vermillion.”

¹⁹⁰ “The Vigilantes of Vermillion.”

political positions as Leet saw it. Leet further degrades Acadians and the name, by suggesting that the vigilante group can politically manipulate the system and the vigilantes, made up of only Acadians who were white and inherently democrats, were not a militia group to defend the region, but to serve their own purposes.

In the remainder of the paper, Leet provides various examples of why Acadians should not be politically restrained. Leet claimed that under these circumstances Acadians in this region are politically favored and that “the meaning of this is, in plain English, that the committee proposes to permanently supersede the courts and to rule the parish in the interest of the political clique.”¹⁹¹ Leet’s article did a couple of things. On the surface, his article is disparaging of course, but because he described Acadian political views mixed with anti-American leanings, Leet was suggesting that Acadians do not possess the ability to self-govern; thus the use of Acadian conveyed a belief system of a group of people and influenced political behavior. Acadian became a negative word dictated by its usage. Acadian entered public discourse and has been negatively codified and during Reconstruction employed by both Republican and Democrat biased newspapers to sway readers. The Republican argument would be Acadian ineptness at self-rule thus Radical intervention was needed, and the argument for Democrats would use Acadians as scapegoat to make the argument that along with the black vote other groups are not equipped with the intelligence to self-rule and why Anglos are better at making these decisions. You may assume that journals with a Republican bias would not refer to Acadians negatively; but, by publishing these pieces, they contributed to a language that might impact public opinion.

1874

In 1874, the *New Orleans Republican* editors published several articles on DeBlanc and

¹⁹¹ “The Vigilantes of Vermillion.”

his accompanying terrorist group violence, an Acadian typesetter, and continued attacks by editors of editors. The articles contained debasing race and class epithets of Acadians to complicate and persuade public opinion regarding Reconstruction questions surrounding who was fit to self-govern. These editors used Acadians as a scapegoat, which distanced Anglos from both blacks and other whites and blamed Acadians regardless of the newspaper bias; editors and journalists did this because it became a way to maintain a north-south division packed with race, class, and ethnic factions. The Anglos were determined to maintain their culture. French continued to characterize a suspect and not American.

On March 26, Acadian was mentioned several times on the same page and all times related to several articles regarding editor and newspaper issues surrounding other newspapers including the *New Orleans Republican* editors and journalists commenting on their present issues. By 1874, William R. Fish and Thomas G. Tracy, once a war correspondent for the *New York Tribune* had taken over the editor positions for the *Republican* but Southerners considered them carpetbaggers.

The *New Orleans Republican* was established by S. L. Brown and Company served as the official publication of the Republican party in Louisiana and published by sympathizers of the Compromising Republicans, who during the 1868 Constitutional Convention, nominated Warmoth.¹⁹² Following the ownership of S. L. Brown, Fish and then Tracy became editors of the *Republican*. In 1874, references to an Acadian typesetter emerged. For example, on March 3, several articles were dedicated to issues regarding the independent press and an article with the same press. The editors of the *Republican* described the hiring of a compositor, but the

¹⁹² Philip D. Uzee, "The Beginnings of the Louisiana Republican Party," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 12, no. 3 (1971): 197–211.

description was not without an analysis of the compositor's ethnicity and character. The author describes the compositor as "a gentleman from Acadia."¹⁹³ Although there is an Acadia Parish in Louisiana, it was not established until 1886, thus the author is referring to the group.

The author describes the typesetter as "a dark and shadowy type of the Gallic race," in a disparaging way toward Acadian culture and identity.¹⁹⁴ Here the writer uses Acadian as a scapegoat for editorial mistakes and to make a point that Acadians do not possess the moral aptitude to make civilized decisions. The article contained two examples of the paragraph the writer was trying to provide proof of the Acadian typesetter's incompetence. He says "he even read over three times this editorial paragraph to the gentleman from Acadian."¹⁹⁵ The writer goes on to describe the situation, "the gentleman from Acadia either suspected his rates would be cut still lowered, or had been so much in the habit of being turned out of printing offices that without a word of explanation."¹⁹⁶ Here the author does refer to the compositor as a man from Acadia and it is not clear, whether he is referring to present day Nova Scotia or a regional reference, but either way the negativity surrounding the word Acadia or Acadian suggests that Acadians were inept. In summary the article challenges the idea of propaganda or bias, as if somehow there exists an independent press, and that is not true. Does the use of negative views of Acadian the perspective of all, well could be but the repeated use of Acadian in a negative way contributes to the evolution of the identity. Articles such as these served to sway the reader in agreeing with the author's opinion regarding their Reconstruction politics. This type of writing or opinion complicated white beliefs about governing self-fitness and whether Democrat

¹⁹³ "The Trouble Among The Printers," *New Orleans Republican*, March 26, 1874, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1874-03-26/ed-1/seq-2/>.

¹⁹⁴ "The Trouble Among The Printers."

¹⁹⁵ "The Trouble Among The Printers."

¹⁹⁶ "The Trouble Among The Printers."

or Republican, while you would think that Republican views were liberal, they were not. Over the course of the Reconstruction era, Acadian became negative.

Again, in the following week, the *Republican* refers to the Acadian compositor several times to make the point of the mistakes he has made, while doing his job. For example, March 29, and on the 31st, the writer refers to the Acadian compositor again. In the article on the 29th the writers says “This note came at a time when they were perplexed by typographical difficulties. After we had discharged our Acadian compositor, and corrected his proof, and strict etiquette was not strong upon us.”¹⁹⁷ And then the following day and then month, the following appeared in the newspaper “the Mobile Graphic Mentions the fact that Captain W. G. Jones, now in that city, “is the guest of her Britanic majesty’s consort’ Doubtless our Acadian typesetter has wandered over to the Gulf City and a month later the *Republican* publishes something similar “an Acadian compositor made his paper allude to an “attorney-at-jaw.”¹⁹⁸

With every reference to Acadian the writer is highlighting the incompetence of the Acadian compositor, by criticizing his professionalism. These excerpts suggest perhaps that the inability to rely on French speakers or traditionally French speakers is not possible. This suggests somehow Acadians do not possess the ability to be literate and accomplishes the task of using them as a scapegoat that Americans should reconsider or be careful of who is considered or Reconstruction re-questions all regardless of race and the Republicans used Acadians as a scapegoat that in fact there are those among us that cannot self-govern. Used the word Acadian and negative designations of Acadian when questions surrounding either black or northern ability

¹⁹⁷ “A Point in Etiquette,” *New Orleans Republican*, March 29, 1874, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1874-03-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

¹⁹⁸ “No Title,” *New Orleans Republican*, April 30, 1874, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1874-04-30/ed-1/seq-2/>.

to make valid decisions regarding whatever politics.

1874

Alongside the assault on the Acadian typesetter, a series of political opinion articles detailing the daily political problems of Reconstruction, state, and municipal administration were published. During the months of May and June 1874, several articles were published in the New Orleans *Republican* that expressed contempt towards Acadians or compassion. In the May 1 edition, articles on a page typically contained editorials on the issues regarding the Mississippi River. In the article titled “Cheap Indignation,” the journalist responds to several criticisms regarding the recent river overflow and engineer attempts to solve the problem.¹⁹⁹ The journalist states,

If there is any ground for censure at all. It is on account of the lateness of the proposition for relief. It makes [no] difference whether the residents along Bayou Plaquemine or Acadian fishermen or planters in good condition. They are entitled to protection as much as anyone. But as their aggregate interests are small when compared to those which have been submerged at points below, it would have been a cheap solution. Of the difficulty to let the water out up there and save the rich parishes of West Baton Rouge, Iberville, St. John, Jefferson, and a part of Orleans.²⁰⁰

The journalist defended Acadians and their livelihood and importance in the community, but to defend suggests there were some who faulted Acadians for their position. The author made them the scapegoat.

The following month, June, two articles appeared referring to Acadians. Both referring to Acadians in a negative way and tied to issues dealing with the reconstruction issues regarding violence and jurisprudence. Like other articles, the journalist once again described Acadians in a

¹⁹⁹ Hebert was a state engineer and appointed by President Grant to serve on the board of the US engineers of the Mississippi River Commission. .

²⁰⁰ “Cheap Indignation,” *New Orleans Republican*, May 1, 1874, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1874-05-01/ed-1/seq-2/>.

negative way. The journalist wrote, in an article titled "Respect for the Law " made several connections to the absences of civility behind violent behavior occurring in Louisiana. Claiming that "judges, district attorneys, marshals, sheriffs, police magistrates, policemen, etc.." have not protected those who cannot protect themselves and along with a jury and the press, "declines to discuss the merits of the case on trial. . .[and]. . . refrain from making inflammatory appeals to the political, social and religious prejudices" suggesting that both criminals and certain groups are not "virtuous."²⁰¹ The journalist goes on to explain the drawbacks of this group, by claiming indirectly they are not American because those other than them, the journalist claim as those are un American by "employing a slight foundation of truth, mixed with false hood and violent appeals to the prejudice of the unthinking rabble. . ." ²⁰² Noticeable is the hypocrisy of these comments when the author goes on to depict Acadians as haughty, dishonest, and crafty.

The journalist states,

The criminal history of this state for the past quarter of a century is a sad chapter. The most atrocious offenders have been subjected to farcical trials and released as a matter of course. The practice has become so notorious that it is a common subject of remark. As the facts of a murder become known, we hear the chances of the perpetrator being punished canvassed. "They will never get a New Orleans jury to hang that man" is said of four-fifths of the murderers. Latterly, however, there has been something of a turn in tide. Under the new jury law, several panels composed of conscious men have been obtained, and the friends of offenders, long deemed privileged grow, frightened. Even the ancient right of shooting "free niggers" is threatened. Hereafter, when a high toned Acadian wishes to indulge in this exciting amusement he must be prepared with some sort of an excuse without delay, or he will run a great risk of being locked up. Unless it can be proved by at least two witnesses and one newspaper reporter that the negro was arrogant and insolent, and threatened the wife, children, hearth, fireside, and other et ceteras of the slayer's cabin, situated in an adjoining parish fifty miles away. The skillful attorney who either volunteers or is employed to conduct the defense will be driven to the necessity of establishing a case of emotional insanity or suicide in self-defense. This is a concession which is gratifying and propitious. It proves that a feeling of respect for the law has so far

²⁰¹ "Respect for the Law," *New Orleans Republican*, June 12, 1874, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1874-06-12/ed-1/seq-2/>.

²⁰² "Respect for the Law."

prevailed as to make criminals exert their ingenuity to evade it. We hope another decade will see further progress made.²⁰³

Two days later, on June 14, the New Orleans *Republican* issued an article titled "The Stings of Conscience" in which it claimed that other Louisiana publications were culpable for the Colfax Massacre, not the *Republican*. The *Republican* accuses the *Bee* as promoting French imperial tendencies, defending Louisiana as not as pursuing a connection to the French and accusing the New Orleans *Bee* and the *Times-Picayune* of "incite and send out the people to war" suggesting that these two newspapers incited violence.²⁰⁴

Why not leave these miserable Acadians alone? Why practice upon their ignorance? To make a case of national sympathy?? Why thrust them forward and jump back behind neutrality or attempt to palm the responsibility upon others? We don't mind what is said by such antagonists against US, but we have human sympathy for the misguided unfortunates who have suffered so much to make a political issue. We have an idea that the same men will not again embark in a similar enterprise. The departure of the Klu Klux convicts for out Albany, and the return of such as were pardoned by the president closed out the white camellias. The existence of the order and organization is not, we believe, suspected to exist anywhere.²⁰⁵

Following the June articles, the *New Orleans Republican* published a review of Maine state senator William Gould's research on a history of Acadians under the title "The True Story of Acadia" on July 19; however, the author was not there, suggesting that the editor selected the item. Although the essay does not include Acadians of Louisiana, it discusses the investigation of Acadian culture conducted Gould. The essay portrays Acadians in a poor light, yet the research of Acadians in different regions of the United States suggests there is something essentially flawed about them. The article describes them as "most part incredibly ignorant and dirty' that have a certain Gallic aptness for the use of strangely involved and complicated oaths,"

²⁰³ "Respect for the Law."

²⁰⁴ "The Stings of Conscience," *New Orleans Republican*, June 14, 1874.

²⁰⁵ "The Stings of Conscience."

which suggests that there is something inherently wrong with them.²⁰⁶ In the second half of 1874, many newspapers, notably the *New Orleans Republican*, reported on the violence in numerous places of the state, but specifically in St. Martinsville, in an effort to dispute the voting rights of Republican voters and eject Republican officeholders. Although the term Acadian does not appear in the body of the article, it is in the title, “Alcibiades DeBlanc Once More—His Gallant Acadians Under Arms—Rallying Under the White Flag” suggesting that all participants were Acadians.²⁰⁷

In the latter part of 1874, both Democratic and Republican journalists in Louisiana covered the violence surrounding the White League and its colonel Alcibiades DeBlanc. Although the Democrat-leaning journalist agreed with DeBlanc when reporting on the violence, the Republican-leaning journalist did not. Often blaming Acadians for the violence and depicting them in a negative light is proof that although Republican newspapers supported social equality for blacks, they felt Acadians should be blamed for their inability to govern themselves and characterized them in a racist manner. Republican journalists would characterize the Acadians as barbaric, disloyal to the United States, and in need of assistance, citing their incapacity to govern themselves. As evidence of the Acadians' barbarism, these personal, non-structural attacks and insinuations that they had an inherent flaw served as a proxy for their lack of civility.

On August 29th, in the *New Orleans Republican*, “Acadians” appears in the title “His Gallant Acadians Under Arms” under the headline “Alcibiades DeBlanc Once More” and “Rallying Under the White Flag.” The author was referring to the November St. Martinsville

²⁰⁶ “The True Story of Acadia,” *New Orleans Republican*, July 19, 1874.

²⁰⁷ “Alcibiades DeBlanc Once More—His Gallant Acadians Under Arms—Rallying Under the White Flag,” *New Orleans Republican*, August 29, 1874, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1874-08-29/ed-1/seq-1/>.

elections and the efforts of the White League to complicate voting to install a Democrat candidate. Alcibiades DeBlanc occupied St. Martinsville captured the tax collector and forced other Republicans to leave the city. Although the title appears to be complementary, the journalist was not. The journalist states, “[DeBlanc] distinguished leader of the White leaguers of St. Martin has again succeeded in getting together his army which was scattered by the Metropolitans a year or so ago.”²⁰⁸ The important word to note is “scattered,” which gives an aire of demeaning and suggests that the army of “Acadians” are a nuisance and do not have the discipline or aptitude to be civilized.

A day later, the *New Orleans Republican* devoted two columns to the occupation of St. Martinsville by DeBlanc. Although both articles reprint and quote other newspapers, the *New Orleans Republican* journalist describes Acadians as uncivilized and of questionable morals. The *New Orleans Republican* claims, “mounted men were scurrying hither and thither, rallying the warlike Acadians to meet and wrestle the blue-coated aggressors, who report said, were marching overland and were close upon them.”²⁰⁹ From a dispatch the night before, claims the author, but the author is not quoting the dispatch, but paraphrasing. Using the word “warlike,” portrays Acadians as uncivilized. In the following article titled, “Mob Law in the Attakapas” and the bylines “Vigilance Committee Outrages,” and “White Men Banished and a Negro Hanged” refer to Acadians in a similar way. The *New Orleans Republican* quotes other newspapers, but paraphrases the contents as “but the armed Acadians, massing and drilling under General Alcibiades DeBlanc, go swaggering through the country without let or hindrance, congratulating themselves that they have no debts to pay to the tax collector whom they gave

²⁰⁸ “Alcibiades DeBlanc Once More—His Gallant Acadians Under Arms—Rallying Under the White Flag.”

²⁰⁹ “From St. Martinsville--The Alcibiadeans in Arms--Watching for the Metropolitans Provis- ioning the Mob With Government Rations the Army Disbands and Reassembles.,” *New Orleans Republican*, August 30, 1874.

exiled from his home, fat with government rations issued on account of the overflow, their bad passions influenced by bad whisky, and apply their improved Christian civilization to such men as fail to appreciate their standard superiority.”²¹⁰

The *Louisiana Sugar-Bowl* newspaper, was devoted to sugar planter readership and Democrat leaning, the *Republican* paraphrasing of the excerpt from the *Sugar-Bowl* was significantly different. The *Republican* described Acadians as less than by using words such as, “swaggering,” or phrases such as, “congratulating themselves, “fat with government rations,” or “bad passions,” let alone suggesting they were intoxicated and claiming some superiority.²¹¹ Acadians were slandered as inept by journalists with a Republican leaning. Even while newspapers with Republican and Democratic leanings described Acadians in this manner, Republican journalists or carpetbagger journalists and editors would use Acadians as scapegoats to symbolize the immorality of white southerners.

The month after the New Orleans *Republican*’s articles about the uprising in St. Martinsville, the *Donaldsonville Chief*, also a Republican leaning newspaper, reported on the circumstances. The *Donaldsonville Chief*, founded in 1871 by Linden E. Bentley, who supported Horace Greely as a Liberal Republican Party candidate and perhaps the Unification Movement, a coalition of blacks/whites and Liberal Republicans and moderate Democrats, to end Reconstruction. He used disparaging descriptions of Acadians, when reporting on the federal intervention of the uprising by the White League.

In prior articles, editors and journalists place blame on Acadians, for the collapse of

²¹⁰ “Mob Law in the Attakapas--"Vigilance Committee" Outrages--White Men Banished and Negro Hanged,” *New Orleans Republican*, August 30, 1874; “From St. Martinsville--The Alcibiadeans in Arms--Watching for the Metropolitans Provis-ioning the Mob With Government Rations the Army Disbands and Reassembles.”

²¹¹ “From St. Martinsville--The Alcibiadeans in Arms--Watching for the Metropolitans Provis-ioning the Mob With Government Rations the Army Disbands and Reassembles.”

peace leading up to the November elections. Although Acadian membership was significant in the White League, the journalist suggests that only Acadians are at fault, even though Colonel DeBlanc, by ancestry, was not Acadian. Over the summer of 1874, Acadians were debased repeatedly, thus reshaping the discourse on Reconstruction. Acadians became scapegoats for the collapse of Reconstruction and then seizing the moral high ground to deflect blame from the south for their views on race and slavery and northerners making apologies for the south. By making Acadians inferior, further debased Blacks or placed both in the same category.

Beginning with the leading title, “Troops to the Rescue!,” and the subtitles, “To Your Holes, Oh! Leaguers!, No More Political Murders!, The New Rebellion Will Be Suppressed!, New Orleans, Shreveport, Alexandria, Coushatta, Monroe, St. Martinsville to be Occupied by U.S. ‘Boys in Blue,’” highlights the confidence the journalist has in federal intervention to squash the violence and threats to Republican voters, by using phrases and words to send a message to the perpetrators and relief for law abiding citizens. A close reading of the title, both leading and subtitles, especially the phrase “to your holes,” describes Acadians as less than and suggests that Acadians were at fault for attempting to end Reconstruction.²¹²

Further on in the article, the author refers to Acadians again and suggests Acadians represent all who live in the region of Attakapas and all who live there are uncivilized. The author rhetorically states, “hide your shot-guns and revolvers, ye bloody-minded Acadians of Attakapas! Hunt your holes, ye red-handed Leaguers of Red River! For your reign of terror is

²¹² “Troops to the Rescue!--To Your Holes, Oh! Leaguers!--No More Political Murders!-- The New Rebellion Will Be Suppressed!--New Orleans, Shreveport, Alexandria, Coushatta, Monroe, St. Martinsville to Be Occupied by U.S. ‘Boys in Blue,’” *The Donaldsonville Chief*, September 5, 1874, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85034248/1874-09-05/ed-1/seq-2/>.

nipped in the bud and retribution is at hand.”²¹³ The quote represents the ways Louisiana southern journalists of Republican leaning newspapers sought to dominate the discourse of Reconstruction politics by placing blame on others: those not in support of Reconstruction policy and who did not accept newly freed men and women as fit for self-government. Although Republican leaning newspapers wrote tirelessly about Reconstruction issues, these editors and journalists would eventually find themselves more southern and less Republican for not only expressing a need to civilize Blacks, but Acadians too. By using racial epithets of Acadians, perpetuated a view of Acadians as characteristically unfit for self-government, due to ignorance, violent, which suggests they could not be trusted.

Louisiana journalists of both Republican and Democrat leaning newspapers were a contentious group, often arguing with each other. Whereas Democrat editors portray not only freed men and women and Acadians at times as socially inept or uncivilized, Republican editors do the same, with vigor. Concerned about “Negro Rule,” many Louisiana white journalists used racial epithets to define and reshape the ideology of the time, just as editors who supported the enfranchisement of blacks. At the end of the Reconstruction era southern journalists had seized the discourse and along with blacks, Acadians did not escape the psychological warfare. Although Acadians suffered a different and far less severe experience than blacks, Acadians were used as a scapegoat more times by Republican than Democrats editors to reinforce the inability of non-Anglos to self-rule. Louisiana journalist used Acadian racial epithets, which would support white arguments for a southern way of life and challenged Reconstruction policy. Over the Reconstruction era, negative images of Acadians conveyed beliefs and influenced

²¹³ “Troops to the Rescue!--To Your Holes, Oh! Leaguers!--No More Political Murders!-- The New Rebellion Will Be Suppressed!--New Orleans, Shreveport, Alexandria, Coushatta, Monroe, St. Martinsville to Be Occupied by U.S. ‘Boys in Blue.’”

political behavior. Through interpersonal attacks of Acadians, Louisiana journalists expressed hatred of both pro and anti-Reconstruction politics and stressed the importance to who they were as southerners; therefore, forming their worldview. Consequently, Acadian identity did not disappear by the end of the Reconstruction period, but rather began to develop, and Americanization of a people did not occur, but a southernization of identity did.

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Through direct attacks on Acadians, Louisiana Republican journalists expressed disappointment in the non-efficacy of pro Reconstruction politics. They began to indirectly stress the importance of an elite Louisiana (white) Southerner lifestyle by criticizing Acadians or French speaking Americans as 'backward' ways; therefore, perpetuated a racial hierarchy which perpetuated racial views which would collapse Reconstruction attempts at integrating and enfranchising blacks and whites. While Republican Louisiana journalists challenged Democrat beliefs, they also reinforced views on race. Thus, Acadian identity did not end during the Reconstruction era but began and an Americanization of a people did not emerge, but a southernization of identity did.

Much like the editors and journalists of Democrat leaning newspapers in the South,

Southern Republican leaning newspaper editors and journalists were just as contentious arguing with each other, and in most articles portray not only newly freed men and women, but also Acadians as socially inept or uncivilized. Both Republicans and Democrats needed someone to blame for the failures of Reconstruction policies. Southern Republican editors challenged Democrat editors' objection to northern Reconstruction policy and white Democrat claims of black dependence. Some historians found that southern editors had "seized the rhetorical high ground," but, with the same vigor, Republican editors use Acadians as a scapegoat.

On September 26, 1874, an article, with no title and or author, but perhaps written by the editor, appeared in the *Donaldsonville Chief*, a Republican biased newspaper. The article reacted to an earlier article, in September, titled "Troops to the Rescue!" which described Acadians as "ye bloody minded Acadians of Attakapas."²¹⁴ In the first half of the article, the author claims, "[Donaldsonville Chief] is charged that we have published an article derisive of Acadians, and rumors have reached us that several prominent gentleman in the is community have taken umbrage at our language and consider that we have uttered a slur upon all citizens of French-American extraction."²¹⁵ A close reading of this excerpt reveals a move by the editor to establish a moral high ground and indirectly minimizes the social position of Acadians, which upon first glance, one would not have concluded.

The most compelling evidence is the editor's suggestion that the designation of Acadian, due to the response from "several prominent [Acadians]," by their own admission "the

²¹⁴ "Troops to the Rescue!--To Your Holes, Oh! Leaguers!--No More Political Murders!-- The New Rebellion Will Be Suppressed!--New Orleans, Shreveport, Alexandria, Coushatta, Monroe, St. Martinsville to Be Occupied by U.S. 'Boys in Blue,."

²¹⁵ "Troops to the Rescue!--To Your Holes, Oh! Leaguers!--No More Political Murders!-- The New Rebellion Will Be Suppressed!--New Orleans, Shreveport, Alexandria, Coushatta, Monroe, St. Martinsville to Be Occupied by U.S. 'Boys in Blue,."

conclusion must seem evident that such are ashamed of their descent, and if we have hurt the feelings of any of this class of citizens we submit that the fault lies with themselves, not us.”²¹⁶

In a way comparable to journals supported by Democrats, Republican editors contended that violence and Southern racial customs would persist if Reconstruction was left in the hands of Louisianan southerners or Democrats. With their attention to Acadians, Louisianians should fear Acadian rule and these symbols defined the ideological parameters of the Reconstruction era. Racial epithets of Acadians were used in the articles of Republican editors as scapegoats to challenge anti-Reconstruction politics to garner public sentiment and discredit Democrat ideology. Disparaging Acadians was an important propaganda tool to undermine southern arguments regarding states’ rights and white supremacy. Insinuating that Acadians were incapable of self-government strengthened racial myths and widened the gap between Anglo Southerners and non-Anglo Saxons. Similarities between the racial ideologies of Anglo Southerners and Anglo Northerners were not far off, paving the road for Southern Redemption. Using relationships between whites and blacks as determiners of race, northerners were able to accept the circumstances of the south or race relations would be based on “separate but equal” ideology.

²¹⁶ “Troops to the Rescue!--To Your Holes, Oh! Leaguers!--No More Political Murders!-- The New Rebellion Will Be Suppressed!--New Orleans, Shreveport, Alexandria, Coushatta, Monroe, St. Martinsville to Be Occupied by U.S. ‘Boys in Blue.’”

Chapter 5: 1875-1877

After the Panic of 1873, state and municipal governments lacked cash, but the Amnesty Act of 1872, which re-enfranchised over 100,000 Confederate soldiers, paved the way for forthcoming elections and a program of redemption. In the elections of 1874, Democrats were winning back control in state and local governments and as a result President Grant doubled down on military occupation of southern states like Louisiana to buttress the weakening Kellogg government. In an incident on January 4, 1875, Grant ordered the military to sustain the Kellogg administration when the White League attempted to seize control of the Louisiana Statehouse. Grants intervention sparked a debate in congress, which questioned Grant's military intervention in the affairs of Louisiana on behalf of the federal government. The debate signaled the impending retreat of the federal army from Louisiana and the emerging redeemer policies.

Senator Charles Sumner began drafting legislation for a Civil Rights Bill in 1870. Sumner died in 1874 and never saw his work completed. The Civil Rights Act became law on March 1, 1875 and stipulated that everyone within the borders of the United States is entitled to equal access to public places and facilities and made it a federal crime to refuse someone based on race. In order to make the law more appealing prior to its passage, the language on public school integration was removed. Concurrently, Democrat officials throughout the south pushed white to abandon the Republican party based on their race.

During the 1875 to 1877 period, Louisiana Acadians played a large part in the violence against Republicans, whether it was the disputed election between Stephen B. Packard and Francis T. Nicholls, challenging the federal troops stationed in prairie parishes, or participating in the "perfect coup d'Etat."²¹⁷ The amnesty of Confederate whites, notably in Louisiana, may

²¹⁷ Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 2997.

have contributed to an increase in voting-related violence between whites and blacks, but violence also increased under other circumstances. In organizations such as the Knights of the White Camelia and the White League, many members were Acadians. These groups justified their conduct as patriotic, not for the United States, but rather for the South. In a consolidated effort non-Republican Louisiana whites inflicted terror on blacks, or Jim Crow. However, with the passing of the Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871, many Louisiana whites were prosecuted by the federal government for discriminating against voters because of race. The federal government withdrew from Louisiana at the end of the period and Democrats won elections and Republicans held on to the presidency. The compromise which would result in a Republican president, Louisiana Democrat politicians winning office, removal of federal troops resulted in a redeemed state, and lastly Acadians remained scapegoats or cultural artifacts to be peddled by boosters. Editors and journalists of Republican or Democrat biased newspapers continued to debate each other affirming a southern identity. In studies on the Reconstruction of Louisiana and Acadian participation therein, the years 1875 to 1877 get scant attention. Most of the literature leaps directly to the 1877 deal between Democrats and Republicans that resulted in Democrats backing the Republican presidential nominee Rutherford B. Hayes in the 1876 election. Republican nominee Stephen B. Packard and Democratic nominee Francis T. Nicholls followed the same pattern as Kellogg and McEnery.

Leading up to the 1875 to 1877 period, white-on-black violence had increased in Louisiana, with the Knights of the White Camelia and the White League attacking blacks and Republicans. Although Grant won in 1872, Brasseaux argues that compared to the 1868 election there was far less violence, but “attempts were made to manipulate voting results.”²¹⁸ For

²¹⁸ Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*, 142.

instance, pro-Fusionist registrars restricted the number of polling places in regions with a high concentration of radical Republicans and stuffed vote boxes, resulting in a disputed election. William Pitt Kellogg was elected governor, but John McEnery refused to accept and set up his own government. Although the Fusionists could not accept the election of Kellogg, they dissolved after Grant expressed his support for Kellogg and in those parishes as argued by Brasseaux, a resurgence of violence occurred from the White League and the *Caucasian*, the White League's newspaper which was established in 1874. The first chapter was organized in Opelousas, with a disproportionately large Acadian population. Despite the occurrence of violence, groups such as the Tax Resisting Association did not rely solely on physical violence. Of all the reasons as to why the armed conflict was necessary, I found that editors and journalist of both Southern and Northern bias newspapers were waging a rhetorical war. As much as Acadians participated in violence against Republicans, they were frequently exploited as scapegoats or praised as Southern patriots or Northern politics attacks on Democrats.

The *New Orleans Republican*, dated February 2, 1875, published a copy of federal proceedings involving the examination and cross examination of witnesses to the White League violence in Louisiana. The article was titled, "The Congressional Committee—Startling Facts Elicited—No Lack of Witnesses," a sensational description often used by *Republican*. In December of 1874, the House of Representatives established a committee to examine Louisiana. In order to appreciate the existing state of circumstances, the committee gathered testimony, acquired documents, and wrote a report at the request of President Grant; sections of the report were published by Republican editors. The decision to publish the proceedings of the congressional committee chaired by William Wheeler had to do with bringing attention to the violent White League actions regarding the 1874 attempt to seize power that resulted in a street

battle and the White League's January 4th attempt to seize the Louisiana State House. Although the editor was not commenting on Acadian participation in the events under study, there is evidence that Acadians regardless of class saw themselves as white. Regardless of the connection between Democrats and Liberal Republicans, Acadians backed Democratic race governance and policy.

On the front page of the *New Orleans Republican* on February 2, 1875, the editor published Lieutenant L. W. Cook's assessment of the state of Louisiana. He stated, he “had rather live among Comanches than live with Acadians; did not find any love for the United States government, or disposition to be friendly to the army; [Acadians] are not inclined to give colored men their legal rights.”²¹⁹ As a northerner, stationed in Louisiana and defending the suffrage of blacks, Cook characterized Acadians, as uncivilized. Cook could care less about the class division among Acadians, and regardless of the success or failure of his mission, Cook believed it was the Acadians who were the problem, not him. Similar to editors and journalists, Cook viewed Acadians as the primary hurdle to restoring society and safeguarding black suffrage. In the middle of a North-South discourse, Acadians were exploited as scapegoats.

Cook’s comment can be understood in different ways such as Michael G. Wade’s examination of military involvement in Louisiana. He used Cook's 1875 statement to the congressional committee as the headline of his paper to suggest that 1865 Reconstruction might have been successful had the soldiers remained. My disagreement has nothing to do with his reasoning; if the federal government had acted, perhaps the violence could have been stopped, but hindsight is 20/20. As his title, Wade utilized a soldier's remark from 1875, which is

²¹⁹ “The Congressional Committee-Startling Facts Elicited-No Lack of Witnesses,” *New Orleans Republican*, February 2, 1875, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1875-02-02/ed-1/seq-1/>.

illogical. Perhaps he sees some similarities in Acadians of Louisiana and the white communities of Boone, North Carolina. Like editors and journalists of the Civil War and Reconstruction period, Wade, over a century later blames Acadian resistance for failure of Reconstruction; thus, again they become the scapegoat. As with other Southern whites, Acadians of all classes allied themselves to maintain their racial standing.²²⁰ Republican newspapers used similar tactics of Democrat editors and journalists to rally support for their cause by portraying Acadians as the villains. The Republican response or view of Acadians is evidence that Democrat views were winning and the changing northerners' acceptance of a Confederate dominated paradigm. Degrading Acadians, much like Blacks, revealed an emerging racial system that gaslighted non-Anglo groups and placed blame more on the interpersonal instead of structural terms, a view codified by *Plessy v. Ferguson*.²²¹

Although my objection is not with Wade's reasoning per se, I believe that government action may have prevented the murdering of African Americans. However, it is not that simple, as other circumstances must be addressed. Wade's interpretation of the evidence fails to consider the racial propaganda involved and its impact to the failure of Reconstruction. As well as how these ideas about Acadians may be utilized to obtain authority or power. With the overturning of the social order, which entailed the liberation and subsequent enfranchisement of African Americans, Anglo whites could not consider any group as more privileged than Anglo-Saxons. Wade's analysis should consider the influence of race on post-Civil War Louisiana.²²²

²²⁰ Michael G. Wade, "'I Would Rather Be among the Comanches': The Military Occupation of Southwest Louisiana, 1865," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 39, no. 1 (1998): 45–64.

²²¹ Charles M. Payne, "'The Whole United States Is Southern!': Brown v. Board and the Mystification of Race," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 1 (2004): 83–91, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3659615>.

²²² Wade uses evidence or excerpt from a year that does not fall within the same year as he is studying. The use of the "Comanche" was an excerpt from 1875, not 1865.

Wade's use of evidence from 1875 to argue for 1865 raises doubts about his methodology. Perhaps, Wade believes race is only relevant when blacks are involved, but he is wrong, those same ideas are relevant to other ethnicities. The discourse evolved as Anglos desired racial separation from people whom whites thought primitive. The racial oppression structure did not exist anymore thus Southerners were developing a rhetoric that hid its nature.²²³ Anglo Louisianians blamed Acadians for social and political issues. Making Acadians the existential threat made it acceptable for Anglo Louisianians to argue that they were racially superior. As a regional or immediate response to the racial and cultural crisis, the discourse that evolved may have been a type of consolation for the humiliation, occupation, and devastation. This type of rhetoric would become standard in defining the social divide between Southerners or civilized and uncivilized ethnicities.²²⁴ We cannot stop there though, what becomes understood as the problem was there was the use of a natural disparity between blacks and Anglos and Acadians fit somewhere in between. Acadians acted as a racial barrier between African-Americans and Anglo-Saxons, who viewed them as foreign, not native or Southern. Acadians mostly spoke or understood French not English, were once French subjects, and then exiles, thus according to many not white.²²⁵

Although the thesis of this dissertation is that both Democrat and Republican editors disparaged Acadians in their coverage of local events, issues, and literary or historical articles, but by the close of Reconstruction, Republican editors and journalists reported on

²²³Payne, "The Whole United States Is Southern!"; Debney, "Theorizing Panic-Driven Scapegoating"; Glenn Feldman, *The Great Melding: War, the Dixiecrat Rebellion, and the Southern Model for America's New Conservatism* (Tuscaloosa, UNITED STATES: University of Alabama Press, 2015), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utep/detail.action?docID=2121718>.

²²⁴ Debney, "Theorizing Panic-Driven Scapegoating"; Feldman, *The Great Melding*; Payne, "The Whole United States Is Southern!"

²²⁵ Payne, "The Whole United States Is Southern!"

and sensationalized Acadian activities more than Democrat newspapers. Republican editors and journalists felt the loss of Reconstruction changes and responded by blaming Acadians for Reconstruction failure. By describing Acadians as uncivilized or ignorant, those who were losing the Reconstruction battle could isolate blame and gain power over the failure of Reconstruction. For a highly complex racial hierarchy, Acadians were the group that Anglos could put racial space between newly freed blacks serving alongside them. Newspapers, important to shaping the views of its readers, contributed to negative images of then and Acadians present today. The White League had a rather large membership, and most were Acadians. For example, Lafayette Parish had 15 White League chapters and 10 of the 15 presidents were Acadian. Of the Acadians parishes, Blacks outnumbered Acadians, for example in St. Landry. In 1870, 1,653 Acadians resided in the parish to the 10,647 Blacks.

LOCAL HISTORY AND TRAVEL LOGS 1875

In the following months, Acadian entered the newspapers, in various forms, such as associations to the local history or travel log, the Barataria Oyster War, and an “Acadian” printer. In the May 16th edition of the *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, an article appeared titled “An Englishman’s Description of the Teche Country.” Although the article was a reprint from *Fraser’s Magazine*, a London, England literary journal, the presence of the article, perhaps exposes the motivations behind the editor’s purpose. The *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger* was established in 1868 and was the official journal of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Founded on an anti-nativism premise and held by an Irish Catholic audience, with an Irish editor, perhaps one could conclude that although a religious centered publication, often political opinion would appear. At the time of the article’s publication, both editors supported the confederacy and challenged Reconstruction policy and while the political perspective is not relevant to my

analysis, the author provides his view of the Teche region much like a travel logger. Travel loggers were at times, embellishing, but in this article provides professional expert and local to support his thesis, but even more relevant is the views of Judge Avery's, owner of Avery Plantation, opinion of Acadians and the degradation of their culture, thus the people.

Quoting, Judge Avery, the author uses Avery's description of Acadians as "who still preserve man of their primitive characteristics. . . ." ²²⁶ Although the writer concluded Judge Avery described Acadians in "in [the] most affectionate terms," the author goes on to write about Acadians in a degrading way. The author writes, "living in [the Teche] secluded region they have changed but little, and they are still the same gentle, simple, credulous people they were in Canada" and following this sentence, the author goes on to say, "neither in manners, moral or religious culture, has there been much alteration, and they cling tenaciously to old memories and old observances." ²²⁷ Not only does the author mean to degrade Acadians, but the editor of the *Morning Star Catholic Messenger* on May 16th by his publishing of the article did the same thing. But descriptions of Acadian culture in life, did not stop there the author claimed that "they are Americanized less than any other race or nationality that has dwelt for two generations on American soil, save perhaps to creole French of Louisiana their distant cousins." ²²⁸ The article goes on for paragraphs describing them in the same way Southerners would describe slaves. "They seem to us a hearty and happy race, easily contented, and although industrious, fond of combining play with work," the author asserts, implying that the author essentializing and exoticizing Acadian. ²²⁹

²²⁶"Louisiana-An Englishman's Description of the Teche Country," *The Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*., May 16, 1875.

²²⁷"Louisiana-An Englishman's Description of the Teche Country."

²²⁸ "Louisiana-An Englishman's Description of the Teche Country."

²²⁹ "Louisiana-An Englishman's Description of the Teche Country."

The denigration of Acadians continues for several paragraphs and the evidence indicates that Anglos considered Acadians as less. And although repeated in newspapers journalists contributed to the rhetoric that perpetuated views of Acadians. Although the morning star in Catholic messenger was a predominantly democrat bias paper its views about Acadians were no different than other newspapers or journalist views about Acadians regardless of its political position. This view of Acadians contributed to a southern understanding that stem from confederate views which sought to internalize customs to perpetuate degradation.

During this time southern journalists, regardless of political position, used the press as a way of communicating political issues. State and federal notices both political sides used newspapers to undercut each other and make their arguments. Although historians have found the democrat press in the south as a vehicle to oppose northern oppression, Republican newspapers replied in the same way. Republican leaning Newspapers challenged confederate views of black rule and replied by degrading Acadians by saying they are unable to rule. Using Acadians or describing Acadians as uncivilized or unfit to rule combined with southern views contributed to the way Southerners both Republican and Democrat, viewed the world in reconstruction.

On September 1, 1875, the *New Orleans Times*, which claimed to be the “largest Daily Circulation in the Southwest,” published an article outlining the agricultural strengths of Northwestern Louisiana and offered an overview of the people living in the region. Although it asserted that it was a “representative conservative Southern newspaper” it was edited by Isaac N. Stoutmeyer and managed by Wm. H. H. Judson, both northerners. In the article titled “Northwestern Louisiana,” Acadians were described in degrading terms: “Along the border of Bayou de Glaize, which is a long sinuous stream, there is one of the finest sugar districts of the

state, peopled by and quiet and contented though not overly energetic people, who are descendants of those Acadian families who first settled this region. They have in undisturbed seclusion tilled the generous soil, comparatively shut out from the great busy world, living exactly as her father did a century ago. They are happy in their seclusion and rich behind their wants.”²³⁰

The author uses racial rhetoric to describe Acadians as unfit or unable to self-govern to suggest that those who wish to settle in the area or businessmen who are looking for investment or those of Northwest Louisiana or state boosters want to induce commerce into the area were suggesting that Acadians have not made the best use of the land. Claiming Acadians were not "energetic" implies they were not innately hardworking. Interestingly the author describes Acadians in the same way as Anglos would describe Native peoples or other people of color. Lastly, suggesting Acadians resided in “undisturbed seclusion” suggests there is available soil for the taking or untouched. The notion that Acadians live undisturbed or in solitude paints them as barbaric or unfit to self-govern and industrious Anglos sought to profit from the land. Further down the article, Acadians were referred to again in a racially disparaging way. The editor argues, “this is one of the wealthiest parishes in the state. The Broad Valley of Red River which divides it being one of the most if not most productive planting district on the continent. It was fortunately settled by a class of men unequal for their thrift and energy, called in Louisiana, in contradistinction from those of creole or Acadian dissent, “Americans.”²³¹

Not only does the author describe them in a racially negative way, but they suggest they are not American. Again, these distinctions are racially motivated, and journalists portray

²³⁰ “Northwestern Louisiana,” *The Times-Democrat*, September 1, 1875, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/231085930/>.

²³¹ “Northwestern Louisiana.”

Acadians in a negative way and to reinforce the image and blame them for the failure of the economy. Journalists began to stress the importance of Anglo southern lifestyle over a multiethnic American way of life, that although may seem counter intuitive, suggests that those who fought for the Union or would be considered carpetbaggers began taking on the southern way of life.

BARATARIA OYSTER WAR 1875

On May 27th, 1875, two articles appeared in the *New Orleans Republican*, the first titled “The Baratavia Bay Troubles” and the second “Cheaper Fish, Oysters and Game Wanted.” Although the first article appears to be less subjective than the other, are indication that the *New Orleans Republican’s* editor and journalist political bias on the matter and became another opportunity for them racially degrade Acadians. Editors and journalists exploited Acadians as scapegoats for the failings of Reconstruction by implying they were incapable of self-governance or barbaric. The context in which these articles emerged and what would become a war was the result of a lack of legislation controlling the activities of harvesters and economically available to all. By mid-June, newspapers such as the *New Orleans Republican*, published an article which accused those, referred to as Acadians, as guilty and in the months to come Acadians were described by newspapers as uncivilized.

Although Acadians had not entered the reporting of the Baratavia Bay incident regarding the Austrian oyster rakers, an article appeared on May 27th in the *New Orleans Republican* that described the event as “violent.”²³² Approximately a week later, on June 1, the *New Orleans Republican* recounted more information on the incident, claiming that the sheriff arrested “more

²³² “The Baratavia Bay Troubles,” *New Orleans Republican*, May 27, 1875, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/326022843/?terms=Oyster%20rakers&match=1>.

than fifty and paroled them.”²³³ There after Acadians entered the narrative, on June 4th “twenty of the Baratavia Acadians who raided the Austrian oyster rakers surrendered.”²³⁴ The articles that followed referred to Acadians in a negative manner, again utilizing them as a scapegoat for regional concerns by urging they be ruled, cementing the perception that Acadians were uncivilized and responsible for a variety of regional ills. At times, specific to regions with a high population of Acadians, newspapers would blame Acadians for myriad social ills. Editors and journalists, without having full understanding of who was involved would describe suspects in a group instead of individuals accused of committing a crime. Editors would shift blame to Acadians and indict an entire community as opposed to considering those involved, thereby suggesting Acadians were endangering society through their inability to govern themselves, act and think in a “rational” manner, and follow the norms of “civilized society”.

Pertaining to the Baratavia Oyster War, oyster farmers asked for legislation that would exclude unnaturalized oyster rakers from the beds along the coastal region, thereby effectively barring them from the oyster industry. Whether this request came from the Acadians involved or others, reveals that some believed their rights as citizens were not protected. Incidents like the Baratavia Oyster War was another opportunity for editors and journalists to use Acadians as scapegoats and place blame to identify them as a threat to law abiding citizens in the state. The threat as described by editors played into ideas of those challenging federal authority as morally inept to accept slave emancipation. Republican prejudiced editors and journalists would utilize Acadians to complicate the matter by challenging southern race ideas and asserting they were

²³³ “The Baratavia Raiders,” *New Orleans Republican*, June 1, 1875, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/326023323/?terms=Oyster%20rakers&match=1>.

²³⁴ “No Title,” *New Orleans Republican*, June 4, 1875, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1875-06-04/ed-1/seq-3/>.

uncivilized, implying that both Acadians and southern society were unqualified to rule themselves due to cultural racism.

For some editors and writers of Republican-leaning publications, attributing the failure of Reconstruction to the Acadians became an expression of their discontent. The activities of the Acadians were a kind of opposition to the Reconstruction agenda and would come to define who they were. Eventually, along with other white southerners, reconstruction was overthrown, and the racial system was progressively reframed by asserting that freed blacks were excluded rather than equal. Within this highly racialized landscape, Acadians distanced themselves from blacks by claiming that Acadians were not violent, but they implied that due to inherent cultural traits, blacks were. Nonetheless, editors and journalists used Acadians as scapegoats for several social conflicts, and this case, the Baratavia Oyster War. In the June 16th edition of the *New Orleans Republican*, the editor published an article titled “Barataria Raiders Committed for Trial,” wherein he included Acadians in the incident. Describing the accused, who happen to be considered by the editor as “raiders,” as being Acadians were considered already the perpetrators. The editor states, the parish judge, Judge Hyman, “took up the charges against the Acadians of Barataria Bay who assumed the duties of judge and jury by driving out several hard-working Austrians who had located on an island about 15 miles bug for Livingston for the purpose of wreaking oysters during the summer.”²³⁵

The editor emphasized the accused were Acadian, and perhaps it could be true, however describing them as “judge and jury” and describing the Austrian oyster rakers as “hard working,” suggests that the editor sees Acadians, specifically these as above the law. At the same time, the

²³⁵ “Barataria Raiders Committed,” *New Orleans Republican*, June 16, 1875, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1875-06-16/ed-1/seq-3/>.

editor's view debases Acadian identity and culture, and it constructs them as uncivilized and incapable of following the law. Further in the article, the editor states, "this kind of business and since the old settlers in that section to such a degree that they wore the strangers off at the muzzles of double barrel shotguns, and as the Austrian did not see it to move as fast as their imperial opponents desired, the houses of the Austrians were destroyed in their provisions scattered over the beach and their boat sent a drift."²³⁶

In the editor's description of incident in terms of empire, such as describing the Acadians as "old settlers" and "warned the strangers off at the muzzles" and refer to Acadians as the Austrian "imperial opponents" suggests that they are uncivilized, because of their French colonial settler history should be perceived as suspect because their citizenship was obtained via an imperial agreement, not a democratic one. The writer goes on to describe the Acadians as aggressors by claiming that "the testimony showed that nearly 100 Acadians attacked nine inoffensive Austrians and drove them from their homes."²³⁷

The Reconstruction era was a time of severe racial upheaval not just for the emancipated, but for whites fought violently to maintain their racial position, especially where Acadians outnumbered Anglos. Anglo editors and journalists, who were Republican and northern, often described Acadians as deviants, claiming they were uncivilized, thus suggesting they were unfit to self-govern. They fought the rhetorical battle by placing blame on Acadians as the reason for the breakdown of Louisiana society and Reconstruction politics. For example, on July 31st, the New Orleans Republican published an article titled "More Trouble Among Oyster Rakers," an update to the article published approximately a month earlier on the Baratavia Oyster War. The

²³⁶ "Barataria Raiders Committed."

²³⁷ "Barataria Raiders Committed."

first compelling segment of the article, the editor compares Acadian behavior to an animal or escaped prisoner which describes them as deviant: “The Acadians at Cheniere Camanada have broken loose, venting their spleen on the Austrian oyster rakers who have temporarily settled on a barren island above Fort Livingston, Barataria Bay. The Acadians have trumped up a charge and caused six of the Austrians to be arrested and imprisoned on Grand Isle.”²³⁸

Editors and journalists' views about Acadians reveals a rhetorical battle ensuing between Democrats and Republicans. Republican editors and journalists used Acadians as a scapegoat describing them as uncivilized to challenge Democrat views on Reconstruction. Whereas Democrats used political rhetoric such as carpetbagger or scalawag, I argue Republican editors would use Acadian to challenge Democrat political rhetoric wishing to reform southern society in the form of the north. Using Acadians as a scapegoat, Anglo editors and journalists saw themselves as elite or above Acadians by describing them as violent, thus suggesting they are to blame for Reconstruction's collapse or Acadian are amoral people to conduct themselves as fit to self-govern. At the conclusion of the article, the writer, sarcastically suggests Acadians have “reformed a little by experience, as on this occasion they did not use the shotgun argument.”²³⁹

The following month, several Barataria Oyster War articles emerged in the newspapers and expanded upon the common themes that degraded Acadians. Regardless of political bias, all reported on the incident but none other than the *New Orleans Republican* were hostile towards Acadians. All editors reporting on the incident professed to have the truth, until an article appeared in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* outlining the events by the *Louisiana Registrar*, defending the Acadians and racial bias would be seen by the request made by legislation. What

²³⁸ “New Orleans Republican 31 Jul 1875, Page 3,” Newspapers.com, accessed September 28, 2022, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/326036719/>.

²³⁹ “New Orleans Republican 31 Jul 1875, Page 3.”

is important to see is, again the New Orleans Republican, a paper owned by northerners or carpetbaggers, placing blame on Acadians for the failures of Reconstruction; thus, using them as a scapegoat and then sometimes claiming they were an existential threat to society. For example, in the August 3rd edition of the New Orleans Republican, an article titled “The Acadians Enjoined” reports on an injunction issued preventing “the [Acadians] of Cheniere Camanada from interfering with the Austrian oyster rakers,” but what follows, if one is to study all articles related to the Oyster War, regardless of political bias, was reactionary politics and maximize threat.²⁴⁰

Editors and journalists of the New Orleans Republican had an agenda, just as Democrats, did, whereas Democrats blamed carpetbaggers for state political and economic issues, Republican editors recognized a losing battle and Radical Reconstruction was waning, thus Acadians became a scapegoat for Reconstructionist. One common element in all the newspaper articles was the concern over Acadian morality or internal make up, thus creating something like a moral panic. Scapegoating works because those who are doing it, if knowing scapegoating, would not necessarily consider scapegoating, which is why if normalized it works and racial views of Acadians prosper today and not until the reconstruction era did Acadians begin their evolution. Surrounding the Baratavia Oyster War, views about Acadian identity enter the opinions and discourse on race, which was turned on its head by editors and journalists of the Louisiana press.

Whereas on the 3rd of August the *New Orleans Republican* devotes a small paragraph to the oyster war, but in the days following both Republican and Democrat newspapers report and

²⁴⁰ “The Acadians Enjoined,” *New Orleans Republican*, August 3, 1875, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1875-08-03/ed-1/seq-3/>.

contribute lengthy and detailed reporting on the issue on the coast of the Barataria Bay, an important oyster industry grew. Although some researchers argue that Austrians were instrumental in the establishment and development of the oyster industry, absent from the literature is an analysis of other ethnic involvement such as the Acadians. Understanding Acadian participation in the Barataria Oyster War can provide us with a unique perspective on the legislation that would influence the environment, industry, and economy after the conclusion of Reconstruction. Reconstruction language generated by editors and journalists of the period demonstrates how Acadians were seen and how Acadian perceptions of others were impacted.

The New Orleans *Daily Picayune's* coverage of the Barataria Oyster War on August 6 appears to be the most balanced. The journalist does not portray the Acadians as victims but does provide a clear interpretation of the events in the series, without immense hostility and racial labeling. The writer reported,

Their settlement had become a considerable one, as they had constructed huts and other necessary structures. This encroachment did not, as reported, suit the views of a large number of Acadian residences of La Chenier, who about two months ago, having arm themselves with shotguns and other weapons of warfare, made a descend upon the Austrians and destroyed not only their settlement, but their boats, etc., no resistance being offered them.²⁴¹

Without quoting an Acadian, the journalist's stance on behalf of Acadians demonstrates his position as a journalist. It is possible that he is accurate; but his propaganda was as powerful as other examples of racial anger propagation. Further in the article, the writer describes the way Acadians respond to their arrest, by charging the Austrians with harvesting oysters out of season, defying the law regarding the protection of oysters and the industry.

²⁴¹ "The Oyster Feud-The Island of Madame John-The War Between the Acadians and Austrians-Judge Pardee Settlers Matters for the Present," *The Times-Picayune*, August 6, 1875, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/32136375/>.

The following day, the *New Orleans Republican* had a vastly different perspective of the battle between the Acadians and Austrians. The editor of the newspaper was William R. Fish, who became chief editor in 1872, and Thomas G. Tracy, who joined one year later. Both supported Louisiana's Radical Republican regime and claimed they only reported the truth. The writer began his assessment, "as the real condition of the contention between the residents of Cheniere Camanada and a dozen Austrians over oyster beds in Barataria Bay has been badly distorted. We propose to give a short history of the case, stating things as they occurred."²⁴²

The excerpt indicates that the editor believes the newspaper's interpretation was the truth; thus, shaping the rhetoric and normalizing racial views of Acadians as uncivilized, stoking fears of existential threats, which give rise to reactionary policies.²⁴³ The writer goes on to describe the Austrian oyster rakers in a manner that readers would begin to sympathize with. The writer says, "[Austrians] quietly pursued their laborers, interfering with nobody."²⁴⁴ After describing the Acadians as industrious, the writer makes an assessment of Acadian irritation, not like the *Daily Picayune*, but referring to rights, saying "[Austrian oyster raking] industry in a manner interfered with oyster men who reside in that locality, mostly on Cheniere Camanada, men who think that they have an exclusive right to all the fish in Barataria."²⁴⁵

What follows in the article was the editor's opinion of the Oyster War placing Acadians at fault for their lack of civility and inability to self-govern, placing these characteristics on an interpersonal level; thus, representing them as immoral and an attack of their character. For example, the writer states, "[Austrians have] but little or no chance with [the Acadians], for

²⁴² "Barataria Oyster War-The Last Phase of It," *New Orleans Republican*, August 7, 1875, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/326038199/>.

²⁴³ Debney, "Theorizing Panic-Driven Scapegoating."

²⁴⁴ "Barataria Oyster War-The Last Phase of It."

²⁴⁵ "Barataria Oyster War-The Last Phase of It."

[Acadians] form a closed community, and they are always ready to oppose any newcomer.”²⁴⁶

The writer meant that Acadians should be viewed as suspects and suggests they are uncivilized because citizens of the U.S. should behave in a certain way, but because they are citizens who speak French, mostly perceived as ignorant, and treacherous cannot be trusted. Rhetoric used by hostile editors and journalists influenced politics by providing internal characterizations, such as claiming Acadians were violent, treacherous, and ignorant or ill-mannered. Louisiana Democrat and Republican editors and journalist engaged in the North-South debate often at the Acadian’s expense. Editors and journalist stereotypes and images questioned Acadian fitness for self-government.

In three separate excerpts, for example the author describes Acadians as violent, treacherous, and ignorant,

This summer, these Acadians did all they could to distress the Austrians, and finally actually invaded the strangers camp, fully armed, around their houses, destroyed their provisions, and sent their skiffs addressed. The Austrians were warned off at the muzzles of double barrel shotguns.²⁴⁷

[Acadians] then trumped up a charge against the Austrians, accusing them of raking oysters out of season. Of course, that charge fell of itself. The evidence at the trial was clear that the Baratarians had grossly violated the law. And judged, Hyman committed them for trial, first, reading them a severe lecture on their bad conduct.²⁴⁸

Both parties return to their homes, and for a month all went well, but the Baratarians [Acadians] still held an animosity for their neighbors, so they put their heads together and concluded to make one more effort to disperse the Austrians. They made affidavits before a little justice of the peace on the Cheniere charging that the Austrians were raking oysters out of season.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ “Barataria Oyster War-The Last Phase of It.”

²⁴⁷ “Barataria Oyster War-The Last Phase of It.”

²⁴⁸ “Barataria Oyster War-The Last Phase of It.”

²⁴⁹ “Barataria Oyster War-The Last Phase of It.”

The Republican journalist employed Acadians as a scapegoat for the societal failure of Radical Reconstruction, emphasizing Southerners' refusal to embrace emancipation or federal intervention and challenging their way of life. Southerners, arguing against the North, said they had the right to defend Anglo culture since there was a suspect in their midst: Acadians, who spoke French, were uncivilized, and were previously French subjects who were not vetted but received citizenship without careful consideration.

A few days after the August 7th *New Orleans Republican* edition, Democrat leaning newspapers such as the *Daily Picayune* and the *New Orleans Bulletin* published reports of further conflict, not between the Acadians and Austrians, but between the Acadians and the officials serving an injunction. While serving the injunction, both the *Daily Picayune* and the *New Orleans Republican* asserted that the Acadians shot at the officials and wounded two of them. Although the *Daily Picayune*, a paper that would appear to support the Acadians, published this self-professed rumor, it qualified the report as having no confirmation. The afternoon edition of the *Daily Picayune*, on August 11 stated, “seems to have been a canard,” which would seem that the newspapers much like the Republican ones, would use Acadians as a scapegoat and use them to meet some end or purpose. By publishing a rumor, which is evidence of bias and goes against journalistic principles, reveals that regardless of political distinction, Acadians were used as scapegoats to blame for the upheavals of Reconstruction. Acadians were one of many, over the reconstruction era, who were blamed or sacrificed for the failures of Reconstruction in Louisiana. Acadian character was blamed for and at the center of moral panics. They were often considered as endangering society for the purpose of achieving some political agenda. The interesting thing is that what makes them different was not so significant then. They spoke French, much like others, but potentially their settler colonial past could make

them a perfect target, especially when there were efforts behind both parties, southerners regardless of if Democrat or Republican to reunite with the union under their own terms.

On the next day, August 12, several newspapers published articles on the Oyster War, most of which were updates and lacked significant information. For example, the *Daily Picayune* morning editions contributed two articles one, asserting the wounding of public officials by Acadians as false and, that the officials were all ok. The article titled “All Quite At La Chenier” was a positive report, however, the incident and just the reporting of the description, reflects or suggests the Acadians were like animals, now tame or obeying, the article objectifies them. The article states, “the colonel states that he was courteously received by the Acadians who have ceased all hostilities and have signed an agreement not to molest the Austrians in their fisheries and promise to obey the injunction issued form the Second Judicial District Court.”²⁵⁰

The evidence reveals that Acadians were perceived, much like animals, with few characteristics associated with the ability to self-govern. Regardless of regional background, Louisiana editors and journalists condemned activities as “Acadian” to persuade northern critics that the situation was under the control of responsible whites. Home rule was the goal, and “sophistic pruning” was the game.²⁵¹ All of this defined the ideological parameters of Reconstruction political rhetoric, making someone the scapegoat and that was Acadians. This was not much different from the way Democrat editors and journalist, to win the ideological war over Reconstruction policy.

By the afternoon of the 12th, the *Daily Picayune* published an update on the Barataria Oyster War. Much like the other reports, journalists tied the circumstances of the battle to

²⁵⁰ “All Quiet at La Chenier,” *The Daily Picayune*, August 12, 1875, Morning edition, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/32136849/>.

²⁵¹ Feldman, *The Great Melding*.

Acadian character. At times the descriptions of Acadians were not direct, but journalists' perceptions of the event biased the article. For example, the *Daily Picayune*'s editor published, "it appears that the Acadians at La Cheniere Camanada agreed, after considerable importuning, to pay the sum of \$2000 for the damage done by their attack upon the Austrians on the island of Madame John, and for the expenses incurred by the Illyrians, in the matter of lawyer's fees, mostly, we take it."²⁵²

Journalists used the word "importuning," while not directly, suggests that Acadians do not have the ability to control themselves, and that they had to be coerced. This perception contributes to rhetoric that placed blame on Acadians and under no circumstance can an Acadian be the victim, because they are animals. Like the other newspaper articles, journalists and editors were hostile, and the Louisiana press offered an efficient venue of communicating with their audience by describing Acadiens as an existential threat and Louisiana society, regardless of political position, became preoccupied. The preoccupation complicated constructive political dialogue, which developed reactionary politics associated with propaganda, such as the Baratavia Oyster War reports, to serve a political agenda regardless of political opinion. By making Acadians as the boogie man, who regardless of political position made them a scapegoat by calling them uncivilized marks an important event in the transformation of Acadian identity.

On August 15, 1875, the *Daily Picayune* published the *Louisiana State Register*'s account of what editors and journalists would describe as the Baratavia Oyster War. *The Louisiana State Register*, a Republican newspaper in the city of Carrollton and Jefferson near New Orleans, was republished by the *Daily Picayune*. Edited by Amos S. Collins, the year

²⁵² "Jets," *The Daily Picayune*, August 12, 1875, Afternoon edition, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/32136913/>.

before Collins was driven by a mob from his place of business, offers evidence that a perspective other than what most newspapers offered existed. Whether the journalist or editor, the author defends the Acadians which shifts the blame from Acadians to Austrians. Through the publication of a different narrative, the author is vying for power and evidence of Reconstruction race politics. For example, in the following excerpt, the author asks readers to rethink common understanding of the Baratavia Oyster War, in fact suggesting that the Acadians are the victims.

The author states,

The city papers, of late had had considerable to say regarding the quarrel now in progress between the inhabitants of the lower part of Jefferson Parish and the Austrians who make their livelihood by bedding and selling oysters in this city only one side thus far seems to have had a hearing and either by willful misrepresentation or want of reliable information, the Austrians would seem to a disinterested reader to be the oppressed victims of Acadians of the Cheniere Caminada. Such is not the case, as we shall demonstrate.²⁵³

Further down, the author states,

From time immemorial the oyster grounds have been as they in law or public property. Anyone has a right at seasonable times to supply himself with oysters, either for sale or individual use, those who have made the 'bedding' of oysters a business are for the most part Austrians or Turcos against whom nothing prejudicial has been said until they attempted to monopolize the business, excluding all who were not in their ring, like the average politician of the present day.²⁵⁴

The excerpt reveals a common opinion for a Democrat or perhaps an independent constituency concerned with the state of Reconstruction politics by suggesting the Austrians were acting like Republican politicians and it proves the journalist harbored political opinions and perceived the Austrians as interlopers, a view about race projected on those not citizens, much like blacks and other ethnicities. The view of race suggests that a larger view of race was operating at the local

²⁵³ "La Cheniere Caminada-The Cause of the Troubles Between the Acadians and the Illyrians," *The Daily Picayune*, August 15, 1875, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/32137081/>.

²⁵⁴ "La Cheniere Caminada-The Cause of the Troubles Between the Acadians and the Illyrians."

and was applicable to anyone not Anglo. This view implies that all non-White residents were questionable; thus, Acadians became suspect and eventually scapegoats, for both the failure of politics to maintain the status quo or change the state of Reconstruction politics. Although biased, the newspapers served political purposes in Louisiana, much like other southern states, as the only institution for white Democrats to challenge Republican politics and Republicans challenge Democrat politics. What would appear as a difference in politics, would become outright hostility among editors and journalists and the conflict shaped race discourse in the form of interpersonal or a matter of morality. In the same article, the writer argues,

And just here arose the trouble between the ‘Acadians,’ citizens and taxpayers of the parish of Jefferson, and the Austrian and Turcos fisherman; and the same causes have made trouble in every part of the state where oysters abound. The ‘Acadians’ justly allege that the Austrians have taken possession of all the oyster reefs, claiming them as their property—parceling out ‘water-lots’ to suit themselves—and preventing the citizens from the adjacent shores from procuring any either for sale or otherwise. The citizens, believing their right to take the oyster at pleasure to be inalienable and as good as that of any carpet-bag foreigner, are naturally indignant and commit the indiscretion of punishing the offenders without the aid of the law.²⁵⁵

It is important to acknowledge the use of words, such as “citizens,” “taxpayers,” and the reference to Austrians as alien, the author suggests. By stating that Austrians have taken control of other groups citizenship was denied and illegal in some sense. The author refers to “carpet-bag foreigner,” another use of propaganda important to the language of Reconstruction. Making references to carpetbaggers, was rhetoric that stoked fears of existential threats of northerners and promote the need for home rule, a smoke and mirror strategy.

The citizens further justly allege that the Austrians continue to bed oysters during the “milky season” and that they “cull” on the shore and do not deposit the refuse within reach of tidewater. As the fishermen are an industrious hard-working class the result of their laborers will soon be a parent – in fact we know that for several years past oysters have been growing scarce, and in a few years from now the supply will be totally

²⁵⁵ “La Cheniere Caminada-The Cause of the Troubles Between the Acadians and the Illyrians.”

exhausted, unless stringent measures are at once taken to prevent the present criminal waste.²⁵⁶

The contested debates over race in Louisiana played a part in the shaping of Acadian identity. Apart from the way Acadians saw themselves, beliefs about Acadians were dominated by an ideology, which historian David Brion Davis saw as a Confederate ideology.²⁵⁷ The paradigm shaped all views regardless of political party affiliation or views and is another example of the highly stratified racial hierarchy and no group, regardless of ethnicity, escaped. This ideology became one in which both the north and south rejected Reconstruction, a belief in segregation, and most compelling to be able to accept racial segregation was to view the era as a time when both slavery “damaging for whites morally but helped civilize and Christianize African savages.”²⁵⁸

What Payne adds to Davis's theory, however, is that the gaslighting of blacks, which began after freedom also extended to other non-Anglos, blaming them for their inferiority. Acadian rejection of perceived ideas of them, not only proves this argument but at the same time one can see the application of this Confederate ideology. For Acadians, at once seeing them as poor whites is at the same time seeing them as racialized and “become attacks on or defense of other characters. . .”²⁵⁹ I think in the case of Acadians, much of the articles “of southern elite have always preferred discussions about race in while they are presented as the aggrieved party,

²⁵⁶ “La Cheniere Caminada-The Cause of the Troubles Between the Acadians and the Illyrians.”

²⁵⁷ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (Westminster: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014).

²⁵⁸ Davis; David Brion Davis, “Free at Last: The Enduring Legacy of the South’s Civil War Victory This Debate Isn’t Just about Reparations. It Is about Putting Slavery in Its Place. The Enduring Legacy Of the South’s Victory,” *New York Times*, 2001, sec. The Week In Review.

²⁵⁹ Payne, “The Whole United States Is Southern!”

whether that means bearing the burden of having to civilize and support blacks in the 19th century or having to put up with reverse discrimination in the twentieth.”

As we before stated the same wasteful practice which obtained in the vicinity of Caminada, is equally true of other localities. We are personally cognizant of many cases where citizens of the State, living for their whole lives in a lower Mississippi have been driven from the reefs by this same class of fisherman, and after a few months the locality would be found [?] clear of oysters as a sandbank. Unless act 27 of 1871 is forced both in letter and spirit the oyster reefs on the coast of Louisiana will soon become a thing of the past. When the strong arm of the law is again raised to prevent this catastrophe we hope all good citizens will ‘holler on the right side.’²⁶⁰

The article’s author makes the case for Acadians and at the center of the author’s argument was that Acadians were citizens and the Austrian oyster rakers were not. Although Acadians were accused of terrorizing the Austrian Oyster Rakers, the author believed the Acadians were in their right to attack the Austrians and the law created by the legislation needed to be enforced.

In the same year as the Baratavia Oyster War, articles re-surfaced about an “Acadian” printer, once again making disparaging remarks about his ability to typesetter. Although Democrat leaning newspapers remarked on the mistakes of the printer, the *New Orleans Republican* was perhaps the most aggressive. Much like the other articles and mentions of mistakes, the *New Orleans Republican* published an article titled “The Acadian Printer Found.” In the past, the *New Orleans Republican* was often hostile towards Acadians, regardless of an article’s content and listing the Acadian compositor/printer’s mistakes did not escape the editor’s article. Also, the same edition, an article appeared titled “Associated Press Enterprise,” the editor criticized the newsworthy events sent to the Republican by the Associated Press, which was hypocritical.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ “La Cheniere Caminada-The Cause of the Troubles Between the Acadians and the Illyrians.”

²⁶¹ “Associated Press Enterprise,” *New Orleans Republican*, June 15, 1875, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1875-06-15/ed-1/seq-1/>; “The Acadian Printer Found,” *New Orleans Republican*, June 15, 1875, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016555/1875-06-15/ed-1/seq-1/>.

The author listed various mistakes such as incorrect dates, confusing headlines, and misspellings by the Acadian printer. The editor uses Acadian in a derogatory manner, by making a generalization that all printers of Acadian ancestry “can not ‘set’ right.”²⁶² In the following sentences, the editor makes the distinction between the “Acadian printer” at the *New Orleans Republican* and one found at the times, but he was not sure until his final sentence. His description follows and the editor comments on the printer’s small intelligence, weak focus, and professional integrity,

We have kind recollections of him, and we have his hat to this day. He looked upon his first proof for many minutes and then appeared to be counting the rafters in the composing room. He was thinking whether to correct the miserable job on the galley or set it up over again. The marks on the margin were evidently a surprise to him; he doubted himself, and then asked for the copy. He braced himself up on the end of an empty case in the corner alley, where he had been put to do swift work. He looked at that copy and then went out for legal advice. He came back no more, and no trace of him have been seen until the issue of the Times last night.²⁶³

The way the editor described his experience, the year before, was no different, but he means to make the distinction between printers of Acadian ancestry and other printers. Beyond his use of Acadian in a derogatory way, the editor suggested the Acadian printer should be suspected and blamed for the mistakes in the news. Much like the rhetoric containing Confederate ideology, such as carpetbagger or scalawag, Acadian became a scapegoat and trap for all wrong going on and counter anti Reconstruction politics. The rhetoric reflected how Anglo Louisianians, often carpetbaggers, viewed Reconstruction, which became integral to who they were. The type of discourse contributed to images of Acadian as unable to self-govern or inept as citizens and reflected the anxieties of suspicious people in their midst and increasing immigration to the region. Confederate ideology would increasingly become relevant to Acadians when they would

²⁶² “The Acadian Printer Found.”

²⁶³ “The Acadian Printer Found.”

shift the discourse to others and place interpersonal conflict as a reason to give up on Reconstruction.

1876

Two days later the *New Orleans Republican*, refers to the Acadian printer and outlines the mistake and the following year on March 11, 1876, the editor refers to another mistake in the *Cherokee Advocate*, not by the Acadian printer, but bringing attention to the mistake found in another paper and using the Acadian printer as a comparison. The editor wrote, “We have received the first number of the *Cherokee Advocate*, published at Tahlequah Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory. A portion of the paper is set up in the Cherokee language in a manner that would make an Acadian printer commit suicide if he attempted to correct the proof.”²⁶⁴

The editor means several things. First like other articles, insults Acadians as having intellectual deficits common to all Acadians. The editor is suggesting Acadians are inept due to their primary language as French, instead of English, just like the Cherokee language. Editors and journalists were often hostile and contributed to a discourse that described some innate quality of unfitness. In the public discourse regarding Acadians towards the end of the Reconstruction era but before the 1896 court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, there was a shift in how Acadians were viewed and how they viewed themselves, and race had a significant role in this transformation. Although the view that Acadians were not fit to self-govern, did not really go away, you see the emergence of government officials siding with the liberal faction of Republicans shifting responsibility and aligning themselves with the powerful. Race eventually became a thing for Acadians and in order to reject ideas like Acadians as inept yet culturally distinct would be an indicator as shifting racial politics. Acadians would become apologists for

²⁶⁴ “No Title,” March 11, 1876.

the racial imbalance, often describing blacks as there are too many cultural and social differences which to me would lead to segregation or *Plessy v. Ferguson* judgment for separate but equal legislation.

Although Acadians became citizens under the Louisiana Purchase treaty of 1803 between the United States and France. Under the circumstances of their citizenship, without hesitation did the federal government think twice about their ethnicity and races residing in Louisiana. Although a large population would mix, and as Brasseaux and other scholars would claim identity evolution was the result of class criteria, whether via marriage or profession, none of these sources support the extent to which race played a part in their assimilation. My argument is during Reconstruction, Acadians invested in their race and those changes started during Reconstruction not resolved by then. While scholars believe that race did not matter, it did, and Acadians double downed on the bet. The loyalty to their ethnicity had less to do with being American and more to do with being Southern. Through discussion in the newspapers by editors and journalists, concerns over immigration and the need for labor and settlement were important to the success of the economy and politics, but I want to emphasize, class mattered but race mattered more during the Reconstruction period.

I consider race and ethnicity to be intertwined; thus, one cannot be considered without the other. Regarding the reality of race, "some authors still consider it to be a biological reality in some sense, while others argue that it is merely a cultural phenomenon, and still others conceive of it in familial terms."²⁶⁵ Bernard, by emphasizing that Acadians or Cajuns were white, especially proving his assertion by arguing that Acadian couldn't get any whiter because they

²⁶⁵ Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Race or Ethnicity? An Introduction," in *Race or Ethnicity? An Introduction* (Cornell University Press, 2018), 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501727245-003>.

were white supremacists. This assertion does two things, I think without him knowing this he is calling Cajuns, racists, reifying the category of race, and trying to whitewash, remembering race and ethnicity are inextricable. When thinking of Acadian identity, compared to potential immigrants, these references of the places where immigrants would settle, Acadians were portrayed as industrious.

Regarding immigration over the period of 1875-1877 into parishes of highly populated Acadians, they were referenced many times. At times they were used as a lure for immigration, whether there were similarities between Acadian and the incoming immigrant or dissimilar. For example, an article appeared in the *Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, describing the opportunity, especially for French Canadian immigrants. The author states, we “will find in the Attakapas a congenial population, their people in race and creed, and we would call their attention to the fact that here their exiled Acadians brothers found a home in olden times.”²⁶⁶ Here the author describes Acadians as a race, and this suggests that ethnicity held the same weight as race and could be used interchangeably. The published letters supporting the view followed. As far as Acadian assimilation, there was a degree of assimilation, however, because the authors of the letters, make a distinction among the various ethnic and religious groups, suggests that assimilation was an ongoing process.

Various letters appear after the article, such as Vicar General G. Raymond, seeking Irish immigration and settlement of Louisiana perhaps trying to increase parishioners, was likely. He describes the parish agriculture as having potential, but one of the letters refutes the positive attributes of the regions. He states, “I certify that the statements made of the advantages of the

²⁶⁶ “Louisiana Immigration,” *The Morning Star and Catholic Messenger*, March 26, 1876, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86086284/1876-03-26/ed-1/seq-1/>.

section are far below the truth.” But he says that if “all who need a home to come and settle in a country in which they will find, in a short time, ease and comfort.”²⁶⁷ A month later, on April 20 of the same year, another story on Louisiana immigration mentioning Acadians was published.

1877

On May 1, 1877, an article appeared on page 8 in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* under the pseudonym “Acadian.” Writing from Fair Oaks Plantation near Vermilionville, in which Acadians have resided for many generations, the author of “A Chance for the Unemployed” responded to an article discussing the poor condition of families in New Orleans. Possibly the Granger farmer author was posing as an Acadian, but the piece is proof of values typical of Southerners blaming one’s failure to an intrinsic characteristic. The author states,

The matter has been discussed informally at our Grange meeting. And the most prominent members of the Grange are pledged to cooperate in the good work. We can give work to at least 30 families on condition that the members of these families will earn their bread: no idlers or find gentleman wanted. . .no room for persons who cannot put false pride in their pockets, and help themselves while they help us. . .the predominant desire of this community is to be rid of the trifling Negroes, who go reluctantly through the forces of scratching the earth for a living when they cannot live by pilfering.²⁶⁸

The Acadian depicts the Grangers of Louisiana as modest planters concerned about economic issues, higher taxes, labor shortages, and controlled cotton production.²⁶⁹ Grangers advocated for immigration but favored European labor over Blacks, the article argues. As Linda Marie Thorstad explains in her dissertation titled “The Historical and Cultural Geography of the Grange

²⁶⁷ “Louisiana Immigration.”

²⁶⁸ “A Chance for the Unemployed,” *The Times-Picayune*, May 1, 1877.

²⁶⁹ Oliver H. Kelley, who traveled the South following the Civil War, conceived the concept. Kelley was appalled by the appalling circumstances of rural living. Post Panic of 1873, membership increased and by 1875 farmers throughout the south were banding together. In 1873, a Louisiana Granger agency was founded to help secure cotton market prices. Grangers advocated for immigration but favored European labor over Blacks.

in Minnesota and Louisiana, 1870-1880,” many Grangers were linked with the White League, as evidenced by her use of the following quote: "uniting as white men, swore to work for the rise of the white race in the state. . . ”²⁷⁰ Thorstad contends that Grangers were among the Colfax and Coushatta massacre terrorists.

Although we have seen the newspapers trying to assimilate Acadians as black in order to push them lower on the social totem pole, but in this article, Acadians push back by claiming they are not black. The Acadians attempted to construct an identity that would offer them authority and prevent their integration into the social structure as blacks' inferiors. Their acts of resistance are meant to mainstream them or at least craft an identity that gives them social power instead of assimilating them as sub-people. In a supporting article, written by perhaps the editor, supports “Acadian’s” argument makes the racist argument more racist because it is founded on the values of freedom, but for white freedom. He states,

it will appear from his letter that the planters in his section are anxious to encourage intelligent white labor, and to give the surplus population of the overcrowded city an opportunity to make a fair experiment. To find work for the unemployed now as a public duty of no small importance. If other granges in the state can offer practical inducements such as this one, the movement may become a very important one in giving encouragement to wipe agricultural labor and developing the resources of the state. The cities cannot give employment to all the idle population congregated in them, and many who are out of work will doubtless be glad of the opportunity to secure comfortable homes and a certainty of making a living in the country. The proposition of Acadian will be found to be a practical one.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Linda Marie Thorstad, “The Historical and Cultural Geography of the Grange in Minnesota and Louisiana, 1870-1880” (Ph.D., United States -- Louisiana, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College), 125, accessed March 14, 2022, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304531155/abstract/D0DBF847C3F9450FPQ/1>.

²⁷¹ “A Chance for Working People,” *The Daily Picayune*, May 1, 1877.

Acadian pandered to Southerners who respect honor and civility, and the ability to self-govern was contingent upon one's commitment to honest labor. These values portrayed you as Southern and white. Being white and southern elevated one's social standing.

In 1877 random references of Acadians appeared in the *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, *Weekly Times-Democrat*, and the *Louisiana Sugar Bowl*. The articles were written with Acadian or Louisiana history in mind. The period's social Darwinian theory informed the first piece titled "Our People-Where They Came From Originally-The Origin of the Population of Louisiana." According to social Darwinism, individuals who failed did so owing to their own weakness and incapacity to govern themselves. The author begins "Who were our forefathers?—Not the far distant apes and jelly fish to whom traces us, but those more immediate ancestors that converted Louisiana from savagery and wildness to its present state, to whom we owe its peculiar customs and habits, a not least of all ourselves." In the rest of the article where the author refers to Acadians the author explains Acadian are Cajuns under the subtitle "French," but first describes the origins of Acadian settlers. The article appears to be an argument against social Darwinism, but it was really written to support the theory. The writer describes,

The Acadians were a sturdy, stalwart built race, showing in their disposition and in every feature they're northern or Norman descent. They were boney, sinewy, with high cheekbones and their complexion swarthy and bronzed all their features bearing so close a resemblance to those of our Aborigines as to give rise to a somewhat wild theory that the climate of America had Indianizing effect on Europeans and that a few centuries of it would convert us in complexion and disposition, into Sioux and Modocs. The true explanation of this undoubted Indian physiognomy is perhaps more easily and naturally explained in their frequency, in the early days of the Choctaw wives accustomed so prevalent in the colony that at one time too be get a schism between church and state on this point the parish priests Cooley suggesting that if a man could get no better wife than Indian scraw he had better remain single altogether.²⁷²

²⁷² "Our People-Where They Came From Originally-The Origin of the Population of Louisiana," *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, March 4, 1877, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83026413/1877-03-04/ed-1/seq-2/>.

The article goes on to claim Cajuns are a cousin to Acadians. Interestingly, the author sees the Acadian that arrived after 1765 to be different from earlier Acadian settlers, the difference being post 1765 settlement under the Spanish monarchy. Perhaps recognizing this distinction is immaterial, but the author's subsequent sentimental description of pre-1875 Acadians as a race shows a political rhetoric intended to portray Acadians as once uncivilized but were evolving.

A month later, an article appeared in the *Weekly-Times-Democrat* titled “Working Upon Public Sentiment” on April 14th. The correspondent commenting on the election of Louisiana governor refers to Acadians but used “Acadia” to suggest political understanding of the election has to be available to every individual with “simplest Acadian in the State will know beforehand what the outcome must be. Five months later Acadian appears in the columns of the *Louisiana Sugar Bowl* on August 16th. Although the author refers to Acadians positively in the regional history, makes a comparison to Native Americans and Israelites had “to become sufferers.”²⁷³

On August 7th and 8th, 1888, Louisianians who settled from outside of the states, gathered at the Mid-Summer Convention to discuss and support immigration to the state. In a pamphlet titled “Come To Louisiana,” the advocates of immigration to Louisiana, spoke on behalf of the health, climate, and hospitality of the state and residents and who were once residents of states outside of Louisiana challenged a notion, extended by the Iowa commissioner at the World’s Exposition, stated that “clover could not be grown in Louisiana, as it would be burned up by excessive heat” (B. Come to Louisiana), after May 1st, New Orleans and all the southern cities are as deserted as a graveyard,” and other references to high temperatures.

Because of the negative references, the State Immigration Association of Louisiana gathered to

²⁷³ “No Title,” *Louisiana Sugar Bowl*, August 16, 1877, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/333131083/>.

dispute the commissioner's opinions and in the pamphlet of proceedings, references to Acadians occur.²⁷⁴

All speeches were of non-native Louisianians serving as unbiased authorities for the best conditions for immigration and settlement of various regions of Louisiana. One speech, a representative of New Iberia, Maj. Richard Pomeroy, a region with a high population of Acadians, not only refers to Acadians as Acadians, but makes no reference to them as Cajun. Maj. Pomeroy begins his speech with the assumption that since southern states have been accepted into union, suggests that "present living traces of the diversity of races of men which in course of them have come together in it."²⁷⁵ Pomeroy suggesting that the adaptation of various ethnic groups have not yet been accepted. This type of rhetoric was powerful, and evidence of Acadian not accepted into the mainstream even if this Acadian was considered a poorer one. He states,

This variety shows itself under different aspects, with features more or less marked. Sometimes it is a couple or complete separation of idioms, of local traditions, of political sentiments and a sort of intrinsic enmity distinguishing from the great national mass, the population of a few small districts, and sometimes a mere difference of dialect or even accent marks comments the more feebly, the limits of the south settlements of men once thoroughly distinct and hostile to each other. The further we go back from the time in which we live, the more definite these varieties become in more clearly we perceive the existence of several nations within the geographical circumference which now bear is the name of one only. In Louisiana, Primm preemptively, we find the state of affairs, but through it all there exist a kindly feeling that is open to convention and that will extend a hearty welcome to the stranger who gives satisfactory evidence of his sincerity.²⁷⁶

Pomeroy's speech argues was on the surface, assimilation had not happened for all ethnic groups and represents a historical circumstance in which the social hierarchy was upended and various

²⁷⁴ State Immigration Association of Louisiana, "Come to Louisiana," 1888, <https://archive.org/details/cometolouisiana00stat/page/n7/mode/1up?q=Acadian>.

²⁷⁵ State Immigration Association of Louisiana, 42.

²⁷⁶ State Immigration Association of Louisiana, 42.

groups, aligned by some historical identity such as Acadian wished to fight for power and there is evidence to that, to gain racial superiority. This excerpt suggests that by large the Acadian group was not fully assimilated, and that whiteness served as force at work in managing their assimilation into American social order. Whiteness was and is a force to oppress people and is significant to the formation of a Southern exceptionalism. And the boundaries demarcated by whites and ethnicities looking for power are no different in mechanism across all eras, that groups looking for power set up boundaries to distinguish themselves from others, but it is from the distinctions the majority group makes of them. It would not be until a generation later that Acadians begin rethinking who they are with the birth of an ethnic identity who chooses class over race to distinguish who they are because they want to assert they are not racists and did not participate in perpetuating slavery.

Conclusion

Calvin J. Roach was terminated from Dresser Industry Valve and Instrument Division on March 31, 1977. Opposed to his dismissal, Roach filed an E.E.O.C. complaint. He claimed that Dresser management treated him unfairly because he was of Acadian ancestry.²⁷⁷ Eventually Roach filed suit for national origins discrimination under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and on July 17, 1980, District Judge Edwin F. Hunter, Jr. heard the case. Roach's case proceeded to trial and eventually the plaintiff settled on an undisclosed amount of money. In his opinion, Hunter claimed Cajuns are "properly defined as an Acadian, and that one is a Cajun only if his ancestry includes someone who once lived in Acadia [thus] Mr. Roach is a Cajun and an Acadian"²⁷⁸ At the end of his opinion, Hunter concluded Acadians are

. . . protected by Title VII's ban on national origin discrimination. The Louisiana Acadian is alive and well. He is "up front" and "mainstream." He is not asking for any special treatment. By affording coverage under the "national origin" clause of Title VII he is afforded no special privilege. He is given only the same protection as those with English, Spanish, French, Iranian, Czechoslovakian, Portuguese, Polish, Mexican, Italian, Irish, et al., ancestors.²⁷⁹

Hunter's opinion is relevant to the argument of this dissertation in a couple of ways. Despite Hunter's assertion that an Acadian and a Cajun are synonymous, the distinction between the two remains a matter of ongoing discussion. Most importantly Hunter makes Acadian civilized and because they are "upfront" and "mainstream," Acadians are fit to self-govern. Although the trial

²⁷⁷ Roach said that Dresser's management referred to him as a "coonass" on many occasions. Roach was examining the company's quality control, and he reported that it was inadequate. Following his report, Roach was dismissed. Roach was investigating the company's quality control and reporting that it was weak. Dresser viewed him as a whistleblower and so dismissed him.

²⁷⁸ Roach v. Dresser Indus. Valve and Instrument Division | Cases | Louisiana | Westlaw, accessed October 4, 2022.

²⁷⁹ "ROACH v. DRESSER IND. VAL | 494 F.Supp. 215 (1980) | Supp2151669 | Leagle.Com," Leagle, accessed October 4, 2022, <https://www.leagle.com/decision/1980709494fsupp2151669>.

may give weight to a long history of Acadian discrimination, common negative conceptions of Acadians remain in public sphere and popular.

Title VII is founded on a long tradition of civil rights legislation in the United States. Despite the availability of Section 1981, Roach's lawyers pursued Title VII because Roach was considered part of a white group as opposed to non-white. Section 1981 stems from legislation enacted in 1866. Section 1981 was enacted in order to eliminate the devastation caused by the Black Codes. Section 1981 was re-enacted pursuant to the 14th Amendment in 1870. The amendment defines citizenship in the United States legally and protects citizens' civil rights against denial by the federal and state governments. This case represents a moment in the evolving nature of Acadian identity. There are instances in which race and class intersect, yet racial discrimination had a stronger influence on Acadian identity construction than class. Interesting because those exist who claim Cajun for living in the region Acadians settled and of mixed ancestry. Defendant used for example Paul O. Hebert as an example of an elite Acadian but is making the case for Cajun. Brasseaux defines him as Creole. The argument that scholars cannot have it both ways contributes to the confusion and sheds light on how Acadians were considered at the period and the potential that an Acadian may not have viewed themselves as such.

The way the city papers covered the court decision is what is telling. For instance, the historical context in which the case and story were published, "Cajun Bill hot topic in Legislature," which first appeared in the Lafayette Daily Advertiser on June 5, 1988, suggests race ideology had evolved but Acadian were rarely Acadian, they were Cajun. According to the correspondent, Representative Raymond Lalonde drafted a measure that would provide Cajuns

minority status and the ability to receive state benefits, but Black legislators, the author wrote would “fight against the measure.”²⁸⁰ The journalist assessed the racial climate in Louisiana,

it seems a shame that in today's society there would remain a need for special treatment through governmental policy. The constitutional and legislative protection against discrimination on the basis of race color and creed should be enforced at all costs that should be enough but, in some circles, unfortunately is not maybe someday all forms of affirmative action plans will become unnecessary.²⁸¹

The way race ideology worked in the late 20th century demonstrates how race-related thought evolved, from cultural pluralism to multiculturalism; hence, while all groups were included under the American broader category, group distinctions were either ignored or under appreciated. The logic of multiculturalism in the writers' call for no more racism, which silences opposition to racism and increases white dominance in the narrative, would further demarcate borders between Anglo-whites and other groups. Again, it erases concerns generated by race ideology while still designating limits inside itself, which is another racial and southern distinction.

During the Civil War and Reconstruction, Louisiana newspapers sensationalized accounts about Acadians. The media would portray them as illiterate, barbarous, or undeserving of citizenship, a common view among Anglo newspaper editors and journalists. These newspapermen frequently used Acadians as a scapegoat to make points about Reconstruction politics or social problems. Typically, the editorial approach consisted of generously referencing pieces from other publications and sensationalizing the story with local discussion and talk and yet, these newspapers satisfied a genuine demand for affordable local news. Some of these

²⁸⁰ Mike Hasten, “Capital Report; Cajun Bill Hot Topic in Legislature,” *The Daily Advertiser*, June 5, 1988, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/539413404/>.

²⁸¹ Hasten.

publications, such as the New Orleans Republican, New Orleans Times-Picayune, and Times-Democrat, were operated mostly by individuals with northern experience. The government funded publications with a Republican bias, and this was the only source of news for both political parties in Louisiana. As a result of the Civil War, numerous papers ceased operations. Thus, Democrats were frequently unaware of political and social events.

Acadian-related news would generate a whirlwind of essays analyzing events that indicated the prevailing mindset at the time. The dialogue between the north and south generated a diversity of viewpoints, but the southern position finally prevailed. As a result, the stories written about Acadians attracted readers, and the public's fascination in these occurrences grew. These reports affected the American reading public's perception of the south and Louisiana. The journalistic realm of the South in Louisiana defined Acadians, and newspapers outside of the South would reemphasize these perceptions of Acadians as newspaper-selling fodder. To suit the cravings of their readers, newspapers with a Southern identity in mind perceived Acadians as primitive.

MAKING SOUTHERN ACADIANS

In several of these works, Anglo Saxon characters who viewed Anglo Louisianans as racially superior and Acadians as inferior demonstrate a Southern image of who they were socially and politically, establishing social boundaries and bolstering the reader's self-image. The editors and journalists' work would reemphasize Anglo supremacy and promote a racial ideology of Southerners, as well as how these journals envisioned Louisiana, which was home to a variety of ethnic groups. Although a writer might represent Acadians as exotic and barbaric, a motif was developed to encourage readers to visit Louisiana. The editors of newspapers attempted to substantiate the distinctions between Acadians and everyone else, but they also enticed readers to

Louisiana so that they may observe a war-torn south and an extraordinary culture in its natural habitat. As a result, Acadians were racialized and idealized, and Acadian culture was doomed to be wiped out by the assault of civilization that New Southernism hoped to bring to Louisiana. Acadians' depiction as barbaric and incapable of self-government positioned them at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The effect newspapers had on Acadian identity in the public arena laid the groundwork for a new Cajun identity and a very lucrative tourism industry in Louisiana.

As a result of the war, emancipation, and Reconstruction, perhaps two distinct groups arose; I do not necessarily deny this claim. In the imaginations of Anglo-Southerners, however, a new image of Acadians arose after Emancipation. The Anglo Southerners to whom I speak were Louisiana newspaper editors, writers, and columnists who were politically split but thought Acadians to be ignorant, savage, and incapable of self-government. From their reporting on local occurrences, editorials, political commentary, local histories, and short novels, these authors presented Acadians as self-governing outcasts that endured far into the twenty-first century. Rarely do Acadian voices emerge in newspaper archives, but those that do offer a glimpse of the effect of Southern ideology on Acadian identity. Even while class was a factor in the social position of Acadians, white supremacy was the foundation of Southern philosophy and the justification for labeling Acadians as such. Although Acadians had held citizenship since 1803 and were considered white prior to Emancipation and had a social and political elite, editors, reporters, and columnists portrayed Acadian identity as far too barbaric to participate in their citizenship due to the inversion of the pre-emancipation social hierarchy. Regardless of political allegiance, Anglo-Americans in Louisiana were eager to retain their social status and consigned Acadians to the sidelines.

CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

Acadian history is well researched by dedicated researchers. However, few people have addressed how regional discourse affects the fluidity of Acadian identity. In the latter part of the 19th century, newspaper stories on Acadian-related events or historical figures of Acadian descent reflect a dialogue between the North and the South. Whether it was the Democrat editor/journalists' dedication to home rule or the Republican editor/journalists' struggle against white supremacy, both sides participated in a passionate argument that concluded in a common set of ideas: Acadians were unfit to self-govern. Aside from Acadian politicians such as Paul Octave Hebert and the Acadian Oyster Rakers, few Acadian voices can be found in newspaper articles. Acadian and Anglo editors and journalists make identification decisions based on situational considerations. Arguments between Northern and Southern ideas on Reconstruction defined the rationale. Although identification is changing, academics have depicted Acadian identity as rigid. Choices are governed by "situational logic," thus the person who posed the question possessed specific assumptions about the person he/she was inquiring about, and that individual responded accordingly.²⁸² Following a situational logic, an individual constructs his or her identity. Small glance into the behavior decisions of Acadians such as once Governor Paul Octave Hebert and the Barataria Oyster War and the identification decisions made by newspaper editors and journalists on their behalf. Depending on who was asking, Acadian, editor, and journalist identity selections followed a situational logic. Social and political factors from the South and North influenced Acadian identity decisions.

²⁸² Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*.

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Vita

Jessica DeJohn Bergen earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Southeastern Louisiana University in 1998. She continued her undergraduate work at the University of Texas at San Antonio and awarded her a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies with majors in History and African American Studies in 2006. She earned a Master of Arts from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2009. She completed her academic studies at the University of Texas in El Paso, graduating in 2022 with a Ph.D. in Borderlands History with specializations in Borderlands, the United States, and French Empire.

In 2009, Dr. Bergen was awarded the Graduate Advisory Committee Scholarship from the University of Texas at San Antonio; after that, she was awarded the Dodson Dissertation Fellowship in 2013, 2015, and 2016. While attaining her degree, Dr. Bergen worked as a Teaching Assistant and held the Assistant Instructor position at the Center for History Teaching and Learning. In the Fall of 2010, she held an Adjunct Professor position at El Paso Community College before she began her doctoral program at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Dr. Bergen has presented and published her findings at several conferences and journals. She presented her research at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association of Texas, the 2012 Phi Alpha Theta University of Texas at El Paso-New Mexico State University Joint Conference, the 2013 Annual Meeting of the National Council on Public History, the 2015 Latin American Graduate Organization, and the 2021 Roosevelt Institute of American Studies Graduate Student Seminar. She has published a book review in the *Journal of Mississippi History* titled “Review of *Adventurism and Empire: The Struggle for Mastery in the Louisiana-Florida Borderlands, 1762 – 1803* by David Narrett and one in H-Net Borderlands titled “Review of *War on the Gulf Coast: the Spanish fight against William Augustus Bowles*” by Gilbert C. Din.”

Contact Information: jessicadbergen@gmail.com