

A FRACTURED FOUNDATION:
DISCONTINUITIES IN ACADIAN RESETTLEMENT, 1755-1803

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the social, cultural, and political discontinuities found among Acadians who settled in Louisiana after their deportation from Atlantic Canada in 1755. Historians studying the Acadians' early years of arrival and resettlement in Louisiana have drawn readers' attention to the preservation of Acadian cultural and social attributes. These works tell how in spite of their need to adapt to life in a southern borderland region, the Acadians who arrived in Louisiana retained important qualities of their pre-dispersal identity. Such studies have served well in deconstructing the "Evangeline" myth created through Henry Longfellow's epic poem, yet at the same time they have inadvertently mythologized the preservation of the Acadians' pre-dispersal identity.

In contrast, this text examines ways that the Acadian identity changed through their experiences in exile and resettlement in the South. The Acadians' interactions with the government, with Native and African Americans, and among themselves in Louisiana provide evidence that the very foundation of their former identity underwent severe fractures. In studying their new relationships with colonizers as well as other colonized, evidence of the Acadians' willing participation in the colonial military, their fears of Native American tribes, their involvement in slaveholding, and their increased dependence on the government indicate that they experienced critical social, cultural, and political changes as a result of the Grand Dérangement. Through their dispersal and their resettlement in the South, the Acadians' quest for survival resulted in a new definition of what it meant to be "Acadian."

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INTRODUCTION

I am originally from a small community in New Brunswick, Canada, where, in spite of growing up surrounded by French Acadian descendants, I spent my childhood and my teenage years entirely unfamiliar with Acadian history. It was not until after I graduated from high school in the North, moved to Central Florida, and several years later returned to school to further my education that I began to discover who the Acadians were. I so clearly remember a moment early in my studies at the university when a professor asked me if I had decided what my main area of research might be. I replied, “Well, I’m interested in learning about the French Acadians.” In response, he asked, “Aren’t they known as Cajuns in Louisiana?” I remember giving him a confused look, and saying, “Well, not that I know of...”

In looking back at that moment, I still feel rather humiliated. What a display of my ignorance! Nonetheless, I continued to explore Acadian history, and a few months later I found great consolation in a study by French scholar André Magord. In his book *The Quest for Autonomy in Acadia* (2008), Magord observes how in New Brunswick, “Relationships with the two dominant groups remained focused to a large extent on the unexpressed, on the tensions resulting from earlier differences, or on ignorance.”¹ This sentence jumped off the page at me! In a footnote for this section of his text, Magord further explains how a study by Elise Laidet at the University of New Brunswick in St. John in 2005 “shows that even Anglophone students are ignorant of Acadian history, and even more so about the deportation.” Magord writes, “I have verified this by questioning the students from this University [UNB] who attend the University of Poitiers each year.” In some ways, this statement brought me much relief ... evidently I was not so alone in my ignorance. At the same time, it saddened me to think that myself, as well as

¹ André Magord, *The Quest for Autonomy in Acadia* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2008), 107.

other students at the university level in New Brunswick, had such little knowledge of our region's history.

This discovery made me determined to pursue studies concerning the Acadians, their exile experiences, and their resettlement in the North and the South. And, in coming months, I found myself returning to the question my professor posed concerning the Cajuns in Louisiana. Through reading studies by historians Naomi Griffiths and Carl Brasseaux, I began learning more about who the Acadians-Cajuns were, and questions entered my mind concerning the struggles they endured during their exile and the obstacles they faced in trying to reestablish themselves in the South. Ultimately, I found myself repeatedly returning to the question: "Can the settlers in Louisiana be called 'Acadians'?"²

In exploring studies that provide evidence of the Acadians' diverse experiences in exile, as well as documents archived in the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, I started to discover that through their dispersal the Acadians were not as united as is often portrayed. I began learning of conflicts found among the Acadians during their exile and resettlement, and I also found that they interacted differently with Native American tribes in the South. Most importantly, I discovered that in Louisiana the Acadians became active participants in the imperial rivalry that was taking place – a stark contrast to their former quest for neutrality in the North. Over the course of my studies, I began to wonder if changes in Acadian society resulting from their exile and resettlement in the South had long been overlooked, minimized, or perhaps even avoided. Based on my research, this study will show that there are significant social, cultural, and political

² For example, Naomi Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); and Carl Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia: The Beginnings of Acadian Life in Louisiana, 1765-1803* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

discontinuities found among the Acadian people as they endured a scattered exile, and attempted to reestablish themselves in Louisiana.

In his work *The Founding of New Acadia* (1987), historian Carl Brasseaux also addresses the question of whether or not the families who arrived in Louisiana could still be considered ‘Acadians.’ Through incorporating works by François-Edmé Rameau de St. Père, Bona Arsenault, and Naomi Griffiths, Brasseaux explains that the Acadians in the North shared a special “social cohesiveness” and a “fierce independence” as a distinct people group: social qualities that he believes they carried with them to Louisiana.³

Published in 1877, Rameau de St. Père’s *Une Colonie Féodale en Amérique* provides perhaps the earliest mention of the Acadians acquiring a sense of independence from the ruling powers as early as the seventeenth century. In describing the Acadians’ settlement and occupation of the Maritime region, Rameau de St. Père tells of the emergence of an Acadian nationalistic identity. He writes that there:

developed and grew among the Acadians the idea of a patrie; the New World was no longer for them a place of importation or exile; three generations had already known and worked the land; in the middle of its farms, its polders, its orchards, their fathers lived; they saw grow and prosper these plantations and these crops; the love of the land entered into their spirit with its memories, its attachments, and its joys.

Rameau de St. Père describes how through the Acadians’ settlement experiences and their love of their land, they became “fully attached” to one another and to the “patrie” that took shape.⁴

Almost a century later, in his study *History of the Acadians* (1966), Bona Arsenault describes the Acadians’ “co-operative” nature, and he similarly tells how through working together and loving

³ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 1-19. Griffiths often uses the word “independence” in describing the Acadians in *The Acadians: Creation of a People* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1973), 13, 21, 28, and 75.

⁴ François-Edmé Rameau de St. Père, *Une colonie féodale en Amérique: l’Acadie, 1604-1881* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1889), 1:159-60.

their land, Acadian nationalism developed prior to their dispersal. He writes, “Two or three, sometimes four generations had contributed to the formation of a distinct nation with its own habits, customs and traditions. The feeling of an Acadian country reached into their innermost being. Love of the Acadian soil had entered their hearts. They had become Acadians.”⁵

The works by Rameau de St. Père and Arsenault drew attention to the development of an Acadian national identity (be it without clearly defined borders), and in doing so, provided a subject for other historians to debate. By the 1970s and 1980s, historians began to provide more analytical studies of when and how this shared identity came to exist. For example, in *The Acadians: Creation of a People* (1973), Naomi Griffiths observes that, “What was being developed by the Acadians after 1670 was a clan, a body of people united by blood ties, common beliefs and common aims for the group as a whole.” According to Griffiths, in “working toward the envisaged end of their own independence” the Acadians came to share a “tremendous social cohesion.”⁶

As mentioned above, Brasseaux builds on these studies by Rameau de St. Père, Arsenault, and Griffiths in describing how the Acadians in Louisiana retained much of their pre-dispersal identity. According to Brasseaux, in spite of facing significant changes in their physical environment when they arrived in Louisiana, the Acadians nonetheless preserved their former cohesiveness and their desire for independence. More specifically, while changes came in cattle herding, agricultural practices, clothing, and architecture, the Acadians continued to have strong family relationships, to demonstrate “nonmaterialistic values,” and to apply characteristics of “pragmatism and flexibility.” Brasseaux concludes that on the surface it may

⁵ Bona Arsenault, *History of the Acadians*, trans. Brian M. Upton and John G. McLaughlin (Québec: Le Conseil de la vie française en Amérique, 1966), 62.

⁶ Griffiths, *Creation of a People*, 18 and 36.

appear that the Acadian culture changed as a result of the deportation, but in Louisiana between 1765-1803 there is evidence of its endurance and preservation.⁷

In comparison with Brasseaux's work, this study is not intended only to try and prove whether or not the Acadians in the South were still *truly* Acadians. Instead, another of its purposes is to allow consideration of the complexity of their history. In providing a new perspective, this study will build on more recent works that have further explored the construct of pre-dispersal Acadian identity. For example, in his study presented at the Congrès Mondial Acadien in 1996, sociologist Joseph-Yvon Thériault counters Rameau de St. Père, Arsenault, and Griffiths in their portrayal of the Acadian quest for independence that emerged in the late seventeenth century. Thériault instead argues that an Acadian nationalistic identity did not begin to develop until much later. As Thériault observes in his article, "On the contrary Acadia ... is the creation, the invention of a social movement that took shape in the middle of the nineteenth century in which, on the debris of the ancient French Acadia and the mythic elaboration of a people, the Acadian identity is literally created." According to Thériault, the Acadian national identity that came to exist in the late 1800s developed as a "collective response to the barriers encountered by the Acadians in their attempt to enter into a larger social, political, and economic world." Thériault believes this identity became defined based on Henry Longfellow's "Evangeline" and Rameau de St. Père's *Une Colonie Féodale en Amérique*, as well as through the social and political influence of the Acadian clergy.⁸

In their books released approximately ten years after Thériault presented his argument, Naomi Griffiths and French historian Jean-François Mouhot responded in two different ways. In

⁷ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 121-49 (quotes, pgs. 16, 142 and 149).

⁸ Joseph-Yvon Thériault, "Vérités mythiques et vérités sociologiques sur l'Acadie," in *Le Congrès mondial acadien: l'Acadie en 2004* (Moncton, Éditions d'Acadie, 1996), 271-6 (quotes, pgs. 266 and 270).

her study *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755* (2005), Griffiths continues to defend her theories concerning the development of an Acadian nationalistic identity prior to their dispersal. In contrast, in his work *Les réfugiés acadiens en France, 1758-1785: L'impossible réintégration?* (2006), Mouhot studies the Acadians exiled in France, and he builds on Thériault's text by expressing his doubts in the formation of an Acadian nationalistic identity by the early eighteenth century.

According to Griffiths, the political and social Acadian identity became formally constructed in the 1730s. She explains how the Acadians together faced the demands of demographic growth, and as a result, created a style of local government in settlements that were very connected through their families. In the introduction of her book, Griffiths describes the development of this Acadian collective identity:

“The common experience of the political situation of the colony, both internal and within the region as a whole, the strong kin relationships both within and between the settlements, the general high standard of living: all these factors helped the development of a sense of collective Acadian identity. ... Of great importance in the growth of this sense of Acadian identity was the impact of the communal work needed to build and repair the dykes, the observance of common religious practices, and the development of a unifying cultural life.”

In concluding her study, Griffiths explains how the Acadians had political ambitions and exercised their right to give their own political voice. She concludes, “However skeptical others have been about the existence of Acadian identity, the Acadians themselves never seem to have doubted it.”⁹

Meanwhile, in Mouhot's study, he opens his work by challenging Griffiths' writings that describe the formation of a distinct collective identity prior to 1755. Mouhot explains how this timeframe does not fit well, as this was when national identities were only beginning to take

⁹ Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 310 and 464.

shape. In other words, it was more likely that the settlers living in Acadia considered themselves French, and they were attached to one another primarily through familial and regional connections rather than a type of nationalistic connection. In addition, Mouhot counters Carl Brasseaux's imagery of the Acadians in France who "saw with horror" that they might be "absorbed in the French population." As Mouhot inquires, in assuming the existence of an Acadian identity that the Acadians were aware of and wanted to preserve, "how does one explain the strong divisions among the Acadians living in France, the assimilation of a great number of them, or their indecision when choosing a new destination?"¹⁰

In 2008, French scholar André Magord provided yet another perspective on the construct of Acadian identity. In his work, Magord takes into account Griffiths' theories, as well as the questions raised by Thériault and Mouhot. Magord acknowledges the development of a collective Acadian identity, yet he attributes it to their need to secure their way of life. According to Magord, the Acadians are a complicated case, since there is in actuality no Acadian government, yet there is nonetheless "the preservation of a distinct Acadian existence."¹¹ In his chapter entitled "Acadia in the Context of the New World," Magord writes that for the pre-dispersal French inhabitants of Acadia, "The existence under consideration is not claimed as being collective identity. Such a position would have been unacceptable to the ruling classes, and those involved had neither the necessary communal experiences, nor even the concern with such an identity." At the same time, Magord explains that while in the 1700s a collective identity could not have been formally "claimed," the settlers in Acadia nonetheless together shared a "hope of sustaining a separate socio-economic form of organization." In reflecting on

¹⁰ Jean-François Mouhot, *Les réfugiés acadiens en France, 1758-1785: L'impossible réintégration?* (Québec: Septentrion, 2009), 29-37 (quotes, pgs. 29 and 33).

¹¹ Magord, *Quest for Autonomy*, 21-3.

the emergence of this undeclared collective identity and the significance of the Acadians' neutrality, Magord concludes:

One of the founding characteristics of the Acadian collective identity was their ability to remain pacifist in the context of recurring wars between the two powers... The word pacifist, which implies a conscious ideology is certainly too strong a term, but the attitude, which was present throughout this difficult and liberating period, necessarily molded the Acadian people. Neutrality was not in the least passive, because the Acadians had to continuously repeat their innovative tactics which were audacious and responsible, with the aim of preserving the essential quality of their existence.¹²

In other words, neutrality was a key social, cultural, and political status shared by the Acadians in the North before their dispersal.

In defining attributes of the pre-dispersal Acadian identity, this study will reflect the influence of the recent works by both Griffiths and Magord. It will acknowledge that while the pre-dispersal Acadians may not perfectly fit within the definition of a "nation," they nonetheless shared a desire to preserve the lifestyle they had attained in the North. In their quest to preserve this lifestyle, they attempted to guard their position of neutrality. In addition, they tried to keep good relations with neighboring Mi'kmaq tribes and to distance themselves from the imperial powers by forming their own "kind of self-rule."¹³ In comparison, the Acadians who endured exile and arrived in the South lost much of this former way of life. Social discontinuities become evident through studying the Acadians' changing relationships with the imperial governments, with other ethnic groups, and with one another.

The first chapter of this text will address the Acadians' loss of their former neutrality and explain some of the changes that took place in their interactions with imperial governments. Due to their neutrality in the North, the Acadians lost their homeland, and they ended up struggling

¹² Ibid., 31-51 (quotes, pgs. 34, 36 and 42).

¹³ Ibid., 36.

with sickness and poverty during their exile. This failure of their neutrality resulted in two outcomes that led to the alteration of their former identity: first, the Acadians realized that this political position ultimately had bad results. Second, they found themselves in a new state of reliance on provisions and protection from imperial governments. Consequently, the Acadians who arrived in Louisiana turned to the government for economic aid, and military records provide evidence that they became active participants in military conflicts. Due to their failures in their quest for neutrality in the North, the Acadians in Louisiana no longer formally asked to be exempt from “taking up arms” on behalf of the empire.

This study will also examine the effects of the new relationships the Acadians found with Native and African Americans as they settled in Louisiana. Unlike in the North, where they often held good relations with the Native American tribes, the Acadians in the South quickly expressed their apprehension when it came to living near forts along the frontierlands. During their exile and their arrival in Louisiana, the Acadians witnessed people’s fears of Indian tribes in other colonies, and as a result they quickly adopted an imperialist approach in relating with the nearby tribes. In Louisiana, the Acadians relied on the government for protection from the “savages,” and also for support as they acquired Indian lands.

Another change in Acadian society came as they adopted slaveholding as part of their daily lives. When they lived in the North, the Acadians did not become slaveholders largely due to their location. Their environment did not lend itself to a type of plantation society, and they lived far from a port city where they might easily trade or purchase slaves. Through their exile experiences in more southern British and French colonies, the Acadians became far more aware of the institution of slavery. In settling in a southern society where slave owning was common, many of them became slaveholders by the early 1800s. This study will consider how the

Acadians' slave ownership provides evidence of class stratification developing among the Acadians in the South. In comparison to Brasseaux, who tells how Acadian social classes came to exist in the 1800s, this study will show that class differences began to emerge prior to the turn of the nineteenth century.

The third chapter will explore how through such changes in imperial and ethnic relations, as well as their need to survive in a new land, the Acadians' "social cohesion" and "familial cohesion" could not be fully maintained.¹⁴ As they settled in Louisiana, individual Acadian men made different alliances out of their need for survival and for reestablishment in the South. And, unlike in the North, the Acadians were unable to resolve personal conflicts among themselves through their own elected delegates. The failures by their delegates in the North, combined with generational differences between pre- and post-dispersal Acadians, resulted in Acadians in the South turning to imperial authorities to determine the outcome of community and family disputes.

In settling in the South in the late eighteenth century, the Acadians lost hope in their neutrality, they adopted an imperialist approach in interacting with Native American neighbors, they faced the early developments of Acadian class stratification, and they failed to reconstruct their pre-dispersal style of autonomy. Through this breakdown of their neutrality, as well as their sudden need for survival and reestablishment, these changes to the Acadians' society and identity were not "merely superficial," nor did the "core elements of Acadian culture [remain] unchanged."¹⁵ In actuality, the Acadian identity was greatly altered by their exile and their resettlement in Louisiana.

¹⁴ Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 182-3; Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History*, 57; and Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 3, 54, and 145.

¹⁵ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 149.

CHAPTER ONE – RELATIONS WITH EMPIRES

“...And shit to His British Majesty!

But His British Majesty didn't take kindly to the insult and struck back. And so began the real battle between the giant Goliath and these two puny Davids swinging their slings against a whole fleet. Cannonballs broke the masts, tore the sails, shattered the quarterdecks and smashed the hatches ... Ah, the poor sea beasts! And still neither captain of either four-master would lower the flag, as if they were fighting for a country.

It wasn't for a country then?

Yes, for a country, a country of the future for the Virginians and for Beausoleil-Broussard a country of the past.”

Pélagie-la-Charrette by Antonine Maillet¹⁶

Throughout their colonial history, the Acadians experienced the effects of imperial rivalry. In the time leading up to their 1755 deportation, they lived in a borderland region that had become critical to both France and Britain. Then, over the course of their exile to British and French colonies, the Acadians continued to face the repercussions of imperial conflicts as both empires struggled to reestablish their authority at the end of the Seven Years War. As the war ended, many Acadians decided to move to Louisiana where they once again found themselves in a borderland region that was in a complicated process of shifting from French to Spanish rule.¹⁷

During their time in Acadia, in exile, and in resettlement, the Acadians struggled to learn how to best interact with the powers in play. Through differences across time and space, the Acadians' reliance on empires changed, as did the empires' reliance on the Acadians. This sense of reliance was not black and white, all one direction or all the other, but instead was complex

¹⁶ Antonine Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, trans. Philip Stratford (London: John Calder, 1982, originally published in 1979), 139.

¹⁷ Concerning the imperial rivalry over Acadia, see Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid, eds., *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); and John G. Reid et al., *The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); concerning Louisiana see David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America: The Brief Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); and Bradley G. Bond, ed., *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

and shifting. As a result of the shifting power in imperial relations, as well as their failings of neutrality in the North, the Acadians changed their methods of interacting with the imperial powers in the South.

This chapter will examine the results of the Acadians' realization that their former neutrality failed them. Prior to their dispersal, the Acadians had established a rather self-sufficient society, and through the degree of autonomy they achieved in the North, the Acadians managed to maintain their neutrality for over fifty years. In contrast, during their exile the Acadians struggled to survive in new colonies where they now depended on government provisions. Later, as they arrived and settled in Louisiana, the Acadians continued to rely on the government for land and protection. In return, the Spanish government expected Acadians to serve well as military personnel. After settling in Louisiana, the Acadians lost their identity as the "Neutral French": they now participated in military conflicts, and by 1770 they declared their allegiance to the Spanish crown.

Acadian Neutrality

Prior to their dispersal, the Acadians in the North were often labeled as the "Neutral French."¹⁸ As is briefly mentioned in the introduction, this is a critical aspect of Acadian identity that is still debated by sociologists and historians. As André Magard observes: "The

¹⁸ See for example, Jean Baptiste Galerm, "A relation of the misfortunes of the French neutrals: as laid before the Assembly of the province of Pennsylvania," Read before the Pennsylvania General Assembly, 12 February 1756 (accessed through Readex: Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, 20 March 2011); and *The Gazette*, Maryland, 11 September 1755, quoted in Basil Sollers, "The Acadians Transported to Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* no. 3, (1908): 5. Acadian neutrality is evident in their request to declare their loyalty to the British King, yet to be exempt from taking up arms on behalf of the British empire. This is stated in the following: Copy of the answer to the "Declaration sent to the French Acadians for Signature," 1717; Records of a meeting of His Honor the Lieutenant Governor of the Province and the Deputies, 25 September 1726; Extract from a Letter of Governor Mascarene to Governor Shirley, April 1748; Letter to His Excellency Edward Cornwallis, 6 September 1749; and Letter from Governor Lawrence to the Board of Trade, Halifax, 18 July 1755. All in Thomas B. Akins, ed., *Acadia and Nova Scotia: Documents relating to the Acadian French and the first British colonization of the province, 1714-1758* (Cottonport: Plyanthos 1979), 16, 67, 159, 173-4, 260.

fact that the question of neutrality remains problematic to the present day indicates that it touches on the fundamental aspects of the Acadian identity.”¹⁹ Over the last two decades, several interpretations of Acadian “neutrality” have emerged, and the perspectives offered by Naomi Griffiths, Maurice Basque, and Magord are worth noting. Through their studies, these scholars all provide evidence of the critical nature of neutrality in the definition of “Acadian.”

Of key importance is Griffiths’ observation in her work *The Contexts of Acadian History, 1686-1784* that in the midst of conflict between the French and the British, the Acadians’ neutrality “was clearly a deliberate policy on the part of the Acadians, of their own devising, and not rooted in either French or priestly councils.”²⁰ Through her studies, Griffiths provides evidence to show how this neutrality did not reflect the Acadians’ submissiveness to imperial rule, but rather showed their agency in refusing to adopt all of Britain’s regulations. According to Griffiths, the Acadians’ neutrality was a decision made by the Acadian communities that reflected their unity as a people group.

In building on Griffiths’ foundation, more recent studies begin to examine the differences found within the Acadian communities, based on the actions taken by particular individuals. In his article “Family and Political Culture in Pre-Conquest Acadia,” Maurice Basque explains the importance of seeing Acadian neutrality not as a type of idleness or isolation. Instead, their neutrality needs to be viewed as a “political neutrality,” where there is communication with the opposing rivals and attempts to treat each side the same. Basque explains how the lines for the Acadians’ political neutrality were hard to draw. Rather than fully avoiding interaction with the French and the British, individual Acadians interacted differently with the imperial agents based

¹⁹ Magord, *Quest for Autonomy*, 35.

²⁰ Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History*, 41-2.

on their understanding of what neutrality required. At the same time, Basque concurs with Griffiths that in spite of having various political views and occasionally providing material aid to either empire, the majority of Acadians avoided taking part in any military activities on behalf of either Britain or France.²¹

Like Basque, Magord considers the complexity among the Acadians in the North. Rather than trying to explain how neutrality affirmed a distinctive nationalistic or ethnic character, Magord explains how the Acadians' neutrality was their method of "defending a way of relating to themselves and to the world. More than a cultural and political self-determination vis-à-vis France or England, they were aiming to preserve their own mode of existence."²² In other words, for the Acadians who sat under the storm clouds of opposing imperial powers, neutrality was seen as a critical means of survival.

These works provide evidence that our understanding of the purpose and the definition of Acadian neutrality will continue to evolve through evidence and interpretation. Still, each of these works concur that through their relationships with Britain and France, the Acadians' attempts to guard their neutrality resulted in a lengthy postponement of their deportation. In the end, however, neutrality became a plea and a decision expressed by Acadian representatives that failed in allowing them to preserve their way of life. With their attempted neutrality eventually resulting in their deportation, the Acadians learned that taking sides may be necessary in order to survive in a borderland region.

²¹ Maurice Basque, "Family and Political Culture in Pre-Conquest Acadia," in Reid et al., *The 'Conquest' of Acadia*, 176.

²² Magord, *Quest for Autonomy*, 36.

Imperial Differences across Time and Space

As the Acadians arrived in Louisiana, they discovered that just as Acadia had been lost to the British in the early 1700s, Louisiana was in the process of being handed over to the Spanish government. The transfer of this region was complicated, and from 1766-1770 Spanish occupation of Louisiana was limited. Instead, many French political and military leaders continued to hold important positions in managing the colony. On arriving in the region, the Acadians faced interactions with Frenchmen who struggled with serving both France and Spain, and who also faced the constant threat of the neighboring British. In particular, French Governor Charles-Phillipe Aubry and Commissaire-Ordonnateur Denis-Nicolas Foucault tried to help the Acadians get settled, hoping that the new arrivals might join with other Frenchmen to serve the Spanish well in such uncertain times.²³ However, Aubry and Foucault soon learned that any expectation of the Acadians' dedication in serving French authorities was a dangerous assumption.

Prior to their deportation, the French and the Acadians shared an unstable relationship. During the 1700s, the French hoped to regain the Acadian region from Britain, and trusted that the Acadians would naturally choose to serve the French crown. However, in spite of knowing the French language and being largely Catholic, the Acadians seemed to preserve an identity that was not wholly "French."²⁴ Instead, the French found themselves interacting with men and

²³ Aubry, Governor of Louisiana, to the Duke of Choiseul-Stainville, Secretary of the French Navy, Archives des Colonies (hereafter AC) C 13a, 45:41-2, 25 February 1765 in *Quest for the Promised Land: Official Correspondence Relating to the First Acadian Migration to Louisiana, 1764-1769* (hereafter *QPL*), ed. Carl Brasseaux (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1989), 31; Aubry to Choiseul-Stainville, AC C 13a, 45:47-52, 24 April 1765 in *QPL* 40-1; and Foucault to the Duc de Choiseul-Stainville, AC C 13a, 45:118-9, 13 May 1765 in *QPL* 48-9.

²⁴ Linda Martín Alcoff, "Introduction, Identities: Modern and Postmodern," in *Identities: Race, Class, Gender and Nationality*, eds., Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 2-3; and Naomi Griffiths, "Acadians in Exile: the Experiences of the Acadians in the British Seaports," *Acadiensis* 4, no. 1 (1974), 75-6.

women who did not want to give up their homeland on behalf of serving the empire. Rather than picking up to move to French forts Louisbourg and Beauséjour, most Acadian families stayed on British-occupied lands where they worked as self-sufficient farmers and tradesmen. As historian Robert Rumilly observes, “The movement is much easier for the fishermen of Newfoundland than for the Acadian cultivators. One can move his boat, but not his land.” Rather than abandoning their land and willingly joining the French military, the Acadians hoped to maintain neutrality and stay settled in the Chignecto, Minas Basin, and Annapolis regions.²⁵

Sadly, as the rivalry between the French and the British escalated, the Acadians’ neutrality proved impossible to preserve. In 1749, French clergyman Abbé LeLoutre and French official Louis de la Corne employed Mi’kmaq men in the Beaubassin region to burn Acadian homes and to force their reliance on French provisions. Through this event, many Acadian families had little choice but to move near French fort Beauséjour for survival. Consequently, the British suspicions of Acadian allegiance were drastically heightened.²⁶ This event, as well as the dispersal that it led to, provide evidence of how the French and British empires in the North exerted their military power in controlling the Acadian communities.

When the Acadians arrived in Louisiana, these formerly “Neutral French” faced branches of the French and British government that were in very different positions in comparison with the imperial governments in the North. After significant loss to Britain during the Seven Years War, France now faced major financial struggles. With the empire’s aversion to further involvement in conflicts with the British and the Native Americans, France hoped to quickly pull

²⁵ Concerning the Acadians’ labors as farmers and their trade relations with French and British neighbors, see Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History*, 57-9; Barry Moody, “Making a British Nova Scotia,” in Reid et al., *The ‘Conquest’ of Acadia*, 150; and Robert Rumilly, *L’Acadie anglaise, 1713-1755* (Montreal: Fides, 1983), 23-4.

²⁶ Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 392-3; and Governor Charles Lawrence, letter to the Board of Trade, 11 August 1755, cited in Stephen Patterson, “Colonial Wars and Aboriginal Peoples, 1744-1763,” in Buckner and Reid, eds., *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 145.

out of Louisiana. Yet, French leaders in the southern colony found themselves with little choice but to wait for well over a year for the Spanish military to arrive. In trying to keep peace in the region while also caring for the arriving Acadians, Governor Aubry realized that this was a precarious time for the French and the Spanish empires. They had few resources and needed to find some method of gaining Acadian loyalty. For Aubry, the military force used in the North was simply not an option. This led him to acknowledge the critical nature of Acadian agency: despite their poverty, Acadians could certainly choose sides (and might even be incited by the neighboring British). Therefore, the French and the Spanish needed to focus their attention on helping the Acadians select quality land in Louisiana that satisfied their expectations.²⁷

One of the first regions Aubry sent the Acadians to settle in was Attakapas. In directing the settlement in this area, Aubry's orders provide early evidence of Acadians having agency in constructing their new environment in the South. Aubry asked French Lieutenant Louis Andry to oversee the structure of the settlement, yet also ordered that Andry should direct the land allotment "in concert with said Acadians." In his letter, Aubry more specifically delegated authority to Acadian Beausoleil in determining their land ownership. Aubry wrote, "We appeal to the spirit of justice and prudence of Mister Beausoleil and the other persons selected to distribute the land wisely and equitably."²⁸ In this early settlement process, the Acadians were entrusted to make decisions for themselves as well as on behalf of the empire. Aubry's allowance of authority to arriving Acadian men provides a premonition of what Spain would

²⁷ John Preston Moore, *Revolt in Louisiana: Spanish Occupation, 1766-1770* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 35-7, 77; Aubry to Choiseul-Stainville, AC C 13a, 45:41-2, 25 February 1765 in *QPL* 31-2; and Foucault, Commissaire-Ordonateur to the Duke of Choiseul-Stainville, Minister of the Navy, AC C 13a, 45:108-108vo, 28 February 1765 in *QPL* 32-3.

²⁸ Copy of the instructions to be followed by Sieur Andry regarding the settlement of Acadian families in the Attakapas area, AC F 3, 243:23ff, 17 April 1765. Instructions attached to a letter by Aubry, dated 15 April 1765 in *QPL* 33-7 (quotes, pgs. 34 and 36).

come to face: a delicate balance of power shared with new settlers who might strengthen Spain's imperial ambitions in the Americas.

In comparing the development of the Acadian relationship with Spain to their former relationship with the empires in the North, a significant dichotomy quickly emerges: the Acadians were more reliant on Spain than they were on the empires in the North, while at the same time Spain was more reliant on the Acadians than Britain or France had been. The Acadian reliance on Spain came as a result of their poverty during their early years of settlement, as well as their labors on difficult terrain in a hot, humid region.²⁹ Conversely, the Spanish reliance on the Acadians came as a result of their desire to make Louisiana less a frontier. Spain hoped Louisiana might become a financially beneficial colony, and believed the Acadians might serve well in both settling and defending this newly acquired territory.³⁰

Acadian Reliance on Spain

To understand Acadian reliance on Spain, it is necessary to first take into account their imperial relations prior to and during their exile. Historians who study the northern pre-dispersal Acadians devote much attention to describing their self-sufficiency. Through the successfulness of dykeland cultivation with their *aboiteaux* technology, the Acadians acquired life's necessities. By the 1700s, they established commercial trade relations with merchants in Boston and Louisbourg that enabled them to acquire tools, kitchen utensils, home decorations, wine, and

²⁹ Jacqueline K. Voorhies, "Les Problèmes d'installation des acadiens en Louisiane au XVIIIe siècle," *Proceedings of the First International Symposium on the Acadians*, ed. Jean Daigle (Moncton, 1979), 165.

³⁰ Governmental Expenses: Colony of Louisiana, Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Audiencia de Santo Domingo Papers (hereafter ASD) 86-6-6, 1767 in *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-94: Translations of Materials From the Spanish Archives in the Bancroft Library* (hereafter SMV), ed. Lawrence Kinnaird (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949), 17; and Aubry to Choiseul-Stainville, AC C 13a, 45:47-52, 24 April 1765 in *QPL* 40.

sewing materials.³¹ Based on their ability to meet their own needs through labor and trade, there is little evidence of Acadian requests for government support, be it economic or military.

Instead, in a study that examines the differences between the French who settled in the Québec region compared to those who settled in Acadia, Leslie Choquette describes how politically and economically “modern” and “independent” the Acadians were. She observes how “Neither the French nor the British had much luck in tapping the Acadian economic surplus...Acadians were less subsistence farmers, it appears, than world-class tax dodgers!”³² The expulsion resulted in significant change in this regard, and Acadians in the British provinces found themselves with little choice but to depend on government provisions.

When the British military loaded the Acadians onto ships in 1755, a few individuals managed to keep their “ready money and household furniture,” yet for the majority their losses were overwhelming.³³ After losing their land and experiencing separation from their families, the Acadians arrived in British provinces where there was discrimination against them for religious and political reasons. No matter how “neutral” the Acadians might have supposedly been, the British provincial leaders feared their potential alliance with the French and Indians, or with slaves. From the provincial leaders’ perspective, these “papists were fully expected to join their co-religionists, the French, and their fierce Indian allies in the impending intercolonial struggle for North American domination....The Acadians, in the view of the British colonial

³¹ John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 49; Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 67-9, 310-1; Jean Daigle, “‘Un pays qui n’est pas fait,’ 1650-1686” in Buckner and Reid, eds., *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 67-8; and Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 288.

³² Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 142, 179-80, 189; Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 176; and Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants*, 289-90.

³³ Letter from Governor Lawrence to Monckton, 8 August 1755 in Placide Gaudet, *Acadian Genealogy and Notes Appendices A-N*, (hereafter *AGN*), in Public Archives of Canada, *Sessional Paper no. 18, Report concerning Canadian archives for the year 1905: Volume 2* (Ottawa, 1906), 9.

administrators, would constitute, even in exile, a formidable fifth column, capable perhaps of inciting servile insurrections in the slave colonies to aid the French cause.”³⁴ As a result of these fears, the Acadian prisoners of war faced severe restrictions by local authorities and became reliant on material provisions through provincial governments.

In each of the port cities, the Acadians faced similar struggles. In a study concerning the Acadians in Maryland, Gregory Wood tells how they accepted being treated as “virtual prisoners” in order to receive some government aid for “the truly needy among them.” As for the Acadians who arrived in South Carolina, Chapman J. Milling gives some credit to the kindness of governors James Glen and William Bull, but he cannot overlook the economic and social struggles the Acadians faced as a result of the public’s fears. Milling describes how Acadians had to be inside before dark, faced indentured labor, and were transported to different parishes by armed escort. In his study of Acadians in Georgia, E. Merton Coulter explains how they struggled to find any source of income in the local communities. Wood, Milling, and Coulter each contend that Acadians lost their former economic independence in becoming bound laborers who worked either for other individuals or for the government to acquire necessities for survival.³⁵ In a study of those exiled to Massachusetts, Christopher Hodson observes how Acadians in each of the port cities had similar experiences. He writes that, “governments from Maryland to Georgia feared Acadian treachery and looked to shift the burden of food and

³⁴ Sollers, “The Acadians Transported to Maryland,” 12; Gregory Wood, *A Guide to the Acadians in Maryland in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 24; Clifford Millard, “The Acadians in Virginia,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 40, no. 3 (July 1932): 246; Marguerite B. Hamer, “The Fate of the Exiled Acadians in South Carolina,” *The Journal of Southern History* 4, no. 2 (May 1938): 201; Ruth Allison Hudnut and Hayes Baker-Crothers, “Acadian Transients in South Carolina,” *The American Historical Review* 43, no. 3 (April 1938): 500-1; E. Merton Coulter, “The Acadians in Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 47 (Spring 1963): 69-70; Chapman J. Milling, *Exile Without An End* (Columbia: Bostick & Thornley, Inc., 1943), 51-2; and Carl Brasseaux, “Scattered to the Wind”: *Dispersal and Wanderings of the Acadians, 1755-1809* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1991), quote, p. 11.

³⁵ Wood, *A Guide to the Acadians in Maryland*, 19; Milling, *Exile Without An End*, 35-6; and Coulter, “The Acadians in Georgia,” 71-2.

lodging away from provincial treasuries.”³⁶ In the cities, the Acadians’ requests for aid went before provincial governments that were concerned with securing power over a potential British enemy. The Acadian people in the British colonies quickly became categorized as both a burden and a threat.

During their time in Massachusetts, the Acadians filed several petitions to the government describing their sufferings: unlike in their northern Acadian communities, they now faced poverty and were unable to find work with reasonable pay. While their labors in the North reflected their “modernity” and “independence,” the Acadians deported to Massachusetts found themselves “completely dependent on the province.”³⁷ The multitude of petitions from Acadian families filed between 1756-1758 tell of subsistence being withheld, of not being paid for their work, and of their fears of perishing due to “cold and hunger” through the winters. For example, in their petition John and Peter Trahans explained how they were denied provisions and were threatened with separation from their parents, while Peter Boudreault declared that he and his family were not paid fairly for their labors in their community and were refused financial help from the government. In another petition Charles and Nicholas Breau told how in spite of their entire family spending weeks cutting wood and moving rocks for an Englishman, they “never received one farthing for it, and during the last fourteen days have been served with Provisions so scanty and so bad in their kind that they have been hardly able to keep soul and body together.”³⁸

³⁶ Christopher G. Hodson, “Idlers and Idolators: Acadian Exiles and the Labor Systems of British North America, 1755-1763,” *Religious Refugees in Europe, Asia, and North America 6th- 21st century* (2007): 204-5.

³⁷ Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants*, 289-90; and Richard G. Lowe, “Massachusetts and the Acadians,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series, 25, no. 2 (April 1968), 216.

³⁸ Petition no. 63 by Claude Bourgeois, 4 May 1756 in AGN 103; Petition no. 185 by François and Charles Leblanc, August 1756 in AGN 106; Petition no. 65 by John and Peter Trahans, May 1756 in AGN 104; Petition no. 373, sec.

The responses to the Acadians' pleas by the Massachusetts government, as well as by individual men delegated with overseeing the management of the Acadians (the Selectmen) provided little consolation or recompense for the Acadians' economic struggles and social fears. After their arrival, the government expressed its wish that the Acadians be "disposed" of in areas where they might be "least inconvenient to the Public."³⁹ While the government occasionally warned the Selectmen against abusing their power by separating families and treating the Acadians with violence, little action was taken beyond investigation.⁴⁰

Almost a decade later, the Acadians' search for government aid in Massachusetts persisted. In 1764, Governor Francis Bernard explained to the House of Representatives that these French Neutrals were in "deplorable conditions," unable to work due to smallpox and being "crowded in small apartments." According to Bernard, the Selectmen and the Overseers of the Poor failed in providing for the exiles: the government either needed to step in more radically, or the Acadians needed to be given permission to move somewhere that they might find land and labor.⁴¹ In describing how the local economies in the British provinces functioned through trust and good faith, Hodson concludes that the "Acadians were, in effect, trapped between the fiscal realities of spendthrift provinces and local systems of labour that could not welcome them."⁴² In being seen as too great a burden for their communities, many Acadians endured contempt and poverty during their decade in exile. In contrast to their former

389 by Peter Boudreault, 1757 in *AGN* 110; and Petition no. 60 by Charles and Nicholas Breau, 26 April 1756 in *AGN* 103.

³⁹ House of Representatives, Signed by T. Hubbard and Thomas Clarke, 27 December 1755 in *AGN* 83-4.

⁴⁰ See for example Order on Joseph Mitchel's Petition, Petition no. 56, 20 April 1756 in *AGN* 102; Response to Petition no. 65 by John and Peter Trahans, May 1756 in *AGN* 104; Response to Petition no. 307, sec. 382 by Claude Benway, 7 January 1757 in *AGN* 108; Response to Petition no. 358 by Belloni Melançon, 22-25 February 1757 in *AGN* 109-10; Response to Petition no. 373, sec. 389 by Peter Boudreault, 1757 in *AGN* 111; and Response to Petition no. 547 by Lawrence Mieuse, 10 January 1758 in *AGN* 116.

⁴¹ Francis Bernard to the Gentlemen of the House of Representatives, 18 January 1764 in *AGN* 90.

⁴² Hodson, "Idlers and Idolators," 199.

independence, the Acadians now found themselves reliant on aid from the provincial governments.

The Acadians who relocated to Louisiana did not immediately overcome this dependence on government aid. After his arrival in Louisiana, Acadian Jean-Baptiste Semer provided clues of the Acadians' continued need for government provisions. In a letter brimming with optimism concerning settlement in Attakapas, Semer observed that French Governor Charles Aubry tried to provide some assistance for settlers but "he has not been in complete control, not having the support of the finance ministries." Consequently, Semer looked forward to the arrival of Spanish military leader Antonio de Ulloa and his administration that is rumored to have in the past "given to poor communities and to shamefully poor people all that it had."⁴³

Semer's writings indicate that the Acadians who began to settle in Louisiana had little choice but to rely on help from the government. After his arrival in the province, Ulloa likewise observed how the Acadians "arrive needing everything" and he explained how he was already "giving them all I can after having satisfied the Indians."⁴⁴ In a petition from Opelousas, several Acadians told how they could not get ahead with harvesting wheat crops without help from the government. They wrote that without the lending of oxen and ploughs, "they will continue to live in a state of misery," but should the Spanish government help them, "they will always be indebted to [Spain] for their great happiness." Similarly, in letters to Ulloa from French officials in Acadian communities there are requests for tools, food rations, and desperately needed medical aid during a period of over two years. In their requests for government help, French official Nicholas Verret told of the Acadian settlers' "deplorable conditions" due to poor

⁴³ Jean-François Mouhot and Bey Grieve, "Letter by Jean-Baptiste Semer, an Acadian in New Orleans, to his father in Le Havre, April 20, 1766," *Louisiana History* 48, no. 2 (2007): 224-6 (quotes, pgs. 224 and 226).

⁴⁴ Ulloa to Grimaldi, AGI, ASD, 2585:[n.p.], 25 June 1766 in *QPL* 75; and Ulloa to Grimaldi, AGI, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba (hereafter PPC), 2357:[n.p.], 9 May 1766 in *QPL* 60.

nourishment in the Cabannocé settlement, and official Juan Delavillebeuve told of the shortage of flour and the conditions of “bloody flux” in Natchez.⁴⁵ By 1769, in spite of their supposed “zeal for independence,” the Acadians signed documents promising “the most inviolable fidelity and obedience” to Spain, while Spanish Governor Alejandro O’Reilly lamented over their expense.⁴⁶ Ironically, the Acadian refugees found themselves with little choice but to become dependent on government aid in the midst of searching for their former independence.

Spanish Reliance on Acadians

After their failings in neutrality in the North and then spending over a decade needing help from the government, the Acadians underwent a social, cultural, and political shift toward recognizing the necessity of taking sides. This alteration of Acadian society becomes evident through examining the Acadian military enlistment and revolutionary participation in Louisiana during the eighteenth century. From the time of their arrival in the 1760s through to the end of the American Revolution, there is evidence of Acadian service with the Spanish military and, on a brief occasion, of their actions as revolutionaries. Rather than trying to preserve their former neutrality, the Acadians evidently learned that they needed to take sides in the conflicts surrounding them.

Stationed in one of the earliest Acadian settlements near Natchez, Spanish Captain Pedro Piernas reported to Ulloa that he had successfully filled several military positions with Acadian men. Piernas observed that when it came to establishing the fort’s military company, “In

⁴⁵ The Opelousas Acadians to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 187A:Part I, 13 March 1768 in *QPL* 115; Verret to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 187A:Part I, 10 June 1766 in *QPL* 72-3; Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 187A:Part II, 1 August 1768 in *QPL* 147-8; and Delavillebeuve to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 187A:Part II, 29 September 1768 in *QPL* 161-2.

⁴⁶ Instructions for the Acadians at San Luis de Natchez, AGI, PPC, 2357:[n.p.], 1768 in *QPL* 111; Acadians Subscribing to the Spanish Oath of Allegiance, 9 September 1769 (Saint-Gabriel), 28 September 1769 (Natchez), 9 December 1769 (Attakapas). Louisiana State Museum Document Numbers 1769090901, 1769092801, 1769120901; and O’Reilly to Arriaga, AGI, ASD, 80-1-9, 10 December 1769 in *SMV* 135.

response, [the Acadians] generally exhibited a positive attitude and appreciation, being very satisfied with this favor and all the others received.” In the roster Piernas compiled, he indicated that the Acadian men in Natchez were not merely petty officers, but were entrusted with the military leadership roles of captain, lieutenant, 2nd lieutenant, and sergeant.⁴⁷

Similar military information is also available for early Acadian settlers in St. Gabriel, near Iberville. In the orders given for establishing this Acadian community, it is stated that “every head of family will take a shotgun and ammunition to be used for hunting and also for the occasions when it will be necessary to take arms which they should do dutifully whenever they are ordered to do so.”⁴⁸ In the months following their arrival in St. Gabriel, the Acadians were often seen as a burden by the region’s officials due to their frequent complaints, yet there is no record of them resisting the order to be ready and willing to take up arms on behalf of Spain. Unlike in the North, the Acadian settlers in Natchez and St. Gabriel evidently realized that to secure their land possessions they needed to concede their willingness to serve the Spanish government through military action.⁴⁹

At the same time, Spain also felt reliant on the Acadians for their military service. Ulloa declared that he was hopeful that the Acadians would serve as “good marksmen” and he trusted Aubry’s optimism concerning the Acadians’ capabilities in “effectively waging war against the Indians.” As Ulloa further observed, “the government must be careful to keep them as they are, because as long as they remain unchanged, the king will be able to count on good vassals

⁴⁷ Piernas to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 2357:[n.p.], 29 May 1768 in *QPL* 138; and Roster of the Militia Company in Natchez, AGI, PPC 109, 23 May 1768, listed in Richard E. Chandler, “Odyssey Continued: Acadians Arrive in Natchez,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 19, no. 4 (Autumn 1978): 462-3.

⁴⁸ Ulloa to the Commanding Governor of the Fort of St. Gabriel, AGI, 6 August 1767 in Richard E. Chandler, “End Of An Odyssey: Acadians Arrive in St. Gabriel,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 77.

⁴⁹ Ulloa, Instructions for the locating of 29 Acadian families, [n.d.] in Chandler, “Odyssey Continued: Acadians Arrive in Natchez,” 452-3.

who...will gladly take up arms and sacrifice themselves to his royal service.”⁵⁰ In spite of his hopefulness, between 1766-1770 Ulloa faced two problems when it came to securing Acadian allegiance to the Spanish crown: first, he feared the possibility of Acadian alliance with the British. Second, he witnessed the Acadians’ participation in a revolt against his leadership. In these instances of conflict, the side that the Acadians took is not important. Rather, what is critical to consider is the fact that they chose to take sides. In contrast to their time spent in Acadia and their early years of exile, government officials no longer considered the Acadians the “Neutral French.”

When they began settling in Louisiana, many of the early Acadian settlers found themselves living near British West Florida. For these Acadians, their relationship with Britain in the South began to contrast starkly in regard to the culmination of their former relationship with the British empire in the North. In fact, very soon after the Acadians’ arrival, Spanish officials became suspicious of communications taking place between the British and the Acadians.

Early in 1768, British Lieutenant-Governor Montfort Browne tried to convince the Acadians in Natchez to move across the river to settle in his post. Unlike in the North, where Nova Scotia’s Lieutenant-Governor Charles Lawrence declared he was “determined to bring the Inhabitants to a compliance, or rid the province of such perfidious subjects,” southern British officials saw potential value in the Acadians. Ironically, Acadian families who formerly experienced expulsion by the British were now invited to move to a British territory!⁵¹ Not long after Browne’s invitation, French military official Louis Judice suspected that “According to all

⁵⁰ Ulloa to Grimaldi, AGI, PPC, 2585:[n.p.], 19 May 1766 in *QPL* 67 and 70.

⁵¹ Charles Lawrence to the Board of Trade, 18 July 1755, cited in Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 324; Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 87; and Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 187A:Part II, 29 April 1768 in *QPL* 132. Judice writes that the English leader “stated that whoever took refuge at his post would be welcome.”

appearances, all the people destined to settle at Natchez have chosen to cross to the English side.”⁵² In the end, Browne’s attempt to convince Acadians to move to the British region proved unsuccessful, but during their rule the Spaniards continued to fear the Acadians’ potential alliance with the neighboring British.

Part of Spain’s fear was no doubt founded on the illegal trade that started taking place between Acadian men and the neighboring British colonists. For example, in 1773, French commandant Louis Judice discovered that Acadian Pierre Arseneau was smuggling corn to the English, and then in 1776 he suspected that Amand and Charles Babin were selling them grain. In hearing of Judice’s suspicions, Officer Luis de Unzaga decided to form a militia on the Acadian coastal region in order to keep the Acadians busy and prevent them from interacting with the British, “from whom they are separated only by the boundary channel on one side, and on the other by the width of this river.”⁵³ Such suspicions and fears of Acadian-British alliance provide evidence of an important shift concerning the definition of who the Acadians were and the role they held in their new society: rather than being seen by the British as an enemy that needed to be removed, the Acadians were being viewed as a valuable asset by both the British and the Spanish. Both empires recognized potential in securing Acadian loyalty.

On behalf of Spain, Ulloa initially pursued Acadian allegiance through trying to satisfy their requests for land and provisions. However, as Ulloa became more aware of both the financial turmoil in Louisiana and the British threat nearby, he began imposing restrictions on the Acadians’ land allotment. Out of his growing suspicions of Acadian subversion or alliance with the British, Ulloa ordered that the Acadians could only build homes “on the exact territory

⁵² Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 187A:Part II, 29 April 1768 in *QPL* 132; and Delavillebreuve and Dufossat to His Excellence, AGI, PPC 131:[n.p.], 3 November 1769.

⁵³ Judice to Unzaga, AGI, PPC 189A:470vo, 27 January 1773; Judice to Unzaga, AGI, PPC 189B:302, 4 January 1776; and Unzaga to Arriaga, AGI, Aud. SD, 86-6-11, 27 April 1776 in *SMV* 230.

conceded to them,” with the hopes of keeping them separated in small communities.⁵⁴ In coming months, the Acadian families faced restrictions on where they were allowed to live, and these restrictions led to their growing frustration with Ulloa’s leadership.

The French leaders in the colony began to recognize that Acadian and German settlers might provide powerful ammunition for the overthrow of Ulloa and the reestablishment of French rule. To further aggravate the Acadians, the French went so far as to tell them that Ulloa was holding money in the treasury that they deserved to be paid for their grain contributions. According to Ulloa, the French led the Acadians to believe that he and his other Spanish ministers “plan to swindle them and divide this sum up among ourselves.”⁵⁵ Rather than pursuing court negotiations to solve this dilemma, several Acadian men instead joined with German settlers and French authorities in a stand against Ulloa. Over five hundred Acadians and Germans arrived in New Orleans in October 1768, and after being fed with French wine as well as French reasoning, these men publicly voiced their opposition to Ulloa and to Spain. Aubry convinced Ulloa to flee for the sake of his family, and the Superior Council tried to restore order in the colony. After much unrest and confusion, the following summer saw the arrival of Spanish General Alejandro O’Reilly and his large military brigade. Commissioned by Spain to regain control of Louisiana, O’Reilly quickly took the Frenchmen who led in Ulloa’s overthrow to trial. He sentenced some to the death penalty and others to years of imprisonment, and he succeeded in raising the Spanish flag in the city of New Orleans.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Duplessi to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187, 24 April 1768, cited in Moore, *Revolt in Louisiana*, 135 footnote 30.

⁵⁵ Ulloa to Grimaldi, 26 October 1768 in *SMV* 78-9.

⁵⁶ Moore, *Revolt in Louisiana*, 153, 165-84; 208; Daniel H. Usner Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 116-8; and Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 150-1.

In standing against Ulloa, the Acadians who formerly declared their neutrality in the North had joined with Frenchmen in the South to condemn Ulloa and to declare their desire to fall under France's rule. Like their early involvement with the Spanish military, this event provides evidence that the Acadians in Louisiana did not consider neutrality a viable option. Compared to in the North, where neutrality was "a strong affirmation of identity – very well advised given the political situation of the time," the Acadians in the South no longer turned to neutrality as a means to "preserve their particular way of life."⁵⁷

In 1769, as O'Reilly took military and political control of the Louisiana colony, he ordered that the Acadian and French community leaders in Louisiana sign official Oaths of Allegiance to the Spanish government. Rather than asking for exceptions in their oaths to the monarch, the Acadians now marked documents that proclaimed their unconditional allegiance to the King of Spain. In letters that testified to their free will, Acadian men in St. Gabriel, Natchez, and Attakapas declared they would be faithful to the Spanish crown, and they promised full disclosure of any actions they witnessed that might go against the Spanish empire.⁵⁸

Soon after implementing this declaration of allegiance, O'Reilly's 1770 list of militia companies in Louisiana included two companies of Acadians.⁵⁹ A few years later, the importance of militia involvement increased as revolutionary war loomed on the eastern Louisiana borders. As conflict grew in the east, Spain prepared to counter the British. Between 1770-1776, lists of militiamen were compiled for the regions of Attakapas, Opelousas, and the Acadian Coast. By 1777, Acadians made up the majority of the soldiers in the militia companies

⁵⁷ Magord, *Quest for Autonomy*, 36 and 40.

⁵⁸ Acadians Subscribing to the Spanish Oath of Allegiance, 9 September 1769 (Saint-Gabriel), 28 September 1769 (Natchez), 9 December 1769 (Attakapas).

⁵⁹ "Militia companies for the entire government of the province," AGI, PPC 188-1-2, 22 February 1770 in *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians, Census Records, 1758-1796*, ed. Jacqueline K. Voorhies (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1973), 378.

at St. Gabriel, Iberville, Opelousas, and Attakapas (including men in the Attakapas region who eight years earlier served as community leaders in signing the Oath of Allegiance to Spain).⁶⁰ Spain's Louisiana military took shape through the leadership of Bernardo de Galvez, and historian Richard Chandler observes how after taking their oath of allegiance the Acadians, "comported themselves well as militiamen under de Galvez and served the colony and the Spanish well." After they volunteered their services early in 1779, de Galvez led a force of "Acadians with other colonials" into a "highly successful campaign against British West Florida" where he gained control of Ft. Bute.⁶¹

Conclusion: "Neutrality Is No More"

In examining the Acadians' interactions with government during their time in the North, their time in exile, and then their time in resettlement in Louisiana, there is evidence of critical changes of their identity. Rather than sending representatives to Spanish military and political leaders with their former request "not to take up arms," many Acadian men in Louisiana served as militiamen for the Spanish government and as revolutionaries on behalf of French leaders. This is a tremendous alteration from their pre-dispersal identity that was in many ways constructed through their communities' claims of their commitment to neutrality. Unlike in the North, where they were self-sufficient tradesmen with a political culture that has been described by some historians as an early example of republicanism, the Acadians' exile threw them into a

⁶⁰ Winston De Ville, *Louisiana Soldiers in the American Revolution* (Ville Platte: Smith Books, 1991), 2-5, 23-31, 36-8. See also Acadians Subscribing to the Spanish Oath of Allegiance, 9 December 1769 (Attakapas).

⁶¹ "List of volunteers from the Lafourche des Chetimachas militia who promised to follow the governor-general of this province (de Galvez) wherever he deems proper," 1779. AGI, PPC 192:563. Quotes from Richard E. Chandler, "The St. Gabriel Acadians: The First Five Months," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 295; and Winston De Ville, *The Acadian Coast in 1779: Settlers of Cabanocoy and La Fourche in the Spanish Province of Louisiana During the American Revolution* (Ville Platte, 1993), 4-5.

situation where labor was hard to find and they had few resources to build on with the loss of their land and their homes.⁶² On eventually arriving in Louisiana, the Acadians faced the challenges of weather, illness, and Native American tensions, and found themselves reliant on the government. Due to the failure of their former neutrality and their need for government aid, the Acadians no longer avoided involvement in imperial conflicts.

Through their relations with empires and imperial representatives that changed over time and space, the Acadian society and culture underwent necessary evolution. As scholar André Magord observes, "...every society needs to evolve, to transform itself so as to not collapse." The Acadians could not remain static, since they had little choice in their quest for survival but to adapt their methods of relating with imperial powers. Rather than undergoing "superficial" changes while the "core elements of Acadian culture remained unchanged," the Acadians' political tendencies were drastically altered.⁶³ Through their expulsion the Acadians learned of the futility of neutrality and of the necessity of choosing sides. During his exile, Acadian Joseph Leblanc wisely foretold that, "wherever we go, we shall no longer have neutrality because it is no more."⁶⁴

⁶² Concerning Acadian "republicanism" see Régis Brun, *De Grand-Pré à Kouchibouguac: L'histoire d'un peuple exploité* (Ottawa: Les Éditions d'Acadie, 1982), 30; and Michel Roy, *L'Acadie des origines à nos jours: essai de synthèse historique* (Montréal: Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1989), 27, 75-6.

⁶³ André Magord, ed., *L'Acadie plurielle: dynamiques identitaires collectives et développement au sein des réalités acadiennes* (Moncton: Centre d'études acadiennes, 2003), 13; and Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 149.

⁶⁴ Alexis Trahan et al. to Acadians at Annapolis Royal, 30 July 1763. *Papiers Deschamps*, vol. 32, 123 Library and Archives Canada, cited in Christopher Hodson, "Exile on Spruce Street: An Acadian History," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series, 67, no. 2 (April 2010): 268.

CHAPTER TWO – RELATIONS WITH ETHNIC GROUPS

“In the Acadian land, on the shores of the Basin of Minas,
Distant, secluded, still, the little village of Grand-Pré
Lay in the fruitful valley.

...

Thus dwelt together in love these simple Acadian farmers –
Dwelt in the love of God and of man. Alike were they free from
Fear, that reigns with the tyrant, and envy, the vice of republics.
Neither locks had they to their doors, nor bars to their windows;
But their dwellings were open as day and the hearts of the owners;
There the richest was poor, and the poorest lived in abundance.”

“Evangeline” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow⁶⁵

Through Longfellow’s “Evangeline,” imagery of pre-dispersal Acadians’ social isolation from other ethnic groups was accepted as truth throughout much of the twentieth century. However, rather than truly being “distant, secluded, still,” the Acadians shared complex interrelations with Native American tribes in the North.⁶⁶ Later, as a result of their exile and resettlement, the Acadians’ relations with Native Americans underwent significant changes, and they experienced new interactions with African Americans.

This chapter explores the changes that took place in Acadian society as they developed new relationships with Native and African Americans in the South. In Louisiana, the Acadians encountered different Native American tribes who were shifting alliances between the French, the British, and the Spanish. As a result of their exile experiences in areas where fears of Native Americans were drastically heightened, and their arrival in this unsettled frontier territory, the Acadians quickly expressed their apprehension of living near Native American tribes. In comparison with in the North, where the earliest Acadian settlers formed relationships with local

⁶⁵ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Evangeline,” in *Evangeline: and Selected Tales and Poems* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 176-7.

⁶⁶ See Geoffrey Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: The British Campaign Against the Peoples of Acadia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Reid et al., *The ‘Conquest’ of Acadia*; and Kenneth Donovan, “Slaves In Île Royale, 1713-1758” *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 25-42.

tribes apart from the presence of an imperial military, the Acadian settlers in the South immediately relied on Spanish military officials in interacting with the tribes. The Acadians adopted an imperialistic approach when it came to securing their safety and acquiring new lands from the neighboring tribes.

In regard to African Americans, while the Acadians in the North were aware of black slavery, slaveholding did not occur in the Acadian settlements. In the northern marshlands, the land and the weather did not lend itself to a type of mass cultivation that depended on slave labor. Later, through their exile, the Acadians witnessed first-hand the economic and social significance of slaveholding, particularly in the southern and the island colonies. Consequently, not long after arriving in Louisiana, Acadian settlers started purchasing black slaves. Their growing involvement in slaveholding indicates that class stratification in Louisiana's Acadian society started taking shape before the nineteenth century.

Native Americans

Prior to their expulsion, the Acadians' relationships with Native American tribes in the North had very deep roots. On first arriving in this harsh, coastal region, the French settlers faced hard winters that they would not have survived without help from the Mi'kmaq tribe. Later, as the French Acadians became self-sufficient tradesmen, farmers, and fishermen, they rarely ran into conflicts with the neighboring Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, or Abenaki tribes. In his renowned study, Rameau de St. Père observes that,

At times, one could hear the Acadians complain of the bothersome proximity of the savages, but never, during more than a century of the French domination, did one ever hear talk of an aggression, an altercation, a pillage, or an act of violence ... These alliances, this kinship, this habitual familiarity of relationships, the religious conversion

of the Indians contributed radically in maintaining the good harmony between the indigenous and the Acadians.⁶⁷

In their works published over a century later, historians Geoffrey Plank and William Wicken still concur with the existence of this “good harmony.” Wicken writes, “As farmers, Acadians did not interfere significantly with Mi’kmaq subsistence activities and consequently co-occupation remained possible so long as fish and animal populations remained stable and harvest failures did not occur.” In the decades prior to their dispersal, the Acadian settlers did not alter the migratory patterns of their Native American neighbors, nor did they rely solely on Mi’kmaq or Maliseet hunting regions. Instead the Acadians built their agricultural *aboiteaux* on lands that were subject to high tides, and were therefore of little benefit to the tribes.⁶⁸

Another key component of the Acadians’ relationships with the Native Americans in the North included their willingness to learn politically from the tribes surrounding them. Rather than only trading for land or provisions, the Acadians also adopted political ideals first voiced in 1703 by the Abenaki tribe. In his essay “The Third Acadia: Political Adaptation and Societal Change,” Maurice Basque explains that there were “Abenaki similarities and influences in Acadian politics” as a result of exchanges that took place between a founding Acadian family and the Abenaki. Basque observes that through their “links to Abenaki society, there is a good possibility that the Acadian proposal of neutrality in 1717, which became the standard request of Acadian settlements by 1726-30, was an Abenaki idea.” The Acadians in the North learned

⁶⁷ Rameau de St. Père, *Une colonie féodale en Amérique*, 1:152.

⁶⁸ William C. Wicken, “Encounters with tall sails and tall tales: Mi’kmaq society, 1500-1760,” (PhD diss., McGill University, 1994), quote, p. 230; Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest*, 30-1, 112; and Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 16-7, 48-9.

methods of survival from Native American tribes not only when it came to material provisions, but also when it came to political decisions.⁶⁹

Beyond their economic and political alliances, the Acadians in the North also established familial and social relations with their Mi'kmaq neighbors. In describing the early evolution of Acadian society, Faragher writes that, "Dozens of church-registered interethnic unions were a significant factor in the making of the Acadian community."⁷⁰ Of the earliest founders of Acadia, Charles de Saint-Étienne de la Tour married a Mi'kmaq woman and had three children, while Jean-Vincent d'Abbadie married an Abenaki woman and they had eight children. Later, after the mid-1600s marriages between the Mi'kmaq and members of the Lejeune, Martin, and Mius d'Entremont families are documented. Naomi Griffiths describes how by the late 1600s Port Royal was "a community of some seventy households" and "had at least five homes where the wife was a Mi'kmaq."⁷¹

The interracial complexity shared among Acadians and the Mi'kmaq becomes evident through tracing the family lines of Mi'kmaq leader François Joseph and Acadian settler Philippe Mius d'Azy. Among the children that François Joseph and his Acadian wife Jeanne Lejeune had, three of their daughters married Acadian men, and their son married a Mi'kmaq woman. Similarly, Philippe Mius d'Azy had five children with his first Mi'kmaq wife, and two of their sons married Mi'kmaq women, while one of their sons and one of their daughters married

⁶⁹ John G. Reid, "Imperial Intrusions, 1686-1720," in Buckner and Reid, eds., *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 89; Magord, *Quest for Autonomy*, 35; and Maurice Basque, "The Third Acadia: Political Adaptation and Societal Change," in Reid et al., *The 'Conquest' of Acadia*, 170.

⁷⁰ Concerning provisional and marital relationships among Mi'kmaq and Acadians see Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 259-60; Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 46-7 (quote, p. 47); and Stephen E. Patterson "Indian-White Relations in Nova Scotia, 1749-61: A Study in Political Interaction," *Acadiensis* 22 (1993): 25.

⁷¹ Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 35-6, 172 (quote, p. 172); and Stephen White, *Dictionnaire Généalogique des Familles Acadiennes* (Moncton: Centre d'études acadiennes, 1999), 6 (d'Abbadie), 1433 (Saint-Étienne de la Tour), 1050 and 1054 (Lejeune), 1126-7 and 1260 (Martin), 1206-7, 1209, and 1525 (Mius d'Entremont). After the birth of his daughter Ursuline, d'Abbadie had 2 more children with Mathilde's sister Marie Pidiwammiskwa.

Acadians from the Amireau and Bonnevie families. When d’Azy married a second time, he and his wife (another Mi’kmaq woman) had nine children. Three of these children married into the Lapierre and Guédry Acadian families, while their daughter Marie married Jean-Baptiste Thomas who was “the chief of the Micmacs of the Port Royal river,” and their daughter Françoise married native René Grand-Claude.⁷² These family lines indicate that as Acadia developed, there were several blood connections among Acadian and Mi’kmaq families.

In parish records for the Beaubassin and Port Royal regions dated 1679 through 1748, there is evidence that while marriages between the two groups may have become less frequent during the 1700s, the Acadians and the Mi’kmaq continued to interact socially as baptismal sponsors, marital witnesses and burial witnesses. In Beaubassin in 1723, Acadians Guillaume Cyr and Anne Blanchard sponsored the baptism of a Mi’kmaq child named Joseph Chikagues, while Joseph Sauvage, “son of Philippe a Mikmaque Chief” and Acadian Anne Cyr both served as sponsors at the baptism of Pierre Belisle, the son of a “savage mikmaque.” Later, in 1727 in Port Royal, Jean Kovaret, a “savage Mikmaque” and Acadian Marie Robichaud sponsored the baptism of a daughter of “Jean Baptiste chief of the savages on Cap de Sable.” In January 1733-June 1734 seven children are recorded as being born to Mi’kmaq families, with the children’s baptisms sponsored by Acadians Anne Robichaud, Charles Girouard, Magdeleine Robichaud, Étienne Martin, Jean Lore, Marie Madeleine Pellerin, and Pierre Michel. Likewise, in October 1734, “savage” Marie Magdeleine sponsored the baptism of the son of Acadians Alexandre Pellerin and Jeanne Gaudet.⁷³

⁷² Milton P. Rieder, Jr. and Norma Gaudet Rieder, *Acadian Church Records, Volume III: Port Royal, 1702-1721* (Metairie, 1977), 130; and White, *Dictionnaire Généalogique*, 369, 876-7, 760-1, 1206-7, 1209.

⁷³ Milton P. Rieder, Jr. and Norma Gaudet Rieder, *Acadian Church Records, Volume II: Beaubassin, 1712-1748* (Metairie, 1976), 11 and 15; Milton P. Rieder, Jr. and Norma Gaudet Rieder, *Acadian Church Records, Volume IV:*

As for marital witnesses, in June 1726 Acadian Joseph Amireau served as a witness to the marriage of François Doucet and Marie Pisnet (a “savage son” and “savage daughter”), and in August 1735, Acadians Marie Pellerin and François Bourgeois witnessed the marriage of “savages” Charles Perisse and Marie Grandclaude. In 1730, Pierre Lavergne testified to the burial of Gregoire Charet, a “two year old son of Pierre Charet and Marie Magdeleine savages,” while Laurent and Claude Granger bore witness to the burial of “Agnes wife of Jean B. chief of the savages.” These instances of Acadians and Mi’kmaq serving as baptismal sponsors, marital witnesses and burial witnesses on each other’s behalf during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries provide evidence of the social proximity shared between the two ethnic groups.⁷⁴

The existence of this proximity does not mean that tensions never surfaced between the Acadians and their Native American neighbors. Conflicts developed, largely as a result of the British-Mi’kmaq war and the approach of the Seven Years War. In 1745, as the British and the Mi’kmaq declared war against each other, the Acadians started receiving threats by representatives of both parties who asked for information, food, or shelter. Still, in spite of occasional moments of conflict that flared up between the Acadians and the Mi’kmaq due to heightened imperial interest in the region, a long-standing discord never developed between the two parties. Their continued interdependence is reflected in a petition that Acadian deputies brought to the provincial government in 1745. During the British-Mi’kmaq war, scalp bounties were issued, and the Acadians feared that men and women in their own communities might be at

Port Royal, 1716-1729 (Metairie, 1983), 78; Milton P. Rieder, Jr. and Norma Gaudet Rieder, *Acadian Church Records, Volume V: Port Royal, 1730-1740* (Metairie, 1983), 31-2, 42, and 47.

⁷⁴ Rieder and Rieder, *Acadian Church Records, Volume IV*, 70; White, *Dictionnaire Généalogique*, 1317; and Rieder and Rieder, *Acadian Church Records, Volume V*, 8, 10, and 55. In his studies concerning the Acadians settling in Louisiana, Brasseaux makes no mention of Acadian-Native American marriages. In addition, none are documented at the “Ensemble Encore: Together Again! The Acadian Memorial Archive,” Acadian Memorial Foundation, Inc. Copyright 1988-1989 <<http://www.acadianmemorial.org/english/ensembleencoreset.html>> and <http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore/search.php?pagenum=132&numrecords=3396> (accessed 29 March 2011).

risk. Based on the number of Mi'kmaq descendents living among them, the Acadians stepped forward to request that at least individuals of mixed blood not be subject to this British war policy. As Plank observes, in the decade leading up to the deportation "officials in Nova Scotia struggled to define the boundaries between the Mi'kmaq and the Acadian communities."⁷⁵

Conversely, the boundary lines between the Acadians and their neighboring tribes in Louisiana were quickly drawn, perhaps partly as a result of the Acadians' exile experiences. When the Acadian exiles first arrived in other British colonies they became very aware of other colonists' fears of the French and Indians, particularly because the Acadians' own reputation of alliance with the Mi'kmaq preceded them. For example, Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie worried that these so-called "Neutral French" might join with the Indians in "murdering and scalping our frontier Settlers." Based on his fears, Dinwiddie sent the Acadians on to Britain, so as to prevent having any "barbarous Murders and Robberies" committed by the Acadians and the Indians. In his study of the Acadians' experiences in Virginia, historian Elliot Healy observes that, "The average colonist made no distinction between the peaceable Acadian ... and the French adventurer who led a band of pillaging Indians." Similarly, in his study of Acadian exiles in South Carolina, Chapman Milling tells how the provincial government feared the Acadians' "known friendliness towards Indians."⁷⁶ Yet, in spite of these suspicions, there is little record of Acadians ever joining with the French military or with France's Native American partners. Instead, they lived among the British, and witnessed the fears the settlers had of the Indian tribes.

It seems likely that the Acadians' fears of Native American tribes grew as they heard stories and rumors circulating in the provinces over the tribes' violent acts. For example, the

⁷⁵ Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest*, 111-2 (quote, p. 112).

⁷⁶ Governor Dinwiddie to Sir Thomas Robinson, 15 November 1755 and Governor Dinwiddie to the Earl of Halifax [n.d.], both cited in Millard, "The Acadians in Virginia," 245 and 246; Elliot Dow Healy, "Acadian Exiles in Virginia," *The French Review* 22, no. 3 (January 1949): 233-4; and Chapman Milling, *Exile Without An End*, 52.

Acadians who lived in Maryland during the Seven Years War were no doubt aware of the public's terror. News articles streamed out of Annapolis describing the "barbarous Cruelties and Murders committed by the Indians," including men and children being "scalped and left for dead," women being molested and their stomachs "ripp'd open," houses being burned, and plantations being destroyed.⁷⁷ The Acadians who landed in Maryland witnessed how the increasing proximity of the Indians haunted the British citizens.

Acadian families who left Maryland and traveled to Louisiana began settling in Natchez and St. Gabriel, where imperial military leaders Charles Aubry and Antonio de Ulloa struggled with satisfying the Native American tribes' demands. After witnessing people's fears of Indians in Maryland, the Acadians in these borderland communities immediately began voicing their concerns over living in remote areas where they did not have adequate military protection. In telling Ulloa about the Acadians' arrival in Natchez, French military official Nicolas Verret wrote, "They all agree that the land is suitable, but too isolated. Their wives and their children would be exposed to Indian harassment, and they themselves would live in constant fear."⁷⁸ In trying to convince these Acadians to stay in Natchez, Spanish military official Pedro Piernas "offered to settle half or part of the families above the fort and the remainder below in order that all may have the protections they desire and be free of the Indian raids that they fear." He proceeded to show them "the place where they would gather in the event of an Indian raid" and to instruct them "regarding the manner in which they should behave towards them [the local

⁷⁷ "Affirmations by George Casper Heiss and Henry Cole concerning Indian violence at their homes," 1 January 1756; "The Speech of Governor Belcher, to the Council and Assembly of this Province to the Gentlemen of the Council, and of the General Assembly," 15 January 1756; "Speech by his Excellency Horatio Sharpe, Esq. to the Gentlemen of the Upper and Lower Houses of Assembly," 26 February 1756; and "A Proclamation by his Excellency Horatio Sharpe, Esq; Governor and Commander in Chief in and over the Province of Maryland," 20 May 1756. All articles in the *Maryland Gazette*.

⁷⁸ Aubry to Choiseul-Stainville, AC C 13a, 45:41-42, 25 February 1765 in *QPL* 28-32; Ulloa to Grimaldi, AGI, PPC 2585:[n.p.], 9 May 1766 in *QPL* 57-60; and Verret to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 2357:[n.p.] 26 March 1768 in *QPL* 116.

Indians] to insure their own security.” As the Acadian families began to settle in Natchez and St. Gabriel, the Acadian men immediately accepted orders to serve with the Spanish military in order to secure safety from Native American tribes.⁷⁹

In spite of having some military protection, the Acadians in Natchez could not overcome their fears of Indian attacks. In October 1769, they wrote a letter to Governor Alejandro O’Reilly requesting relocation because of “finding themselves continually in fear of being killed by savage nations that are making war.”⁸⁰ It has been argued that these Acadians’ motivation came primarily out of their desire to be relocated near other Acadians, yet their fears of the “savage nations” cannot be ignored. Follow-up letters by military leaders Jean Delavillebreuve and Charles Aubry confirm that the Acadians were justified in their fears due to being situated too far from the fort. This danger, combined with their failures in land cultivation, made it apparent to Aubry that these Acadian families needed to be relocated to a place where they would be more useful for the settlement and the defense of New Orleans.⁸¹

The Acadians arrived in Louisiana needing land, which was the very thing Native American tribes did not want to lose. Without the availability of regions like their former northern dykelands (that were beneficial to the colonizers and of little use to the tribes), combined with their heightened fears of Native Americans, the Acadians proved unable to develop relationships with tribes in Louisiana like they formerly held with the Mi’kmaq in the North. Beyond only being afraid of their new Native American neighbors, there is also evidence

⁷⁹ Piernas to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 2357:[n.p.], 27 March 1768 in *QPL* 117; and Piernas to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 2357:[n.p.], 29 May 1768 in *QPL* 140. See also the Natchez military list, PPC 109 in Chandler, “Odyssey Continued: Acadians Arrive in Natchez,” 462-3; and Report on Acadians going to Saint Gabriel, AGI, ASD Section 5, 2585 in Chandler, “End of an Odyssey: Acadians Arrive in St. Gabriel,” 70.

⁸⁰ Acadians to O’Reilly, request for relocation, PPC 181:[n.p.], 18 October 1769.

⁸¹ Dufosset and Delavilleboeuvre to O’Reilly, PPC 181:[n.p.], 3 November 1769; and Aubry to O’Reilly, PPC 181:[n.p.], 3 November 1769.

of early conflicts between Acadian settlers and two particular tribes. The conflicts are mentioned in letters exchanged between military official Louis Judice and Governor Ulloa less than two years after the Acadians began arriving. In one letter, Ulloa reported to Judice that the Tensas Indians complained that military official Verret had ordered their tribe to leave the area they were living in “because of the Acadians.” Evidently, the Tensas tribe was not impressed with the Acadians’ occupation of their land. Only a month later, Judice informed Ulloa that because the Houma tribe was out hunting he “was unable to speak to them about their insults to the Acadians.”⁸² These letters indicate that tensions quickly began to rise between the Acadian arrivals and the local tribes in Louisiana.

A few years later, another letter by Judice reflects that the Acadians’ relations with the Native American tribes in the South hung on a delicate thread. Judice reported that an Englishman informed him of the presence of a dreaded Talapouche tribe, and they suspected that this tribe was living near the neighboring Houma village. Judice explained that “we are staying on guard,” and he wrote that the local settlers needed “to keep an eye open, and to use all appropriate precautions to discover and prevent any of [the tribes’] bad intentions.” A few months later, Judice received word from an Indian family that the Talapouche tribe had entered into land agreements with the English, and in return for “taking the hand of the English” the Talapouche planned to embark on a mission to “kill all the Spanish and the French.” These threats came as a result of the Indians’ concerns over their lands, and the Acadians now living on and near these very lands had little to offer in negotiations with the tribes. Consequently, the Acadians failed to establish social and economic relationships with the southern tribes like they

⁸² Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187A:Part 1, 2 December 1767 in *QPL* 108-9; and Ulloa to Judice, AGI, PPC 187A:Part 1, 19 November 1767 in *QPL* 106-7.

shared with the Mi'kmaq in the North. Instead, Acadian men resorted to joining the Spanish military to defend their settlements against Native American attacks, or, as with the settlers in Natchez, they asked permission to move to more protected areas.⁸³

For Acadians in the more western regions of Louisiana, changes in their relationships with Native Americans are also evident based on their approach toward land contracts with neighboring tribes. Formerly, when the Acadians lived in the North, the Mi'kmaq held authority when it came to land negotiations. Wicken observes how “records suggest that Acadians did not establish new settlements without the consent of neighbouring Mi'kmaq people.”⁸⁴ In contrast to the pre-dispersal Acadians whose culture developed in the midst of their reliance on aid and land provisions from the Mi'kmaq, the post-dispersal Acadians came to Louisiana reliant on empires. Consequently, in their new interactions with Native American tribes, the Acadians adopted an imperial approach in land acquisition. By means of their relationship with the Spanish military, individual Acadians gained a sense of imperial defense they did not formerly have in the North. From the 1760s through the 1780s, conflict between the Acadians and Native American tribes rose as the Acadian settlers acquired more and more property.⁸⁵

Evidence of the Acadians' adoption of an imperialist approach in land acquisition is found in land negotiations with an Attakapas tribe in western Louisiana. In a timeframe of only a few months, Anselme Tibaudau, François Broussard, and Michel Mau (French husband of Acadian Isabelle Broussard) managed to purchase land that Attakapas Chief Bernard's tribe formerly occupied. In reflecting the Acadians' acquired position of imperial power, it was not

⁸³ Letters signed by Judice, AGI, PPC 189A:495, 27 September 1773; AGI, PPC 189A:[n.p.], 29 September 1773; and AGI, PPC 189A:529, 6 February 1774.

⁸⁴ Wicken, “Encounters,” 229.

⁸⁵ Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187A:Part I, 12 September 1767 in *QPL* 98-9; Ulloa to Judice, AGI, PPC 187A:Part I, 19 November 1767 in *QPL* 106-7; Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187A:Part 1, 2 December 1767 in *QPL* 108-9; and Letter signed by Judice, AGI, PPC 189A:537.

until he and his “warriors” faced “extreme misery” that Bernard finally agreed to sell Tibaudau, Broussard and Mau a total of thirty-two arpents of land.⁸⁶ Unlike with the Mi’kmaq in the North, these sales certainly were not based on Chief Bernard’s willingness to accommodate Acadian families in his territory. Instead, the chief witnessed the loss of his native lands to the imperial power. While Brasseaux observes how the Acadian-Indian exchanges in the Attakapas region sometimes served as “mutually beneficial business arrangements,” these particular land exchanges between Tibaudau, Broussard, Mau, and Bernard provide evidence that this Attakapas tribe in no way viewed these land transactions as “mutually beneficial.”⁸⁷

The Acadians’ exile experiences and their need for new land, combined with the French-Indian exchanges that occurred in Louisiana during the early part of the eighteenth century, drastically altered how these new arrivals came to interact with Native Americans tribes. Unlike with the Mi’kmaq in the North, there is little record of amiable social interactions between the Acadians and their neighboring Native American tribes in the South. Brasseaux does tell of trade agreements that the western Acadian settlers established with neighboring tribes, yet social fusion among the communities did not occur. As these western Acadians bought tribal lands, the Native American tribes migrated further westward, and by the 1800s “Acadian relations with the local tribes were almost completely severed.”⁸⁸ As a result of their exile experiences in the colonies and their resettlement in Louisiana, the Acadians tried to either distance themselves from the tribes or to secure dominance over them.

⁸⁶ Sale of land by “les Sauvages” to Anselme Tibaudau, St. Martin’s Parish Original Acts (hereafter SMOA) Vol. 2 no. 38, 16 November 1780; Sale of land by “Bernard Chef Attakapas” to Sr. François Broussard, SMOA Vol. 2 no. 84, 20 February 1781; and Sale of land by Bernard Chef Attakapas to Sr. Michel Mau, SMOA Vol. 2 no. 88, 20 February 1781.

⁸⁷ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 186.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Unlike in the North, where the Acadians often hoped neutrality might preserve their relationship with the Native Americans, Acadians in the South did not try to use neutrality as a means to secure peaceful relations with neighboring tribes. In building their new homeland, the Acadians in Louisiana chose to take new and different roads in interacting with Native Americans: many of the Acadians in the east joined with Spain's military to guard and protect their families, while others in the west adopted an imperial approach when it came to land acquisition.

African Americans

As the Acadians found new methods of interacting with Native Americans, they also needed to learn how to relate with African Americans. During this time in colonial Louisiana, the Acadians in the eastern settlements were living in a region described as “an extension of the Caribbean system” where there was a growing economic reliance on plantation agriculture. Consequently, Acadians in the eastern regions immediately came into contact with plantation slavery, after having encountered various forms of slavery throughout their exile experiences. In *The Founding of New Acadia*, Brasseaux explains that “most Acadians initially regarded blacks and mulattoes as their social equals,” but further study reveals that an Acadian society that embraced racial equality did not exist in Louisiana.⁸⁹

Based on recent studies concerning Acadian exile experiences, slavery in the North, and slavery in colonial Louisiana, the Acadians' perspectives on this institution when they first settled in the South need to be reconsidered. In *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a People, 1803-1877*, Brasseaux observes that:

⁸⁹ Jennifer M. Spear, “Colonial Intimacies: Legislating Sex in French Louisiana,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series, 60, no. 1 (January 2003): 90; and Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 191.

Frontier egalitarianism was comparatively easy to maintain in Acadia, where slavery was unknown and indentured servitude was a distant and unpleasant memory. In lower Louisiana, however, Negro slavery was a well-established institution at the time of the Acadian migrations, and though most of the exiles demonstrated little interest in the peculiar institution, their children and grandchildren exhibited no such apathy.⁹⁰

Two particular statements in this text need reevaluation: first, that in Acadia “slavery was unknown,” and second, that in Louisiana at this time “slavery was a well-established institution.”

Through recent studies, there is evidence that the early settlers in Acadia had been influenced by the racial prejudice that took shape in French society as early as the 1500s. In his study concerning the development of racism in French society, William Cohen tells how “The French developed initial negative reactions toward Africa and its inhabitants long before setting foot on the [African] continent.” According to Cohen, through classical Greek and Roman ideas inherited in French society and the publication of travel accounts beginning in 1556, the prejudice against black Africans developed based on mythical accounts of their monstrosity or their animal-like nature. This racial prejudice is fully evident in a letter the Acadians sent to the governor of New France as early as 1710. In the letter the Acadians complained that through imposing levies, Englishman Samuel Vetch was treating them “like the negroes.”⁹¹

Furthermore, studies by Kenneth Donovan provide evidence that the institution of slavery would not have been entirely “unknown” to all northern Acadians. Donovan tells of the development of a “society with slaves” on Île Royale: a French region that the Acadians interacted with frequently through trade relations and family connections. As Maurice Basque observes, “a

⁹⁰ Carl Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a People, 1803-1877* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), 4.

⁹¹ William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1980), 1-5 (quote, p. 1); Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and “Letter of the principal inhabitants of Port Royal to Vaudreuil,” 13 November 1710, AC C11d, 7:98, cited in Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 242.

large number of Nova Scotia Acadians had at least one blood relative or an in-law living in Cape Breton ... Île Royale was not then the terra incognita so often portrayed.” In his study, Donovan also explains how Acadians Joseph and Marguerite Dugas from Minas Basin moved to Louisbourg in 1722 and purchased their slave Pierre Josselin in the 1730s. In explaining this purchase, Donovan observes, “perhaps they felt some social pressure, since six of the 10 households within their block had slaves.”⁹² Yet, despite the likelihood of the Acadians having a perception of black inferiority, there is no evidence of slaveholding by those living in the Minas Basin, Grand-Pré, or Chignecto regions. While the Acadians in the North were cognizant of black subjugation, they did not readily adopt slaveholding as part of their political, social, or economic culture.⁹³

Reasons the Acadians did not incorporate slavery into their society lie primarily in their location. Unlike in the more southern colonies, the Acadians’ methods of marshland agriculture, as well as the seasonal weather only allowed limited space and limited time for land harvesting. These factors simply did not make it feasible for individuals to adopt a type of monocrop production. In addition, the trade ships that carried slaves to the North American colonies often stopped at the major Louisbourg fortress on Île Royale, but not at the small ports along the inner

⁹² Kenneth Donovan, “Slaves In Île Royale, 1713-1758” *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 27-8; Basque, “Political Adaptation and Societal Change,” 162; and Kenneth Donovan, “Slaves and Their Owners in Ile Royale, 1713-1760,” *Acadiensis*, XXV, no. 1 (Autumn 1995): 16. Concerning class stratification based on race in Louisbourg, see Anne Marie Jonah and Elizabeth Tait, “Filles d’Acadie, Femmes de Louisbourg: Acadian Women and French Colonial Society in Eighteenth-Century Louisbourg,” *French Colonial History* 8 (2007): 31-2; and concerning the slaveholding interests of a soldier at Beauséjour, see John Clarence Webster, *Thomas Pichon: The Spy of Beausejour: An Account of His Career in Europe and America*, original documents translated by Alice Webster (Sackville: The Tribune Press, 1937), 115.

⁹³ In Stephen White’s genealogical study he provides census records that indicate that between 1636-1714 some Acadian families in Beaubassin, Port Royal, and Minas Basin had “domestiques.” However, the numbers are very low (5 in Beaubassin, 15 in Port Royal, and 3 in Minas Basin), and the occasional names that are recorded provide evidence that their “domestiques” were fellow Acadians. For example, Anne Petitpas served as a “domestique” in her sister Isabelle’s household. White, *Dictionnaire Généalogique*, 13-4, 600-1, 806, 993-4, and 1379. In addition, scholars maintain that “domestique” is “indicative of a legal status of freedom, or indenture, rather than a condition of enslavement.” Maureen G. Elgerman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 9.

Baie Française/Bay of Fundy waterway. In comparison with the settlers who lived on Île Royale, it is unlikely that the Acadians in the Minas Basin, Grand-Pré, and Chignecto regions had direct interaction with slave traders. The Acadians in these areas were aware of slavery, but they did not purchase slaves to labor in their communities.⁹⁴

After 1755, during the time they spent in the British provinces, the Acadians not only witnessed slaveholding, but they also became far more aware of the significance of class stratification in the colonies. Historians' studies of Acadian experiences in various British port communities, while often showing bias in their sympathy for Acadians, tend to agree that British colonists treated Acadians as though they were socially inferior. In other words, during their exile, the Acadians shared experiences comparable to those endured by black slaves, and they learned of the economic and social class constructs that existed in other colonial societies.

Archives of the House of Representatives in Massachusetts indicate that there was much prejudice against these Catholic charges, and petitions filed by the Acadians in Massachusetts tell of occasions when they were physically forced into labor. For example, Joseph Michel declared that his teenage son Paul was "dragged away and sent to sea" by the Selectmen, and Englishman Caleb Tildon concurred that "by Force of Arms" Paul was taken away from his family. In terms of physical abuse, another petition by Augustin Hébert told of the beating he endured when he tried to resist a Captain Conligot who "forced from him one of his children." In his written testimony that is marked by nine other Acadian men, Hébert explained how because of Conligot's violent attack, "he was scarce able to walk about for a fortnight." Belloni

⁹⁴ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 47, 54-5; Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 77; Elgerman, *Unyielding Spirits*, 3, 12-3; and Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History, 2nd edition* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 17-23.

Melançon described how his sons came under the “ownership” and abuse of Squire Richardson who treated one son “in a cruel manner” in that he “bruised his arm black and blue against the ground so that he could not use it for a month after.” Violence and subjugation is also evident in Lawrence Mieuse’s petition where he explained that his brother refused to work any longer for a man who did not pay him, and as a result the man went to the brother’s house “and almost strip’d him naked and said if his Father stood in his defence he would split his head.” Mieuse told how the man threatened that, “he would as soon kill any of them as a frog.”⁹⁵ In responding to these petitions, the government tried to control the acts of the Selectmen and provide some aid to the Acadians, but tensions continued to rise. The government soon proposed laws to secure control over the Acadians, stating that, “many Inconveniences and Mischiefs may arise to this Government by the Liberty at present given to the late Inhabitants of Nova Scotia.” Situating the exiles in a social category alongside slaves and savages, the government proposed a law that any Acadian going outside of their town or district limits would be set in stocks for their first offense and for their second offense would be “whipt on the naked Back.”⁹⁶

In other British provinces, the provincial leaders feared the possibility of Acadian alliances with either slaves or Native Americans, and out of their desire to secure control, these leaders subjected the Acadians to forced labor and restricted movements. In a situation similar to what they experienced in Massachusetts, the Acadians in Maryland found themselves subject to the power of the provincial government when it came to receiving labor, food, and shelter.

Acadians encountered the same circumstances in South Carolina where laws required them to be

⁹⁵ Petition no. 51 by Joseph Michelle, 3 March 1756 in *AGN* 100-1; Petition no. 228, Sec. 425 by Augustin Hebert, 7 October 1756 in *AGN* 107; Petition no. 358 by Belloni Melançon, 22 February 1757 in *AGN* 109; and Petition no. 547 by Lawrence Mieuse, 10 January 1758 in *AGN* 116.

⁹⁶ House of Representatives, “An Act to prevent any mischief that may arise to this government by the late Inhabitants of Nova Scotia,” 20 August 1756 in *AGN* 87-8; House of Representatives, “An Act relating to the late inhabitants of Nova Scotia transported hither by order of the government there,” 27 August 1756 in *AGN* 89.

inside before dark, and they faced indentured servitude. In his study of colonial records, E. Merton Coulter tells how the Acadians in Georgia were told to offer their labor to other settlers, in return for mere necessities such as food to eat and a roof over their heads.⁹⁷ In Virginia, the fears of Acadians based on their Catholicism and their potential alliance with Native or African Americans also ran rampant. In relating plantation owner and military official Edward Lloyd's decision to take sixty Acadians to work on his estate in nearby Maryland, Christopher Hodson tells how Lloyd suspected the Acadians' capabilities of "corrupting mine & other Negroe slaves." As Hodson observes, "Lloyd could imagine what his own disgruntled Catholic slaves might do if inspired by equally disgruntled Acadians." Similarly, Virginia Governor Dinwiddie told how the Acadians "behave ill and have had frequent Cabals with our Negroes."⁹⁸ With the loss of their former means of self-provision, as well as the prejudices they faced, the Acadians in the British colonies occupied a low rung on society's ladder.

A similar exposure to class stratification occurred among those who were shipped out of Virginia, and who eventually wound up in France. In subsequent years, several of these Acadians experienced a type of forced labor on the French islands. After failing in their attempts to provide the Acadians with productive agricultural lands within France, French political leaders decided that the Acadians might serve well in revitalizing the empire as laborers in colonies such as Saint Domingue. Hodson writes, "By recruiting and resettling hundreds of Acadian refugees in Guiana and Saint Domingue, the French state subjected these North American farmers, fishermen, and self-styled aristocrats to the same reductive forces that made instrumental

⁹⁷ Wood, *A Guide to the Acadians in Maryland*, 19; Sollers, "The Acadians Transported to Maryland," 11; Milling, *Exile Without An End*, 36, 52; Hamer, "The Fate of the Exiled Acadians in South Carolina," 201, 206; and Coulter, "The Acadians in Georgia," 69, 71-2.

⁹⁸ Edward Lloyd to James Hollyday, 9 December 1755, cited in Hodson, "Idlers and Idolaters," 205; Hodson, "Idlers and Idolaters," 205-6; and *The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, Vol. 2, page 396, cited in Millard, "The Acadians in Virginia," 246.

commodities of Africans.” The Acadians who arrived in the islands faced destitute conditions, and received scarce provisions “such as those received by royal slaves.”⁹⁹ Due to the terrible conditions and ultimate failure of the settlement in Saint-Domingue, several of these Acadians fled directly to Louisiana in 1764 and 1765. Through their experiences as laborers in both the British and French colonies, the Acadians were positioned near black slaves on society’s social stratum.

After laboring within plantation societies in the colonies, many of the Acadians who arrived in Louisiana had evidently become aware that by acquiring slaves they might secure a higher status in society. In addition, the Acadians arrived in Louisiana at a time when they had some opportunity to define their position on the social ladder. Brasseaux contends that slavery was “a well-established institution,” in Louisiana during this period, but more recent studies provide evidence that the Acadians arrived as racial power relations were in the process of being redefined in the colony. With white settlers still recovering from a major revolt by the Natchez Indians and African Americans in 1727, Spanish officials who arrived in the 1760s needed “to terminate the lax regime that characterized slavery [in Louisiana] following the Natchez rebellion.” Through being exposed to class stratification during their exile, and arriving in Louisiana when Spain hoped to end this “lax regime,” many of the Acadians joined with other colonizers in trying to secure a white dominant order in the colony. Several Acadians strove to be slaveholders and active participants in Louisiana’s transition from being a “society with slaves” to becoming once again a “slave society.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Christopher Hodson, “A Bondage So Harsh: Acadian Labor in the French Caribbean, 1763-1766,” *McNeil Center for Early American Studies* (Spring 2007): 99; and Gabriel Debien, “The Acadians in Saint-Domingue,” in Glenn R. Conrad, ed., *The Cajuns: Essays on Their History and Culture* (Center for Louisiana Studies: Lafayette, 1983), 26.

¹⁰⁰ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 339.

Louisiana census records provide evidence of slave ownership among the first generation of Acadian settlers. Considering the challenges these Acadians faced in settling in another borderland region, their acquisition of slaves is certainly remarkable, and reflects their understanding of the social significance of slaveholding. Studies of the census records and trade documents reveal slave acquisitions by early Acadian settlers in Cabannocé, Opelousas, and Attakapas, as well as their continued purchases of slaves over the coming years. Brasseaux records that the earliest Acadian slaveholders were four residents in Cabannocé who acquired slaves in 1765 – virtually upon their arrival. A few years later, in the 1769 census records for the Cabannocé region, six Acadian families are listed as owning slaves, including the families of Joseph Hébert, Widow Godain (who is recorded as owning 6 slaves), Jacques Leblanc, Marcel Leblanc, Joseph Bourg, and Widow Anne Landry.¹⁰¹

In Opelousas, several Acadians who served as witnesses in a letter to Ulloa on behalf of their community are also listed as slaveholders in the Opelousas Post General Census records for 1777, 1788, and 1796. While in the 1777 census only Sylvain Saunier and Joseph Chrétien (husband of Acadian Magdeline Saunier) owned slaves, by the time of the 1788 census, Saunier and Chrétien, as well as Pierre Thibaudot, Jh (Joseph) Cormier, Charles Commau, Pierre Richard, Victor Richard, Jean Jeansonne, Widow Savoie, Jean Savoie and Widow L'Angebourg each owned at least one slave. Later, in the 1796 census, the same families were documented as owning slaves, with Saunier's and Commau's numbers increasing to eleven and ten slaves respectively.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 191; and Voorhies, "Cabannocé Census, 1769" in *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians*, 441; For Joseph Bourg see "Ensemble Encore!" <http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore/record_detail.php?id=3364> (accessed 2 December 2010).

¹⁰² Voorhies, "Opelousas Post General Census Records," (1777, 1788, and 1796) in *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians*, 311-4, 323, 353.

Slave transactions also took place among the early settlers in Attakapas, once again including slave acquisitions by men who served as community leaders. In addition to slave purchases by leaders Olivier Thibodeau, Armand Broussard, and Joseph Broussard, other Attakapas settlers who formerly lived in Acadia also acquired slaves. For example, in 1777, René Trahan purchased an eighteen year old “negresse named Venus” from French official Michel Judice, and in 1778 Jean Baptiste de Macarty sold Jean Baptiste Broussard a twenty year old “negro named Jean.”¹⁰³ While the place of exile of many of the early Attakapas slaveholders is unknown, it is worth noting that three of them did not experience exile in the more southern British colonies or in the French island colonies. Instead, records show that until 1762-1763 Olivier Thibeaudot, René Trahan, and Jérôme Gaudet were prisoners of war in Halifax and Fort Edward in the North. Having fled their homes when the deportation occurred, these men eventually found themselves with little choice but to submit to Britain’s military power. The British forced these Acadian prisoners to labor on the dykelands they formerly owned. Over a decade later in Louisiana, these Acadian men sought to shift their position on society’s ladder: now they owned slaves who labored on their behalf.¹⁰⁴

On the surface it is certainly important to take into account the historical information concerning the Acadians’ relations with slaves during exile, and their acquisition of slaves during their resettlement in the South. At the same time, this part of Acadian history also deserves deeper reflection: in recent literature, the Acadians’ exposure to slavery provides context for another dimension of Acadian identity. In comparing the renowned Acadian novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette* and a book entitled *Moncton Mantra*, Roswitha Casmier tells how these novels portray

¹⁰³ Attakapas District Acadians to Ulloa, AGI, PPC, 198A:170-171, 27 August 1767 in *QPL* 95-6; Slave Acquisition, SMOA Vol. 1 no. 74, 6 October 1777; and Slave Acquisition, SMOA Vol. 1 no. 97 / 23, 10 June 1778.

¹⁰⁴ “Ensemble Encore!” <http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore/search.php?pagenum=132&numrecords=3396> (accessed 21 April 2011); and Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 417-22, 427.

the enslavement of white Acadians through their experiences with colonial societies. Casmier refers in particular to the story in *Pélagie-la-Charette* of the Acadian Catoune, who finds herself chained to a black man on an auction block in Charleston where “Here, the ‘poor white’ is put on the same level as the black slave.” And here we see divergence in literature and history, as well as history’s complexity: unlike Pélagie, whose experiences in working alongside slaves in the South resulted in her choosing to free the black man chained to Catoune, several Acadians who arrived in Louisiana after serving their exile “in bondage” chose to become slaveholders themselves.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion: Emergence of Acadian Class Stratification

In studying the Acadians’ involvement in slaveholding not long after their arrival in Louisiana, there is evidence that the class stratification believed to have emerged in the nineteenth century actually saw its advent in the late eighteenth century. The Acadians who arrived in Louisiana in the 1700s immediately faced a critical fork in the road ahead of them. In one direction there was a social ladder to climb, while in the other direction there was a trail to an “isolated frontier.” Either direction served as a drastic change for the Acadians in comparison with their northern origins. In 1765 Charles Aubry rightly observed that the Acadians were “being reborn in Louisiana” – each family began to grow and develop in new ways in a new land.¹⁰⁶

In the North, the Acadian communities had few extremes when it came to social classes. Through their interdependence in harvesting the dykelands, their family connections, and their

¹⁰⁵ Roswitha Zahlner Casmier, “L’appropriation de l’expérience ‘noire’ dans deux romans de la littérature acadienne: *Pélagie-la-Charrette* et *Moncton Mantra*,” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 32, no. 2 (2005): 189; and Christopher Hodson, “A Bondage So Harsh.”

¹⁰⁶ Aubry to Choiseul-Stainville, AC, C 13a, 45:56-67, 14 May 1765 in *QPL* 50.

distance from traditional French society, the Acadians came to depend on each other for survival. Historian Peter Moogk tells how despite having “a hint of a superior class,” Acadia “was more egalitarian than Canada.” In an article, scholars Anne Marie Jonah and Elizabeth Tait state, “The small population of the colony made it impossible for the noble to remain separate from the *roturier* [commoner].” Through her studies, Griffiths also argues that in Acadia “the small population base and the relative uniformity of lifestyle worked against the development of social barriers.” With the absence of the French seigneurial system and the early Acadian settlers’ disconnection from the French empire, the Acadians in the North worked together in their communities to face the physical and economic challenges in their environment.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, in spite of their dependence on each other, the Acadians did not isolate themselves from surrounding societies. They often engaged in trade with the Mi’kmaq, the British, the New Englanders, and the French, and they formed a rather modern society in terms of politics and economy. In recent excavations in Nova Scotia, material evidence testifies to what Choquette labels the “commercial nature of Acadian farming.” Discoveries of materials imported from around the world (including kitchenware from various European countries, the Mediterranean and China), counter the imagery of Acadian isolation and peasantry. In his study of the trade relations in the Acadian region, George Rawlyk tells of the Acadians’ involvement in exporting their agricultural surplus, and Maurice Basque explains how the Acadians traded with the English in order to “exchange agricultural surpluses with them for much-needed products.” As imperial tensions escalated in the 1700s, the Acadians in the major settlement regions

¹⁰⁷ Moogk, *La Nouvelle France*, 175; Jonah and Tait, “Filles d’Acadie,” 25; and Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 182.

continued to provide products to merchants from Boston and Louisbourg.¹⁰⁸ Since such studies show that by the mid-eighteenth century the Acadians' environment in the North was not so secluded as is often presumed, it is unlikely that all of those settling in Louisiana "bore the stamp" of an entirely "isolated frontier."¹⁰⁹ Instead, as they arrived in Louisiana after being uprooted from their northern communities, some Acadians found isolation from imperial societies on a western frontier to be a new, viable option. Meanwhile, other Acadians recognized the potential of social elevation by means of economic success in southern trade and agriculture.

Historians Carl Brasseaux and Vaughan B. Baker attest that Acadian class stratification did not emerge until the nineteenth century, but the Acadians' choices in where to settle, and their involvement in slaveholding indicate that it began to evolve as early as the mid-1700s. Brasseaux observes that "the fragmentation of the once extremely cohesive Acadian community appears to have taken place between 1790 and 1810, when second- and third-generation Acadians embraced both slavery and the plantation system," yet census records concerning slave acquisitions provide evidence that this "fragmentation" began taking place much earlier.¹¹⁰

For those who became slaveholders, their quest for economic success required the avoidance of social isolation. These Acadians did not only interact among themselves, but they also traded with the French and English settlers surrounding them. For example, in 1777 Olivier Thibeaudot purchased a slave from Englishman Isaac Mitchell, and René Trahan bought a slave from French official Louis Judice. Later, in 1780 Frenchman Benoit de St. Clair sold a slave to

¹⁰⁸ Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants*, 288; George Rawlyk, "Cod, Louisbourg, and the Acadians," in Buckner and Reid, eds., *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 120; Basque, "Political Adaptation and Societal Change," 163; and Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 337.

¹⁰⁹ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 176.

¹¹⁰ Baker, "The Acadians in Antebellum Louisiana," in Conrad, ed., *The Cajuns: Essays On Their History and Culture*, 97; and Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*, 5.

Acadian father and son Joseph and René Broussard.¹¹¹ These examples of exchanges that took place between Acadian men and people from outside of their communities show that the Acadians who were in pursuit of economic success realized the necessity of exchanges with members of the surrounding societies.

Through the growth of economic bargaining with both the English and the French, there are instances where some Acadian men (and in this case, those who had been born at least ten years prior to the deportation) began to acquire slave inventories that increased dramatically in the time leading up to 1803. For example, in the Cabannocé region, Eustache Daigre and Pierre Arseneau acquired six and eight slaves respectively prior to 1790. Similarly, in 1796 in the Opelousas region Charles Comeau owned ten slaves, Michel Comeau owned twelve slaves, and Silvain Saunier owned eleven slaves. Finally, by 1803 Attakapas resident François Broussard acquired seventeen slaves.¹¹² In comparison with other Acadians who did not become slaveholders, or those who acquired only one or two slaves, these Acadian men certainly pursued economic success after their arrival in Louisiana. Rather than settling with the acquisition of bare necessities, these Acadians took steps up a social ladder whose upper levels were occupied by French slaveholders in Louisiana's white society.

While the vast majority of the Acadians did not immediately fit the image of southern plantation slaveholders, many of them had nonetheless been greatly affected by their exile experiences and their arrival in a developing frontier region. The Acadians' social cohesion and

¹¹¹ Slave Acquisition, SMOA Vol. 1 no. 63, 24 November 1777; Slave Acquisition, SMOA Vol. 1 no. 74, 6 October 1777; and Slave Acquisition, SMOA Vol. 2 no. 75, 14 June 1780.

¹¹² "General Census of St. Jacques de Cabannocé," AGI, PPC 190:192 et seq, 15 April 1777; and "General census of the settlers in the Lafourche District, 1788," AGI, PPC 201:668-680; Voorhies, "Opelousas Post General Census Records, 1796," in *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians*, 347, 353; "Census of the District of Vermilion, May 1803," AGI, PPC 220:[n.p.] in "Attakapas Census, May 1803," *Attakapas Gazette*, 22 (Summer 1997): 87; and "Ensemble Encore!" <http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore/search.php?pagenum=132&numrecords=3396> (accessed 21 April 2011).

egalitarianism changed significantly as they resettled in Louisiana. As a result of being placed on a lower social rung during their exile and then being given the opportunity to settle in a new environment where social classes were in the process of being defined, Acadians had the opportunity to immediately try and define their position in southern society. The combination of these factors resulted in several of the early Acadian settlers in Cabannocé, Opelousas, and Attakapas choosing to acquire slaves and to lead the way as part of an emergent Acadian upper class.

CHAPTER THREE – RELATIONS AMONG ACADIANS

“Ah! petiots, we were undergoing sore trials! But we were lulled by the hope that far, far away, in Louisiana, our dreamland, we would find our kith and kin. That radiant hope illumined our pathway; it shone as a beacon light on which we kept our eyes riveted, and it steeled our hearts against sufferings and privations almost too great to be borne otherwise.”

Acadian Reminiscences by Felix Voorhies¹¹³

The Acadians’ desire to be reunited as a people group after spending over a decade in exile is a myth of great fortitude in adopted memories. As reflected in Felix Voorhies’ text, a common belief is that the Acadians from all over Europe and the Americas strove to find their “kith and kin,” willingly taking any risk necessary to be reconnected with their friends and families. However, there is evidence that during their exile and resettlement, the Acadians were not so devoted to helping one another, or to being reunited with one another as is often portrayed. Individuals often made different choices based on their need for survival, and fractures among the exiled Acadians materialized.

This chapter will show that during their exile, Acadians were often more intent on survival than on the preservation of their former northern community as a whole. The Acadians in exile often prioritized their individual concerns, in requesting help from the colonial governments and choosing where they would resettle. Later, the Acadians who decided to travel to Louisiana continued to struggle in reestablishing themselves and their families. Through their need to survive, the Acadians in the South made different choices in securing income, land, and protection.

By examining legal conflicts between Acadians in the South, this chapter will address in greater detail the Acadians’ loss of social cohesion. Court records indicate that the Acadians did

¹¹³ Felix Voorhies, *Acadian Reminiscences* (Boston: The Palmer Company, 1907), 97.

not fully reestablish their former system of self-rule that had been constructed in the North. As discussed in chapter one, in 1769 Spanish official Alejandro O'Reilly arrived with military personnel to secure control over the colony. Due to the presence of the military, combined with the failures by their community leaders in the North, the Acadians in Louisiana did not rely on elected community delegates for help in resolving their personal conflicts. Instead, they turned to Spanish officials for adjudication.

Concerning their loss of social cohesion, parish records also indicate that the Acadians in Louisiana encountered new generational differences. In legal cases, there are occasions when those born and raised in Acadia could not reconcile disagreements with others born during exile or the early years of settlement in Louisiana. Through such differences between pre- and post-dispersal Acadians, as well as exile separations, economic struggles, their growing involvement in slaveholding, and the loss of their pre-dispersal system of self-rule, the Acadians' former social cohesion could not be fully reestablished in the South.

Differences During Exile

In works published throughout the 1900s that tell of the Acadians' experiences in various British port communities, historians often recount how exiled families united in dealing with their sufferings. For example, in his study of Acadians in South Carolina, Chapman J. Milling describes how as a group the Acadians "hated no man, envied no man; wanted only to be let alone." Similarly, E. Merton Coulter tells how farther to the South the Acadians joined together to face the obstacles of living in a "strange land, speaking no English, and professing a religion outlawed in Georgia." In reflecting the influence of these works, Brasseaux likewise observes how in Pennsylvania and Maryland the Acadians "closed ranks to present a common front

against the concerted British effort to destroy their ethnic identity.”¹¹⁴ These writings reflect imagery of how the Acadians banded together, with their shared language, religion, and cultural traditions, to avoid assimilation in the colonies.

More recent studies concerning the Acadians’ exile experiences are providing clues that such solidarity among the exiled Acadians was not so uniform. Instead, these studies indicate that in their quest for survival, the Acadians made different choices depending on their environment and their needs. In Gregory Wood’s study of Acadians in Maryland, he explains that while some of them tried to leave Maryland and either return north or travel south to Louisiana, others contributed to the creation of a “Frenchtown” and became actively involved in local society. According to Wood, by 1773 several Acadian families acquired land in the region, and a few years later Acadian men in Maryland joined with their English neighbors to participate in the American Revolution. The Acadians in Maryland did not have such “closed ranks” as is often portrayed, even when it came to choosing where they wanted to live.¹¹⁵

In one of his articles, Christopher Hodson examines the history of an exiled Acadian man who acquired an English name: Charles White. Hodson’s analysis of this individual demonstrates that White did not conform in his daily life to the ideals of preserving an Acadian community. Hodson observes how “The experience of the grand *dérangement* was not shaped by the uniform impulse to restore old links. Rather, Acadian lives in exile were products of thousands of small-scale choices, made as the world lurched unpredictably beneath the refugees’ feet, to band together, break apart, or blend in.”¹¹⁶ According to Hodson, White was one of those Acadian refugees who chose to “blend in” to his new environment and to “break apart”

¹¹⁴ Milling, *Exile Without An End*, 7; Coulter, “The Acadians in Georgia,” 73; and Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 54.

¹¹⁵ Wood, *A Guide to the Acadians in Maryland*, 15, 38-41; and Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 54.

¹¹⁶ Hodson, “Exile on Spruce Street,” 256.

from fellow exiles during his lifetime. Rather than joining with other Acadian families to travel to the Caribbean or Louisiana, or to return North, White settled in Philadelphia where he achieved wealth through real estate and trade. The studies by Hodson and Wood both provide evidence that during their exile Acadians often made choices as individuals, based on their personal needs and desires.

Similarly, studies of the Massachusetts court records show how Acadians prioritized their personal concerns when it came to requests for government aid. In their petition to the provincial council, Acadian men Jacques Mirau and Joseph d'Entremont highlighted how they were unlike many other Acadians. According to them, they formerly lived in Cape Sable, "a place far distant, and separate from other settlements in Acadia," where they were "employed wholly in fishing." Mirau and d'Entremont explained that when they lived in the North, they shared good relationships with English fishermen who "they always entertained in the most friendly sentiments, saving the shipwrecked from misery, helping all that were in distress, furnishing those with supplies that wanted them, and entertaining all that came into their Harbor with the most cheerful Hospitality." In return for their former goodwill toward the English, these Acadian men asked that they not be sent to the Carolinas where they might be forced to labor as cultivators. They requested that those from the Cape Sable region be allowed to stay in Massachusetts "where they can be employed in their old way of Business." In the midst of their exile, Mirau and d'Entremont were focused on taking care of themselves and those from their former fishing community. Their concern was not with the preservation of the Acadian society. They hoped that as individuals they might be integrated into the work environment in

Massachusetts where “in all the fishing Towns they shall find Persons with whom they have been acquainted and between whom and themselves offices of Friendship have often passed.”¹¹⁷

In other cases there is further evidence of the Acadians’ concerns over the survival of their immediate families, rather than on the survival of the common group. Some of these cases indicate that jealousies, often a root cause of conflict, developed among the Acadians during their exile. In a petition filed by Magloire Hébert, he requested to be paid appropriately for his labors for the Selectmen, in order that he might “provide clothing and prevent his family from being naked.” In reflecting on his destitution, Hébert pleaded to “have the same allowance that other of his countrymen in the same circumstances are allowed in other Places, when [*sic*] he sees they live contented and are very well taken care of.” Regardless of whether or not Hébert did indeed believe that other Acadians were “well taken care of,” what is important here is that rather than trying to find help and provision through his Acadian connections, Hébert turned directly to the government on behalf of his immediate family. If other Acadians were in poverty as well, Hébert did not plead on their behalf. At the same time, if other Acadians were indeed in better condition, Hébert did not go to them for support. Instead, he stood alone for “himself, his wife and three children.”¹¹⁸

In the same way, the Meuse family petitioned the court with their complaint that the Selectmen in Plymouth were not providing for them in the same way that they were providing for other Acadians.¹¹⁹ In this case, the lack of provisions also led to separations within the family. In asking for financial aid, Meuse explained that only his wife and his young daughter

¹¹⁷ Petition no. 68 by Jacques Mirau and Joseph d’Entrement, [n.d.] in *AGN* 104-5.

¹¹⁸ Petition no. 398 by Magloire Hébert, [n.d.] in *AGN* 112.

¹¹⁹ “A Case Study,” in “Le Grand Dérangement: The Acadian Exile in Massachusetts, 1755-1766,” online exhibit by the Commonwealth Museum: the Museum of Massachusetts History <<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mus/exhibits/onlineexhibits/acadianonline/acaidx3.htm>> (accessed 14 April 2011).

were living with him, as “his sons when Provisions grew dear left the family & went one way & one another to get work for themselves.”¹²⁰ Here again, we see evidence of the social effects of the expulsion, as the Acadian families turned their attention toward their own survival.

Through their struggles, many Acadians approached the government for aid on a familial, rather than a communal, basis. Instead of “closing ranks against...common threats” and “vigorously defending their group’s boundaries,” the Acadians often focused on caring for themselves and their immediate families in order to survive in the colonies. The texts by Wood and Hodson, as well as the Massachusetts records indicate that the Acadians exiled in the British colonies often made choices based on their needs as individuals, rather than uniting with a shared goal of rebuilding their former society.¹²¹

Meanwhile, as Acadians in the British colonies learned to survive in their new surroundings, other Acadians (whose journey included being sent from Virginia, to England, and on to France) also needed to rebuild their lives. In a 1955 study, Oscar Winzerling tells of the Acadian exiles in France who experienced failed “aristocratic promises,” and consequently united in their desire to move to Louisiana.¹²² Similar to the studies by Wood and Hodson that question the unity among exiled Acadians in the colonies, recent works by French historians Jean-Marie Fonteneau and Jean-François Mouhot move beyond Winzerling’s text by examining in further detail the complexity of the Acadians’ experiences in France. These studies show how the Acadians did not focus their attention on preserving their Acadian “patrie.” Instead, like the Acadians in the British colonies, those scattered throughout France and the French colonies also needed to learn to survive in new, different, and changing environments.

¹²⁰ Petition no. 196 by Charles Meuse, 30 May 1759 in AGN 125.

¹²¹ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 47.

¹²² Oscar William Winzerling, *Acadian Odyssey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), 134, 137, and 142.

As is evident in the Acadians' petitions in the Massachusetts archives, Fonteneau also tells of different decisions made by the Acadians in Belle-Île-en-Mer based on their personal concerns. He explains how these Acadians had individual motivations in the decisions they made, particularly when it came time to choose whether or not to leave for Louisiana. In countering the imagery of Acadians who banded together during their exile, Fonteneau observes that by 1785, "Acadians who left for Louisiana did not represent the totality of Acadian repatriates or refugees in France, not even the majority." In addition, Fonteneau argues that those who did leave Belle-Île and later traveled to Louisiana did not share a single, common reason for leaving their settlement in France. He writes, "It would be very imprudent to want to draw a standard portrait of the Acadian in Belle-Île during this time, since he was, by nature, individualist.... Thus, the most diverse motivations prompted the successive departures."¹²³ In other words, the Acadians who left France were not entirely united with a shared view of what Louisiana might have to offer. Instead, they each had their own reasons for their departure.

In Jean-François Mouhot's study of Acadian refugees, he counters Naomi Griffiths' "myth" that those in France "never wanted to become integrated, because they formed a group united by a strong 'identity' determining their choices and their behaviors." Mouhot provides examples of conflicts between the Acadians in France, as some underwent assimilation while others chose to move to various destinations, including Belle-Île-en-Mer, Poitou, Saint-Domingue, Guiana, and St. Pierre and Miquelon. Mouhot further argues that the myth that is "most engrained" is that all of the Acadians in France united in their desire to move to Louisiana. Through examining the Acadians' conflicts and differences during their quarter century of exile

¹²³ Jean-Marie Fonteneau, *Les Acadiens: Citoyens de l'Atlantique* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 1996), 11 and 284.

in France, Mouhot concludes that by 1785 the Acadians did not leave for Louisiana in pursuit of “Acadian ‘nationalism’.” In actuality, there was great division among the Acadians who even considered moving to this region with a more tropical climate.¹²⁴ Spain had difficulty in finding passengers for the ships destined for Louisiana up until the last minute, and, suffice it to say that businessman Henri Peyroux de la Coudrenière’s methods of convincing the Acadians to go to Louisiana came under question. At one point a Spanish ambassador ordered Peyroux that as a representative of the “two sovereigns” he needed to act “with the least appearance of seduction or violence.” Ultimately, only about half of the Acadians living in France decided to take the risks of traveling to Louisiana.¹²⁵

The Acadians scattered throughout the British colonies and those who wound up in France had very different exile experiences. Their quest for survival impacted their relationships with one another, as they focused on their individual needs. Studies provide evidence that the majority of these Acadians did not occupy themselves with either preserving or rebuilding their former society. Instead, following their dispersal, the Acadians responded to the challenges they faced as individuals, searching for government aid for their own families and going different directions in choosing where to resettle.

¹²⁴ Jean-François Mouhot, “Trois mythes concernant les réfugiés acadiens en France (1758-1785),” in André Magord, ed., *Le fait acadien en France: histoire et temps présent* (La Crèche: Geste éditions, 2010), 81-95 (quotations, pgs. 86, 91, and 87).

¹²⁵ Comte d’Aranda to Peyroux, AGI, PPC 197 no. 957, 8 July 1784, http://www.septentrion.qc.ca/acadiens/fiche.php?date_debut=1784-07-08 (accessed 25 January 2011), cited in Mouhot, *Les Réfugiés Acadiens en France*, 286; and Mouhot, “Trois mythes concernant les réfugiés acadiens en France,” 92. Peyroux de la Coudrenière was a Frenchman who hoped to achieve financial success through moving the Acadians to Louisiana. For more on Peyroux, see Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 66-9.

Surviving in the South

These examples of Acadians' differences and separations during exile bring to question Carl Brasseaux's study that emphasizes the Acadians' ability to preserve their cohesiveness during their exile and as they settled in the South. In building on Naomi Griffiths' studies that draw attention to Acadian social cohesion in the North, Brasseaux tells how the Acadians preserved this aspect of their identity. Brasseaux writes that during the time they spent in the Middle Atlantic colonies, the Acadians' "cohesiveness had provided the exiles the strength to endure discrimination, malnutrition, disease, and government harassment." Concerning their settlement in Louisiana, Brasseaux states that, "thus able to interact on a cooperative basis for the group's interests, the Acadians preserved their culture and group identity." As with the recent studies of the Acadian exile, however, further study reveals that Acadians who arrived in the South after being exiled to other regions often took different roads in interacting with their British neighbors and with one another. In trying to reestablish themselves in a new frontier, the Acadians were not so united as is often portrayed.¹²⁶

Events surrounding the settlement of Natchez while Governor Antonio de Ulloa was still in power reveal differences among the Acadians in their devotion to one another, and their willingness to submit to Ulloa's authority. Not long after arriving in Louisiana, brothers Honoré and Alexis Braud led several other Acadian families in a stand against Ulloa's orders to settle in remote Natchez. Out of their fears of moving to such an isolated region, these Acadians were easily encouraged by the Braud brothers to defy Ulloa. As a result of their resistance, Ulloa had the families arrested and he forced them to board a boat that was scheduled to leave the colony. The night before the boat was going to depart, Honoré and Alexis proved how rather than caring

¹²⁶ Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 182-3; Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History*, 57; and Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 3 (quotes, pgs. 54 and 145).

so much for their fellow Acadians, they were in fact far more occupied with their own well-being. The Brauds escaped the vessel and left their counterparts “abandoned by their leaders.” The next day, the abandoned families acquiesced to moving to Natchez, and in the coming months, military official Louis Judice learned that the Braud brothers “had taken refuge” at English Manchac.¹²⁷

In trying to secure control over the Brauds and to prevent the trouble they seemed capable of causing, Judice wrote three letters to Ulloa telling of his attempts to track them down. In his first letter, Judice informed Ulloa how other Acadian men that he sent to arrest the Brauds “warned” them of the government’s pursuit, thus enabling the brothers to flee to the British colony. In a letter written a month later, however, Judice reported that out of the four Acadians he suspected of aiding the Brauds in “[seeking] refuge among the English,” only one of them was in fact “guilty.”¹²⁸ Contrary to his former suspicions, Judice no longer believed that the Acadians unanimously rose to the defense and protection of the Brauds. Since arriving in Louisiana, the Braud brothers abandoned their fellow Acadian colonists. In return, due to the priority of their own resettlement, other Acadians did not unite to protect these brothers from the government.

In the meantime, further differences developed among the Acadians who moved to Natchez based on their personal concerns for survival and resettlement. After their arrival, Spanish official Pedro Piernas first reported how he struggled with satisfying the new settlers. In a letter updating Ulloa on the Acadians’ frustrations he declared, “I do not understand their obstinacy.” Piernas observed how one man in particular, Joseph Braud, proved himself to be

¹²⁷ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 81-5 (quote, p. 83); and Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187A:Part II, 29 April 1768 in *QPL* 132.

¹²⁸ Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187A:Part II, 25 April 1768 in *QPL* 129; Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187A:Part II, 29 April 1768 in *QPL* 132; Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187A:Part II, 30 May 1768 in *QPL* 140-1.

“quite obstinate and is inciting the others to refuse to settle.” Joseph, as a cousin to Alexis and Honoré, evidently shared similarities of government resistance with his cousins. At the same time, it is worth noting that Joseph did not choose to flee with them, but instead tried to reach an agreement with the Spanish authorities.¹²⁹

Over a week later, as Piernas still tried to satisfy his charges in Natchez, he began recognizing differences among them. Piernas wrote that, “Some are pleased with their land and good fortune, because they recognize its goodness and are learning that the country is rich in resources.” Piernas believed that “some of the families will stay to settle even when others may decide to leave.” By the end of April, a month after the Acadians’ first confrontation with Piernas, he told Ulloa that several of the Acadians now “gladly agreed to be settled, abiding by all of Your Excellency’s decisions.” These Acadians explained to Piernas how their former response came due to the instigations of Joseph Braud and two other men who “motivated them to do what they did.” The Acadian families now apologized for “the disapproval they had shown.”¹³⁰ In trying to reestablish themselves, these Acadians did not share a common front they were committed to. Instead, they quickly turned against Braud and his companions, and put their attention toward building their homes in Natchez. In this instance the Acadians did not make decisions based on the unity of their group, but rather on their personal concerns for survival.

The events concerning the Braud family and the settlers in Natchez indicate that, like during exile, these men based their actions on what they felt would be best for themselves and their immediate families. No longer being so “closely knit” to their fellow Acadians, the Brauds

¹²⁹ Piernas to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 2357:[n.p.], 27 March 1768 in *QPL* 119 and 120; and Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 85.

¹³⁰ Piernas to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 2357:[n.p.], 6 April 1768 in *QPL* 126; and Piernas to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 2357:[n.p.], 28 April 1768 in *QPL* 131.

and other settlers in Natchez made decisions with their personal interests in mind when faced with the options of resisting Spanish settlement orders, abandoning their companions, or even fleeing to a British military post.¹³¹

As the Acadians settled in Louisiana, the English not only provided a place of refuge for men like the Brauds, but in coming years they also provided sources of income for some of their Acadian neighbors. In this regard, the Acadians put their commitment to the Spanish crown on the surface, while beneath the surface certain individuals chose to go against Spanish authority in trading with the British. Simon and Isaac Leblanc were Acadians active in the Spanish military, but at the same time they did not adhere to the rules that outlawed economic trade with their English neighbors. In one of Spanish official Louis Judice's letters, he wrote how Simon Leblanc had recently proven himself "entirely dedicated" to serving the English. Within a few days, Judice further explained how Simon and his brother Isaac were guilty of "insubordination," since they floated a raft of logs to New Orleans in return for payment from the English. As soldiers for the Spanish military, these Acadian men defied Judice's orders for the sake of making income, showing their "preference for service to the English over service to their prince and their country."¹³²

As with the Brauds, the experiences of the Leblancs reflect the individualism Acadians resorted to as they settled in Louisiana. The Acadians have little voice during this period of their history, yet stories like that of the Leblancs indicate that Acadian men made independent choices for the sake of improving their lot. In spite of reputedly acquiring a "virulent Anglophobia" through their exile experiences, the Acadians' need for survival and reestablishment in this

¹³¹ Jacqueline Voorhies, "The Search for the Promised Land," in Conrad, ed., *The Cajuns: Essays on Their History and Culture*, 89.

¹³² Judice to the governor, AGI, PPC 190:307, 8 October 1777; and Judice to the governor, AGI, PPC 190:312, 12 October 1777.

borderland region resulted in some individuals taking the risk of trading with the British – even when serving in the Spanish military.¹³³

The stories of the Brauds and the Leblancs provide some glimpse of the Acadians' loss of their former social cohesion, as individuals made unique choices in learning to live in a new land. This loss of cohesion is further evident in one of the Acadians' early responses to church construction in the South. According to Naomi Griffiths, in the North there may have been disagreements over the clergy, but most Acadians were very supportive of the construction and the maintenance of church buildings. She tells how “all the major settlement areas ... had small wooden churches dating from the late seventeenth century.” Griffiths also notes that the Acadians “seem to have paid their tithes without argument” in their northern settlements.¹³⁴ In the Cabannocé region, however, the Acadians responded very differently when it came to church construction. In one of his updates to Ulloa, Judice explained that while some of the Acadians were willing to pay “2 livres, 2 sols” per family for building a church, many of them simply “refuse[d] to pay their share.”¹³⁵ These Acadian families did not prove themselves to be united, even when it came to the construction of this religious landmark of their former society.

Like during their exile, the Acadians who arrived in Louisiana prioritized their needs as individuals when they interacted with Spanish officials, British neighbors, and one another. In the coming years, as Acadian families became more settled in the South, parish court cases begin to show that differences and disagreements among the Acadians persisted. More importantly, these records indicate that rather than rebuilding their former political system of elected community delegates to resolve their personal disputes, the Acadians relied on Spanish military

¹³³ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 79, 110, 131-2 (quote, p. 79); and James Laxer, *The Acadians: In Search of a Homeland* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2007), xx.

¹³⁴ Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 312.

¹³⁵ Judice to Ulloa, AGI, PPC 187A:Part II, 2 July 1768 in *QPL* 145.

officials for adjudication. As a consequence of their failings in the North, their separations during exile, and their focus on survival in a new land, the Acadians in Louisiana failed to unite in reconstructing their pre-dispersal system of self-rule.

Government Involvement in Personal Disputes

In the North, by the time Britain secured control of the Acadian colony in the early 1700s, the Acadians had already started forming a system of locally selected representatives who kept order in their communities and communicated with British officials. As Naomi Griffiths observes, the growth of the Acadian population resulted in the development of a “system of local government” that “had a fundamental role in the formation of Acadian culture.” Historian George Rawlyck writes that “local elders” in Acadian communities were “carefully chosen by the people to represent faithfully their interests.” In more specific terms, Griffiths tells how as early as 1691 the Acadians at Minas asked British authorities for permission to nominate representatives from within their community to resolve their local conflicts. The Acadians’ preference to rely on fellow members of their community to find solutions for their personal disputes supports André Magord’s statement that in the North, the Acadians “showed their willingness to detach themselves from conventional perspectives, from the imperial systems of government which squeezed their territory from both sides.”¹³⁶

In the early 1700s, due to not having a sufficient number of military officials to cover the region, the British hoped Acadian representatives might serve as a means to keep control of the Acadian communities. In serving as the mediators between the British power and their fellow

¹³⁶ Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History*, 44; George Rawlyck, “Cod, Louisbourg, and the Acadians,” in Buckner and Reid, eds., *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 118; Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 183-4; and Magord, *Quest for Autonomy*, 36.

Acadians, Maurice Basque tells how Acadian deputies were “men of good standing and healthy enough to undertake numerous journeys between Annapolis Royal and their respective villages.” As a result of Britain’s acceptance of this system of representative government during the early part of the eighteenth century, the Acadians managed to live through a form of self-rule. Geoffrey Plank observes, “This system accorded with the way the Acadians had customarily governed themselves....Furthermore, the provincial council’s recognition of the office of deputy reinforced a sense of village autonomy.” More pointedly, Leslie Choquette writes that the Acadians’ “independence continued after the transfer to British rule, culminating in an official form of self-government.”¹³⁷

Over time, this form of self-government became a matter of concern for the British officials. By the 1730s, the British “tried to convince the Acadians to bring any legal disputes to the General Court at Annapolis Royal rather than have them resolved among themselves.” Still, the delegates continued to play important roles in Acadian society in the next two decades. By 1750, once his military troops had been dispatched to most Acadian settlements, Colonel Edward Cornwallis found himself ordering the Acadians to, “communicate with the government exclusively through the commanding officer in their district,” rather than through their delegates. In spite of Cornwallis’ order, in the next five years meetings continued to occur between British officials and elected Acadian community leaders. In the final year leading to their expulsion, the delegates who represented the Acadian communities still emphasized the Acadians’ desire to remain neutral in imperial conflicts.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Basque, “Political Adaptation and Societal Change,” 175; Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 240-1; Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest*, 92; and Choquette, *Frenchmen Into Peasants*, 289.

¹³⁸ Basque, “Political Adaptation and Societal Change,” 175; Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme*, 265; and Griffiths, *From Migrant to Acadian*, 323; 455-6, 460.

In 1755, the attempts of the delegates to maintain Acadian neutrality culminated in an event of epic proportions. The delegates ultimately failed in their negotiations with the British officials, resulting in the Acadians' exile. This failure by the delegates led to three critical social discontinuities. First, as has previously been seen in studying their dispersal and their early arrival in Louisiana, the Acadians found themselves with little choice but to prioritize their personal needs for survival over the needs of their community. Second, generational conflicts between pre- and post-dispersal Acadians emerged, and third, the Acadians in the South lost trust in their former "system of local government." The cases in parish court records provide evidence of such generational differences. In addition, they show that the Acadians often relied on Spanish military leaders to represent them before the government, and to resolve their personal and community conflicts. As is seen in the stories of the Acadians' exile experiences and their early settlement in Louisiana, many of these cases further counter the imagery of the preservation of Acadian "unity" and "solidarity" during their exile and resettlement.¹³⁹

Less than a decade after their arrival in Louisiana, there is evidence of an argument between the pre- and post-dispersal generations of Acadians that could not be resolved among the Acadians themselves. In updating his superiors concerning the Lafourche des Chitimachas region, military official Louis Judice described disagreements taking place between the "young" and the "old." According to Judice, the greatest controversy was based on "where the two sexes should be seated" during church services. Judice explained how the tradition in Acadia held that men and women sat on opposite sides of the church so as to prevent the "indecentcies and scandals" that might occur as a result of "conversations and rendezvous between the boys and girls." Now, in Louisiana, the "old" Acadians wanted to preserve this tradition, while the young

¹³⁹ Griffiths, *The Contexts of Acadian History*, 44; and Brasseaux *The Founding of New Acadia*, 79, 94, and 101.

men wanted to “conform to the laws and customs of the colony” by sitting next to their wives and children on the benches. In the midst of this conflict, the older men “threatened to leave their positions of community syndics and church wardens, and even to leave the colony” if the young men did not adhere to church seating traditions. The young men, in turn, also threatened to leave the Lafourche settlement if seating changes were not allowed. The final outcome of this situation is unknown, but Judice sent a letter to the colony’s governor and asked for “the necessary orders for bringing peace and tranquility among the two parties.”¹⁴⁰

In this confrontation that occurred less than ten years after their arrival in Louisiana, a younger generation of Acadians wanted to adopt a way of life they discovered in their new environment. In trying to do so, they showed little respect for the authority assumed by their older community leaders. In this case, there is evidence of the loss of Acadian social cohesion, as generational differences brought a stand between older men originally from the North and younger men who had been born during exile or resettlement. Furthermore, in this dispute, the Acadians proved unable to arrive at a resolution via the negotiation of their own elected community leaders. These Acadian settlers – the “old” and the “young” – turned to Spanish officials to determine the outcome of this disagreement in their community.

Other controversies documented in the St. Martin’s Parish Original Acts provide similar examples of Acadians turning to Spanish officials to resolve their personal disputes. In particular, there are cases that tell of verbal trade disagreements that Acadian men did not try to reconcile through the help of Acadian delegates. For example, Pierre Dugas requested the help of Second Lieutenant and Commandant Louis Declouet of the Attakapas post to resolve an issue he had with Simon Broussard. In a statement marked by Dugas, he explained how he promised

¹⁴⁰ Letter signed by Judice, 5 May 1773, PPC 189A:474-475.

to provide Broussard a horse in exchange for receiving a horse-drawn carriage. Dugas reported that he kept his end of the bargain by providing Broussard the horse, and then he waited patiently to receive the completed carriage. After spending too long waiting for the carriage, Dugas finally decided to confront Broussard concerning their agreement, and in their conversation he discovered that Broussard no longer “wanted to keep the deal.”¹⁴¹

In his plea for Declouet’s help, Dugas confessed that while he had no witnesses for his testimony, he trusted that Declouet would certainly recognize “the guilty.” After spending two days investigating the case, Declouet finally ordered that Broussard deliver the carriage to Dugas “without delay.”¹⁴² It seems this case was a minor trade dispute between two Acadian men that might have easily been resolved through a community syndic, yet Dugas specifically requested the intervention of government official Declouet. Dugas and Broussard lived as individuals in a new frontier region, who proved unable to reach reconciliation “on a cooperative basis.”¹⁴³ Rather than trying to find a solution through the members of their community, Dugas went directly to a Spanish military official to determine the outcome of his disagreement with Broussard.

Another case between Acadian men Bazil Préjean and Michel Broussard indicates that conflict existed among the Acadians in Louisiana on both individual and community levels. Again, these Acadian men did not trust fellow Acadian delegates or community leaders to determine the outcome of their dispute, but instead they turned to Spanish military officials. In a letter written to a government official in Attakapas, Cabannocé settler Préjean complained how Attakapas residents Ephraime Robichaud and Michel Broussard borrowed his boat out of “the

¹⁴¹ Pierre Dugas contre Simon Broussard, Letter to Louis Declouet, 15 July 1791. SMOA Vol. 11 no. 144.

¹⁴² Letter to Louis Declouet, 15 July 1791; and Affaire du Sieur Pierre Dugas contre le Sieur Simon Broussard, 17 July 1791, both in SMOA Vol. 11, no. 144.

¹⁴³ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 145.

greatest necessity,” but failed to return it to him. According to Préjean, Robichaud and Broussard were military men who used the pirogue in order to quickly move ahead of another troop and join back up with their own men. A few weeks later, after the two men returned home, Robichaud informed Préjean that Broussard would take responsibility for returning the boat, but Préjean explains in his letter that Broussard did not in fact return the pirogue. Then, when Préjean finally saw Broussard in a public place, Broussard tried to completely ignore him. As a result, Préjean resorted to publicly confronting Broussard to ask specifically about his boat. With the argument that ensued, Broussard provided Préjean little hope that he might actually return the lended vessel.¹⁴⁴

In responding to Préjean’s accusations, Broussard and Robichaud did not try to reach a resolution with him directly. Instead, after learning of Préjean’s letter, they immediately asked Attakapas Lieutenant Francisco Caso y Luengo to allow them to bring the case before a government official, with a representative present on behalf of each party. Luengo accepted their request, but the Acadian men still failed to arrive at a resolution satisfactory to both parties. Consequently, Préjean requested that Louis Judice (now the Cabannocé District Commandant) also become involved in trying to resolve the affair.¹⁴⁵ As government officials Judice and Luengo began exchanging letters concerning this particular case, it transitioned from being a minor disagreement between two individuals, to becoming a conflict that reflected tensions existing between two Acadian communities.

In a letter written to Luengo on behalf of Préjean, Judice explained how a “poor resident in his district” had loaned his mode of transportation to someone in “your command.” Rather

¹⁴⁴ Bazil Préjean contre Michel Broussard, Letter signed by Basille Préjean, 2 August 1794, SMOA Vol. 16 no. 50.

¹⁴⁵ Letter signed and marked by Francisco Caso y Luengo, Michel Broussard, and Ephraime Robichaud, 12 August 1794; and Letter to Judice from Pierre Carmouche, [n.d.] 1795, both in SMOA Vol. 16 no. 50.

than saying that one Acadian loaned his boat to another Acadian, Judice's letter hinted toward the separation between the Cabannocé and Attakapas communities. In continuing his letter, Judice asked Luengo to order Broussard to return the pirogue and to pay Préjean a fee based on the time it had been missing. Judice wrote that he "must mention" that many of the men living in Attakapas tended to "borrow pirogues" from men in his Cabannocé district without "ever returning them." In contrast to the imagery of Acadian social cohesion, this case indicates that conflict existed between these two Acadian communities. Judice warned that this pirogue issue was a major problem, and that in the future those in Attakapas would find "no help" from those in his district as a result of their actions. He closed his letter by stating that Broussard needed to be reprimanded concerning "his bad faith, having passed in front of Bazil Préjean's door many times without stopping to discuss an arrangement concerning the pirogue."¹⁴⁶

For over a year, this case continued to be debated. In one of his letters, Judice noted how Préjean's "neighborhood" saw "the bad faith in the affair, on Michel Broussard's part." Then, while it appeared the controversy might be moving toward some resolution, in reality it quickly took what Judice labeled a "bad turn." According to Judice, not only did Broussard continue to lie concerning his end of the agreement, but he also insulted Préjean in the presence of several witnesses. Judice condemned Broussard for his "negligence and his language that might cost him dearly." As this conflict continued to escalate, the officials began to hear testimonies on behalf of both Préjean and Broussard.¹⁴⁷

Few of the testimonies by the other Acadians in these men's communities are available, yet those that do exist indicate that sides were taken based on their home location. For example,

¹⁴⁶ Letter signed by Judice, SMOA Vol. 16 no. 50, 3 March 1795.

¹⁴⁷ Letter signed by Judice, 26 September 1795; and Letter signed by Judice, 23 October 1795, both in SMOA Vol. 16 no. 50.

Attakapas resident Olivier Thibodeau testified on behalf of Broussard. He explained that Broussard had arranged for Préjean to be provided a pirogue, but that Préjean simply refused to accept it. Similarly, Cabannocé resident Dominique Bourgeois defended Préjean's description of how poorly Broussard treated him.¹⁴⁸ A case that started as a personal conflict over a boat became a volley between two Acadian men who each received support from members of their communities. Rather than providing evidence of solidarity or cohesion among the Acadians, the Préjean/Broussard case indicates that there was conflict among Acadians at both the individual and community levels. And, like with the Dugas/Broussard case, these Acadian men did not try to find resolution through their own community leaders. In both of these cases, the Acadians depended on imperial officials to determine the outcome of their disagreements.

This reliance on Spanish officials when it came to conflict resolution occurred not only among individuals and communities, but it also took place at the family level. In studying the available documents concerning two cases in particular, it becomes apparent that Acadian "familial cohesiveness" was far from seamless in the South. In addition, Acadian community leaders were not even trusted to reconcile these disputes among families. Due to their family's generational differences and the Acadians' loss of their former system of self-rule, members of the Broussard family turned to Spanish officials to resolve their personal conflicts.¹⁴⁹

René Broussard and his uncle Claude Broussard became embroiled in a dispute that lasted over a decade. The earliest court records of this case tell how René Broussard felt taken by his uncle in a contract for six arpents of land near Grande Prairie. René asked the court to hold his uncle Claude accountable to their agreement by either providing him with the land he

¹⁴⁸ Census of the Attakapas District, AGI, PPC 218, 30 October 1774; Letter marked by Olivier Thibodeaux, SMOA Vol. 16 no. 50, 3 November 1795; General Census of St. Jacques de Cabannocé, AGI, PPC 190:192, 15 April 1777; and Letter marked by Dominique Bourgeois, SMOA Vol. 16 no. 50, 23 December 1795.

¹⁴⁹ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 101.

truly desired or by reimbursing his payment. Only two weeks after René Broussard filed this initial petition with Commandant Louis Declouet, it seems that the men reached a rather unsettled resolution in the case: they both marked a document stating that they would never again talk to each other about this “affair.”¹⁵⁰ In coming years, however, the conflict between the nephew and his uncle continued to brew.

A decade after René Broussard filed his original petition with Declouet, he sent a letter to official Francisco Luengo once again addressing the original case. In his letter, René explained that he now had evidence of the illegitimacy of his debt to Claude that could be verified through the testimony of family member Joseph Broussard. Luengo responded that he would be open to hearing what Joseph had to say on René’s behalf. Meanwhile, Claude Broussard did not sit idle. Within three days of Luengo’s response to René, Claude marked a formal letter stating that he received word of René Broussard’s accusations, and he wanted Pierre Broussard, Pierre Ellie, and Declouet to serve as witnesses before Luengo on his behalf. Luengo agreed to hear both sides of the case, and in the coming weeks the testimonies of Claude’s three witnesses were documented. Through the testimonies, Luengo determined that Claude’s defense seemed justified, thus René Broussard lost his plea for any retribution. A paper signed by Luengo and marked by Claude and René Broussard indicated their arrival at a forced resolution.¹⁵¹

In this particular affair among the Broussards, two men who shared an immediate family history of exile and resettlement managed to harbor resentment against each other for over a

¹⁵⁰ René Broussard contre Claude Broussard, Letter to Declouet from René Broussard, 5 October 1782; and Letter signed and marked by Claude Broussard, René Broussard, and Louis Declouet, 22 October 1782. Both in SMOA Vol. 13 no. 50.

¹⁵¹ Letter to Francisco Luengo, 2 October 1792; Letter signed by Francisco Luengo, 3 October 1792; Letter marked by Claude Broussard, 6 October 1792; Louis Declouet, Pierre Broussard, and Pierre Elie testimonies, 7 November 1792; Letter signed by Luengo and marked by Claude Broussard, 17 November 1792; and Letter signed by Luengo and marked by René and Claude Broussard, 27 August 1794, all in SMOA Vol. 13 no. 50.

decade. As a son and a grandson to Joseph Broussard dit Beausoleil, Claude and René Broussard were closely related to a man who has become a legendary icon of Acadian-Cajun heritage.¹⁵² Yet, in spite of their family's history of banding together to conquer their exile adversities, these Broussard men could not resolve their differences. Rather than reflecting their family's cohesion, this conflict between uncle Claude Broussard and his nephew René exposes their individualism in their quest to establish themselves in the South. And, like with the controversy over church seating, this case also testifies to men of different generations going to Spanish officials for a ruling, rather than turning to fellow Acadians to determine the outcome of their dispute.

A disagreement between the widow Marguerite Scavoie and her brother-in-law Amant Broussard also brings shadows to the portrayal of Acadian "familial cohesiveness" in Louisiana. Marguerite sent a letter to the Attakapas commandant stating that after her husband died, she found a document concerning an agreement he had made with Amant involving over four hundred piastres. Marguerite explained that she had accounts to settle with all of her children, so she needed more information concerning this money. A month later, after learning that Amant Broussard was indeed indebted to her family, Scavoie unexpectedly decided to drop her case. She appeared before Commandant Jean Delavillebreuve and testified that the four hundred piastres she formerly demanded from Broussard (to be paid by either labor or money) was no

¹⁵² Beausoleil led several Acadians to join with the Mi'kmaq in countering the British between 1755-1762. After being held as a prisoner of war in the North, Beausoleil and his counterparts left Halifax in 1764 and they arrived to settle in Louisiana a year later. For more information concerning this "symbolic leader" of the Acadians in Louisiana, see Warren A. Perrin, *Acadian Redemption: From Beausoleil Broussard to the Queen's Royal Proclamation* (Opelousas: Andrepont Publishing, L.L.C., 2004). For evidence of Claude and René's relations to Beausoleil, I referenced information available concerning Claude Broussard and Joseph "Petit Joe" Broussard (René's father) at "Ensemble Encore," <http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore/record_detail.php?id=114> and <http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore/record_detail.php?id=1865> (accessed 25 April 2011).

longer due. She declared that the receipt she found was “null and void,” and like with the Claude and René Broussard case, it appeared they had arrived at a resolution.¹⁵³

Several months later, however, the conflict between Widow Scavoie and Amant Broussard resurfaced. In a letter witnessed by Louis Declouet, the widow declared that she was handing her situation over to Michel Broussard, her son-in-law, to handle. Michel Broussard, as part of the post-dispersal generation of Acadians, filed an appeal to the government on behalf of the widow. In appearing before Louis Declouet and two witnesses, Broussard testified that in order to recover the four hundred piastres he was willing to go to any lengths, even if it meant traveling to the city where he might present the case before the highest level of court prosecutors.¹⁵⁴

Both of these Broussard cases reveal that an Acadian family (an iconic one, no less) lived with less solidarity and cohesiveness than is often portrayed. Furthermore, after the fragmentation of their northern communities that had “[claimed] a kind of self-rule,” the individuals involved in these cases turned to government officials to determine the outcome of their disputes.¹⁵⁵ Regardless of their blood ties, the conflicts within the Acadians’ communities and their reliance on imperial adjudication indicate that they were no longer united in trying to detach themselves from an imperial power. Their cases reflect a disjointedness that developed (even among families) as a result of the Acadians’ failures in their former neutrality, their

¹⁵³ Veuve Petit Jo contre Amant Broussard, Letter to the Attakapas commandant, May 1791 and Letter signed by Delavillebreuve, 24 May 1791. Both in SMOA Vol. 12 no. 21.

¹⁵⁴ Letter signed by Louis Declouet, 20 September 1791; Appeal of the Veuve Petit Jos vs. Amant Broussard, 20 September 1791, both in SMOA 12, no. 21. Evidence that Michel Broussard was Widow Scavoie’s son-in-law is found at “Ensemble Encore,” <http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore/record_detail.php?id=505> (accessed 25 April 2011).

¹⁵⁵ Magord, *Quest for Autonomy*, 36.

economic struggles during exile and resettlement, and the emergence of new generations who had less attachment to their northern roots.

Conclusion: A Loss of Social Cohesion

As a result of the Acadians' experiences during their exile, they often went different directions – literally - as they settled in Louisiana. Rather than simply drawing closer to any and all fellow Acadians, they focused their attention first on survival. In one of Louis Judice's letters, he explained how his parish was populated with very poor citizens, and he told how several of the families abandoned their lands to avoid the costs of living in the parish. Some of these families traveled to Attakapas, while others moved toward "the city."¹⁵⁶ These families did not unite to overcome their obstacles, but instead each went their own direction.

Later, as they became more settled in Louisiana, the Acadians did not unite based on their connection with their former collective identity. For example, in Judice's Lafourche district there is evidence that settling near fellow Acadians was not fully satisfying for particular families. Judice explained how Jean Jeansonne, after living among other Acadians in Lafourche for at least four years, requested to sell his land and move near his family in Opelousas. Meanwhile, Jeansonne's neighbors Amand Landry and Firmin Braud asked to move closer to their families in Attakapas. Similarly, Olivier Benois asked to leave Iberville and move to Opelousas because he thought the air over the river he lived along was bad for his health. For these men, simply being reunited with fellow Acadians did not bring them satisfaction.¹⁵⁷ After

¹⁵⁶ Letter signed by Judice, AGI, PPC 189A:472, [n.d.] 1773.

¹⁵⁷ Letters signed by Judice, AGI, PPC 189A:519, 9 January 1774; AGI, PPC 189A:520, 16 January 1774; and Letter by Dutisné, AGI, PPC 190:270, 14 September 1777.

acquiring their land and building their homes, these families uprooted themselves once again, left their current Acadian communities, and moved to other parts of Louisiana.

These instances of Acadians who went different directions after living near one another for several years indicate how rather than preserving a collective social cohesion in an isolated environment, Acadian families continued to fend for themselves in various ways. As is seen throughout this chapter, with their differences in choosing where to live and in interacting with their British neighbors, as well as their inability to resolve conflicts among themselves, the Acadian settlers did not fully reestablish their pre-dispersal collective identity.

In economic terms, the Acadians no longer labored together like they did on the northern dykelands, but instead they sought their own means of survival and economic success. Politically, they did not rebuild their former system of self-rule that was rooted in their shared goal of neutrality. In losing these unifying economic and political factors during their exile and resettlement, the Acadians lost fundamentals that made up the social cohesion found in their pre-dispersal society. The Acadian culture in Louisiana is well described as an “old building with a new façade,” but this old building did not only acquire a new front. It also showed fractures in its very foundation.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Compare to Brasseaux, who observes how “like an old building with a new façade, the Acadian culture retained its inner strength but showed the world a new face.” Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 149.

CONCLUSION

In studies of post-dispersal Acadian history, there is a tendency to focus much attention on establishing connections with their northern Acadian culture and society. Carl Brasseaux's work on the Acadians' early years of settlement in Louisiana certainly serves well in deconstructing the "Evangeline" myth, yet his studies may have inadvertently contributed toward the adoption of another myth concerning such connections. Rather than only undergoing changes to their social and cultural "façade," in actuality the foundation of Acadian society had been torn up and it needed to be reconstructed.¹⁵⁹ The reparations did not immediately take place among the Acadians who arrived in Louisiana in the late eighteenth century. Instead, as they settled in their new homeland, the foundation of Acadian society continued to contain crevices due to their diverse experiences in their exile and their resettlement.

Later, in the nineteenth century, two important events took place that served to eventually bring stronger social cohesion among the Acadians in Louisiana. After spending their previous decades learning to survive in a new land and seeing the development of tiers in their society, the Civil War drastically altered the Acadians' individual quests for success. Through the tremendous losses and sufferings inflicted by the War, and in struggling through the Reconstruction period, the previously emergent classes abruptly became two polarized societies. In coming years, through hearing of the publication of Longfellow's "Evangeline," Acadian descendants on both ends of the social pole started filling the gaps in their foundation as they began adopting memories of their former sufferings.¹⁶⁰ This repaired foundation of Acadian society in Louisiana has since become a cultural sacrament, "an oratory, a church, a

¹⁵⁹ Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia*, 149.

¹⁶⁰ Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun*, 74-88, 153.

cathedral.”¹⁶¹ Sadly, attempts to preserve this sacrament have in many ways inhibited studies of Acadian-Cajun history by not allowing the early settlers’ differences from their former society, and among themselves, to be recognized.

This avoidance of differences brings me back to responding to the question I opened with: “Can the settlers in Louisiana be called ‘Acadians’?” Through my studies I have arrived at the conclusion that previous scholars’ focus on proving continuities in Acadian pre- and post-dispersal identity has resulted in discontinuities being ignored. As a result, the post-dispersal definition of “Acadian” has been oversimplified. Certainly, some traditions were preserved (in terms of language, music, and memory), yet critical social, cultural, and political qualities of the Acadians’ former identity were greatly altered. In contrast to their society in the North, the Acadians in the South did not turn to neutrality as a means of security, their racial prejudice was far more evident, class stratification emerged, and they failed to fully reconstruct their former system of self-rule. Through their experiences in dispersal and resettlement in Louisiana, a new meaning for the term “Acadian” emerged prior to the turn of the nineteenth century.

¹⁶¹ Maillet, *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, trans. by Philip Stratford, 160.

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