

## Creoles and Creole Language Use in St.Martin Parish, Louisiana

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Article abstract

Creole is a language widely spoken in present and former sugar cane plantation areas in South Central and Southeast Louisiana. It is spoken primarily by black residents whose ancestors brought it from the Caribbean in the early 9th century. Although English is practically always the dominant language, Creole can frequently be heard in familiar contexts and at certain traditional "country" activities. It is also frequently used in times of stress and as a "secret language". Further, the public use of Creole as a symbol of commonness and identity among group members can be strong on certain occasions.

## CREOLES AND CREOLE LANGUAGE USE IN ST. MARTIN PARISH, LOUISIANA\*

by

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### ABSTRACT

Creole is a language widely spoken in present and former sugar cane plantation areas in South Central and Southeast Louisiana. It is spoken primarily by black residents whose ancestors brought it from the Caribbean in the early 9th century. Although English is practically always the dominant language, Creole can frequently be heard in familiar contexts and at certain traditional "country" activities. It is also frequently used in times of stress and as a "secret language". Further, the public use of Creole as a symbol of commonness and identity among group members can be strong on certain occasions.

**KEY WORDS:** Louisiana, St. Martin parish, Creole, language use.

### RÉSUMÉ

**MAGUIRE, Robert :** Les Créoles et l'utilisation de langue créole dans la paroisse St-Martin.

Le créole est une langue largement utilisée dans les plantations de canne à sucre anciennes et actuelles du centre-sud et du sud-est de la Louisiane. Introduit au début du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle par des Noirs originaires des Caraïbes, son usage est toujours réservé majoritairement à la population noire. Bien que l'anglais demeure la langue dominante, on peut souvent entendre parler le créole dans le milieu familial et à l'occasion de certaines activités ou fêtes locales. Il est aussi fréquemment employé comme « langage secret » et dans les situations conflictuelles. De plus, l'utilisation du créole comme symbole d'identité et d'appartenance peut être essentielle en certaines occasions.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** Louisiane, paroisse St-Martin, créole, langue d'usage.

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\* À la suite d'une erreur de rédaction, le titre de cet article a été présenté en français dans le sommaire du numéro précédent (vol. 23, n° 58, avril 1979).

Because this paper deals with language use in a particular place among a specific group of people, it is appropriate to establish a baseline with some historical data on both French Creole, and Parks, Louisiana and the black community there before delving into contemporary language use.

First, what is French Creole, or Creole as it is referred to in this paper? Creole is a language widely spoken in present and former sugar cane plantation areas in south central and south east Louisiana. In this region, historically and today, many black and white residents speak Creole, although as a general rule, the language is more strongly affiliated with the black population. Its sometimes reference as "neg" or "nigger French" testifies to this fact. Creole, even to the present, is not a written language.

Curiously, the Creole spoken in sugar cane Louisiana today by Creoles, i.e. French Creole-speaking blacks, is very similar in form and pronunciation to the Creole spoken in Haïti, the former French West Indian colony of Saint-Domingue. In this country of some 5 million, Creole is the *lingua franca*.

Similarities in Louisiana and Haitian Creole are seen in vocabulary with the common use of such verbs as "couri" (go), "vini" (come), and "gain" (have). Pronouns, though not exactly matching, are very close to being identical. For example, "Mo" in Louisiana and "Mwe" in Haiti are used for "I". To form the progressive "ing" tense in both Creoles, "ap" is used between the noun and verb, e.g. "M'ap couri là-bas"—I'm going down there.

Such contemporary commonalities in speech suggest a strong historical link between these two areas. Indeed, links did exist, although over the past 150 years they have been virtually non-existent. During the "plus grand dérangement" of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, inspired by the Haitian slave war for independence, French colonists and free people of color fled the slave colony of Saint-Domingue *en masse*, often going to the haven of Louisiana and just as often, arriving with Creole-speaking slaves<sup>1</sup>. Although the exact magnitude of the flood of émigrés into the French port of New Orleans during this 20 year period is subject to much speculation it is reported that by 1809 "some ten thousand refugees" from Saint-Domingue, evenly divided among slaves, free people of color, and whites, had arrived in New Orleans<sup>2</sup>. Surely, the impact of the arrival of a group this large (it doubled Louisiana's French-speaking population) had to be significant in the sparsely populated Louisiana of the early 19th century<sup>3</sup>. One easily speculates that part of the impact was the introduction of the Creole language to Louisiana.

The arrival of French West Indian émigrés coincided with the period when the sugar cane culture that continues to dominate south central and southeast Louisiana today was just being established. Resident French and newly-arrived American planters busily carved out sugar cane plantations in the Mississippi delta lands of Louisiana commencing in the late eighteenth century when sugar cane cultivation first became a practical and profitable enterprise there. It appears that émigrés from the West Indies, many of them former sugar cane planters in Saint-Domingue, heartily joined the rush to carve out plantations<sup>4</sup>. Pushing aside the largely subsistence Cajun farmers, these forceful figures quickly entrenched themselves on land best suited for cultivation of the profitable cane throughout the expanding sugar belt. In St. Martin Parish, the parish in which Parks is located, sugar cane plantations emerged in the early nineteenth century and were particularly dominant in the southern half of the parish. As the plantations prospered, the demand for slaves grew and increasing numbers of Africans were brought into St. Martin Parish, many arriving via the slave entrepot of Charleston, South Carolina<sup>5</sup>. One easily speculates that these arrivals quickly learned how to function in the common language of the "seasoned" slaves, a French Creole, if the plantation was owned and operated by Frenchmen or West Indian

émigrés. In St. Martin Parish, this appears to have occurred. The language of command, French Creole, remarkably similar today to that spoken in Haiti, was thus strongly established in St. Martin Parish.

In St. Martinville, the parish seat located 8 miles south of Parks, older members of several black families recall hearing of Saint-Domingue from family forebearers. Significantly, these informants, although today identified as "black", are noticeably "coffee-colored" in complexion, a fact that testifies to the presence of white ancestors. Such individuals, in colonial and in pre-emancipation Louisiana, were referred to as *gens de couleur* and were often not slave but free. One informant, a Creole lady in her 60's, tells of a great aunt who arrived from Saint-Domingue in St. Martinville in the early 1800's. This lady, a free Creole of color, and other free Creoles of color who arrived in St. Martinville during the same period were fairly well-off by standards of the day. According to this informant and several others in St. Martinville, these non-white émigrés once owned over half the land on which the present town of St. Martinville stands. Some of this land remains in the family.

Other vestiges of the Saint-Domingue past are brought to mind as older members of Creole families vaguely remember the use locally of the Haitian term "carreau", a measurement of land equalling roughly 3.4 acres and used, to this writer's knowledge, only in Haiti. "Pas pli mal", the response to the Haitian greeting "Kouman ou ye", is still occasionally used among older Creoles in St. Martinville. Hence, in making the claim that Louisiana French Creole has strong ties with Haitian Creole, there is a wealth of supporting empirical data.

## THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE

The specific community examined in this paper is a village located roughly in the center of St. Martin Parish in South Central Louisiana. Before World War II, Parks existed in name as a village, but flourished more as a center of commerce and entertainment. Indeed, aerial photos from 1940 show only about 109 structures existing in the area of the present settlement of roughly 325 dwellings. Of the buildings shown in the 1940 aerial photos, it can be surmised by following today's established residence patterns that about fifty-nine of them, or fifty-four percent, were occupied by whites and that fifty, or forty-six percent, were occupied by blacks. Such a computation is facilitated by housing patterns in southern villages, towns, and cities where the black and white "sides" of town are highly segregated. In the case of Parks, blacks were relegated to the back street or were living adjacent to the village—"across the bayou". These 50 black households represent Park's "established" black community.

Information collected pertaining to characteristics of the established community paints a picture of it being a vibrant one with its members having some degree of mobility and of outside contact, largely with other blacks. This outside contact, it must be stressed, is an important factor determining Creole and English use in the black community throughout the twentieth century. While during this period the dominant language in Parks was undoubtedly Creole, English, it shall be seen, was also widely used. Many village men worked on railroads, hence, they travelled at least locally, if not further and they often worked with English-speakers or under English-speaking bosses. In addition to the railroad offering mobility and contact with the outside, other male members of the community left Parks, frequently only temporarily, in search of employment. Texas was the migrant's most common destination, but northern cities, particularly Chicago, also attracted black Creoles.

Chicago, and to a lesser extent other cities such as St. Louis and Kansas City, were instrumental in offering an important factor of black Creole contact and identification with the broad black American world. That factor was music and entertainment. Although New Orleans flourished as the United States jazz capital of the early twentieth century, attracting a host of local black musicians and setting trends for local black music, by the 1930's, Chicago had taken over as the jazz and blues capital of the country<sup>6</sup>. Minstrel shows, largely working out of Chicago, toured Parks yearly, each setting up its tent in the village and offering a weekend of music and burlesque. These minstrel shows, it is important to note, were performed by an all-black cast, exclusively in English, and played to an overwhelmingly black audience. Everyone who came followed the shows in English except, according to an informant now in his 70's, "some of those in the old generations who didn't know much of what was going on."

Parks was heralded by blacks throughout St. Martin Parish and in adjoining parishes as a center of black social life. It attracted not only minstrel shows, but also by being the only local community with a club and a dancehall for blacks, provided a venue for dances, probably the most important type of social gathering as this is one time when men and women of all ages would be together. In groups as large as two dozen, black folks from surrounding areas would pile into cane carts or onto flatbed trucks and journey to Parks for the minstrel shows and dances. At these dances, local jazz and blues bands provided live entertainment. The "Banner Jazz Band" from New Iberia, the "Yelpin' Hounds" from Crowley, and the "Washington Jazz Band" of Cade all included musicians from Parks and performed occasionally in the village<sup>7</sup>. Park's own "Black Diamond Band", however, dominated the music scene locally in the pre-World War II era, and their repertoire of jazz and blues songs included many popular national black hits of the time. The vocalists sang everything in English.

This allusion to music may seem a digression from the intended topic, but these details are presented to stress the fact that in the Parks village of the early decades of the twentieth century, outside contact with the broader black American, non-Creole world did exist, and, especially in the area of music and entertainment, influenced language comprehension and use considerably. After the war, when the big jazz bands went into an eclipse, the northern, big city influence continued to reign supreme, with the blues singers such as Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughan, and Billie Holiday becoming popular idols of the Parks black community.

#### THE PEOPLE IN THE "COUNTRY"

As shown in Figure 1, many, if not most, blacks did not reside in or adjacent to the village in the pre-World War II period, but rather were dispersed throughout the countryside on shareplots or were concentrated in a sugar cane plantation compound. These folks came into the village to partake in the enjoyment offered at the dances and minstrel shows, but their relative isolation in the countryside at a time when, for them, even local mobility was limited, meant that they did not participate directly as members of the large brass bands based in villages. For them, participation in music, like that of blacks throughout the rural South, revolved around simpler folk music that used as instruments whatever existed around the house that could be adapted to make music. This, then, illustrates the basis for the urban/rural distinction in American black music in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century that is frequently made by musicologists<sup>8</sup>. In the Parks rural context, country music was known as "la-la" or "zydeco", with the main instruments being percussion: a rubboard and various other percussion "tools". Button

accordians, available locally, were often used to provide a melody. Zydeco was largely an instrumental form of music, but when lyrics were involved, they were in both English and Creole. "La-la" bands were informally organized and did not appear at clubs and dance-halls, where the brass bands, playing jazz and blues, were preferred, until after the war when the piano accordion and electric guitar were added to many zydeco bands, and the rural residents, moving off the land and into the village, more or less brought the music into the village with them. Before the war, however, "la-la" groups were present at country social gatherings such as houseparties where they provided live music<sup>9</sup>. Hence, for country people, and to a lesser extent for those in or adjacent to the village, a Creole music form existed juxtaposed to the dominant jazz and blues of the brass bands. Hence, a dual musical world of an Afro-American mainstream and a local Creole folk music provided blacks in the Parks area with a diversity of entertainment.

As mentioned above, the complete attachment of rural folks to the land and to agriculture worked to restrict their mobility to not much beyond a 10 to 15 mile radius of their residence. In this context, the extended family offered the basis of individual identification, but still, their blackness worked to unite these folks with their village "cousins" and with blacks elsewhere in the United States. As the wide response in Parks to the recently televised series "Roots: The Next Generations" indicates, blacks living in either the country or the village suffered together under similar conditions of poverty, exploitation and injustice—conditions that united them into a single group.

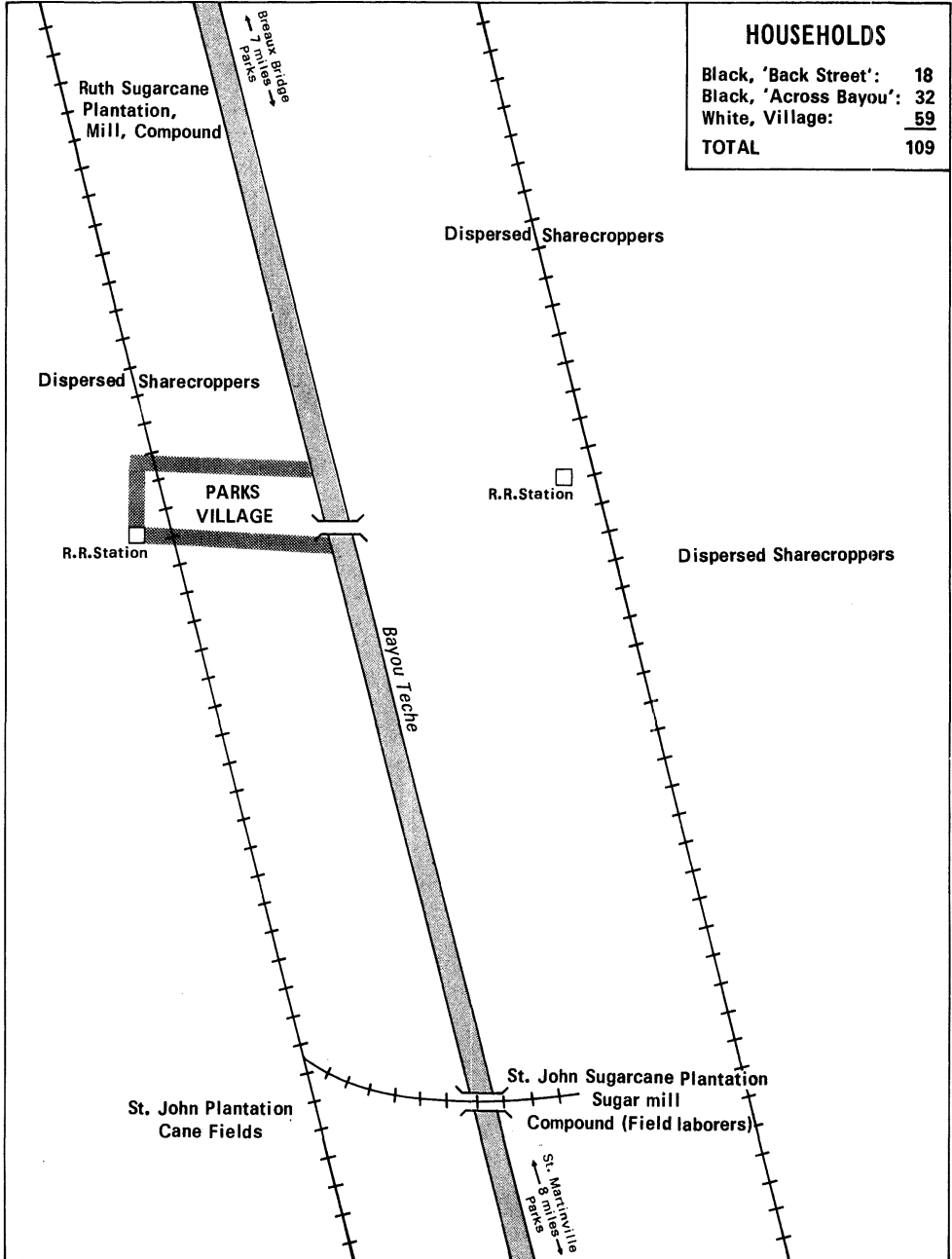
It is important to reiterate that although the country folks were certainly more isolated than the village dwellers, still, their isolation from the wider American and black American reality was far from complete, even in the early twentieth century. In the 1930's, for example, blacks in the entire Parks area were intimately affected by the statewide thrust toward literacy advocated by Huey P. Long, Louisiana's Governor during that period. By attending Long's adult night school classes, which were conducted in English (there was one such school established in Parks) and by learning to sign their names and read rudimentary English, blacks of both the town and the country, now able to sign their own crop payment cheques and hence receive full remuneration for their cane or cotton crop, learned an important lesson that even today is remembered and discussed. They learned that by being able to function in English there was some hope for their greater economic advancement. They also learned that alliances with outside, i.e. non-French, political forces could result in an improvement of their social, economic, and political status. This was a lesson Creoles would never forget and it is important to remember in the context of language use within today's community.

#### TODAY'S COMMUNITY

Since the post-World War II mechanization in agriculture and the coinciding agglomeration and consolidation of farm plots, rural residents have increasingly left the land and joined established blacks in receiving communities such as Parks. Indeed, Parks has drawn much off-the-land migration in the past 30 years. As Figure 2 shows, the black population of Parks has swelled to include at present some 190 households. This spectacular growth over four decades, which more than tripled the number of Creole households, would have been much more spectacular had not the massive out-migration of the late 1940's, the 1950's and 1960's and the early 1970's taken place. During this 30 years period, unemployed and underemployed Creoles fled Louisiana in dorves, heading west to Texas in search of greater economic and social opportunities<sup>10</sup>. In more than a few Parks families, over three-quarters of the siblings currently reside in East Texas cities. During a

Figure 1

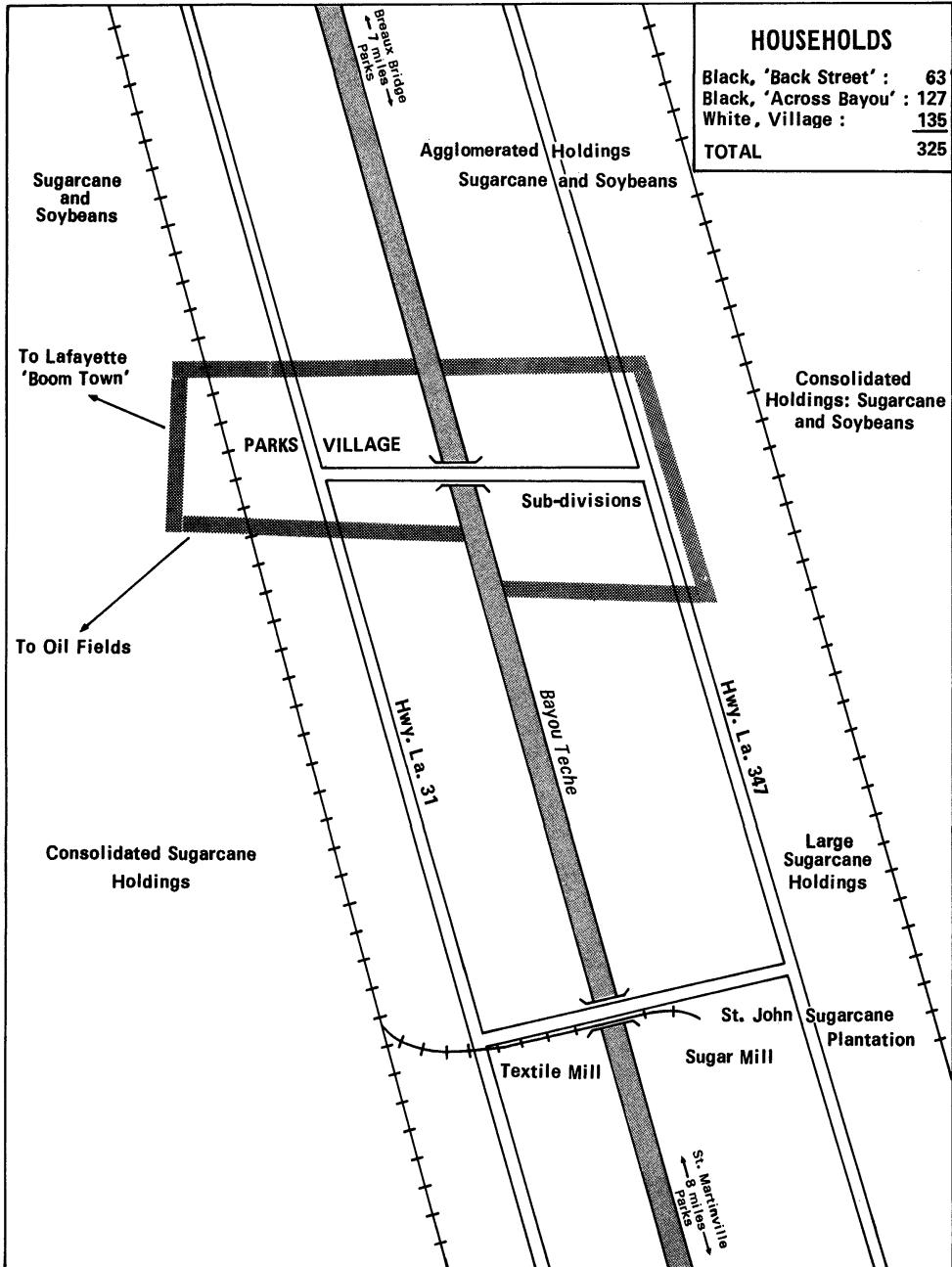
PARKS, LOUISIANA: PRE WORLD WAR TWO



Dessiné par Raymond Fortin

Figure 2

PARKS, LOUISIANA: 1979



Dessiné par Raymond Fortin



holiday like Christmas there are about as many cars in Parks with Texas license plates as there are with Louisiana plates as migrants and their families come home to visit family and friends.

Today, out-migration has virtually ceased, as the Creole blue collar labor force of Parks is in great demand to work at a nearby textile mill, in construction jobs, or in the oilfield industry. Cane is still the primary product of the area, although soybean cultivation now strongly competes for land, but with the massive agricultural mechanization that has taken place, very few blacks participate in that employment sector<sup>11</sup>. As the off-the-land migrants to Parks sink their roots deeper into their postage stamp-sized lots in the subdivisions where they now live, individual identification widens beyond that of the extended family to the black community as a whole. "Giving our community a name" is now an important desire of the black community's residents<sup>12</sup>.

Naturally, in an age of electronic communication and great individual mobility, contact with the outside world has increased tremendously from what it was in the pre-war era described above. For blacks of Parks, this increased outside contact has resulted in a greater awareness of the nationwide black struggle for equality and in a stronger Afro-American identification, as seen by the strong local identification, particularly among the youth, with black figures in sports, entertainment, and politics. In many homes, the same portrait seen by this writer in peasant homes in the West Indies, in ghetto apartments in Philadelphia, and in sharecroppers homes in North Central Florida: that of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Robert F. Kennedy together, is proudly displayed and represents, in a nutshell, the fact that today, for Creoles of Parks, the reality of being black men and black women is the important, unifying factor of who they are.

In the preceding outline of the language, the place, and the people, it is clear that Black Creoles of Parks, Louisiana retain a certain Creole identity while developing a dynamic identity as Afro-Americans. The information presented below on language use indicates that a dual identity emerges in this realm also, as the dynamic language, English, increasingly supercedes Creole, while each language is characteristically used by certain groups within the community and during particular situations. Before moving directly to data on language use, however, it is appropriate to comment on data sources, how data were obtained, and how they are presented.

#### DATA COLLECTION AND ORGANIZATION

Data for this study were collected primarily through participant observation in the study area over a 2 year period, informal interviews with residents of Parks and surrounding areas, and formal household interviews administered in the Parks black community. These interviews sought information on a host of cultural, economic, and social factors. Many questions in the formal household interview dealt directly with language use. Interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. It is from the formal household interviews that statistical data on language use presented herein are extrapolated. Empirical data complement that originating from the formal interviews.

Formal interviews were usually conducted with both male and female household heads in the language of their preference. Interviews were administered in 15 Creole households in Parks, an 8 percent sample. It is important to note that the neighborhood selected at random for sampling largely covers a part of one of the sub-divisions that acted as a destination for Creole off-the-land migration over the past 20-30 years. Hence, the "established" Creole community is not well-represented in the sample. In terms of language use, this may have the effect of displaying less English use among those 40 and

older than is common for the village as a whole. Of the 15 interviews conducted, 6 of them, or 40 percent were conducted in English, while 9, or 60 percent were done in Creole.

In the tables below, the sample is divided into three age groups: Group I (20's and 30's); Group II (40's and 50's); and Group III (60's and older). Informants ranged from 19 to 34 years old in Group I; 46 to 57 in Group II; and 63 to 87 in Group III. Five interviews were administered in each of the 3 generational groups. In Group I, all interviews were conducted in English; in Group II all were in Creole; and in Group III 4 of the 5 interviews were in Creole.

Several mitigating factors existed to present potential and real problems affecting both the language use preference and the accuracy of response. These are:

1. The Stranger Factor: There is a tendency for Park's residents to speak English to outsiders, particularly to strangers, because they naturally assume the outsider does not understand or speak Creole. Informants have subsequently told me they spoke to me in English at first because of this assumption, but then felt able, if desired, to switch to Creole upon discovering I could speak it.

2. The Intimidation Factor: The presence of a strange, yet amiable, white male in the Parks black community led to potential and real problems of candor or lack of such. In the study area, it is largely unprecedented for a white individual to socialize with non-whites or even to enter the homes of blacks, except for such reasons as bill collection or insurance sales. In fact, many informants, when initially approached to do an interview, responded: "O.K., but how much will this cost?" Traditionally, black/white relations are those of client/patron. Hence, there is also a tendency, particularly among older members of the community, to tell white folks what they think the white folks want to hear and/or to "mask" or just "forget" controversial and/or unpleasant matters.

Subsequent establishment of close rapport throughout the community has given the writer an opportunity to correct, clarify, and/or expand upon much of the "masked" or "forgotten" information. Responses in both formal and informal interviews concerning language use have been shown to be basically accurate.

As a final note, before moving onto the data on language use, an "N" factor is given with each table, indicating the number of informants responding to a particular question. Variation in the "N" factor is usually due to the absence of either the male or female household head at the time of the interview.

## LANGUAGE USE IN PARKS

Six tables outlining data on language use collected from the formal household interviews serve to present a picture of Creole and English use in Parks. Each table is discussed and implications are drawn from both the statistical data and additional supportive empirical findings.

- Table 1: I. "Quel langue zaut parle ensembi'?" (What language do you speak together?)
- II. "Vo' Papa/Mama parle Créole? Vo' Papa/Mama parle Anglais?" (Do your Father/Mother speak Creole? Do your Father/Mother speak English?)

*Discussion:* I. Language Spoken Together:

Responses to this question display marked generational differences in Creole and English use among married couples. In the youngest group (Group I: 20's and 30's), the language spoken together is overwhelmingly English, whereas in the other two groups (Group II: 40's and 50's; Group III: 60's and older) Creole emerges as the dominant language<sup>13</sup>.

II. Language Parents of Informants Speak or Spoke:

From the table, it is apparent that most parents are essentially bilingual, although the parents of those 40 and older are clearly dominant Creole speakers. Often these parents use Creole all of the time. A typical response among informants from these two groups is that their parents speak Creole and English, but just a little of the latter<sup>14</sup>.

Parents of informants in their 20's and 30's strongly display the use of both English and Creole. A common response from individuals interviewed in this group is that their parents speak Creole together, but use only English when speaking to the children. The comments of two informants vividly portray this tendency:

Informant I (male, 30): "You see, what happened, when my mother and my grandmother were talking, they'd always send us to go and play outside. We never really got a chance to learn it (Creole), 'cause my daddy and my mother never spoke it."

Informant II (male, 20): "But he (father, never speaks it to us. He never did say nothing to me in Creole. Him and my mother, they speak Creole all the time."

**Table 1**

I. "Quel langue zaut parle ensembl'?"  
 II. "Vo' papa/mama parle Créole?"  
 "Vo' papa/mama parle Anglais?"

		<i>Tout le temps créole</i>	<i>Les deux</i>	<i>Tout le temps anglais</i>
60 ans et plus (n = 5)	I. ....	40% (2)	40% (2)	20% (1)
	II. ....	53% (10)	47% (9)	—
40-50 (n = 5)	I. ....	60% (3)	40% (2)	—
	II. ....	50% (10)	40%(10)	—
20-30 (n = 5)	I. ....	—	—	100% (5)
	II. ....	5% (1)	85% (17)	10% (2)
TOTAL (n = 15)	I. ....	33% (5)	27% (4)	40% (6)
	II. ....	36% (21)	62% (36)	3% (2)

This general situation, where parents speak Creole together but try to keep the children out of range when speaking Creole by sending them outside is reported repeatedly by various members of the community in this general age group. Table 1, then, shows that although both languages are used to some extent by practically all age groups, an increasing use of English among couples and by parents is evident. Overall, the general shift of greater frequency of response from left to right on the table as one moves down the generations supports this statement.

Table 2: III. "Vos enfants, yé parle Créole 'vec vous autres?" (Do your children speak Creole with you?)

*Discussion:* Clearly, responses to this question indicate that children use less Creole with their parents than parents use together and than grandparents speak. Especially in the 40's and 50's group, where Creole use is strong among adults, a picture emerges of children speaking English to parents and parents speaking Creole together. Again, however, sequential generational differences from oldest to youngest indicate a general shift from considerable Creole use to dominant English use. English is used exclusively by the youngest children of the family. For the community as a whole, the data indicate that children overwhelmingly (63 percent) speak English with their parents.

Table 2

## III. "Vos enfants, yé parle Créole 'vec vous autres?"

		<i>Tout le temps créole</i>	<i>Les deux</i>	<i>Tout le temps anglais</i>
60 ans et plus	père .....	—	67% (2)	33% (1)
	mère .....	40% (2)	40% (2)	20% (1)
	les deux (n = 8) .....	25% (2)	50% (4)	25% (2)
40-50	père .....	—	50% (2)	50% (2)
	mère .....	—	40% (2)	60% (3)
	les deux (n = 9) .....	—	45% (4)	55% (5)
20-30	père .....	—	—	100% (5)
	mère .....	—	—	100% (5)
	les deux (n = 10) .....	—	—	100% (10)
TOTAL	père .....	—	33% (4)	67% (8)
	mère .....	13% (2)	27% (4)	60% (9)
	les deux (n = 27) .....	7% (2)	30% (8)	63% (17)

Table 2 differentiates between male and female responses to the question. The data indicate little difference in the language spoken by children to their parents according to parent's sex. But one informant, by elaborating, "mama, she always does all the Creole talking to us", suggests that perhaps this slightly higher Creole use by children to their mother, as indicated in the table, could have some significance. The question: Are women stronger Creole speakers and/or purveyors of the language within the family?—deserves further attention. As seen below, data collected in response to another question shed further, positive, light on this possibility.

It is significant to note that a response of "les deux" (the children speak both languages to parents) means either a particular child mixes Creole and English with his or her parents, or, some children in the household speak Creole with their parents whereas other children speak English. Generational and/or locational differences among siblings appear to have a strong influence on which of the two "les deux" situations applies.

The following examples illustrate each possibility:

Example One: An informant in her 60's, a strong Creole speaker with 12 children, indicates that the oldest child, 40, who lives in Parks, speaks Creole with her. The next 10 children also speak Creole, except one living in Texas, who uses more English. The youngest child, 20, living at home, speaks to her primarily in English.

Example Two: An informant in his 60's, a strong Creole speaker with 4 children, indicates that the oldest child, 39, who lives in Parks, speaks only Creole with him and his wife. The next three siblings, the youngest being 23, all live in Texas and use both English and Creole when speaking to their parents, though the parents say English dominates.

Table 3: Tables One and Two Combined

*Discussion:* The general shift toward greater use of English from the oldest to youngest generation becomes clear when these first two tables are combined. Responses point out that Groups II and III interchange Creole and English frequently, whereas Group I rarely uses Creole in the family circle. The strength of Creole use by the middle group, those in their 40's and 50's, vividly indicates a strong transmission of the language from the previous generation. It is useful to point out, when speculating why this generation has so strongly retained Creole, that it was this generation that, as youngsters, moved off the land and into the village "sub-divisions", and it is this generation, with their parents, that brought "la-la" into the village with them and are today, often with their parents, highly visible at the "zydeco" dances held occasionally in the village. Clearly, this is the "linguistic transitional generation", speaking Creole with their parents, Creole and English together, and English with their children.

Table 3

(I. Quel langue zaut parle ensembl'?)  
(II. Vo' papa/mama parle Créole/Anglais?)  
(III. Vos enfants parle Créole 'vec vous autres?)

		Tout le temps créole	Les deux	Tout le temps anglais
60 ans et plus	II. ....	53%	47%	—
	I. ....	40%	40%	20%
	III. ....	25%	50%	25%
40-50	II. ....	50%	50%	—
	I. ....	60%	40%	—
	III. ....	—	45%	55%
20-30	II. ....	5%	85%	10%
	I. ....	—	—	100%
	III. ....	—	—	100%
TOTAL	II. ....	36%	62%	3%
	I. ....	33%	27%	40%
	III. ....	7%	30%	63%

The data indicate an apparent strong rejection of Creole by informants in Group I and their children. Significantly, the parents of those in this youngest group invariably speak both languages, but evidently their children have opted heavily for predominant English use in family circles.

For the community in general, the data show that, over the generations, there has been, and to a lesser extent, still is, Creole spoken among family members. Apparently, at least some grandparents speak Creole or a mix of Creole and English to their grandchildren. Indeed, repeated observations verify that Creole is sometimes heard at family gatherings that cut across generations. Hence, the next question to analyse is: do the family's

predominant Creole speakers speak Creole to the youngest children of the family? Responses to this question shed critical insights to understanding the nature of and reason for specific patterns of Creole and English use within family circles.

Table 4: "Vo' parle à des petits en Créole?" (Do you speak to children in Creole?)

*Discussion:* Before discussing responses to this question, it is necessary to point out that there was some confusion among informants on the exact meaning of "des petits" as used in this question. Some respondents interpreted the phrase to mean "my children", whereas other, the majority, believed it referred to "children in the community" in general. Hence, responses pertain specifically to either children in the family or all children in Parks. Nevertheless, as no distinction is made by informants between language use with children in the former and latter groups, answers to this question certainly reflect language use patterns within the family.

In comparison with previously discussed data, responses here indicate significantly less Creole use as the overwhelming majority of adults address children exclusively in English. Indeed, no informants reported using Creole all the time when speaking to little ones. A few informants occasionally use some Creole with youngsters. Of this group, a slightly higher percentage appears among those in their 40's and 50's, but this is due to the existence in the sample of the older couple who speak English exclusively (see footnote 13).

Of potential significance, however, is the indication that female informants sometimes address children in Creole more so than males of the same age group. The data in Table 6 lend additional support to the suggestion made above that perhaps women are the purveyors of Creole within the household. Certainly, further investigation into this aspect of Creole use and transmission is needed.

Table 4

IV. "Vo' parle à des petits en Créole?"

		<i>Tout le temps créole</i>	<i>Les deux</i>	<i>Tout le temps anglais</i>
60 ans et plus	Hommes .....	—	—	100% (3)
	Femmes .....	—	50% (1)	50% (1)
	Les deux (n = 5) .....	—	20% (1)	80% (4)
40-50	Hommes .....	—	33% (1)	67% (2)
	Femmes .....	—	67% (2)	33% (1)
	Les deux (n = 6) .....	—	50% (3)	50% (3)
20-30	Hommes .....	—	—	100% (5)
	Femmes .....	—	—	100% (5)
	Les deux (n = 10) .....	—	—	100% (10)
TOTAL	Hommes .....	—	9% (1)	91% (10)
	Femmes .....	—	30% (3)	70% (7)
	Les deux (n = 21) .....	—	19% (4)	81% (17)

Empirical observations repeatedly bear witness to situations where grandparents speak Creole with older family members or with contemporaries only to turn to children or grandchildren and address them in English. For example, one informant, a practically unilingual Creole speaker in his 50's, characteristically speaks Creole with adults, but struggles to communicate with his grandson using the few words of English he knows. In another case just before commencing the formal interview, the informant, in his 60's, was

playing with two grandchildren and speaking to them exclusively in English. For the interview, however, he expressed a preference to speak Creole and then sent his grandchildren outside to play before he made the linguistic transition.

Lengthy explanations on the question of language use with children by several informants offer important insights for understanding this common behavior:

Male, 43 years old: "When I started school at 6 years old, all I knew was Creole. The old people, they never speak English. They talk it now to somebody who would come and talk English with them. They speak it to the children. Yeah, with the children cause the children don't talk it (Creole) too much. They think they're trying to benefit the children with that because they knew the problem we had when we started school. It was hard. Like her (wife), she flunked in first grade (because she only knew how to speak Creole.)"

Female, 27 years old: "All the people around here, as Frenchmen that we are, we don't speak it to the little kids. I don't know, it's just something we learned the English way and we don't teach those children to speak that Creole... And it's a very funny thing. My daddy don't know how to speak English that well, but he will not talk Creole to my children. He won't. Everything he'll ask them will be in English. It could be broken down. He could be saying words that probably those children, they wouldn't understand, but he'll try to speak English to 'em. And all the rest, nobody will speak French. The only thing, my auntie sometimes, through clownin', she'll tell my little boy something in Creole. And he'll laugh then, and they'll laugh. But otherwise, no."

Both speakers offer comments on the rules governing language use with children. The first explains that Creole is not used with children in order to avoid problems faced by earlier generations in school when they arrived speaking Creole exclusively. The second adds to the growing body of evidence that women transmit Creole to children in a family situation when she explains that it is a female member of the family, an aunt, who is the only one to speak at least some Creole with her son. Of significance, she uses it only when "clowning" or joking, but nevertheless, through his positive response to what she says, the child understands Creole.

A comment from another informant, in her 70's, indicates that in certain situations when an older person starts a conversation with children in Creole, the children ultimately determine which language the adult uses, which is English. "Very rare," she states, "do I speak Creole with children. They speak English when I speak Creole. If they speak in English, I speak English."

Curiously, another female informant, in her 60's, comments that regardless of this situation, she speaks Creole with her grandchildren. "Yes, I speak with them in Creole," she claims. "They answer me in English. I speak Creole with all my grandchildren, but they answer me in English." In an immediate contradiction of this statement, however, during the interview the informant, who was speaking Creole, often broke away and spoke to a grandchild—in English!

Hence, the language spoken to children by adults is overwhelmingly English. The critical explanation of why this is so seems to relate to the belief among adults that children should have as much knowledge of English as possible before starting school in order to ensure their success there. Thus, family members who might normally speak Creole are conscious to address children in English to try to help them reach this objective. It is logical, then, to ask, whether children speak and/or understand Creole since so few adults address them in the language. From the above discussion, one surmises that children would have difficulty understanding the language, let alone speaking it. Data in Table Five indicate that this may not be the case.

Table 5: "Vos enfants parle Créole?" (Do your children speak Creole?) "Vos enfants comprend Créole?" (Do your children understand Creole?)

*Discussion:* In keeping with the general trend apparent in the preceding tables, the overall response to this question shows increasing English use from oldest to youngest generations with the youngest apparently not speaking or understanding much Creole. It must be noted, however, that the children of parents in the youngest informant group are often just learning to speak. It is significant, however, that the first language they are learning is, unlike that of the 34 year old informant quoted above, exclusively English.

Changes in Creole speaking and understanding skills over the generations are shown by the interview data. Children of parents now 60 and older can generally both speak and understand Creole. Siblings of parents now in their 40's and 50's, however, display less speaking ability while retaining a strong capability of Creole comprehension, and children of respondents now in their 20's and 30's show, at this point in their linguistic development, much less ability to understand and even less ability to speak Creole. In general, empirical findings support the general trends shown on the table, but they point to important qualifications that must be made to the data.

The data in Table 5 suggest that teenagers are generally passive bilinguals. Empirical findings support this contention, as generally when teenagers overhear old folks speaking Creole together, they obviously understand the overall substance of what is being discussed. Conversations sometimes take place between adults and teenagers where the former speak Creole and the latter answer in English. It is not frequent, however, that old folks address adolescents in Creole, anywhere or at anytime. This may be due to more than a reluctance of adults to speak Creole to youngsters for reasons cited above. Old people may feel that the adolescents simply won't understand everything they say in Creole. One example of a Creole/English exchange between old and young vividly illustrates this possibility. On one particular occasion, during a sweet potato harvest at which men from several families and from age 72 to 14 were present, orders were given by the older men to the teenagers. On several occasions, orders were given in Creole, but then immediately repeated in English, presumably to make sure the first order was understood completely. Of course, Creole/English repetition of commands is also a part of the Creole learning process of the young.

Table 5

V. "Vos enfants parle Créole?"  
VI. "Vos enfants comprend Créole?"

		<i>Oui</i>	<i>Certains : Oui D'autres : non</i>	<i>Non</i>
60 ans et plus (n = 5)	parle . . . . .	80% (4)	—	20% (1)
	comprend . . . . .	100% (5)	—	—
40-50 (n = 4)	parle . . . . .	25% (1)	50% (2)	25% (1)
	comprend . . . . .	100% (5)	—	—
20-30 (n = 4)	parle . . . . .	—	25% (1)	75% (3)
	comprend . . . . .	25% (1)	50% (2)	25% (1)
TOTAL (n = 13)	parle . . . . .	38% (5)	24% (3)	38% (5)
	comprend . . . . .	77% (10)	15%	8% (1)



Several direct comments from informants indicate that although older people and family members in general do not speak Creole with children, the younger generation will learn to understand, if not to speak, Creole as they grow up in the streets of Parks. Indeed, it is expected that children will learn Creole this way. In one such case a female informant, 33, says, when speaking of her sister's children who live in the back street of an "across the bayou" sub-division, "they live in the back and are under the influence (of Creole), I'm sure they understand it. They live in back of my mother's house, so they're really into that Creole. They're 14, 11, and 6, and they're good at Creole. When you live by old people that's all they speak. That's what the old people speak and then the kids pick it up."

Another female informant, 47, says of her two teenage daughters, "No, I never hear them (speak Creole). They don't speak it with me. I never speak French to them. I'm sure they understand. My daughter, if I say something in French to her, she's gonna answer me in English, (but) she'll understand it."

Clearly, from these and other similar comments, it is obvious that although old people, as a rule, do not speak Creole with children, the youngsters learn the language from being around the old people and hearing them speak it together. In many instances, when asking teenagers and young adults why they feel it is useful to learn Creole, the response is that Creole is learned for self-protection: one must understand at least the basics of Creole when living in Parks so people cannot "talk on you". Comments of one informant in his early 30's, whose parents spoke Creole, but who himself did not know much Creole when he came to Parks from a few miles away to marry and live in the village with his Parks wife are very insightful in this regard:

"I learned a little bit and I can understand it better that I can speak it when I start living over here in Parks. Half the time when I be down there on the corner everybody be speaking it, man. When they laughed, I laughed, but most of the time I didn't know what they was saying. But you can't talk on me in Creole. I know. I picked it up. My kids, well, I think they'll be able to understand the difference between Creole and English and they'll be like me: understand enough to know if somebody's talking on you. They gonna pick it up. They got to. Enough to understand."

This enlightening comment points to several critical factors of Creole use in Parks today and the continued survival of Creole in the village in the face of increasing dominance of English in family circles. First it is assumed that the children will learn at least enough Creole to be able to understand it, and second, they will learn it not necessarily in the home, but "on the corner" where "everybody be speaking it."

This leads directly to a discussion of the next set of data which examines the extent of Creole as a social language among friends and neighbors in the village. It has been implied in much of the above that Creole is not frequently used by adults around the home in the presence of children. In what situations, then, do adults use Creole? After a discussion of informant response and related empirical data, the apparent answer to this question surfaces. It is strongly suggested that the survival of Creole may not rest with the family as much as it may be dependent on its continued use as a social language "on the corner."

Table 6: VII. "Quel langue to parle 'vec l'aut' mon' comme des amis ou des voisins zaut rencont' souvent quand zaut ensembl'?" (What language do you speak with other people like friends and neighbors you see often when you are together?)

*Discussion:* Table 6 shows a great mixture of Creole and English use when friends and neighbors of Parks get together socially, be it for card games, bingo parties, wakes, funerals, or merely to chat at homes or at the socialization centers around the village. Sometimes these social groups cut across generations, while other times they are composed of

individuals of the same age group. Usually, social gatherings are sexually segregated. Even at family affairs like house parties, barbecues and "boucheries"<sup>15</sup>, sexual segregation is the rule, with womenfolk in one group and menfolk in another. Although the generational or sexual composition of a group often plays a determining role in deciding language use, another important factor emerges to almost dictate whether Creole or English will be used when adults get together socially. This factor is the key to helping to explain why, as Table 6 shows, Creole is used more frequently at social gatherings than at home among family members.

The presence or absence of children during gatherings clearly affects language use. At clubs, card games, and other social gatherings, children are rarely present or directly involved in the proceedings. Hence, adults can comfortably use Creole on these occasions. Social use of Creole occurs widely among all age groups during these situations, but is especially strong with those in their 40's and 50's. At home, when the children are around and perhaps even directly involved in the social activity, Creole is less comfortably used. Indeed, as comments above have hinted, its use is avoided and English is put forth as an example for the children. Hence, in household circles, where children are present, Creole is used much less than at social gatherings where children do not appear.

Table 6

VII. "Quel langue to parle 'vec l'aut' mon' comme des amis ou des voisins zaut rencont' souvent quand zaut ensemb'?"

		<i>Tout le temps créole</i>	<i>Les deux</i>	<i>Tout le temps anglais</i>
60 ans et plus	Hommes . . . . .	33% (1)	33% (1)	33% (1)
	Femmes . . . . .	50% (2)	25% (1)	25% (1)
	Les deux (n = 7) . . . . .	44% (3)	28% (2)	28% (2)
40-50	Hommes . . . . .	—	100% (3)	—
	Femmes . . . . .	25% (1)	75% (3)	—
	Les deux (n = 7) . . . . .	14% (1)	86% (6)	—
20-30	Hommes . . . . .	—	40% (2)	60% (3)
	Femmes . . . . .	—	60% (3)	40% (2)
	Les deux (n = 10) . . . . .	—	50% (5)	50% (5)
TOTAL	Hommes . . . . .	9% (1)	55% (6)	36% (4)
	Femmes . . . . .	23% (3)	54% (7)	23% (3)
	Les deux (n = 24) . . . . .	17% (4)	54% (13)	29% (7)

Even though the presence or absence of children is perhaps the single most important factor determining language use among adults, within adult groups, generational differences of group members can influence language use. Two comments of a female informant, 29, illustrate how this works. When together with her contemporaries, i.e., women of roughly the same age as her, she states emphatically, "you'll never catch us talking that Creole." But when she is included in a group composed largely of older women, e.g. a home rosary society, she does speak Creole<sup>16</sup>. Clearly, Table 6 shows there is a trend toward greater English use among those in their 20's and 30's than those in older age groups, and empirical data generally support this finding. Language use patterns in social groups roughly parallel language use patterns among couples of the three generational groups in Table One. That is, villagers in their 20's and 30's tend to speak English together, whereas those in their 40's and older freely mix Creole and English. The extent of Creole use by those in the youngest group, however, is much greater socially, than it is at home, where all couples in this age group report using English all the time.

From empirical and interview data, it is difficult to make a general statement concerning language use among groups according to composition by sex. Table Six shows an overall slightly greater use by women than by men and supports the general feeling that emerged from the at home data that women use the language somewhat more than men. On numerous occasions, at social gatherings where there are both men and women, but socially segregated in adjacent groups, men speak Creole while women converse in English; or men converse in English while women use Creole. Less frequently, however, do men and women talk freely together in Creole, although this does happen both in family and at social situations. Generally, there appears to be no specific rules governing language use at social gatherings and Creole and English are freely mixed. The latter clearly dominates when groups are composed primarily of those in their 20's and 30's, whereas the former emerges more frequently when the group is dominated by those in their 40's and older.

There are certain social situations when Creole is more likely to be heard or its use seems to be appropriate, just as there are occasions that seem to call for English use. A brief summary of situational uses of Creole and English is presented as the final section of this paper. Before moving to that section, the above discussion of language use is summarized.

## SUMMARY

Presented above is an intimate but certainly not an absolute and complete picture of language use in Parks. Many questions remain unanswered or only partially answered. Nevertheless, several important characteristics of language use among Black Creoles in Parks do emerge from the data. In summary, they are:

1. There is a high incidence of both English and Creole use among all residents of Parks. Two major determinants of language use are the age of the speaker and the presence or absence of children when a conversation is taking place.
2. Among members of the youngest group in the sample, those in their 20's and 30's, there is clearly a movement away from Creole toward increasing English dominance. This general trend is particularly noticeable when Creole use (or the lack of) in this group is compared with that of the previous generation, those in their 40's and 50's, who emerge as strong Creole speakers. The oldest group, those 60 and older, are strong Creole speakers, although a general capacity to communicate in English, especially with the children, does exist among those in this group. The 40's and 50's group is seen as the "transition generation", with its members speaking both Creole and English frequently and freely.
3. Even though it is clear that the parents of those in their 40's and older speak or spoke mainly Creole, there are indications that as far back as 80 or 100 years ago, blacks in the general vicinity of Parks were capable of understanding and functioning somewhat in English<sup>17</sup>. The need and desirability for blacks in and around Parks to effectively function in English was described in the first section of this paper, which points out how English became an important part of local black reality as early as the first decades of the 20th century.
4. In Parks today, Creole is used more as a social language than as a family language. The presence or absence of children is critical in establishing this general characteristic of language use. At home, where children are present, English is consciously used in order to give children a grounding in the language they will have to master in order

- to successfully function as active members of the economy and society beyond the boundaries of the village, whereas in social situations where children are not present, Creole is more comfortably used among adults.
5. There are indications that women, not men, are the stronger purveyors of Creole, particularly within family circles. It is the women who are more likely to speak Creole with children.
  6. Although Creole is largely avoided in the presence of children at home, children learn to understand the language from overhearing old people speak Creole among themselves and from being "down on the corner", where it becomes necessary to know Creole so people cannot "talk on you." It is expected that children will "pick up" Creole by being around old folks and by hearing it used in social contexts, a widespread community assumption that supports the contention that in Parks Creole is strongest as a social language.
  7. Among adolescents, there is a high degree of passive bilingualism, i.e. being able to understand Creole, but not speaking it. Whether this group will speak Creole as it gets older and be able to transmit the language to successive generations is a question that must remain unanswered. With the increasing domination of English and a coincident lessening of Creole use among young adults, the future of Creole as a spoken language does not appear bright.

#### SITUATIONS OF LANGUAGE USE IN PARKS

One can pass through Parks or even stop and stay awhile and hardly ever hear a word of Creole spoken. It will not be heard primarily because people will naturally assume the stranger, as an outsider, cannot speak or understand it, so he will be addressed in English. But even as a resident of Parks, there are various social functions one may attend and certain groups with which one may socialize and still not hear any Creole spoken.

At teenage functions, for example, Creole is not heard. In general, when males and females under 30 socialize, Creole is not heard. In fact, to use Creole on these occasions, even if one is capable, is considered inappropriate. In fact, Creole becomes virtually taboo. Consider the following situations: if a young man anxious to impress a young lady addresses her in Creole—if he can—he is taking a chance that she will not understand him and she will not be impressed with him. Surely, she will respond in English anyway, because if she attempts to converse in Creole she will be labelled "country"—an anathema dreaded by most, if not all, of those in the adolescent group. At school functions, such as sporting events and concerts, and at school itself, Creole is not heard at all, except when somebody, through clowning, may exclaim a few words or utter an expression in Creole. "To fou, Ronald. You're crazy," exclaimed the 16 years old girl as Ronald evidently told her, in English, about something he had done over the weekend.

Clowning is an important part of Creole use among practically all the folks of Parks. Frequently, funny stories are related in Creole, particularly among men. When a specific story is finished or the topic of conversation changes, the flow usually meanders to English. Recently in Parks, for example, as countless stories of past Mardi Gras were retold at a village hang-out frequented primarily by males of all ages, these stories were often told completely or partly in Creole by men in their late 20's and early 30's to a group that ranged in age from about 17 to 40. Obviously, during such times, there is much impromptu language switching.

At weddings Creole is rarely, if ever used. Weddings are events for the young and dominated by the young, hence English dominates and Creole is very well submerged. From pre-wedding gatherings, through the ceremony, and to the wedding dance that follows, English is used almost exclusively.

In Louisiana, a good measure of language use at social gatherings is found at political functions, for these are frequent and attract a cross-section of the community. In the case of Parks, the only political event in the village completely organized and participated in by blacks since at least Reconstruction in the 1870's occurred in the spring of 1978 when black candidates ran for mayor and town councilman. At the one and only political meeting for these black contenders, the language used was exclusively English. There appeared to be no need to ascertain identity through the use of Creole. A possible explanation for this phenomenon and the one to which the author subscribes is based upon the following logic: "we know you're one of us simply by your race and birthplace. You don't have to prove it by other means. We want you to function in English. You will have to do that to represent us and procure benefits for us, especially from outsiders in state and federal government who have previously, occasionally assisted us as blacks. So let us hear you speak in English. And anyway, everybody at least understands English nowadays, but surely some of these teenagers who can vote won't understand everything you say if you speak Creole." An indication of this kind of thinking was reflected in the emotional climax of the meeting, a soul-stirring rendition of the civil rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome", during which everyone in the small meeting hall sang vociferously, some with tears in their eyes.

Of course, Creole, as the above tables on language use have shown, is used in Parks among certain members of the community according to circumstances existing at the time of the conversation. Presented below is a broad list of circumstances in addition to those already mentioned when Creole is commonly used.

1. Although English is practically always the dominant language, at certain traditional or "country" activities such as Trail Rides<sup>18</sup>, cooperative harvests or a "coup de main", hunting, and French dances, i.e. when an accordian band plays, Creole is often used. With the exception of dances, these activities are basically all male events. While the men are engaged in their activity, the womenfolk may gather on their own. Thus, in one extended Creole family it is traditional that while memfolk are out hunting the womenfolk gather at the home of the family matriarch to talk and listen to old blues records. This activity is English dominated. Even when women do participate in "country" events, they are rarely heard using Creole in public.
2. In times of stress, Creole is sometimes used by both men and women, and usually, though not exclusively, by people in their 30's and older. Hence, when the mother of a woman in her 40's slipped and fell, the daughter and her sisters, in a rare public demonstration of Creole, cried out in distress in Creole. A cane farmer in his late 50's, when angry at his adolescent sons during work in the field, once lost his temper and momentarily shouted at them in Creole. His sons understood—if not the language, certainly the inflection of his voice, and the man, still hopping mad, continued his tirade, but switched to English. A musician in his late 20's who found himself in a compromising position late one night gave a rare demonstration of his capability to function in Creole as he enlisted the support of an acquaintance to help him out of his dilemma.
3. Creole can be used among Parks residents as a "secret language." Such is the case when workers from Parks, both male and female, at a nearby textile mill sometimes

converse in Creole when their non-Creole speaking supervisor is passing and they do not want him to know what they are saying. One informant, a man in his mid-30's, in a rambling but insightful narrative on Creole use in public supports the "secret language" concept, but adds to it a dimension that is very rarely expressed—a certain pride in using Creole and in being a Creole.

"Well, to tell you the truth, nowadays if you're a Creole, people mock you... I'm proud of it, me. I like to let them know. Like I go to Houston and go to a bar or a restaurant. And I like to talk it with my friends, and they speak it too. Oh, most of the guys, if we go into a restaurant or something, we like to make people stare at us. Most of them don't know what we're saying. We like to talk it, and we talk it loud. Let 'em know we're from the southland."

"And I like to let them know I'm a Creole, man, and I'm proud of it. What it (being a Creole) means, I don't know. I'm proud of me as a Frenchman. If you're a Frenchman, you're a Frenchman. If you're a Creole, you're a Creole. If you speak Caucasian, you speak Caucasian. There ain't nothing wrong with that. That's the way I look at it. Now maybe some people see it different. Maybe they meant it a bad name, you know, they meant to call you a bad name with that. It don't bug me. I'm Creole. I let them know I'm Creole and I'm not ashamed of it wherever I go. That's all it is."

This kind of sentiment is rarely expressed and the occasional use of Creole in public places other than as a "secret language" among those with proven and trusted identities is not at all common. Perhaps more common, especially among the youth, is the sentiment expressed by another man from Parks, a few years younger than the individual cited above:

"If I were to go to Chicago they would call me a Creole... because of my accent. But I'm going to tell you, you got some guys right over here; you call them a Creole and they're gonna get mad. Younger guys. You got some who just don't care (for that). They don't like for you to call them a Frenchman. They sure don't like that."

4. The public use of Creole as a symbol of commonness and identity among group members can be strong on certain occasions. For example, at times when Creoles from Parks now living in Houston or elsewhere in East Texas get together with their "home-boys" from Parks, "cutting-up" sessions, or clowning, in Creole take place, especially among men. When the Stone Junkies, Park's illustrious softball team, travels to Houston to participate in a softball tournament, more Creole is used in one night in Houston at pre-tournament festivities, dance halls, and clubs than might be heard in a week in Parks, as friends and relatives "cut-up" and clearly reinforce bonds of common origin. Although Creole use during these occasions primarily occurs through clowning, serious conversation in Creole among past and present Parks residents sometimes takes place.

The same language use patterns exist in Parks when the "cousins" from Houston travel over to Parks for a holiday visit or for a wake. One hears more Creole in public places in Parks on one night than normally heard in a week. Hence, Creole is used among people of trusted identities and it affirms the common origin of the group members.

All in all, then, in Parks, English and Creole are used in various cultural spheres and among certain groups. There is much language switching according to time and place, and general rules that dictate language use are simply difficult to make. Clearly, however, Creole emerges as a rather private language in the sense that it is not broadcast to outsiders, but is used in certain situations where a community "in-group" exists. It sometimes functions as a symbol of identity between former and present residents of the community. Today, Creole and English are both living languages in a vibrant, growing community.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The highly publicized migration of Acadians from what today is Nova Scotia to Louisiana, commonly called "le grand dérangement" was smaller in number than the less publicized movement of émigrés from Saint-Domingue to Louisiana around the time of the Haitian slave insurrection for independence. Hence, the use here of "le plus grand dérangement".

<sup>2</sup> See references on the movement from Saint-Domingue to Louisiana in: Roussève, Charles Barthélemy, *The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of His History and His Literature* (New Orleans: Xavier Univ. Press), 1937.

<sup>3</sup> See: Phillips, U.B., *American Slavery*. (New York: Appleton & Co.), 1918.

<sup>4</sup> See: Sitterson, J. Carlyle, *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry of the South: 1753-1950*, (Lexington: U. of Kentucky Press), 1953.

<sup>5</sup> See: Phillips, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> For a fascinating collection of facts on rural South Louisiana black music in the early 20th Century see: Sonnier Austin M., Jr., *Willie Geary "Bunk" Johnson: The New Iberia Years*, (New York: Crescendo Publishing), 1977.

<sup>7</sup> See: Sonnier, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, extended album jacket notes by Pete Welding on *Vol. I. Urban Blues Uptown* (Imperial LM-94002) and *Vol. II. Rural Blues: Saturday Night Function* (Imperial LM-94001).

<sup>9</sup> Also popular during this era as live musicians at "houseparties" were the blues players or the "one-man bands". Several of these performers are still active locally, playing in clubs that alternate blues and zydeco dances for the older crowd. Especially popular locally is "Harmonica Paul", who plays harmonica, guitar, tambourine and bass drum... and sings. Paul is sometimes accompanied by a rubboard player. His material is almost exclusively in English.

<sup>10</sup> In the 1960's there was a net decrease of over 14% of St. Martin Parish's Black Creole population. (See: Paterson, et. a., *The Human Dimension of Coastal Zone Development*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 679, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> For a more complete analysis of this process see: Working Paper No. 3, *Projet Louisiane*, Département de Géographie, université Laval, Québec, 30 p.), 1978. Maguire, Robert, *Les Gros Té Mange les Petits? Black Creoles and the Shift from Agriculture in St. Martin Parish, Louisiana*.

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed analysis of community formation within the Black Creole community see: Maguire, Robert, "We're Home-Grown, All-Black, and We're Out There: We're The Stone Junkies", in *Southern Exposure*, Summer 1979, Vol. VII (2).

<sup>13</sup> In the only couple in the 60's plus group that always uses English, the wife is from New Orleans and does not speak Creole, even though she has resided in Parks for over 30 years. Her husband, born and raised in Parks, speaks both Creole and English fluently, but uses only English with his wife.

<sup>14</sup> In considering this response, it is important to once again note the characteristics of the neighborhood from which the sample came. It is largely an "off-the-land" sub-division and does not represent the "established" Creole community. Empirical findings indicate the same generation in this established group to be more fluent in English than those who moved in from the country. Both groups appear to have equal capability in Creole.

<sup>15</sup> A "boucherie" is literally a hog butchering. This is a food ritual still regularly conducted among many families in Parks. The entire extended family is generally involved, as may be various friends and/or neighbors. Men and women have differentiated tasks. Often the "boudin" (sausage) made from the pig is sold around the village.

<sup>16</sup> "Catch" as used here may seem to imply that Creole is, indeed, used, but in secret. Local use of "catch" in expressions like this, however, refers to the negative. For instance, blacks in Parks will say "you'll never catch me there", meaning it is a place to be avoided for some reason or another.

<sup>17</sup> (see footnote 14).

<sup>18</sup> A Trail Ride is a social event that takes place on weekends during the warm seasons. At a Trail Ride, those with horses come, bringing friends and followers in cars, trucks and wagons for a day of caravan-type riding on country roads near the village. Often, either the night before or the night of a Trail Ride, a local club will sponsor a Zydeco dance, which will be well-attended by the Trail Riders.