

Introduction

My PhD dissertation focuses on colour prejudice in the early modern French empire, c.1635-1767. It is a comparative study based on Île Bourbon, in the Indian Ocean, which became a French territory in 1638 and was placed under the authority of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* until 1767; French Louisiana, which was established in 1699 and dissolved in 1762-1763; and Guadeloupe in the Lesser Antilles, which was permanently inhabited from 1635. Residents of Île Bourbon comprised Europeans, as well as people of Malagasy, African and South-Asian ancestry. In early modern Guadeloupe, there were Europeans, people of African ancestry, as well as some Amerindians. In Louisiana, there were Canadians, Europeans, as well as many Native Americans, and from the late 1710s, a growing number of people of African descent.

My dissertation argues that the intensity of interethnic antagonisms depended on both the overall colonial policy of the French state disseminated across the empire, and on local economic, demographic, cultural and geopolitical circumstances specific to each colony. The History Project grant allowed me to concentrate my attention on the economic dimension of this argument. I was able to assess the ways in which economic developments have shaped colour prejudice throughout the early modern French empire. One of the major arguments in my dissertation is that in the three colonies, interethnic antagonisms intensified as plantation agriculture developed. The development of plantation agriculture led to a considerable increase in the number of slaves of African ancestry. This increase led authorities to issue a significant number of discriminatory laws to maintain, or to establish, bi-racial plantation societies, with blacks enslaved and whites acting as masters. As shown in my PhD dissertation, discriminatory laws helped create significant interethnic social tensions. Moreover, ‘racial discourses’—denoting physical and intellectual attributes as inevitably passed down in the blood through the generations—developed in the eighteenth century.

An important historiographical debate that requires mention here concerns the relationship between ‘race’ and slavery. Numerous historians have wondered whether pre-existing negative attitudes resulted in the enslavement of Africans or if, conversely, the enslaved condition of Africans in the colonies created the notion of the inferiority of black people. Analysts including prominent historians Evan Degler, Winthrop Jordan, and Eric Williams generally agreed that the enslavement of blacks by European nations was an

‘unthinking decision’ promoted by pressing economic needs.¹ Black and non-black slavery existed since ancient times. The British and the French merely imitated the Spanish and Portuguese who started to bring African slaves to the New World in the sixteenth century.² Jordan was right to believe that because most slaves in Atlantic empires were black, black skin and the inferiority resulting from slavery soon became synonymous, while whiteness came to symbolise freedom and supremacy.

Today, it has become necessary to write a history of interethnic antagonisms in the early modern French imperial context. Historiography focusing on the emergence of racial tensions in the French colonies seems relatively underdeveloped in comparison with the considerable number of works on the construction of ‘race’ in the British empire.³ Few historians of French colonisation have extended their work beyond regional boundaries to embrace a more ‘global’ approach. Moreover, few historians have focused their attention on the histories of early modern Île Bourbon and Guadeloupe. In contrast, scholarship focusing on early modern French Louisiana, as well as interethnic relations and racial antagonisms in this region has grown extensively in recent decades, generating lengthy debates in this historiography.⁴ By using an innovative comparative framework considering not only North America and the Caribbean, but also the French southwest Indian Ocean, and by examining a vast amount of previously unexplored sources, my work seeks to provide a fresh interpretation of the development of interethnic and racial relations in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mississippi valley. The present report summarises my research findings

¹ Carl Degler, ‘Slavery and the genesis of American race prejudice’, *Comparative studies in society and history* Vol. 2, No.2 (October 1959), 46-66; Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Baltimore, 1968); Eric Williams, *Capitalism and slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1944); Timothy Lockley, ‘Race and slavery’, in *The Oxford handbook of slavery in the Americas*, eds. Robert & Paquette and Mark Smith (Oxford, 2010), pp.339-40

² Jean-Luc Bonniol, *La couleur comme maléfice: une illustration créole de la généalogie des ‘Blancs’ et des ‘Noirs’* (Paris, 1992); Joyce Chaplin, ‘Race’ in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.155; William Cohen, *The French encounter with Africans: White response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington, 1980), p.40; Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: origin and evolution of a worldview* (Boulder, 1993), p.129 n26

³ For an introduction to this historiography, see Jordan, *White Over Black*; Alden Vaughan, ‘The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth- Century Virginia’, *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, (Jul., 1989), Vol. 97, No. 3, 311-54; Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Differences in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Philadelphia, 2000). Kathleen Brown provides a survey of the historiography concerning the history of ‘race’ in the British empire in her article entitled ‘Beyond the Great Debates: Gender and race in Early America’, in *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 26 (1998), 96-123

⁴ For an overview of French Louisiana history, see the monumental work of Marcel Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane Française* (4 Vols., Paris, 1953-1974)

regarding the ways in which economic developments have shaped the growth of colour prejudice in the French empire.

To highlight periods of transition, my dissertation is divided into three major chronological sequences entitled ‘Section I: Colour prejudice in the frontier eras, c. 1635-1699’, ‘Section II: Colour prejudice in the experimental eras, c. 1660s-1710s’, and ‘Section III: Colour prejudice in the plantation eras, c. 1690s-1767’.

The histories of Louisiana and Canada are strongly intertwined partly because many settlers in the Mississippi valley were Canadian. Similarly, Île Bourbon largely grew as an extension of the French colony in Madagascar. Settlers from Canada and Madagascar certainly carried their own attitudes towards non-European people to these new settlements. Hence, my dissertation also explores interethnic politics in Canada and Madagascar.

In this report, I frequently use the expression ‘colour prejudice’ and the concept of ‘ethnicity’ instead of the word ‘race’. Definitions of the word ‘race’ vary, but this term is often used to refer to the classification of humankind into groups supposedly having distinct hereditary physical and intellectual characteristics.⁵ Factors such as divergences in religion, custom, social status and the simple perception of unfamiliar physical features not considered innate and hereditary, were more important than ‘racial thinking’ in the seventeenth-century French empire. Therefore, the concept of ‘colour prejudice’—defined as hostility, dislike and antagonism causing unfavourable and discriminatory treatment of people with different skin tones, physical appearance and cultural heritage—does more justice to this historical context.

Resources used

My research draws on a vast amount of largely unexplored archival sources, including censuses, parish registers, private and governmental correspondence, judicial, legal and notarial records, as well as several travel accounts.⁶ Relevant sources are scattered throughout

⁵ *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English* 2005; *Collins English Dictionary* 2008. For more information concerning uses of the word ‘race’, see my essay ‘Colour prejudice in the French Atlantic world’, in D’Maris Coffman, Adrian Leonard and William O’Reilly eds., *The Atlantic World* (New York, 2014), pp.151-171

⁶ For instance: Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des îles Saint-Christophe, de la Guadeloupe, de la Martinique et autres de l’Amérique* (Paris, 1654), *Histoire naturelle et morale des îles Antilles de l’Amérique avec un vocabulaire caraïbe* (Rotterdam, 1658), and *l’Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les Français* (4 vols, Paris, 1667 – 1671); Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux îles*

multiple archives in France, the United-States and La Réunion. From June to September 2012 I worked at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and at the *Centre d'Accueil et de Recherche des Archives Nationales* in Paris. From October 2012 to March 2013, I examined various collections at the *Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer* in Aix-en-Provence.

From April to September 2013, I worked in libraries and archives located in the United States. First, I examined various underexploited collections of Louisianan sources at the *Library of Congress, Manuscript Division/ Rare Book and Special Collections Division*. Second, in New Orleans, I analysed the fundamental judicial records of French Louisiana, housed at the *Louisiana Historical Center* of the *Louisiana State Museum*. I also examined the largely unused sacramental records of the parishes of New Orleans, Biloxi, Yazoo, Fort-Louis and Natchez available at the *Archdiocese of New Orleans*. Additionally, I found relevant sources in the Louisiana Research Collection of the *Howard Tilton Memorial Library* at Tulane University, at the *New Orleans Public Library* and in the Historical New Orleans Collection of the *Williams Research Center*. Third, in Baton Rouge, I worked at the *Louisiana State Archives, Division of the Louisiana Secretary of State's Office*, at the *Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University* and at the *Catholic Life Center, Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge*. Fourth, I also found relevant sources in Lafayette, in the *Special Collections Department* of the *Dupré Library, University of Louisiana at Lafayette*. Finally, at the *Huntington Library* (located in San Marino, California), I examined the correspondence of Philippe de Rigault Marquis de Vaudreuil, governor of New France (1703-1725) and of Louisiana (1743-1753).

From September to November 2013, I worked in the largely unexplored archives of the *Archives Départementales de la Réunion* in Saint-Denis, Réunion Island. Little-known sources available in these archives include, among many others, the papers (including judicial and notarial records, as well as legal documents) of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* (Series C°).

Research findings

- Introduction

I have chosen to use Île Bourbon, Guadeloupe and Louisiana as basis for comparisons because these three colonies were attributed different functions within the French empire and

de l'Amerique (6 vols., Paris, 1722; 2d ed., 8 vols., 1742); Charles de Rochefort, *The History of the Caribby-Islands* (London, 1666)

as a result, they offer particularly varied frameworks for analysis. From the seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century, these three colonies developed different economic systems. These systems impacted on demographic, social and political developments, both moderating and promoting the growth of colour prejudice.

- Section I: Colour prejudice in the frontier-eras, c.1635-1699

This Section focuses on the emergence of colour prejudice in the ‘frontier eras’. In this period, the French explored Louisiana, attempting to establish settlements in the region, as well as in Guadeloupe and on Île Bourbon. Philip Boucher called this period ‘the frontier era’ because intense plantation regimes based on large enslaved labour forces had not yet developed. In addition, law and order were not yet firmly established, as there was no local legal code and no legislative and judicial body in any of the three colonies. In Louisiana and to a lesser extent, in Guadeloupe and on Île Bourbon, pioneers were concerned with survival in the wilderness.⁷ In the first years of settlement, Malagasy servants were employed on Île Bourbon and around the same time, a substantial number of West African slaves began to arrive in Guadeloupe. In both cases, however, free and unfree people of Malagasy and African ancestries were far less numerous than they would become later. Moreover, until the 1710s, there were no Africans in Louisiana. This Section argues that although colour prejudice was present from the beginning of the French encounter with non-Europeans, hostile attitudes and discrimination was not as intense in this context as they would become subsequently. Available evidence also suggests that ‘racial discourses’ had not yet developed in the three regions under study.

- ❖ Île Bourbon

Until the 1670s, various economic, demographic and political factors may have moderated the development of colour prejudice in Madagascar and on Île Bourbon. From the beginning of French colonisation in Madagascar, a vibrant trade—centred around leather, ebony, wax, and copper—may have promoted the development of friendly interethnic relations in the region.⁸ To stimulate interethnic commercial exchange on the island, governor

⁷ Philip Boucher, *France and the American tropics to 1700: tropics of discontent?* (Baltimore, 2008), p. 3, pp.62-111, 112-167

⁸ ANOM F3 205, p.16

Jacques Pronis, for one, encouraged French settlers to marry Malagasy women.⁹ Many settlers in Madagascar married Malagasy women, which suggests that interethnic relations could be fluid. According to Sieur Du Bois, who travelled to Madagascar and Île Bourbon, at the turn of the 1670s, there were 250 French people in Madagascar, including ‘Officiers, Soldats, Ouvriers [et] Habitans’, and these men were ‘pour la plus grande partie mariez à des femmes Originaires de cette Isle’.¹⁰ Even the governor of Madagascar, Pronis, married a Malagasy woman, who was the daughter of Dian Marval, a local leader.¹¹ François Cauche’s account, dated 1643, indicates that Pronis had married a Malagasy woman to reinforce an alliance between the French and a powerful Malagasy family.¹²

Similarly, the hierarchical social order of seventeenth-century Île Bourbon was not defined along a colour line. When the company established a permanent settlement on Île Bourbon in 1665, it used the island as an *escale* (a port of call) on the sea route to the Indies, to provide fresh food to ships travelling between Europe and the East Indies, and as an infirmary for sick sailors and passengers.¹³ Subsistence agriculture was practised by the settlers for their personal consumption, and to provide fresh food to ships stopping at the island.¹⁴ Plantation economy based on the production of cash crops did not develop on Île Bourbon until the eighteenth century.¹⁵

Until the mid-1670s, demographic developments on Île Bourbon resulted from these economic circumstances.

Philippe Haudrère, *L’empire des rois, 1500-1789* (Paris, 1997), p.136, pp138-140

⁹Serge Gélabert, Jean Vincent Dolor and Sung-Yee Tchao Dirs., *La Réunion: histoire d’une Île déserte* (Paris, 1997), p.4

¹⁰ TRANSLATION: including ‘officers, soldiers, workers and planters’, and these men were ‘for the most part married to women from this island’.

Sieur Dubois, *Les voyages faits par le sieur D.B aux isles Dauphine ou Madagascar, et Bourbon ou Mascarenne, ès années 1669, 70, 71 et 72* (1674, Paris), p.103, 153

¹¹ Jean Barassin, *Naissance d’une chrétienté: Bourbon des origines jusqu’en 1714* (Saint-Denis, 1954), p.22

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Raphaël Barquissau, Hippolyte Foucque and Huert Jacob de Cordemoy, *L’île de La Réunion, Ancienne Île Bourbon* (Paris, 1925), pp.40-1; Sonia Chane-Kune, *Aux origines de l’identité réunionnaise* (Paris, 2000), pp.20-21; Jean-Michel Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1974), pp.132-133; Albert Lougnon, *Sous le signe de la tortue: voyages anciens à l’île Bourbon (1611-1725)* (Sainte-Clothilde, Réunion, 2005), p.35

¹⁴ Gélabert Dir., *La Réunion: histoire d’une île déserte*, p.10

¹⁵ Yvan Combeau, Prosper Éve, Sudel Fuma and Edmond Maestri dir., *Histoire de la Réunion: de la colonies à la région* (Paris, 2002), p.18

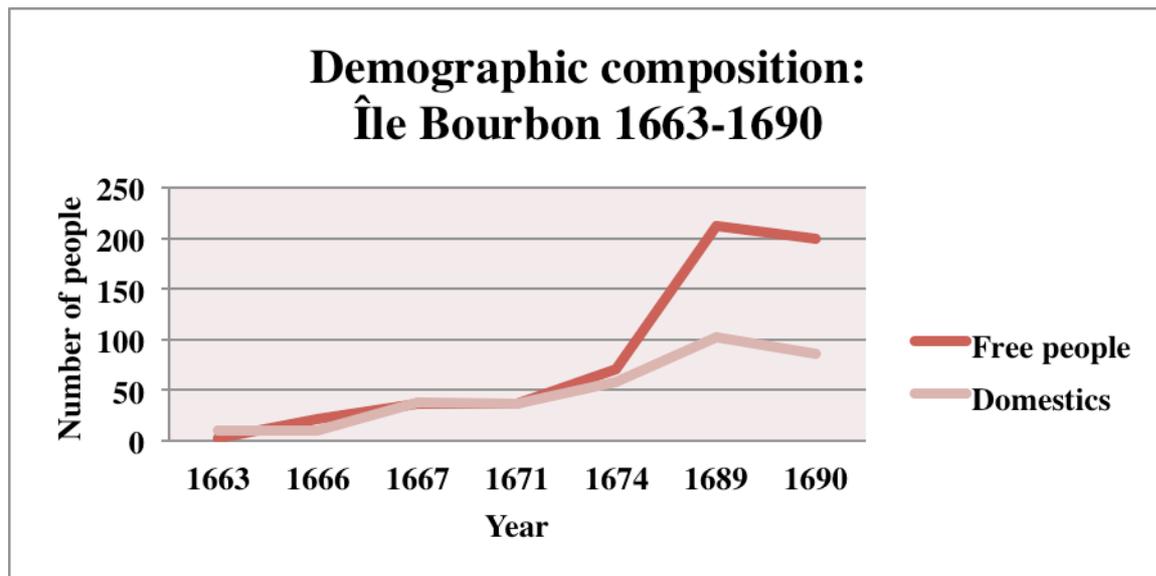


Figure 1 ¹⁶

Partly because plantation agriculture, requiring a large-scale labour force, had not yet developed, the number of servants remained approximately the same as that of settlers on the island from the 1660s to 1674—see **Figure 1**. In 1667, there were 37 servants and 36 settlers on Bourbon, and in 1674 the number of servants had increased to 58, amounting to 45% of the population.

Non-European workers on Île Bourbon prior to the 1680s are designated as ‘servants’ rather than ‘slaves’. As the historian Ho Hai Quang writes, ‘l’opinion générale des historiens est que durant cette période l’esclavage, interdit par les status de la Compagnie, était absent’.¹⁷ In 1664, a royal ordinance prohibited slavery and the slave trade in the French colonies of the southwest Indian Ocean.¹⁸ In the first decades of colonisation on Île Bourbon, Malagasies were never referred to as ‘esclave’. Instead, contemporaries frequently described Malagasy

¹⁶ Years 1663 and 1666: Barassin, *Naissance d’une chrétienté*, pp. 23, 33, 42, 69; year 1667: Jean-François Samlong, *Les engagés Malgaches à la Réunion: 1922-1930* (Saint-Denis, Réunion, 1995) p. 21; years 1671 and 1674: Jean-Claude-Félix Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi de l’histoire d’une famille réunionnaise, 1665-1915* (2 Vols., Paris, 2005), I, 83, 107 and Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes*, p.31; year 1689: Jean Barassin and Serge Ycard, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l’île Bourbon à la fin du règne de Louis XIV: 1700-1715* (Saint-Denis, Réunion, 2005), p. 105; 1690: ANOM G1 477

¹⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘the general opinion of historians is that during this period, slavery, which was absent, was prohibited by the regulations of the company’.

¹⁸ Article XII, ‘Lettre Patentes en forme d’Edit par lesquelles toutes les graces demandées par la Compagnie lui furent confirmée & augmentées mesmes de quelques nouvelles’, in François Charpentier, *Relation de l’établissement de la Compagnie Française pour le commerce des Indes orientales* (Paris, 1666), p.91

workers by using the words ‘domestiques’, ‘negres’ and ‘noirs’.¹⁹ Arguably, the Crown prohibited slavery and the slave trade in the region in order to preserve friendly relations with indigenous populations and in this way, protect trade exchanges.²⁰ It would appear that the social cleavage between the servants and the rest of the population was not as great as it would have been in a slave system. Malagasy workers were paid for their work: according to Cauche, they were compensated with colourful bead ropes.²¹

France did not possess the financial means of densely populating Île Bourbon in the seventeenth century. Thus the ‘free’ population was composed of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. French settlers, as well as Malagasies, Indo-Portuguese women (*Portugaises des Indes*), and an increasing number of *métis* (mixed French/ Malagasy and mixed French/ Indo-Portuguese children) made up the population.

Ethnic origins of the population: Île Bourbon 1667-1686

Year	White (Blancs/ Blanches)	Malagasies (Malgaches) or Blacks (Noirs)- status unspecified	Indians (Indiens, Noirs Indiens) likely servants	Indo- Portuguese women (Femmes Indo- Portugaises)	Mixed people (Métis)	People of unknown origin
1667	36	37	N/A	0	3	N/A
1670	39	37	N/A	0	N/A	N/A
1674	62	43	15	N/A	8	N/A
1686	102	71	12	14	92	57

Table 1²²

¹⁹ See, for example, ANOM G1 477. Jean Barassin, ‘L’escavage Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’ in *Recueil de documents et travaux inédits pour servir l’histoire de la Réunion*, No. 2 (1957), 16-17; Rose-May Nicole, *Noirs, cafres et créoles: études de la représentation du non blanc réunionnais: documents et littératures réunionnaises 1710-1980* (Paris, 2000), p.70; André Scherer, *Histoire de la Réunion* (Paris, 1974), p.24

²⁰ Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes*, pp.28-9

²¹ François Cauche, *Relations véritables et curieuses de l’Isle de Madagascar et du Bresil* (Paris, 1651), VII, 111; also cited in Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes*, p.24

²² Year 1667: Samlong, *Les engagés Malgaches à la Réunion*, p. 21; year 1670: Barassin, ‘Aperçu général sur l’évolution des groupes ethniques à l’île Bourbon depuis les origines jusqu’en 1848’, in *Mouvements de population dans l’océan Indien*, Actes du quatrième congrès de l’Association Historique Internationale de l’Océan Indien et du 14ème colloque de la Commission Internationale d’Histoire Maritime, Saint-Denis, Réunion, septembre 1972 (Paris, 1979), pp.245-258, at p. 245; year 1674: Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi de l’histoire d’une famille réunionnaise*, I, 107; year 1686:

As shown in **Table 1**, in 1667, there were approximately 36 *blancs*, 37 Malagasies and 3 *métis* living on Île Bourbon. By 1686, these figures had increased to 102 *blancs*, 71 Malagasies, 14 Indo-Portuguese women and 92 *métis*. Fifteen Indian prisoners from San Thome had arrived on Bourbon to work as servants in the 1670s. From 1664 to the 1670s, several Malagasy women married Frenchmen and thereby lost their servant status. In addition, the fourteen Indo-Portuguese *métis* who settled on the island in 1673 were free.

Very few European women settled on Île Bourbon during the first decades of colonisation. In 1674, a ship officer reported that on the island, ‘ces miserable demandoient des femmes la plupart ayant Esté constraint depouser des negresses’.²³ The number of women grew from 5 French females and 6 Malagasy women in 1666, to 8 French, 15 Malagasy and 14 *métis* Indo-Portuguese women in 1678.²⁴

This factor may explain why interethnic unions were frequent, suggesting that colour prejudice in social relations was moderate on the island. By 1687, the majority of free Bourbon families were composed of couples of mixed ethnic background.²⁵ While French couples comprised approximately 22% of the families of Île Bourbon (with 10 families and 53 people involved), free couples of mixed ethnic origin represented 57% of the population. Mixed families composed of a Frenchman and a Malagasy woman amounted to approximately 31% of the families of the island (14 families and 78 people). In addition, mixed couples with a French man and a Portuguese woman from the East Indies represented approximately 26% of the families of Île Bourbon (with 12 families and 66 people involved). Malagasy couples—presumably composed of servants—made up 8 families, amounting to 17% of the families.

Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l'île Bourbon*, p. 265 and Jean Barassin, ‘L’escavage Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’ in *Recueil de documents et travaux inédits pour servir l’histoire de la Réunion*, No. 2 (1957), p.19

²³ TRANSLATION: ‘these unfortunate men begged for women, for most of them had been compelled to marry their *négresse* slaves’.

ANOM C3 1, f.55

²⁴ Souchu de Rennefort, *Relation du premier voyage de la Compagnie des Indes orientales en isle de Madagascar ou Dauphine* (Paris, 1668), p.162; Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l'île Bourbon*, p.104; Raphaël Barquissau, Hippolyte Foucque and Huert Jacob de Cordemoy, *L'Île de La Réunion, Ancienne Ile Bourbon* (Paris, 1925), pp.40-1; Chane-Kune, *Aux origines de l'identité réunionnaise*, p.21, 25; Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes*, p.24, 132; Gélabert Dir., *La Réunion: histoire d'une île déserte*, p.6; Albert Lougnon, *Sous le signe de la tortue: voyages anciens à l'île Bourbon (1611-1725)* (Saint-Denis, Réunion, 2006), p.33; Alfred Rosset, *Les premiers colons de l'Île Bourbon* (Paris, 1967), p.148

²⁵ Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l'île Bourbon*, p.102

The birth of free children of mixed ethnic origin began in the earliest days of French colonisation on Île Bourbon, and there was an increasing number of *métis* in the free population of the island. As shown in **Table 1**, the proportion of *métis* grew from approximately 3 people in 1667 (4% of the population) to 106 people in 1686 (30% of the population). Most of these *métis* were of mixed French/ Indian and mixed French/ Malagasy heritage. Among many examples, the early baptism register of 1668 mentions Jeanne, the *mulâtre* daughter of a Frenchman named Jean Mirebeaud and of his Malagasy wife, named Anne Randranar—on Île Bourbon, the words *métis* and *mulâtre* were used interchangeably to designate any person of mixed ethnic origin.²⁶

Finally, the socio-economic order was not defined along a colour line because life conditions on seventeenth-century Île Bourbon were precarious for people of all ethnic backgrounds. In 1678, the inhabitants of Bourbon petitioned the colonial administration, arguing that the island's leaders and their servants were taking most commodities brought to the island. In their own words, this situation compelled them to live 'en Sauvage'.²⁷ White and non-white settlers were both unable to buy clothes. Under the governance of Jacques de La Hure, East Indian clothes were given to the settlers because 'ils étaient tous nus'.²⁸ According to Jean Mas, some white settlers were mainly preoccupied with survival and as a consequence, they shared 'la vie des noirs, au peril de leur peau pale'.²⁹

❖ Louisiana

Several factors may have moderated the development of interethnic tensions in Canada and Louisiana prior to the turn of the seventeenth century. In the first decade of the seventeenth century, French explorers, missionaries and settlers began to regularly associate with Native Americans in New France. In addition to promoting conversion to Christianity, such relationships permitted the formation of kinship networks by connecting the French with the native communities, facilitating the fur trade in Canada.³⁰ In the late 1660s, *Secrétaire d'État*

²⁶ Cited in Barassin, *Naissance d'une chrétienté*, p.83

²⁷ TRANSLATION: 'like *sauvages*'.

ANOM G1 477

²⁸ TRANSLATION: 'all of them were naked'.

ANOM 2707; ANOM F3 208, ANOM C3 1, f.18

²⁹ TRANSLATION: 'the lives of black people, endangering their pale skin'.

Jean Mas, 'Scolies et hypothèses sur l'émergence de l'esclavage à Bourbon', in Claude Wanquet, *Fragments pour une histoire des économies et sociétés de plantations à la Réunion* (Saint-Denis, Réunion, 1989), pp. 109-158, at p.128

³⁰ Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of alliance: indigenous and Atlantic slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill, 2012), p.266

à la Marine Jean-Baptiste Colbert even encouraged Frenchmen in Canada to marry native women. Sexual and marital interethnic relationships became quite frequent in seventeenth-century New France.³¹

Similarly, Louisiana's strategic and economic functions promoted the formation of fluid interethnic relationships. Early Louisiana settlements were established not primarily as plantation colonies, but to provide military outposts to protect French colonies in Canada and the Caribbean, preventing the English from dominating the North American mainland. They were mainly populated by soldiers who did not cultivate the land, which explains why the colony struggled to feed itself.³²

Economic activity in Louisiana largely rested on the fur trade, a rather unsuccessful business as pelts from the region were often damaged in the humid climate and considered inferior to those from Canada.³³ In the 1670s, a substantial number of Canadian *coureurs de bois*—fur traders—began to trade pelts in the Mississippi valley.³⁴ By 1703, governor Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville counted 200 *coureurs de bois* in Mobile alone, although this is may be an overestimation.³⁵ The *coureurs de bois* often refused to stay in French forts, living instead in nearby native villages. They insinuated themselves into Native American trade and kinship networks, frequently through marriage.³⁶ Indeed, according to a letter written by Bienville in 1706, Canadian men who stayed in Native American villages were generally married to native women.³⁷

Demographic factors limited the growth of interethnic antagonisms too. During the entire French period, the native inhabitants of Louisiana largely outnumbered the French. According to Ingersoll's estimates, perhaps as many as 150,000 Native Americans populated

³¹ Marcel Trudel, *L'esclavage au Canada Français: histoire et condition de l'esclavage* (Québec, 1960), p.279. See also Rushforth, *Bonds of alliance*, pp.255-274

³² Carl Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion, service records of French military and administrative personnel stationed in the Mississippi valley gulf coast region, 1699-1760* (Baton Rouge, 2000), p.21

³³ 'Voyage de M. de Sauvole from the fort of the Bilochies or Maurepas to the Thomimes on the Mobile at thirty-six leagues distance. From June 19, 1701 until November', HTML, 'Louisiana Indians Miscellany', L974.3 (970. 1) V 757, p.3, 8

³⁴ Bernard Lugan, *La Louisiane Française, 1682-1804* (Paris, 1999), p.35, pp.38-39

³⁵ Mathé Allain 'French emigration policies: Louisiana, 1699-1715', Glenn Conrad ed., *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series: Volume I The French experience in Louisiana* (Lafayette, 1995), I, 106-114, at p.108

³⁶ Jennifer Spear, *Race, sex and social order in early New Orleans* (Baltimore, 2009), p.21

³⁷ ANOM C13 A1, p.538

Louisiana in 1699.³⁸ In contrast, there were few French settlers in the region at the turn of the eighteenth century. The flow of colonists to Louisiana was inadequate because the country's financial resources had been drained by Louis XIV's protracted warfare, which had bankrupted its treasury. Men were, in addition, needed in France to protect the country's boundaries.³⁹ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the recently declared War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) exacerbated these problems.⁴⁰

In December 1699, in Fort Biloxi, there were only 82 people, including approximately 30 military men, 19 Canadians, 13 pirates from the Caribbean and only 10 labourers.⁴¹ Because their military presence in Louisiana was insufficient to defend French interests in the Mississippi valley, the French forged military alliances with Native American nations; the Choctaw Indians remained France's most powerful allies during the French period.⁴² By 1704, in the entire colony, there were 180 soldiers, 27 families, and 11 Native American slaves.⁴³ From an early date, the French purchased a few Native American slaves from other natives or from other Europeans in North America, putting them at work as domestic servants or field hands.⁴⁴ Forms of Native American enslavement existed before the arrival of Europeans in America, as natives would trade prisoners captured during intertribal wars.

Few French women settled in Louisiana during the first decades of colonisation, which may explain why interethnic unions were so common. When Fort Biloxi was established in 1699, there were apparently no European women in all of Louisiana. In July 1704, the Crown sent 22 girls to Louisiana 'to be married to the Canadians and others'. All of these women were already married by September of the same year.⁴⁵

By the turn of the eighteenth century, interethnic marriages between male settlers and Native American women were apparently frequent. Bienville reported in a letter in 1706 that the presiding cleric and vicar general in Louisiana, Henri Roulleaux Sieur de la Vente 'a fait faire par les missionnaires qui sont chez les Sauvages plusieurs mariages de françois avec des

³⁸Thomas Ingersoll, 'Old New Orleans. race, class, sex, and order in the early Deep South, 1718-1819' (2 Vols., Ph. D. thesis, The University of California, Los Angeles, 1990), p.33

³⁹Gwendolyn Mildred Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana: the development of Afro-Creole culture in the eighteenth century* (Baton Rouge, 1992), p.3

⁴⁰Allain 'French Emigration Policies: Louisiana', p.108

⁴¹Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana*, p.3

⁴²*Ibid.*, p.14

⁴³Allain 'French Emigration Policies: Louisiana', p.106

⁴⁴Grady Kilman, 'Slavery and forced Labor in Colonial Louisiana 1699-1803', M.A thesis, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, 1972, p. 25

⁴⁵Allain 'French Emigration Policies: Louisiana', p.108, 111; Spear, *race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.47

Sauvagesses'.⁴⁶ This same document accused Frenchmen living among the natives to be libertine, suggesting that non-marital sexual intercourse was probably recurrent as well.⁴⁷ Concubinage between French soldiers and native women was, apparently, widespread.⁴⁸ According to historians Gilles Harvard and Cécile Vidal, interethnic sexual encounters were also frequent in the Illinois country from the 1680s, and as a result, births of *métis* children multiplied in that region—in Louisiana and Guadeloupe, the word *métis* regularly referred to individuals with one European and one Amerindian parent and the term *mulâtres* generally referred to individuals with one European and one black parent.⁴⁹

The socio-economic configuration of early Louisiana was not ethnically discriminatory—with the French positioned at the top of the social hierarchy and Native Americans at the bottom. The number of Native American slaves in French settlement was relatively small and free Native American people were far more numerous than the enslaved. Native American communities were, in addition, generally rather prosperous and they comprised powerful families.

By contrast, French settlers in early Louisiana were often needy and powerless in the wilderness. As the colony was established at a time of financial distress for France, the metropole sent few supplies to Louisiana and French settlers in the colony lacked necessities on a regular basis. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, contemporaries regularly complained of the lack of food. Missionary Paul Du Ru reported that in 1700, there was a famine in Fort Mississippi, obliging him to eat Indian food (especially a Native American mixture of corn and water, called *Sagamité*) until the arrival of the next vessel.⁵⁰ French soldiers were even compelled to embrace Indian-style buckskin clothing because uniforms were not worn in the colony.⁵¹ The French needed to maintain friendly interethnic relations in

⁴⁶ TRANSLATION: Sieur de la Vente 'ordered the missionaries staying with the *sauvages* to allow several marriages of Frenchmen with savage women'.

ANOM C13 A1, p. 536

⁴⁷ ANOM C13 A1, p.537

⁴⁸ Gary Nash, 'A tale of three cities (and their hinterlands): race mixture in colonial North America', in Serge Gruzinski and Nathan Wachtel dir., *Le nouveau monde. Mondes nouveaux: l'expérience Américaine*, Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de Recherches sur le Mexique, l'Amérique central et les Andes (EHESS/CNRS), à Paris les 2, 3 et 4 juin 1992 (Paris, 1996), pp. 43-61, at p.54

⁴⁹ Gilles Harvard and Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique Française* (Paris, 2008), p.251

⁵⁰ Paul Du Ru, *Journal of Paul Du Ru*, Ruth Lapham Butler ed. and trans (Fairfield, 1997), p.13

⁵¹ Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion*, p.28

Louisiana because they depended on Native Americans both to obtain necessities, and for military support against potential English assaults.

Economic difficulties may have limited the development of interethnic antagonisms. During the recurrent famines which gripped Louisiana, colonial officials sent French soldiers to live in native villages so that they could be fed. Between 1699 and 1715, this happened at least four times.⁵² Such was the case in 1706, when governor Pierre LeMoyne d'Iberville allowed some soldiers 'to go hunting or to go live as best as they could among the savage nations friendly to the French' because provisions were lacking. On some occasions, civilians were also compelled to live in native villages to survive. Also in 1706, French carpenter André Pénicaut spent the winter among the Acolapissas and the Natchitoches. When he and other settlers arrived in the village, the natives were, Pénicaut stated, 'all delighted to see us come to stay with them'. Among the natives, Pénicaut admired a woman named Ouilchil, who was the daughter of a Natchitoches chief. He described her as 'the most beautiful of all the savage girls in the district'. Another settler named Picard exchanged at least one kiss with Ouilchil's sister. When Pénicaut and Picard had to return to Mobile, they suffered from melancholia because they did not want to lose 'the favors of [these] girls'.⁵³

❖ Guadeloupe

In Guadeloupe, circumstances influenced the development of colour prejudice in different ways. During the first decades of settlement, social identities were not defined along a colour line, to a large extent because not all unfree people were black. In 1635, the first expedition to Guadeloupe carried between 200 and 500 men, the vast majority being *engagés* (indentured servants), though there were also some land-owning free settlers and a few missionaries.⁵⁴ Before the 1670s, French indentured servants served in Guadeloupe for thirty-six months, cultivating the land in very harsh conditions.⁵⁵ Missionary Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre pointed out that the way in which masters treated indentured servants 'paroist fascheuse' because 'ils les font travailler avec excez, ils les noussissent fort mal' and he concluded that 'cette dureté vient sans doute de ce qu'ils ne les ont que pour trois ans, ce qui fait qu'ils ont plus de soin

⁵² Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion*, p.28

⁵³ Cited in Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.22

⁵⁴ Lucien Abénon, *La Guadeloupe de 1671 à 1759: étude politique, économique et sociale* (2 vols., Paris, 1987), p.41; Boucher, *France and the American tropics*, p.72

⁵⁵ Abénon, *La Guadeloupe de 1671 à 1759*, p.48

d'épargner leurs Nègres, que ces pauvres gens'.⁵⁶ Indentured servants were deprived of legal rights, and they had to endure the same corporal punishment as slaves.⁵⁷ Additionally, indentured servants often had to work alongside the servile group. For this reason, the French considered their condition very humiliating. According to Du Tertre, 'les habitans souvent obligent [les *engagés*] de travailler en la compagnie de leurs esclaves, ce qui afflige ces pauvres gens plus que les peines excessives qu'ils souffrent.'⁵⁸ In August 1669, governor of Guadeloupe Claude-François Du Lion described the indentured system as 'une sorte d'esclavage'.⁵⁹ In Guadeloupe, indentured servants outnumbered slaves of African ancestry until the 1650s.⁶⁰

Enslaved Africans began to arrive in Guadeloupe from the first years of settlement.⁶¹ The French started to establish some tobacco and sugar cane plantations and, as a result, the number of African slaves then grew gradually.⁶² When a group of Dutch refugees from the Portuguese colony of Brazil arrived in Guadeloupe in 1654, they brought with them new techniques that vastly improved the output of the island's sugar industry.⁶³ According to a contemporary estimate, by 1669, there were 101 sugar factories in Guadeloupe.⁶⁴ This may explain why in the 1660s, Africans slaves and their descendants slightly outnumbered the free

⁵⁶ TRANSLATION: 'seems regrettable' because 'they make them work too much, they do not feed them enough' and he concluded that 'this harshness probably comes from the fact that they only have them for three years. As a consequence, they take better care of their *nègres*, than of these poor people.'

Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, *L'Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les Français* (3 Vols., Paris, 1667-1671), II, p.477

⁵⁷ Gabriel Debien, *Les engagés pour les Antilles: 1634-1715* (Paris, 1952), pp.206-207

⁵⁸ TRANSLATION: 'the settlers often force them to work with slaves, and this afflicts these poor people more than all the excessive maltreatments that they have to endure'.

Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, II, 476-77

⁵⁹ TRANSLATION: 'a form of slavery'.

ANOM C7 A1 f.58

⁶⁰ Jean-Pierre Sainton, *Couleur et société en contexte post-esclavagiste: La Guadeloupe à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, 2009), p.45

⁶¹ Lucien-René Abénon, *Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe* (Paris, 1992), p.41; Cohen, *The French encounter with Africans*, p.xvi; Lara Oruno, *De l'oubli à l'histoire: espace et identité Caraïbes: Guadeloupe, Guyane, Haïti, Martinique* (Paris, 1998), p.47; Frédérique Régent, *Esclavage, métissage, liberté. La révolution française en Guadeloupe: 1789-1702* (Paris, 2002), p.12; Jean-Pierre Sainton, *Couleur et société en contexte post-esclavagiste: La Guadeloupe à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, 2009), p.246

⁶² Boucher, *France and the American Tropics*, p. 230

⁶³ John Garrigus, 'French slavery', in Mark Smith and Robert Paquette eds. *Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas* (Oxford, 2010), p. 175; Maurice Satinau, *Histoire de la Guadeloupe sous l'Ancien Régime, 1635-1789* (Paris, 1928), p.313

⁶⁴ ANOM C7 A1, f.163

population: in 1664, there were approximately 6,363 *nègres esclaves*, amounting to 56% of the population.⁶⁵

As the number of slaves increased, the French used different arguments to defend slavery. According to some observers, the *nègres* were too unintelligent to resent the fact that they were enslaved. In 1654, Du Tertre observed that, in any case, ‘ils sont si stupide qu’ils n’ont pas plus de ressentiment de leur esclavage, que s’ils n’avoient iamais [*sic*] eu aucune connoissance du bonheur de la liberté’.⁶⁶ Conversion may, at least theoretically, have resulted in slave emancipation. However, perhaps for economic reasons, manumission based on the adoption of Catholicism was not allowed and the French tried to find explanations to justify this abnormality. It was often argued that African slaves and their descendants were too immoral and debauched so that, once freed, they would relinquish Christian practice. Missionary Jean-Baptiste Labat explained: ‘il semble que le demon les retient sous son esclavage par les salles voluptez où ils sont sans cesse plongez, & par cette vie libertine, indifferente & sensuelle, qui les conduit de pechez en pechez dans les abîmes de desordres toûjours plus criminels’.⁶⁷

Although there were real interethnic antagonisms in the first decades of settlement on the island, interethnic social relations were more fluid than they later became when plantation slavery further developed. Interestingly, for example, the French sometimes intermarried with people of African descent.⁶⁸ They seem to have favoured concubinage over marriage with non-Europeans, possibly because of social pressures. But in 1669, Du Lion wrote, ‘il y a beaucoup plus d’hommes et de garçons qu’il y a de filles en ages de mariage, c’est pourquoy au deffaut quelques maistres ont Espousé leurs negresses’.⁶⁹ Among a few instances of intermarriage, the census for the year 1664 mentions Manuel Vaze, a thirty-five-year-old

⁶⁵ ANOM G1 469

⁶⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘they are so stupid that they do not have any resentment for being enslaved, as if they never knew what a happy condition freedom is’.

Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des îles Saint-Christophe, de la Guadeloupe, de la Martinique et autres de l’Amérique* (Paris.,1654), p. 476

⁶⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘it seems that the devil keeps them bonded to slavery by the filthy voluptuousness that always occupies them, and their libertine, indifferent and sensual life, which conducts them from sin to sin into the abyss of always more criminal disorders.’

Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l’Amérique* (6 vols., the Hague, 1724), p. 42

⁶⁸ Abénon, *La Guadeloupe de 1671 à 1759*, p. 50; Lucien-René Abénon, *Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe* (Paris, 1992), p. 209; Bonniol, *La couleur comme maléfice*, p. 51; Lara Oruno, *De l’oubli à l’histoire: espace et identité Caraïbes: Guadeloupe, Guyane, Haïti, Martinique* (Paris, 1998), p. 38

⁶⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘there are many more men and boys than girls in a marriageable age, as a result some masters married their *négresses*’.

ANOM C7 A1, f.58

‘free’ *nègre* married to presumably white ‘Mary Blanche’ and living with her in Capesterre.⁷⁰ Additionally, during the very first years of settlement in the Antilles, some male *mulâtres* married French women. Du Tertre might have slightly overstated the importance of these unions since missionaries were particularly hostile to marriages between French women and men of colour: they seemingly considered them *mésalliances*, creating disorder. Also, while the group of European settlers needed to develop, there were insufficient numbers of European women. But in 1667, he stated that ‘il y a quantité de ces Mulâtres dans les Isles, qui sont libres; j’en ay veu quelques-uns, qui avoient épousé des Françaises. Ce désordre pourtant a esté autrefois plus commun qu’il n’est pas aujourd’huy: mais au commencement de l’establissement des Colonies, il a esté épouvantable & presque sans remede’.⁷¹

- Section II: Colour prejudice in the experimental eras, c.1690-1710s

The periods following the ‘frontier-eras’ have been termed the ‘experimental eras’, as settlers in the French colonies continued to experience, and to experiment with different socio-economic systems that were not firmly established or finalised. Louisiana remained a weak military outpost and a centre of the fur trade, and Île Bourbon maintained and then began to lose its function as a port of call on the sea route to the Indies. The plantation economy had not yet reached maturity in Guadeloupe; it had not yet developed in Louisiana; and it remained largely underdeveloped on Île Bourbon. With experience, French authorities became more effective at fostering economically valuable socio-economic systems in the colonies, through legal reforms. The plantation economy based on an enslaved labour force that developed in the Caribbean proved to be particularly lucrative. Partly for this reason, during the subsequent ‘plantation eras’, French authorities eventually decided to promote the growth of plantation systems on Île Bourbon and in Louisiana as well, introducing legislation to regulate and support the institution of slavery which had been tested in the Caribbean.⁷²

This Section argues that in the ‘experimental eras’, colour prejudice intensified as the governmental elites promoted prejudiced policies and began to use legislation to eliminate

⁷⁰ ANOM G1 469

⁷¹ TRANSLATION: ‘there are several of these *mulâtres* in the islands, who are free; I have seen some of them, who had married French women; This disorder has been more frequent in the past than it is today: but during the earliest period of settlement in the colonies, this disorder was frightening and almost without any remedy.’

Du Tertre, *Histoire générale de Antilles*, II, 513

⁷² See Section III, Chapter 8.

‘flaws’ that threatened plantation slavery as well as French imperial pre-eminence. These ‘flaws’ included mixed marriages, miscegenation and the existence of free people of colour. Much of this legislation proved to be discriminatory against people of colour, encouraging colour prejudice in the colonies. More generally, this Section shows that on Île Bourbon and in Guadeloupe, colour prejudice developed alongside black slavery.

❖ Île Bourbon

From the 1670s to the late 1710s, various economic, demographic and political factors both promoted and moderated the development of colour prejudice on Île Bourbon. As agriculture developed, slavery expanded, which generated negative comments and behaviours. The slave system grew to support subsistence agriculture for the settlers and the crews of passing ships.⁷³ In addition, by 1690, the settlers cultivated small quantities of sugar cane and tobacco, and they collected wild aloe, wax, indigo and cotton.⁷⁴ By 1718, Bourbon colonists had begun to cultivate coffee plants as well, albeit in relatively small quantities.⁷⁵ Plantation agriculture was far from being as developed on Île Bourbon as it was in the Caribbean in the same period. From the 1710s, ships increasingly preferred to dock at Île de France, which offered more favourable mooring conditions and became a new French *escale*.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the *domestiques* of the island had become *esclaves*. Thus, arguably, the social cleavage between them and the rest of the population was more significant than in previous decades. The most plausible explanation for this change is that, from the beginning of colonisation on Île Bourbon to the last decades of the seventeenth century, domestic servants were gradually enslaved.⁷⁶ By the 1690s, the word *esclave* was regularly used to designate Malagasy and Indian workers on the island.⁷⁷ Around the beginning of the eighteenth century, the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* practised the slave trade on a regular basis. Slaves brought to Île Bourbon cultivated the land, tended the cattle and built houses and roads, often alongside their masters.⁷⁸

⁷³ ADR C°767; ANOM G1 477; Jean de La Roque, *Voyage de l'Arabie Heureuse* (Paris, 1716), p.199; Guy Le Gentil de la Barbonais, *Nouveau voyage autour du monde* (3 vols, Paris, 1729), III, 91-92; Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l'île Bourbon*, p.19, pp.204-206

⁷⁴ Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l'île Bourbon*, pp.214-215

⁷⁵ ANOM F3 208, pp.129-130

⁷⁶ This is the theory expressed by Jean Barassin in ‘L’esclavage à Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’, p.11

⁷⁷ Barassin, *Naissance d'une chrétienté*, p.200; Barassin, ‘L’esclavage à Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’, p.11

⁷⁸ Chane-Kune, *Aux origines de l'identité réunionnaise*, p.35

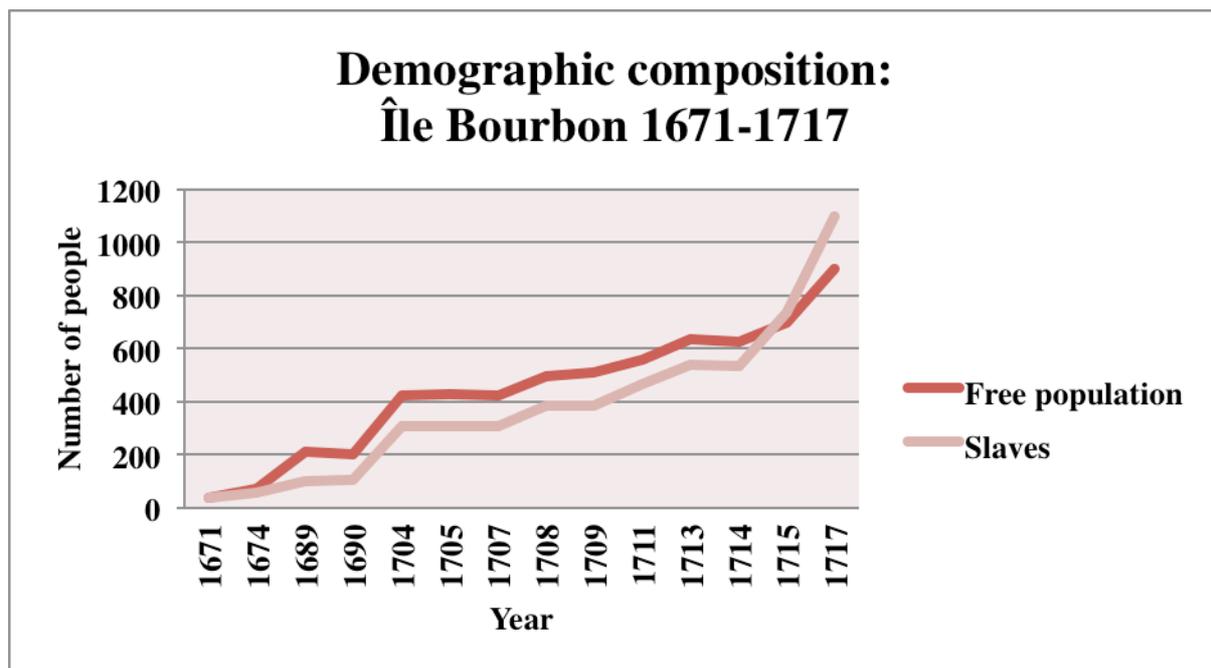


Figure 2⁷⁹

As shown in **Figure 2**, the number of domestic servants and slaves remained roughly equal to that of free people on Île Bourbon, from the 1670s to the late 1710s. In 1674, there were approximately 58 domestic servants on the islands, amounting to 45% of the population. This proportional figure dropped to 42% of the population in 1704 (311 *noirs*) and rose to approximately 51% in 1715, when 736 *noirs* were listed in Bourbon censuses.

By the turn of the seventeenth century, French administrators constantly used the word ‘blancs’ to designate free settlers and the words ‘noirs’ or ‘nègres’ to describe enslaved workers, despite the fact that both groups included people of Malagasy, Indian, and African ancestry. This shows that skin colour was, in the mind of administrators, strongly attached to social status.

With the development of the slave system, dark skin became associated with slavery to such an extent that contemporaries occasionally argued that free people of colour should be enslaved. For example, Governor of Île Bourbon Antoine Boucher mentioned Richard Toquely, a thirty-three-year-old free *mulâtre* from Florida, living on Île Bourbon. He

⁷⁹ Years 1671 and 1674: Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi d'histoire d'une famille réunionnaise*, I, 83, 107; years 1689-1690 and 1704-1705: Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l'île Bourbon*, 105 and ANOM G1 477; years 1707-1709: Combeau, Eve, Fuma and Maestri Dir., *Histoire de la Réunion*, p.151, ADR C°767, ANOM G1 477; year 1711: ANOM G1 477; years 1713-1715: ANOM G1 477, Combeau, Eve, Fuma and Maestri Dir., *Histoire de la Réunion*, p.26; year 1717: Lougnon, *Sous le signe de la tortue*, p.215

described Toquely as a wicked, ugly, alcoholic mutineer and mediocre cobbler having ‘toutes les mauvaises qualités’ and concluded that ‘cela n’est bon qu’à chasser de L’isle, ou à faire travailler comme un Esclave, car il est véritablement noir’.⁸⁰

By the late seventeenth century, slaves were increasingly dehumanised. Europeans often regarded people of colour as mere commodities which could be sold, bought, offered or even wagered. By the 1670s, Sieur Du Bois described Malagasy slaves as a commodity ‘bon marché’ in Madagascar, that could be exchanged ‘pour quelque marchandise’ including rocks and bead ropes.⁸¹ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, slaves were regularly listed in notarial inventories alongside commodities and cattle. Among several instances, in an estate inventory taken of the properties owned by Antoine Payet in 1704, ‘onze noirs et négresses’ were listed between ‘soixante cochons’ and ‘quinze pièces de toile de coton bleu’.⁸² By 1715, slaves were sometimes hazarded in gambling parties, along with ‘bestiaux, terres [&] marchandises’.⁸³ Some masters even used their enslaved workers to promote slave reproduction on the island; in 1704, a master gifted a twenty-year-old *négresse* named Isabelle Moine to another slave owner, to allow her to copulate with a twenty-two-year-old *noir* named Maximin. In return, the former master of Isabelle was to obtain ‘une petite négresse de six ans’ as well as ‘les deux premiers enfants qui proviendront desdits noir et négresse’.⁸⁴ Occasionally, slaves did not even have a name. The census of Île Bourbon of 1714 mentioned a twenty-year-old ‘noir Sans Nom’.⁸⁵

Moreover, as slavery developed on Île Bourbon, legal attempts to implement segregation emerged. Authorities in France attempted to prevent interethnic marriages between *blancs* and *noirs* on the island. Since many people of non-European ancestry were free, the settlers apparently assumed that all of these regulations only prohibited

⁸⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘all the bad qualities’; ‘this type of person must be banished from the island, or must work as a slave, because he is truly black’.

Antoine Boucher, ‘Le Memoire pour Servire a la connaissance particuliere de chacun des habitans de l’isle de bourbon’, in Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l’île Bourbon*, p.191

⁸¹ TRANSLATION: ‘cheap’; ‘for some merchandise’.

Dubois, *Les voyages faits par le sieur D.B aux isles Dauphine ou Madagascar, et Bourbon ou Mascarenne*, p.203

⁸² TRANSLATION: ‘sixty pigs’ and ‘fifteen pieces of blue cotton fabric’.

Barassin, ‘L’esclavage à Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’, p.36

⁸³ TRANSLATION: ‘cattle, lands and merchandise’.

ADR C°2516, f.3v

⁸⁴ TRANSLATION: ‘a little six-year-old *négresse*’; ‘the first two children of this *noir* and this *négresse*’.

Barassin, ‘L’esclavage à Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’, p.40

⁸⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘black without a name’.

ANOM G1 477

intermarriages between free people and slaves. The first legal text on Île Bourbon was issued in 1674 by *Vice-Roi des Indes* Jacob Blanquet de La Haye. It aimed at maintaining the slave system on the island and preserving the social order, by prohibiting unions between French settlers and non-European domestic servants. Article XX of this ordinance stated: ‘Deffenses aux francais d’Epouser des Négresses, cela dégouteroit les noirs du Service, et Deffenses aux Noirs d’épouser des Blanches, c’est une confusion à éviter’.⁸⁶ Although many free people were not *blancs*, authorities in France wanted to create a binary society with *blancs* acting as masters and *noirs* enslaved, as was already the case in the French Caribbean during this period. The ordinance declared intermarriages between French and Malagasy peoples to be ‘une confusion’, a derogatory expression at the time. Seventeenth-century dictionaries defined the word ‘confusion’ as the mixing of distinct elements, causing disorder.⁸⁷ Thus authorities in France considered French and *noirs* fundamentally different, at least with regard to the position that they were intended to occupy in society. To economic historian Quang, article XX was created to lay the basis of the development of a slave system. It was a ‘jalon essentiel vers l’asservissement des Noirs’, defining ‘un modèle social raciste où les Blancs forment l’élément dominant et les Noirs l’élément dominé’.⁸⁸ Jacques Fontaine embraced a similar argument, stating that ‘par l’article 20, Blanquet de La Haye marque la volonté du pouvoir de construire une société esclavagiste’.⁸⁹ He also perceived this regulation as a basis to establish ‘la ségrégation des Noirs’.⁹⁰ This prohibition of interethnic marriages between *blancs* and *noirs* was reiterated in 1689, 1701 and again in 1710.⁹¹

On the other hand, various demographic factors limited the growth of interethnic antagonisms on Île Bourbon. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, as the Crown did

⁸⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘It is forbidden for Frenchmen to marry *négresses*, this would dissuade them from providing service, and forbidden for blacks to marry white women; this confusion must be avoided’.
ANOM F3 208, p.19

⁸⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘a confusion’.

Jean Nicot, *Le thresor de la langue francoyse* (Paris, 1606)

⁸⁸ TRANSLATION: ‘an essential marker towards the enslavement of blacks’ defining ‘a racist social model in which whites form the dominant element and blacks the dominated element’.

Ho Hai Quang, *Contribution à l’histoire économique de la Réunion: 1642-1848* (Paris, 1998), p.44

⁸⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘with article 20, Blanquet de La Haye reveals the will of the authority to build a slave society’.

Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi de l’histoire d’une famille réunionnaise*, I, 106

⁹⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘the segregation of black people’.

Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi de l’histoire d’une famille réunionnaise*, I, 217

⁹¹ Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l’île Bourbon*, p.155

not possess the financial means of sending migrants to Île Bourbon, women of non-European ancestry continued to outnumber women from Europe among the free population.

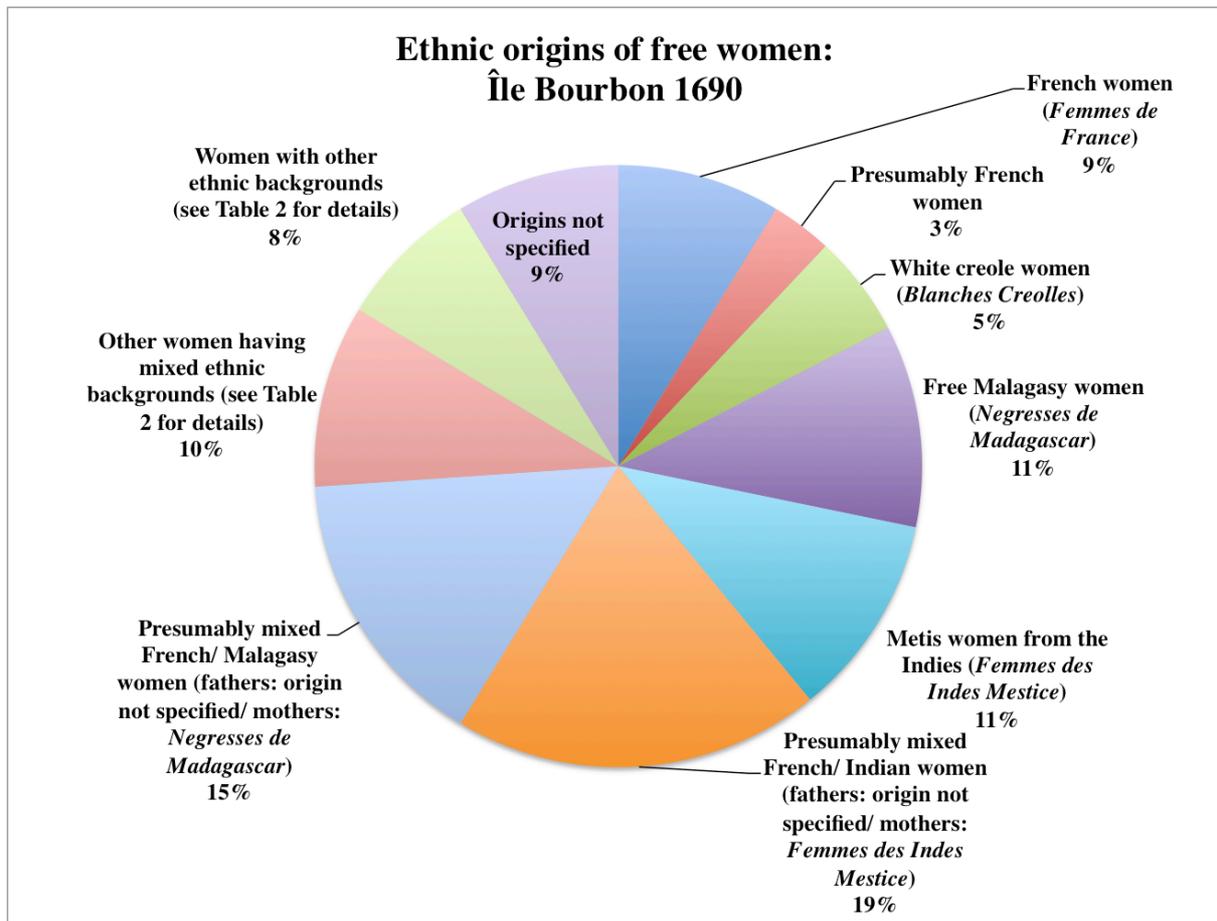


Figure 3⁹²

By 1690, there were 11 French women on the island: only 12% of the female population of Île Bourbon. The same year, only 5 other women were recorded as white (*Creolles Blanches*). There were also 10 free Malagasy women (amounting to approximately 11% of the female population), 18 free women presumably of mixed French/ Indian ancestry (19%), 14 free women presumably of French/ Malagasy heritage (15%), 10 free *métis* women from the Indies (*Métis des Indes*) (11%), and 9 free women of other mixed origins (10%)—see **Figure 3**.

Thus licit and illicit relations between European men and non-white women remained frequent, despite the fact that by 1674, authorities opposed intermarriages between the French and the *noirs*.

⁹² *Ibid.*

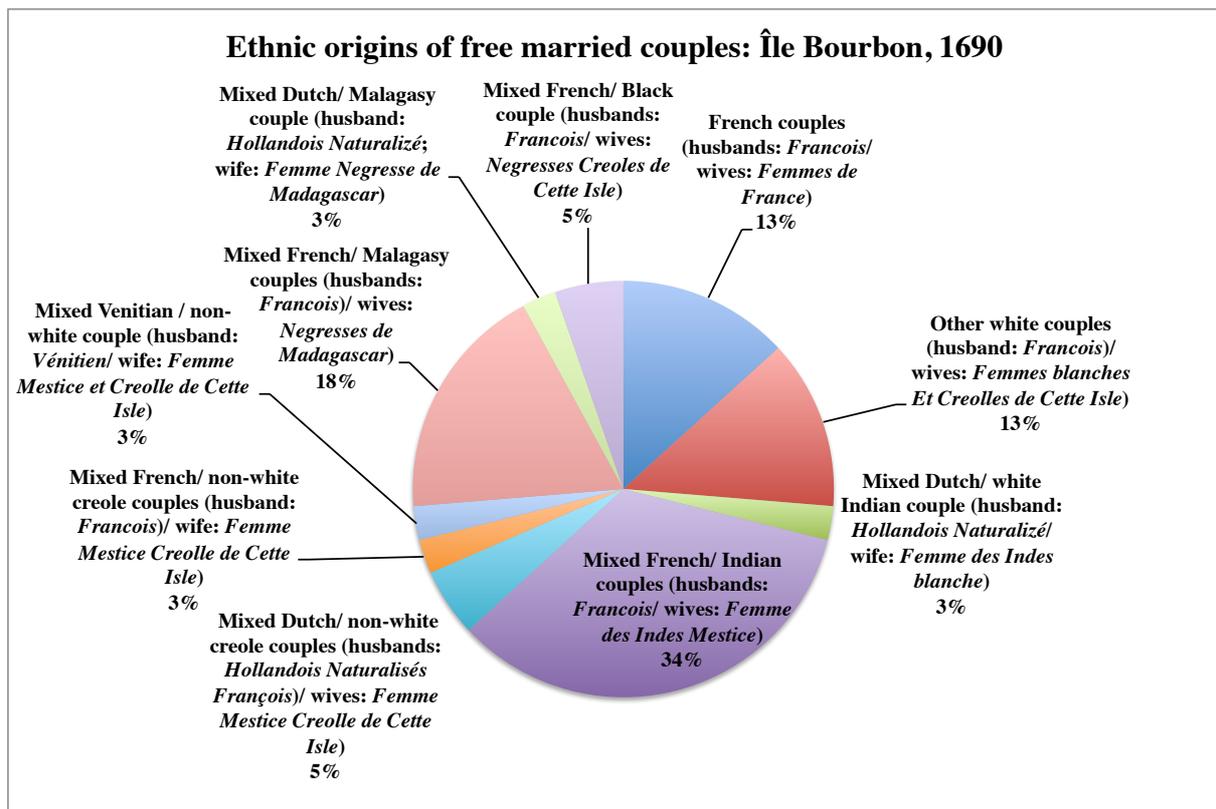


Figure 4 ⁹³

As shown in **Figure 4**, by 1690, mixed couples were predominant in the free population of Île Bourbon. In that year, only 10 households were headed by a European man and a Frenchwoman (or a creole *blanche*— the word ‘creole’ was used to designate people born in the colonies), amounting to approximately 26% of free households. Couples including a European man and a woman of non-European ancestry amounted to some 70% of free couples. Couples headed by a European man and a *métis* woman from the Indies amounted to about 34% of free couples (13 couples). There were also 2 naturalised Dutchmen, 1 Frenchman and 1 Venetian, all married to *métis* creole women of unidentified origins (approximately 11% of free couples). Couples including a European man and a Malagasy woman represented approximately 21% of free couples (8 couples) and 2 Frenchmen had married black creole women. The majority of people classified as ‘de Mascarin’ or ‘Creole’ in the following decades were almost certainly born of these interethnic marriages.

⁹³ ANOM G1 477

Miscegenation was therefore a significant phenomenon, and people of non-European origin represented a significant portion of the free population during the period between the 1670s and the 1710s.

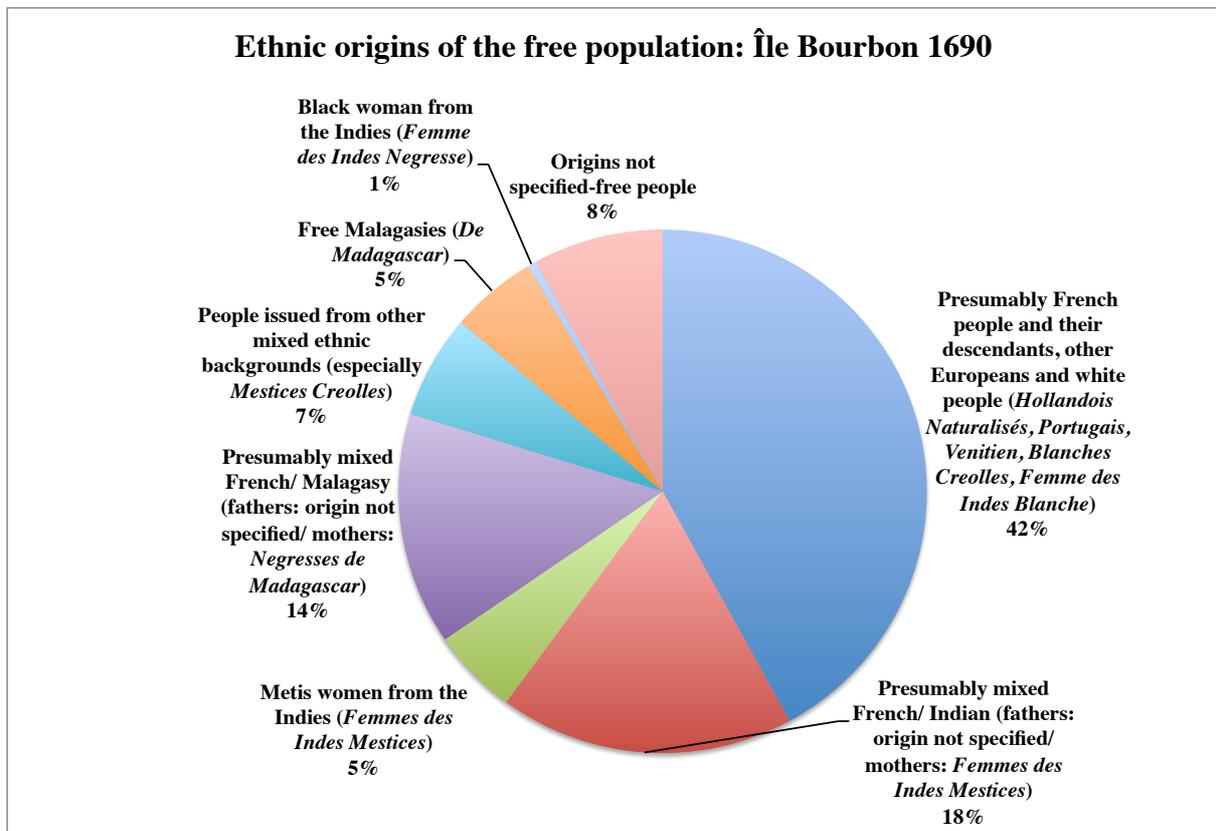


Figure 5⁹⁴

By 1690, people of non-European origin outnumbered Europeans and creole *blancs* among the free population. That year, there were approximately 79 Europeans and settlers classified as *blancs*, amounting to approximately 43% of the free population. There were also 83 free people of mixed heritage (approximately 44% of the free population), comprising 34 free mixed French/ Indian people (18% of the free population), 27 free mixed French/ Malagasy settlers (14%) and 10 free mixed women from the East Indies (*Femmes des Indes Métis*) (5%), as well as 12 free people of other mixed ethnic backgrounds. Most of these people were the children of early mixed Malagasy/ European and Indian/ European Bourbon couples. There were also 10 presumably free Malagasies (5%).⁹⁵

Since people of non-European origin represented a significant portion of the free population, the socio-economic structure of Île Bourbon was not at all defined along colour

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ See Figure 5.

lines in the ‘experimental era’. In addition, sources indicate that from the late seventeenth-century to the 1710s, free people of colour and *blancs* possessed similar wealth levels.

One must be cautious when considering the following analysis. Assessing the number of houses and lands per household is not a very efficient way of assessing wealth levels as it does not take into account the size, quality and value of properties. Yet this sparse data may still prove useful when placed alongside slave numbers. Enumerating the slaves per household may be a good way of assessing wealth levels because it allows one to evaluate purchasing power and production capacities. In the early modern period taxation, and more especially *capitation* (a poll tax), even depended on the number of slaves held.

By 1704 and 1705, some people of colour had become quite wealthy. In these years, the average number of slaves per household headed by a European man and a Malagasy woman amounted to more than 9. Fifty per cent of these mixed households possessed more than 10 slaves. The two biggest European/ Malagasy slave owners owned 18 and 23 slaves respectively. More than 37% of European/ Malagasy slave owners possessed between 2 and 3 parcels of cultivated lands, and more than 1 house. The living conditions for mixed French/ Indian couples were probably comfortable; they owned an average of 6 slaves or more. All except one of these households owned more than 3 slaves and all of these mixed couples possessed cultivated lands and houses. In comparison, in the same years, European households possessed an average of 9 slaves. The most significant European slaveholders owned just 14 slaves. Seventy-five per cent of European couples possessed between 2 and 3 cultivated tracts of land, but only 25% owned more than 1 house.

Free people of colour managed to accumulate wealth in various ways. Some became wealthy by selling their services, working as tavern manager, carpenter, blacksmith, gunsmith, musical instrument maker, dressmaker and surgeon. A few enriched themselves through illegal activities, including theft and piracy. Many became successful by cultivating the land and raising cattle. Such was the case with Louise Payet, a French/ Malagasy *mulâtresse* from Saint-Paul married to a French/ Malagasy creole *mulâtre* named François Cauzan. Louise and François produced large amounts of wine grapes, which were described as ‘monstrueux’.⁹⁶ They also raised cattle and cultivated large portions of land in sugarcane, rice, wheat, vegetables and fruits. In 1710, Boucher depicted Louise and her husband as the

⁹⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘monstrous’.

‘mieux nipez, et des mieux logés de tous les habitans’.⁹⁷ In the 1710s, François died and Louise acquired money through the inheritance of her deceased husband’s brother, as well as new slaves. She then married the French army surgeon of the island, Jacques Macé.⁹⁸ A post-mortem inventory indicates that by the time of her death in 1729, Louise owned numerous lands, 7 houses and cabins, 3 warehouses, diverse furniture, various clothes, shoes, jewels, as well as numerous dressmaking, construction, gardening and kitchen tools, including China dishes. She also possessed 30 slaves, hundreds of animals and 30,146 *livres* or 10,050 *écus*, an extremely large amount of money.⁹⁹

The contrast in conditions of these often prosperous people of colour with the condition of poor white settlers suggests that, unlike in other French colonies, colour was not linked to social position. Boucher’s memoir of 1710 indicates that some French were extremely indigent. For example, he mentioned Gilles Dugain, from Saint-Malo, who was married to a creole woman whom he described as a very corpulent, unfaithful and lecherous ‘selle à tous chevaux’, nicknamed ‘la grande cavalle’.¹⁰⁰ Since they lived in libertinism, he noted, ‘ces gens sont gueux comme Job, n’ayant pas seulement de quoy se couvrir’.¹⁰¹

More generally, due to chronic financial difficulties, the difference between free settlers and slaves was not always visible.¹⁰² Cattle thefts were frequent, and wild game was gradually disappearing.¹⁰³ Cultivated lands suffered under the impact of a rat invasion in the 1670s, a cyclone devastated the island in 1707, and there was a food shortage in 1709.¹⁰⁴ Free settlers constantly lacked clothes, having to dress as lightly as slaves. In 1681, according to Lieutenant Chevalier de Ricous who spent time on Île Bourbon, the settlers were ‘tout nus comme des nègres’.¹⁰⁵ In the 1690s, some settlers declared themselves to be ‘aussy

⁹⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘the most stylish and best housed of all the settlers’.

Boucher, ‘Le Memoire pour Servire a la connaissance particuliere de chacun des habitans de l’isle de bourbon’, p.94

⁹⁸ ADR C°2793, p.17, 30v, pp.28-29v; ANOM G1 477;

⁹⁹ ADR 3E03

¹⁰⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘a saddle to all horses’; ‘the great mare’.

Boucher, ‘Le Memoire pour Servire a la connaissance particuliere de chacun des habitans de l’isle de bourbon’, p.34

¹⁰¹ TRANSLATION: ‘these people are very poor, not even having something to cover themselves’.

Boucher, ‘Le Memoire pour Servire a la connaissance particuliere de chacun des habitans de l’isle de bourbon’, p.34

¹⁰² See Section II, ‘Context’.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.306

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.275; Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi de l’histoire d’une famille réunionnaise*, I, 113; Loughnon, *Sous le signe de la tortue*, p.45

¹⁰⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘entirely naked like nègres’.

Cited in Barassin, *Naissance d’une chrétienté*, p.130

malheureux que leurs Esclaves’ because they had not even received land grants to practise agricultural activities.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps because necessities were lacking, slave rebellions proliferated from the 1670s to the late 1710s, which stimulated the development of interethnic tensions. From 1676 to 1686 (especially in 1676, 1678, 1680 and 1686) and again in 1694, there were different slave uprisings on Île Bourbon.¹⁰⁷ According to Father Bernardin de Quimper, Malagasy domestic servants wanted to kill the French and assume rule on the island. Some Malagasy rebels were arrested and hanged, but others ran away to the mountains, occasionally undertaking expeditions to plunder French homes and attack French colonists.¹⁰⁸ There was also a major slave plot in January 1705, involving a group of *noirs* from Madagascar. The plan was ‘d’entrer dans La maison de quelques habitans pour Les Egorger Et Se rendre Maitre de leurs armes’ and to kill the governor of the island.¹⁰⁹ In 1706, 1709, and 1717, some slaves again planned to assassinate the governor and kill the principal settlers of the island.¹¹⁰

As a result of these events, Malagasy slaves were increasingly disliked for their tendency to run away and be involved in slave rebellions. Because there were major Malagasy insurrections on the island, French administrators agreed that ‘les Esclaves de Madagascar Sont mutins [et] Séditieux’, believing that they ‘ne Manqueroient jamais a massacrer tous Les habitans’.¹¹¹ For these reasons, French traveller and journalist Jean de la Roque concluded in 1709 that ‘ces Noirs sont les plus méchantes gens du monde’.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘as miserable as their slaves’.

ANOM G1 478, p.41

¹⁰⁷ Barassin, ‘L’esclavage à Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’, pp.18-19; Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes*, p.31; Quang, *Contribution à l’histoire économique de la Réunion*, p.47

¹⁰⁸ Barassin, *Naissance d’une chrétienté*, p.121; Barassin, ‘L’esclavage à Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’, pp.18-19; Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des colons de l’île Bourbon*, p.19; Filliot, *La traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes*, p.31; Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi de l’histoire d’une famille réunionnaise*, I, 107, 113, 120-121, 218; Quang, *Contribution à l’histoire économique de la Réunion*, p.47

¹⁰⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘to enter the house of some settlers to cut their throats and take their weapons’.

ANOM C3 2, f.79, 95

¹¹⁰ ANOM C3 3, f.83, 111; La Roque, *Voyage de l’Arabie Heureuse*, p.185, 193; Barassin, *Naissance d’une chrétienté*, p.274, 291

¹¹¹ TRANSLATION: ‘slaves from Madagascar are mutineers and seditious’; they ‘will never miss the opportunity to massacre all the settlers’.

ANOM C3 2, f.70v; ANOM C3 3, f.110v

¹¹² TRANSLATION: ‘these blacks are the wickedest people in the world’.

Jean de La Roque, *Voyage de l’Arabie heureuse* (Paris, 1716), p.193

❖ Louisiana

In Louisiana, a variety of cultural, demographic, economic and political factors shaped the development of interethnic prejudice, from the turn of the seventeenth century to the late 1710s. Several factors contributed to the development of fluid interethnic relations in the region during the 'experimental era'. The French in the Mississippi valley continued to trade furs with Native Americans, which helped to sustain pacific and supportive relations. As previously noted, Canadian *coureurs de bois* embraced native customs to integrate into Native American trading networks, often through intermarriage.¹¹³ Several Louisiana officers and district commandants were involved in an illegal trade in furs with local Native American communities as well.¹¹⁴

Since few settlers practised subsistence agriculture in the colony during this period, the slave system had not yet developed in the region, which probably limited the development of colour prejudice. In 1712, army officer Pierre d'Artaguiette lamented 'le petit nombre d'habitant qui Sont a la louisianne pour Metre en Valeur les terres'.¹¹⁵ By this year there were only 27 families in Louisiana French settlements, including 4 families practising subsistence agriculture. In 1708, there were only 80 'Esclaves tant Sauvages que Sauvageses' in the colony, amounting to approximately 24% of the population of the Louisiana colony.¹¹⁶ The crown did not possess the financial capacity to supply Louisiana with African slaves. In 1712, proprietary rights over Louisiana were granted to wealthy financier and investor Antoine Crozat, who obtained a monopoly on Louisiana's commercial relations. However, Crozat was unwilling to make this investment.¹¹⁷ By 1710, only 10 *nègres* had been transported to the colony and the number of slaves of African ancestry remained very small until the arrival of the first slave ship from Africa, in 1719.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.21

¹¹⁴ Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion*, p.35

¹¹⁵ TRANSLATION: 'the small number of settlers who are in Louisiana to cultivate the lands'. ANOM C13 A2, p.800

¹¹⁶ TRANSLATION: 'slaves including *sauvages* and *sauvageses* from different Nations'.

¹¹⁷ Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.54

¹¹⁸ Hall, 'The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture', in Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon eds., *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge, 1992), pp.58-87, at p.67; Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.55; Usner, 'Frontier Exchange in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Race Relations and economic Life in Colonial Louisiana, 1699-1783', (PhD thesis, Duke University, Durham, 1981), p.5

Partly due to major financial difficulties, French emigrants to the colony were extremely few from the turn of the seventeenth century until the late 1710s, a factor which also limited the growth of interethnic antagonisms.¹¹⁹ A census indicates that by 1708, there were approximately 279 individuals in the French settlements. This number comprised 122 men belonging to the garrison, 77 settlers and a few *coureurs de bois*. The same census mentioned ‘plus de 60 Canadiens herants qui sont dans les Villages Sauvages Cituez le long du Fleuve Mississipy’.¹²⁰

Male settlers and soldiers continued to outnumber French women: by 1708, there were only 28 French women in all of Louisiana, amounting to approximately 12% of the French and Canadian population in the region.¹²¹ Crozat sent 12 girls to Louisiana in 1713, but these were described as ‘si laides et malfaittes que les habitans de ce pays cy et Surtout les canadiens ont fort peu d’empressement pour elles’.¹²² Perhaps for this reason, most of them remained unmarried before 1714.¹²³ *Commissaire-Ordonnateur* Jean-Baptiste Duclos wrote, regarding Canadians in Louisiana, that ‘ils Sen Sont tous Retournés en assurant qu’ils aimoient encore mieux les Sauvagesses’.¹²⁴ Efforts to bring French women to Louisiana were not revived until the formation of the *Compagnie d’Occident* in 1717.

The lack of French women possibly contributed to the formation of interethnic relationships between Frenchmen and Native American women.¹²⁵ *Coureurs de bois* in native villages were repeatedly blamed for bringing about non-marital relationships with native women. The census of Louisiana of 1708, accused them of destroying the missionaries’ effort to convert natives ‘par leur mauvaise vie libertine avec Les Sauvagesses’.¹²⁶ According to governor Sieur Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac in 1713, Canadian men in Louisiana were ‘adonnés principalement aux femmes Sauvagesses qu’ils preferent aux françoises’.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ Daniel Usner, ‘Frontier Exchange in the Lower Mississippi Valley’, p.xiii

¹²⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘over 60 wandering Canadians who are in the Indian villages situated along the Mississippi River’. ANOM C13 A2, p.226

¹²¹ ANOM C13 A2, p.225

¹²² TRANSLATION: ‘so ugly and malformed that the inhabitants of this country and especially the Canadians have no desire for them’. ANOM F3 24, ff.68-69

¹²³ Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.48

¹²⁴ TRANSLATION: ‘they left and told us that they prefer the *sauvagesses*’.

¹²⁵ Regarding the lack of European women in Louisiana, see Section II, ‘Context’.

¹²⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘by their bad and libertine conduct with the *sauvagesses*’.
ANOM C13 A2, pp.225-226

¹²⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘principally devoted to the *sauvagesses*, whom they prefer to French women’.
ANOM C13 A3, p.13

In addition, interethnic concubinage was recurrent between Canadian settlers or French soldiers, and Native American women. According to Cadillac, male settlers used these women as ‘Sauvagesse esclaves’ to wash their laundry, cook and keep their cabins safe.¹²⁸ In 1708, French missionaries complained that, in fact, settlers owning enslaved Native American women in Mobile lived ‘avec Elles Sous un mesme toit en concubinage’.¹²⁹

Even military officers lived in concubinage with native women, the memoir stated, ‘soit parce qu’ils ne trouvent pas Sur les Lieux des filles françoises, Soit qu’il leur paroisse moins Embarrassant, Et plus commode de n’avoir que des Concubines Sous le nom d’Esclaves qui les Servent’.¹³⁰ To Cadillac in 1716, such relationships were widespread among people holding positions of authority in the army, ‘ni aiant presque point dofficiers qui n’aient des Sauvagesse esclaves chés eux’.¹³¹ Priests in Louisiana believed that concubinage could not be stopped because even the most powerful settlers in Louisiana, members of the *Conseil Supérieur*, kept enslaved Indian concubines.¹³²

Miscegenation was thus considerable in early eighteenth-century Louisiana. The author of the anonymous memoir claimed that in Louisiana, military men had children with native women ‘tous les Jours, au vû Et au Sceu de tout le monde’.¹³³ By 1716, Cadillac complained that enslaved native women were almost always pregnant or nursing. In his opinion, their owners accused native men of having fathered these children, but ‘a la Verité Les Enfants Sont metifs, et paroissent dun Sang mele’.¹³⁴

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, licit relationships sanctioned through marriage between French or Canadian men, and Native American women were also numerous. In 1706, Bienville complained that in Louisiana, ‘le Sr de la vente a fait faire par les missionnaires qui sont chez les Sauvages plusieurs mariages de françois avec des

¹²⁸ ANOM C13 A3, p.1, 17

¹²⁹ TRANSLATIONS: ‘with them under the same roof in concubinage’.
ANOM C13 A2, p.163

¹³⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘either because they do not find French girls there, or because it seems less restrictive and more convenient to them to only have concubines, with the status of slaves, serving them’.

ANOM C13 A3, p.392

¹³¹ TRANSLATION: ‘as there is almost no officers having no enslaved *sauvagesse* in their homes’.

ANOM C13 A4, p.530

¹³² ANOM C13 A3, p.531

¹³³ TRANSLATION: ‘everyday, in the full knowledge of everybody’.

ANOM C13 A3, p.392

¹³⁴ TRANSLATION: ‘in reality, these children are *métis*, and seem to have mixed blood’.

ANOM C13 A4, p.530

Sauvagesses’.¹³⁵ This decision, Bienville stated, went against the king’s will to gather in the settlers who were scattered across Native American settlements.¹³⁶ According to Duclos by 1713, Jesuit missionaries had married most Canadian men and *coureurs de bois* to ‘Sauvagesses’, ‘surtout aux Illinois’.¹³⁷

Until the 1710s, military forces in the region remained inadequate to protect French interests in the Mississippi valley, which contributed to the formation of fluid interethnic relations. By 1716, there were only 126 soldiers in the Louisiana garrison. Many of them had been charged with desertion and insubordination before being forced to travel to Louisiana, and some were untrained civilian recruits.¹³⁸

As they did not possess the means of properly defending Louisiana’s borders, the French depended upon military alliances with Native American communities. The British in North America exerted constant pressure on France’s Louisiana colonies, especially through their Native American allies, the Chickasaw. In order to protect the colony from the assaults of British settlers from Carolina, Louisiana governors Bienville and Cadillac received orders from the metropole ‘[de] ne rien négliger pour vous concilier l’amitié des Sauvages’ and to make peace with the Alabama Indians.¹³⁹ Officers thus maintained friendly relations with Native American nations, especially at Fort Saint Jean-Baptiste, Fort Tombecbe and Fort Toulouse.

The French needed to maintain friendly relationships with the indigenous population as they continued to depend on them to get necessities, another factor which may have restrained the development of interethnic antagonisms. The colonisation of Louisiana occurred at a very difficult period for France. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, the War of the Spanish Succession had drained its economic resources. Consequently, the colony could scarcely rely on the mother country for economic support. Resources from France were largely directed towards colonies in the Caribbean, which proved to be much

¹³⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘Sieur de la Vente made the missionaries amongst the *sauvages* celebrate many marriages of Frenchmen with *sauvagesses*’.

¹³⁶ ANOM C13 A1, p.536

¹³⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘especially in Illinois’.

ANOM F3 24, f.69

¹³⁸ Brasseaux, *France’s forgotten legion*, p.35

¹³⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘not to neglect any mean of obtaining the friendship of the *sauvages*’.
ANOM B 32, f.237v

more profitable than Louisiana.¹⁴⁰ Hence, shipments to Louisiana became especially rare between 1704 and 1711, generating major food shortages.¹⁴¹

Living conditions did not improve when Crozat obtained his monopoly in 1712. Cadillac had provided Crozat with descriptions of the considerable wealth to be extracted from Louisiana's potential gold and silver mines. Crozat also expected to enrich himself by trading with Louisiana settlers. The colony generated no revenue, however, because there were no valuable mines in the region, and no demand for Louisiana's products in France. When Crozat realised that Louisiana was not profitable, he lost interest in the colony and from 1714 stopped sending vessels to the Gulf of Mexico.¹⁴² He eventually abandoned his property rights over the colony in 1717.¹⁴³

In Louisiana, early settlers, soldiers and administrators lived in precarious conditions. The salaries of royal employees were based on prices and incomes in the metropole, although merchandise in Louisiana cost 100% more than that available in France. Local authorities were frequently unable to provide basic necessities to the troops.¹⁴⁴ In 1712 an administrator stated, of French soldiers in Louisiana: 'the distress is great; It is pitiful also to see them as they are all naked and most often living on crushed and boiled Indian corn with a piece of meat'.¹⁴⁵ Contemporaries frequently complained of the lack of food and clothing in the colony and, as in previous years, they largely depended on Native Americans to obtain such necessities.

As we have seen, in times of severe food shortage, authorities sent French soldiers into Native American communities to be victualed. In 1710, D'Artaguiette reported that Bienville had 'distribu  dans plusieurs villages Sauvages Un Sergent et trente Cinq Soldats des Soixante cinq qui restent dans les deux compagnie qui Servent icy'.¹⁴⁶ In 1713, following two years of bad harvests, soldiers were sent to live in native villages again. Governor Cadillac stated that, following his arrival in Louisiana 'j'ai trouv  toute la garnison dans les bois parmi

¹⁴⁰ Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.19

¹⁴¹ Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, p.12

¹⁴² ANOM C13 A2, p. 672; Allain 'French Emigration Policies', p.110

¹⁴³ Mathe Allain, 'In search of a policy, 1701-1731', in Glenn Conrad ed., *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series: Volume I The French experience in Louisiana* (Lafayette, 1995), p.96; Allain 'French Emigration Policies', p.110; Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion*, pp.25-27; Lukan, *La Louisiane Franaise*, p.77

¹⁴⁴ Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion*, pp.27-28

¹⁴⁵ Brasseaux, 'The Image of Louisiana and the Failure of Voluntary French Emigration, 1683-1731', in Conrad ed., *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series*, pp.153-162, at p.156

¹⁴⁶ TRANSLATION: 'distributed in several savage villages, one sergeant and thirty-five soldiers of the sixty-five men who are in the two companies that serve here'. ANOM C13 A2, p.542. See also ANOM C13 A2, pp.549-550

les Sauvages qui l'ont fait vivre tant bien que mal'.¹⁴⁷ Army officers also wanted to live among natives that year. Cadillac reported, concerning officers in Louisiana, that 'lorsque nous Sommes arrivés, ils etoient Sur le point de les aller joindre dans les bois pour tacher de Sauver leur vie'.¹⁴⁸ Cadillac approved their initiative, considering 'l'Etat deplorable ou ils Sont reduits'.¹⁴⁹

Civilians were also sometimes compelled to live in native villages in order to survive. In 1708, as necessities were lacking in the colony, Bienville allowed a group of Canadian mercenaries and *voyageurs* 'd'aller dans Le Mississipy Vivre avec Les Sauvages Jusqu'au premier Vaisseau'.¹⁵⁰

In addition to receiving the French into their villages in times of hardship, natives provided corn, meat and clothes to French settlers on a regular basis. Communities who helped the French in the first decades of the eighteenth century included the Chitimachas, Houmas, Chaouachas and other nations established along the Gulf Coast and the lower Mississippi valley.¹⁵¹ The Crown encouraged French administrators to acquire food from the natives. Since no ship from France had been sent to Louisiana in 1710, a royal administrator declared: 'jespere que vous aurez pourvuu a la Subsistance de la garnison, Soit par le moyen de la recolte des Sauvages, ou par les Secours que vous aurez pû tirer du gouverneur de Pensacola'.¹⁵²

Thus prior to the 1720s, socio-economic categories were not defined along ethnic lines in Louisiana. Free Native American people were far more numerous than enslaved natives, and native societies remained prosperous and powerful. By contrast, French settlers

¹⁴⁷ TRANSLATION: 'I found the garrison in the wood among the *sauvages* who helped them survive with great difficulty'.

ANOM C13 A3, pp.14-15

¹⁴⁸ TRANSLATION: 'when we arrived, they were about to join them in the wood to try to save their lives'.

ANOM C13 A3, p.16

¹⁴⁹ TRANSLATION: 'the deplorable state to which they were reduced'.

ANOM C13 A3, pp.16-17

¹⁵⁰ TRANSLATION: 'travellers'; 'to go to live in the Mississippi with the *sauvages* until the arrival of the next vessel'.

ANOM C13 A2, p.179

¹⁵¹ Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.20

¹⁵² TRANSLATION: 'I hope that you will have provided subsistence goods to the garrison, either through the harvest of the *sauvages*, or through the help that you can obtain from the governor of Pensacola'.

ANOM B 32, f.317v.

in Louisiana were often indigent and powerless.¹⁵³ This lowered the barrier between the coloniser and colonised in the colony's social structure.

❖ Guadeloupe

Between the 1660s and the turn of the seventeenth century, a strong increase in the sugar industry stimulated the development of colour prejudice in Guadeloupe.¹⁵⁴ As a result of this economic development, by 1671, African slaves and their descendants outnumbered the free population.

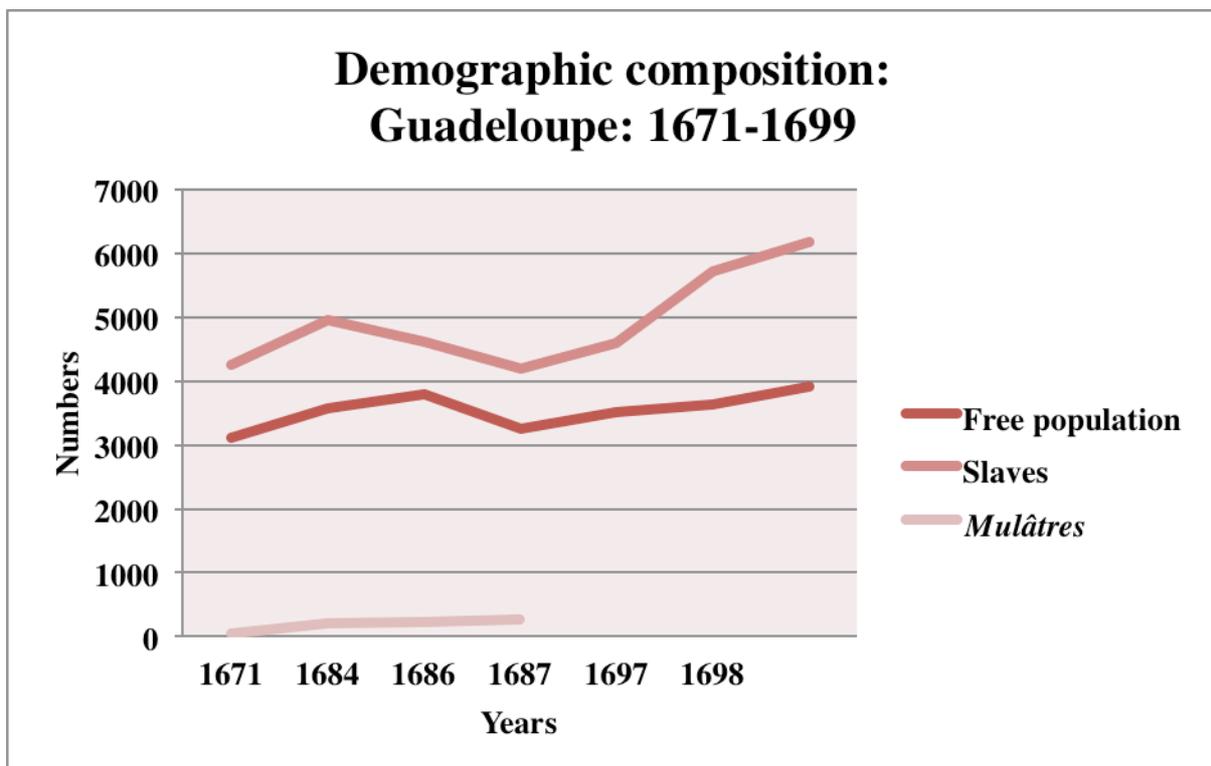


Figure 6¹⁵⁵

The number of slaves grew from 4,267 individuals in 1671 (57% of the population of the island) to 6,185 in 1699 (60% of the population).¹⁵⁶ As plantations growing sugar cane expanded, the number of indentured servants started to diminish rapidly by the 1660s. The

¹⁵³ Regarding economic difficulties in Louisiana, see Section II, 'Context'

¹⁵⁴ ANOM, C7 A3, f.1

¹⁵⁵ All the censuses include the data for Basse-Terre, Grande-Terre and Les Saintes, excepted for the census of the year 1684, which only comprises the data for Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre: ANOM G1 468; ANOM G1 469

¹⁵⁶ See **Figure 6**

census of 1697 does not mention even one *engagé*.¹⁵⁷ Slaves of African ancestry were, by far, the predominant mode of production in the French Antilles.¹⁵⁸ The growth of plantation slavery in Guadeloupe, and the resulting low status of African workers inevitably engendered negative attitudes towards people of darker skin colour.

As black slavery developed by the end of the seventeenth century, French people increasingly regarded *nègres* as inferior beings. Since *nègres* were often considered less intelligent than Europeans, they had a duty to obey and remain humble. In 1698, Labat pointedly asserted of one of his slaves that ‘je lui disais parfois, pour tâcher de l’humilier, qu’il était un pauvre Nègre qui n’avait point d’esprit’.¹⁵⁹

As plantation slavery developed, society in Guadeloupe also became highly segregated from the 1660s to the 1690s, with whites controlling an increasing number of black slaves. The French began to regard interethnic marriages between persons of African ancestry and the French as *mésalliances* threatening the social order of the Antillean colonies. The case of a Flemish settler named Jacob Michel, who was taken to the court of the Guadeloupean *Conseil Souverain* in 1667, illustrates this point well. Some relatives wanted to exclude his wife, Marie Lăcotti, who was classified as a ‘negresse’, from family inheritance by nullifying their marriage. The court approved their request and declared Jacob and Marie’s marriage null and void partly owing to ‘la honte sur la famille’.¹⁶⁰ As persons of African descent occupied an inferior position, *blancs* thought such marriages to be humiliating. Authorities also hoped to prevent free people of colour from improving their economic status, in order to maintain the developing social hierarchy. This was particularly true in the second half of the century, perhaps due to the economic crisis that developed during this period.

The political elite in Guadeloupe seemed opposed intermarriages between *blancs* and *noirs*. An *arrêt* issued in December 1667 by the *Conseil* of Guadeloupe attempted to restrict intermarriages between *blancs* and *noirs* by forbidding ‘à tous religieux, pretres et ecclésiastiques de célébrer aucun mariage entre un blanc et une noir ou une Blanche et un noir sans la participation du Gouverneur ou commandant dans cette Isle’ and to ‘aucun notaire de

¹⁵⁷ ANOM G1 469 bis. See also Henri Bangou, *La Guadeloupe: histoire de la colonisation de l’île, 1492-1848* (2 Vols., Paris, 1987), p.59; Cohen, *The French encounter with Africans*, p. 47, 72

¹⁵⁸ Boucher, *France and the American tropics*, p.230; Garrigus, ‘French Slavery,’ p.173

¹⁵⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘I sometimes told him, in order to humiliate him, that he was a poor negro and that he had no wit’.

Labat, *Nouveau Voyage*, II, 53

¹⁶⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘the shame on the family’.
ANOM F3 133, f.36

faire passer aucun contract de pareil mariage sans un billet particulier dudit Gouverneur ou commandant'.¹⁶¹

By the end of the seventeenth century, social and governmental pressures had apparently deterred most *blancs* of Guadeloupe from marrying women of African descent. In 1695, Father Labat reported that in the *Îles du Vent* he had only met two *blancs* who had married black women. One of these men was Sieur Antoine Lietard, a Lieutenant of the militia of Pointe-Noire in Guadeloupe, who married a 'très-belle Negresse' named Barbe in 1673 and 'avoit de beaux petits mulâtres'.¹⁶² While Labat's comment seems rather approving, the parish register of Pointe-Noire states that nobody came to their wedding 'pour de forts grandes raisons'.¹⁶³ This suggests that French settlers were opposed to such marriages.

- Section III: Colour prejudice in the plantation eras, c.1690s-1767

This last Section examines the development of colour prejudice in 'the plantation era', in which Île Bourbon, Guadeloupe and Louisiana saw the expansion of plantation economies based on the exploitation of large numbers of slaves. It argues that colour prejudice became increasingly entrenched in the eighteenth century when elites across the French empire began to use 'racial' discourses and to issue an increasing number of discriminatory laws. The goal was to maintain hierarchical social orders defined along colour lines, with blacks enslaved and whites acting as masters. This Section also argues that increasingly, discriminatory legislation helped create significant interethnic social tensions.

The expansion of plantation regimes from the 1720s was stimulated by administrative transformations that spanned the empire; these transformations began under the Regency. In 1717, Crozat relinquished his control over Louisiana and authorities chartered the *Compagnie d'Occident*.¹⁶⁴ In addition to owning all lands in Louisiana, the *Compagnie d'Occident* held a monopoly for twenty-five years on commerce into, and out of, Louisiana. From 1718 to 1719, all major French maritime trading companies were fused into the *Compagnie des Indes* (also

¹⁶¹TRANSLATION: 'to all priests and clergymen to perform any marriage ceremony between a white man and a black woman or a white woman and a black man without the agreement of the governor or the commandant of this island' and to 'all notaries to validate such acts of marriage without a written agreement of the governor or commandant'.

ANOM F3 133, f.36

¹⁶² TRANSLATION: 'a very beautiful *négresse*'; he 'had some beautiful little *mulâtres*'.

Labat, *Nouveau Voyage*, II, 35

¹⁶³ TRANSLATION: 'for very great causes'.

ANOM 85MIOM276

¹⁶⁴ ANOM A 23, f.24. See also Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion*, p.42

known as the *Compagnie Perpetuelle des Indes*). Until its dissolution in 1769, the *Compagnie des Indes* acquired trade monopolies across the globe, including exclusive rights to commerce in Louisiana, Île Bourbon and the slave trade on the West African Coast (specifically in Senegal and Guinea). From 1719 until 1731, the *Compagnie des Indes*, exercising its monopoly on the West African slave trade, began to import a considerable number of African slaves into the colonies.¹⁶⁵ In 1731, lacking capital and facing financial bankruptcy the *Compagnie des Indes* ceded Louisiana to the Crown.¹⁶⁶ By that time, Louisiana was seen as an unprofitable and expensive military outpost and was subsequently left in a state of near abandonment by France. The Crown allowed ‘à tous Ses Sujets’ to conduct ‘librement le Commerce’ in Louisiana and trade monopolies in Senegal, Guinea and Canada were granted to private companies.¹⁶⁷ Louisiana remained under the Crown’s authority until 1763 and Île Bourbon continued to be administered by the *Compagnie des Indes* until 1767.

❖ Île Bourbon

From the late 1710s until 1767, the development of plantation slavery stimulated the development of colour prejudice on Île Bourbon. This period is usually described as ‘une ère nouvelle’ that saw the emergence of a plantation society resembling the model seen in the Caribbean.¹⁶⁸ Eighteenth-century Bourbon society resembled that of the French Caribbean in that it comprised a large enslaved population and a small proportion of free settlers.¹⁶⁹ In 1717, the *Compagnie des Indes* created a ‘plan of colonisation’ intended to promote demographic and economic development on Île Bourbon.¹⁷⁰ Within a few years, the island

¹⁶⁵ Gary Nash, ‘A tale of three cities (and their hinterlands): race mixture in colonial North America’, in Serge Gruzinski and Nathan Wachtel dir., *Le nouveau monde. Mondes nouveaux: l’expérience Américaine*, Actes du colloque organisé par le Centre de Recherches sur le Mexique, l’Amérique central et les Andes (EHESS/CNRS), à Paris les 2, 3 et 4 juin 1992 (Paris, 1996), pp.54-55;

Joseph Zitomersky, ‘Race, esclavage et émancipation: la Louisiane créole à l’intersection des mondes français, antillais et américain’, in Marie-Christine Rochmann dir., *Esclavage et abolitions: mémoires et systèmes de représentation*, Actes du colloque international de l’Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier III, du 13 au 15 novembre 1998 (Paris, 2000), p.287

¹⁶⁶ LSM ‘Black Books’, year 1731

¹⁶⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘all his subjects’ to conduct ‘free trade’.

ANOM A 23, ff.106-107v.

¹⁶⁸ TRANSLATION: ‘a new era’.

¹⁶⁹ Nicole, *Noirs, cafres et creoles*, p.73; Claude Prudhomme, *Histoire religieuse de la Réunion* (Paris, 2000), p.11

¹⁷⁰ Henri Cornu, *Paris et Bourbon: la politique française dans l’Océan Indien* (Saint-Denis, Réunion, 1980), p.16; Jean Defos Du Rau, ‘L’île de la Réunion: étude de géographie humaine’ (Thèse de

became a major coffee provider in Europe.¹⁷¹ Coffee bean production grew from 180,000 *livres* in 1726 to 2,500,000 *livres* in 1744.¹⁷² Simultaneously, Bourbon residents continued to practise subsistence agriculture on a significant scale.¹⁷³

After the late 1710s, the development of plantation agriculture on Île Bourbon resulted in major demographic transformations.

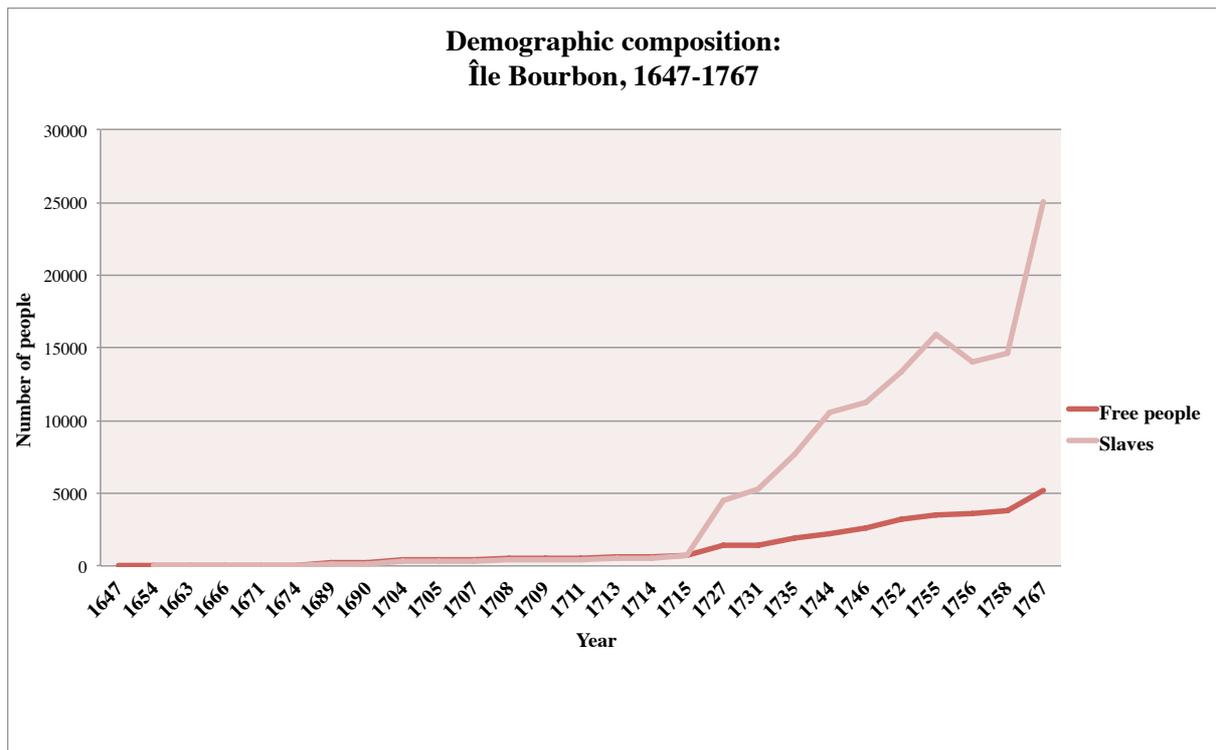


Figure 7 ¹⁷⁴

Figure 7 shows that from this period until 1767, the number of slaves increased to considerably outnumber the proportion of free people. By 1731, there were 5,271 enslaved

doctorat, Institut de géographie, Faculté des Lettres, Bordeaux, 1960), p.139; Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi de l'histoire d'une famille réunionnaise*, I, p.221

¹⁷¹ Cornu, *Paris et Bourbon*, p.16; Defos Du Rau, 'L'île de la Réunion', p.139

¹⁷² ANOM F3 206, f.131; Haudrière, *L'empire des rois*, p.165; Scherer, *Histoire de la Réunion*, p.16

¹⁷³ ANOM F3 205, pp.82-83; ANOM F3 206, f.131, ff.146v-147v, 149v-150; ANOM F3 208, p.277, 411, 413, 415; Scherer, *Histoire de la Réunion*, p.22

¹⁷⁴ Years 1647, 1654, 1663 and 1663: Barassin, *Naissance d'une Chrétienté*, pp. 23, 33, 42, 69; years 1671 and 1674: Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi d'histoire d'une famille Réunionnaise*, I, 83, 107; years 1689, 1690, 1704, 1705: Barassin, *La vie quotidienne des Colons de l'île Bourbon*, p. 105, and ANOM G1 477; years 1707, 1708, 1709, 1711, 1713, 1714, 1715: Combeau, Eve, Fuma and Maestri Dir., *Histoire de la Réunion*: p. 26, 151, ADR C°767, and ANOM G1 477; years 1727, 1731, 1735, 1744, 1746, 1752, 1755, 1756, 1758: ANOM C3 5, Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi d'histoire d'une famille Réunionnaise*, I, p. 22, ADR C° 771, ADR C°774, ADR C° 775; ADR C° 777, and ADR C°779; year 1767: Prosper Eve, *Le corps des esclaves de l'Île Bourbon: histoire d'une reconquête* (Paris, 2013), p. 151

workers on the island (80% of the population). The proportional number of slaves then dropped to 14,599 in 1758 (79%), possibly due to a major smallpox epidemic in that year, before increasing again by 1767. By that date, there were 25,047 slaves on the island (some 83% of the population).

As plantation slavery intensified, attitudes became more prejudicial. The appearance of a significant number of discriminatory laws reflected and reinforced existing colour prejudice. From 1723, the ‘Lettres patentes en forme d’Edit concernant les Esclaves Negres des Isles de Bourbon et de France’ regulated slavery on Île Bourbon.¹⁷⁵ Article V of the ‘Lettres Patentes’ forbade ‘nos Sujets blancs de l’un et l’autre Sexe de contracter mariage avec les noirs a peine de punition et d’amande arbitraire’ and specifically prohibited priests from celebrating such unions.¹⁷⁶ The same regulation prevented ‘nos Sujets blancs meme aux noirs affranchis ou nez libres de vivre en Concubinage avec des Esclaves’.¹⁷⁷ It also sentenced masters who fathered children with their slaves to pay a fine and have their concubine and illegitimate offspring confiscated. Interestingly, however, this last provision would not apply if a ‘homme noir affranchy ou libre qui n’etoit pas marié Durant Son concubinage avec Son Esclave Epousera ladite Esclave quil affranchie par ce moyen’.¹⁷⁸ In that case, the children could be ‘rendus libres et legitimes’.¹⁷⁹ This later amendment did not apply to *blancs*, confirming that by the 1720s, authorities wanted to end legitimate and illegitimate relationships between *blancs* and *noirs*. This regulation differed from article IX of the 1685 *Code Noir* regulating slavery in the Antilles, which did allow whites to marry the mothers of

¹⁷⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘Letters patent in the form of an edict concerning the Negro slaves of Île Bourbon and Île de France’.

Barassin, *Naissance d’une chrétienté*, p.200; Barassin, ‘L’esclavage à Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’, p.11; Chane-Kune, *Aux origines de l’identité réunionnaise*, p.27

¹⁷⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘our white subjects of both sexes to marry their black slaves, under sentence of an arbitrary fine’.

ADR C° 940 (also in ADR C° 2517 pp.16-26)

¹⁷⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘our white subjects and even manumitted slaves from living in concubinage with their slaves’.

ADR C° 940

¹⁷⁸ TRANSLATION: ‘manumitted black or a free black who was not married during his concubinage will marry the slave who will in this way be freed’.

ADR C° 940

¹⁷⁹ TRANSLATION: the children will ‘become free and legitimate’

ADR C° 940

their illegitimate children and thereby manumit both parties.¹⁸⁰ This change in the 1723 ‘Lettres patentes’ no doubt demonstrates that concerns over mixed marriages had become more intense.

In addition, several regulations attempted to limit the possibility of social ascendancy for manumitted slaves and free blacks on Île Bourbon, probably because their existence challenged the segregated social system. Like article LVIII of the 1685 *Code Noir* of the Antilles, article LII of the ‘Lettres patentes’ of Île Bourbon of 1723 commanded freed slaves to maintain a ‘respect Singulier’ towards their former masters.¹⁸¹ A Martinican edict of 1678 forbade free people of colour to give asylum to maroon slaves and stated that ‘en cas de recidive ils seront descheus de leurs privileges de Liberté dont ils jouissent.’¹⁸² Similarly, article XXXIII of the ‘Lettres patentes’ of 1723 condemned manumitted slaves and free *nègres* giving asylum to maroon slaves to pay a fine and explained that ‘faute par lesdits negres affranchis ou libres de pouvoir payer l’Amende ils Seront reduits a la Condition d’Esclaves et Vendus’.¹⁸³ A close analysis of the judicial records of the *Conseil* of Île Bourbon suggests that these regulations probably never applied to those *libres* who were born free, however. Since people of colour represented a substantial portion of the free population on Île Bourbon, such an application would undoubtedly have proved too controversial. In addition, article X of the ‘Lettres Patentes’ of 1723 prevented *libres* from receiving any donations ‘entre vifs a cause de mort ou autrement’.¹⁸⁴

People of non-European ancestry continued to amount to a significant portion of the free population, which both stimulated and restrained the development of colour prejudice on the island. Sources are fragmentary and generally do not indicate ethnic backgrounds; it is, therefore, not possible to determine with precision the ethnic origins of free Bourbon colonists from the 1720s to the 1760s. As shown in Section II, before the arrival of a substantial number of European migrants beginning in the 1720s, people of non-European

¹⁸⁰ Louis France dir., *Le Code Noir ou Recueil des reglemens concernant le Gouvernement, l’adminsitration de la justice, la police, la discipline & le commerce des nègres dans les colonies françoises*, Mars 1685 (Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, 1980)

¹⁸¹ ADR C° 940

¹⁸² TRANSLATION: ‘in the event of a second offence, they will be deprived of the privilege of liberty that they enjoy’.

CAOM F3 248, f.101

¹⁸³ TRANSLATION: ‘if these manumitted slaves and free blacks cannot pay the fine, they will be reduced to the condition of slave and sold’.

¹⁸³ ADR C° 940

¹⁸⁴ TRANSLATION: ‘*inter vivos*, because of death or for any other reason’.

¹⁸⁴ ADR C° 940

descent were numerous in the free population. Following the arrival of new European migrants, the vast majority of free settlers were reported in censuses as ‘d’Europe’ and ‘Créole’. Since the numbers of free settlers of Malagasy, Indian and African ancestry were substantial in previous decades, many of these creoles were likely to be non-white.

Unlike in earlier decades, from 1715 to 1756, the number of free women and girls remained roughly equal to that of free men and boys. The number of free women rose to 626 (44%) in 1727 and to 1626 women and girls in 1756 (47%).¹⁸⁵ However, by that time, one may assume, at least some of these free women and girls were non-white. In 1721, Father Antoine Gaubil, who spent time on Île Bourbon, noted, regarding creole women on Île Bourbon, that ‘une partie est mulâtre’.¹⁸⁶

Wanting to establish a bi-racial plantation society on Île Bourbon, the *Compagnie des Indes* consistently attempted to prevent intermarriages between its officials or employees, and free creole women of non-European ancestry. By the 1720s, discourses on ‘race’, blood purity and *mésalliance* had surfaced in discussions concerning interethnic marriages on Île Bourbon. One must be cautious when considering the numerous documents which were copied by lawyer and politician Mérédic Louis Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry at the turn of the eighteenth century. These are invaluable since many of the originals have disappeared, but Moreau de Saint-Méry may have modified the content of these sources when writing up his notes. Nevertheless, according to the copy of a document made by Moreau de Saint-Méry in 1734, the *Compagnie des Indes* forbade ‘pour cause connue d’admettre au conseil, ni conseiller, ni Employer qui Epousera une Creolle’, nor the *Conseil* ‘de permettre a Ses Employés d’Epouser des filles creolles’.¹⁸⁷ These prohibitions were reiterated in 1736, 1738, 1740, and again in 1754. The company threatened men with removal from their positions if they did not comply with these regulations.¹⁸⁸ These regulations applied to members of the *Conseil Supérieur*, as well as to soldiers, officers and sailors on the island. In 1754, the *Compagnie des Indes* informed the *Conseil* of Île Bourbon that ‘la Compagnie Entend par Creolle, tout Enfant né d’un Sang Meslé. Quant aux Enfans des Isles nés de Pere et mere Européens, Sans

¹⁸⁵ ANOM C3 5, f.164

¹⁸⁶TRANSLATION: ‘some of these women are *mulâtresses*’.
Lougnon, *Sous le signe de la tortue*, p.238

¹⁸⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘for known causes to admit any councillor and employee who will marry a creole woman at the *Conseil*’; ‘to allow its employees to marry creole women’.

ANOM F3 205, p.87

¹⁸⁸ ANOM F3 205, p.26, 44, 46

Melange de Sang, ils ne Sont point Censés Creols, et ne Sont point Exclus, comme les autres'.¹⁸⁹

Intimate interethnic relations occurred, however, resulting in the birth of a significant number of illegitimate children of mixed heritage. A Lazarist priest reported in 1740 that on the island, the settlers 'ont la plupart un bon nombre de bastars qu'ils ont de leur négresses'.¹⁹⁰ Eighteenth-century parish registers for Île Bourbon contain numerous mentions of enslaved children 'dont le pere est inconnu'.¹⁹¹ These were sometimes recorded as French 'Soldat[s]' and 'ouvrier[s]'.¹⁹² There were possibly many other mixed children born to a French father who cannot be identified because the ethnic origins of illegitimate fathers were often not recorded; but for the years between 1704 and 1748, the very incomplete parish register of Sainte-Suzanne listed eight illegitimate mixed children born to an enslaved mother and a French father. Four of these Frenchmen were military men and two were 'ouvriers'.¹⁹³ This pattern was not restricted to Sainte-Suzanne; many other illegitimate children of enslaved women and unknown fathers who were sometimes classified as French are found in all eighteenth-century parish registers for Île Bourbon. Among several examples, in 1761 in Saint-Denis, a priest baptised a slave named Modeste, the daughter of a creole slave named Brigitte 'qui a déclaré pour Pere de l'Enfant le nommé Dudain Soldat de cette garnison'.¹⁹⁴ All of these illegitimate mixed children were enslaved, suggesting that few Frenchmen manumitted their offspring. The fact that so many mixed children were illegitimate shows that French settlers on Île Bourbon were more reluctant to marry enslaved women of colour than they were before, perhaps due to the significant number of laws aimed at preventing intermarriages between *noirs* and settlers on Île Bourbon.

On eighteenth-century Bourbon, economic difficulties generated slave rebellions, which also stimulated the development of interethnic tensions. In the 1720s, 1730s and 1750s,

¹⁸⁹ TRANSLATION: 'with the word creole, the company means any child of mixed blood. Children having a European father and mother, without mixed blood, are not considered to be creoles, and are not excluded, like the others'.

ANOM F3 205, pp.44-45

¹⁹⁰ TRANSLATION: 'often have a significant number of bastard children whom they have with the *négresses*'.

Nicole, *Noirs, cafres et creoles*, p.80

¹⁹¹ TRANSLATION: 'whose father is unknown'.

¹⁹² TRANSLATION: 'soldier[s]'; 'worker[s]'.

¹⁹³ ANOM 85MIOM/1151

¹⁹⁴ TRANSLATION: 'who declared the soldier of this garrison named Dudain to be the father of the child'.

ADR GG44, 'Saint-Denis', 2 MIEC773

episodic drought, a series of hurricanes, and heavy rains destroyed plantations and cattle, generating food shortages and hardship.¹⁹⁵ In 1721, the royal register spoke of ‘la déplorable Scituation ou Se trouve actuellement L’Isle de Bourbon par la disette des Vivres’.¹⁹⁶ Major financial difficulties amplified this hardship. From the 1720s, the incomes of Bourbon colonists collapsed as coffee prices dropped.¹⁹⁷ Bourbon coffee could not compete with the favoured Arabian coffee and, from the 1730s, with Caribbean coffee beans produced in Martinique and Saint-Domingue. Settlers were unable to afford necessary commodities since the *Compagnie des Indes* set exorbitant prices.¹⁹⁸ In 1746 in a letter to authorities, the settlers contested the new drop in the price for coffee, which caused ‘une misère affreuse’ in the colony.¹⁹⁹

Slaves were the first to suffer from the impact of economic difficulties; consequently, incidents of maroonage and slave rebellions multiplied on eighteenth-century Île Bourbon. Authorities noted that the lack of food, ‘les rend fugitifs, Leur fait faire des complots’ and ‘les Exposit a faire des Vols et pillages Sur leurs habitations’.²⁰⁰ The records of the *Conseil* of Île Bourbon contain a significant number of mentions of maroon slaves, especially from the 1720s to the 1750s.²⁰¹ Both plantation-bound and escaped slaves committed theft and murder and from the 1720s, maroons formed armed groups, attacking settlers and obtaining food, weapons, tools and clothes.²⁰² Among numerous examples, in 1734, ‘plusieurs noirs’ attacked a cabin, killed its owner, Sieur Brossard, and stole clothes and tools.²⁰³

The fact that many Malagasies were involved in the various insurgencies that took place in the eighteenth century reinforced interethnic prejudice. In 1736, the administrators of

¹⁹⁵ ADR C°2, p.190; ADR C312, p.14; ANOM F3 206, f.87, 91, 102v, 131, 137, ff.41-41v; Barassin, ‘L’esclavage à Bourbon avant l’application du Code Noir de 1723’, p.57; Cornu, *Paris et Bourbon*, p.18; Fontaine, *Deux siècles et demi de l’histoire d’une famille réunionnaise*, I, 221, 252, 238-239; Haudrière, *L’empire des rois*, p.170; Jean Valentin Payet, *Histoire de l’esclavage à l’île Bourbon* (Paris, 1990), p.94

¹⁹⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘the deplorable condition of the island due to food shortages’.

ADR C°1, p.69

¹⁹⁷ ANOM F3 205, p.367, pp.407-409; ANOM F3 206, f.22v, 29, 31

¹⁹⁸ TRANSLATION: ANOM F3 208, p.274

¹⁹⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘a horrible misery’

ANOM C3 8, f.183

²⁰⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘makes them run away, renders them inclined to revolt’ and ‘pushes them to steal [crops] and plunder the plantations’

ADR C°2430; ANOM F3 205, p.388

²⁰¹ See, for example, ADR C°2516 and ADR C°2522 *passim*

²⁰² See ADR C°2516, ADR C°2517, ADR C°2519, C° 2794 *passim*, and ADR C°3, f.23

²⁰³ TRANSLATION: ‘several blacks’

ADR C°1013

Île Bourbon advised the *Compagnie des Indes* to send African and Indian slaves to Bourbon instead of Malagasies, because slaves from Madagascar were thought to be too rebellious, ‘feroces, hardis Et Entreprenans’.²⁰⁴ To these officers, African and Indian slaves were ‘fins Et Rusés ayant autant d’Interêt que les blancs a S’opposer a la Reussite des Entreprises des Malgaches’.²⁰⁵

Although all enslaved people were non-whites, the hierarchical social order of eighteenth-century Île Bourbon was not entirely defined along a colour line. A significant number of free South-Asians settled on Île Bourbon and occupied the relatively distinguished position of craftsman. According to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre most free Indians on the island were ‘Malabares’, renting their services ‘pour plusieurs années’, being ‘presque tous ouvriers’.²⁰⁶ Many worked as builders, as was the case of Nalout, Mouton, Callia and Chavrimouton in 1763, who were all recorded as ‘Malabar[s] Maçon[s]’.²⁰⁷ Others worked as carpenters, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, goldsmiths, tailors and shoemakers. For example, in 1733, governor Pierre-Benoît Dumas mentioned ‘un Mulatre habitans Et Naturel de Ceylan’ who came to Île Bourbon ‘pour y travailler de Son metier de Cordonnier’.²⁰⁸ This same *mulâtre* had introduced the commerce of cinnamon on Île Bourbon.²⁰⁹ Europeans held these Indian workers in high esteem. In 1731, authorities declared their preference for using ‘Ouvrier Indiens’ to teach crafts to apprentices, arguing that ‘L’yvrogerie Empêche les ouvriers de france d’Instruire des Noirs’.²¹⁰ From 1745, the administrators of the company refused to recruit assayers from France to work on Île Bourbon, because in their own words ‘les Essayeurs Indiens’ worked ‘avec plus de justesse que ceux de france’.²¹¹

²⁰⁴ TRANSLATION: ‘ferocious, bold and grubby’.

ANOM F3 206, f.141

²⁰⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘fine and smart, having as much interest as whites to oppose the success of the undertakings of the Malagasies’.

ANOM F3 206, f.141

²⁰⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘for several years’; ‘almost all workers’.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Voyage à L’isle de France, à l’isle de Bourbon, au Cap de Bonne-Espérance etc., avec des observations nouvelles sur la nature et les hommes* (Amsterdam, 1773), p.188

²⁰⁷ 2 Mi 47 C°808

²⁰⁸ TRANSLATION: ‘a *mulâtre* born in Ceylon’; ‘to practise his craft of shoemaker’.

ANOM C3 7, f.110

²⁰⁹ ANOM C3 7, ff.110-110v

²¹⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘Indian workers’; ‘drunkenness is preventing workers from France to teach [their crafts to] blacks’.

ANOM F3 205, p.1

²¹¹ TRANSLATION: ‘Indian assayers’ worked ‘with more precision than those from France’.

ANOM C2 31, ff.155-156

A partial assessment of the number of slaves and size of parcels of land per household demonstrates that generally, as in previous decades, other free people of colour on Île Bourbon were not poorer than Europeans. Some creole people of non-European ancestry owned considerable numbers of slaves and multiple tracts of land. In 1732, such was the case with Luce Payet, the daughter of a Frenchman named Antoine Payet and of Louise ‘de Madagascar’.²¹² In Saint-Denis, she and her French husband Henry Justamond owned ninety-two slaves, three lands cultivated in coffee plants, as well as various livestock animals.²¹³ In 1732, it would appear that a majority of households on Île Bourbon owned between ten and twenty slaves.²¹⁴ Several non-white creoles possessed as many or even slightly more slaves and tracts of land than the average settler on Île Bourbon. Among several examples, in 1732, the widow Louise Nativel, who was classified as ‘Creolle de Madagascar’ owned twenty-seven slaves, a few livestock animals and three cultivated lands.²¹⁵ By the end of the period covered by this dissertation, several people of colour remained quite wealthy. Among other examples, the census of 1756 listed Pierre Nativel Junior, the son of Pierre Nativel and of Marie Varach ‘de Madagascar’.²¹⁶ Pierre Junior and his wife owned 114 slaves, a large plantation and more than one hundred livestock animals.²¹⁷

Like the *mulâtresse* planter Louise Payet (see Section II), several people of colour continued to occupy positions of high socio-economic standing on the island. Governor of Île Bourbon Pierre-Benoît Dumas was married to an Indian woman named Marie Gertrude Wanzyll. The Dumas couple was among the wealthiest inhabitants of Île Bourbon, owning more than twenty domestic slaves, 140 *nègres de pioche*, large coffee plantations and hundreds of livestock animals.²¹⁸ In 1732, Sieur Dumas was charged with having slandered his wife and an infantry captain named Monseigneur Marion, by unjustly accusing them of carrying on an adulterous relationship. Administrators described Marie Gertrude as a virtuous ‘Indiennes [*sic*] fort aimable qui n’à Jamais donné la moindre occasion de parler d’Elle’.²¹⁹

²¹² TRANSLATION: ‘from Madagascar’.

ANOM G1 477

²¹³ ADR C° 768, f. 159v, 169

²¹⁴ ADR C°768, f.94

²¹⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘creole from Madagascar’.

ANOM G1 477; ADR C° 768, f.129

²¹⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘from Madagascar’.

ANOM DPPC G1 477

²¹⁷ C°778, f.21v

²¹⁸ C° 768, ff.91-93v

²¹⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘a very friendly Indian woman who has never been much talked about’.

Marie Gertrude probably came from a noble Indian family since officials reported that when she went to Paris with her husband Dumas, ‘elle trouva qu’elle avoit Epousé un homme du plus profound Neant, Sans Nom et Sans Famille’, which she considered to be ‘une cruelle Tromperie’.²²⁰

While several non-whites were prosperous, some *blancs* were relatively poor. Several European families possessed few slaves and few or no plantations. Among other examples, in 1732 in Saint-Paul, Flemish settler Nicolas Gonnet and his French wife Magdelaine Le Goy owned only six slaves, no cultivated land and no livestock.²²¹ Poverty may have helped diminish the colour line in Bourbon society, especially when settlers encountered major economic difficulties. In fact, financial difficulties were so significant that some settlers could not even afford clothes for their families. In a letter written in 1740, they lamented ‘le chagrin journalier qu’ils ressentent et qu’ils Eprouvent actuellement de leur [sic] nudité, La plus par d’Eux ne pouvant assister au Service divin’.²²² In a remonstrance sent to the *Compagnie des Indes* and to the members of the *Conseil Supérieur* in 1732, a group of settlers complained that increasingly low income, added to insect invasions and recurring climatic upheavals had placed them in a deplorable condition. According to them, they were soon going to be in an ‘Etat peu different de celui de nos Esclaves’.²²³

❖ Louisiana

Different economic, demographic and political factors shaped the development of colour prejudice in the French settlements of the Mississippi valley. The plantation regime that emerged in Louisiana from the late 1710s was far less intense than that which developed on Île Bourbon and in Guadeloupe. Historians such as Jennifer Spear and Joseph Zitomersky have argued that from this period, Louisiana was moving towards the Caribbean model of plantation agriculture, based on a large enslaved labour force.²²⁴ Others, like Gwendolyn

ANOM C3 6, f.80

²²⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘she found out that she had married a nobody, with no distinguished name and family’; ‘cruel deception’.

ANOM C3 6 f.88v; ADR C°768, f.91

²²¹ ADR C° 768, f.80

²²² TRANSLATION: ‘the daily sadness caused by their nudity, most of them being unable to attend church service’.

ANOM F3 208, p.540

²²³ TRANSLATION: ‘in a state little different from that of our slaves’.

ANOM F3 206, f.127

²²⁴ Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.53; Joseph Zitomersky, ‘Culture, classe ou Etat? Comment interpréter les relations dans la grande Louisiane française avant et après 1803?’, in

Hall, contend that there was no plantation society in French Louisiana, because the colony did not produce a high quantity of valuable cash crops.²²⁵ Indeed, Louisiana's small crop production and export volumes never competed with those of the French Antilles.²²⁶ But Louisiana resembled the French Caribbean because, in some areas of the Mississippi valley, settlers developed plantation economies based on the use of large numbers of enslaved workers brought from Africa.

Export crops were cultivated principally in the lower Mississippi valley. From the 1720s, tobacco plantations began to develop in the regions of New Orleans, Natchez, Pointe Coupée, Bayagoulas and Natchitoches.²²⁷ Settlers began to produce and export increasing quantities of indigo.²²⁸ Subsistence crops included wheat in Illinois (part of this production was exported to the lower Mississippi valley), as well as rice along the lower Mississippi.²²⁹

The development of plantation agriculture engendered significant demographic transformations. From 1719 and for slightly more than a decade, more than 6,000 African slaves, most of them from Senegal and Guinea, were transported to the colony.²³⁰

Marcel Dorigny and Marie-Jean Rossignol dir., *La France et les Amériques au temps de Jefferson et de Miranda* (Paris, 2001), p.66

²²⁵ Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana*, esp p.10

²²⁶ Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana*, pp. 10-11, 123-124 and p. 121, 202; Joseph Zitomersky, *French Americans: Native Americans in eighteenth-century French colonial Louisiana: the population geography of the Illinois Indians, 1670s-1760s* (Lund, 1994), p. 18.

²²⁷ ANOM G1 464; ANOM G1 465; HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', LO 130, LO 191, LO 202; HTML, 'Louisiana Research Collection, French Colonial Period, 1655-1731', Box 1, 1724/12/20

²²⁸ ANOM G1 465; HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', LO 191; HTML, 'Louisiana Research Collection, French Colonial Period, 1655-1731', Box 1, 1724/12/20; Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana*, p.124;

²²⁹ ANOM G1 464; HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', LO 143; Dumont De Montigny, 'Histoire de la Louisiana: poème en quatre chants, circa 1736', LOC, 'Louisiana Miscellany 1724-1837', p.152

²³⁰ Lugan, *La Louisiane Française*, p.82; Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.55

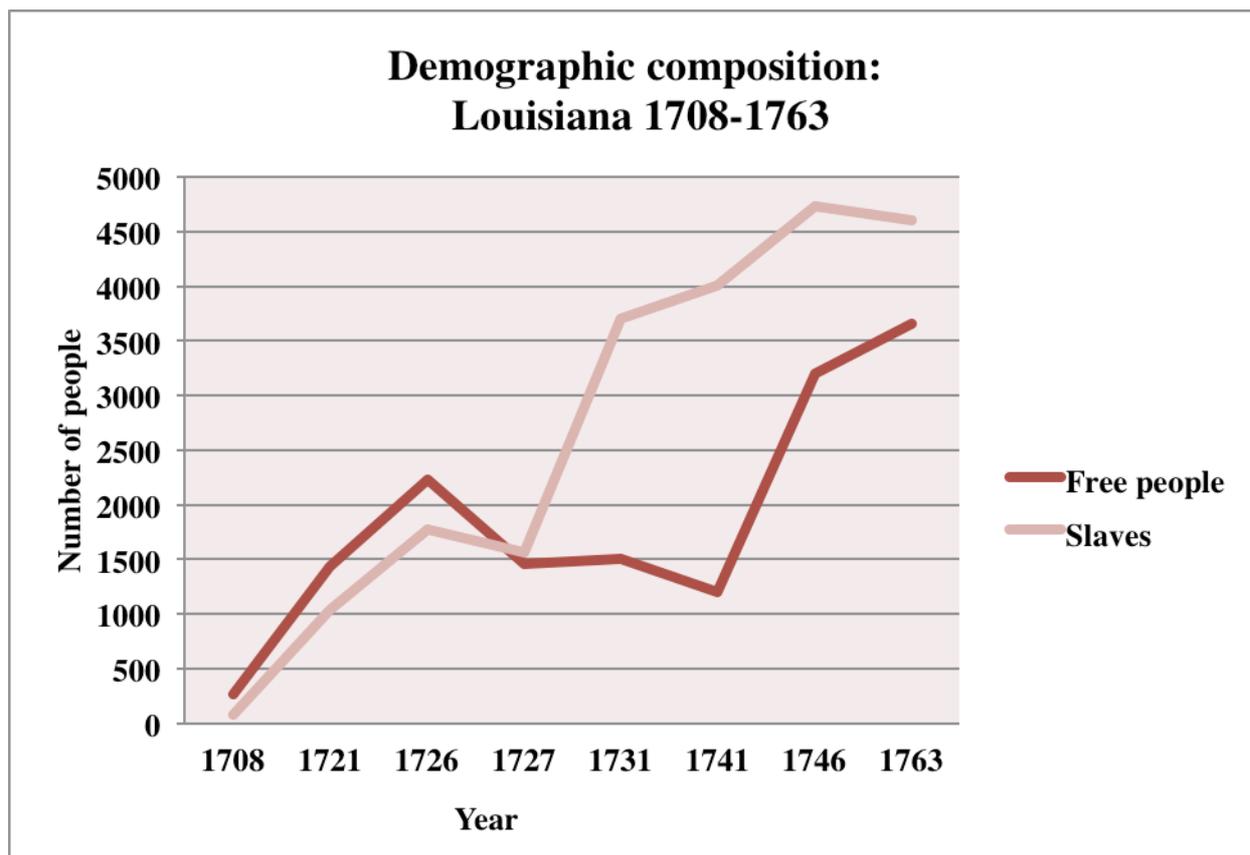


Figure 8 ²³¹

As shown in **Figure 8** above, by the end of the 1720s, enslaved workers outnumbered free people in the Louisiana colony. By 1721, there were 1,029 slaves in the colony (including 852 Africans and 177 Natives Americans), representing approximately 42% of the population. This proportional figure rose to 71% of the population in 1731 (3,695 captives) but dropped to 70% in 1746 (4,730 slaves) and to 56% in 1763 (4,598 captives), due to disease, high mortality and low fertility rates, and to the cessation of slave imports. In 1724, the substantial increase in the number of enslaved workers in Louisiana and other French colonies motivated the Crown to issue a new *Code Noir* for Louisiana, which regulated slavery in terms similar to the *Code Noir* of the Antilles of 1685 and the ‘Lettres Patentes’ of Île Bourbon of 1723.

As black slavery developed, people of African ancestry came to be considered inferior to *blancs*. Racial discourses entered discussions concerning blacks. In the eyes of French engineer Antoine-Simon Le Page Du Pratz, *nègres* were ‘hommes nés d’une basse extraction & Sans éducation’, which explained some of their evil inclinations, such as their proclivity to

²³¹ Year 1708: ANOM C13 A2; years 1721, 1726, 1727: ANOM G1 464; year 1731: ANOM F3 132; years 1741, 1746 and 1763: Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, p. 10

steal.²³² Slaves in Louisiana became increasingly dehumanised as their number increased after 1720. As on Île Bourbon, enslaved workers were usually listed among other commodities in Louisiana notarial estate inventories. For example, in 1754, in the inventory of the succession of Etienne Bosseron in Pointe-Coupee, the names of six African and Native American slaves appear alongside furniture and cattle.²³³ In the minds of many colonists, *blancs* were intended to occupy a much higher and more dignified position than *noirs*. Thus, in 1726, a French surgeon named Dominique de Sanson complained to the *Conseil Supérieur* that his supervisor had treated him as if he were ‘moins qu’un Negre’, in part by threatening to ‘le faire chatier par les negres’, because he had spent too much time curing a slave.²³⁴

Additionally, in the 1720s in Louisiana, discriminatory laws became more frequent; they aimed at maintaining a segregated plantation society, with blacks enslaved and whites acting as masters. Like article V of the ‘Lettres Patentes’ of Île Bourbon, article VI of the *Code Noir* of Louisiana of 1724 forbade ‘a nos Sujets blancs de l’un et de l’autre Sexe de Contracter Mariage avec les noirs, a peine de punition et de demande arbitraire’.²³⁵ As with article V of the ‘Lettres Patentes’ of 1723, the same article sentenced masters fathering *mulâtres* with their slaves to pay a fine and to have their concubines and illegitimate offspring confiscated. It also stated that this last provision would not apply in the case of an unmarried ‘homme noir affranchy ou libre’, who would be permitted to marry his enslaved concubine.²³⁶

As on Île Bourbon, a collection of regulations attempted to prevent the social ascendancy of free people of colour in Louisiana, perhaps because their presence threatened the segregated social order. Like article LVIII of the *Code Noir* of the Antilles of 1685 and article X of the ‘Lettres patentes’ of Île Bourbon of 1723, article LIII of the 1724 *Code Noir* of Louisiana commanded freed slaves to convey a ‘respect singulier’ to their former masters.²³⁷ As in the Martinican edict of 1678 and in article XXXIII of the ‘Lettres patentes’ of 1723,

²³² TRANSLATION: ‘men of a low lineage and having no education’.

Antoine Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de Louisiane, contenant la découverte de ce vaste pays* (3 Vols., Paris, 1758), I, 348

²³³ HTML, ‘Kuntz Collection, French Colonial Period, 1732-1768’, Box 2, 1754/12/3

²³⁴ TRANSLATION: ‘less than a *nègre*’; ‘have him punished by the *nègres*’.

LSM File 1726101402; LSM File 1726111501

²³⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘our white subjects, of both sexes, to marry blacks under penalty of punishment and arbitrary fine’.

ANOM A 23, f.50

²³⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘manumitted or free black man’.

ANOM A 23, f.51

²³⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘a singular respect’.

ANOM A 23, f.56v

article XXXIII of the *Code Noir* of 1724 subjected free blacks to (re)-enslavement if they were found to have offered asylum to maroon slaves.²³⁸ A regulation issued in 1751 by the *Conseil Supérieur* of Louisiana also stated that ‘tous negres et negresses ayant obtenu leur liberté qui Seront capables de recevoir chez eux des Esclaves pour les Seduire et les exciter à Voller leurs maîtres, et mener une vie Scandaleuse, Perdront leur liberté’.²³⁹ The surviving records of the *Conseil Supérieur* show that, in Louisiana, a few manumitted slaves were indeed re-enslaved. For example, in 1747, a freed black slave named Jeannette was re-enslaved for theft and unpaid debts.²⁴⁰ Like article X of the ‘Lettres Patentes’ of 1723, article LII of the *Code Noir* of 1724 prevented *libres* from receiving any donations ‘Entre vifs a cause de mort ou autrement’.²⁴¹ This regulation was applied at least a few times in Louisiana. For example, in 1725, the Count of Deserbois freed a black woman named Lazou and granted her money. The *Conseil Supérieur* approved the manumission but refused to accept the donation ‘attendu de l’Incapacité de ladite Negresse a Recevoir des donations’.²⁴²

Discriminatory legislation generated significant social tensions from the 1720s to 1763 in Louisiana. The available parish registers suggest that marriages between European settlers and people of African ancestry were extremely rare during this period. This near absence of intermarriages between *blancs* and people of African ancestry was probably due, in part, to the fact that article VI of the 1724 *Code Noir* of Louisiana prohibited marriages between *blancs* and *noirs*.²⁴³ No records exist of marriage between a French person and a man or woman of African descent in the parish registers of Mobile for the period between 1724 and 1763, nor in the records of Natchitoches from 1729 through 1763.²⁴⁴ The same is true for the parishes of Pointe-Coupee (1756 to 1768), and Biloxi, Yazoo and Natchez (1720 to 1730).²⁴⁵ In the parish registers of New Orleans for the period between 1720 and 1763, only one

²³⁸ ANOM COL A 23, f.54

²³⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘every *nègre* or *négresse* having obtained their freedom, who will be capable of giving asylum to slaves to seduce them and induce them to steal from their masters and lead a scandalous life will loose their freedom’.

ANOM C13 A35, f.44

²⁴⁰ Henry Dart ed., *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 18 (1935), p.168

²⁴¹ TRANSLATION: ‘*inter vivos*, because of death or for any other reason’.

ANOM A 23, f.56

²⁴² TRANSLATION: ‘because the said Negress is unable to receive donations’.

ANOM 2866, f.141

²⁴³ For more information regarding this regulation, see Chapter 8.

ANOM A 23, f.50

²⁴⁴ Jacqueline Olivier Vidrine transcription and ed. *Love’s legacy: the Mobile marriages recorded in French, transcribed with annotated abstracts in English, 1724-1786* (Lafayette, 1985); ‘Natchitoches Parish Registers, 1729-1792’, SCD, Dupre Library, UL Lafayette

²⁴⁵ ‘St Francis of Pointe Coupee New Roads L.A, Baptisms Marriages Burials, 1756-1769’, ABR; ANO, SR/ 56

intermarriage between a *blanc* and a person of African descent was recorded. In 1747, Christine Chovin ‘mulatresse libre’ gave birth to a child named Jean Paul.²⁴⁶ A man born in New Orleans named Jean La France, whom we may assume was white, acknowledged being the father of Jean-Paul and ‘etre dans le dessein depouser Christine Mulatresse Mere de cet enfant’.²⁴⁷ Christine was the daughter of a Frenchman named Delery and of Françoise, ‘negresse Esclave’. La France eventually married Christine in 1748 and together they had another son named Jean-Baptiste, in 1754.²⁴⁸

The fact that slave-owners generally owned small numbers of slaves meant that interethnic ties of friendship were particularly likely to emerge. Proportions of slaves varied from one Louisiana settlement to another. A majority of slaves lived in settlements located in the Gulf Coast region in areas surrounding the Mississippi river, especially in and near New Orleans and Mobile, and to a lesser extent Biloxi, Pascagoula river and La Balize, although there was also a substantial number of slaves in Natchez.²⁴⁹ In the region of News Orleans, in 1727, slaves amounted to approximately 53% of the population and in 1721 the situation was similar in Mobile, where slaves represented approximately 50% of the population.²⁵⁰ However, in the census of 1724 of the *Village des Allemands*, there is no mention of slaves.²⁵¹ By 1731, there were only approximately 165 *nègres* in Illinois, amounting to less than 5% of the enslaved population of people of African ancestry in Louisiana.²⁵² In the colony as a whole, six slaveholders possessed nearly 50% of the region’s enslaved workers. Most settlers owned no slaves at all and slaveholders, for the most part, owned few slaves. More than one-half of the households located in the belt surrounding New Orleans owned fewer than five slaves, and a quarter of households owned just one.²⁵³ As Hall expresses it, ‘la répartition

²⁴⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘free *mulâtresse*’.

ANO SR/210, p.95

²⁴⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘having the intention of marrying Christine *mûlatresse*, mother of this child’.

ANO SR/2, p.114

²⁴⁸ ANO SR/210, p.95; ANO SR/ 3, p.23

²⁴⁹ ANOM G1 464

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, pp.55-56

équilibrée des esclaves dans les foyers de petite dimension est un danger commun qui encourageaient l'établissement de liens d'intimité entre maîtres et esclaves'.²⁵⁴

Manumission acts and last wills demonstrate that many masters developed friendships with their domestic slaves—slave owners frequently justified their willingness to grant freedom or properties to their slaves by invoking their affection towards them. Among numerous examples, in 1757, a merchant named Sieur Henry Decours manumitted his four-years old *mulâtresse* slave named Rosette 'being much attached to her as she his good natured, and wishing to take care of her education'.²⁵⁵

In Louisiana, exchanges of knowledge between the French and people of African ancestry may also have stimulated the formation of fluid interethnic relations. This is the argument developed by Daniel Usner.²⁵⁶ Africans in the Mississippi valley helped the French develop efficient plantation techniques. They showed them how to grow rice, a reliable crop cultivated in the swamplands of southern Louisiana, and exported from the Gulf Coast to the Caribbean.²⁵⁷ It was introduced to the Mississippi valley in 1719, along with several African slaves who knew how to cultivate it.²⁵⁸

From the 1720s to the 1760s, settlers in Louisiana were more likely to maintain fluid relationships with non-European people as they continued to face long-lasting hardship. Financial difficulties together with a series of crop failures beset the Mississippi valley from the 1720s to 1763. In the words of the members of the *Conseil Supérieur*, the year 1722 was the 'temps de la disette' and such was the case again in 1733, and in 1738.²⁵⁹ In 1721, commodities from France were sold to Louisiana settlers with a benefit of 50% for the company. Company employees appropriated the most popular products to sell them at even higher prices and as a result, few colonists could afford these goods.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ TRANSLATION: 'the equal distribution of slaves in small households is a common danger which stimulated the establishment of friendship bonds between masters and slaves'.

Gwendolyn Hall, 'Relations raciales en Louisiane coloniale. Politique étatique et attitudes populaires', in Alain Saussol et Joseph Zitomersky ed., *Colonies, territoires, sociétés* (Paris, 1996), p.53

²⁵⁵ LSM 'Black Books', 1757; LSM File 1757070101

²⁵⁶ Usner, *Indians, settlers & slaves in a frontier exchange economy: the lower Mississippi valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill, 1992)

²⁵⁷ Dumont De Montigny, 'Histoire de la Louisiana: poème en quatre chants, circa 1736', LOC, 'Louisiana Miscellany 1724-1837', pp.103-104; Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana*, pp.122-123

²⁵⁸ Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, pp.121-123

²⁵⁹ TRANSLATION: 'the time of the famine'.

LSM File 1724122802; ANOM C13 A17, f.210; ANOM C13 A23, ff.176-177

²⁶⁰ HTML, 'Louisiana Research Collection, French Colonial Period, 1655-1731', Box 1, 1721/9/2

Wars in the North American territories worsened the situation. The War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) prevented French ships from supplying the settlers and during the Seven Years War (1754-1763), an English blockade disrupted communications and supplies once again.²⁶¹

On a few occasions, people of different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities attempted together to run away from the colony. Such endeavours probably involved the existence of a certain unity among these people. In 1720, for example, fifteen people were accused of having conspired to run away to the Choctaw and then to the British. These included a young Native American slave, a maroon African slave, a French sergeant, a Swiss soldier and a French woman who had been compelled to go to Louisiana and had been married by force.²⁶²

In fact, many French soldiers deserted French settlements and established themselves among Native American communities. In 1747, Vaudreuil sent a letter to *Secrétaire d'État à la Marine* Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux Count of Maurepas, seeking an amnesty, 'pour tous les deserteurs qui depuis plusieurs années Sont parmy les Sauvages et les espagnols'.²⁶³ In the same year the Crown agreed to grant this amnesty, on the basis of the 'repent[ance] que temoignent les Soldats deserteurs qui Sont parmi les Nations Sauvages'.²⁶⁴ Natives became so attached to some deserted soldiers that they sought to protect them, preventing French authorities from exacting punishments.²⁶⁵ One important case is that of a deserter named Jolicoeur, who found refuge among the Cherokee. He lived in their community for six years, learnt their languages and, according to governor Vaudreuil, was 'adopté par la famille du Nommée Chartine un des princeaux chefs de cete Nation qui depuis un An ne Cesse de demander Sa grace'.²⁶⁶ The governor requested royal pardon for Jolicoeur in 1743 and again in 1746, but the final outcome of these requests is unknown.²⁶⁷

²⁶¹ Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion*, p.65

²⁶² Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, p.131. Other, similar, cases were found in: HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', 'Lettres Volume III', pp.167-168; LSM File 1752021701; LSM File 1752021702

²⁶³ TRANSLATION: 'for all the deserters who have been among the *sauvages* and the Spaniards for many years'.

HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', LO 325

²⁶⁴ TRANSLATION: 'the repentance manifested by the deserter soldiers who are among the *sauvages*'.

HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', LO 101

²⁶⁵ For other examples, see: HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', 'Lettres Volume I', p.49v, 205

²⁶⁶ TRANSLATION: 'was adopted by the family of Chartine, one of the main chiefs of this nation who has been constantly asking for his pardon this year'.

The survival of the French who had not deserted the colony continued to depend significantly on the indigenous populations who often provided food and shelter to settlers. Officer Dumont de Montigny related how, in the winter of 1719, in Biloxi:

‘la farine et le vin tout a coup nous Manquant
le peuple, le soldats, tout [*sic*] S’en fut aux villages
que pour lors avoient faits les barbares sauvages
qui donnoient au François de la sagamité*
et tout avec plaisir et affabilité;
tout ce monde pour lors pendant cette misère
ne vivoient que Comme eux, restant dessus leurs terre’.²⁶⁸

That record of hospitality did not prevent Dumont de Montigny from expressing prejudice towards the Indians, whom he called ‘barbares sauvages’.²⁶⁹

In view of constant threats of potential British or Indian attacks, the French had also, again, to rely on Native American nations (especially on Choctaw and Illinois Indians) for military support. Different events put the French in conflict with several Native American nations. In 1729, the Natchez Indians and their African, Choctaw and Chickasaw allies massacred, ‘plus de trois cent francois’ in the Natchez settlement, according to Marine officer Jean Charles Pradel.²⁷⁰ The few remaining *blancs* were captured and enslaved.²⁷¹ Natchez Indians sought to drive off and even eliminate French settlers as they moved into Natchez lands. Later, in 1732, powerful Chickasaw and Natchez bands attacked French settlements

HL, ‘Vaudreuil Papers’, ‘Lettres Volume I’, f.94v

²⁶⁷ HL, ‘Vaudreuil Papers’, ‘Lettres Volume I’, ff.93v-94v

²⁶⁸ TRANSLATION: ‘as flour and wine were lacking, the people and the soldiers all went to the village of the barbarous *sauvages* who gladly and affably fed the French with *sagamité*. During this period, the French lived like the *sauvages*, staying on their lands’.

**Sagamité* was a Native American dish made of wheat, water and oil.

Dumont De Montigny, ‘Histoire de la Louisiana: poème en quatre chants, circa 1736’, LOC, ‘Louisiana Miscellany 1724-1837’, p.14

²⁶⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘barbarous *sauvages*’.

Dumont De Montigny, ‘Histoire de la Louisiana: poème en quatre chants, circa 1736’, LOC, ‘Louisiana Miscellany 1724-1837’, p.14

²⁷⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘more than three hundred French people’.

‘22 may 1730 Letter, Pradel to his mother, New Orleans’, in ‘Jean Charles Pradel family papers, 1718-1954’, LSU Hill Library, Mss.2866. See also Dumont De Montigny, ‘Histoire de la Louisiane’, LOC, p.21, 28, 59

²⁷¹ CAOM F3 24, ff.188-191v. Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, p.101

near New Orleans and at Pointe Coupee and Mobile.²⁷² In the 1730s and the 1740s, the French were at war with the Chickasaw Indians.²⁷³ Promoting commercial exchanges with natives and being able to provide presents to Indian chiefs was one of governor Vaudreuil's main strategies through which he hoped to realise his political ambition of maintaining friendly relations with Native American allies.²⁷⁴

Trade between the settlers and Native Americans remained significant, especially in Illinois. In 1748, authorities mentioned the existence, in Illinois, of a group of fur traders 'ayant passé presque la plus grande partie de Leur vie dans les Bois a la Chasse et a La traite parmy les Sauvages'.²⁷⁵ In the 1740s, Vaudreuil complained that because a great number of fur traders were pursuing their activities, agriculture remained underdeveloped in the region as 'ces traiteurs prive l'agriculture d'un nombre considerable de Sujets qui Se fixeroient aux Illinois'.²⁷⁶ Canadian men dominated this trade, although French soldiers were also involved in these exchanges.²⁷⁷ In 1743, Vaudreuil sent orders to the different posts in Louisiana, asking the commandants to allow their garrison soldiers to trade with 'les Sauvages qui viennent traiter des Peltries au fort', arguing that 'il est juste que les Soldats qui font quelques ouvrages pour les Sauvages en retirent leur Salair'.²⁷⁸ He however asked them 'de ne point permettre a Personne d'aller faire la Traitte dans aucun village des Sauvages'.²⁷⁹ To eliminate the *coureurs de bois* from Illinois, Vaudreuil suggested that a few trading companies possessing exclusive trading privileges and composed of a few wise settlers should

²⁷² Brasseaux, *France's forgotten legion*, p.52

²⁷³ Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, p.17; Haudrère, *L'empire des rois*, p.265

²⁷⁴ Bill Barron ed., *The Vaudreuil Papers: a calendars and index of the of the personal and private records of Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil Royal Governor of the French province of Louisiana, 1743-1753* (New Orleans, 1975), pp.xx-xxi

²⁷⁵ TRANSLATION: 'having spent almost most of their lives hunting in the woods and trading among the *sauvages*'.

HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', 'Lettres Volume II', f.42

²⁷⁶ TRANSLATION: 'these traders deprive the region from the agriculture that would otherwise be practised by a considerable number of subjects who would settle in Illinois'.

HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', 'Lettres Volume II', ff.12v-13

²⁷⁷ HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', 'Lettres Volume II', p.12v

²⁷⁸ TRANSLATION: 'the *sauvages* who come to the fort to trade'; 'it is fair to let the soldiers who make crafts for the *sauvages* to let them draw a salary from them'.

HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', 'Lettres Volume III', p.64

²⁷⁹ TRANSLATION: 'not to allow anybody to trade in any village belonging to the *sauvages*'.

HL, 'Vaudreuil Papers', 'Lettres Volume III', p.64

be created.²⁸⁰ In 1745, a monopoly on the Choctaw trade was granted to infantry officer Francois Hazur and his associates.²⁸¹

Although black slavery developed in Louisiana, the hierarchical social order was not entirely defined along a colour line. Some free people of colour occupied distinguished professions. A few worked as *commandeurs*, as was the case of De Valette ‘Commandeur des Negres’ who lived in central New Orleans, and many were domestic servants. Such was the case with Raphael Bernard, ‘Negre Libre’.²⁸² Sieur Dumanoir had hired him in France and together, they had moved to Louisiana. In 1724, Raphael petitioned the *Conseil Supérieur* because Dumanoir deprived him of his salary and mistreated him, giving him ‘coups De batons, toute [sic] Les fois quil luy demandoit ses gages’.²⁸³ Raphael wanted to obtain his earnings and recover a valuable trunk belonging to him, which his employer had confiscated.²⁸⁴ The *Conseil* condemned Dumanoir to provide what was due to Raphael, to return the trunk and to allow him to leave his service.²⁸⁵ Some *libres* held the relatively esteemed positions of craftsman and sailor, as was the case of Antoine Bauvais ‘Mulatre’, a salaried sailor on a vessel named ‘La Loire’, which belonged to the *Compagnie des Indes*.²⁸⁶ Additionally, a few free *métis* (French/ Native American) men became involved in trading activities. La Lande ‘metis’, for example, was imprisoned in 1752 for having traded in the Ohio country without the consent of the commandant of Fort-de-Chartres, Jean-Jacques Macarty. He confessed to having sold three-hundred-and-fifty deerskins to the English during his stay in the Ohio country in 1751, in exchange for various goods, including covers and cloths.²⁸⁷

Other free people of African ancestry even occupied positions of high standing in Louisiana.

²⁸⁰ HL, ‘Vaudreuil Papers’, ‘Lettres Volume I’, f.13v

²⁸¹ Dart ed., *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 14 (1931), p.603

²⁸² TRANSLATION: ‘free nègre’.

LSM File 1724072701

²⁸³ TRANSLATION: ‘blows with a stick when he asked for his salary’.

LSM File 1724072701

²⁸⁴ LSM File 1724072701

²⁸⁵ LSM File 1724092002. For other judicial cases involving free domestic servants of African ancestry in Louisiana, see: Dart ed., *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 14 (1931), p.594; LSM File 1730042101

²⁸⁶ LSM File 1729070501

²⁸⁷ HL, ‘Vaudreuil Papers’, LO 376

An administrator mentioned Larue, a ‘Mulatre’ captain commanding a ship which arrived in Louisiana in 1734.²⁸⁸ Larue wanted to go to France and ‘y armer pour Son Compte Un Navire pour aller prendre des Negres en Guinée et les apporter icy’.²⁸⁹ The administrator approved this proposal, finding the arrival of new slaves necessary to promote the cultivation of indigo plants in the region.²⁹⁰

A small number of free women of African ancestry were relatively successful. For example, in 1732, Monsieur de Chavannes manumitted Marie Angelique, called Isabelle ‘Negresse’, ‘dont il est content pour la fidelité et les services’.²⁹¹ This woman of colour then acquired an attractive property on Royal Street in New Orleans, which formerly belonged to Chavannes. In 1738, she invested in cattle farming by buying a herd of horned cattle from a man named Graveline.²⁹² One year later, she sold the lot on Royal Street to a Frenchman named Sieur du Breuil.²⁹³ Even during his illness, Chavannes helped Isabelle direct her business by getting involved in some notarial matters regarding her cattle.²⁹⁴ When he died in 1752, Chavannes designated Isabelle and her daughter as his unique heirs ‘pour leur tenir Lieu de payment de leurs gages pendant le temps quelles [l’]ont Servy’.²⁹⁵ Although article LII of the *Code Noir* of 1724 prevented *libres* from receiving such donations, the *Conseil* agreed to deliver Chavannes’ belongings to Isabelle.²⁹⁶ A map indicates that, in the 1720s, a dozen *nègres libres* like Isabelle owned properties in central New Orleans.²⁹⁷ These included, for example, De Valette, ‘Commandeur des Negres’, and Marty ‘neigre Libre’ who seems to have owned several buildings in the city.²⁹⁸

²⁸⁸ TRANSLATION: ‘mulâtre’.

ANOM C13A 19, f.88v

²⁸⁹ TRANSLATION: ‘to load a ship for his own profit to go and take *nègres* in Guinea and bring them here’.

ANOM C13 A19, f.89

²⁹⁰ ANOM C13 A19, f.89

²⁹¹ TRANSLATION: ‘*négresse* who contented him through her faithfulness and services’.

LSM File 1738021503

²⁹² LSM File 1738021503

²⁹³ Dart ed., *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 6 (1923), p.310

²⁹⁴ LSM 1740072902

²⁹⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘as a payment of their salary for when they worked for him’.

LSM File 1752120202

²⁹⁶ File 1752120202

²⁹⁷ ‘Estat des Personnes auxquelles l’on a marqué par leurs alphabetiques et Chiffres des Emplacements pour batir Suivant le Projet de la Ville de la Nouvelle Orleans’, LOC, ‘Louisiana Miscellany, 1724-1837’, Mss. 17, 495, Reel No.1

²⁹⁸ TRANSLATION: ‘*commandeur* of the *nègres*’; ‘free *nègre*’.

Some free Native American women also occupied relatively distinguished socio-economic positions. A Missouri Indian woman named Françoise was married to a military officer and trader named Sieur Dubois, at first stationed along the Missouri river. Together, Françoise and Dubois moved to the Illinois country. When a group of Native American enemies murdered Dubois, Françoise inherited his properties, including cattle and furniture left in Missouri. Then she married another Frenchman named Sieur Marin, around 1730. An estate inventory reveals that when Françoise died in 1739, she possessed properties from the Dubois inheritance, as well as 5,000 *livres*, a substantial amount of money.²⁹⁹ The sight of these relatively prosperous people of colour must have contrasted with that of the many *blancs* who lived in extreme poverty.

Indeed, numerous *blancs* in Louisiana could hardly be associated with prestige and power. From the 1720s to 1763, wars and a series of crop failures exacerbated hardship in the region. These factors rendered many settlers poorer than certain people of colour. In the 1720s, a census reported that in the Arkansas post ‘tous les habitants Sont pauvres et ne Subsistent que de la chasse des Sauvages’.³⁰⁰ In 1738, settlers in Louisiana had to let their slaves hunt freely to survive ‘n’ayant rien du tout dans leur [*sic*] vilages pour vivre’ and the soldiers were ‘Sans habits’ due to the lack of supplies.³⁰¹ In 1748, in a letter to Maurepas, Vaudreuil mentioned the ‘perte de plus de 300 Negres aux habitants de ce paÿs depuis 2 ans’.³⁰² Since the War of Austrian Succession had interrupted commerce with France for years, Louisiana settlers did not have any clothes or blankets to protect slaves from the ‘hyvers de ce paÿs’.³⁰³ The same year, Vaudreuil reported the deaths of several *blancs* at the

‘Etat des Personnes auxquelles l’on a marqué par leurs alphabetiques et Chiffres des Emplacements pour batir Suivant le Projet de la Ville de la Nouvelle Orleans’, LOC, ‘Louisiana Miscellany, 1724-1837’, Mss. 17, 495, Reel No.1, f.451v, ff.447-447v, 453-453v. See also the ‘Vieux Carré Survey’, Years: 1728 and 1731, HNOC.

²⁹⁹ Dart ed., *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 15 (1932), pp.147-151; Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana*, p.15. For another example, see: Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.38

³⁰⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘all the settlers are poor and only survive thank to the hunt of the *sauvages*’.
ANOM G1 464

³⁰¹ TRANSLATION: ‘having nothing in their vilages to survive’ and the soldiers were ‘without clothes’.

ANOM C13 A23, ff.176v-177

³⁰² TRANSLATION: ‘the loss of more than 300 *nègres* belonging to the setters of this country during the last two years’.

HL, ‘Vaudreuil Papers’, LO 121

³⁰³ TRANSLATION: ‘the winter of the country’.

HL, ‘Vaudreuil Papers’, LO 121

German Coast and in Pointe Coupee, and concluded that due to the lack of clothes ‘l’habitant Se trouve dans le cas de courir les mêmes risques de Ses Negres [*sic*]’.³⁰⁴

In addition to being more indigent than some people of colour, many Europeans practised activities that were also performed by slaves, working as domestic servants, sailors or craftsmen.³⁰⁵ Very often, they cultivated the land on their own because they did not own slaves. Such was the case with all the German families staying at the *Village des Allemands*. Administrators described them as ‘rompus’, ‘malades’ and ‘pauvres gens’ gradually perishing under the great quantity of work that they had to accomplish on their lands, without the help of any slave.³⁰⁶ Interestingly, in Louisiana, some *blancs* were even treated like slaves: after 1717, hundreds of *engagés* settled in Louisiana, working for the *Compagnie des Indes* or for individual landowners as farmers and craftsmen, generally for three years. These *engagés* had to petition authorities because they were unpaid and had to endure ‘slaverish treatment’.³⁰⁷

In fact, several settlers did not seem to hold the *blancs* in Louisiana in higher esteem than Native Americans and people of African ancestry. After 1717, thousands of forced migrants including convicts, vagabonds, soldier-deserters, poor women and prostitutes were sent to Louisiana.³⁰⁸ A manuscript report indicates that from 1717 to 1721, 1,278 salt smugglers and other exiles were transported in this way, representing about 18% of the migrants to Louisiana during this period.³⁰⁹ Because many Louisiana migrants were the rejects of French society, many settlers despised them. In the words of an administrator, these settlers were ‘faineans et de mauvaises moeurs, moins propres au travail qu’a corrompre les autres Colons, et même les naturels du pays qui Sont une nation douce, docile, industrieuse, laborieuse et amie des François’.³¹⁰ Some colonists even clearly declared preferring *nègres* to these individuals. A member of the *Conseil Supérieur* named Fazende purchased a *négresse*

³⁰⁴ TRANSLATION: ‘the settler is exposed to the same risks as the *nègres*’.

HL, ‘Vaudreuil Papers’, LO 124

³⁰⁵ ANOM G1 465

³⁰⁶ TRANSLATION: ‘exhausted’; ‘sick’; ‘poor people’.

ANOM G1 464

³⁰⁷ Cited in Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.54

³⁰⁸ Brasseaux, *France’s forgotten legion*, p.43; Henry Weber, *La Compagnie Française des Indes, 1604-1875* (Paris, 1904), p.110

³⁰⁹ ANOM C13 C1, f.329

³¹⁰ TRANSLATION: ‘lazy peoples with bad manners, less fit to work than to corrupt other colonists, and even the natives of this country, who are gentle, docile, industrious, laborious and the friends of the French’.

ANOM COL A 23, f.29v

named Margot to use her as a cook, finding it ‘impossible to use white men or women because of their laziness as well as their licentiousness’.³¹¹

❖ Guadeloupe

During the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the plantation regime continued to develop in Guadeloupe. A social order developed that was, to some extent, defined along colour lines. Indentured servants almost entirely disappeared from the island: the 1707 census mentions only one *engagé*.³¹² As indentured servants had vanished from Guadeloupe, *blancs*, regardless of their social status or income, found themselves at the top of the social structure.

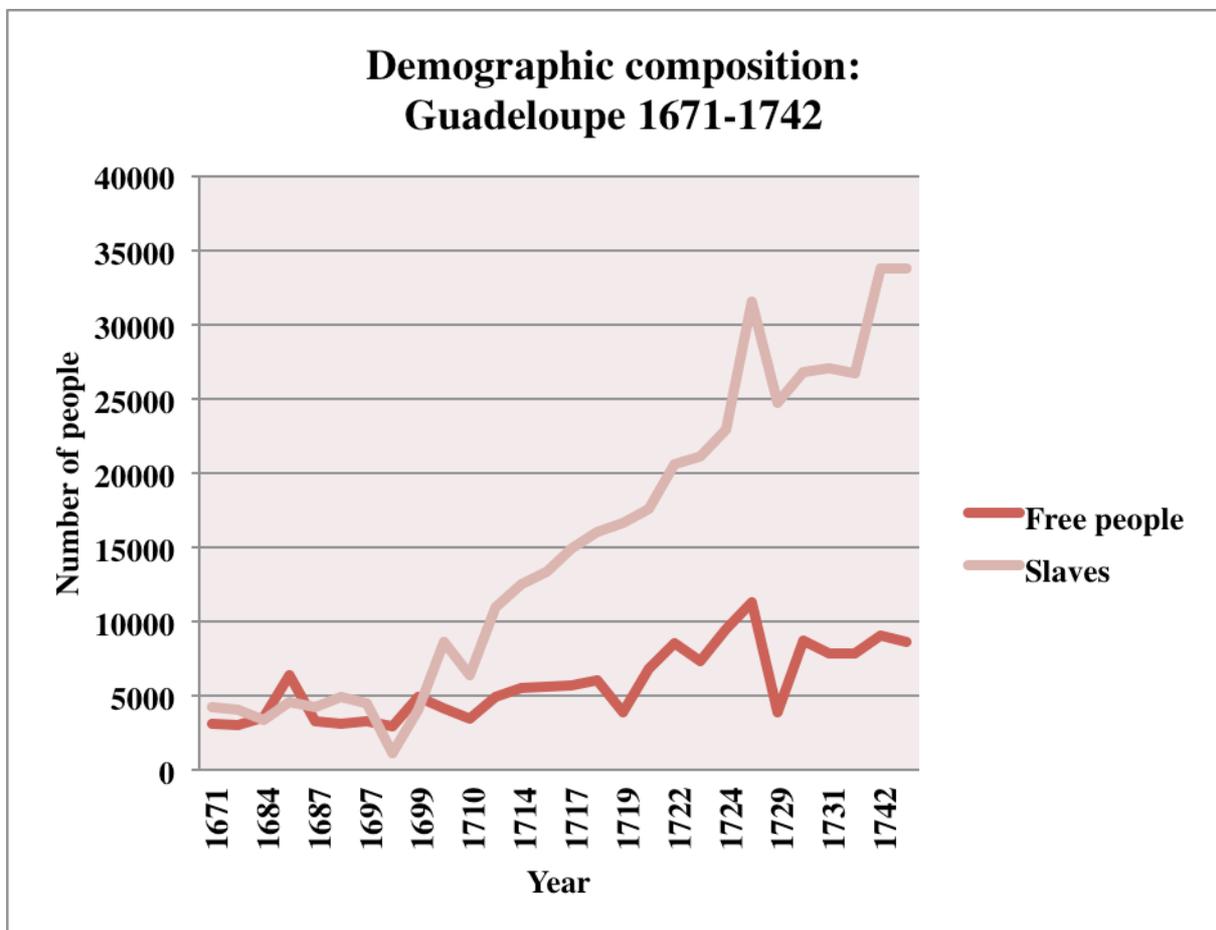


Figure 9³¹³

³¹¹ Cited in Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, p.130

³¹² ANOM G1 497

³¹³ Year 1671: ANOM G1 468; years 1684, 1697, 1699, 1722: ANOM G1 469; year 1697: ANOM G1 489; years 1710, 1714, 1717, 1729, 1731, 1742: ANOM G1 497; years 1719, 1724: ANOM G1 498

Figure 9 demonstrates that, from the end of the seventeenth century to around 1715, the white population stagnated and the slave population increased somewhat sporadically, significantly outnumbering whites. In 1710, *nègres* in Guadeloupe amounted to about 6,366 individuals (approximately 63% of the population) and there were about 3,457 *blancs* (34% of the population). From the 1720s, largely owing to vacant fertile lands on Grande-Terre, Guadeloupe became a major centre of sugar production.³¹⁴ As a consequence, the number of slaves increased considerably and reached a peak around 1729, when 24,777 black captives were recorded in censuses, amounting to approximately 83% of the population of the island. This proportional figure remained stable until the 1750s, as a Guadeloupean census made in 1753 mentioned 41,026 *esclaves*, corresponding to approximately 82% of the population. As on Île Bourbon, free settlers became a small minority attempting to control a very large labour force.

As black slavery developed, people of African ancestry were increasingly considered inferior. By the 1720s in Guadeloupe as in France, Louisiana and Île Bourbon, ‘racial thinking’ had emerged. This is evidenced by the fact that at least a few elite men had begun to classify people into groups sharing common hereditary traits, presumably transmitted through blood. The trial of the surgeon Gilles Petit, who was taken to the court of the Guadeloupean *Conseil* by his brother in law Jacques Denis Huard in March, 1727 is a case in point. Similar to the Michel case of 1667, Jacques Denis sought to exclude Gilles’s wife Magdelon, a ‘negresse’, from the family inheritance by nullifying their marriage. French settlers and politicians attempted to prevent blacks’ economic ascendancy, thereby protecting their own position at the top of the social hierarchy. Magdelon and Gilles got married in Pointe-Noire and then moved to Grand Cul-de-Sac where they had ‘[de] nombreux d’Enfants mulâtres’.³¹⁵ *Procureur Général* Monsieur Dorillac believed their marriage to be void due to ‘l’inegalité Considerable des Conditions’.³¹⁶ Attempting to satisfy Jacques Denis’s request, he argued that such a *mésalliance* was ‘indigne’, ‘scandaleuse’, ‘Infame’ and ‘honteuse’.³¹⁷ He explained that ‘il y à dans Ces Isles des personnes proportionnés de toutes Couleurs et de toute Espece’ and concluded that since ‘il ne manque n’y homme ny de filles de meme Sang’ in

³¹⁴ Abénon, *La Guadeloupe de 1671 à 1759*, I, 268

³¹⁵ TRANSLATION: ‘numerous *mulâtre* children’.
ANOM F3 224, p.217

³¹⁶ ANOM F3 224, p.221

³¹⁷ TRANSLATION: ‘contemptible’; ‘scandalous’; ‘infamous’; ‘shameful’.

Guadeloupe, such unions should be categorically prohibited.³¹⁸ That is, people of colour should marry within their racial groups.

An emphasis on the supposed inferiority of blacks also developed in religious discourse. Missionary to Guadeloupe Father Moreau declared in 1709 that after their conversion to Christianity, *nègres* were (only) ‘presque égales à [leur maitres] devant dieu’.³¹⁹ The French increasingly represented slaves as a lower form of human, partly because they needed to assert their control over the rapidly growing servile group. They may have embraced similar attitudes towards free people of colour, sensing that their status represented a threat to the established social order.

As the slave regime intensified in the first half of the eighteenth century, social tensions became more intense too. Intermarriages between *blancs* and *noirs* were very rare. For the period between 1700 and 1759, the well-preserved parish registers of Le Gozier in Guadeloupe mention only one union between a *blanc* and a person of colour: a French woman, Marie Madelaine Delbourg, married François Thaouira, a ‘mulatre libre’, in 1757, but this was probably due to the fact that they already had two illegitimate children, Charles and François.³²⁰

But the most striking aspect of accentuated colour prejudice was the considerable increase in the number of illegitimate children of mixed heritage, which suggests that white settlers were increasingly reluctant to marry people of colour. Mentions of illegitimate *mulâtres* were relatively rare in seventeenth-century censuses. Between the 1720s and the 1750s, however, in the single parish of Le Gozier, fifteen illegitimate *mulâtres* were baptised. In April 1740, for instance, a priest baptised a *mulâtre* named Charles ‘né du libertinage de Marie Rose Girard negresse Libre avec Le François Guillaume Le Roux’.³²¹ Rejection of interethnic unions was not restricted to Le Gozier, as several mentions of illegitimate children appear in all the Guadeloupean parish registers. For example, in 1703 in Saint-François, a priest baptised Magdeleine ‘une petite mule fille de Marie Thomas negresse Libre non mariée

³¹⁸ TRANSLATION: ‘on these islands, there are people of equal rank of all colours and of all species’; ‘there is no lack of men and women of equal blood’.

ANOM F3 224, pp.223-224

³¹⁹ TRANSLATION: (only) ‘almost equal to their masters in the eyes of God’.

Guillaume Moreau, ‘Memoires concernant la mission des peres de la companie de Jesus, 1709’, in *Annales de la société d’histoire de la Martinique*, Vol. 27 (1988-91), pp.69-75, at p. 73

³²⁰ ANOM 85MIOM197

³²¹ TRANSLATION: ‘born out of the libertinage of Marie Rose Girard free *négresse* and the Frenchman Guillaume Le Roux’.

ANOM 85MIOM197

laquelle dit l'avoir eu de Gabriel Leblond aide major de cette isle'.³²² The fact that some Frenchmen refused to recognise their *mulâtre* offspring suggests that social pressures were significant.³²³ Social tensions were probably related to developing discourses on *mésalliance* and to the new legislation.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the development of plantation slavery generated the establishment of several discriminatory legal measures in Guadeloupe. The previously mentioned article VI of the 1724 *Code Noir* of Louisiana inspired the authorities of the French *Îles du Vent* to forbid unions between *noirs* and *blancs* around the 1750s. In 1758, two lawyers, Nadau and Marin, proposed a reform of the 1685 *Code Noir* for the French *Îles du Vent* in which 'il conviens de tenir toujours les affranchis dans un estat inferieur, et qu'il ne puissent pas s'allier avec les blancs' on the basis that with 'l'article 6 de l'Edit du mois de mars 1724 [sa majesté] a defendu aux habitans de la Louïsiane de l'un et l'autre sexe, de contracter mariage avec les noirs'.³²⁴ It was eventually decided that, 'surtout lors que d'honnêtes gens y seroient interessés', the *Gouverneur Général* and the *Intendant* should be allowed to forbid marriages between *blancs* and people of colour.³²⁵ Multiple efforts to prevent intermarriage in the colonies were partly due to the fact that, as previously stated, the number of slaves arriving in the colonies increased significantly: authorities needed to establish or preserve the higher social status of French people in society.

Discriminatory measures against free people of colour went even further during this period. As on Île Bourbon and in Louisiana, French authorities attempted to prevent the ascendancy of *libres* through legal and fiscal regulations. Like article X of the 'Lettres Patentes' of Île Bourbon of 1723 and like article LII of the 1724 *Code Noir* of Louisiana, the royal declaration of February 1726 prevented free people of colour in Guadeloupe from receiving donations.³²⁶ In the 1660s, a regulation had exempted 'les Gentihommes d'extraction', 'les femmes blanches' and 'les Enfants Blancs de L'Isle aussy bien que leurs

³²² TRANSLATION: 'a little *mulâtresse*, daughter of Marie Thomas unmarried free *négresse*, who says that Gabriel Leblond, assistant warrant officer, is the father'.

ANOM 85MIOM352

³²³ ANOM 85MIOM2078

³²⁴ TRANSLATION: 'It is necessary to always maintain freed slaves in an inferior position, and to prevent them from associating with whites'; with 'Article VI of the Edict of March 1724, his Majesty forbade the inhabitants of Louisiana from marrying black people.'

ANOM F3 90, f.87

³²⁵ TRANSLATION: 'especially when it involves honest people'.

ANOM F3 90, f.88

³²⁶ ANOM F3 236, p.677

descendants' from paying the *capitation* (a poll tax).³²⁷ In 1688, in order to clarify the fiscal status of free people of colour, the *Conseil* had issued an arrêt 'qui dispense les mulâtres et mulâtresse Libres et les negres et negresses Libres du payement des droits de Capitation'.³²⁸ But by the 1730s, while creole *blancs* were still exempted from paying this tax, all free people of colour were compelled to pay it.³²⁹ In 1738, two Guadeloupean *mulâtres* named Babin and Laverdure were even sent to the prison at Fort Royal because they had refused to pay the *capitation*.³³⁰ The same year, administrators complained of 'l'esprit de Sediton quil y à eü a la grande terre de la part des Mulâtres & nègres Libres, au Sujet de la capitation'.³³¹ This rule continued to apply at least until the 1750s: in 1758, Nadau and Marin noted that 'l'intention du Roy est que les Mulâtres et Negres libres Soient Sujets a payer la Capitation pour leurs personnes, quoy que creoles'. In their opinion, this was 'sans doute pour mettre une difference entre les blancs et eux'.³³² A decree issued in June 1720 also forbade free people of colour in Guadeloupe from wearing sumptuous clothes, forcing them to dress with 'étoffes de peu de valeur, avec pareils habits dénué de soie, dorure ni dentelle, à moins que ce soit à très bas prix', under threat of loosing their freedom in the event of a second offence.³³³ The number of free people of colour in Guadeloupe remained low until 1759, as there were only about 320 *libres* in 1710 (3% of the population) and no *libres* or *mulâtres* were recorded in 1742 and 1743.³³⁴ However, in Saint-Domingue, the number of free people of colour had grown from 500 in 1700, to 15,000 in 1715.³³⁵ Prejudicial regulation regarding the *libres* may be seen as a response to this demographic transformation and as an attempt to prevent similar changes from occurring in the other colonies, as they threatened the colonial socio-economic order.

³²⁷ TRANSLATION: 'Noblemen'; 'white women', 'white children born on the island as well as their descendants'.

ANOM C7 A1, f.40; ANOM F3 221, pp.373-375

³²⁸ TRANSLATION: 'exempting free *mulâtres* and *mulâtresses* and free *nègres* and *négresses* from paying the *capitation*'.

ANOM F3 221, p.691

³²⁹ ANOM F3 90, ff.88-89

³³⁰ ANOM F3 90, f88-89; ANOM F3 225, p.339

³³¹ TRANSLATION: 'the seditious spirit that developed in the Grande-Terre among the *mulâtres* and free *nègres* regarding the *capitation*'.

ANOM F3 225, p.339

³³² TRANSLATION: 'probably to underline the difference between white people and them'.

ANOM F3 90, f.88

³³³ TRANSLATION: 'clothes of little value, without silk, gold-effect and lace, unless if they were very inexpensive'.

'Reglement de MM. Le Général et Intendant Sur le luxe des esclaves Du 4 Juin 1720', F3 236, pp.700-701

³³⁴ ANOM G1 497

³³⁵ Spear, *Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans*, p.65