

NEW ORLEANS IN THE ERA OF REVOLUTION:

A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

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In 1791, two years into the French Revolution, New Orleans had but 4,816 inhabitants. By 1810, five years before the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, its population had grown to 17,242. The annual rate of increase over these two decades was 6.9 percent, higher than ever before or since. Under French domination from 1732 to 1763, the growth rate had been about 2.4 percent per annum.¹ In the first quarter-century under Spanish domination, it had quickened to 3.3 percent per annum; but that was still less than half as fast as from 1791 to 1810; nor was the growth rate of those years matched by the rate of 4.8 percent per annum after 1810 that produced a city of 168,675 inhabitants on the eve of the Civil War. What accounts for the rapid increase during the revolutionary era? Was it accompanied by changes in population structure? Can the mutations be viewed, at least in part, as repercussions of the French Revolution?

These questions will be answered mainly on the basis of data from censuses of New Orleans in 1788, 1791, 1805, 1810, and 1820.²

¹Joseph Zitomersky, "Urbanization in French Colonial Louisiana (1706-1766)," Annales de demographie historique (1974), p. 273. The growth rate is for the white population.

²"Resume general du recensement fait dans la province de la Louisiane, District de la Mobile et Place de Pensacola en 1788," Archives du Ministere des Affaires etrangeres (Paris): Correspondance consulaire pour la Nouvelle Orleans, I (1804-1817), f. 55; census of New Orleans, November 6, 1791, in the City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, La.; census of New Orleans, August 5, 1805, by Matthew Flannery, reprinted in New Orleans in 1805: A Directory and a Census (New Orleans: The

First, the rate of growth of the population as a whole and of its major components -- whites, free persons of color and slaves -- will be analyzed. Then trends in age distribution, sex ratios, and fertility will be described. The parameters and level of aggregation vary from census to census; but systematic comparison does reveal the era of the French Revolution to have been a distinct transitional period in the demographic history of New Orleans.

Judging from censuses taken between 1788 and 1820, the annual rate of increase in the revolutionary era was irregular.

Pelican Gallery, Inc., 1936); and population schedules for the Territory of Orleans of the Third Census of the United States, 1810, f. 468-470, and for Louisiana of the Fourth Census, 1820, II, 193. The source for the census of 1788 also contains a census for Louisiana in 1797; but it is unclear if it describes New Orleans or the parish in which it was located; and unlike the censuses used for this study, no breakdowns of the population by age and gender are provided.

Table 1 -- The Growth of New Orleans, 1788-1820

Year	Population	Annual rate of increase
1788	5,319	
1791	4,816	-3.3%
1805	8,475	4.1%
1810	17,242	15.3%
1820	27,176	4.7%

Sources: "Resume general du recensement fait dans la province de la Louisiane, District de la Mobile et Place de Pensacola en 1788," Archives du Ministere des Affaires etrangeres (Paris): Correspondance consulaire pour la Nouvelle Orleans, I (1804-1817), f. 55; census of New Orleans, November 6, 1791, in the City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, La.; census of New Orleans, August 5, 1805, by Matthew Flannery, reprinted in New Orleans in 1805: A Directory and a Census (New Orleans: The Pelican Gallery, Inc., 1936); and population schedules for the Territory of Orleans of the Third Census of the United States, 1810, f. 468-470, and for Louisiana of the Fourth Census, 1820, II, 193.

If these figures are correct, the population of New Orleans declined in the years coincident with the beginning of the French Revolution, made up the loss and grew at a moderate pace from 1791 to 1805, the period of transfer from Spanish to French and from French to American sovereignty, and then doubled in the space of five years. The second decade of the nineteenth century was also one of growth, but at nowhere near the spectacular rate of increase of 15.3 percent per year attained from 1805 to 1810.

The impression of a rapid surge between periods of negative or modest increase is, of course, contingent on the accuracy of the censuses. Carondelet's remark in a letter of 1792 that the population of New Orleans was less than 6,000 implies more inhabitants than the 4,816 counted in the census of 1791.³ Some contemporary estimates are also considerably higher than the 8,475 persons reported in Matthew Flannery's census of 1805. According to Perrin du Lac, the population already exceeded 12,000 in 1800; and Paul Alliot, resident in the city until July, 1803, gave the same figure.⁴

On the other hand, a census taken in 1807 put the number of persons living in Orleans parish at 17,001. The parish still contained at this time, in addition to the city of New Orleans, a sizeable rural population. At the same fraction of the parish that the city represented in 1810, its population in 1807 would have been

³Charles Gayarre, History of Louisiana, Vol. III, The Spanish Domination (New Orleans, 1972, orig. publ. 1885), 313.

⁴F. M. Perrin du Lac, Voyage dans les deux Louisianes, et chez les nations sauvages du Missouri, par les Etats-Unis, l'Ohio et les Provinces qui le bord, en 1801, 1802 et 1803 (Paris, 1805), 390, 391, cited in James Robertson, ed., Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807, 2 vols. (Freeport, New York: Books for Librairies Press, 1969, reprint of 1910-1911 edition), I, 150. Paul Alliot, Historical and political reflections on Louisiana (New York, April 13, 1804), in ibid., I, 71.

10,800.⁵ This suggests an urban population two years earlier closer to 8,500 than 12,000.

The most likely explanation for the discrepancy between the censuses and contemporary estimates is that the former enumerated only the core population, while the latter took note as well of merchants and planters in town on business, raftsmen who had descended the Mississippi with their cargoes, sailors and other transients. The most frequently mentioned occupation in the 1791 census was inn-keeper; but it is apparent from the number of persons in their households that their customers were not recorded; nor were patients at the Charity Hospital.⁶ If the censuses excluded the transient population, they remain a reliable source for analyzing change over time in the size and structure of the core population.

New Orleans suffered a number of catastrophic events during the revolutionary era. Fires destroyed nearly half the town in 1788 and

⁵"Recensement general du Territoire d'Orleans au 1er de janvier 1807," item 1 in Joseph Dubreuil de Villars papers, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University. The percentage of the population of Orleans Parish living in New Orleans in 1810 is calculated from the population schedule for the Territory of Orleans in the Third Census of the United States, 1810, f. 468. In all probability, this percentage was higher in 1810 than in 1807 due to the refugee migration of 1809.

⁶Census of New Orleans, November 6, 1791, in the City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, La.

again in 1794.⁷ Paul Alliot commented that the burned-out districts were not yet completely rebuilt as of 1803. Some streets had hardly twenty dwellings.⁸ The city was hit by three hurricanes between 1792 and 1794 and eight yellow fever epidemics between 1796 and 1812.⁹ According to Alliot, as many as 3,000 inhabitants perished one year from the rotting fish that a flood left in the streets when the water subsided, and a smallpox epidemic carried 1,500 children to the grave in 1802.¹⁰ Although such events must have limited growth, mortality was not the critical factor determining increase or decline between any two points of time. That factor was immigration. As New Orleans was to demonstrate repeatedly throughout the antebellum period, no matter how high the toll of epidemics, new boatloads of immigrants could quickly make up the loss and provide the human material for continued growth.

A migration accounts for the surge in the growth rate of New

⁷George W. Cable, "Historical Sketch (of New Orleans)," in George Waring, Jr., ed., Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, 2 vols. (New York, 1970, orig. publ. in 1887), II, 232.

⁸Alliot, Reflections, pp. 63, 69-71.

⁹Thomas Fiehrer, "The French Revolution in Louisiana, 1789-1803," unpublished Ms., p. 7; Stanford Emerson Chaille, Life and Death in New Orleans from 1787 to 1869, and more especially during the five years 1856 to 1860 (New Orleans, "Bronze Pen" Steam Book and Job Office, 1869), "Historical Table (No. 1) of the Population and Mortality of New Orleans," pp. 24-25.

¹⁰Alliot, Reflections, pp. 63.

Orleans between 1805 and 1810. In 1809 Cuba expelled many of the refugees from the Saint-Domingue revolution who had been granted asylum there. Of 9,059 whose arrival in New Orleans is mentioned in an official report by the mayor, 2,701 were white, 3,102 were free persons of color, and 3,226 were slaves.¹¹ These numbers represent 99 percent of the difference in whites enumerated in the censuses of 1805 and 1810, 95 percent of the difference in free persons of color, and 106 percent of the difference in slaves.¹²

Despite hostility to the Saint-Domingue refugees in some quarters, their sympathizers were sufficiently numerous and influential to obtain from the government an exemption from the federal statute prohibiting the introduction of foreign slaves into the United States as of 1808. Retention of their slaves facilitated the refugees' integration into Louisiana society, and many settled permanently in New Orleans.

The supportive reception of Saint-Domingue refugees from Cuba

¹¹"Rapport du maire de la Nouvelle-Orleans au Gouverneur Claiborne," January 18, 1810, published in the Moniteur de la Louisiane, January 27, 1810. The total of 9,059 refugees is for the period from May, 1809, to the end of the year. The newspaper noted that additional arrivals in January, 1810, brought the total number of refugees to more than 10,000.

¹²The refugees are another argument in favor of a population closer to 8,500 than 12,000 in 1805. If the latter figure were correct, adding the refugees to the 1805 population would imply 3,817 more inhabitants than were counted in the 1810 census.

in 1809 contrasts markedly with the response in Louisiana to the revolution in France and its colonies up to that moment in time. In the 1790s Spanish authorities acceded to pressures from the Creole elite, frightened by events in Saint-Domingue, to cease the importation of slaves from the West Indies and even to ban the slave trade entirely from 1795 to 1800. The African trade was reopened in 1800, then prohibited by the Americans from October, 1804, to November, 1805. Free persons of color from the French colonies were liable to expulsion from Louisiana from 1790 on.¹³ Even white immigrants were required by Spanish officials to swear oaths of allegiance to Charles IV. Those who refused were expelled.¹⁴

Besides the attempt to quarantine Louisiana from the introduction of the revolutionary virus from abroad, other counter-revolutionary measures were taken to deal with radical movements that nevertheless developed in New Orleans and rural posts, particularly in the years 1792-1794. Governor Carondelet reorganized the militia and obtained troop reinforcements from Mexico, hired free colored informers to report on secret meetings of Jacobin agitators, and arrested and deported individuals

¹³Paul Lachance, "The Politics of Fear: French Louisianians and the Slave Trade," Plantation Society in the Americas, I, 2 (June 1979): 165.

¹⁴Thomas Fiehrer, "The French Revolution in Louisiana, 1789-1803," p. 11.

suspected of sympathy for the French Revolution.¹⁵ Their emigration, however, was probably of less consequence demographically than the discouragement of potential immigrants by such counter-revolutionary measures.

The restrictions on importation of slaves and entry of free persons of color from the French colonies are consistent with a deceleration of the annual rate of increase of these elements of the population of New Orleans over the entire period from 1788 to 1805.

Table 2 -- Size and Increase of the Population of New Orleans, by Race and Condition, 1769-1820

	Whites		FPC		Slaves		Total	
	N	Growth rate	N	Growth rate	N	Growth rate	N	Growth rate
1769	1,803		99		1,227		3,129	
1788	2,370	1.4%	823	11.8%	2,126	2.9%	5,319	2.8%
1805	3,551	2.4%	1,566	3.9%	3,105	2.3%	8,475	2.8%
1810	6,331	12.3%	4,950	25.9%	5,961	13.9%	17,242	15.3%
1820	13,584	7.9%	6,237	2.3%	7,355	2.1%	27,176	4.7%

Source: "Census of Louisiana" (New Orleans, September 2, 1771), in Kinnaird, comp., Spain in the Mississippi Valley, Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 196; and censuses cited under Table 1.

Notes: The 1771 census gives the population "in accordance with the Registers for the year 1769"; and the total for 1805 differs from the sum of 8,222 whites, free persons of color and slaves because it includes 253 individuals cited simply as "Toutes les autres persons."

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 8-11.

The growth rate of free persons of color from 1788 to 1805 was only a third of what it had been in the preceding 19 years and less than a sixth of the rate for the next five years. Slaves, too, increased less rapidly between 1788 and 1805. In their case, the impact of counter-revolutionary policies was stronger in rural parishes than in the city. The number of slaves on Louisiana plantations declined from 16,559 in 1788 to 14,999 in 1805.¹⁶

For whites, the annual rate of increase was a percentage point higher in the years of Spanish domination coincident with the French Revolution, but slow in absolute terms and much inferior to rates attained after 1805. Only in the second decade of the nineteenth century did their growth rate surpass that of blacks; but most of this increase occurred after the Battle of New Orleans closed the Napoleonic phase of the revolutionary era.

Thus the 1805-1810 period alone accounts for the rapid growth of New Orleans in the years of the French Revolution, principally

¹⁶Calculated from the censuses for 1788 and 1805 by subtracting slaves in New Orleans from the total number of slaves in parishes within the limits of what is today the state of Louisiana. The dates of these censuses extend beyond the years when the slave trade was totally prohibited. It is possible that the rate of -0.5 percent for rural slaves was even more negative between 1795 and 1800, although some slaves were smuggled in even then. By comparison, the rate of increase of whites outside New Orleans decreased from 6.9 percent between 1769 and 1788 to 1.9 percent between 1788 and 1805, while the rate for free persons of color declined from 13.5 percent to 4.9 percent.

as a result of the massive influx of Saint-Domingue refugees in 1809. These refugees, whose displacement may be considered one consequence of the French Revolution, offset the initial impact of the revolution on New Orleans, namely, a deceleration in the growth rate from 1788 to 1805 when counter-revolutionary restrictions on importation of slaves and immigration of free persons of color apparently limited the attractiveness of the city to white immigrants as well.

In affecting the pace of population growth, events associated with the French Revolution also modified certain characteristics of the population of New Orleans. First of all, the censuses taken between 1788 and 1820 reveal a striking difference in age composition between free persons of color and the other two castes.

Table 3 -- Age Distribution in New Orleans, by Race and Condition, 1788-1820

	Whites			F.P.C.			Slaves		
	<16	16-49	50+	<16	16-49	50+	<16	16-49	50+
1788	38	58	4	48	46	6	28	70	2
1791	36	55	9	46	44	10	30	67	3
1805	37	53	10	47	45	8	34	64	2
1810	35	52	13	--	--	-	--	--	-
1820	32	60	8	49	43	8	35	62	3

Sources: Census of the Second Quarter of New Orleans, 1804, in the City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, La., and censuses cited in Table 1.

At the end of the eighteenth century 40 to 50 percent of the population

in the colonies that were to become the United States was under the age of 16, and the proportion increased from North to South.¹⁷ In New Orleans, only free persons of color approached this norm. The proportion of white and slave children in the total population was as small as in island colonies of the Caribbean,¹⁸ but the trend over time was different for the two castes. In the second half of the revolutionary era, the slave population grew younger as the white population became older. Examination of change over time in sex ratios will explain why.

The other noteworthy feature of age distributions in New Orleans is the much smaller fraction of slaves above 50 than either whites or free persons of color. The proportion of elderly free blacks was to some extent augmented, and that of slaves diminished, by manumission of older slaves; but the major part of the difference should be attributed to a combination of preference for servants in the prime of life and higher slave mortality. In general, the era of the French Revolution was one of continuity in differentials by

¹⁷Robert V. Wells, The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776: A Survey of Census Data (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 269, Table VII-3. See also James Davis, Frontier America, 1800-1840: A Comparative Demographic Analysis of the Frontier Process (Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1977, p. 75, Table 16. In settled areas of the South in 1800 and 1810, 49 percent of the white population was less than 16.

¹⁸See again the comparisons of age composition in Wells, Population of the British Colonies, p. 269.

race and condition in the age structure of the population of New Orleans.

The same is true of sex ratios. At the end of the revolutionary era as at the beginning, white males outnumbered white females, in contrast to free persons of color and slaves among whom women outnumbered men. Within each caste, though, the degree of imbalance varied over time. While free men and women of color moved towards equilibrium, white and slave sex ratios became even more imbalanced.

Table 4 -- Sex Ratios in New Orleans, by Race and Condition, 1788-1820

	Whites	FPC	Slaves
1769	1,345	478	810
1788	1,235	395	814
1791	1,264	602	857
1805	1,147	662	762
1810	1,306	-	-
1820	1,554	639	583

Sources: see Tables 1 and 3.

Note: The sex ratio equals the number of males divided by the number of females multiplied by 1,000.

The white sex ratio, after moving towards equilibrium from 1769 to 1805, became more imbalanced in the next two censuses. The average annual rates of increase for whites of 1.4 percent from 1769 to 1788 and 2.4 percent from 1788 to 1805 are low enough to be within the range of natural increase, although it is more likely that substantial net migration was necessary even in those decades to compensate for a death rate exceeding the birth rate. In any case, the higher rates of growth after 1805 are surely due to even higher levels of immigration which, immigrants being more often male than female, also widened the sex ratio. Since most immigrants were adults, they also contributed to the aging of the white population from 1805 to 1820.

The sex ratio of free persons of color was the inverse of that of whites. Females outnumbered males. It was most imbalanced at

the beginning of the revolutionary era. Among adults, there was only one free man of color for every seven free women of color in New Orleans in 1788. Three years later, the ratio had improved to one male for every three females. From then to 1820, however, it showed only gradual improvement. What might explain the radical reduction in imbalance between 1788 and 1791 and the slow pace of change from then to the end of the revolutionary era?

The improvement of the sex ratio of free persons of color at the outset of the revolutionary era was probably a consequence of movement of free men of color from the countryside into the city. Unlike free women of color and children of both sexes in Louisiana, a majority of whom resided in New Orleans, most adult free men of color lived in rural parishes in 1788. The census for that year counted 318 outside the city compared to only 57 within it. Over a hundred lived on the Chapitoulas coast just above the city. Many of the 69 additional free men of color enumerated in the 1791 census of New Orleans may have been pushed out of this district by the failure of indigo crops just as the decline in white males and slaves in the city created a demand for male labor there.

Between 1788 and 1791 free men of color increased from 5.9 to 13.7 percent of the free adult male population of New Orleans. On the one hand, Governor Carondelet attempted to turn this demographic change to his advantage by playing free persons of color off against

whites.¹⁹ On the other hand, free men of color were hardly immune to revolutionary ideology. As early as 1790 a secret royal order directed Spanish officials to expel from Louisiana all Blacks, slave or free, born in the French colonies; and Carondelet deported free men of color as well as whites suspected of Jacobin sympathies.²⁰ Restricted immigration, however, produced only a slight improvement in the sex ratio of free persons of color between 1791 and 1805.

Following the American take-over of Louisiana, all free men of color above the age of 15 were barred from entry in 1806, and in the following year all free persons of color regardless of age or sex.²¹ This did not prevent a large number of Saint-Domingue refugees of this caste from settling in New Orleans in 1809. Since the sex ratio of refugees who were free persons of color was itself highly imbalanced (311 adult men for 1,000 adult women), it reinforced momentarily the existing imbalance in the city.²² Eleven years later the ratio of free men to women of color was still less than it had

¹⁹Fiehrer, "French Revolution in Louisiana," pp. 10-11.

²⁰Esteban Miro to Luis de las Casas, August 21, 1790, Despatches of the Spanish Governors (New Orleans, 1939), VII, 28; Fiehrer, "French Revolution in Louisiana," p. 9.

²¹Donald Everett, "Emigres and Militiamen: Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1815," Journal of Negro History, XXXVIII (1953), 384-85.

²²The mayor's report on the refugees published in the Moniteur, January 27, 1810, recorded the entry of 1,377 free women of color above the age of 15, but only 428 adult free men of color.

been in 1805. Only in the 1820s, as the children of the refugees reached maturity, was there again a sharp movement of this caste in the direction of equilibrium.²³

Like free persons of color, there were always more female than male slaves living in New Orleans. The trend over time among slaves, however, was towards greater imbalance. Their sex ratio was close to equilibrium at the beginning of the revolutionary era. The censuses of 1788 and 1791 counted almost nine adult male slaves for every ten adult female slaves. By 1805 the ratio was somewhat more imbalanced in favor of females, and markedly more so in 1820. The census for that year reported less than one male for every two adult females; and unlike free persons of color, the slave sex ratio would not improve in subsequent decades. Since slave children were legally assigned to their mothers, the increasing proportion of females was accompanied by a slight increase in the proportion of children in the urban slave population.

How did the imbalanced sex ratios affect the capacity of each caste to reproduce itself? Censuses from the period of the French Revolution provide enough data for at least a partial answer to this question. Table 5 shows the trend over time for each caste in

²³In the Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, f. 104-105, the adult sex ratio of free persons of color improved to 819 men for 1,000 women.

child-women ratios, a measure of fertility.

Table 5 -- Ratio of Children <10 to Females Aged 16-44,
by Race and Condition, New Orleans, 1788-1820

	Whites	FPC	Slaves
1788	1.172	.852	.542
1791	1.172	1.033	.543
1805	1.154	1.033	.611
1810	1.161	--	--
1820	1.271	1.133	.423

Sources: see Table 1.

Most striking is how much smaller the fertility ratio was for slaves than for the free population. Between 1791 and 1805, a period of restricted imports, it showed some improvement; but it declined sharply between 1805 and 1820. These were also the years, it will be recalled, that the sex ratio of adult slaves became progressively more imbalanced. The growing preference for female slave labor was apparently at the expense of the already limited opportunity of urban slaves to form themselves into family units. The fertility ratio for free persons of color was in every census not quite equal to that of whites. It was closer, though, than one might imagine, given the shortage of adult males in this caste.²⁴

Finally, although the fertility of the free population was high

²⁴In the second quarter in 1804, for example, there were only 36 adult free men of color for 78 adult free women of color, but 42 of the latter were nonetheless mothers.

relative to that of urban slaves, it was itself low in absolute terms. Child-woman ratios were already lower in New Orleans than in rural Louisiana by the end of the French colonial period. The census taken in 1763 recorded 1.74 white boys under 14 and girls under 12 per adult female in the city, compared to 2.07 in the rest of the colony.²⁵ The urban-rural differential widened under Spanish and American domination. In 1810, the white refined birth ratio in rural parishes of the Territory of Orleans was almost double the ratio in New Orleans.²⁶

Infant mortality was probably the main factor depressing child-woman ratios in the city. These ratios, it is important to remember, are based on surviving children enumerated in censuses. At the mortality level of New Orleans in 1849 and 1850, the earliest years for which age-specific mortality rates can be calculated, one infant below the age of one died for every two who remained alive. Half of the children born in a given year died before their fifth birthday.²⁷ There is no reason to believe children stood a better

²⁵"Recapitulation of the General Census taken in New Orleans and in all the districts below the city of New Orleans to Pointe Coupee in the year 1763," in Jacqueline Voorhies, trans. and comp., Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians: Census Records of the Colony, 1758-1796 (Lafayette, La., 1973), p. 102.

²⁶Third Census, 1810, f. 468-470.

²⁷Chaille, Life and Death in New Orleans, pp. 57-58. Ansley Coale and Paul Demeny, Regional Model Life Table and Stable Populations (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 3-4, 7.

chance of survival a half-century earlier.

High mortality made migration the most important determinant of demographic change in New Orleans. A decrease in net migration resulted in population decline between 1788 and 1791. Even the modest pace of increase between 1791 and 1805 depended on the constant arrival of replacements for residents lost through epidemics and emigration. The growth spurt towards the end of the era of the French Revolution, as we have seen, was due to the influx of over 10,000 Saint-Domingue refugees in 1809.

In doubling the size of the population, the refugees were also the source of a major structural change. They altered the relative importance of the three castes co-existing in New Orleans.

Table 6 -- Proportion of Whites, Free Persons of Color and Slaves in the Population of New Orleans, 1769-1820

	Whites %	FPC %	Slaves %
1769	57.6	3.2	39.2
1788	44.6	15.5	39.9
1791	42.9	17.9	39.2
1805	43.2	19.0	37.8
1810	36.7	28.7	34.6
1820	49.9	23.0	27.1

Source: see Tables 1 and 2.

Prior to the French Revolution, more liberal conditions of manumission introduced by Spain had already resulted in an increase

in the proportion of free persons of color substantial enough to justify calling New Orleans a three-caste society; but it was only in 1810 that they approached parity with whites and slaves. Over a third of the Saint-Domingue refugees from Cuba in 1809 were free persons of color.²⁸ A comparable impact of immigration on the proportion of whites in the total population did not occur until the second decade of the nineteenth century, that is, for the most part after the close of the revolutionary era.

Immigration in the period of the French Revolution also modified the composition of the labor force. The proportion of each caste in the population 16 to 49 years old was noticeably different in 1820 from what it had been in 1788.

Table 7 -- Composition of the Population Aged 16-49, by Sex, Race and Condition, New Orleans, 1788-1820

	Males			Females		
	Whites	FPC	Slaves	Whites	FPC	Slaves
1788	53%	3%	44%	32%	20%	48%
1791	52%	8%	40%	31%	19%	50%
1805	52%	9%	39%	33%	20%	47%
1820	70%	10%	20%	33%	25%	42%

Note: see Table 1.

The change is most evident among males. White male immigrants

²⁸Mayor's Report, January 18, 1810, published in the Moniteur, January 27, 1810.

arriving after 1805 took the place of many slaves in the active population. From almost half of the male workforce in 1788, slaves fell to only a fifth by 1820. That year also saw an increase of free women of color from 20 to 25 percent of females 16 to 49 years old at the expense of slaves. This was a lingering side effect of the Saint-Domingue migration. Free women of color arriving from Cuba in 1809 were as numerous as female slaves accompanying the refugees.

The long-term trend in New Orleans was towards a reduction of slaves to an ever smaller proportion of the active population. In 1850 only 10 percent of males and 20 percent of females between the ages of 15 and 50 were slaves. The proportion of free persons of color also declined by mid-century to 4 percent of males and 9 percent of females in this age group. They were supplanted by white immigrants who were the main source of population growth after 1820.²⁹

Although one of these trends, the decline of slave labor, is already discernible at the end of the era of the French Revolution, this period was in general one in which the three-caste character

²⁹J.D.B. DeBow, ed., Statistical View of the United States: A Compendium of the Seventh Census, vol. 5 of "Demographic Monographs" (New York, London, Paris: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1970, reprint of 1854 edition), pp. 397-99. In J.D.B. DeBow's breakdown of the birthplace of 99,071 inhabitants of New Orleans in 1850, only a third were born in the city or in the state of Louisiana. Among the immigrants, 20,220 were natives of Ireland, 16,369 were Americans born in other states, 11,220 were Germans, and 7,522 were French.

of New Orleans society was reinforced. The most direct way the Revolution touched the city was through the Saint-Domingue migration of 1809. Thanks to it, enough free persons of color were added to the population for New Orleans to remain a three-caste society for several more decades; and it supplied enough French-speaking immigrants of all colors and conditions to enable the Gallic community to compete with Anglo-American, Irish, and German immigrants in the decades ahead. These were the demographic preconditions for the persistence of a French Creole culture in antebellum New Orleans.

APPENDIX: ESTIMATES OF COMPARABLE AGE-GROUPS
IN THE CENSUSES OF 1788, 1791, 1805, 1810 AND 1820

The age divisions of censuses of New Orleans in the era of the French Revolution are not uniform. The censuses of 1788 and 1791 employ the three customary Spanish categories: 0-14, 15-49, and 50 or older. The number of whites, free persons of color and slaves in New Orleans in 1797 is known, but age and sex breakdowns are not. The 1805 census distinguished between children and adults, with 16 the dividing line. The first federal census of New Orleans in 1810 subdivided the white population into five age groups (0-9, 10-15, 16-25, 26-44, 45 and older), but reported only the total number of free persons of color and slaves. The 1820 census used the same five categories for the white population as in 1810, and four (0-13, 14-25, 26-44, and 45 and older) for free persons of color and slaves.

To permit comparisons across time, three standardized age categories have been estimated where they do not correspond to those actually found in the censuses: 0-9, 16-44, and 16-49. The first two are used to calculate a refined fertility ratio (number of children less than 10 for women 16-44 years old), and the third to divide the population into three age groups: youth up to 16 years old, adults aged 16 to 49, and the elderly 50 or more years old. Although 50 can hardly be considered an age of retirement, more rapid aging and shorter life expectancy at the beginning of the 19th century make it of interest not only to compare adults to children, but also the elderly to adults at the height of their productive power.

The age group 0-9 is estimated at 70 percent of the number of persons 0-14 enumerated in the 1788 and 1791 censuses. In a study of mortality in antebellum New Orleans, the mortality experience of age groups up to 20 was similar to that described in the model life tables of Ansley Coale and Paul Demeny for stable populations with growth rates of from -5 to +5 percent at mortality levels 2 and 6, model West. The age distribution at this mortality level is the basis of my estimate of the size of the age group 0-9 in 1788 and 1791. It is supported by the observed distribution of white boys and girls in 1810 and 1820, when children less than 10 represented from 63 to 75 percent of all youth 0-15 years old. For 1805, the age group 0-9 is estimated at 67 percent of persons 0-15 years old. The censuses of 1810 and 1820 give directly the number of whites 0-9 years old. For non-whites in 1820, the proportion 0-9 in the age category 0-13 is estimated at 74 percent.

Women 16-44 years old are estimated at 90 percent of the age

group 15-49 in 1788 and 1791, again roughly what one would expect in a stable population at mortality levels 2 to 6. In the 1804 equivalent of a nominative census for the second quarter, this proportion was 93 percent for white women and 91 percent for free women of color; but this appears to have been the consequence of unusually few females 45-49 and 15 years old. There were only 8 white women 45-49 years old compared to 19 in the 40-44 age range and 15 in the 50-54 age range; only 5 females 15 years old among 31 white girls 15-19 years old; and corresponding, though less pronounced, anomalies among free women of color.

In 1805, the census gives only the number of women 16 and older. The age-group 16-44 being equal to this number minus women 45 and above, it can theoretically be derived from an estimate of the size of the older age group. Unfortunately, the proportion of the elderly among all adult women was quite variable.

Percentage of females in oldest age group relative to all adult females by race and census

	1788 (50+)	1791 (50+)	1810 (45+)	1820 (45+)
whites	9.1	14.7	23.5	20.1
f.w.c.	13.1	19.1		20.6
slaves	3.7	3.5		4.7

Note: In 1788 and 1791, percentage of women 50 and older among all women 15 and older; in 1810 and 1820, percentage of white women 45 and older among all white women 16 and older; in 1820 percentage of free women of color and slave women 45 and older among all women of their castes 14 and older.

Moreover, at mortality levels 2 to 6 around 30 percent of adult women should be over the age of 45, or considerably more than the proportions observed in New Orleans in 1810 and 1820. Taking the discrepancy as indicative of higher adult mortality than the model tables for stable population allow for, the proportion of 16 to 44 year olds among females 16 and older enumerated in the 1805 census is estimated at 80 percent for whites and free persons of color and 95 percent for slaves. For non-white women in 1820, the number 16 to 44 years old is estimated at 95 percent of the sum of those in age categories 14-25 and 26-44.

The age categories for comparing the proportion of youth, adults and the elderly in the population are the same as those used in Spanish censuses except that the age of 16, not 15, is the boundary between the first two age groups. To adjust for this difference, 5 percent of the age group 15-49 is transferred to the 0-14 age group. For the 1805 census, which distinguishes only between children and adults, the proportion of males 16-44 is estimated as for females in calculating fertility. For both sexes, one-fourth of the difference between the adult population and the age-group 16-44 is then transferred to the latter to estimate the number of persons aged 16-49. For whites in 1810 and 1820, 16 to 44 year olds are similarly augmented by 25 percent of the age group 45 and above (the estimated proportion of 45 to 49 year olds in this age group). The procedure is the same for non-whites in 1820 except that the age group 15-49 is reduced at its younger end by an estimated 10 percent of 14 and 15 year olds in the age group 14-25.

In Coale and Demeny's tables of age distributions at mortality levels 2 and 6, approximately 75 percent of the age group 45 and above is 50 or older. That a multiplier of .75 is appropriate for New Orleans is supported by a comparison of the proportion of all adult males and females estimated to be 50 or older in 1805, 1810 and 1820 with the proportion actually observed in that age range in 1788 and 1791.

Percentage in oldest age group relative to all adults by race, gender and census

		as reported in censuses				as adjusted		
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		1788	1791	1810	1820	1805	1810	1820
White	M	4.9	12.4	29.5	15.0	14.6	21.8	11.1
	F	9.2	14.7	23.5	20.1	14.5	17.1	14.6
FPC	M	12.3	11.1		14.6	13.7		11.5
	F	13.1	19.1		20.6	17.1		16.1
Slave	M	1.9	5.6		6.8	4.7		5.4
	F	3.7	3.5		4.7	3.7		3.8

As reported in censuses of 1788 and 1791: percentage 50 and older in population 15 and older

As reported in censuses of 1810 and 1820, percentage 45 and older

in white population 16 and older and in non-white population 14 and older.

To the right is estimated percentage 50 and older in population 15 and older in adjusted censuses of 1805, 1810, and 1820.