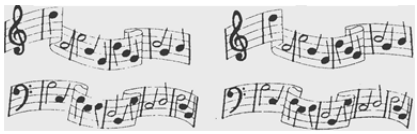
TOO LOUD, TOO WILD? NEGOTIATING CAJUN CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS[1]



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With chapters in Louisiana, Texas, and Illinois, the Cajun French Music Association, established in 1984 to preserve and promote traditional Cajun culture, is active in Cajun ethnic revival and cultural advocacy. But variation within the Cajun population makes determining the traditional and its representations problematic. This article discusses negotiations of Cajun cultural representations during the first two decades of the CFMA's existence. Cultural ideals held by the association founders and leaders, primarily middle-aged and elderly Cajuns from southwest Louisiana, are not universally shared by CFMA members. Disjunction between organizational ideals and conflicting perspectives has led to intracultural crises of representation. Resistance to organizational dictates and ensuing debates provide a framework for understanding the negotiations of traditional representations. (Cajun, cultural representations, ethnic revival, French Louisiana)

The Cajun French Music Association (CFMA) was founded in 1984 to preserve and promote Cajun culture. Chapters were initially founded in south Louisiana and east Texas, with additional chapters established later in San Antonio, Texas and Chicago, Illinois. Le Cajun (aka, the "Cajun Grammys"), an annual music awards ceremony and festival held in Lafayette, Louisiana, is the centerpiece of Cajun cultural representations by the CFMA.

At the 2001 Le Cajun, I volunteered at a beer booth operated by two CFMA chapters and there became acquainted with numerous CFMA officials and senior members who were working in the booth or patronizing it. The famed Cajun accordionist, Wayne Toups, was scheduled to perform as the festival finale. As Toups approached the stage, one CFMA officer informed me that the organization had made an effort to speak with Toups to ensure that his performance was suitable for the event. Why it might be necessary for Cajun officials in a Cajun organization to ask a foremost Cajun musician to perform Cajun music in a manner suitable for a Cajun festival is the issue this paper addresses. The question is particularly significant, as Toup's ensuing performance resulted in an intracultural crisis of representation when his representation of Cajun music conflicted with official style ideals espoused by the CFMA.

Various forms of cultural representations occur under labels such as revival, preservation, and promotion that are often focused on "folk," "ethnic," or "traditional" culture. Revival can range from the resurrection of defunct or moribund practices to revitalization of existing cultural forms. These

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processes occur in the course of nationalistic or nostalgic movements that seek to rediscover and promote the roots of a nation's culture and identity, or that use indigenous cultural revitalization as a rallying point (Badone 1992; Brocker 1996; Handler 1986). Revival is also a common reaction to assimilation trends in immigrant communities (Fishman 1985).

Cultural revival, especially that involving folk music and dance, has often been initiated and directed by those outside of the "folk" community, such as intellectual elites, socioeconomic elites, politicians, and governmental institutions. In some instances, those leading a revival assume that existing folk music forms are "too simple, too primitive, too poor" (Baumann 1996:77) and need be refined to appeal to the non-folk consumers. Even within an indigenous-driven movement, growing popularity of ethnic tourism and the desire for external approval and validation of previously stigmatized cultural forms often creates an operational philosophy to have representations tailored to meet the expectations and aesthetics of non-indigenous consumers (Le Menestrel 1999). Therefore, cultural representations "can become a kind of ethnic, regional, or national show business—entertainment for people outside more than those inside the community in which the music was originally performed" (Henry 1989:68).

Festivals are ideal venues for cultural representations. They often are presented as folk festivals, or such an orientation is strongly implied (Regis and Walton 2008; Wilson and Udall 1982). Scholars have proposed a range of festival types to reflect who controls cultural representations and their guiding philosophies (Wilson and Udall 1982). Typologies have also been proposed for the artists who perform in these venues, often depending on their degree of self-reflexivity in representing a given culture (Wilson and Udall 1982).

Ethnic revival efforts can celebrate a group's diversity, but they are often based on a perceived homogeneity and unity within heterogeneous populations (Waterman 1990). Selection of the authentic cultural elements to represent in festival settings and beyond is an inevitable part of preservation and promotional efforts. Significant intracultural diversity exacerbates the selection process because of competing visions of acceptable cultural representations, a dilemma faced by the CFMA. Understanding the processes by which the CFMA negotiates cultural representations has broad implications since the organization has taken an active role in shaping representations of Cajun culture well beyond CFMA venues. This article considers these conditions in the CFMA roughly between 1984 and 2002 and focuses on music, dance, and language. It explores how the CFMA worked during its first 20 years to negotiate which aspects of local culture it deemed authentic and how best to represent them, especially in festival settings.

Data collection included participant observation at four Le Cajun events between 1990 and 2002. The author also attended several meetings of two CFMA chapters and numerous CFMA-sponsored jam sessions. Unstructured or semi-structured interviews were conducted with a founding member of the CFMA, a CFMA national president, and a chapter president, as well as with various CFMA members. Archival research involved a survey of issues of the CFMA newsletter, *La Voix Des Cajuns*, and various CFMA internal and public correspondences.

CAJUN ETHNOGENESIS

Cajuns are the descendants of the Acadians (the term Cajun stems from an Anglicization of *Acadien*) who were resettled in south Louisiana following their deportation from present-day Nova Scotia and New Brunswick during the Seven Years War. In Louisiana, the Acadians intermarried with French and European colonists during the colonial era and with Anglo Americans and European immigrants following the Louisiana Purchase (Brasseaux 1987, 1993; Sexton 1996). At the same time, the Acadians were culturally influenced by Europeans, Native Americans, African Americans, and Anglo Americans. The result was creolized cultural forms that cut across ethnic and racial groups (Gutierrez 1993; Sexton 1999). Regional variation among Acadians developed as the population spread across rural and urban south Louisiana and east Texas. The term Cajun was increasingly applied to white Louisiana Francophones, even those with little or no Acadian ancestry (Brasseaux 1993; Dormon 1987; Henry 1996; Sexton 1999). Through various processes ranging from the structural to local agency, the entire French Louisiana culture region and local culture had become largely subsumed under the labels Acadian and Cajun by the end of the twentieth century (Dormon 1987; Sexton 1999; Trepanier 1991.) However, since the 1980s, the term Creole has become increasingly visible in regional discourse in relation to the Afro-French population (Dormon 1996; Sexton 1999).

Preserving Cajun culture became a salient issue beginning in the 1950s when a Cajun ethnic revival, largely based in southwest Louisiana, began (Esman 1983; Gold 1979). It is important to note that, among Cajuns, efforts were generally oriented toward preserving and revitalizing existing cultural elements rather than reviving defunct practices (Gold 1979; Sexton 1999). In 1968, an institutional approach to revival came with the development of the statewide Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL). The organization attempted to stimulate use of the French language, albeit through Standard French instruction in public schools and with college scholarships to support study abroad in Francophone nations. In recent

decades, various organizations have emerged to promote Cajun cultural interests (Sexton 1999, 2006).

Revival efforts included the participation of applied folklorists who conducted salvage ethnography and worked with local activists to document and present Cajun culture in public forums such as festivals (Ancelet 1989; Brasseaux 2008; Sexton 1999). Two such early representations of Cajun culture occurred with the 1939 National Folk Festival in Dallas, Texas and the 1964 Newport Folk Festival. Participating Cajun musicians were recruited by those largely outside of the folk community, who selected them as most representative of authentic local folk tradition (Ancelet 1989), rather than those who exhibited innovation or external influences (Brasseaux 2008). In addition, the published works and discographies of applied folklorists and academic scholars emphasized conservative forms of southwestern Louisiana cultural elements as Cajun or Acadian (Ancelet 1989; Francois 1990; Oster 1958, 1959; Savoy 1984). Within this context, the terms folk and folklore often became used as matter-of-fact labels that tended to lend prestige and authenticity to local culture (Sexton 1999).

During the mid-to-late twentieth century, a diverse festival landscape developed in Louisiana. Initial events were devoted to local products and lacked any significant ethnic orientation (Esman 1984). Later events such as the Breaux Bridge Crawfish festival, Boudin Festival, *Festivals Acadiens*, Cajun Day, and Tee Mamou Iota-Mardi Gras Folklife Festival were explicitly promoted as celebrations of Cajun culture, or this orientation was strongly implied (Sexton 1999). In southwest Louisiana, Creole-oriented festivals such as the Plaisance Zydeco Festival developed in the 1980s (Sexton 1999). Large multicultural enterprises such as the Jazz and Heritage Festival and the International Festival also emerged.

DIVERSITY IN CAJUN CULTURE

Cajun music is a primary feature of local cultural representations. However, given a diverse and changing cultural landscape, classifying Louisiana musical genres has been a complex process. The violin was the dominant musical instrument among the Louisiana French until the early twentieth century (Ancelet 1989; Comeaux 1999; Sexton 1996). Historical sources indicate the popularity of a wide range of dances among the Louisiana French in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including waltzes, two-steps, mazurkas, contradances, and round dances (Brasseaux 1993). The jitterbug, various jigs, and shuffles also entered local performance repertoires in some areas. The shift to accordion-led music through the popularity of pioneering commercial recordings of local accordionists in southwest Louisiana in the late 1920s led to a narrowing of the traditional dance repertoire to primarily

focus on waltzes and two-steps (Ancelet 1989). Instruments such as the drums, steel guitar, keyboard, and electric guitar became popular in some Cajun bands (Ancelet 1989). A trend toward bilingual and English lyrics by some Cajun musicians reflected a language shift in the Cajun population and popular music influences, especially in the second half of the twentieth century (Sexton 2000a). Music and dance associated with the violin as the primary instrument came to occupy a secondary status or dropped out of favor altogether. However, string-band music remained popular in eastern Louisiana where the accordion did not achieve the same degree of popularity (Broven 1983.

Ongoing influences by popular American music such as country and rock-and-roll have contributed to the evolution of local music (Ancelet 1989). Mid-to-late twentieth century musicological developments included the emergence of Swamp Pop, a fusion of Cajun and early rock-and-roll music performed by both blacks and whites in the 1950s. Creole Zydeco music—which combines older African-influenced French musical styles with blues, rhythm and blues, and predominantly English lyrics—has become widely popular beyond the Afro-French community (Kuhlken and Sexton 1991; Sexton 2000b; Spitzer 1986). While race has featured prominently in discussions of differences in Cajun and Zydeco music, the adoption of Zydeco performance styles by some Cajun musicians over the last two decades has become sufficiently commonplace to blur lines between genres (Sexton 2000b). Furthermore, Zydeco has occasionally been used by some Cajuns as a catch-all term for accordion-led music that does not sound like Cajun, even if such musical forms may not be recognized as legitimate Zydeco by the Creole community (Sexton 2000b).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the popularity of Cajun music in the United States and beyond increased, while Zydeco music achieved equal or even greater popularity (Kuhlken and Sexton 1991). Cajun and Creole music scenes flourish in areas such as southern and central California that experienced significant World War Two-era outmigration from French Louisiana (Dewitt 2008). Cajun bands of non-Cajun musicians have developed throughout the U.S. and abroad.

A diverse and dispersed musical landscape of Cajuns and other groups and a blurring of musical boundaries provide fertile ground for debates over authentic style and tradition. These can range from general discussions of appropriate instrumentation and performance style to whether language determines genre (Ancelet 1989; Brasseaux 2006).

THE CAJUN FRENCH MUSIC ASSOCIATION

The Cajun French Music Association (CFMA), founded in 1984 in the southwestern Louisiana town of Basile, was partly a reaction to CODOFIL, which was viewed by some Cajuns as ineffective in promoting Cajun interests (Sexton 2006). Its founding members were middle-aged and elderly blue-collar and middle-class Francophone musicians and cultural activists from southwest Louisiana. The CFMA's purpose is to "promote and preserve, not only Cajun music, but also various aspects of the Acadian heritage" (CFMA 1984). The membership was described as "Grassroots Cajuns who want to preserve their heritage by teaching authentic Cajun language and the traditions of their Acadian ancestry" (http://www.cajunfrenchmusic.org/). Within a decade of its creation, the CFMA had grown to nine chapters distributed from New Orleans, Houma, and Baton Rouge in eastern/southeastern Louisiana to Houston, Texas. Two additional chapters in Texas were later added. A Chicago, Illinois chapter was established in 2007. The San Antonio and Chicago chapters consist of largely non-Cajun membership. The CFMA enumerates its membership according to how many families belong to it, rather than individual holders of membership, with membership currently estimated at 2000 families.

In San Antonio and Chicago, chapters are auxiliary because of their limited size, with voting status reserved for chapters with memberships of 50 or more families. All voting chapters have the same organizational structure, which is replicated and expanded in a national governing body. Individual chapters are charged with local affairs, whereas the governing body establishes guidelines for the organization. The CFMA publishes a newsletter, *La Voix Des Cadjins*, with sections allotted in each edition for every chapter to report news and to advertise activities. Chapters hold monthly meetings, and each organizes its own calendar of local events, including annual festivals. Each chapter also elects a Queen annually. The CFMA also established a Hall of Fame to honor musicians or others who have worked to promote Cajun culture.

CFMA chapters often sponsor weekly dances and advertise the schedules and performances of Cajun bands at chapter events and at other venues in La Voix Des Cadjins (LVDC). Chapters also organize free or fee-based accordion, violin, and guitar lessons. The CFMA has developed musical apprenticeship programs to train young musicians in the accordion, violin, or guitar. The CFMA promotes various venues for beginning musicians to hone their craft—for example, jam sessions at bars and community centers or following chapter meetings.

There is a corresponding emphasis on promoting dance, given its importance in Cajun culture. Each chapter has an official dance troupe, informed by

a national dance troupe committee, which performs at local organization functions and provides demonstrations at non-CFMA events, such as at public schools. Dance lessons are provided by chapters after some meetings and at regular classes. The CFMA also developed the *Joie de Vie* children's dance troupe, which performs in many of the same venues as its adult counterparts.

Despite a sharp decline, the Cajun French language remains a valued cultural capital. Chapter meetings open with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer, both in French, whereas chapter business is conducted in English. A bilingual orientation extends to Le Cajun, where the Pledge of Allegiance and "America the Beautiful" are performed in French. Awards are co-presented in both French and English, with recipients giving their acceptance speech in French and/or English. *La Voix Des Cadjins* is printed in English, but French terms and expressions and brief French lessons are interspersed throughout the publication. Various chapters organize weekly and monthly or bi-monthly informal French classes.

The CFMA stages the annual Le Cajun festival in mid-August. Awards are given in various categories, such as best band, best song, best new band, best new young Cajun musicians, etc. Announcements are made regarding the most recent inductions into the CFMA Hall of Fame. Awards may be given to honor scholars who research and document Cajun. With the global popularity of Cajun music, the CFMA developed a *Prix Dehors* (outside prize) given to a band not from French Louisiana and Texas. Saturday and Sunday are devoted to music and dance as numerous bands perform. Various booths and displays are oriented toward the sales or demonstrations of Cajun food and arts and crafts, such as accordion and violin making.

NEGOTIATING CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS

Since the inception of the CFMA a fundamental concern has been identifying the specific "traditional" aspects of Cajun culture to be preserved and promoted, as well as proper modes of representation. The organization's concern with regulating Cajun music is due to contemporary competing genres and their influences on Cajun music. One official, for example, noted that "If we don't move to save our culture, we'll be absorbed by country, rock, and Zydeco and fade away" (LVDC 1989). There was also the fear that Cajun music would be confused with other local styles. One writer asserted "much is being printed positive about the Cajun culture, and so much being printed that they are calling Cajun but is really Zydeco" (CFMA 1990). Such fears included an economic component, as it was asserted that, due to cultural pollution, "We then begin to lose our uniqueness and tourists will have no reason to travel to Lafayette to see and hear that which they can see [and hear] anywhere in the U.S." (L.M. to J.S. 1989).[2] Cultural representations in broader

contexts are important as well. For example, following the 1990 Super Bowl in New Orleans, one CFMA official noted:

It was brought out by one board member that the band playing in the Super Dome (halftime performance) was a discredit for the Cajun culture. It was brought out that Wayne Toups was the band playing. It was stated that if the CFMA was united, it could influence the kind of music played when it is televised nationwide or, at least, have a good representation of what Cajun music really is (CFMA 1990).

Emphasizing accurate representations became vital to the CFMA. One CFMA president, for example, stated that, "Le Cajun award show is the most important thing being done by the CFMA to influence the guidance of what is and is not good Cajun music" (CFMA 1990). Selecting the proper representations for Le Cajun is a particular concern since the event draws such high attendance, and it has received significant local and international press coverage at times. In fact, the CFMA has worked with promotional companies to ensure high visibility for the event (M.H. to M.C. 1991).[5] There was a conscious effort to cultivate respectable contexts of representation in CFMA-sanctioned events such as Le Cajun, by, for instance, attempting to limit alcohol consumption and encouraging proper dress among performers (CFMA 1991).

There was significant discussion within the CFMA from the beginning regarding the nature of Cajun music and culture and their boundaries. An important feature of early CFMA discourse was addressing regional variation in Cajun culture. For example, one CFMA meeting included "much discussion about the Houma chapter and what is a Cajun band. The different styles of music between southwest and southeast Louisiana being the topic of the discussion" (CFMA 1989).

Other discourse articulated tension between members who viewed Cajun music as a fixed repertoire of enduring unchanged traditions and those who recognized varying degrees of innovation. In an interview with Mr. L., a founding CFMA member, he gave an example of one such negotiation. Arch-conservatives advocated restricting the definition of Cajun music to that which did not reflect external influences. To counter this perspective, Mr. L. arranged a presentation at a CFMA meeting where he played *La Valse de Belizaire* (Belizaire's Waltz), which was recorded by the legendary accordionist Nathan Abshire. Those in attendance were asked if it would be considered a traditional Cajun song, which resulted in a universal affirmative. Mr. L. then pointed out that the melody to La Valse de Belizaire was taken from the country song "Precious Jewel." The intentional cultivation of this teachable moment laid the groundwork for reaching agreement that some outside influences on Cajun music were acceptable.

The ideal of Cajun music held by CFMA founders is to have the accordion as lead instrument, accompanied by the violin and guitar. Subsequent discourse included the suitability of additional popular instruments such as the steel guitar, electric guitar, drums, and keyboard. The CFMA negotiated and established parameters for music and songs that must be met in order to be eligible for nomination for CFMA awards. These included limiting instruments to the accordion, violin, guitar, steel guitar, drums, and triangle. Although the accordion was ideally the lead instrument, bands that featured the violin with accompanying stringed instrumentation were also deemed authentic. To qualify for award nominations by circa-2000, recordings had to follow these instrumental guidelines. No more than two songs on an album could be in English or bilingual. For an individual song award, recordings had to be entirely in French.

To ensure authenticity at CFMA-sponsored performances, bands were sometimes required to sign performance contracts in which they agreed to operate within organizational guidelines. Or, oral instructions could be issued. In at least one instance, a band hired to perform at a chapter dance was "instructed not to play Country or Zydeco music" (CFMA 1991).

Singing in French is considered a defining feature of Cajun music, as indicated in the previously mentioned implementation of lyrical guidelines. Furthermore, in an attempt to maintain linguistic standards, the CFMA established a Cajun Lyrics Authenticity Advisory Committee to ensure that only songs with correct lyrics are nominated for awards. This is a sensitive issue for some Francophiles in the CFMA because many Cajun musicians are not fluent in French, while others do not speak French and must perform by memorizing lyrics. However, as of 2001, musicians were only encouraged, rather than required, to submit song texts to the committee prior to recording.

Beyond addressing concerns about song texts, other negotiations of language have occurred. For example, during the CFMA's initial organizational phase, one conservative member proposed that French be the official mode of conducting association business. According to one founding CFMA member, this proposal was rejected on the basis that many members could not speak French or were far from fluent. Even though French did not become the official language of the CFMA, fluency in French was thought to be an asset for officers in the organization long after the Association was established. For example, in a 2000 Acadiana chapter meeting I attended, the business of nominating a chapter member to run for CFMA President was discussed. One member stated that the nominee should be a Francophone. Otherwise, "How are they going to represent the Cajun people if they don't speak French?" Subsequently, a Francophone was nominated and went on to be elected president.

A high value is placed on Cajun dance. In fact, those elected as chapter Queens are required to learn "traditional" Cajun dance (CFMA 1991). Identifying traditional dance, however, is problematic. For example, at one point there was the suggestion that a dancing committee "research and learn various types of dancing that is no longer popular today, such as polkas and mazurkas" (T.F. to CFMA Board of Directors 1987).[3] The suggestion garnered little support. Chapters initially set their own standards. The Lafayette chapter's dance troupe committee voted in support of "Demonstrating and preserving the five traditional dances: waltz, two-step, mazurka, polka, and contradance" (LVDC 1991a). The Houma chapter used dances such as the jig/Bayou jig, mazurka, polka, and contradance in demonstrations, or discussed them as traditional. A crisis of representation occurred when dancers from the Houma chapter featured prominently in a widely distributed tape of the first Le Cajun. One official complained in CFMA correspondence that "The tape shown too many countries started and ended with the untraditional dance [jig] performed by the Houma dance troupe, bad message" (W.D. to J.S. 1991).[4]

Wider discourse about the authenticity of dance forms continued for some time. The Houston chapter, for example, had earlier provided a narrower perspective on traditional dance forms by publicly inviting "anyone interested in learning traditional Cajun dancing-waltz or two-step" to attend dance lessons (LVDC 1991b). Shortly afterward, the Lake Charles chapter proclaimed "Let us not forget that the CFNA in Lake Charles shall only play traditional Cajun music and dance only the traditional Cajun dances at CFMA functions, thereby keeping the music and culture alive. To do less than that would be not living up to our responsibilities [that] our chapter was formed to do" (LVDC 1991c). The Lake Charles chapter subsequently identified the waltz and two-step as the dances that would be taught at its bi-monthly classes (LVDC 1991c).

To resolve ambiguity over authentic dance forms, a CFMA national dance troupe meeting was held that "confirmed" the waltz and two-step as traditional Cajun dances (LVDC 1991d). The mazurka, polka, and contradance were initially considered to be early Cajun dances, but based on "historical research", it was determined that "[t]hese dances were not performed regularly or long enough to become traditional like the waltz and the two-step" (LVDC 1991d). Likewise, the majority of dance troupe members agreed that the jig, which was regularly performed by the Houma chapter, was not a traditional Cajun dance. Shortly afterward, the Houston chapter expressed its sentiment about the jig, asserting, "There is no question about how we feel—IT IS NOT A TRADITIONAL CAJUN DANCE. We may be living away from Cajun Country, but our members who grew up in Louisiana agree that they never saw any [jigs]" (LVDC 1992a). The debate over acceptable dance

forms culminated in the Spring of 1992 with an 11-to-5 National Board vote against the use of the jig in official forums as a representation of traditional Cajun dance (LVDC 1992b).

The CFMA also envisioned a broader role in informing all representations of Cajun culture. Senior members of the CFMA worked to develop a Heritage Committee (billed as its "Watchdog" committee) to establish cultural authenticity (CFMA 1990). The roots of the Heritage Committee seemed to come from an earlier unsuccessful attempt by the CFMA to recruit a prominent southwestern Louisiana Cajun folklorist to work with a committee appointed by the organization to research and determine "what is a Cajun and his music" (CFMA 1988). The Heritage Committee envisioned a broader degree of advocacy that would endeavor "to scrutinize all materials, functions, organizations, etc. that hold themselves out as being 'Cajun' and to respond appropriately. Committee would write 'letters to the editor' outlining our position and viewpoints" in the local print media (CFMA 1990). In fact, the CFMA had already engaged in a wide range of cultural advocacy. At one point, the CFMA urged the Mayor of Lafayette to allow CFMA members to serve on an advisory committee for local tourism promotion to ensure proper Cajun cultural representations (LVDC 1989). In the 1980s and 1990s, the CFMA promoted spreading French language immersion programs in public schools (Sexton 2006). The CFMA also worked with the public school system to "assure authenticity of Cajun music taught in the schools" after it was decided to include Cajun cultural content in some classroom materials (CFMA 1990). The CFMA became active in guiding the selection of Cajun bands to be included in the multi-cultural International Festival in Lafayette, Louisiana (CFMA 1991).

The CFMA also assumed broader advocacy roles in shaping regional discourse. For example, since its establishment, the CFMA has challenged use of the term "coonass." Although commonly used by many Cajuns as a parallel ethnic label to Cajun, as well as appearing as an icon in some merchandizing, the label is controversial (Sexton 2009). The CFMA, its supporters, and some individual members acting independently have made numerous, often successful, public and private protests over the use of the term in various local media, arguing that the labels "Cajun" and "Acadian" are more accurate and respectable representations (Sexton 2009).

Debates over the nature of traditional Cajun music persisted even after initial negotiations acknowledged the suitability of some innovations in Cajun music. As a commentary on ongoing debate over tradition versus change, one writer in *La Voix Des Cadjins* referenced a news article on the discovery that a pod of whales had changed its "song," a startling development in a form of animal communication previously thought to be static. The report surmised

that a desire for sheer novelty motivated the change. The CFMA writer then made the point that it "seems like whales and Cajuns like new songs and new music" (LVDC 1991b). This perspective had been recognized and reported two years previously when the CFMA stated the desire to "promote and preserve the traditional Cajun, not to stifle the new and modern" (CFMA 1989). Such perspectives were deemed necessary because "We don't attract the younger people unless we are having some kind of the progressive musical groups" (CFMA 1989). Despite the desire to appeal to younger members, integrating "progressive" Cajun music into CFMA events could result in crises of representation like in Wayne Toups's performance at Le Cajun.

To understand continuing problems with cultural representations, it is necessary to situate Toups in the context of his career. Toups is likely the most widely known Cajun musician and is the first (and perhaps only) Cajun musician to have been featured on MTV. He began his career as a child performing "traditional" Cajun music in southwest Louisiana during the 1970s and achieved regional and national fame by blending rock–and-roll, Zydeco music, and Cajun music into what he calls "Zyde-Cajun." Toups rarely uses a violin in his band, which usually features the electric guitar and keyboard. As his career progressed, his song lyrics shifted to bilingual or English.

Toups was long viewed with misgivings by CFMA leadership, exemplified by the aforementioned criticisms of his 1990 Super Bowl halftime performance. Such perceptions framed the CFMA efforts to speak with Toups prior to his Le Cajun appearance. This discussion did not have the desired effect. Prior to Toups taking the stage at Le Cajun, his sound crew had ignored the festival staff and greatly amplified the volume. He proceeded to play fast, hard-driving songs instead of the traditional routine of alternating lively two-step dances with slow waltzes. Toups included at least two songs with English lyrics in his set, and some people in the vicinity of the beer booth where I was working voiced displeasure with the performance from the very beginning. One middle-aged woman said "He's driving people away." Several people held their hands over their ears, and one middle-aged man used paper towels to fashion makeshift earplugs. A CFMA chapter president commented aloud, "That's not Cajun, ah, ah," while nodding his head disapprovingly. However, it seemed that Toups's performance appealed to many in the audience. One member somewhat grudgingly noted that many dancers, especially younger people, remained on the dance floor throughout the set, the ultimate sign of approval of a Cajun band's performance. How they were dancing was another issue, since many dance forms exhibited were in conflict with the traditional models espoused in official CFMA discourse. The consensus among those who voiced opinions in my presence was that Toups's performance was

problematic, even though the festival emcee praised him at one point for playing "our traditional Cajun music."

Issues beyond musical style contributed to the crisis of representation. Toups often wears shorts, a tie-dyed t-shirt, and a headband while performing, a contrast with the tendency for many Cajun musicians of past and present to dress conservatively to cultivate a respectable public image (see, for example, Brasseaux 2008). He sometimes is referred to as "Le Boss" or "the Cajun Bruce Springsteen" because his headband and stage presence evoke the famed rock-and-roll musician. Toups used the label "coonass" twice when addressing the crowd between songs. At the time, Toups was on probation for a well-publicized drug conviction that earned him the nickname "Cocaine Wayne." Not surprisingly, one CFMA official later asserted in an interview that Toups's performance was "too loud, too wild" and "not a good role model for the kids."

Field research in the wake of Toups's appearance indicated that the official CFMA perspective on traditional Cajun music and dance would remain a point of contention. For example, one official in the Houma chapter stated in an interview that the jig was still being used by the chapter's dance troupe, at least in local representations. In 2002, at the CFMA beer booth at Le Cajun, with reference to Toups's performance of the previous year, one of my coworkers (a middle-aged man) asserted that initial CFMA musical guidelines were developed by "a bunch of white-haired old men." He added that guidelines had recently been relaxed because the CFMA had voted to allow bands to use the keyboard in performances, but he thought that the CFMA needed to "loosen up more," especially in regards to embracing Zydeco-influenced music. "Otherwise it's like we're sticking our heads in the dirt." This perspective was evident with some younger CFMA members. At the same Le Cajun, in conversation with two young women working at an adjacent booth, I asked if music such as Wayne Toups's and Zydeco appealed to younger Cajuns. Both women would soon be seeking office in one of the upcoming CFMA chapter elections, and they assured me that their primary goal as officers would be to advocate for more inclusion of Zydeco and "progressive" Cajun music since these are forms that "you can really dance to."

CONCLUSION

The CFMA regards itself as a bulwark against the pollution and erosion of Cajun culture. Constructing its defense by identifying and promoting the traditional creates dilemmas for any ethnic organization, since seeking to define and regulate the authentic and traditional is inherently problematic (Handler 1986; Handler and Linnekin 1984). The CFMA has avoided attempts to resurrect cultural forms that have largely or entirely disappeared. Likewise,

traditions that are represented are not restricted to the "pure" Cajun cultural forms that have been emphasized by some in the CFMA. At the same time, the CFMA has tended to resist representing some modified forms of Cajun music. Despite often being perceived as overly conservative, the CFMA has often actually occupied a middle ground in terms of representations. But the road to middle ground and compromise is a rocky terrain.

Many cultural representations are directed by those outside the local culture. For example, elsewhere in the festival landscape of Louisiana, applied folklorists, anthropologists, and festival programmers exercise significant authority in selecting performers and dictating which aspects of their representations are appropriate. This was done in the development of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, where it is argued that the folk is produced for consumption by those largely outside of the community that produces it (Regis and Walton 2008). Such processes are not without controversy or resistance (Regis and Walton 2008).

Unlike some other festivals, the CFMA's activities are controlled by Cajuns, but controversy persists. CFMA festivals are promoted as commercial events that target both the local population and a broad tourist and media market. Many think that the most traditional cultural forms will have more appeal to outsiders because of their authenticity, even if more popularly influenced forms are arguably more marketable to local and outside audiences. Deemed less traditional and less relevant are practices such as some dances that are clearly long-lived but did not extend into the present or were limited in distribution. Thus, as Henry (1989:68) notes for traditional music revival in Ireland, "Those styles of music selected for presentation acquire an implicit seal of approval and those which are not selected suffer neglect and less chance of survival." Therefore, there is a process of production of the traditional by the CFMA for internal and external consumption that is subject to debate, even when representations are controlled by those within the culture. Such debates provide insights into past and present diversity in the Cajun population.

Presumably, representations are most successful and free of conflict when the types of performers and the festivals where they perform closely relate. The settings where CFMA-sponsored performances occur represent a blurring of boundaries among "indigenous festivals," "evolving indigenous festivals," and commercialized indigenous festivals. An indigenous festival is an event focusing on the specific culture being represented. In this case, representations are controlled by the local population, with little or no attempt to incorporate outsiders or to adapt local aesthetics to outsiders. The event is directed toward the controlling culture at large (Wilson and Udall 1982). On the other hand, CFMA festivals also contain varying degrees of commercialization, which is

found in evolving indigenous festivals and commercialized indigenous festivals. The latter two groups are portrayed as, to varying degrees, adapting materials to an aesthetic not wholly of the group, allowing more involvement by those outside of the host culture.

Within festival contexts, emphasis by the CFMA is on a blend of representations by "traditional folk performers" and "aware traditional performers" (Wilson and Udall 1982). Among traditional folk performers, there is an unconscious performance of repertoires that are oriented toward local cultural ideals, and their performances occur largely or entirely within native settings. Traditional performers often perform outside of their community in the status of folk artists, and they may often return to older musical forms that have been abandoned. As with the concept of revival, however, this orientation often represents the inclination to emphasize musical forms viewed as being in danger of being abandoned, rather than a resurrection of dead forms.

An interesting development within the CFMA in terms of selection of styles of performers was the Prix Dehors. It honors musicians which Wilson and Udall (1982:21) have described as "performers who reproduce traditional folk styles" because they adopt elements of style and materials from cultures to which they do not belong. The Prix Dehors was significant to the early vision of the CFMA because it represents an acknowledgement of the national and international spread and influence of Cajun music. It identifies performers whose style mirrors the forms mandated by the CFMA. The award provides legitimacy and authenticity for groups that perpetuate this tradition outside of French Louisiana.

A third type of performer relates to the conflict between Toups's performance and CFMA ideals. It is the "evolved traditional performer." In this type:

> [T]he personal roots of the performer are in folk tradition, but the aesthetics and materials of the dominant culture have largely supplanted those of the group. Such performers may work full-time at their art. They tend to be highly conscious of the styles in which they perform and of other forms, and they may blend forms. The material performed tends to be idiosyncratic although the flavor and style of the group which produced it may be an obvious and prized part of the performance. (Wilson and Udall 1982: 21)

Wayne Toups began his career as a traditional folk performer, but his national, as well as much of his local popularity, has come as an evolved traditional performer whose rock-and-roll and Zydeco-inspired repertoire appeals to mainstream aesthetics of the American population and younger Cajuns. A crisis of representation occurred with Toups's performance at Le Cajun because it was not in accordance with official mandates, which dictated a traditional folk performer as the ideal cultural representative, although the performance actually had broad appeal to a native audience.

Debate over the CFMA's standardization of Cajun culture indicates the tenuous nature of representing traditions that are assumed to be universally shared and valued. As Waterman (1990:372) notes for the role of music in constructing a contemporary pan-Yoruba nationality in Nigeria, "It is clear that the image of a unified Yoruba people has increasingly gained a foothold as a hegemonic [that is, taken for granted] framework for cultural identity." Within the CFMA there is a taken-for-granted perspective that the most authentic cultural forms are to be found in the recent past, or more specifically, the lived experiences of older CFMA members with roots in southwest Louisiana. Their perspectives have been (at least indirectly) influenced by folklore research that has shaped past representations of traditional local culture. But the taken-for-granted framework promoted by the CFMA is not necessarily shared by all. By 2001, there was increased movement by the CFMA toward inclusivity regarding cultural forms that some viewed as necessary to appeal to a younger and broader Cajun population. However, the controversial nature of Wayne Toups's performance at the CFMA awards suggested that marked shifts toward ethnic show business and catering to mainstream tastes and younger Cajuns invite debate.

The CFMA has played a significant role in Cajun cultural advocacy and transmitting traditions, and it continues to do. Expansion of the CFMA into decidedly non-Cajun areas and a corresponding rise in non-Cajun membership present new challenges, as these new voices may hold differing perspectives on Cajun culture and its representations. Furthermore, as the power and influence of the "old guard" of CFMA membership diminish, younger leadership faces the challenges of maintaining traditions codified by the organization, while acknowledging the rich diversity of musical styles and changing aesthetics in the French Louisiana musical landscape. Future research would do well to explore how tradition has continued to be negotiated within the CFMA in light of these dynamics.

From a perspective of applied anthropology/folklore, this article provides valuable insights into how an organization negotiates cultural representations and thus can inform programming efforts by applied scholars and aspiring ethnic organizations beyond those related to Cajun culture. Since the CFMA has played a significant role, perhaps disproportionately so in relation to its size, in shaping regional cultural representations beyond association venues, an understanding of the CFMA can inform the broader study of ongoing and future representations of Cajun culture throughout Louisiana and elsewhere.

NOTES

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University of Louisiana, Lafayette. Mac Arnaud, in his capacity as CFMA President, kindly shared CFMA documents with the author. Eric Rupp assisted with data collection on the Chicago and San Antonio chapters of the CFMA.

2. L.M. to J.S. 1989. Letter manuscript in the CFMA files located at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. February 26.

3. T.F. to CFMA Board of Directors. 1987. Letter manuscript in the CFMA files located at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. March 4.

4. W.D. to J.S. 1991. Letter manuscript in the CFMA files located at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. September 11.

5. M.H. to M.C. 1991. Letter manuscript in the CFMA files located at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. September 11.

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