



Understanding Resilience through Ritual and Religious Practice: An Expanded Theoretical and Ethnographic Framework

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Conventional Understandings of Resilience

- The ability to withstand the impact of an adverse event.
- A mechanism for coping with adverse events.
- The possession or development of adaptive capacities linked to functioning and adaptation following an adverse event.
- The acquisition and development of networked resources.
- The achievement of livelihood outcomes such as increased economic resources, well-being, and security.
- Reduction of vulnerability contexts and conditions.

Questions about Resilience (The 5Ws)

- What is resilience in this social and cultural sense?
- Who are the people that are engaged in these resilience-building practices and what do they do?
- Where do we see these practices?
- When do we see them?
- Why do these practices exist in this particular time and place? Is religious practice in part a response to the vulnerable conditions in which people live?

Saint Devotion, Hurricanes, and Resilience in New Orleans



A House in the Lakeview Neighborhood of New Orleans



Altars to St. Joseph



La Source Ancienne
Annual Hurricane
Protection Ceremony



HURRICANE CEREMONY X

Public prayer ceremony dedicated to Our Lady of Prompt Succor (who has intervened historically on New Orleans' behalf when a hurricane has threatened) and Ezili Danto (also associated with Mater Salvatoris and Mount Carmel) to ask for protection from hurricanes

When: Saturday, July 21st. 7:00 p.m.

Where: Achade Meadows Peristyle, 3319 Rosalie Alley (off of Rampart, between Piety and Desire)

What to bring in offering:

For Our Lady: flowers, statues, candles, religious pictures, jewelry.

For Danto: Barbancourt Rum, Florida Water, candles, daggers, dolls dressed in red and blue with gold trim or calico prints, spicy black beans, peasant cakes, unfiltered cigarettes, pan fried cornbread with peppers, fried pork, white crème de menthe.

What to wear: Please dress in white (the color of purity), with red head scarves, or all red (the color of Petwo rites).

Ethnographic Examples

- The formation of social and spiritual relationships and networks
- The role of religion and faith in the development of a personal or communal sense of safety and security
- The role of religious practices in the formation and growth of popular movements of revitalization.

Directions for Analysis and Expanding Theoretical Frameworks

- Do these examples fit with the conventional understandings of resilience? Are we still talking about abilities, adaptive capacities, social networks, etc. or do we need an expanded framework that better incorporates the social and cultural dimension?

- Ritual and religious practices fit with conventional definitions when considered as:
 - Forms of social capital, leading to the development of network structures and linkages, patterns and systems of social and spiritual support, channels of communication, community bonds and commitments, organization, and action.
 - Factors in the development of a socially and culturally based sense of security and sustainability.

- Ritual and religious practices suggest the need for an expanded framework of resilience when we focus on:
 - The significance of social and spiritual relationships to human well-being
 - The mechanisms by which resilience is built in everyday practice
 - The local meanings and experiences of religious practices in relation to security and sustainability
 - The direction of religious practices towards revitalization and social transformation
 - Social and cultural practices as embedded within larger ecological and political ecological concerns

Additional Theories

- Kinship and relatedness studies
- Religious networks, solidarities, and the “consolidating power” of religion
- Religious revitalization movements, security, and sustainability
- The social-ecological dimensions of religious practice and religious place-making

Methods and Directions for Future Research

How do we study this? How will data from an examination of these sorts of practices inform emerging social vulnerability and resilience frameworks?

- Long-term ethnographic field research
- Challenges for studying the immeasurable
- Dissemination of data in policy relevant ways
- Ensuring that findings are relevant to people in impacted communities, scholars, and scientists across disciplines
- Collaborative work