

Explaining the Relationship between Religiosity and Resilience

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Abstract : Although the positive impact of religiosity on well-being, health, and life-coping abilities is well known, up to date research has failed to provide scientific evidence for the relationship reasons. Therefore the present study took a qualitative approach by examining how religiosity interacts in coping with emotionally distressful situations, for which wedding preparations are an example. Wedding preparations, related to the experience of ambiguous emotions, can be the reason for phases of high distress. Although being per-se religious ceremonies, they are also socially-scripted and characterized by people's striving for personally meaningful celebrations. The negotiation of these many influences can evoke conflicts. To reveal components of religiosity which contribute to stress-resolution, eight biographic-narrative interviews with recently married spouses were conducted. Participants were from different nationalities and Catholic deep-belief communities in order to determine factors independent from national-culture and social-subgroup. The audio-tape recorded, transcribed and translated interviews were analyzed by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Opposing previous research on wedding-related conflicts but in-line with the quantitative account on the relation between stress-resilience and religiosity, the present study found participants reporting very low levels of distress and ambiguity. Although similar areas of potential conflicts were revealed, deep-belief Christians seemed to handle them in a different way. Participants freed themselves from own and others' rigor mundane expectations by their spiritual preparation and the focus on a divine instance. This evoked a feeling of perceived closeness to God and of unconditional love, resulting in acceptance of oneself and others. Through relativizing mundane goods, participants perceived absolute freedom. Thus belief did not supplement coping strategies, previously defined in the literature, but substituted them. The paper implies that in explaining the connection between stress-resilience and religiosity, one's perception and experience of unconditional love might outweigh other social or personal factors. However, further qualitative investigations are needed to fully explain the phenomenon.

Keywords : deep-belief, religiosity, resilience, wedding

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