

Good example of how
the diverse cultures
contributed to the
Louisiana we know
today...

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



The evident identity of Louisiana as an exceptional yet unique kind of integrated cultures has been captured using many phrases by many scholars. This savory mixture has also been identified alongside its historical dishes, gumbo. Capturing this unique and complex assortment of cultures has eluded many scholars, researchers and anthropologists. Some authors have however come close to identifying this complex assortment describing tradition, folk life and folklores.

A major event labeled Louisiana Purchase that occurred in 1803 played a major role in shaping the future of this state. This marked a major experiment to incorporate the very diverse state into the United States of America. This was linked to meeting of multicultural identities. This marked a major transformation of what the cultural assortment was and what Louisiana would become today. This profound effect greatly shaped modern day Louisiana. These newly incorporated states provided a major challenge to the contemporary Louisiana. The southern extreme of Louisiana was considered by most historians as a completely foreign entity. Many of the inhabitants were of African, Caribbean and Mediterranean decent describing this very distinct state. It is recorded in history that majority of them were of Catholic denomination and had different view of the government. This was coupled by the fact that they had different structures of law.

The diversity of race among these inhabitants were another major factor contributing to the diversity of this region. The linguistic variability was not an exception and this detailed assortment meant that the various inhabitants struggled for power and supremacy. This was and still is a multicultural frontier with major interaction with the creoles, English settlers,

Acadians, African slaves and Native Americans. This interaction continued through the 19th century to present day America. This diversity brought about major conflicts with each and every entity fighting for supremacy and recognition. This interestingly led to the discovery that within diversity there existed major strength. Louisiana's history as a state and as a colonial territory for close to 15 years was characterized by not only cultural but legal and political friction among its diverse entities.

In addition to the diversity of cultures in the state of Louisiana, there is also an interesting factor of lack of counties in this state. This is substituted by parishes. The Spanish are credited for creating most of the colonial structures. Few scholars have proved to realize the variation and degree of complexity of cultures within this state. Many have described the fact that New Orleans and South of Louisiana is juxtaposed with British-American and African-American culture of the North of Louisiana. However, few are aware of the little differences in the cultural complexity due to Native Americans and numerous immigrants who have over time inhabited the state. This includes the Irish, Latino, Germans and Chinese among other minorities. Scholars with vast experience and knowledge in Louisiana's history have put on paper the settlement and immigration pattern to this assorted state. Fred Kniffen documented the settlement patterns in this region and formed the basis for describing the different cultural entities in the region.

With the mention of Louisiana, a lot of people focus on New Orleans and tend to ignore the other regions in this state. There has been great scholarly conflict in understanding the diverse culture of this entity that has been considered the metropolitan center. Similar to the entire state of Louisiana,

New Orleans has been ruled by the Americans, Spanish and French with each of the aforementioned making diverse yet significant contribution to the contemporary structures in place. It should also be noted that the Africans, Native Americans and immigrants including the Irish and Germans have made significant contribution to the cultural landscape of Louisiana. Today New Orleans is a great diversity metropolitan center with Latin, Greek and French speaking communities. As opposed to some tourist publicities, New Orleans is not a town for the Cajuns despite the fact that this community came to dominate this town at the advent of World War II. The Creole community came about with the intermingling and blending of the Spanish and French nobles and officers.

The creoles define the descendants of the French, Spanish and Africans who are described as being people of no color that resulted in intertwining among the different entities. They however retained their separate identities.

Majority of the Africans arrived in this state as slaves from French speaking West African nations. However, some came as people free of color originating from the Caribbean islands. These too came as slaves. The fact that a great number of the African immigrants came from a region of closely related communities, contributed to development of the creole community. This was a likely contributory factor to the retention of diverse cultures and the creole community. For instance, the immigrants from Haiti brought in the voodoo religion and the house designed described as shotgun. The word voodoo originated from voudun described by Africans as a Supreme Being or deity.

The creole were regarded as being highly educated and talented chefs. They

largely contributed to the gumbo delicacy from which the state is highly recognized. The word gumbo itself is of African dialect. With the end of Louisiana Purchase of 1803, Les Americans population came to settle in Louisiana especially the uptown areas. The Irish that were escaping the potato famine added to this diversity followed by African-Americans that added to the population of Africans by joining the former slaves.

Jazz music played a very significant and central role in unity and fusion of the diverse communities in this region. Communities that were previously conflicting discovered a new integration instrument and played an important role in developing this new form of art. African-American blues and salsa known to be of Latin origin are played in major clubs in modern day Louisiana. This is alongside rhythm and blues made famous by various artists including Neville Brothers. Parading is yet another culture embraced by the people of New Orleans. This is a practice that aims at recognizing all aspects of the society. The Irish are also recognized for developing the historical dialect described as 'yat' considered a shortening of the phrase 'where you at'. The Mardi gras parade is also described in which people throw ingredients of potato stew to the crowd. The jazz parades are still part of some funerals in contemporary New Orleans with very subtle variation from the ancient Jazz parades. The parading and marching traditions happen alongside craft traditions such as ribbon baskets and costume and mask making.

Southern Louisiana is a unique region with authors such as Nicholas R. Spitzer describing it as a cultural gumbo in which each community retains its specific identity and can be identified separately yet at the same integrated

in a way that they blend thereby affecting each other. The complex integration of the African, French, Spanish, Irish and American culture describes a complex regional culture. However, when one observes closely yet critically the diverse local differences can be identified within this complex blend of different entities. Despite South Louisiana being deeply rooted to French culture, this part is not entirely French speaking. The French culture is described by many researchers as being triangular with its base stretching from Lake Charles to New Orleans and its apex being immediately below Alexandria. Some places have been noted to be dominated by French traditions.

Cajun has been described by many scholars in the study of South Louisiana. This term is considered as a local version of Acadian. Cajun developed as a result of blending of many cultures particularly the French expelled from Scotia by the British. Plantation masters majorly influenced their slaves in a significant way by for instance teaching them English as opposed to French. Being closer to major transportation routes, the Spanish, French and English became more cosmopolitan compared to the people that inhabited the prairies that are found to the West. The Germans later migrated to the area and settled in the region providing vegetables to the New Orleans. However, it is difficult to identify these Germans today since they were assimilated into the French culture and their names were either translated to English or French.

Living isolated in the prairies towards the West, the dominant French speaking communities assimilated the Germans, Native Americans and Africans. Many of them were later to be absorbed into the Cajun culture.

Today many of the Cajun people are identified by different French, English and Native American names. The black creoles with a French dialect described as free-men-of-color who were land owners, closely interacted with the Cajun culture. Despite the fact that the two are racially distinct today, they share a great deal of cultural including music, food, catholic religion and the creole dialect. However, of major importance is the zydeco. This music genre is recognized for blending of French creole music and Caribbean rhythms incorporated by the Africans. Not all blacks in this region are French speaking since there was introduction of freed slaves to this population who speak English and having significant cultural contribution. For instance the zydeco music appears to have been majorly influenced by the south rhythm and blues.

This complex blend of culture between the creole and Cajun communities later led to 'swamp pop' a unique entity in rhythm and blues that is credited to the area which is common along Texas and the entire southern Louisiana. Swamp pop kind of music combines Cajun music with creole rhythm and blends western and country music. Today, entertainment joints and restaurants offer Cajun and creole music to tourists and locals alike. The Cajun and creole cultures also have many crafts including cotton weaving and fiddle making. A few communities to the South of Louisiana have remained English speaking. Still some communities in this region have resisted total assimilation into the creole or Cajun culture thereby retaining their own culture and tradition to date.

Croatians a unique entity in the region retained their cultural diversity and tradition. They are recognized to have been the pioneers of the oyster

industry which they dominate up to date. This group remains unique to other communities in this region even after more than a century of residence in the region. The catholic religion is the most widely shared among most of the south Louisiana residents. This was present during the colonial times and continues to persist up to date. For example the creole mark major events in their religious calendar such as fat Tuesday followed by other significant events such as Ash Wednesday and Lent all being Catholic practices.

The remaining part of Louisiana is dominated by African Americans and English speaking Americans with British roots. These British Americans immigrated at different times to occupy the various parts of Louisiana today. This region, which is commonly referred to as ' North Louisiana' by many researchers is home to two main subcultures; the south plantation culture and the south hill culture. Both of the subcultures are basically Protestants although with many differences in denomination. Most of these people were mainly Baptist or Methodist and observed strong ethics in their economic activities. The population of Northern Louisiana has been described by many scholars as a patchwork with each section remaining distinct with its interaction with the rest of the inhabitants of the region. This makes the Northern part of Louisiana assorted as opposed to being uniformly British/African. A major part of Florida parish that is mainly protestant is mainly inhabited by Upland south culture. A major part of this region was previously part of the French territory.

Craft traditions in Northern Louisiana communities is attributed to their plantation skills and is based on the use of available resources. Some craft practices such as knife making, basket making and whip making have been

retained up to date. However, other practices such as soap making are rare today with only a few individuals retaining such practices. Food traditions include diverse practices of preparing various delicacies such as chow chow jams and jellies. Some still consume fish and game meat. The ritual practices reflect the protestant beliefs. The churches have practices such as homecoming. This brings together families, particularly extended families. The Memorial Day is also significant to date as it commemorates great people and military veterans. Some protestant churches in the region still practice baptism along river shores, a practice which has continued for many generations. 3(McClain, 2004)

Music in the Northern Louisiana is greatly influenced by the community cultural roots. Gospel music is perhaps the dominant genre of music in this region. Gospel music by choirs is heard in many festivals and radio stations in contemporary Louisiana. Other genres of music practiced by the region include country music and blue grass. Country music shows are at times held weekly.

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