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Gullah Geechee Indigenous Articulation in the Americas

By

Sharon Y. Fuller

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Environmental Science, Policy, and Management

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Abstract

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by Sharon Y. Fuller

Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Science, Policy and Management

University of California, Berkeley

Professors Jeffrey Romm and Carolyn Finney, Co-Chairs

Gullah Geechee are descendants of enslaved West Africans who have articulated cultural traditions of their ancestors with the land- and seascapes of the Sea Islands. The ecological similarities of Sierra Leone's coastal region facilitated the importation of African traditions into what became South Carolina, thus resulting in land-based cultural practices that can be defined in an unexpected way as indigenous (Reardon and TallBear 2012). The Gullah Geechee disrupts the dichotomy of traditional or historical indigeneity and diasporic identity (Clifford 2001, Yeh 2007). They are diasporic and also situated in a particular place. De jure sovereignty is not the reality but rather de facto assertions of belonging to the land. Rather than a biological hybridization inheritance analysis, my research uses a geographical and social type of co-constitution to illustrate Gullah Geechee indigenous articulation in the Americas (Ng'weno 2007, Sturm 2002). Rising from the legacies of the American South, the Gullah Geechee secured land abandoned after the civil war legally and through community sanctions. My analysis illustrates Gullah Geechee indigeneity and sovereignty constituted in relation to cultural practices linked to the land. Transitioning from a Western anthropocentric worldview to an African ethical framework of human and nonhuman reciprocity and cooperation, my research reveals the power dynamics of structures of authority producing identity and indigeneity within small-scale fisheries managed as common pool resources (CPR) in the Sea Islands. Although conventional resource management strategies typically ignore gendered perspectives in favor of male-biased frameworks that actually obscure women's work, my study reveals Gullah Geechee indigenous livelihood strategies and self-determination pursuits inclusive of women's critical engagement (Ray 2007). I also show how the performative is part of the identity politics of the Gullah Geechee as they articulate themselves as indigenous, but in a surprising way, in the Americas (Ebron 2002).

Dedication

to my father
who taught me the joy of fishing
and to my mother
who brought along the cast iron skillet
knowing the sea would provide

Lee and Dolores Jackson

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The possibility to make visible is a concrete form of power
—Carolyn Finney

Indigenous knowledge views landscapes as inscriptions of cultural practices that bear signatures of specific ethnic traditions—Judith Carney

Folks in the barrier islands—owned boats as in other places they own horses. They were known as saltwater farmers—David Cecelski

Introduction

The Gullah Geechee's journey begins in the continent of Africa and continues in the continent of North America. They are co-constituted by the human and nonhuman inhabitants, histories and geographies, of both continents in addition to the space in between. Using Hall's (1996) definition of relational governance in which different regimes of authority, not simply plural, but rather different regimes of truth constituted in discursive social formations, I analyze the effects of relational governance on indigenous practices. More specifically, my research analyzes the effects of shifting alignments of power between governmental agencies, recreational homeowners and indigenous communities in relation to indigenous livelihood strategies and self-determination pursuits. In this dissertation I illustrate Gullah Geechee indigenous articulation in the Americas by analyzing the role of identity politics and its effects on culture-based sovereignty. In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of the co-constitution of Gullah Geechee identity from cultural practices and traditions of the Americas and Africa to illustrate who they are. Transplanted into a land that is ecologically similar to their home of origin, I also provide insights into the physical geography in which they emerged as a new people through the co-mingling of African and Native American cultural traditions and practices. Although not often explicitly stated, knowledge production and the ability to disseminate knowledge is a concrete form of power. As a researcher I have the distinct privilege of producing and disseminating knowledge. It is important to note however, that I also bring particular biases and assumptions based on my personal experiences that influence the way in which I collect and interpret data. I therefore also elaborate on who I am and the significance of positioning in my role as researcher and storyteller.

Who They Are: We Gullah!

Gullah Geechee are descendants of enslaved Africans captured in West Africa from the 17th through the 19th centuries. South Carolina coastal plantations were invested primarily in rice and cotton. Plantation owners targeted Africans from the West Africa coastal countries of Sierra Leone, Gambia, Liberia and Senegal where rice, indigo, and cotton were indigenous to the region. The many tribes Gullah Geechee ancestors came from along the Rice Coast included the Wolof, Mandinka, Fula, Baga, Limba, Temne, Mende, Vai, Kissi, and Kpella (Opala, 1987). The name "Gullah" is derived from Angola where some of the enslaved Africans originated. The name is also thought to originate from the Gola ethnic group that lived between Sierra Leone and Liberia. "Geechee," is derived from another

ethnic group Kissi that lived between Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia (Sumpter, 2010; Opala, 1987). Geechee is also identified as descendants of Africans enslaved in the Georgia Sea Islands (Wood, 1974). Due in part to the remoteness of the island and also the planter class' susceptibility to malaria and other waterborne diseases prevalent in semi-tropical coastal regions, the Gullah Geechee toiled in the oyster shell infused soils in relative isolation (Creel, 1988; Joyner, 1985). Absence from constant oversight produced an optimum environment for the continuance of indigenous practices and cultural traditions. Thus, enabling enslaved Africans to construct a new identity as a result of and despite the tragic conditions of slavery. Enslaved Africans from Sierra Leone were generally outnumbered by slaves from other African countries in the American South with the exception of South Carolina and Georgia (Wood, 1974). South Carolina's coastal zone, as a result, had a higher population of Sierra Leonean slaves enabling a distinct retention of linguistic and cultural traditions, language being the most fundamental to Gullah Geechee indigenous identity (Opala, 1987). The Gullah language spoken on St. Helena Island closely resembles the Krios, the most commonly spoken language in Sierra Leone present day (Opala, 1987; Turner, 1949). The ecological similarities of Sierra Leone's coastal region facilitated the importation of African traditions into what became South Carolina, thus resulting in land-based cultural practices that can be defined in an unexpected way as indigenous (TallBear, 2013).

One consequence, of the practically exclusive use of enslaved Africans to construct waterways, cultivate and harvest land based crops and fish in South Carolina, was the formation of a Black majority (Wood, 1974). Even though concerted efforts were made to thwart strategic alliances between enslaved Africans who spoke different languages and were captured in different countries, the commonality of the experience of slavery forged bonds of camaraderie that unified the black majority in the exact manner the planter class had so desperately attempted to avoid. Thus, displaced Africans became a black majority, embodying a vastly different identity, constituted through the importation of cultural practices and traditions to the Americas. St. Helena Island's black majority, coupled with absentee plantation owners, were key factors aiding in the emergence of a new people (Cecelski, 2001; Creel, 1988; Joyner, 1985).

Despite his riches, noted the visitor the planter walks forth in the morning
unrefreshed, yet he must heed his steps, for the poisonous reptiles lie in his path-the
shark watches for him when he laves his burning body in the surf, and the alligator
pulls him down in the rivers. For nearly half the year he cannot visit his own
plantation...if he comes back before the frost, it is like the return of the banished
Foscari, on pain of death. Thus he becomes an absentee. -Charles Joyner

The evolution of the slave social structure contributed significantly to contemporary Gullah Geechee identity. Biological kinship on St. Helena Island plantations was important, but not as essential to a person's identity as where a person "caught sense" (Guthrie, 1996). Catching sense identified the place where slaves, from ages two to twelve, learned about life on a plantation, plantation households and plantation kinship rather than biological kinship. Gender and age imbalances were also factors prevalent in the South's slave populations, as males and children were the preferred labor commodity (Joyner, 1985; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Young enslaved African males were the premium

choice for satisfying the strenuous labor demands of St. Helena Island plantations. As one plantation owner commented, the objective of slave procurement was to transfer in male slaves while selling off females, “retaining only enough...to assure a healthy rate of natural increase” (Malone, 1992). Predominantly “young” male slave populations were common as a result (Malone, 1992). For instance, in the mid-1850s one plantation’s composition was comprised of sixty-three percent male, thirty-six percent female and nearly sixty percent were under the age of 16 (Malone, 1992). In addition to their value as a human commodity, women’s reproduction capacity was also commodified within the institution of slavery. Using female slaves as “breeders”, became immensely profitable and a necessity to plantation owners, particularly after the transatlantic slave trade was abolished (Davis, 1995; Wood, 1974).

Enslaved women as “breeders” ensured the survival of the plantation owner’s human commodity by caring for biological children until separated as a result of sales, contracting out or death, and in the role of caretaker of other children placed in her charge. For instance, Frederick Douglas lived with his grandparents, where his grandmother took care of her various daughters’ children while her daughters worked as hired hands on neighboring plantations (Martin, 1984). Plantation owners who were also the biological fathers of their slaves was one of the core realities of plantation breeding, as was true of Frederick Douglas’ father, the wealthiest slaveholder in Tuckahoe, Maryland (Martin, 1984). Consciously silenced, yet positively recognized as a fundamental contradiction to Christian ideology, the slave owner/father distinction represented “a sin and standing accusation against him who is master and father to the child” (Martin, 1984). The slave owner/father dilemma was the exception rather than the norm on St. Helena Island plantations.

Due to the absence of plantation owners and other whites fleeing the ecological and psychological challenges, St. Helena’s Island slave population existed in an environment that had few whites and was virtually free of mulattoes (Joyner, 1985; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Thus, the primary means of increasing slaves populations, aside from purchasing, was through the breeding of enslaved women best suited for childbearing. Depending on size, age and gender of the slave populations, movement among plantations may be necessary to achieve desirable slave reproduction outcomes. In St. Helena, for example, slaves moved frequently between the fifty-five plantations on the island. Even though, in 1860 Thomas Coffin was the largest plantation owner on St. Helena Island with 253 slaves laboring on four plantations consisting of 3,329 total acres, he was still frequently required to obtain suitable mates for his slaves on neighboring plantations (Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Male slaves, as a result, commonly went to neighboring plantations in search of a suitable wife. Although plantation owners, such as Coffin, were displeased by the “lost time” such pursuits caused, they rationalized that marriage would eventually add more slaves to their estates (Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986).

The role of caretaker, of the immediate and extended family, was another West African tradition enslaved women imported (Opala, 1987; Turner, 1949). However, contrary to the dominant literature on slavery in the Americas, enslaved women were generally not the

head of 19th century slave households (Malone, 1992). They typically inhabited households comprised of biological and non-biological kinship. Narratives and representations of this type aided in perpetuating a myth of matriarchy for women of African descent, beginning in the 19th century to present day. Although, family units consisting of the biological mother, father and children were produced through the breeding of slaves, the family as a functional entity was outlawed and permitted to exist only when it benefited the plantation owner (Davis, 1995). Davis further posit that:

The designation of the black woman as a matriarch is a cruel misnomer. It is a misnomer because it implies stable kinship structures within which the mother exercises decisive authority. It is cruel because it ignores the profound traumas the black woman must have experienced when she had to surrender her childbearing to alien and predatory economic interests.

Despite a preponderance of literature depicting matriarchal family structures on plantations, St. Helena Island's households were "simple family", units as were most slave households. A simple family is classified as a unit in which both parents and children, parents without children physically residing in the household or single persons with children, lived in the same household, with the latter category representing the *smallest* percentage (Malone, 1992). In St. Helena Island the male and female of a simple family were often slaves from the same or neighboring plantation that produced children who were sold or contracted out to other plantation owners. Although researchers note biological kinship existed in seventy-five percent of simple family units, the units did not comprise a conventional nuclear family in which husband, wife and biological children resided (Davis, 1995). Children were therefore not necessarily biological, in fact in most case not. Marriage thus became the institution plantation owners deemed best for supporting "natural reproduction". For example, in St. Helena Island slaves were allowed to choose "husbands" or "wives" in some cases, however most marital units were created through processes equivalently to arranged marriages. The norm, in fact was for plantation owners to determine which slaves were allowed to marry. Although Baptist ministers often officiated such unions, slave marriages, were not recognized by the state of South Carolina (Creel, 1988; Joyner, 1985).

In spite of the lack of state sanctioning, the planter class eagerly promoted slave marriages. Formalizing a symbol of family through ceremony, plantation owners believed, assured a stable social order while creating conditions that enabled a "natural" increase in the slave population (Joyner, 1985). Creating conditions for successful childbirths was the primary intent, particularly since children who survived became permanent additions to the plantation owner's estate (Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). However, high mortality rates of enslaved mothers and their infants, was the exasperating reality of human commodity investments. For example, children ten years old and under accounted for more than half the deaths in St. Helena Island between 1850-1860. Further, forty-seven percent of the children who died in 1860 were 3 years old or under (Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Although plantation owners often accused surviving mothers of killing their babies (which in fact was true in some cases), researchers note that slave children frequently died from the same causes as white children, during the time, including

dysentery, pneumonia, lockjaw, worms, and fever. However, slave children susceptibility to disease was higher given the poor nutrition and physical strains of mothers and squalor of the slave quarters (Pollitzer, 2005; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986).

...a grandmother, born a slave owned her own boat, stitched her own nets, and went fishing or crabbing most days—David Cecelski

Enslaved women were expected to perform the unacknowledged tasks necessary for household survival, including food preparation, clothes maintenance, and childrearing, in addition to other plantation tasks (Davis, 1995). Enslaved African women “were yoked to fieldwork alongside the men” toiling in the mosquito infested humid landscapes (Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). In order to extract the maximum surplus from labor of slaves, enslaved women had to be released from the myth of femininity. Women were thus forced into a “deformed equality” with enslaved African men (Davis, 1995). Tasked with the “double duty” of fieldwork and caretaker, enslaved women typically began their day well before the work bell and continued far after they completed fieldwork (Joyner, 1985; Ray, 2007). It is important to note that gendered roles were more indicative of spatially defined tasks rather than conformance to social conventions based on biology. In other words, a slave owner’s expectation of an enslaved woman, for example, often included such tasks as plowing a field in addition to meal preparation.

As a result of the plantation owner’s absence and a black majority, his expectations were often superseded by the cultural traditions and practices of the enslaved Africans. One such practice in St. Helena Island slave households was the adoption of an egalitarian structure (Joyner, 1985). In addition to being a form of resistance, the egalitarian system substantially contributed to the overall well being of the slave community. For example, although enslaved women were responsible for predawn meal preparation and mending clothes, men assisted in household survival by gathering wood and mending cast nets while children harvested fresh shrimp, crabs and oysters from creeks to supplement meals. Unifying with enslaved men, women “performed the only labor that could not be directly and immediately claimed” by producing a consciousness and practice of resistance within the household and plantation community (Davis, 1995; Martin, 1984).

Although historical accounts tend to illuminate the role of enslaved men toiling in the Sea Islands, women were also actively engaged in survival strategies and self-determination pursuits (Carney, 2001). In addition to the hundreds of men piloting boats down rivers and the Atlantic during the 19th century, the Sea Island women were also steadily harvesting oyster, clams, shrimp, crab and mullet along the shorelines. As tidewater slaves, the women were tasked with shucking oyster, clams and scallops, gutting and salting the catch. Most women “could handle a skiff, as well as a frying pan”, as noted by Cecelski (2001). An important distinction between women and men harvesters however, was that women shared larger portions of the seafood they caught, rather than selling (Bennett, 2005). Due to the abundance of the sea’s bounty in the Sea Islands, coupled with a moderate appreciation for seafood by plantation societies, enslaved women were provided ample opportunity to share fish and shellfish, harvested and collected from the men, communally. Gullah Geechee women today continue communal sharing, in addition to conducting other

traditional practices retained, such as marketing, preserving catches and food preparation (Béné, Steel, Luadia, & Gordon, 2009; Cecelski, 2001).

The forging of America is a story of determination, perseverance and of a pioneering spirit. It is also a story of atrocities that are conveniently omitted from “official” historical records, through a process I call convenient amnesia. Unlike the illusion of a people from a distant past now extinct, that frames Native American identity, shades of blackness kept the enslaved African descendants’ identity squarely in the present (Anderson, 2007; Sturm, 2002; TallBear, 2013). The proximity and more importantly, the necessity of diverse groups working cooperatively in a remote space away from dominant ideologies on race and identity in addition to narratives legitimating racial hierarchies, enabled the people of the Sea Islands to work closely together. Biological kinship, although important as noted previously, could also reveal the incestuous realities fundamental to the institution of slavery (Davis, 1995; Martin, 1984; Sturm, 2002). A culture of silence, as a result, assisted in shrouding the atrocities of slavery including truths enslaved mothers, fathers, daughters and sons could not acknowledge. Further, due to the prevalence of absentee plantation owners and whites in general, St. Helena Island “families” had a greater chance of maintaining familial ties, biological and non-biological (Pollitzer, 2005; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). The island’s absence of plantation owners, ecological similarities with West Africa and isolation afforded enslaved Africans a form of resiliency through their own enterprise as fishers, crabber, shrimpers, and boatmen (Cecelski, 2001; Jones-Jackson, 1987). Thus, not only was productively enhanced, the cornucopia of African, Native American and European languages, drumming, ring shouts and song also gave birth to alternative forms of communication such as the rhythm of jazz and blues still treasured today (Creel, 1988).

The Land- and Seascapes

The southeast coastal area is a region of fertile landscapes and rich aquatic substrates. The physical geography of the Sea Island’s landscape consists of a chain of over 100 barrier and tidal islands that stretch from South Carolina down to Florida (McKenzie, 1980; Walker, 2005). The area is designated as the Gullah Geechee coast, a region that accounted for some of the richest plantations as a result of rice and cotton cultivation and harvesting in the South (Sumpter, 2010). Congress, also recognized the cultural and ecological distinctiveness of the region, designated the area as the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC). GGCHC is charged with advocating for Gullah Geechee, cultural preservation across four states from North Carolina down to Florida (Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, 2012). Both designations recognize the substantive cultural and traditional contributions of West Africans enslaved to grow rice, indigo, and cotton in the American South. My research focuses on one of the islands, St. Helena, in South Carolina’s vast coastal zone that substantially relied on the indigenous knowledges and labor from Africans transported from the Rice Coast (Carney, 2001; Cecelski, 2001).

The coastal zone is approximately 8,000 square miles and has over 500,000 acres of coastal marshes that are primarily classified as saltwater marshes. It is bounded by Port Royal and St. Helena sounds on the south and Georgetown on the north. Consisting of forty elongated

islands buffering the Atlantic Ocean the marshes, sandy beaches and a dune system, the coastal zone is also home to the largest delta system on the East coast, Santee River Delta (McKenzie, 1980; SCDNR, 1999). Another prominent feature of South Carolina's coastal zone is the extensive system of rice field dikes, canals, and reservoirs still adjacent to many coastal rivers, feeding fresh and saltwater marshlands and supporting an abundance of fish and shellfish thriving on the diverse substrates of the region (Burrell, Jr., Whitaker, Wenner, & DeLancey, 2009; Carney, 2001; Walker, 2005). The extensive system of rivers, canals, dense forest and oyster shelled sandy roads once separated the Sea Islands from the mainland.

In contrast to the vast resources and land within South Carolina's coastal zone, St. Helena Island, comprises only sixty-four square miles of the coastal zone's eight thousand (SCDNR, 1999). Known as the heart of Gullah Geechee country in lowcountry, St. Helena Island has miles of cultivated land, bush, young forest growth, burial grounds, waterfront marshes and woodlands (Jones-Jackson, 1987). "Lowcountry" locates St. Helena Island in the Atlantic Coastal Plains just below the Piedmont in "upcountry" of ancient beach dunes that extend the width of South Carolina (SCDNR, 1999). Tucked in Beaufort, one of the states most productive counties, boasting over \$1 billion in tourism revenue while also supporting agriculture, forestry, fisheries, government, recreation and the military industries (Miley, Gallo & Associates, 2008). In fact, Beaufort County accounts for the highest revenue from commercial fisheries in the South Carolina's coastal zone, with shrimp fisheries topping the list, followed by blue crabs, clams, oysters and mullet (Burrage, 2011; McKenzie, 1980).

The past is prominently present in St. Helena Island. Plantations, architecturally replicated from the Royal African Company's 17th century sugar plantations in Barbados, serve as the island's skyline (Jones-Jackson, 1987). Standing silently on tabby foundations of sand, oyster shell and lime throughout St. Helena Island's landscape, the plantations speak of spatial histories constituting contemporary realities. Driven off the land by wealthier plantation owners, Barbados' smaller planter class migrated, with slaves in tow, to South Carolina seeking to regain their fortunes in the Americas (Guthrie, 1996). Although sugar proved not as profitable, cotton and particularly rice production, in South Carolina, yielded riches unimaginable for the new planter class of the American South. The planter class had struck gold; only in this case it was land. The land had the perfect soil for rice cultivation (Carney, 2001; Guthrie, 1996). The unanticipated profit driven demand quickly exceeded the labor capacity of the enslaved Africans transported from Barbados.

The new planter class however, was unfamiliar with rice cultivation, particularly the region's profitable shallow-root varieties. In order to maximize production of their new enterprise, they would require individuals knowledgeable about the soil and cultivation (Carney, 2001). Initial attempts to harness the knowledge of the Native Americans failed, primarily due to their practice of harvesting wild rice varieties (Ramsey, 2008). Native Americans were also sold to colonies in the West Indies in hopes of thwarting additional battles with British settlers after the Yamasee war (1715-1717). Native Americans were also sold to finance other sources of labor (Sturm, 2002). The British used monies obtained from the sales of their human commodity of Native Americans to procure the knowledges

and labor of indigenous populations inhabiting ecologically compatible landscapes in regions located outside of the Americas (Sturm, 2002). The west coast of Africa, an area colonizers were already exploiting for the West Indies colonies including Barbados, was identified as the ideal location to purchase knowledgeable laborers, especially since they believed enslaved Africans were less likely to escape or rebel due to their unfamiliarity with the landscape (Ramsey, 2008). By 1720 Africans had become the preferred human commodity replacing Native Americans (Sturm, 2002). West Africa, the reservoir for labor in the West Indies' colonies, would now fulfill dual purposes for the planter class: labor and indigenous knowledge. Nearly 40,000 slaves were imported from Africa to South Carolina between 1700 and 1740. In 1720 sixty-five percent of the population was enslaved Africans (Malone, 1992; Wood, 1974).

As the planter class vaguely comprehended initially, but later fully grasped with the harnessing of indigenous knowledges, South Carolina coastal regions possessed the ideal topography for tidal floodplains, inland swamps and rain-fed upland rice cultivation (Carney, 2001; Cecelski, 2001). The ecological similarities of Sierra Leone's coastal region expedited the means for exceeding profits of West Africa's rice coast, in the America's new rice coast. Under the tutelage of enslaved Africans, the planter class quickly discovered that the spatial diversity necessary for rice cultivation required transforming upland forest areas by clearing trees thus allowing for planting seed that sprouted quickly in well-drained soil (Carney, 2001). Further, St. Helena Island's swampy landscaped enabled the cultivation of varieties requiring submersion throughout the growth period by taking advantage of valuable ground water tables (SCDNR, 1999). The third ecological similar ecosystem used an ingenious method that recognized the intricacies of river floodplains and coastal estuaries' tidal systems (Carney, 2001). As was also practiced in West Africa's coastal region, rainfall was captured for irrigation and for leaching out salts by flooding fields during low tide (Opala, 1987). The salinity level of marine water could also be manipulated between high and low tides to cultivate a salinity tolerant variety, *glaberrima* (*oryza glaberrima*), imported from West Africa that was also more adaptive to soil nutrient deficiencies (Carney, 2001; Opala, 1987).

In spite of the beneficial nuances relative isolation from conventional attitudes and behavior enabled, the St. Helena Island fisheries were deeply entwined with tidewater plantation life, past and present (Cecelski, 2001). For instance, enslaved Africans not only caught and harvested shellfish for plantation owners but in many instances they were also allowed to supplement their sparse diets, typically of corn pone molasses, sweet potatoes and black eye peas, with the sea's bounty (CHPP, 2013; Glanton, 2006; Guthrie, 1996). Further, a diet rich in seafood, accompanied by an occasional ration of rice from the tidewater marshes, enabled enslaved Africans to retain a semblance of customary traditions and fishing practices originating from their home countries in the coastal regions of West Africa (Cecelski, 2001; Creel, 1988; Opala, 1987). On the northwest coast of Africa and the southwest coast of North America fish was integral to the traditions, practices and survival of free and enslaved Africans. Fish was also critical for the survival of South Carolina's planters and plantation societies (Cecelski, 2001).

The enslaved African's indigenous knowledge of fishing, hunting, cultivation, preserving and preparing resources was instrumental in staving off starvation during lean periods, while substantially reducing plantation expenses and increasing planter class profits, during lean and plentiful periods (Davis, 1995). Predictably indigenous knowledge of fisheries and local waterways was a prized commodity within coastal regions. Gullah Geechee survival and self-determination pursuits, present day as well as during the time of their enslaved ancestors, used their indigenous knowledge to reap abundances throughout the land and seascapes of St. Helena Island (Chandler, Mills, Peterkin, & McCollough, 2008; Guthrie, 1996). For instance, I witnessed the Gullah Geechee rake in blue crabs from saltwater marshland during low tide and toss cast-nets for shrimp, mullet or anything caught in a quarter inch mesh net, also referred to as a "po' man's" net as it is designed to capture everything within its grasp, at shifting and high tides. The shifting tide thus enables the harvesting of an abundance of fish, shrimp, oyster, clams and crab that is integral to Gullah Geechee beingness and survival.

During times of scarcity the abundance of seafood of South Carolina's Sea Islands caught and harvested by enslaved Africans aided in sustaining the planter class (Jones-Jackson, 1987; Joyner, 1985). In fact, during slavery, plantation owners could substantially increase their profits from slave labor by selling surplus labor to other plantation to harvest fish or pilot boats for example (Cecelski, 2001). Typically, slaves were hired out to the highest bidder depending on skills possessed, upon completing tasks on their owner's plantation (Creel, 1998). Although the slave owner retained the majority of profits or resources produced by surplus labor, male slaves were also allowed to keep a portion in many instances (Cecelski, 2001). For example, male slaves were allowed to keep excess oysters harvested while contracted out, should the plantation owner express no desire for them. Enslaved African males used the excesses for selling or bartering to free and refugee slaves. They also gave portions to enslaved women, who in turn distributed the resources throughout the plantation community (Cecelski, 2001; Joyner, 1985). During lean and also times of plenty, the survival of slave and slave master was inexorably linked in dichotomous pursuits of self-determination and materiality.

South Carolina's enslaved labor, topography and indigenous knowledge ensured successful economic competition with other slave-based rice economies along the southeastern seaboard. In fact, by 1860 over 402,000 enslaved Africans inhabited South Carolina, comprising fifty-seven percent of the population (Wood, 1974). Lowcountry plantations, such as those on St. Helena Island, had higher percentages, with enslaved Africans comprising eighty-five percent of the population, during the majority of the year and escalating to ninety-five percent during the humid tropical summer months, as the planter class sought refuge in malaria free destinations (Wood, 1974; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). St. Helena Island's slave majority toiled the land- and seascapes under self-governance, for the most part, during a significant portion of their enslavement from the 17th century through the Civil War (Creel, 1988; Guthrie, 1996; Jones-Jackson, 1987).

Approximately 12,000 former slaves and refugee freedmen remained on St. Helena Island after the Civil War (Pollitzer, 2005; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Due to the Confederacy's defeat, the planter class abandoned rice and cotton plantations leaving the

Gullah Geechee on vacated lands (Du Bois, 1999; Opala, 1987). Many newly freed slaves chose to continue working in St. Helena Island's estuaries as farmers and fishers, harvesters of oysters, clams and shrimp (Wood, 1974; Tibbetts, 2009). Although the emancipation proclamation abolishing slavery was nothing more than a notion in many parts of the South, newly freed slaves, successfully acquired land after the Civil War (Sumpter, 2010). As part of the United States reconstruction plan for recovery of the South, in 1862 President Lincoln commissioned the Port Royal Experiment, authorizing lands abandoned during the Civil War be set aside for freed slaves (Du Bois, 1999). As a result, antebellum plantations formerly owned by whites were subdivided into parcels and made available for purchase by former slaves (Guthrie, 1996; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). The Port Royal Experiment also authorized the recruitment of Northerners to educate and train newly freed Sea Island slaves in appropriate vocations such as food preparation, tailoring, upholstery, carpentry, plantation operations and how to purchase land (Guthrie, 1996). The Penn Center, also known as the Penn Gullah Geechee Historical Cultural Center, was established to implement the recruitment and training objectives of the Port Royal Experiment (Creel, 1988; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Penn was the first educational and vocational institution of its kind in the South. The interest of northern recruits quickly dissipated however, at the conclusion of the Civil War. The shift in commitment was due in part, to conflicts that arose from competing interest in the abandoned lands with emancipated slaves (Chandler, Mills, Peterkin, & McCollough, 2008).

Another reconstruction mandate was, Field Order No. 15, issued by General Sherman in 1868 authorizing land on all the Sea Islands from Charleston to Port Royal and adjoining lands to the distance of thirty miles inland be set aside for former slaves, resulting in the allocation of 485,000 acres of land (Du Bois, 1999). Former slaves had to occupy the land to obtain it legally; the planter class had to occupy the land in order to reclaim it legally. Legal possession was eventually granted to the planter class in most cases, due to the federal government's decision to support the plantation owners (Joyner, 1985). President Johnson's eventual rescission of the order was perhaps the most critical determining factor. Due to Johnson's reversal, whites could once again make legal claims to the land (Du Bois, 1999). However, physical possession often proved difficult on barrier islands like St. Helena, that were only accessible by boat, for one primary reason—whites, even though, "legally" entitled, failed to return (Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Thus, freed slaves retained ownership in higher proportion in isolated islands, including St. Helena, than mainland areas using the distinctive communal property regime of heir property. In possessing the spatially isolated land, the Gullah Geechee were able to continue traditional practices unencumbered by the societal conventions of the period (Jones-Jackson, 1987; Joyner, 1985). In fact, the legacy of heir property resulted in the retention of more of their African heritage—music, food, land use, language, and spiritual practices—than any other black population in the United States (Creel, 1988).

Land ownership also meant survival (CHPP, 2013). Living their entire lives on land passed down through the generations from grandparents and parents, most Gullah Geechee were spared the legacy of sharecropping and landlessness (Guthrie, 1996). A gift of land, a legacy passed down through the generations was rarely taken for granted by Gullah Geechee or their ancestors and was also treasured above all else. The Gullah Geechee's informal

communal property regime resulted in distinctive land tenure in St. Helena Island (Dyer, Bailey, & van Tran, 2009). For example, by 1869 former slaves owned half of Beaufort County, many purchasing “swampy marshlands” deemed undesirable by whites for \$1.25 per acre (Glanton, 2006). However, due to southern laws, such as Jim Crow and Black codes, newly freed slaves were typically denied access to the legal system necessary to officially acquire land. Thus, land was generally passed down through generations without a written will (CHPP, 2013; Dyer, Bailey, & van Tran, 2009). The Gullah Geechee’s unique land tenure was derived from heir property ownership schemes. Legally referred to as tenants in common, heir property was land purchased or deeded to newly freed slaves after the Civil War (CHPP, 2013; Glanton, 2006). Ownership of heir property becomes complicated however, in cases in which any heir attempts modifying title, since all heirs legally own the land, regardless of whether they live on the land, pay taxes or have any knowledge of the property (Dyer, Bailey, & van Tran, 2009).

On St. Helena Island, land remained the most valuable asset, especially in an informal communal sharing system (Sumpter, 2010). Gullah Geechee ownership of waterfront property, in a communal system, meant that everybody on the island had access to the waterways and consequently the sea’s bounty (Guthrie, 1996). Land ownership enabled the continuance of cultural practices and sharing traditions of coastal resources critical to Gullah Geechee livelihoods and self-determination pursuits (Campbell, 2002; Jones-Jackson, 1987; Sumpter, 2010). Progress within the Gullah Geechee’s worldview is grounded in beliefs of reciprocity, cooperation and sharing with the intent of ensuring the well being of the entire community (Awolalu, 1996; Griaule, 1970). On the other hand, market based economies define progress in terms of the constant economic growth that big development projects typically provide (Ruether, 2008; Tokar, 2008).

During the early 20th century however, the legacy of a gift of land encountered severe threats as a result of big development projects, such as massive resorts and hunting reserves, began cropping up throughout the Sea Islands (Campbell, 2002; Guthrie, 1996; Howe, McMahon, & Propst, 1997). Admittedly, real estate developers infused valuable property and revenue into state coffers. For example, Hilton Head, one of the most profitable resort areas in the Sea Islands, generates billions of dollars in revenue annually alone (US Travel Association, 2012). The value of land adjacent to Hilton Head’s resorts escalated at astronomical rates as a result. For example, land once valued at a mere \$100 per acre, prior to the construction of Hilton Head resorts in 1956, escalated to \$200,000 per acre within a few decades (Howe, McMahon, & Propst, 1997). Land speculation of the sort that occurred in Hilton Head created innumerable challenges for Gullah Geechee land tenure regimes (CHPP, 2013; Dyer, Bailey, & van Tran, 2009).

Although land is viewed as an asset, heir property often became an incomprehensible liability. For instance, heirs assuming responsibility for the property are often unable to obtain loans, mortgages, or public funds to improve homes or land because they lack clear title (CHPP, 2013). Should an heir desire to obtain clear title, the process is often daunting, as all heirs, including absent or disinterested familial, must relinquish their shares of property ownership. As alluded to earlier, obtaining clear title is often impossible. For instance, a recent attempt in Beaufort County required the agreement of approximately

180 heirs¹ to clear title (Glanton, 2006). Multiple-owner property regimes are the primary manner in which hundreds of Gullah Geechee are dispossessed of land annually through auctions for delinquent taxes and questionable sales (Glanton, 2006). Sales made without disclosing to all property owners are particularly troublesome with heir property since any heir can sell his or her percentage of ownership to an individual or corporation and force the sale of the entire property. In fact, nearly fourteen million acres of South Carolina's heir property has been lost since the Civil War. Presently, South Carolina has approximately one million acres of heir property with Beaufort County accounting for a mere 3,304 acres of the total (CHPP, 2013).

Who I Am: Researcher and Storyteller

Each morning I began with exercise, coffee and a generous spraying of insect repellent, in spite of its potentially cancerous effects, in my site's tropical setting. Eager to remain in sync with the tide's rhythm, I'd rush to the field with just coffee in hand. My host however believed that everyone should start the day with a hearty breakfast. She often waited patiently with meal in hand, poised to intercept. "I'm headed to the lagoon", I'd protest. "This is hot 'yo pot" she responded "a meal on the go". Resolutely silenced, I set off with coffee and meal in hand. At the site while settling into my beach chair, adjusting my hat and securing the vital water nearby, I noted patterns emerging. One phenomenon I found particularly interesting. Every time I appeared on the beach, people would quickly snap my photo. While enjoying a scrumptious "hot 'yo pot" meal of shrimp and grits, this particular day was no exception. The beachgoers never acknowledged nor requested permission, but rather pretended to snap scenic shots in my general direction. The incognito photography occurred several times before I noticed the lens' inevitable aim directly at me. "Why are people taking my picture", I wondered? Musing from the photographer's angle, however, I constructed an imaginary of difference. My shoulder length dreadlocks, adorned with cowrie shells and a straw hat transformed me, the only person of African descent on the beach, into "native". Mute, I became Gullah.

The culture of silence is a powerful means of producing different types of visibility. Who I believed myself to be, was not be the same identity imposed by others. My silence simultaneously became a tool of power and a cloak of banishment. As noted by Henry Louis Gates (2008), Zora Neale Hurston trained as an anthropologist under Franz Boas at Barnard College. Her seminal work included seven novels that were published between 1921 and 1951. The eighth novel, *Mules and Men*, was published posthumously in 1991. Although Hurston was a phenomenal researcher and storyteller, her scholarly contributions remained relatively invisible for three decades. Hurston's power was cloaked within the realm of banishment until resuscitated by Alice Walker many years later (Gates, 2008). She was a pioneer who chose to use anthropological approaches inconsistent with conventional methods, even though her techniques remained within the scope of Boas teachings. Self-identified as a storyteller first, and an anthropologist second, Hurston conducted ethnography in African American communities in Eatonville Florida, with the

¹ Recent attempt to clear title for 20-acre property in Warsaw Island, Beaufort County with 180 heirs recorded on the deed.

intent of revealing “a sense of black people as complete, complex, undiminished human beings” (Hurstun, 2008). Rather than falling prey to static representations essentializing blackness as though natural and normative behavior, Hurstun adopted an alternative approach that captured human nuances beyond the sociological or political sphere (Finney, 2014; Gates, 2008).

Hurstun strove diligently to serve as a witness, shedding the conventional canons of anthropology in relation to race, class, and gender, to reveal a people as they viewed themselves. In other words, Hurstun had no intention of being a “voyeur” as Deloria (1998) argues, extracting data on the periphery as an “objective” observer adequately distanced from her “subjects”. Her methodological approach was one of full immersion in a variety of social events such as meals, baptisms, vodoun rituals and dances with the people she was investigating (Hurstun, 2008). As a participant, regardless of whether she actively participated or not, Hurstun was keenly aware of how her presence changed the dynamics of situation she was witnessing. She also understood that rigid adherence to conventional ethnographic frameworks, such as participatory observations from a distance, could result in data that merely supported anthropological canons rather than allowing for undefined occurrences. Using this exploratory, open-ended approach, Hurstun discovered three key findings relevant to my research of the Gullah Geechee while researching African American communities. One, community members’ actions were guided by an anti-materialist ideology to achieve economic wellbeing; two, community members refused to succumb to a culture of poverty and; three, silence was one of the most powerful tools among the African American community she was investigating (Hurstun, 2008).

Embracing Hurstun’s methodology, particularly her role of witnessing, I embarked on my investigation of Gullah Geechee livelihood strategies and self-determination pursuits in South Carolina, determined to be a witness rather than miner of indigenous knowledge. In assuming my role as a witness, the cultural and historical realities of the American South actively produced who I became as researcher. In other words, as witness my goal was not to be solely guided by dominant ideologies on race, identity and wealth, but rather as an active participant analyze the realities unfolding on the ground as they occurred. My host, an insider, meaning a life-long resident and highly respected community member, also expected my full participation in cultural practices, rather than merely extracting data as an illusory objective outsider. Ironically, tourists of European descent similarly expected my full immersion in the spatial realities of the South’s plantation culture.

In *Black Face, White Mask* Fanon (2008) notes the contradictions of who one is and who one thinks she or he may be. Although initially succumbing to conventional ethnography methods by attempting to distance myself, my host embraced me as a southern child returning home, while tourists viewed me as exotic. Regardless of who I was or thought I may be, my identity produced spatially by historical social formations provided access to geographies and social networks critical to my research. Disguised in silence, business continued as usual as I fished and crabbed along side Gullah Geechee feeling the satisfaction of living off the land. Silence also enabled me to experience exoticism and recognize indigeneity’s exponential value to South Carolina’s tourist industry. Given the honorary title of Gullah Geechee in training by my host, as a form of reciprocity I was

expected to assist in preserving the cultural traditions and fishing practices still in use on St. Helena Island. In recognition of my title and role, I was bestowed the basket name of Crab Lady by a community leader who was also one of my key informants. Basket names are part of the Yoruba naming tradition in West Africa (Awolalu, 1996; Thompson, 1983; Turner, 1949). Community elders bestow basket names to community members to symbolize their purpose in the community (Turner, 1949). The naming tradition, help my transition from and purely outsider Yankee scholar to Crab Lady, a researcher beginning to achieve a modicum of trust within the community.

As I quickly discovered, my theoretical studies insufficiently prepared me for the realities on ground. Countless snakes, unimaginable blackness and a distinctive Southern culture, which were absent from the literature studied, were phenomena impossible to ignore once in the field. Informants warned that the water moccasin was the main snake requiring acute alertness in the area. "You'll know it by its musty odor," they calmly cautioned. Adapting to the absolute blackness that descended every evening was easily remedied with the aid of a powerful flashlight that I learned to keep with me at all times. Adapting to Southern culture however was an entirely different challenge. I still marvel at an incident that occurred at the Beaufort Visitor's Center in which a white clerk suddenly recoiled from the counter, as I approached, as though repelled by my presence. Even though another clerk quickly replaced her, she too apparently identified me as "other", since I was provided a completely different set of brochures, than those provided white patrons.

Though the postbellum plantation industry represents more than remnants of an antebellum era, I soon discovered that anyone from someplace other than the South is immediately labeled Yankee. In the South, particularly South Carolina, the culture was a direct manifestation of the South's tenacious hold on a colonial past of plantation aristocracies and racial hierarchies (Du Bois, 1999). South Carolina was the first state to declare its secession from the Union in 1860. The first shots of the Confederacy during Civil War occurred in 1861 in Charleston, South Carolina (Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). South Carolina's military history remains a significant determinant of contemporary realities. As I noted, in South Carolina, for example, northerners are still frequently referred to as Yankees. Despite liminal realities situating me in a culture of a distant past, I remained acutely cognizant that contemporary ideologies were constituted by historical beliefs and practices as well as current events (Hall, 1996). Yet, Southern contemporary beliefs were vastly different from other culturally defined geographies. Undeniably, my experience at the visitor center was an unfortunate event that I could write about extensively, expounding on racial prejudices and discrimination in the South from historical accounts to contemporary times. Yet, so many brilliant scholars have already contributed to that particular body of literature (Chandler, Mills, Peterkin, & McCollough, 2008; Du Bois, 1999; Wood, 1974).

Another unexpected challenge I encountered was transportation. Initially hoping a bicycle or walking would suffice as primary modes of transportation; I soon discovered the impracticability of such an approach. Using public transportation was another mode envisioned, especially since it is prominently featured on most tourist publications. However, I soon discovered that public transportation was also impractical. Public

transportation in St. Helena Island is dedicated to predawn and dusk commutes to the metropolitan areas of Savannah and Charleston or barrier islands with substantial resort development such as Hilton Head. Thus, it became necessary for me to secure a vehicle to traverse the island's sixty four square miles in addition to travelling to regulatory and archival data sites located up to 100 miles away.

I began in the Fall of 2010 visiting St. Helena Island to locate a site to reside while conducting research the upcoming summer. My first exploration site was the Penn Center, a historical Gullah Geechee Cultural institution, where I spoke to people about the various sites in the area while introducing myself as a UC Berkeley researcher. I also explored the numerous facilities on the campus given its historical significance of having the responsibility of educating newly freed slaves after the Civil War. I also wandered in one of the local businesses. Amazingly the owner became intrigued by my research examining livelihoods within the context of fisheries in the St. Helena Island area and eagerly offered assistance. The serendipitous encounter proved to be a significant asset for my research in two fundamental ways. One, access within the community is only possible with the support and sponsorship of a highly respected community member. Admittedly, numerous research projects are conducted without fulfilling this particular criterion, but I was interested in analyzing the effects of intentional community inclusivity (Hurstons, 2008; Scolte, 1972). Two, with only a limited knowledge of the people, place and history gained from secondary data on historical accounts of St. Helena Island and theories on race, identity and indigeneity, partnering with someone with firsthand (primary data) knowledge was critical. The business owner provided both in addition to becoming one of my most vital key informants. As a lifelong member of the community, her fishers, fishing sites and regulators knowledge plus providing introductions, significantly expedited my acceptance and consequently access to a wealth of resources.

As a researcher, coming into a community without any ties to the community or to the state as a native Californian representing UC Berkeley a preeminent research institution, I stimulated numerous questions regarding my intent. Once again, my sponsor, the unpaid business owner was instrumental in alleviating suspicions and anxieties about my research. In many instances all that was necessary to convince community members to speak with me was simply the mention of her name. The business owner, similar to other key informants, seemed eager to have an account of who they were based on insights from community members they identified rather than secondary sources or individuals they deemed inappropriate. Being present in the community for three years attending events, talking with community members and visiting popular sites also aided in me gaining access to an expanded network of people, places and activities. In prominently positioning myself in the community, I strove to witness their own reflections of traditional practices and customs stemming from norms and values fundamental to Gullah Geechee beingness (Hurstons, 2008). Observing the minutest object, behavior and gestures, my goal was to recognize significances in everyday practices of fishing, meal preparation, religion to reveal "a rich, hidden content" incomprehensible to individuals unfamiliar with Gullah Geechee traditions and practices (Griaule, 1970; Hurstons, 2008). In so doing, I adopted Zora Neale Hurstons and Robert Scolte (1972) approach of actively participating in community social functions and events. Further, over the course of three years, I conducted ethnographic

work in the Ashepoo, Combahee Edisto (ACE) basin in South Carolina, guided by the philosophy that research should be driven by the desires for indigenous peoples autonomy and cultural wellbeing (TallBear, 2013).

Primarily focusing on St. Helena Island, I conducted semi-structured interviews, participant observations and oral histories at fishing spots within a fifteen-mile radius of St. Helena Island. Eddings Point and Station Creek boat landings, Hunting Island State Park, Broad River Pier and Beaufort's Downtown Marina were the primary sites visited to conduct participant observations and identify potential participants. Using the snowball method, I targeted other potential informants including shrimpers, crabbers, cane polers and oystermen to inquire about livelihood strategies within the context of fisheries. Elaborating on the anthropocentric effects on traditional practices was one of the guiding questions. Also choosing to coordinate site visits with group activities and community events such as exercise and health fairs, I visited senior centers, churches, community centers, schools and colleges approximately three times per week. The majority of the days designated for community organizations were spent at the Penn Center, a preeminent historical institution and St. Helena Island Elementary School, a space in which community members participated in social and political events. As noted previously, the Penn Center was one of the first institutions in the country established to educate and train newly freed slaves after the Civil War. It still remains an important resource within the community as the custodian of historical Gullah Geechee documents and artifacts. It also serves as a vital space of community events such as workshops on educating residents on how to keep their property.

I also met with several representatives at South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), University of South Carolina's Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Sea Grant program, who were responsible for freshwater and marine resource management, particularly representatives managing projects federally funded to assist struggling shrimpers and fishers, regarding policy adoption, monitoring and enforcement. Due to the critical linkages between land use and coastal resource management I also met with Beaufort County councilmembers. Another primary stakeholder interviewed was property owners along the shoreline. Property owners were generally recreational homeowners of European descent that worked closely with regulatory agencies in an unofficial capacity as resources monitor and enforcer. Although enforcement was conducted through an informal process it remained integral to SCDNR official structure of regulation and governance as I discovered while residing on the waterfront.

Numerous vacant vacation homes blanket St. Helena Island's shoreline. Miraculously, I was granted the privilege of living in one for a few months during my fieldwork. Intimate access to privatized space presented a rare opportunity to conduct participant observations and interviews from the position of landowner, which was the identity presumed by waterfront residents. The Gullah Geechee believed that ownership of waterfront property granted community access to the shoreline (Guthrie, 1996). The dominant Eurocentric definitions of wealth and property were vastly different from the indigenous ideologies of the Gullah Geechee, however (Ng'weno, 2007; Ebron, 2002). Functioning from beliefs and practices

co-produced in the Americas in the 17th century, the Gullah Geechee's cultural values were supplanted by the dominant culture, as a result of European immigrants outnumbering the indigenous population (Campbell, 2002; Jones-Jackson, 1987). Although, indigenous communities and Europeans both value waterfront property, it serves as the epitome of social capital for the latter, denoting a prosperous immigrant, capable of vacationing abroad or to a semblance of exotic destinations such as the tropical barrier islands.

The influx of a new majority enabled the presumption of access or lack of access to shoreline properties based on racial hierarchies and social economic status (Agrawal, 2005; Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Thus, to protect privatized space of immigrant recreational homeowners, symbolized by fences barring shoreline access, two critical components were necessary—monitoring and enforcement (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Property owners determined who had shoreline access and also served as the enforcers of their decision. Officially, SCDNR regulated access. In so doing, the regulatory agency relied heavily on auxiliary units for monitoring and enforcement, such as the sheriff department and property owners, in which more reliance was placed on the property owners. Monitoring was also accomplished primarily through an informal governance system whereby owners physically occupying the property were charged with not only protecting personal privatized space but also the vacant spaces of absentee property owners.

The Gullah Geechee, on the other hand, relied on communal access systems in which access to the shoreline was viewed as an entitlement, in so far as a member of the indigenous community was the property owner (Creel, 1988; Guthrie, 1996; Sumpter, 2010). As a result of dichotomous ideologies of ownership three fundamental polycentric authority categories were produced authorizing access to privatized space—property owners, governmental agencies and indigenous community (Ostrom, 2010). Electing to negotiate with property owners and agency representatives in some cases or ignoring prohibitive regulations in others, the Gullah Geechee's invoking of usufruct rights² often created severe tensions between legally recognized property owners and indigenous communities (Agrawal, 2008; Ostrom, 2010). The Gullah Geechee allow their way of life or habitus to determine actions more than formal rules (Bourdieu, 1990).

The notion of private property is especially contentious between the Gullah Geechee, resort developers and vacation homeowners, given that some recreational communities have residential vacancy rates as high as eighty-two percent (Beaufort County 2012). For the nearly 5,000 Gullah Geechee remaining in St. Helena Island the loss of access, to fences protecting peopleless spaces along the waterfront, also represents a loss of identity (Guthrie, 1996; Sumpter, 2010). Although I chose another mode of transportation to conduct my research, daily observations revealed that the Gullah Geechee are primarily pedestrians and boaters. Staying within a one-mile radius of their community is not uncommon as a result. Participating in informal ride sharing is another mode the Gullah Geechee use. As I frequently witnessed, the Gullah Geechee stand on the side of the road or in front of their houses and wait for any passing vehicle to stop and provide a ride. Few vehicles stopped along the busy main roads to give casual commuters rides however. The

² The right to use resources.

unreliability of casual commutes is perhaps another reason many Gullah Geechee stay within a one-mile radius of their home.

Although confined within a small radius, community members still had access to resources. For example, Gullah Geechee lacking transportation, particularly elderly community members rely on community members possessing transportation to deliver groceries or the latest harvest from the land and sea. In addition to other modes of transportation mentioned, employers also play a significant role. Maintaining a practice that originated after the Civil War, employers regularly provide transportation to and from work sites. A few decades ago, buses, trucks and personal cars cruised neighborhoods picking up oyster shuckers, shrimp headers and crab pickers to work at local plants every morning. Local workers were also returned home at the end of the day. Due to the closure of the majority of seafood businesses in St. Helena Island area, rides to plants are no longer necessary. Employers, nevertheless continue to transport local workers to a few job sites that remain such as shrimp boats and farmland.

Portraying the Gullah Geechee, as being confined within a one-mile radius may give the impression that their worldview is limited, however it is important to note that the way they view the world is constituted through knowledge exchanges that extend far beyond the spatial boundaries of the island. Further the banality of transport in bateau and other flat bottom boats render traditional modes of transportation invisible to tourists and recreational homeowners in spite of use by Gullah Geechee with shoreline access. The Gullah Geechee's cultural traditions and practices are part of the charm and exoticism of St. Helena Island that tourists and recreational homeowners are able to choose whether or not to experience. These modes of transportation and limited mobility illustrate another reason shoreline access is essential to the indigenous community's way of life. However dwindling shoreline access is one of the primary dilemmas and concern of the Gullah Geechee, caused by big development.

Gullah Geechee livelihood strategies and self-determination pursuits, although invisible to many, are fundamental tactics for not succumbing to a culture of poverty. The Gullah Geechee adamantly reject poverty frameworks in which blackness is generally defined. The Gullah Geechee achieved security through obscurity in wielding relational power multi-directionally (Spivak, 1999). Within the context of Hall's articulation framework the Gullah Geechee forge and deconstruct alliances as the situation dictates. As exotic native they gain access to land to "perform" traditional practices (Hall, 1996). As native cultural expert, they persist in cultural traditions and practices integral to their identity, choosing silence or not. "do't tell him nothing. Nobody don't have to know where us gets our pleasure from" an excerpt from one of Zora Neale Hurston's novels, eloquently illustrates the power of the seemingly powerless. Using their own authority to change gendered roles to ones of comrades in struggles of resistance and producers of civilization as modern subjects, the Gullah Geechee transformed "deformed equality" into a unifying force in which resource abundance is fundamental (Davis, 1995; Scott, 2004).

Who can separate his faith from his actions, or his beliefs from his occupation? Your daily life is your temple and religion—Kahlil Gibran

My advisor asked, “is your research about fisheries or self-determination?” Although I usually responded, I investigate Gullah Geechee fishing practices, during this occasion I answered without hesitating, that my research analyzes indigenous livelihoods strategies and self-determination pursuits, within the context of fisheries. I began as a Yankee scholar attempting to achieve scientific objectivity. Immersed in the sounds and smells of the St. Helena and in sync with the ebb and flow of the tides, I became a witness to a people who possessed an ontology based on abundance rather than scarcity. Therefore, my journey begins as a witness to the complexities of the Gullah Geechee outside the dominant black/white racial binary typically critiqued in the United States (Reardon & TallBear, 2012). As noted previously, in this dissertation I illustrate the effects of identity politics on the Gullah Geechee’s culture-based sovereignty in their indigenous articulation in the Americas. Similar to the beliefs of some members of the Cherokee Nation who challenge the prevailing racial ideologies that ask them to choose one racial or ethnic identity, Gullah Geechee sovereignty is not based solely on race, but rather on “their shared historical experiences and their political status” (Sturm, 2002). Gullah Geechee challenge dichotomous labeling as black or indigenous. Constituted by the historical and contemporary land- and seascapes of St. Helena Island, the Gullah Geechee emerged as a people who are racially black and cultural indigenous (Anderson, 2007).

In the next chapter on livelihoods, chapter two, I analyze how Gullah Geechee indigenous articulation is vastly different from the dominant narrative on indigeneity, race and more importantly who they are as a people. In so doing I illustrate how identity and alliances constitutes a very different articulation of indigeneity in relation to the Sea Islands, a very specific geographical space and a historically significant space that enable sovereignty to exists unrecognized as a legal entity. In chapter three on governance, I delve deeper into the construction of community sanctioned culture-based sovereignty rather than de jure sovereignty as derived through Gullah Geechee identity. I illustrate how the Gullah Geechee use relational power and situational alliances to support their cultural based sovereignty assertion than enables access to coastal resources and abundance. In chapter four, the livelihoods chapter, I show how the Gullah Geechee’s traditional practices persist in ways often unrecognized or acknowledged by individuals outside of the community who are unfamiliar with the traditions and languages of the Gullah Geechee (Griaule, 1970). In the livelihoods chapter I also provide a critique of the effects of shifting cultural values and beliefs that occurs as more tourists and recreational homeowners of Europeans descent settle in St. Helena Island. The final chapter, chapter five I provide a brief summary of the key findings of my research on self-representations of indigeneity, livelihood and self-determination pursuits. I also discuss the implications of my positioning as a “witness” to Gullah Geechee indigenous articulation in the Americas as a researcher “speaking with, not for” indigenous communities (TallBear, 2013).

Indigeneity: Land is the Language

Oyster shells blanket the land. Crunched underfoot on sandy roads. Beaming from tabby homes dotting marshlands. Glistening at low tide in countless columns erected from high tide's deposits. And atop makeshift pits wherever folks gather, permeating the landscape with an enticing aroma. Be it flounder, clam, crab, shrimp or oyster, island time is harvest time, a time always in sync with the tides.

Introduction

Rising in part from the legacies of the American South, the Gullah Geechee secured land abandoned after the civil war legally and through community sanctions. Gullah Geechee are descendants of enslaved West Africans who have articulated cultural traditions of their ancestors with the land- and seascapes of the Sea Islands. The ecological similarities of Sierra Leone's coastal region facilitated the importation of African traditions into what became South Carolina, thus resulting in land-based cultural practices that can be defined in an unexpected way as indigenous (Reardon & TallBear, 2012). During slavery, peoples from West Africa's rice coast were specifically targeted for their agricultural and fishing knowledge that was critical to South Carolina's exponential economic growth (Creel, 1998; Cecelski, 2001). Transitioning from a Western anthropocentric worldview to an African ethical framework of human and nonhuman reciprocity and cooperation, in this chapter I illustrate the power dynamics of structures of authority producing identity and indigeneity within small-scale fisheries managed as common pool resources (CPR) in the Sea Islands. In so doing, I demonstrate how Gullah Geechee indigeneity is constituted by cultural practices linked to the land. I also show the effects of tourism and divergent worldviews on self-determination pursuits and how the performative is part of the identity politics of the Gullah Geechee as they articulate themselves as indigenous, but in a surprising way, in the Americas (Ebron, 2002).

"We have no concept of homelessness" one Gullah Geechee fisher stated, "food is everywhere...in the creek, in the marsh, in the sea... I can build something back there in the woods and never be hungry" a reality I frequently witnessed as illustrated in the opening observation. Several informants made similar statements, adamantly rejecting notions of poverty, during my fieldwork in the Sea Islands. Does that mean the Gullah Geechee are not poor? Not necessarily. However, the Gullah Geechee never mentioned poverty during interviews or participant observations. Engaging both livelihoods and poverty frameworks, I was convinced by the dominant literature to adopt a poverty framework for my analyses which focused on improving standards of living through a cash economy (Kodras, 2008). However, after collecting empirical data, I decided that the livelihood framework was more relevant, particularly since the Gullah Geechee adamantly reject notions of poverty. Comprehending how the Gullah Geechee represent themselves became a critical component in my analysis, particularly after I had for a while inappropriately framed their identity within a poverty framework. Additional literature reviews revealed pertinent

economies for the Gullah Geechee based on communal sharing, bartering and exchange (Béné, Steel, Luadia, & Gordon, 2009). This literature bolstered my decision to use a livelihoods framework. The concept of poverty failed to illuminate the complexities of Gullah Geechee lives and identity. The revised framing enabled a more accurate critique of the Gullah Geechee's relationship with the sea and landscapes of the island in their pursuit for self-determination—their particular way of being in a particular place—St. Helena Island. The first conversations I had with the Gullah Geechee were about land. Contrary to marketing ploys touted by the tourist industry, harvesting the land and sea's bounty is not viewed as sport or recreation by the Gullah Geechee, but rather as an integral part of their identity. The Gullah Geechee spoke passionately about losing access to coastal areas used for traditional practices through the steady loss of heir property to recreational homeowners, developers and government. They emphasized how tourists related to the land- and seascapes in vastly different ways from themselves. They also spoke of a beingness of cultivation, harvest, inheritance and loss in relation to the land. Over the course of my field-based ethnography, I gradually realized that land was the language of the Gullah Geechee, for it fundamentally constituted them as a people who emerged in an intimate relation with the Sea Islands.

The Sea Islands served as an ideal site for investigating the emergence of a distinct indigenous identity due to its remarkable retention of traditional fishing practices—practices that I argue evidence distinct Gullah Geechee linkages to the land. As descendants from Africa they brought particular technologies such as cast netting, gigging, line dipping and collective harvesting to the Americas (Opala, 1987; Creel, 1998; Jones-Jackson, 1987). However, in attempting to continue traditional practices in a different landscape but that featured ecological similarities to their historic homelands in Sierra Leone, the Gullah Geechee encountered other indigenous people and their practices. It was through this encounter between Africans of the diaspora and Native Americans, and the nonhuman inhabitants of this particular landscape, that traditional fishing practices co-mingled to articulate new traditional practices still in use on the Sea Islands. The Gullah Geechee's relationship with the land constitutes their indigenous identity and sovereignty. However, it is important to note that their sovereignty is culturally based and not biological. Similar to other indigenous people, for example Native Americans, the Gullah Geechee cannot be adequately understood solely within prevailing U.S. analyses of race (Ben-zvi, 2007; Reardon & TallBear, 2012). Instead, to fully grasp the uniqueness of their identity, including their articulation of themselves as indigenous, it is important to understand distinctive Gullah Geechee linkages to and practices in a particular place.

Although, indigeneity is generally grounded in traditional or historical land-based claims of origin, what I am arguing is somewhat different from conventional indigeneity analyses. The Gullah Geechee disrupts the dichotomy of “having been here forever” or “colonial histories of displacement” indigeneity and diasporic identity (Clifford, 2001; Yeh, 2007). They are simultaneously a diasporic African people who imported indigenous practices and applied them in an intimate material relation to a particular North American place. *De jure* sovereignty is not the reality, but rather *de facto* assertions of belonging to the land (Ng'weno, 2007). The present day Gullah Geechee identity is not static. Rather, as it has historically, it constantly changes in response to human and nonhuman encounters

including the technological, co-constituting the landscape as it does. The Gullah Geechee's ethnogenesis therefore represents a cultural amalgam of their African past and their emergence as a new people in the Americas (Bilby, 2005). As indigenous peoples they possess histories of belonging, resisting and dispossession. Yet, the Gullah Geechee's sovereignty is not based on traditional claims through treaties or a myriad of additional legal constructs, as are most indigenous claims. Rather, Gullah Geechee sovereignty is culturally based. In lieu of a biological hybridization inheritance analysis, my critique uses a geographical and social type of hybridity. In other words, my hypothesis tests the theory that the Gullah Geechee's identity-based sovereignty is constituted culturally and not biologically. In framing indigeneity as a dialectic, whereby indigeneity is linked to the land and cultural practices, my intent is in challenging the dominant assumption on what constitutes indigenous identity (Ng'weno, 2007; Sturm, 2002; TallBear, 2013).

Providing an in depth racial analysis of blackness or indigeneity is beyond the scope of this dissertation. My goal is to provide a concise synopsis of key theoretical frameworks, essential for illustrating the complexities of Gullah Geechee indigenous articulation in the Americas. Concretely delineating sovereignty poses yet another conundrum as scholars also continue questioning the appropriateness of autochthonous as the primary criterion, since within the context of indigenous identity autochthonous refers to firstness or people who have been in a particular territory forever (Clifford, 2007). Debates on what constitutes indigeneity, blackness or whiteness will continue for the foreseeable future. In this chapter I begin with an overview of conventional theoretical framings of indigeneity and sovereignty. I then proceed to elaborate on the complexities of Gullah Geechee indigenous articulation in the Americas. Expanding on notions of sovereignty, I illustrate how indigenous identity is produced and how sovereignty is defined beyond secession to reflect the co-constitution of emerging people in a particular place. In this chapter, I further demonstrate how Gullah Geechee identity is produced in relation to others through shifting alignments of power using Stuart Hall's relational authority framework. Due to the strategic advancement of particular theories within the dominant discourse, I present an overview of the prevailing racial ideologies that constitutes indigeneity and blackness. I will also show how theories on race shape consciousness to situate who and what the Gullah Geechee are not against ideologies of who and what they should be (Fanon, 2008).

Identity and Indigeneity

For all who identify as native, tribal, or indigenous, a feeling of connectedness to a homeland and to kin, a feeling of grounded peoplehood, is basic—James Clifford

Emily Yeh (2007) notes land-based autochthonous indigeneity consists of inhabiting an ancestral homeland, possessing a distinctive language and culture and being colonized by outsiders. Thus, indigenous identity, the basis of sovereignty, is often essentialized through a biological and cultural inheritance binary. Diasporic is generally defined as the movement of indigenous peoples from their original homeland. According to conventional ideologies, sovereignty is constituted through indigenous traditional or historical territorial claims based on notions of autochthony or firstness. 18th century treaties established the legal and political relationship between the federal government and Indian tribes. For example, in accordance with Commerce Clause, Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution,

the government has the authority to “regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with Indian tribes”. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is the agency designated to administer policies related to commerce and the “guardianship” of federally recognized tribes. Federal law thus delineates which tribes are eligible for resources such as land, food, education and medical assistance. In so doing, the legal-political relationship between “guardian and ward” is officially institutionalized. On the other hand, a number of tribes that are unrecognized by the federal government elect to demonstrate their sovereignty through place-making within the context of roots and routes that acknowledge movements in and out of particular territories or space (Clifford, 2007). In other words, roots and routes extend beyond conventional notions of legal territories in order to recognize “patterns of belonging that accentuate a sovereignty without secession, involving models of relative yet relational autonomy in non-coercive contexts” (Clifford, 2007).

Rootedness, the imaginary construct of sovereignty, connotes a continuous physical presence geographically (Glissant, 2010). Defined as such local and trans-local realities of migration and displacement are often rendered invisible as a result of *de jure* sovereignty’s rigidity based on notions of rootedness. Roots *extended through* routes, on the other hand, enables the transplanting of traditional practices in a new space. For example, continued participation in cultural heritage days, pow wow rituals, basket weaving, acorn harvesting and cast net fishing in conjunction with new practices resulting from cash-based economies and new technologies, maintains an individual’s linkages to cultural traditions and practices integral to indigenous identity. In other words, using Clifford’s pragmatic framework, place-making allows for understandings that “concrete ties to ancestral places have not been severed”. As a result, *de facto* sovereignty is sustained through traditions and cultural practices in spite of dispossessions of land, language and religion.

Building on Yeh and Clifford’s indigeneity frameworks, Anderson (2009) argues that autochthonous populations are peoples whom are long-standing occupants of a territory and bearers of non-Western languages and cultural traditions. He further notes that autochthonous groups are the “products of the situation of colonial domination, sharing a more or less common socioeconomic situation and possessing very rich cultural structures”. Although Anderson’s definition is similar to Yeh and Clifford’s, he has one notable exception. Anderson substitutes *long-standing* for *original* in defining the occupancy of a territory criterion. Framed in this manner scholars are challenging the presumption that autochthonous equates to sovereignty. Though seemingly a minor change in semantics, it creates a plethora of interpretations as to who is or is not indigenous. A more imposing question within the chaotic milieu is, who decides? Hence, acknowledging identity-based sovereignty is a tenuous proposition, especially since power, as is also true of identity, is as fluid as the tides, ebbing and flowing as a particular situation dictates.

*do’t tell him nothing. Nobody don’t have to know where us gets our pleasure from—*Zora Neal
Hurston novel

Although Stuart Hall and Donna Haraway (1996; 1988) argue that people are co-constituted through spatial negotiations and interactions, who one is, is also produced

through the imaginary. Fanon (2008) in *Black Face, White Mask*, illustrates the contradictions of who one is and who one thinks she or he may be as a result of consciousness. Scholars further note that the dominant narrative and imagery are instrumental in constituting consciousness that legitimize behavior and material production (Ong, 2010; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). In other words, an individual's consciousness is produced by ideologies of the ruling class in order to control their behavior by sanctioning power. However due to power's relational attributes, Clifford aptly argues "not even the most powerful nation can impose absolute authority over its economy, frontier and cultural symbols". In analyzing identity, I use Donald Moore's (2005) triad in motion analytic to locate power. Moore's triad is grounded in Foucault's triangular theory of a single rationality of power. Foucault (1995) posits power is constituted through sovereignty, discipline³ and governance over a particular population. However, contrary to Foucault's theory in which sovereignty is defined as a central authority controlling a population through laws, Moore's triad analytic emphasizes Gramsci's relational authority theory, that is constituted through shifting alignments of power. Hall (1996; 411-440) aptly illustrates the intent of divergent and convergent forces within relational authority regimes.

Having thus established the groundwork of a dynamic historical analytic framework, Gramsci turns to the analysis of the movements of historical forces – the 'relations of force' – which constitute the actual terrain of political and social struggle and development. Here he introduces the critical notion that what we are looking for is not the absolute victory of this side over that, nor the total incorporation of one set of forces into another. Rather, the analysis is a relational matter – that is, a question to be resolved relationally, using the idea of 'unstable balance' or 'the continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria'. The critical question is the 'relations of forces favourable or unfavourable to this or that tendency'. This emphasis on 'relations' and unstable balances reminds us that social forces which lose out in any particular historical period do not thereby disappear from the terrain of struggle; nor is struggle in such circumstances suspended.

Continuing with Hall's (1996: 131-150) theoretical framing, I use his articulation theory to illustrate the Gullah Geechee's articulation in the Americas. Hall describes articulation by using the analogy of a cab and trailer that are not necessarily connected to each other unless warranted in a specific instance. Alignments are formed when needed, but they can also disconnect when a particular alignment is no longer relevant. Articulation thus represents the fluidity of identity within a historical and spatial context in relation to societal formations. As Hall (1996: 411-440) further notes, "societies are necessarily complexly structured totalities, with different levels of articulation (the economic, the political, the ideological instances) in different combinations; each combination giving rise to a different configuration of social forces". In addition to the Gullah Geechee's intimate relationship with South Carolina's land- and seascapes, the fluidity of their identity is also integral to their indigeneity and sovereignty. Hence, within the triad of motion analytic, the

³ Discipline as defined by Foucault is a mechanism of power that regulates the behavior of individuals in the social body. Regulating spatial organization, temporal attributes and people's activity and behaviors is how this is accomplished.

Gullah Geechee engage in contingent constellations of power to negotiate with state agencies for usufruct⁴ rights and resources.

The triad's shifting alignments enables a fluidity of who one is, at a particular time, through the performative, one of their power constellations (Ebron, 2002; Deloria P., 1998). That is, the performative enables a particular identity to be interpellated—a calling forth as required. The complexity of Gullah Geechee identity is not apparent to most, particularly when they employ strategic tactics such as the performative to gain access to land. The performative is manifested through the trickster. Many African and Native American myths feature a trickster. West African Mende tribes tell stories of the Eshu, a trickster who serves as the messenger between the physical and spiritual worlds. Eshu is also associated with change and quarrels (Gates, 2014). In many African stories the trickster is typically a god, an animal, or a human. Often belittled as nothing more than children's stories, African myths with tricksters as the central figure have more than entertainment value. Elders within the community use stories to instruct kinship on beliefs and expected behaviors.

Similar to the Cherokee and Cowessess tribal groups of North America, the Mende of West Africa do not believe that a separation exists between humans, animals, plants, the sky, soil, oceans or fire (Innes, 2013; Opala, 1987; Sturm, 2002). As a close bond between humans and nonhumans is essential to the worldview of indigenous people of the Americas and Africa, behaving contrarily creates discord among kinship networks. Lessons through stories and modeled behavior on codes of conduct from humans and nonhumans are in fact fundamental to the way in which the Mende view the world. As descendants of the Mende tribes, the Gullah Geechee also believe that kinship includes nonhumans. Br'er Rabbit, a trickster in popular Gullah Geechee folktales that originated during slavery, uses his intellect rather than physical force to outmaneuver opponents usually much larger and stronger. For example in the fable Br'er Rabbit and the Tar Baby, after becoming ensnared in the fox's trap, the trickster convinces the fox to toss him in the briar path, a place that supposedly inflicts considerable suffering. The briar patch, however is the rabbit's home enabling his easy escape unscathed after being tossed. Br'er means brother in Gullah. Elders retelling the story of Br'er Rabbit illustrate the kinship ties between the rabbit and the fox and deception is a legitimate strategy in particular situations.

Ralph Ellison and Zora Neal Hurston also illustrate the importance of the trickster character in novels and ethnographies. A passage from Ellison's (1952) *Invisible Man* provides an excellent example of a contemporary adaptation of the trickster in relation to racial hierarchies as a character perceived as a traitor to people of African descent asserts "overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open". These examples aptly illustrate how superficial assessments of a particular situation frequently fail to capture the genuine essence of the matter at hand. Similarities in the value of narratives and worldviews thus aided in the co-mingling of beliefs and traditions of the indigenous people of the Americas with beliefs and practices of the indigenous people transplanted from Africa. The trickster character is also central figure in Native American and First Nation stories. Robert Innes

⁴ The right to use

(2013) explains how the trickster narrative provides guidance to the Cowessess First Nation cultural groups of North America. Many times through negative portrayals, he asserts in addition to illustrating the “contradictions inherent in social life”, the trickster stories “act as societal control by dramatizing community values and behavioral limits”. Innes further notes that trickster stories use frameworks that reinforce the beliefs of overlaps between human and nonhuman kinship networks. In fact, brother rabbit is also prominently featured in Native American trickster narratives, including a similar Br’re Rabbit story told by the Cherokee, titled *The Rabbit and the Tar Wolf* (Mooney, 2001).

Contemporary racialized space normalized through neo-colonial tourism compel the Gullah Geechee to invoke the performative as a means of securing and retaining access to land. In summoning the performative, that is personifying Br’re Rabbit, the trickster character, becomes the normative identity during negotiations with government agencies and recreational property owners (Campbell, 2002). In so doing, the Gullah Geechee symbolized dual identities that are situationally adaptable and which also enable them to transmit unique signals to different people in the same setting. Thus within the performative, the Gullah Geechee are “represented as part of the folklore as an ethnic group with a distinctive traditional culture and identity” (Anderson, 2009). The Gullah Geechee invoke the performative trickster Br’re Rabbit as a means of continuing self-determination pursuits. As such, the performances by the Gullah Geechee are more than a response to power—it is power (Ebron, 2002).

Gullah Geechee sovereignty is reified through opaque power constellations often manifested through the trickster. For instance, invoking the performative is a vital tactic of the Gullah Geechee’s strategy to retain access to land vital for the continuance of traditional practices. Although they may embody a specific identity for a particular occasion, doing so does not necessarily mean that they self-identity with the performative called forth. In other words, the Gullah Geechee could exist, should they so desire, within the simplistic good/bad binary when necessary to manifest a postcolonial imaginary of indigenous identity. Ebron refers to such instances as “culture-making” in which culture becomes a set of goods and practices transformed into a commodity. As a commodity within a capitalistic economic system, the indigenous identity can therefore be leveraged as the situation dictates. As a result, opposing manifestations of exotic, static, primitive and adaptive, evolving, contemporary native representations are brought to life in relation to situational dynamics (Ebron, 2002).

Race is also a defining factor within dominant ideologies of identity. The dominant narrative constructs a worldview of binaries between black and white, rich and poor, and good and bad. Gradations between polarized positions, where most of the world’s population exists, is rendered invisible by silences, that is, the absence of discourse (Hurst, 2008). Class, however, rather than being represented as a separate category, is often characterized as a homogenous equivalent to race (Gilroy, 1993). In other words, racially distinct groups are also presumed to be of the same class. For those groups or identities that fall outside black/white binary, their differing racialization is under-analyzed within the literature on race formation in the United States (Reardon & TallBear, 2012). In the United States’ dominant analyses, race is structured around the black/white

binary that holds these two racial categories to be mutually exclusive (Ben-zvi, 2007; Gilroy, 1993). As Europeans were the colonizers and conquerors of the Americas, whiteness symbolized their belief system; culture and civilizing notions of what others must simulate in order to become human and civilized as opposed to blackness (Glissant, 2010; Hall, 1996: 411-440; Said, 1979). "Othering" thus becomes the product of such oppositional dichotomies that define who an individual is *not* in relation whiteness (Fanon, 2008). Adopting beliefs and practices of the dominant culture through acculturation produce scales of whiteness that are not intended to be equivalent to pure whiteness, however. Although only resembling whiteness is the intent, the hegemony uses racial purity as the symbol for being civilized (Fanon, 2008; Schimmel, 1991; Sturm, 2002; TallBear K. , 2013).

Indigeneity also falls within this type of dichotomous framing: Indian and non-Indian, good Indian and bad Indian, and poor Indian and *poorer* Indian. The latter binary is due to Indianness, as well as blackness, being defined by scales of poverty or more precisely in frameworks privileging economic deprivation (TallBear, 2013; Ng'Weno, 2007). Indians who are not poor are therefore subsumed into the racial category of whiteness because prosperity is an indicator of being civilized and embodying whiteness (Sturm, 2002). Bloodlines or notions of specific biological admixtures, throughout the centuries, remain the primary denominators in constituting racial identities and are instrumental in retaining a consciousness of white superiority. "As a result of the implicit or explicit comparison of Indian and white cultures, Indians were commonly judged good or bad" in relation to their perceived degrees of whiteness, Schimmel (1991) argues. White thus represents goodness, wholesomeness and above all else purity (Gilroy, 1993; Schimmel, 1991; Sturm, 2002).

Therefore in order to be an "authentic" Indian, an individual must also be the appropriate race (TallBear, 2013; Ng'Weno, 2007). Nicholas Thomas (1994) provides insights into the origins of such expectations as he aptly notes "a theory that privileges race as a sovereign hierarchical operator remains within the category of 19th century imperialist thought". Pure Indians, in accordance with the dominant racial barometer, exist below the white category and above the black category. Further, in racializing Indianness, Indian and indigenous become synonymous within the dominant discourse on race categorizing of Indianness (Anderson M. , 1997). Western epistemologies of race, culture and nationalism therefore provide the foundation for dominant race ideologies reliant on racial or cultural essentialism (Wade, 2013; Ng'Weno, 2007; Hall, 1996: 411-440).

As a peoples ostensibly on the brink of extinction, championing the charge to resolve all society's ecological ills within the trope of warrior, princess or ecological Indian the transition, reifies the dominant worldview of what and who is indigenous in addition to serving as a primary example of the essentializing of Indianness (Schimmel, 1991). Further, gross generalizations regarding language, livelihood, class, and consciousness, also aid in producing a simple and easily replicated homogenous indigenous identity. Rendering visible the stoic, spiritual, one-with-nature identity has produced a sainthood type status symbolizing an inferior race whose demise was inevitable, framed within Darwinism logic of survival of the fittest (Hardin, 1968; Said, 1979). In this type of representation, indigenous identity is transformed from uncivilized savage to ecological savior (TallBear,

2014). A preoccupation with materials such as clothing, hair style, pottery and traditional baskets constituting indigenous identity is one the consequences of the new paradigm of retaining an imaginary of now an intellectually superior yet extinct race, alive by commodifying Indianness (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007). For example, in contrast to colonial representations of Indians as uncivilized savages contemporary constructions portray Indians as the *savoir*, eliciting the admiration of many.

As Circe Sturm notes in *Becoming Indian*, a 21st century phenomenon is for individuals who previously self-identified as white and visibly met the phenotype criteria for whiten (Gates, In search of our roots: how 19 extraordinary African Americans reclaimed their past, 2009)ess, to presently self-identify as Indian in order to embrace their suppressed Indianness. The newfound Indianness is generally evidenced anecdotally through warrior and princess narratives used to legitimate alleged—sometimes actual although often also undemonstrable—Indian ancestry (Sturm, 2002). In “becoming Indian,” Indianness is absorbed into whiteness. It is important to note that in transforming to Indianness from whiteness, the privileges of whiteness are unaffected. Admittedly the phenomenon Circe Sturm notes of erroneous claims of Native American ancestry is not unique to people of European descent. Individuals of African descent also frequently make claims regarding “Cherokee princess” lineage. Genetic testing and genealogical research by scholars such Henry Louis Gates (2009) however, prove “scientifically” that such claims are also erroneous and admixtures are typically the result of slavery’s atrocities.

Granted a revisionist version of America’s painful history is a more palpable story for people, including people of African descent, to past down through the generations. Yet absolute data corroborating such claims is absence in most cases. So why is there more tolerance for individuals of African descent making such claims than those of European descent? Race, according to dominant race theories in the United States, revolve solely around the black/white binary. In other words a person is either identified as white, that is an individual of European descent or not white. As other-than-white, people of African descent and Native Americans were subjected to the same racial oppression and thus share histories and memories of injustices based on race. This reality, in part explains why Native Americas generally demonstrate a greater tolerance in allowing such assertions to go unchallenged publically.

It is important to remember that indigenous equates to Indian within dominant ideologies on race. In other words indigeneity symbolizes a distinct racial category. As a result, the racial categories of black or Indian is phenotypically coded, while Indian defined as indigenous relies on narratives of who actually belongs. Except for the conflation of Indianness equating to race, dominant theories on indigenous identity are typically grounded in polarizing notions of race and indigeneity. As a result, even the notion of an Indian with both Indian and African ancestry is difficult to comprehend, particularly since the convergence of two racial categories, connote degeneracy and illegitimacy due to one of the categories being black (Anderson M. , 1997; Ng’weno, 2007; Pollitzer, 2005). Biological determinism maintains the black/white binary in which blackness can only exist in the primitive while whiteness represents the modern (Glissant, 2010; Said, 1979). Blackness, therefore, has the effect of replacing Indianness or whiteness, as the hegemonic civilizing

expectation of acculturation is deemed in racist thought to be beyond the capacity of individuals of African ancestry (Wade, 2013). As a result, people of African descent become subsumed in the universal ideology of black identity (Gilroy, 1993). Thus individuals, known or perceived to have a “drop” of African blood and on the basis of phenotype demarcating gradations of purity, get racialized as simply Black or African American (Anderson M. A., 2009; Wade, 2013; Sturm, 2002; Pollitzer, 2005). Ideological assumptions of presumably physically distinctive blackness as well as indigeneity, as a result, become primarily based on racial difference.

Except for cultures of poverty, blackness represents peoples devoid of culture, history, and national or historical connections (Ng'weno, 2007; Wade, 2013). Blacks with income exceeding poverty levels, remain an anomaly to blackness, as no alternative identity to blackness exists. Black identity is also represented as peoples that lack any intellectual contributions to offer to modernity in addition to, or perhaps as a consequence of, being racially inferior and uncivilized (Wade, 2013). Hence, blackness in relation to whiteness is emblematic of the uncivilized “other”. Acculturation, once again, is the singularly means of becoming civilized in accordance to the European consciousness an ideology. Thus, persistent essentializing representations of blackness and indigeneity through consciousness engender a logic of normative behaviors and physical attributes that are generally disconnected from reality (Finney, 2014).

A black racial identity only partially describes the Gullah Geechee, because they also constitute themselves culturally as indigenous. In defining themselves, the Gullah Geechee “have not given over to this binary model of ethno-racial identification but have instead articulated and practiced the everyday politics” of being black and indigenous (Anderson, 2009). In other words, the Gullah Geechee refuse to choose between identities as merely black or indigenous. Conversely, different articulations of blackness are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, in order to invalidate laws and rights that apply to African Americans, they work to illustrate their profound uniqueness as a people, often employing the trickster to construct a distance between other groups and themselves. I use the fourteenth amendment to demonstrate one tactic used for enhancing their indigenous distinctiveness. The fourteenth amendment grants rights to citizenship. The Gullah Geechee on the other hand assert their distinct peoplehood, regardless of de jure sovereignty and citizenship. It is also important to note that in some instances aligning to normative notions of citizenship afford the Gullah Geechee particular privileges, such as equal opportunity benefits and voting rights for African Americans, achieved as a result of the Civil Rights Movement.

Further, indigenous scholars debunk the notion of static identities stagnated in colonial ideologies, and frame indigeneity contemporarily as an “oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in the struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples” (TallBear, 2013; Sturm, 2002). Further, scholars argue that indigenous identity is far more multidimensional than usually represented as TallBear (2013) argues in regards to ancestry:

'ancestry' is not simply genetic ancestry evidenced in 'populations' but biological, cultural, and political groupings constituted in dynamic, long-standing relationships with each other and with living landscapes that define their people-specific identities and more broadly their indigeneity.

A shift to identity formation frameworks privileging culture over race has not occurred without criticism. The new analytic prioritizing culture ignores the resurgence of racism, racial binaries and racial discrimination critics assert (de la Cadena & Starn, 2007; Ng'weno, 2007). Rather than replacing race, scholars stress the importance of including both culture and race in the new identity analytic (Ng'weno, 2007). Yet, regardless of all of the other elements that together constitute their identity, land remained the most important for Gullah Geechee. Absent ties to the land, they become a people stripped of their distinctive identity.

Entangled Articulations: Race and Bureaucratization

Hegemony is a very particular, historically specific, and temporary moment in the life of a society—Hall

The transatlantic slave trade produced a new ontology of kinship, as a result of severed biological ties, that extended beyond bloodlines to mudlines. The new kinship was derived from heritage constituted via human linkages with a particular land—what I call “mudlines.” Mudlines are land-based heritages, produced through the traditional practices and ideologies, that is, ways of understanding the world, of a specific geography. For example, Glissant (2010) uses the analogy of a boat’s hull as a womb to illustrate the co-constitution of human and nonhuman identities. Conception begins with the merging of cultures through the gestation period, that is the development of a new being. Shared memories, experiences and the creation of a common tongue are birthed, representing the co-constitution of a new identity. Clifford (2007) refers to this type of phenomena as “connectedness-in-dispersion” or rather a reconstitution of elements of each tribe’s culture in new circumstances.

Due to the targeted enslavement of Africans from the Ivory Coast’s rice growing region, the journey across the Atlantic and emerging as a new people in the Americas produced a common language as the enslaved African shared memories of homelands and similar agrarian practices (Carney, 2001; Cecelski, 2001; Opala, 1987; Jones-Jackson, 1987). The transatlantic slave trade severed bloodlines, but common practices and human knowledge used to work both land and sea, practices and knowledges which were in turn further cultivated by that work, helped forge the human bonds that led to the rise of a Gullah Geechee people. Their collective practices and knowledges derived in an African homeland were linked with newly known land and waters on this side of the Atlantic. Mudlines were further strengthened from the knowledge of the land’s agrarian practices transplanted from what is now known as Sierra Leone to what is today South Carolina’s Sea Islands (Carney, 2001; Cecelski, 2001; Creel, 1998).

Gullah Geechee indigeneity, the co-constitution of land- and seascapes and humans via mudlines, is difficult for many people to comprehend or distinguish from other groups.

Although the Gullah Geechee as a people retain strong ties and identify with traditions and places of their ancestral homelands, they have no illusion of returning to the past, “because they are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging at the same time to several homes” (Gordon & Anderson, 1999; Hall: 411-440). Existing in multiple places simultaneously, due to the conditions of displacement, was also integral to the formation of Gullah Geechee identity (Hall:131-150). They are diasporic and situated in close material relation to South Carolina’s sea islands. As a result, the Gullah Geechee’s cultural practices and traditions are simultaneously tied to multiple lands, the Americas and Africa (Glissant, 2010). Comprehending the constituting of the Gullah Geechee from a co-mingling of race, place, culture and practices, requires an analysis beyond dominant ideologies. It is important to remember that the Gullah Geechee do not simply cohere as a people. They are co-constituted in relation to humans and the nonhumans in which the material and spiritual are entangled and integrated at the same time (Griaule, 1970; Thompson, 1983).

The co-mingling of technologies, commerce, indigenous knowledges and languages from Africa, Europe and the Americas, created something vastly different from their places of origin. Further, the cultural practices derived from many sources were changed situationally through each encounter with human and nonhumans of the land and seascapes of the Americas (Glissant, 2010; Haraway, 1988). Although isolation is the prevailing theory, advanced by scholars, as the primary condition for contributing to the Gullah Geechee’s retention of cultural and traditional practices, a few theorists’ contest minimal contact ideologies (Creel, 1998; Pollitzer, 2005). Motary (2008), for example, argues that South Carolina was far from being isolated, particularly since it was “more actively engaged with the world economy than most other British North American colonies”. In fact, during the 17th and 18th centuries, South Carolina and the Sea Islands teemed with a myriad of cultures. In addition to African, other cultures included French, Huguenots, Quakers, Scots, Irish, Swiss, Barbadians, and Creek and Cherokee Indians (Matory, 2008; Pollitzer, 2005; Joyner, 1985; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Hence, external influences, wrought by the realities of colonization, were vastly instrumental in the production of South Carolina’s Sea Islands. Particular elements aligned, as needed or perhaps more accurately stated, when certain alignments were able to come together, producing more of a cosmopolitan reality for the Gullah Geechee than one of isolation and ignorance of distant cultures and knowledges beyond physical boundaries. The continued merging and extracting of cultures continues today within a contemporary form of colonialism—globalization. However, contrary to the totalizing root theory in which one language, one belief system and one set of cultural practices exists, a new people’s emerged and continue to exist through the co-mingling of cultures and traditions and consciousness.

...used to be a time when we couldn’t get off the plantation, now we can’t get on—
Emory Campbell

Equipped primarily with theoretical and historical knowledge derived from the literature, I arrived in St. Helena eager to investigate gendered livelihood strategies in indigenous fishing communities. However, upon arrival I discovered that the original plantation names

also identified the current communities. A stone pillar prominently stood at the gateway of the Avenue of Oaks. Formidable moss covered oaks bordered the sandy oyster shelled road. Spacious contemporary homes with immaculate lawns peaked through the Avenue's aging canopy. Glossy tourists pamphlets and travel guides obtained at the visitor center informed of the slave cabins that once stood close behind the towering oaks. I was greeted by an aesthetic of wealth, past and present landscapes of grandeur, shielded by oak sentinels along a path to the original big house of the Coffin Point Plantation.



Plantation house in Coffin Point Plantation community

Since the 1950s a booming tourist industry and new retirees from across the country have increased the demand for coastal land (Dyer, Bailey, & van Tran, 2009). South Carolina, once a bustling plantation economy, has retained the plantation culture through “plantation resorts”. The contemporary American South plantation grandeur reflects racial hierarchies constructed in the past and prominent in the present. A binary of colonial planter class and slave is perpetuated through a postcolonial binary of tourist and servant. Slave cabins that once lined sandy oyster shelled roads and shorelines are now replaced with spacious single-family residences and immense condominiums. The “new crop” of development as defined by Sea Island resident Emory Campbell, is rapidly transforming waterfront property and agricultural lands to timeshares, golf resorts and vacation homes. The 18th century plantation culture is kept vibrant by means of a dominant narrative that romanticizes racial hierarchies of the past and legitimates the reproduction of “the plantation”. The continuation of a heavily racialized space is demonstrated in the prominence of black faces in subservient roles in the service industry throughout the South Carolina’s Sea Islands. Yet, the Gullah Geechee are conspicuously absent from popular spaces frequented by tourists other than to fulfill the role of servant (Finney, 2014).

In fact, as part of the identity politics, Gullah Geechee frequenting racialized white space for reasons contrary to the dominant imaginary of subservience are expected to perform (Clifford, 2007; Innes, 2013). The black/white binary is plainly visible throughout the

island, behind massive moss covered oak trees sheltering historic and modern structures serviced by Gullah Geechee. Contradictory worldviews, one grounded in an anthropocentric ethic of domination and the other in an ethic of reciprocity, collide. This creates friction between the competing self-preservation approaches of state agencies versus indigenous populations. The latter group demonstrates a better comprehension of the indelible link between ecological preservation and human survival (Deloria, 2001; Griaule, 1970). However, the ushering in of tourism within a capitalist economic model of constant growth is changing traditional practices and thus the land- and seascapes of the Sea Islands (Anderson M. A., 2009; Merchant, 2005).

Due to the historical charm presented in dominant representations of a genteel and prosperous South, the Sea Islands are an ideal destination for seekers of an exotic getaway—those who want to experience a romanticized past, particularly during military unrest abroad involving the United States (Creel, 1998). During such instances, travel for Americans across the globe becomes challenging even within allied territory. One alternative, or directive, is to remain home in a less hostile environment than may be encountered internationally. Thus, the Sea Islands became a haven tucked safely within American borders during world wars and other military conflicts, such as in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attack. In addition to the impacts of war, technological advances were also instrumental in dramatically increasing the number of visitors to the Sea Islands. Bridges built in the 1950s not only accommodated the tourists, but also enabled increased efficiency in the harvesting and distribution of goods and services for the Gullah Geechee. Technological advances also shifted the labor demand to women for two main reasons: repetitive tasks no longer required strenuous manual labor, and more important women could be paid less (Spivak, 1999). This shift was also due to employers’ presumptions of docility in women and perceptions of higher retention as a result of women’s familial commitments (Ong, 2010).

Technology also as helped render the labor of women invisible in canneries, crab picking plants and oyster shucking factories as they became “interchangeable parts” of the assembly process (Roy, 2010). Goods took precedence over services except in stances in which services were devoted to maintaining the standards of living and comforts of the privileged tourist class. In spite of the immense production resulting from cloaked labor, the dominant ideologies of indigeneity perpetuated a convincing narrative of extinction. As a result, the indigenous population was perceived not as an evolving, adaptive peoples but rather as a vanishing culture requiring some time of salvaging. Paradoxically, contrary to conventional constructs of race and indigeneity, the shift in self-identified identities contributes to the expansion of indigenous populations rather than their extinction (Sturm, 2002). The Gullah Geechee population, for example, although not expanding has actually remained relatively stable in number throughout the early 20th century, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. St. Helena Island by Race		
Year	Black Indigenous	Total Population

1930	4458	4626
1980	4934	8134
2000	4901	8407

Source: US Census and Beaufort County

In spite of the indigenous population stability, the transitory immigration spikes, however resulted in tourists of European descent outpacing the indigenous population. An effect of the change in demographics is that the new arrivals also brought their lifestyles, culture and beliefs right along with them. For example, in 2010 tourism was a billion dollar industry in Beaufort County, precipitating a significant increase in large development resort and recreational homes projects (US Travel Association, 2012). Tourism, as a result, strategically dispossessed Gullah Geechee of land under the guise of market oriented reform (Ruether, 2008; Anderson, 2009). Land is communal, within the Gullah Geechee's worldview, wherein collective tenure rights are assured through local informal governance regimes, such as common pool resources management of shorelines and creeks (Opala, 1987; Jones-Jackson, 1987; Thompson, 1983). Dispossession of land, as a result, is a direct threat to their indigeneity and who they are as a people. The immigrant populations, on the other hand, operated within a private ownership framework, symbolized by newly erected fences demarcating the privatized spaces of recreational homeowners and resort developers. Access to resources, most importantly land, is among the escalating casualties affecting indigenous identity resulting from neo-colonial tourism (Anderson, 2009). As states scramble to strengthen their economies by luring more and more tourists with promises of an untouched, unspoiled paradise and exoticisms, indigenous populations are thrust deeper into struggles over resources vital to traditional practices and their beingness (Said, 1979). Although Gullah Geechee adoption of alternative strategies are recognized in some cases, several livelihood and self-determination strategies remain invisible to most, rendering them null and void and absent from state agencies' economic strategies (Agrawal, 2008; Berkes, 2008; Nadasdy, 2003).

As a result of land being vital to Gullah Geechee identity, the land spoke through a language of richness that was in sync with the land- and seascapes of St. Helena Island. In contrast to the conventional implied linkages of indigenous populations to land, specifically land of the past (Ng'weno, 2007), the Gullah Geechee represent spatial realities linked to cultural practices and traditions of the present. Ontologically guided by abundance rather than notions of scarcity, the land- and seascapes are viewed as limitless as long as they are not exclusively bound to one particular place. Thus, the Gullah Geechee are tied to the land, not territories that are defined by limits (Glissant, 2010). As a result, self-determination pursuits are always possible as long as they have access to land and water. Although power is occasionally elusive for the Gullah Geechee, I illustrate in the Governance chapter the manner in which they assert their authority to gain access to land in pursuits of self-determination.

The landscape of your word is the world's landscape –Glissant

South Carolina service oriented economic development mandates are devised to sustain the state's burgeoning tourist industry. Conceding the failure of hierarchical management models, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) adopted a participatory approaches framework in an effort to engage stakeholders from all segments of the community, to preserve the ecological integrity of the Sea Islands (SCDNR, 2012). Forging alliances that enable the continuance of traditional practices is a strategy used by the state and Gullah Geechee, as the former requires labor and the latter access to land. For example, state beaches and historical heritage corridors enable access to land in which the Gullah Geechee are able to continue traditional practices vital to self-determination pursuits. These practices are similarly critical to the state's neo-colonial tourism objectives (GGCHC, 2012; Anderson, 2009). The Gullah Geechee's ability to wield power is temporally and spatially situated in relation to state agency objectives (Haraway, 1988).

Championing de facto sovereignty constituted by shared cultural heritage, history and language, the Gullah Geechee secure access to land and additional coastal resources by strategically invoking the requisite identity during negotiations with state agencies, recreational homeowners and resort developers. I am not implying that they invoke an inauthentic identity, rather the Gullah Geechee elicit the most vital performative relevant to the triad in motion's current configuration. Due to the triad's relational authority however, the identity invoked may either enable inclusion or exclusion to accessing resources. As an example of the context in which relational authority is achieved through invoking the performative, in this section I elaborate on one of South Carolina's participatory approaches strategies to achieve the state's neo-colonial tourism objectives.

The SCDNR's meeting agenda, location and format were all seemingly banal conventions for conducting a meeting ostensibly to engage community stakeholders. Yet the setting was emblematic of non-agentive power in such that, "the unspoken authority, not easily recognized" is produced under the guise of "agency protocol" (Agrawal, 2008; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). Community stakeholders, such as the Gullah Geechee, are thus required to perform in order to have their perspectives and worldviews heard. Visibility within agency structures was also challenging for the Gullah Geechee given their immersion into an environment in which the written word took precedence over oral in addition to both written and oral presentations being conducted in the universalizing or totalitarian root language of English (Glissant, 2010; Chandler, Mills, Peterkin, & McCollough, 2008).

Continuing with Glissant's root metaphor, the totalizing root is invasive and monolingual with the intention and capacity of destroying everything in its path. Thus language is used as an efficient instrument for preserving asymmetrical power. The Gullah Geechee were operating within a context that did not value their worldview (Finney, 2014). Therefore, in order to bring representations of indigenous identity to life and visible, the Gullah Geechee are forced to succumb to agency protocols through performances (Ebron, 2002; Said, 1979). Adoption of the proper decorum and agency conventions did not necessarily guarantee visibility. "I never know when there's a meeting. I can't get them to put me on the mailing list. And the few times I'm at meetings they all act like they don't understand me" a fisher lamented. Agency representatives can easily feign ignorance regarding

communication difficulties with indigenous stakeholders, since the Gullah language lacks official recognition by the state without de jure autonomy.

The preponderance of complicatedness and confusion is not uncommon in such settings in which there is asymmetrical power. In fact, the intentional complicatedness rather complexity of the participatory process produced identities of inclusion or exclusion. The fisher's presence, albeit silently, is more important than his substantive engagement in the decision-making process because that alone is perceived as progress (Nadasdy, 2003; Agrawal, 2008). The flowchart in Figure I illustrates SCDNR's expected participatory approaches outcomes that are contingent on specific identities. On the surface, the participatory approaches frameworks yields two distinct outcomes in which the Gullah Geechee are either included or excluded from access to land.

Figure I. State Agency Participatory Approaches and Community Engagement Framework

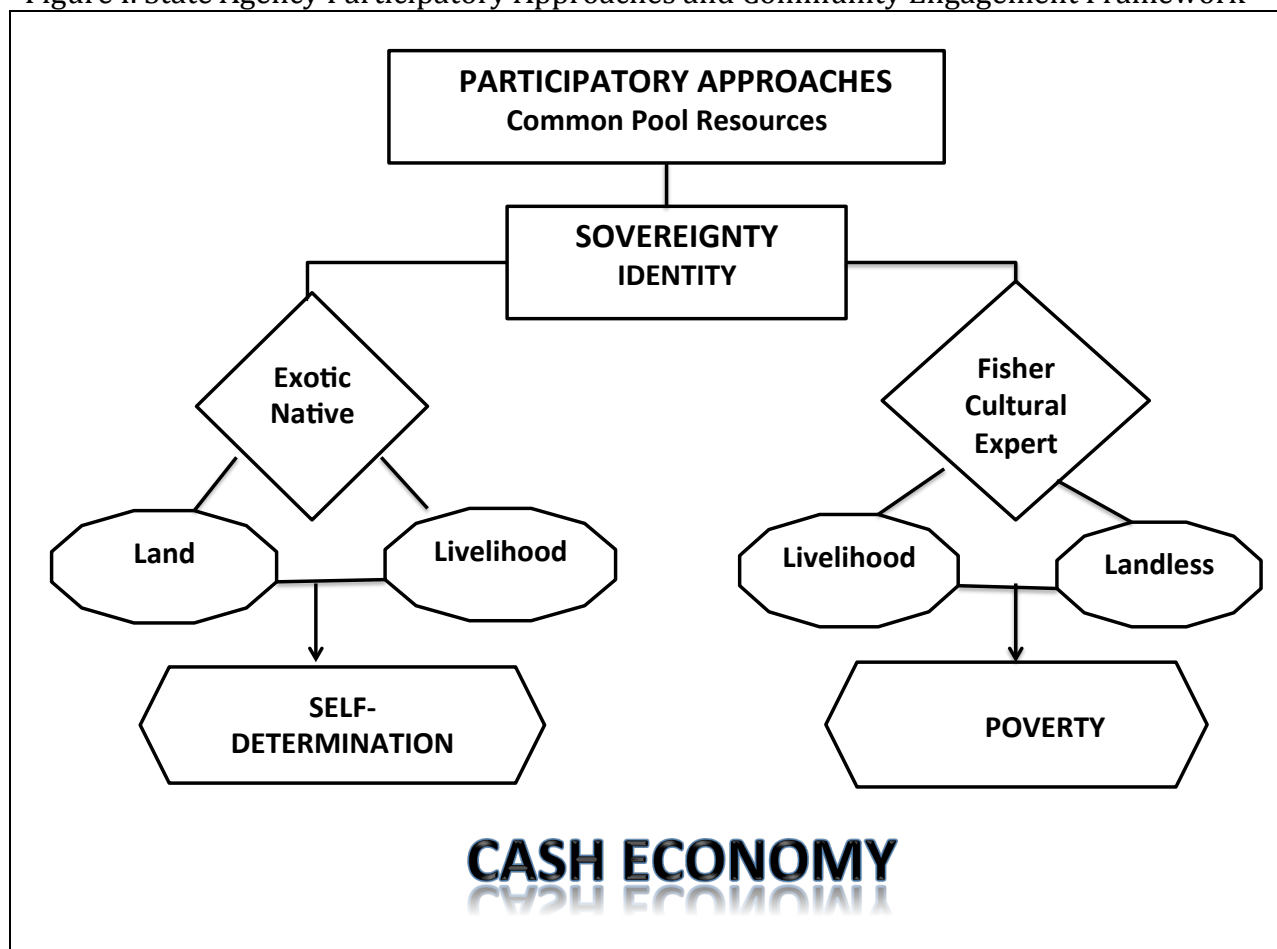


Figure 1. Predictable outcomes for agency directed participatory approaches to common pool resource management of coastal resources. A linear progression to an outcome of either self-determination or poverty is intended for the prescribed native identity of exotic or cultural expert. Both identities are intricately linked to the status of land ownership or landlessness.

As illustrated in Figure 1, land is the dominant factor in negotiations with natural resources regulatory agencies. In the agency-directed process, participatory approaches married to common pool resources work through “sovereignty” to produce the exotic native or cultural expert identity. Engagement in participatory approaches, for the exotic native, combine common pool resources with land as a means of achieving self-determination pursuits. Participatory approaches for the fisher/cultural expert, on the other hand, work through common pool resources that combine with landlessness to produce poverty. Agency accountability, to state and federal bureaucracies, is based on attaining quantifiable objectives through a positivist approach⁵ (Agrawal, 2008; Li 2002). Community engagement in the participatory process qualifies as a quantifiable achievement. Identifying and engaging stakeholders in addition to documenting their involvement is fundamental to the participatory approaches framework⁶.

Fabricating an American South imaginary, of the past, is instrumental in preserving a chasm between official and unofficial labor through the practice of the indigenous population engaging in self-determination pursuits only after completing official state recognized tasks. Within the ante- and postbellum southern imaginary, tourists maneuvering ski boats and yachts around paddle-powered bateaux are minor inconveniences compared to the pleasure of experiencing planter class comforts of southern charm and exoticism. The exotic native is recruited into appropriate livelihoods and directed to adhere to the use of spatially restricted resources such as conducting traditional practices in agency designated public boat landings and marinas. In so doing, the exotic native gains access to *public* land as part of the resources made available through the participatory approaches process.

Under the state’s participatory approaches rubric, use of public lands, meeting participation and appropriate employment in service-oriented professions supporting tourism, for example, are indicators of success. Participation in agency directed meetings and use of public boat landings and marinas both represent quantifiable objectives and indicators of success or failure depending on the agency’s particular goal. Success, according to the state’s construct, is achieved through community engagement in the process, although not decision-making, and gainful employment in the service industry (Colson 2011; Ostrom, 1990). The exotic native engaged in livelihood pursuits recognized by state agencies and vital to neo-colonial tourism exemplifies progress and modernity, on the other hand, in the servant role of caddy, cook, maid, and tour guide. “Leisure” time, that is time spent outside of official employment, is devoted to accomplishing traditional practices. Gullah Geechee cast-netting at changing tide, crabbing at low tide and pole fishing during high tide are familiar sights at public boat landings and parks throughout the island. The exotic native represents the desirable path of self-sufficiency and self-determination, while the native fisher/ cultural expert, henceforth referred to as cultural expert, symbolizes failure and is destined to a life of poverty.

⁵ The assumption that every problem can be solved by dividing it into parts and manipulating in accordance to a set of mathematical rules,

⁶ Interview with anthropologist Elizabeth Colson April 2011.

Failure, depicted in the diagram's righthand column illustrates the state's designation of poverty and perception of the native cultural expert who represents indigenous populations prioritizing self-determination honoring cultural traditions and practices. The undesirable path denotes the state's prevailing practice of characterizing non-monetary economies through scales of poverty rather than self-sufficiency. Private landownership, the only legitimate form of land tenure, it seems, recognized by the state is seen as beyond the grasp of cultural experts lacking monetary currency. Framed in this manner, the Gullah Geechee are then constituted by the state as landless. Because they are engaged in unacknowledged traditional practices and professions, state agencies classify them as unemployed. As so-called landless people they are also viewed as being devoid of culture and therefore are made invisible in the sense that they fail to appropriately represent the state's understanding of an indigenous identity (Ng'weno, 2007). In fact, privileging private poverty ensures that individuals fail to achieve self-determination in the state's understanding of that term. They thus become wards of the state and *quantifiable* dependents.

Further, state dependency, statistically justified, also guarantees ongoing access by state agencies to financial resources necessary to aggressively fight, as President Lyndon Johnson mandated beginning in the 1960s, the "War on Poverty". As noted in the governance chapter, poverty is an extremely lucrative industry (Roy, 2010). State governments are the beneficiaries of poverty frameworks since regions with the highest poverty rates receive the largest amount of financial resources earmarked to eradicate poverty. Even though the cast-netting, crabbing and pole fishing are viable livelihoods for the Gullah Geechee, state officials and tourists view these same activities as acts of leisure for the exotic native, in addition to those activities being key to the cultural expert's poverty. The cultural expert does not participate in agency directed meetings or adhere to the spatial restrictions demarcated by the state for traditional fishing practices. The cultural expert's livelihood pursuits were therefore unacknowledged and invisible to state agencies. As a result, the cultural expert is presumed jobless, landless and a failure.

Ironically, gated vacation communities and plantation resort development projects displace the indigenous community while also creating potential labor shortages (Tokar, 2008). Displacement thus compels the Gullah Geechee to become a supplier of temporary and permanent laborers due to their inability to adequately pursue traditional livelihood activities or obtain sufficient employment in the service industry (Schimmel, 1991; Spivak, 1999). Labor, therefore becomes a precious commodity for state agencies attempting to fulfill economic objectives. Surplus labor, rather than a shortage, is produced by the state with promises of employment to the displaced indigenous population. Satisfying the labor demand locally has two distinct advantages for the state. First, racial hierarchies attractive to tourists are maintained, and second a surplus supply of exotic natives labor is secured that also provides an aesthetically critical presence (Anderson, 2009; Tokar, 2008; Ng'weno, 2007).

Gainful employment in professions deemed appropriate by the state further enhances state coffers by forcing the Gullah Geechee into a cash economy.

One of the consequences of shifting the Gullah Geechee to a cash economy is that they are now required to purchase goods and services. The shift in transactions from exchange or gift economies to cash also contributes to two income streams of state and federal governments: income for goods and services, and taxes for income and said goods. The economic shift also produces a dependency on cash and state recognized occupations (Tokar, 2008; Spivak, 1999). The perception is that the exotic native is granted access to land as a result of accepting subservient roles in the tourist industry. A salient reality of the exotic native self-sufficiency model is that in failure or success, no reliance on the community is expected or required (Weiner, 1992).

A linear progression constituting autochthonous and diasporic identity is not depicted in diagram above of the exotic native versus cultural expert. Both concepts of indigeneity—the state sanctioned understanding on the left and the Gullah Geechee understanding depicted on the right—are tethered to spatial and historical realities of South Carolina's Sea Islands (Hall, 1996: 131-150). The complicated process obscured the complexities constituting Gullah Geechee indigeneity and state agencies' intentions. Alignments among indigenous community members and between agency representatives prevailed, swirling around one constant—access to land. In the milieu, landowner and landless alignments are made to manifest as entangled alliances hitched temporally in the opaqueness of a process intentionally complicated (Glissant, 2010; Hall, 1996: 131-150). The exotic native and cultural expert are the two identities that emerge from the participatory process. The dominant narrative espoused by state agency representatives, project self-sufficiency for the exotic native and poverty for the culture expert through conventional depictions of a static pre-modern indigeneity, rather than modern indigenous identity of an evolving cultural expert.

Self-determination is also disguised as poverty in relational authority triads in which only state agencies ostensibly wield power. Opaque alliances, however produce power shifts in relation to spatial realities (Moore, 2005). Even though discernable power appears to only reside with state agencies, the Gullah Geechee who alternately perform the exotic native and the cultural expert, assert their authority in the spaces where they find openings. As a result, state interpretations of these consultations often fail to reveal the complexities of identities and alliances situationally called forth or interperllated (Berkes, 2008; Nadasdy, 2003). State agencies' superficial critiques thus aid in perpetuating historical assumptions and stereotypes that obscure, and in many cases, ignore the multidimensional aspects of a particular situation (Said, 1979).

The dominant narrative of exotic native in equitable collaborations with state agencies, who were on the successful path to achieving self-determination pursuits, satisfied the participatory approaches engagement objective of agencies. Failure of the cultural expert, to a certain extent, was also desirable in order to provide calculable efficiency models illustrating, for example, the probability of the cultural experts economic and social demise (Agrawal, 2008; Li, 2002). State agencies conventional assessment method was a positivist approach for managing natural resources. That is, only scientifically verifiable or mathematically provable approaches were deemed appropriate for evaluating and managing the state's natural resources. Further, since the Gullah Geechee cultural practices

occur in coastal areas coveted by the tourism industry, the promotion of resource management schemes allowing access or retaining possession of privatized lands, run counter to the states economic interests (Anderson M. A., 2009). Thus, I argue that the exotic native, as configured in Figure 1, is on a path of poverty rather than self-determination. In fact, successful outcomes are cloaked within the intentional complicatedness in which the exotic native's self-determination pursuits are achieved in partnership with the cultural expert through a culture of reciprocity (Bilby, 2005; Moore, 2005).

In spite of the lack of official recognition, the Gullah Geechee strategically used their de facto sovereignty as a source of collective rights to reify their beingness as black and indigenous (Anderson, 2009; Ng'weno, 2007). The annual Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Days serves as a prime example of how the fluidity or relational power of indigenous identity enables the Gullah Geechee to exist in a particular space at a particular time. Each November, shortly before Thanksgiving, thousands of tourists descend on St. Helena Island to participate in parades, art and food exhibits, dance and a host of other performances portraying Gullah Geechee culture. The annual event also functions as a "reunion", bringing together Gullah Geechee from all parts of the country, to experience once again, if only briefly, a feeling of belonging. As a result, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Days event became one of the state's largest tourist attractions. The event's bolstering of tourism aids traditional and non-traditional livelihoods. State agencies benefit from the large influx of additional tourists participating in the indigenous event and the Gullah Geechee benefit from the increased demand for indigenous cultural events. The Gullah Geechee's indigenous identity became a viable commodity within the state's economic framework that required preserving, particularly since extinction is not profitable. In "hegemonic structures of managed multiculturalism" the Gullah Geechee as Clifford (2007) argues in collaboration with state agencies created "a place to consume nativism". Keenly aware of the tourist industry's dilemma, in so doing, the Gullah Geechee strategically leverage their identity to best meet the needs of their community.

Conclusion: Inscripted Landscapes

...they are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging at the same time to several homes—Gordon & Anderson

While on a tour, a participant asked what's the best book on Gullah culture? *Gullah Culture Legacies*, the tour guide replied. Only he and I laughed, since apparently we were the only folks that knew he, the tour guide, was the author. Who the Gullah Geechee are shifts with the tides. The landscape teeming with life, glistens with oysters at every turn. St. Helena Island revolved around daily harvesting of the landscapes' bounty. Yet, the rhythm was changing. As a symbol of prosperity for tourists, the steady influx of immigrants, blanketing St. Helena Island, usher in values and priorities contrary to those intertwined with the landscape. The indigenous population, long accustomed to the reality of population shifts, acutely recognized their new identities as internal exiles in their own landscapes (Ng'weno, 2007). Western consciousness, legitimating the individualism fueled by consumerism,

dramatically altered the land- and seascapes on the island. Exoticism took precedence over authentic indigenous identities in relation to dominant ideologies of “economic” survival.

Although invoking the performative became the norm, it is important to note such performances were strategically conducted as part of the Gullah Geechee’s self-determination pursuits. Due to state agencies “peddling ‘traditional culture’ as their most important economic product,” agency representatives were acutely aware of the importance of establishing collaborations with the Gullah Geechee (Ebron, 2002). The creation and dissolving of alliances between state agencies, vacation homeowners and the indigenous community produced a fluidity of authority in response to the particular situation. Emblematic of the political economy evidenced in which the interests of the immediate class took precedence, the ecological sustainability and social equity rhetoric typically had minimal impact on effective substantive change to the social order (Hall, 1996: 411-440). As I reiterate throughout the chapters, the Gullah Geechee detest the presumption of poverty. In fact, the Gullah Geechee concede that who they are perceived to be was predominantly defined and disseminated by academicians relying on secondary sources who in turn offer a “re-utterance of conical material” (Campbell, 2002; Said, 1979).

Racially categorized as indigenous or black, the Gullah Geechee continued to reject such dichotomies opting rather to define themselves as a peoples who are racially black and culturally indigenous, although not Afro-indigenous, a term which indicates a racial “mixture” historically of African descendants and Native Americans. As cultural experts their existence is based on their relationship with the land. Co-existing with a landscape of humans and nonhumans, the land became an abundant resource and the basis of the Gullah Geechee sovereignty. The general public’s ignorance of the tour guide’s publication or about the ways in which Gullah Geechee are entangled with the land- and seascapes are examples of the phenomenon in which particular narratives fail to travel. As a result, the Gullah Geechee’s story is not bound within precious volumes gracing library shelves in preeminent institutions. Their story is in the land.

The Gullah Geechee’s beliefs and practices are sustained through an alternate worldview or consciousness originating from African and Native American systems of thought. As a result, the Gullah Geechee have a counter-narrative to hegemonic discourse, devised to convince them of who and what they are regardless of how they defined themselves (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991; Hall, 1996: 411-440). As a result of entangled articulations, mudlines, that is, cultural ties of shared memories, language, traditions and practices, between humans and nonhumans and thus not bound by human biology were produced. Although not recognized by most outsiders, the monolingual invasive root, devised to clone subjects throughout the Americas to parrot ostensibly universal truths⁷ did not consumes Gullah Geechee identity (Glissant, 2010). In other words the totalizing root symbolizing one language, one belief system and one set of cultural practices ostensibly controlled by western science rules, regulations and laws is not indicative of Gullah Geechee beingness.

⁷ Universal truth refers to that which is true for all individuals, regardless of spatial and temporal realities or belief systems.

The Gullah Geechee are representative of a different metaphysics in which linkages to the land and communal use of resources are integral to their peoplehood (Griaule, 1970; Opala, 1987). In liminal spaces unrecognized by most, the Gullah Geechee persist in etching out livelihoods and self-determination pursuits derived from the co-mingling of Africans of the Diaspora and from Native American traditional fishing and harvesting practices in partnership with the human and nonhuman inhabitants of the Sea Island's land- and seascapes. Scholars posit society reveals itself most in the phenomena it excludes, rejects and confines (Foucault, 1995; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). On the surface the Gullah Geechee are represented as poor, yet they reject a framing of poverty and continue operating from a worldview of abundance. A consciousness of abundance situates the Gullah Geechee as vital producers in a landscape of the Americas and not merely a people of resistance who require economic and cultural redemption. Recognizing the multidimensional ability of power, the Gullah Geechee remain cognizant of others' perception of who and what they are. Most important however is their tenacity in defining who and what they are for themselves. While never explicitly stated, the Gullah Geechee feel no obligation, or perhaps inclination is more accurate, to convince others of the validity of who they are, what they know or how they elect to convey their knowledge. Proving their existence and value to others holds no place in their beingness. In other words, the co-mingling of the African ethical framework and Native American consciousness of reciprocity, cooperation and sharing (Innes, 2013), shaped their beliefs, practices and culture in a way that inspires confidence in who they are as a people, rather in response to other's imposed identities. Thus, "We Gullah!" seemed to be all they felt needed to be said.

Shifting Tides, Shifting Power: Gullah Geechee Governance

... always responding to new regulations. Nobody asked me or folks that look like me what we think –Gullah Geechee oysterman

State fisheries are regulated by state law. Ninety-eight percent of the legislators however are unfamiliar with the resources. They aren't biologists. Odd process when you have folks making decisions that know nothing about the resource. –SCDNR staff

Poverty, Policy and Power

In the early 1990s over a quarter of the world's population still lacked sufficient food to sustain human life. Adequate water supplies also critical to life and water dependent livelihoods were lacking as well (UN, 1992). The Global South and American South have the largest proportions of people living in poverty worldwide. In 1964 President Lyndon Johnson announced an “unconditional war on poverty” in the State of the Union address. The percentage of the states' low socioeconomic status population is the guiding criterion for determining federal government resource allocations in response to the “war” (US Census, 2011). In 2013 the federal government spent \$82.5 billion on the newly named food stamp program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). \$40 billion in additional monies for the economic stimulus effort were dispensed to states as part of the 2009 Recovery Act. Originating far earlier than Johnson's war on poverty, the government has a pronounced historical role in controlling public benefits. The basic tenet of poverty alleviation programs is increasing allocations as needs increase. For example, states with the poorest children receive larger federal resource allocations (US Census, 2011). Consequently, government aid substantially increases during economic crises.

At the global level, the United Nation's Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and Dublin Principles are the most comprehensive programs. Aggressively advocating for poverty eradication, the United Nation's MDG is to halve the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than \$1 per day (UN, 2006). Accomplishing such a momentous task is not without seemingly insurmountable obstacles. However, in focusing tactics on the sectors of the population most adversely impacted by poverty, positive outcomes are achievable. Even in Beaufort, South Carolina, my field site, government reports illustrate the dire realities of poverty. County reports show that 12.5 percent of families and nearly 18 percent of individuals live below the poverty line while only 48 percent of population over sixteen is in the labor force (US Census, 2000). Conceivably the remaining 52 percent could be labeled unemployed thus legitimating government aid. The absence of formally recognizing gendered roles within regulatory processes, such as poverty eradication programs, particularly impacts women's livelihood strategies (Ray, 2007). My field site in St. Helena Island is no exception to the lack of gendered economic analyses that affect women worldwide, even though Beaufort County's thriving seafood industry once heavily

relied on female labor working in the labor-intensive positions of shuckers, headers, and pickers (Burrell, Jr., Whitaker, Wenner, & DeLancey, 2009). The formerly thriving commercial seafood industries' oyster shucking plants, crab canneries and shrimp processing plants no longer dotting the landscape represented supplemental income for the Gullah Geechee's informal "invisible" economies from "unemployed" occupations (Burrell, Jr., Whitaker, Wenner, & DeLancey, 2009). As a result, individuals engaged in non-traditional or unrecognized livelihood strategies were invalidated, producing an erasure that is particularly troubling for women (Davis, 1995; Hurston, 2008; Jackson, 1993). Thus, gendered strategies are essential to initiatives genuinely intending to lift the majority of the world's population out of poverty, particularly since women and children are the sectors requiring the most assistance (Ray, 2007; Spivak, 1999).

In spite of the prevalence of domestic and international poverty alleviation initiatives, images of impoverished *foreign* children, requiring as little as \$1 a day, continue permeating the Western consciousness. Imploring eyes, distended bellies and tattered clothing persist in eliciting the benevolence of privileged consumers during late night infomercials to present day. Indicators of the global state of poverty are consumed daily through multiple mediums, including television, news reports, and white paper publications commissioned for up-to-the-minute accounts of a particular phenomenon (UN, 2006). Ironically, regardless of all the "data" produced, the true dimensions of poverty in the United States remains virtually invisible to the world (Kodras, 2008). As one of the world's richest nations, the strategic deployment of charitable aid, legitimated by a globally constituted moral obligation, ensures the effective waging of the war on poverty on all three fronts—global, national and local.

One persistent question remains however, why is the poverty narrative so pervasive? Acknowledging women's central role in this "war" is slowly becoming a reality in international policy and regulatory circles for the environment, however (Jackson, 1993). For instance, recognizing women's vital roles, as the primary individual responsible for securing water, managing household provisions and efficiently coordinating collaborative efforts, has resulted in international mandates such as those delineated in the Dublin Principles. Dublin Principles II and III adopted at the 1992 International Conference on Water state that: water development and management should be based on a participatory approach; and women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water, respectively (UN, 1992). The Millennium Development Goal and Dublin Principles II and III all have profound implications for women's health and quality of life matters, particularly the Gullah Geechee, since vibrant water bodies enhance shellfish and fish abundances vital to their self-determination pursuits and livelihood strategies.

As climate change causes sea levels to rise and ocean temperatures escalate, coastal waterways are dramatically changing and impacting fish abundance (Institute for the Environment, 2008). Indigenous livelihoods that depend on coastal area abundances are directly impacted as a result. Access to resources, from fishery harvest permits to being privy to the particulars of agency resource management strategies, is typically contingent on an individual's or group's identity (Berkes, 2008). Language, a symbol of power, is particularly crucial due to it serving as the basis of an individual's conception of the world

(Gramsci, 1971). As a result, researchers note that government directed collaborative efforts between state agencies and indigenous groups often create barriers instigated around issues of access and language (Ostrom, 1990, Agrawal 2008). Thus even the best intentions are frequently derailed due to an agency's incapacity or refusal to consider disparate ideologies (Nadasdy, 2003; TallBear, 2013). Conceding the failure of hierarchical centralized resource management models, regulatory agencies are now adopting participatory approaches (Berkes, 2008; Ostrom, 1990). Employing community based natural resource management (CBNRM) strategies, agencies seek to engage diverse stakeholders, including indigenous communities, in locally promoting ecological sustainability (Nadasdy, 2003). In fact, participatory approaches encouraging collaborations between communities, agencies and universities, has become the new mantra for state agencies (TallBear, 2013). Berkes (2008) argues that in addition to addressing ecological sustainability regulatory agencies are interested in the linkages between participatory approaches and poverty alleviation.

Regulatory agency interest is particularly timely since scholars also note that resource management strategies informed by indigenous knowledge has a greater probability of mitigating climate change and the ensuing rises in sea levels (Agrawal, 2008). Further, it is well documented that coastal resource management strategies using indigenous knowledge not only promotes ecological sustainable practices, but also enhances the probability of genuinely addressing quality of life issues (Berkes 2008; Ostrom, 1990). TallBear (2013) cautions however, "rather than integrating community priorities with academic priorities, changing and expanding both in the process, decolonizing methods begin and end with the standpoint of indigenous lives, needs, and desires, engaging with academic lives, approaches, and priorities along the way". Further Li also notes that participatory approaches are often used as an "environmental hook to tie rights to particular forms of identity, social organization, livelihood and resource management (Li, 2002).

As management of common pool resources (CPR) is fundamental to decentralized schemes, in this chapter I critique the relational governance between indigenous groups, state agencies and property owners within participatory approaches framework. Although perceived by some researchers and regulatory agency representatives as the cause of environmental degradation, common pool resource management can promote and ensure sustainable practices (Ostrom, 1990). This reality is well known to indigenous groups, since they often managed local water bodies as common pool resources (Colson, 1980). In this chapter, I therefore also provide an analysis of the power dynamics of structures of authority producing identity and indigeneity within small-scale fisheries managed as common pool resources in South Carolina's Sea Islands. Recognizing that struggles over resources are struggles over identity, I illustrate the shifting alignments of power framed within a triad in motion⁸ analytic that enable access to coastal resources and the continuance of traditional practices (Gramsci, 1971; Glissant, 2010). Further, due to the

⁸ Donald Moore's triad in motion is grounded in Foucault's triangular theory of a single rationality of power constituted through sovereignty, discipline, and power in which the primary target is a population.

significance of gendered roles in coastal resource use and consumption, I also illuminate women's critical engagement in natural resource management.

Women and children are of particular interest in poverty-based schemes, since they represent the "data" illustrating the vast majority of the poor worldwide (UNICEF, 2012). Outsourced to Indonesia, Thailand, Ecuador, Mexico and Vietnam, the American plants that once relied on domestic female labor are now only reflected in imposing documents safeguarded in government archives. One of the consequences of outsourcing to foreign markets, resulting from a shift in demand from domestic female labor to foreign female labor, is that the actual production costs of corporations is obscured (Ong, 2010). "What are the implications of a global production system in which relations of gender and race are critical for the expansion of economic and symbolic capital?" Ong asks. This inquiry is indeed urgent considering women's labor account for approximately seventy percent of informal work forces worldwide (Spivak, 1999). One argument is that the scattering of labor-intensive production processes throughout the third world enables transnational corporations such as those headquartered in Japan, United States and Western Europe to escape mounting domestic labor costs while gaining market access abroad (Li, 2007, Ong, 2010).

The norm in conventional resource management strategies, including CBNRM, as a result, is to ignore gendered perspectives in favor of male-biased frameworks that actually obscure women's work (Agrawal 2005, Ray 2007). However, women's roles are integral to local fisheries and economies worldwide, even though most operate in informal, unacknowledged economies (Béné 2009, Spivak 1999). In fact, researchers posit women's efforts are fundamental to fisheries management and quality of life schemes (Agrawal 2008, Béné 2009, Li 2002, Ray 2007). Yet, women's role in small-small fisheries and livelihood strategies are obscured through the use of gendered labels and agency priorities. For example, although small-scale fisheries employ ninety percent of all fishermen and account for over half the edible catches worldwide, the emphasis of natural resource management remains on male-dominated industrial fisheries (Berkes, 1986). Agrawal (2005) further argues that women's substantive engagement, in coastal resource management in collaboration with state agencies, is dependent upon on "how conservation is related to their historically constituted material interest and the practices of which they are a part".

The lack of comprehension of gendered roles and, women's roles in particular, is problematic for effective coastal resources management and policy (Bennett, 2005). Due to conventional approaches that are typically the least complicated approach, resource managers and policy makers tend to universalized the roles of women in which homogeneity is legitimized, for in reality, a highly heterogeneous group (Bennett, 2005; Jackson, 1993). Thus, socially constructed gender enables the false equating of women with gender (Spivak, 1999). In so doing, underlying assumptions promote the idea of a direct correlation between women's interest and environmental conservation rather than linkages between livelihood strategies and natural resources. As a result, their specific concerns are rarely acknowledged nor elicited in formal decision-making processes

(Jackson, 1993). However, an important fact often forgotten is that in defining gender more broadly, gender represents the interest of men and women as Jackson (1993) argues:

Women's knowledges cannot be considered in isolation from men's for there are variations in who acquires what knowledge. Knowledges are manufactured and expressed through social processes and therefore reflect gender relations.

In spite of their presumed invisibility, women can be instrumental and serve as key participants in alleviating poverty and achieving social transformation in the harvesting, management and marketing of natural resources (Ray 2007). However, as Ray also argues women-centered approaches have a tendency to engage women in "double-duty" causing many to opt out of formal processes. These asymmetrical power dynamics, which are inherent in formal decision-making process, also contribute to women's confinement in informal policy structures and networks (Ong, 2010). As a result, Jackson (1993) argues that natural resource policy-makers must also take into account the multiple ways in which gender relations influence access to coastal resources. Exclusive gender focused initiatives however, have a tendency to characterize women solely as homemakers and mothers, undoubtedly invaluable roles, rather than acknowledging them also as key participants in the use and management of vital natural resources (Berkes 2008, Ostrom 1990, Zwarteveen 1997).

Thus, community engagement through participatory approaches devised ostensibly to "empower" women, often subject them to additional responsibilities, the double duty noted, without acknowledging or valuing traditional duties performed in the household (Ray, 2007; UN 2006). Further, the invisibility of vital traditional responsibilities generally results in women's inadequate compensation for household duties in addition to their time or contributions devoted to state agency devised community engagement efforts (Ostrom, 1990; Zwarteveen, 1997). In other words, women are expected to fulfill the vital roles of mother, homemaker and natural resource manager in an informal, essentially uncompensated volunteer capacity. Explicitly acknowledging formal and informal responsibilities of women and men, on the other hand, would assist in state agencies securing women's vital knowledge and participation in the decision-making and resource management process (Agrawal 2003, Béné 2009, Li 2002).

The Gullah Geechee's rejection of poverty frameworks cannot be over-emphasized. As a result, the Gullah Geechee's total disregard for paralyzing coastal resources management schemes, couched within poverty eradication ideologies in which improving livelihoods and ecological integrity are touted, is not uncommon. In so doing, the Gullah Geechee are able to continue traditional fishing practices vital to their self-determination pursuits. This invisible and informal approach however, is not evident in official accounts of collaborative efforts through participatory approaches (Ostrom, 1990). As mentioned in the Indigeneity chapter, due to poverty dominating the literature, I vacillated between livelihood and poverty frameworks for my analysis. Rather than analyzing poverty through a predictive lens imposed through the dominant discourse, I chose to conduct a discursive analysis of how poverty is structurally constituted by posing the question, what does the poverty framework privilege? Although poverty alleviation programs generally appear to

succeed, program success is generally inexplicably bound to donor expectations rather than the necessities of donor recipients (Agrawal, 2008). I therefore determined that a livelihood strategies framework enabled a more accurate portrayal of the cultural traditions and practices revealed in South Carolina. As indicated above, poverty is a billion dollar industry (Roy, 2010). Thus “poverty, powerlessness and exclusion from valuable resources are integrally related” in relation to self-sufficiency and self-determination pursuits (Li, 2002). One means of effectively constituting and maintaining poverty, is through the governance of people and natural resources using strategies such as community based natural resource management (CBNRM) (Agrawal 2005; Li 2002). Fundamental to community engagement strategies, CBNRM at a minimum creates the illusion of inclusivity through participatory approach frameworks.

State Governance: Participatory Approaches

What if practice isn't driven by policy? What if practice is in fact produced by policy?

–David Mosse

“There’s a lot of history here”, a recreational homeowner asserts. “That’s an understatement”, I retort. Although a woefully unrealistic goal, I was determined not to allow the slave narrative to engulf my research. Particularly, since the narrative of inexplicable pain, suffering and loss is already well documented by other scholars (Chandler, Mills, Peterkin, & McCollough, 2008; Creel, 1988; Joyner, 1985; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986; Wood, 1974). My intention was to reveal a new narrative, illuminating complexities beyond the dominant black/white racial binary generally used to describe blackness in the Americas (Reardon & TallBear, 2012). However, as the homeowners aptly asserted the consciousness and material realities in South Carolina’s sea islands are predominantly constituted by the histories and institution of the South. Thus, the plantation industry was impossible to ignore, particularly when immersed in St. Helena Island’s forty-two plantations community (Guthrie, 1996). Plantations confiscated, abandoned or operating with a severely limited capacity, without the advantage of slave labor, are the origins of contemporary plantation communities (Creel, 1988; Rosengarten, Chaplin, & Walker, 1986). Postcolonial plantations now represent communities of extended kinship networks or privatized space of recreational homeowners and resort developers. State coastal resources management and poverty alleviation objectives are constituted within a plantation industry context as a result in which ecological subjects are produced.

The global market was dramatically altered as a result of the September 11th military attack on American soil. Marine and fresh water fishing regulations significantly increased post September 11, 2001. One of the consequences affecting coastal areas was the market collapse of the shrimping industry (Walker, 2005). Several informants mentioned trucks sat idle in New York, unable to export goods to domestic and foreign markets, as a result of Homeland security enforcing stricter transportation regulations. South Carolina’s shrimping industry had a product without a market (Adams, 2008). As Agrawal (2005) argues of historically situated realities in relation to commodities, “new demand pressures create varying incentives about the products to be harvested, technologies of harvest and rates of harvest”. Shrimp boat captains could no longer afford to pay crewmembers. Gullah

Geechee livelihoods suffered substantially as a result. The fisheries within common pool resources also became heavily regulated (SCDNR, 2012). Absent global imports, domestic supplies became scarce, including seafood. South Carolina seafood industry was required to rely more heavily on domestic goods due to the curtailment of foreign transactions (Walker, 2005). Key state policies thus began echoing the international mantra of International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and African Development of decentralization in which local control was touted as an effective means of managing natural resources and legitimating narratives of scarcity and poverty (Ruether, 2008). Domestic and international corporations and governments were also instrumental in directing local control in order to ensure a surplus of low paying and manual labor jobs. External control was thus a key tactic used to reinforce the racialized and gendered roles of the American South (Spivak, 1999; Tokar, 2008). In the milieu of globalization, St. Helena Island's abundant resources shifted from local indigenous demand to fulfilling state and national Gross National Product (GNP) goals. As a result "market related demands contributed to local pressures on resources" (Agrawal, 2005). Increased governance through the imposition of additional fisheries fees and regulations was one tactic agency used to ensure attainment of state objectives.

South Carolina has an unusual regulatory process in which fisheries are regulated by state law. As a result, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources has limited authority, acting more in an advisory role to public officials and liaison to the public. Unlike the bordering state of North Carolina, SCDNR lacks the authority to issue proclamations for changing regulations. SCDNR falls under South Carolina's Code of Law, Title 50, Fish, Game and Watercraft, Chapter 5, Marine Resource Act, of South Carolina's statutes (South Carolina Legislature, 1976). Initially governed under Chapter 17, the statute was rewritten in 2001 in an effort to consolidate most marine fisheries law. As regulations are state law, any modifications to regulations must adhere to South Carolina's legislative process. For example, to address a pervasive concern of marine fisheries such as shrimp or sheepshead population declines, revisions to regulations require authorization by the General Assembly. To do so legislators must introduce a bill that subsequently proceeds through the normal process of appropriate committee and subcommittee reviews in order to be considered as a new or amended law (South Carolina Legislature, 1976).

Why is management of natural resources legislated by the state? Legislators contend that natural resources are a public resource for the people of the state and since legislators represent the people, the authority to manage natural resources such as fisheries should be with the state. "It's a lengthy and frustrating process and it's always political," a SCDNR staff member asserted. "We can propose bills but our recommendations may not fall within the legislator's priorities. It's very political," he continued. Accountability for all natural resources, that is, land, water, wildlife and fisheries is also a contributing factor of prioritizing particular issues and the lengthiness of the process. As a result, only certain concerns within a specific resource receive priority. For example, land typically trumps fisheries within the management hierarchy of resources and state priorities. As a result, matters related to fisheries may fail to receive adequate consideration within requisite time constraints in relation to a specific fish species or habitat. Structurally, navigating the

process is often times just as confusing for regulators as it is for the general public due to the necessity of possessing a basic comprehension of the legislative process.

Politics as indicated by the agency representative is perhaps the most crucial element of the regulatory process. In response to questions regarding the effectiveness of the state coastal resource management regulatory process, the SCDNR staff member further noted the irony of individuals (elected public officials) regulating resources of which they possess little knowledge. He also persistently reiterated how embedded politics was in the process. For instance, the SCDNR staff member remarked that, “ninety-eight percent of the legislators however are unfamiliar with resources, they’re aren’t biologist. Many times policy makers don’t know the fish they’re proposing law for. Odd process when you have folks making decisions that know nothing about the resource”. As South Carolina legislators are expected to address a plethora of state issues including improving state roads and bridges, criminal domestic violence, after school programs and healthcare, concerns from constituents lacking political power, regarding freshwater and marine resource management, may not be a high priority (South Carolina Legislature, 1976).

An important distinction in access to authority is that the concerns of those with power supersede matters of importance voiced by the majority, that is, the general public. Access within this type of governance again becomes challenging, as power is not equitably distributed throughout all segments of a public official’s constituency, particularly since agencies are likewise included (Agrawal, 2008; Berkes, 2008; Ribot & Peluso, 2003). For instance, not only are constituents of the “general public” required to lobby elected officials to address a particular concern, SCDNR staff are also required to lobby public officials to effect regulatory changes. The latter category is even more problematic, since SCDNR staff members have greater access to elected officials due to their ability to leverage their official state positions. It is also important to note, that some constituents of the “general public” also serve in an official advisory capacity on such committees as the Marine Advisory Committee (MAC). Although voluntary, engagement in advisory boards and committees substantially strengthen ties between particular members of the general public and regulatory authorities. In fact, frequent communication and negotiation between elected and voluntary entities are expected as advisory groups are charged with making recommendations to public officials. In spite of the seemingly limited power of SCDNR, the agency does have the authority for determining fishing and harvesting seasons. Delineating seasons is of vital importance to resource users, particularly since reduced harvest periods can cause hardships for individuals and groups accustomed to reliable abundances during a specific time of year.

Despite state agency efforts to substantively engage community members through participatory approaches, Gullah Geechee efforts to gain a better comprehension of new regulations by participating in agency meetings are usually unsuccessful. One of the primary criticisms of participatory approach regimes Agrawal (2005) argues is that state actors “attend only cursorily to social, political, institutional, and physical environments in which commons are situated”. Further, agency representatives often treat indigenous community members as primitive and intellectually deficient (Nadasdy 2003). Fishers

interviewed expressed discomfort in attending Department of Natural Resource advisory and regulatory meetings. They expressed concern in regard to the exclusionary effect of the immense technical jargon in documents and oral presentations or rather a written regulatory language devoid of Gullah Geechee cultural practices or modes of communications. Community participation was also challenged because of agency representative routinely disregarding the local fishers concerns expressed at the regulatory meetings. Due to the disconnect between community members and agencies, created by centralized top-down hierarchical approaches, the Gullah Geechee fishing practices became criminalized by the complicatedness of the regulatory process. “The new regulations are confusing”, one fisher confesses. “I never know what I can catch, when I can catch it or where. So I ignore them, knowing I might be breaking the law”. In fact as Li (2002) posit, “contrary to the goal of its proponents, there is increasing evidence that CBNRM has the effect of intensifying state control over upland resources, lives and livelihoods”. Another criticism of participatory approaches is that the gendered roles held by women are frequently omitted from coastal resources management strategies (Jackson, 1993; Ray, 2007). Although primarily excluded from the participatory process Gullah Geechee women perform tasks integral to fisheries including fish preserving, bookkeeping, purchasing and marketing. Thus women’s role directly impact livelihoods strategies of Gullah Geechee women and men fishers.

As noted in the indigeneity chapter, involvement in participatory approaches for the exotic native is the combining of common pool resources with land as a means of achieving self-determination pursuits. The cultural expert, on the other hand, worked through common pool resources that combined with landlessness to produce poverty. The exotic native and cultural expert are the two identities that emerge from a complicated regulatory process. According to SCDNR agency expectations, one pathway leads to access to land and self-determination while the other is destined for landlessness and poverty. The exotic native is the inscribed subject fulfilling state objectives and exemplifying successful community engagement through participatory approaches.

Participating as expected, the exotic native provides input to the regulatory process through conventional agencies approaches such as small group discussion and reporting back to the larger group. Transcribed flipcharts are subsequently compiled into lengthy reports documenting the community engagement process. These types of proceedings are typical of participatory approaches conducted at agency facilities that Agrawal (2003) aptly argues are objectives of governmentality as illustrated below. “Attention to markets, demography and state governance is only a partial solution” Agrawal (2005) notes. Acknowledging “situated knowledge”, that is paying particular attention to large variations in resource use driven by market demand has significant implications for state generated data analyses. Further, this type of governance is also the object of community engagement processes criticisms noting the process as representing an end to a means rather than a means to an end (Colson, 1980).

Governmental strategies achieve their effects by becoming anchors for processes that reshape the individuals who are a part and the object of governmental regulations. The construction of steadily more elaborate lists and tables about the qualities of the population,

the effort to know the rhythms and regularities of the social, the launching of the processes that make up people, and the governance of these people are thus all part of governmentality.

FIGURE 2. COMMUNITY ADAPTATION TO STATE DIRECTED PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES
CONVERGENCE OF INCLUSIONARY AND EXCLUSIONARY PATHWAYS

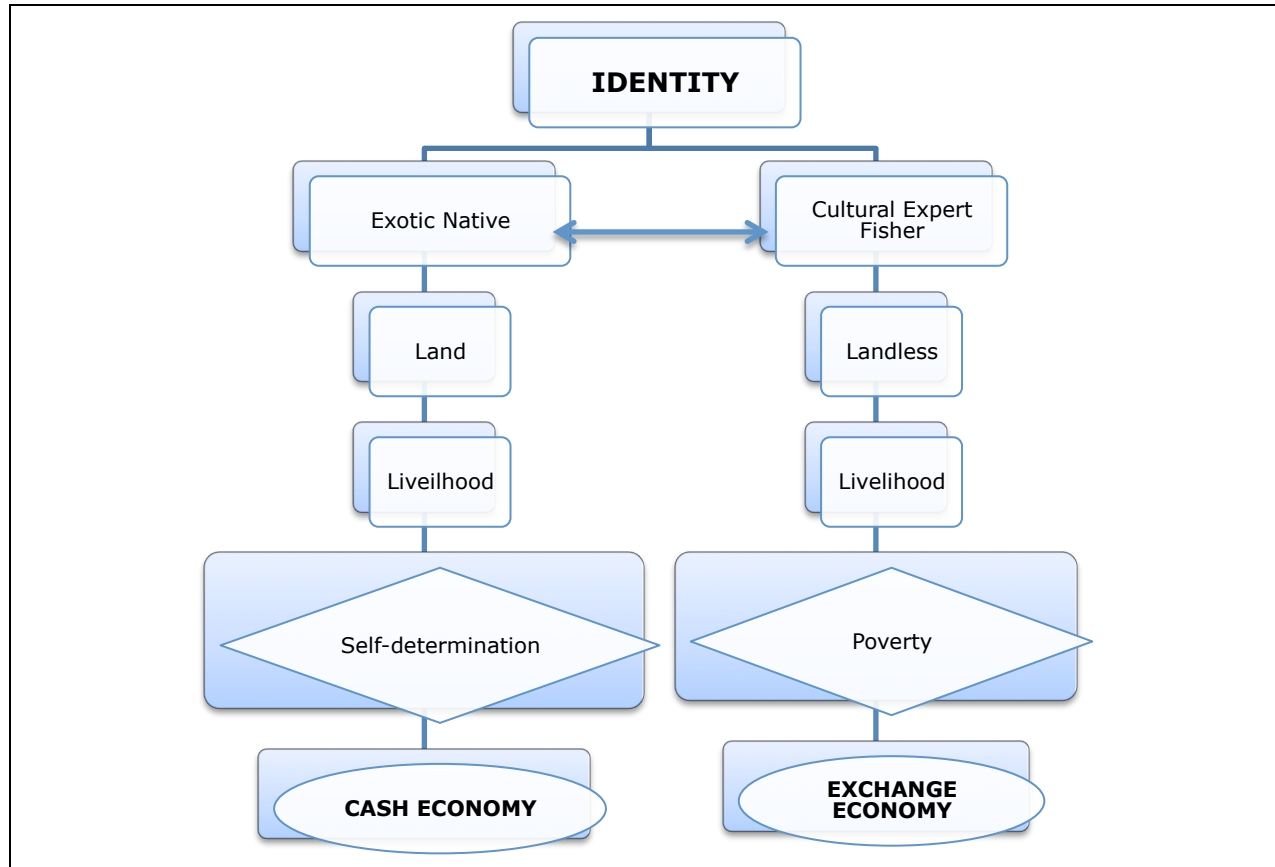


Figure 2. Community Adaptation of State Directed Participatory Approaches for Coastal Resource Management. Linear progressions along paths of inclusion for the exotic native or exclusion for the cultural expert depicts State projections. The reality however is illustrated through a shift to the exchanging of land access and goods and services between the exotic native and cultural expert, thus enabling both identities to achieve self-determination pursuits.

Who is included or excluded in the flow of benefits and appropriate livelihoods as delineated in the state directed participatory approaches diagram is typically directly depended on identity (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). The objective representing the cultural expert is that of exclusion from self-determination pursuits within the state directed process. Although the cultural expert is officially excluded from coastal resources such as land, his or her “failure” statistically symbolizes attempts at poverty alleviation regardless of the outcome. In fact, both the exotic native and cultural expert’s involvement in any form sufficiently represents community engagement from the state agency’s viewpoint. However, the complicatedness of the process aids in obscuring the reality of distinct identities at a particular time, or situationally, whereby access to resources is

simultaneously attainable to the exotic native and the cultural expert, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Rather than a dualistic rendering of include or exclude, Gullah Geechee negotiations reflect the convergence of inclusionary and exclusionary pathways constituting sovereignty that produce self-defined routes to land access and self-determination pursuits. In order for the exotic native to secure access to coastal resources, adopting a market-oriented identity is usually necessary (Bilby, 2005). Assuming a performative identity is the manner in which the exotic native exerts relational authority in negotiations with state agencies as means of achieving self-sufficiency objectives (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991; Ebron, 2002; Spivak, 1999). In other words, the Gullah Geechee creates an illusion of acceptance of an imposed identity portraying them as inferior and dependent on state agency edicts. As a result, relational authority linked temporally to a specific identity enables the Gullah Geechee to move between exoticism and cultural expert as part of their self-determination strategy. In other words, shifting alignments allow a performative identity to be interpellated, or called forth at a particular time, as warranted (Deloria, 1998; Ebron, 2002; Schimmel, 1991).

The relational authority within the triad in motion analytic enables the Gullah Geechee to negotiate with state agencies and property owners for usufruct rights to coastal resources (Hall, 1996; Moore, 2005). In so doing, the exotic native exerts authority to gain official access to land, while the cultural experts wields authority to compliment official access by securing unofficial agreements between the exotic native and the state. It is important to remember that in some instances the Gullah Geechee are in alignment with state agencies objectives and expectations, as is also true of other components of the triad in motion of indigenous groups, state agencies and recreational property owners. For example, even though the cultural expert is categorized as a failure and thus invisible, boundaries demarcating government and private land also becomes “blurred” in instances in which the presence of exoticism is desired. Recreational homeowners and resort developers also recognize the importance of exhibiting an “authentic indigenous” identity at a particular time in support for example of market oriented tourism development.

Contrary to state pronouncements however, full immersion into a cash economy jeopardizes Gullah Geechee livelihoods and self-determination pursuits. Moving indigenous populations into a cash economy creates poverty, as they are no longer able to sustain themselves through cultural traditions and practices based on non-monetary frameworks (Roy, 2010; Schimmel, 1991). One of the guiding objectives of market-oriented reform is to ensure that all individuals can actively participate, including the poor. An informal exchange economy however, is not profitable for market-oriented economies especially since gaining profits remains the goal even for programs ostensibly devised to eradicate poverty (Roy, 2010). For example, worldwide and particularly in developing countries, microfinance is touted as an exemplary approach to alleviated poverty for women. However, poverty theorists argue that poverty alleviation programs targeting women are typically implemented without the proper infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms to ensure women’s success in microenterprise ventures (Roy, 2010; Spivak, 1999). The prevailing outcome of state initiated participatory approaches is transforming all stakeholders into market consumers. Although vital to the tourist-based economy, the

daily activities of the cultural expert are not viewed by state agencies as gainful employment. The cultural expert is forced to adapt to the “language” of scarcity focused on maximizing production in order to be heard within state agency directed participatory approaches “collaborative” efforts necessary to continue practices fundamental to exchange economies (Tokar, 2008). Thus, fulfilling basic human needs, to sustain life through the exchange of goods and services locally, is not without challenges in spite of collaborative efforts with the exotic native.

The dominant narrative of poverty that obscures the complexities of the exchange economy is fundamental to sustaining a consciousness of scarcity critical to capitalist economic models. As a result, depicting the Gullah Geechee as poor and thus in dire need of aid through “war” schemes prescribed to eradicate the malignant affliction of poverty, is the prevailing discourse (Roy, 2010; Ruether, 2008). A discourse of exchange between the exotic native and cultural expert however, is the narrative that fails to travel. Employed in conventional service industry roles of caddie, cook, maid or tour guide, the state agency’s objective, within participatory approaches is that of ensuring the exotic native’s availability for the “conventional jobs” noted. Further, in order to sustain an illusion of tradition and exoticism in St. Helena Island, the indigenous population are encouraged and allowed to supplement conventional labor through the continuance of traditional practices during their spare time. These temporal restrictions also assist in maintaining racialized space demarcated by specific occupations.

Operating on multiple scales in relation to a specific situation and spatial dynamics, the Gullah Geechee engage in a polycentric authority regime with state agencies and property owners to maintain access the coastal resources (Ostrom 2010). Ostrom describes polycentric authority as indicative of “many centers of decision making that are formally independent of each other. Whether they actually function independently, or instead constitute an interdependent system of relations, is an empirical question in particular cases”. Using a ground up, across multi-leveled social and kinship networks, the Gullah Geechee wield discernable authority in governing the inland coastal regions of Ashepoo, Combanhee and Edisto (ACE) basin (Berkes 2008). Gradually recognizing the limitations of governance approaches, predicated on simple mathematical models, government agencies are presently attempting to gain a better understanding of local realities through the adoption of complex multiple authority models of governance (Agrawal, 2005; Li, 2002; TallBear, 2013). Further, the presumption of achieving sustainable management of coastal resources by relinquishing all authority to state agencies has failed to produce the intended outcomes in St. Helena Island and similar management regimes worldwide (Berkes 2008, Li 2002, Ostrom 2010).

In reality, state agencies are dependent on communities, categorized as unofficial authorities, in order to support a cash economy based on a tourist industry comprised predominantly of recreational homeowners (Anderson, 2007; Bilby, 2005). Hegemonic power, although generally perceived as static and unyielding, is in fact an element of fluid power constellations constituted as a result of specific historical and spatial realities and authorities (Hall, 1996; Moore, 2005). Hence, within the triad of motion analytic constituting polycentric authority, the entity that best achieves the objectives of the

constellation retains power as long as warranted in alignment with the particular situation (Moore, 2005). Contrary to the dominant discourse of state authorities, relational power enables the strategic exertion of power by groups ostensibly disenfranchised or without power, such as in negotiations with regulatory agencies and private property owners (Hall, 1996). As a result, the Gullah Geechee are rarely deterred from self-determination pursuits attributed to a lack of access to state regulatory process based on language, transportation or inhospitable behavior. The difficulty in state agencies conceding the realities of polycentric authority, on the other hand, is acknowledging the surrender of power to groups generally perceived as “wards” of the agencies rather than equitable partners (Bilby, 2005; Takaki, 1982)

Although acknowledging reciprocal relations may be infrequent, power transitioning among disparate spheres of authority exemplifies the relational governance of South Carolina’s sea islands. In fact scholars found that local informal governance, resulting from polycentric authority schemes, manage coastal resources more efficiently as a result of cooperative efforts built on trust established through kinship and social networks (Berkas, 2008; Ostrom 2010). Community devised networks produce the appropriate environment for not only acknowledging heterogeneity within the indigenous community but also honoring a cadre of approaches ranging from cultural fishing practices to community sanctioning of local natural resources. Ostrom (2010) further argues that greater cooperation occurs in instances whereby local users of the resources develop and agree and appropriate management of the resource including sanctioning mechanism.

Common pool resources along St. Helena Island’s shoreline that were once accessible and managed for the benefit of the community are presently demarcated by newly erected fences. While conducting a shoreline observation a property owner inquired about what I was catching at low tide. After telling him of my crab bounty, I ask if he also harvested shellfish or fished in the area. “No” he emphatically responded. “I buy whatever we eat. I’ve no interest in fishing. Fish we like isn’t caught here—halibut and cod. Easy to buy at the market.” The property owner’s comments illustrate different priorities for coastal resources. Although aesthetics are important, the Gullah Geechee value shoreline areas beyond beauty and symbolic capital. Recreational homeowners, however have little interest in the practical consumptive use of coastal resources, as illustrated by the property owner.

Gullah Geechee fishers, recreational homeowners, hereafter referred to as property owners and county officials informants revealed another enforcement phenomenon. Property owners play a significant role in resource governance as the primary group authorizing shoreline access. Permission to cross private property to access waterways is granted by waterfront property owners. They decide as one property owner stated “who’s a good Black or a bad Black”. Thus, property owners determine a person’s acceptability for harvesting fish and shellfish by classifying prospects as good or bad. Good was broadly defined as someone known by the property owner personally or through an acquaintance. My positioning as researcher, from a prestigious university, afforded me the designation of “good” Black thus granted spatial access denied to “bad” Blacks. The Gullah Geechee are not

bounded into groups delineating a concise sense of territory (Li, 2002). Hence, blackness became the prevailing identity within the black/white binary that is further bifurcated into good or bad (Anderson, 2007; Schimmel, 1991; Sturm, 2002). Ribot and Peluso (2003) suggests focusing on who has the “ability” to benefit from a particular resources rather than relying solely on constructs produced through conventional property regimes provides a more accurate account of resource users.

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, located in Columbia, is the regulatory agency for coastal resources. The drive north from St. Helena to Columbia requires approximately three hours. As a result, county sheriffs also act as fish and game regulations enforcers in St. Helena Island. Fences and the capacity to participate in participatory approaches are two ways access to resources is controlled by different elements of coastal resource management power constellations. Examined within political-economic and cultural frames, physical objects seemingly as benign as a fence is in fact a “technology of access control both because it physically keeps people away from a resource and it symbolizes or communicates intent to restrict access” (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Inequitable power is further wielded by controlling who has access to authority. Due to the location of South Carolina Department of Natural Resources in Columbia, only individuals with the capacity to travel extended distances from St. Helena Island are able to engage in the requisite lobbying, communicating, or permit filing required to legally access a specific resource. Even in instances in which community members successfully traversed one-lane roads and highways crisscrossing marshlands to reach state agencies, “participation” also presents challenges (Ribot & Peluso, 2003).

Immersed in a formal regulatory environment that privileges written documentation and oral presentations in English only, communicating in English interspersed with Gullah frequently results in claims by agency representatives of their inability to understand community members (Chandler, Mills, Peterkin, & McCollough, 2008). It is important to note, such assertions by agency representatives were not necessarily explicitly conveyed, but rather became a part of dichotomous “dance” or performance between us (agency) and them (community) (Chandler, Mills, Peterkin, & McCollough, 2008; Ebron, 2002). A few illustrations of the dance include, agency representative constantly asking community members to repeat themselves, whether the proper agency form was submitted regarding their concern, or directing constituents “standing before them” to agency websites for policy clarification. In my role as researcher, community members often requested that I communicate their requests to agency representative, since I was perceived as “speaking the language”. More important, the cultural capital representative of my education, university affiliation and western accent, elevated my blackness in the southern black/white binary, to that of scholar privileged with access to formal forms of authority (Agrawal 2005, Finney 2014).

Institutional regulation, ecological practices, and subject formation are related to and depend on various forms of knowledge. But a central and particular feature of the knowledges that became a part of environmental regulations from the 1860s onward was their genesis in an invocation of expert authority. Even more crucially, new ways to produce knowledge, through statistics and

numbers, were combined with the claims to expert authority on which regulations depend (and which shape practices). –Arun Agrawal

Further, as an academic scholar, or “scientist”, the knowledge I produced had greater legitimacy in policy circles than knowledges and practices of community members (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). In fact governance scholars argues as also noted by Agrawal above, that bureaucratization that is, the use of “statistics, maps, numerical tables, and their collation in specific formats can become the basis for producing new forms of knowledge that make some actions seem naturally more appropriate than other as an invaluable aid to the process of government” (Agrawal, 2005; Nadasdy, 2003). In many instances the adoption of participatory approaches has the effect of ensuring the domination of “professional experts” who are in reality extremely skeptical of substantively engaging community members in the process (Li, 2002; Nadasdy 2003).

Ironically, many requests for my assistance from the Gullah Geechee were as simple as being placed on a Marine Advisory Committee (MAC) meeting email list or wading through the labyrinth of bureaucracy to identify the correct person of contact for a specific issue. Yet, the Gullah Geechee typically lacked the access needed to engage at any level. Although the obstacles prohibiting substantive engagement in the regulatory process appear minimal, the cumulative effect of a multitude of “minor” slights creates an incessant stream of intimidation. Most community members, as a result, opted-out of such processes, rather than further subjecting themselves to humiliating and infuriating episodes (Li, 2002; Ray, 2007)

Access to managing common pool resources presents other challenges within the triad as well. The plantation psyche is one challenge unique to South Carolina’s sea islands (Blake & Simmons, 2008). The language of slavery normalizes racialized space. Couched within a plantation culture, individualism is the rational for racial and economic disparity on St. Helena Island. Thus, a culture of servitude prevails legitimating dispossession of space through a contemporary binary of tourist and servant. Further, constant exposure to the plantation culture on the island and adjacent space, normalized racial and gender hierarchies of the antebellum era for several Gullah Geechee and recreational property owners.

Establishing trust within the Gullah Geechee community is often challenging, particularly in relation to members parroting the dominant narratives of racial inferiority. Ironically, it was not uncommon for particular community members to vehemently deny the existence of a plantation culture, even in cases in which they are specifically asked about the retention of plantation names for present day residential and recreational communities. “They rather work for the white man rather than for me or themselves” one informant lamented. “It’s that slave mentality”, he continued. Some fishers resorted to working alone, despite the availability of members within their kinship networks, as a result of family members internalized racial hierarchies.

Paradoxically, Gullah Geechee indigeneity is more accurately portrayed in relation to their limited access to whites, beginning in the antebellum period, through a lens of social

superiority rather than inferiority (Blake & Simmons, 2008). The environment produced by St. Helena Island's historic remoteness was absent of the shame and humiliation commonly associated with Gullah Geechee beingness. Spatially specific language and cultural practices validated Gullah Geechee indigenous distinctiveness, while reaffirming their capacity for self-sufficiency and self-determination. In culturally and geographically demarcated space, the indigenous population is unapologetically Gullah Geechee (Campbell, 2002; Chandler, Mills, Peterkin, & McCollough, 2008). The language and behaviors outsiders consider backwards, during the 17th and 18th centuries, constituted an indigenous belongingness that precludes universal comprehension or acceptance.

The Gullah Geechee recognize that how they define their indigenous identity, past and present, is vastly more important than the perception of others (Griaule, 1970; Opala, 1987). Although, St. Helena Island's isolation was instrumental in preserving indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions still evident in present day, it is important to emphasize that the isolation was not devoid of external contact. In fact, Motary (2008) argues that South Carolina was far from being isolated, particularly since it was "more actively engaged with the world economy than most other British North American colonies". As such, colonization had a profound influence on knowledge and identity production in St. Helena's Sea Islands.

Regardless of the expectations of regulatory agencies and coastal access challenges, the Gullah Geechee persist in harvesting abundances. "Regulations not a problem, vacation homes don't bother me either... just fish anyway" a fisher commented. He went on to describe the fabrication of a shrimp decline, suspecting that a few shrimp boat captains with political clout lobbied for a change in regulations to compensate for insufficient yields. In fact the informant went on to describe creek locations, requisite water temperatures and depths for shrimp harvests contending that enforcement agents were not knowledgeable of optimum sites and conditions. Conceding instances of oyster bed declines and parasites on shrimp were attributed to an influx of fresh water, he argued that new regulations failed to address the actual issues contributing to climate change.

Although the fisher's brother visiting from another state echoed this sentiment, he was surprised by the abundance of shrimp caught that morning because of state advisories declaring a scarcity of yields. The fisher however viewed the bounty as normal stating "plenty of shrimp, bass and oysters in this area". Due to the large yield, the brother took more than his usual supply home for distribution within the kinship network. In spite of the fisher's high yield however, the demand for his harvest still exceeded his capacity. In fact, their intimate knowledge of the land and waterways enable indigenous self-determination pursuits to proceed through cooperative efforts fusing the intersection of paths of the exotic native and cultural expert rather than the agency prescribed parallel paths. The art of stitching cast nets, spearing flat fish in the tide pools and harvesting oysters using baskets made from marsh sweet grass continue within a web of regulations seemingly only efficient in paralyzing traditional fishing practices. Hence regardless of imposing regulations, the Gullah Geechee persevere in practices integral to their identity serving as witnesses of resource abundance rather than scarcity.

Shifting Tides: Resource Abundance

Peering over the dock at low tide, I noticed a small but steady disturbance in the water. Something was burrowing into the sand. During the next shoveling I caught a glimpse of what appeared to be a lobster tail. “That couldn’t be”, I uttered to no one in particular. Concentrating more intensely, I confirmed that it was a lobster. Excitedly, I conveyed my sighting to a key informant. “Nobody can ever claim they’re without food here on the island”, she merely responded. Later I also share my observation with her brother. He too was nonplussed. “You can also catch flounder there in the pools at low tide”, he says. Amazed at the abundance, of delectable morsels used in gourmet cuisines throughout the world within grasp of the shoreline, I immediately began preparing for an evening of fishing. Gig, flashlight and wading boots in hand, I mentioned to my informant, that I was off to catch flounder guided by her brother’s instructions. After a long silence she slowly said, “be sure to hang your phone around your neck”. Admittedly I was slightly concerned by her remark, but not to the extent of altering my evening gigging plans. As I was loading my gear into the truck however, I received an urgent call from her brother. “You need a boat, Sharon”, he stated emphatically. “You can’t get to the shallow pools on foot”. “Oh”, I said releasing a heavy sigh.

The overarching rationale for the Gullah Geechee’s disdain for poverty frameworks and notions of resource scarcity can be attributed to their distinctive realities of the continuance of traditional practices grounded in a self-sufficiency ideology that I call resource abundance. Gullah Geechee fishers prefer to operate within an unofficial capacity to manage coastal common resources pools, thereby avoiding rigorous and often prohibitive regulations (Ostrom 1990). Since common pool and common property resources are often confused, I begin this section with an overview of the definitions. A common pool resource may be owned as government property, private property, community property or have no ownership. Common property regimes are particular social arrangement regulating the preservation, maintenance and consumption of a common pool resource. Berkes et.al (1989) notes four primary property-rights regions governing common property resources as illustrated in Table 2.

Property Regime	Description
Open Access	The lack of property rights and is free and open to all individuals desiring to use resources
Private Property	Property that is legally owned by an individual or corporation who has the right to regulate the use of the property
Communal	Property held by an identifiable community of users who can exclude others and regulate the use of the property

State	Property owned by state government which in turn controls access and the use of resources within the property
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TABLE 2. COMMON POOL RESOURCES. FOUR PRIMARY COMMON PROPERTY REGIMES GOVERNING COMMON POOL RESOURCES.

Fundamental to property regimes are the associated rights of access for each category. Through Ostrom's meta-analysis of common pool resource studies, she notes five primary property rights associated with property regimes: 1) access or the right to enter a particular property, 2) withdrawal or more precisely, the right to harvest a resource, 3) management defined as possessing the right to transform or manage resource 4) exclusion, meaning the right to determine who can use the resources by controlling access and, 5) the right to lease or sell first four rights (Ostrom 2010). In so doing, resource users and owners determine who has access and also enforces the unofficial coastal management system of common pool resources. Access to the shoreline is typically accomplished through traversing private land or using public land at boat landings, marinas and state parks. Multiple users managing common pool resources generally first establish boundary rules for determining who can use the resource, followed by creating rules to control resource allocation flows, defining actions required for efficient monitoring of common pool areas, and finally determining the local sanctioning appropriate in the event that rules are violated (Agrawal 2008, Berkes 2008, Ostrom 2010).

Women in St. Helena Island are responsible for securing sufficient food for family member of the immediate household, in addition to extended family members living locally and out-of-town and neighbors (Guthrie, 1996; Jackson, 1993). In fact, a common sight along the rivers, creeks and shorelines of St. Helena Islands is Gullah Geechee women cast netting, bogging, hand line dipping and rod fishing harvesting crab, shrimp and sheepshead as part of livelihood strategies sustained through social and kinship networks. Functioning from a tradition of limited refrigeration and access to grocery stores, the Gullah Geechee using a communal property regime, rely on creeks and rivers near their homes to provide sustenance, such as shrimp for breakfast (Carney, 2001). St. Helena Island has only two boat landings Eddings Point and Station Creek. Lands End is the sole public beach (SCDNR, 1999). St. Helena's unique harvesting and cultivation rhythm is synchronized with the high, low and shifting tides. Shellfish harvesting, crabbing, shrimping and fishing are linked to a particular tide or during the upwelling of shifting tides. As a result, the tides determine the particular shoreline activity at a particular time, for example women harvesting crab during shifting tide for family meals.

The women's practices evidence an informal economy in which daily catches are distributed to family, extended family, and community members (Béné, Steel, Luadia, & Gordon, 2009). Invoking usufruct rights Gullah Geechee women fishers, persist in traditional practices in spite of access restrictions imposed by private property regimes as a result of their customary and familial obligations. Recognition of gendered roles is critical to achieving livelihood objectives, as women are the primary community members

responsible for gathering and harvesting resources within common pools (Agrawal 2005, Ray 2007, Roy 2010). Gullah Geechee men, on the other hand, generally fish from a bateau, small powerboat or contract out as laborers on shrimping vessels for extended periods in the sea (Jones-Jackson, 1987; Joyner, 1985). In spite of a community sanctioned right-to-use practice, which enables access to the shoreline and the fulfillment of the Gullah Geechee 's self-sufficiency objectives, such informal processes are still a violation of state law. One of the critical dilemmas of "informal" practices as a result, is the unpredictability of state enforcement (Cordell & McKean, 1986).

The Gullah Geechee's informal exchange economy narrative counters the cash economy narrative in St. Helena Island. The exchange economy is based on the transferring of goods and services without an exchange of cash. As a non-monetary system, the value of goods and services exchanged are omitted from governing agencies standard of living assessments (Weiner, 1992). The Gullah Geechee, on the other hand, hold their cultural traditions and practices in much higher regard. Thus, exchanges occurring within the heterogeneous Gullah Geechee population are unrecognizable by most (Griaule, 1970). Relying on their traditional knowledge and cultural practices, the Gullah Geechee tap into the basis of their exchange economy, St. Helena Island's abundant resources.

The Gullah Geechee exchange economy consists of an array of value-laden categories. Traveling deep into woodland and across vast marshes, the Gullah Geechee harvest amply seafood to sustain their extended kinship networks. In so doing, they frequently exchange freshly caught shrimp, crab, oyster or flounder for the services of an electrician, automobile mechanic, or plumber. For example, 100 pounds of shellfish in the food category equates to \$1,000 in the services category that includes plumbing, electrical, or mechanical. Livestock and produce are also integral to the exchange economy. An equitable equation may also include the Sea Island's prized tomatoes or a calf. Although undoubtedly a peculiar sight to outsiders, witnessing a 300-pound calf transported in a bateau⁹ precariously between islands and the mainland, is not uncommon as a result of a local informal economy reliant on traditional modes of transportation. In fact, one individual often performs multiple jobs, that of plumber, electrician, machinist and crabber, for example. The multi-functional role is more the rule rather than the exception. Exchanging goods and services is fundamental to Gullah Geechee indigeneity and occurs on multiple levels. The most critical level of exchange consists of intra-Gullah Geechee transactions and resource distribution.

⁹ A flat bottom boat resembling a dugout canoe

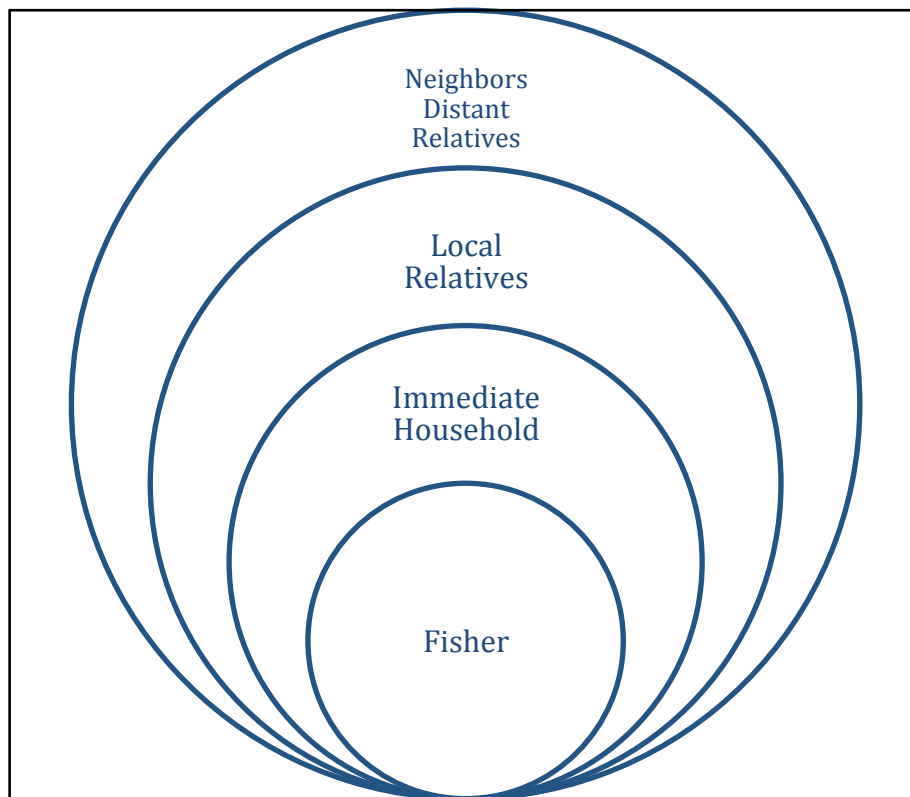


Figure 3. Extended Kinship and Social Distribution Network. Resources distributed through extended kinship and social networks with initial distributions to immediate household members, followed by a distribution to local relatives and neighbors and a final distribution to visiting and out of town relatives.

As illustrated in Figure 3 resource distribution fishers first distribute catch to family members in immediate household, second distribution is extended to local relatives, followed by a distribution neighbors. Any fish remaining is frozen and stored and distributed at a latter time to relatives visiting from out of town. In fact many out of town relatives rely on monthly distributions of seafood from the Sea Islands. Seafood is also transported to members within the extended kinship network when visiting relatives out of town, particularly senior relatives with limited mobility (Guthrie, 1996). Excesses of fish and shellfish are distributed to immediate and extended family members before offering to other women in the community.

Borrowing from the conventional economic terminology, exchanges also generate supplemental income for St. Helena Island's indigenous population. Exchanges between the exotic native and cultural expert provide sufficient supplemental income to sustain a desirable quality of life. One outcome of communal exchanges is that the goods and services received by the exotic native assists in maintaining alliances within the community in addition to aiding the Gullah Geechee continue practices integral to their cultural-based sovereignty. For instance, conventional jobs may limit engaging in traditional fishing practices such as cast netting, due to the importance of shifting tides. However, seafood caught by the cultural expert can supplement the dietary customs of the exotic native constrained by temporal and spatial restrictions of conventional occupations. Thus the

exotic native's livelihood strategy maintains the capacity of extending beyond the boundaries of a cash economy while the cultural expert maintains alliances fundamental to indigenous identity and self-determination.

The exotic native preserving access to land is equally important in exchanges with the cultural expert. As Ribot and Peluso (2003) argue "those who control physical access to resources may influence who get to work in extraction and production". Possessing physical access to resources is a vital element of the exotic native's identity intricately linked to self-determination pursuits. State collaborative agreements with indigenous communities position the exotic native with land access. Securing the presence of community members directly impacted by coastal management projects is one of natural resource agencies primary participatory approaches objectives. As a result, the exotic native, in assuming her or his expected role, is granted access to land through the state's collaborative efforts. Wielding the power leveraged through state collaborative efforts, also positions the exotic native to grant the cultural expert access to land, in an unofficial capacity. For instance Agrawal (2005) argues "in many cases, as new market actors gain access to a particular common pool resource, they seek alliances with state actors to defend the primacy of their claims".

In spite of cooperative efforts however, under the guise of sustainable development and coastal resources management, land access is continually compromised. Land assessed by the Gullah Geechee, using their indigenous knowledge and determined to be perfectly suitable for traditional harvesting, is often designated hazardous by regulatory agencies and zoned as non-harvest areas with restricted access. Informants stated such restrictions are merely tactics to thwart traditional indigenous livelihoods, that of cultural experts, in support of big development/tourism and large-scale commercial fishery operations. As a result, state regulations effectively reduce harvestable land critical to Gullah Geechee livelihoods. Informal intra-Gullah Geechee agreements however, enable access to areas typically inaccessible to the general public.

Conceivably the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC)¹⁰ commissioners, indigenous committee members and National Park Service employees responsible for managing GGCHC may grant access to restricted areas within the corridor. The exotic native employed in the tourist industry, as a caddy at a golf resort for instance, may also grant access to privatized harvest areas unofficially. These unofficial exchanges, unrecognized by most outsiders, illustrate Gullah Geechee self-sufficiency and determination. Thus, a poverty framework provides an inauthentic characterization of Gullah Geechee identity and beingness within the dominant narrative of resource scarcity and poverty, rather than within self-proclaimed narratives of abundance. Illustrating once again and in concert with Zora Neal Huston's anthropological analysis of black families in the American South, the Gullah Geechee refuse to succumb to a culture of poverty (Hurstons 2008).

¹⁰ Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor was commissioned by Congress to establish a corridor extending over the states North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida for the preservation of Gullah Geechee culture.

Conclusion

The notion that indigenous knowledge might be used to reevaluate current practices and theories about how people relate to the world around them is rarely considered. — Foucault

Recognizing the profitability of poverty schemes, the Gullah Geechee shifted power to sail on the tides of self-sufficiency and self-determination. Not succumbing to the one-size-fits-all governance regimes of state regulatory agencies as exemplified by the exotic native, the Gullah Geechee remain acutely cognizant of their livelihood strategies' ability to leverage invisibility in order to effectively pursue self-determination along the path of the cultural expert and exotic native while avoiding the exploits of consumerism. Although the exotic native pathway produces an imaginary of self-determination, full immersion into a cash economy creates a vicious cycle of dependency on goods and services ecologically unsustainable and detrimental to human's well-being and the preservation of cultures (Roy, 2010; Ruether, 2008).

Contrary to quantitative information and scientific methodology of western science, indigenous knowledge reflects the social embeddedness of knowledge that is qualitative and antidotal in nature (Berkes, 2008; TallBear, 2013). Governmental agencies often erroneously presume that integrating indigenous knowledge with science will automatically lead to improved resource management and tribal empowerment. However, Nadasy (2003) cautions that underlying assumptions and actions linked to certain types of knowledge are instrumental in preserving hegemonic power and the disempowerment of indigenous communities.

Foucault also offers two compelling arguments in relation to how power is constituted and maintained. First, knowledge and power are inseparable. Second, institutional power arises from the ability to shape discourse as it does for the use (or threat) of coercive force. As a result, the development of natural resource institutions and practices become inextricably linked to the expansion of state power. The notion that indigenous knowledge might be used to reevaluate current ecological practices and natural resource theories, within the context of how people relate to the world around them, is rarely considered by state regulatory agencies. Although governance is an all encompassing, or perhaps consuming is a more appropriate term, the "type of governance is not important rather it is how a particular governance arrangement fits the local ecology, how specific rules are developed and adapted over time and whether users consider the system to be legitimate and equitable" (Ostrom, 2010).

Cognizance of the appropriate "fit" within the social and ecological community is of particular relevance to Gullah Geechee due to the fact that "in many contexts where imposed environmental agendas framed in participatory rhetoric have reduced the political and economic security" of the targeted population (Li, 2002). Even though local communities having a high level of rule-making autonomy, can improve livelihoods and resources sustainability, it is also important to note that "official" governance processes may remain completely unaware of the particulars of effective local governance of resources. Invisibility I discovered, for example, is in many instances an intentional and

prime illustration of the Gullah Geechee wielding power. Thus a greater focus on how power works within communities and in the governance of common pool resources can help strengthen the body of literature on communal property regimes (Berkes, 1989; Hall, 1996). As Agrawal (2005) notes the construction of ecological subjects through agency derives analyses must in addition to considering the implications of markets, demography and state governance, pay close attention the historical, spatial, social, or political framed contextually.

The Gullah Geechee invoke the performative in order to be heard in agency directed participatory approaches schemes. They also “hitch” a particular identity or as Hall (1996) argues they align with particular groups as needed and disconnect once the alliance is not longer necessary, with other governmental agencies such as the National Park Service. As a result, the Gullah Geechee use their relational authority not only to gain access to land, as demonstrated with the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor agreement, they also use their cultural-based sovereignty to ensure that land of which they have intimate knowledge retains the ecological characteristics vital to their cultural traditions and practices. In so doing, the Gullah Geechee are able to effectively leverage their indigenous identity to gain access to land within the state’s economic reform that uses the “marketing of nativism” as a key strategy (Anderson, 2007). The Gullah Geechee thus continue to operate from a framework of resource abundance, regardless of “official” accounts that portray them otherwise.

Banking on the Sea: Gullah Geechee Livelihoods

My parents always worked for themselves. I was confused. I thought I was poor...I realized later that we weren't poor. We had everything we needed – Gullah Geechee oysterman

An Abundance of Scale within Land and Seascapes

An abundance of seafood is provided with each shifting tide. The Gullah Geechee livelihoods are intricately linked to the ebb and flow of each shifting tide. Dispensing with the notion of poverty often used to describe indigenous populations, I chose to use an ethnographic approach in an effort to capture the Gullah Geechee's authentic indigenous voice in relation to their cultural traditions and practices. In adopting a methodology of narratives, participant observations and reflexivity, my initial poverty framework gradually transformed into livelihoods precisely as a result of the empirical data gathered in the field. As I discussed in the governance chapter, poverty is a profitable enterprise on a local, national and global level that uses race and gender as the guiding criteria. Blackness, indigeneity and womanhood, within the dominant discourse portrayed by governments and private institutions such as United States and International Monetary Fund, as a result are synonymous with poverty (Ng'Weno, 2007). For example, President Johnson's "war on poverty" of the 1960s directed at African Americans, women and children, continues having traction today with policymakers commissioned to resolve the inequitable distribution of wealth in America (Roy, 2010). The Gullah Geechee however, adamantly rejected notions of poverty. Notions of ownership within Western and African societies are constructed from two vastly different worldviews. The former consciousness is constituted by a philosophy devoid or detached from spirituality. The latter belief system in contrast is deeply intertwined with spirituality and acknowledgement of the unknown.

African philosophy grounded in an ideology of metaphysics and reciprocity is vital to the Gullah Geechee's worldview and traditional ecological knowledge guiding their practices and behaviors (Bilby, 2005; Opala, 1987). I was therefore tasked with proceeding beyond the boundaries of the dominant literature of rich or poor to discover an alternate framework for critiquing blackness, indigeneity and gender. To do so, over the course of three summers, positioning myself as Zora Neal Hurston described her ethnographer role as a "witness", I conducted participant observations at local fishing spots in the Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto (ACE) basin (Gates, 1999). Rather than adopting a method based on the conventional imaginary of participant observation as an "objective" investigator appropriately distanced from research "subjects", I embraced a witnessing approach that fully acknowledged the potential effects my presence could have on a particular situation (Glissant, 2010; Haraway, 1988; Mudimbe, 1988). Therefore, I did not gather data in the sense of a voyeur, but more as a fisher by actively engaging in activities to the best of my ability (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2007; Deloria, 1998). Positioning myself as fisher, particularly one with an insatiable appetite for seafood, granted access that enabled me to "work with and not for" the Gullah Geechee (TallBear, 2013). In other words, I had no intention of capturing their stories in isolation or without being an active participant. In so doing, while accompanying the Gullah Geechee as they harvested the sea's bounty, I also fished, shrimped, crabbed and gathered oysters right alongside my informants, witnessing firsthand the challenges and triumphs of a life in sync with the tides.

Three distinctive levels of economy are prominent in West African and Central African fisheries: medium-to-large scale commercial, rural-urban trading and rural (local). In this chapter, I reveal abundances of scales, similar to African fisheries, on three levels through the narratives of a commercial oysterman operating in a cash-based market, an exchange and cash crabber working between rural and urban markets and a local familial crabber¹¹ who operates primarily within a gift economy in the local rural community. Although each fisher is typically identified by one particular economy, in this chapter I demonstrate the interlocking attributes fundamental to the Gullah Geechee's sense of beingness and self-determination. Due to the myriad of definitions and framings, I begin with the theoretical framing for traditional ecological knowledge in support of my use of the term to connote indigenous knowledge produced by indigenous peoples. Even though, the Gullah Geechee are often rendered invisible, through post-colonial representations, in this chapter I also reveal that within their politics of refusal, how they define themselves, regardless of how others perceive them, is integral to their identity-based sovereignty and indigenous articulation in the Americas.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge Theoretical Framework

Western scientific knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge are vastly different. Building on the importance of local knowledge, I refer to Fikret Berkes (2008) framing of traditional ecological knowledge. Berkes defines traditional ecological knowledge as "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment". The formation of traditional ecological knowledge is comprised of four fundamental levels Berkes (2008) posits. Constituting the inner most core is knowledge of local species, habitat and behaviors. Reverberating from the core's spatial knowledge is a ring of appropriate practices. The third layer is comprised of social institutions responsible for rule-making and governance of social relationships. Last, the fourth level, intricately weaved throughout all levels reinforcing the whole, is consciousness or the worldview that shapes and provides meaning to an individual or community's perception about the world (Berkes, 2008). In this context, local knowledge is equated to indigenous knowledge. As Berkes argues:

Traditional ecological knowledge is often an integral part of the local culture, and management prescriptions are adapted to the local area. Resource users themselves are the "managers"; they identify themselves as members of a local community and not as individual scientists or resource managers answerable to their peers or to an anonymous government agency. Traditional systems tend to have a large moral and ethical context; there is no separation between nature and culture. In many traditional cultures nature is imbued with sacredness.

Although several scholars argue that all knowledge is local, a few also note that not all knowledges have the capacity for extending beyond their spatial origins (Nadasdy, 2003;

¹¹ Harvest is used for family members in immediate household first with subsequent distributions to local relatives and neighbors.

TallBear, 2013). Power, linked to individuals, groups and institutions of authority, plays a critical role in determining whether or not a specific knowledge has the capacity to travel. Paradoxically, widely disseminating local knowledge is the presumed objective of knowledge production. Yet, in many instances the sacredness of knowledge, particularly in indigenous communities, precludes the propensity to reveal local information. Local community members thus are also capable of exerting power. One of the consequences, of such selectively, however is exogenous authorities producing knowledge, translated from their perspective, of local experiences. One of the consequences of asymmetric power however, is that indigenous knowledge produced from within the community typically remains stationary. Knowledge *about* local practices and culture that is typically produced by researchers and academic scholars outside the community however, becomes highly mobile as a result of government agencies and universities' greater capacity to disseminate knowledge.

Family Business: Commercial

The oysterman is one of the few if not the only Gullah Geechee who owns and operates a bait and supply shop in the entire county of Beaufort. He inherited the business from his parents and has used it as his sole source of income and livelihood for over fifty years. I met the oysterman at the bait shop at daybreak. Jumping into his Ford truck, I noticed the lack of inside panels, doorknobs, visors and apparently seatbelts that he made no attempt to fasten. Following suit, I also disregarded seatbelts, particularly since they were obviously not one of the vital components among the rust, shrimp heads, oyster shells, cast nets, buckets and racks strewn about functioning as the 'spit and glue' of the vehicle. He quickly apologized for the cabin's pungent smell, stating that he had forgotten to discard yesterday's shrimp heads from the truck bed. I assured him the smell was not a problem but asked if my window rolled down. He laughed, saying that the driver's side does not go up and the passenger's side does not go down. I can probably get the back window open, he offered. Immersed in the tantalizing sights, sounds and smells of the island we set off in the sweltering heat with one lone cabin window slightly ajar.

Expecting to proceed to the public boat launch I settled in for the 20-minute ride to Eddings Point Landing. However, the 'preparation ritual' was still in progress. We made three additional stops for supplies and equipment at the hardware store, gas station, and once again returning to the bait shop for a life jacket for me, unbeknownst to me at the time, before actually proceeding to the boat launch. At the dock the oysterman launched a 14-foot powerboat reminiscent of his truck, having only a steering wheel and no seats or benches. Using a small plastic table as his seat and a tarp tossed over the bow as mine, he continued readying the boat by emptying one of several buckets of shrimp heads, before covering with plywood and positioning near the stern. In so doing, the boat now possessed a bench, storage area for the day's catch and room for my feet. I used the life jacket as a cushion, atop the bow, only after convincing my host I am quite comfortable on the water. Crab shells, oysters shells, shrimp heads and decaying fish covered every inch of his boat, leaving no doubt I was aboard a fishing vessel. Two hours, after the time we met at the shop, we pushed back from the dock. The other oysterman scheduled to meet us at the boat landing was a no-show. Absence of the much needed additional hand is taken in stride, as the oysterman casually mentioned, the most he can rely on was for folks not show up.

The embankments near the docks were teeming with oysters. He indicated several thriving oyster beds as we traveled up the channel. Those are all mines, the oysterman stated “but I can’t harvest them because Department Natural Resources says they’re polluted from run off. Do you see anything that’ll cause pollution,” he asked rhetorically. “Black folks used to live there,” he continued as we move deeper into the channel “my aunt had a house right over there”. The majority of the land along the St. Helena Sound now belongs to recreational homeowners, including waterfront acreage specified in cultural leases (Beaufort County Planning Dept, 2012). The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (1999) issues cultural leases to individuals and corporations for an annual fee for cultivating and harvesting land designated in the leases. Each leaseholder must also comply with SCDNR’s prescribed cultivation methods of seasonal shell planting or alternative approaches approved by the agency. Although still thriving with seemingly healthy oyster beds, the oysterman asserted that regulatory agencies condemned a significant portion of lands, demarcated by property owned by recreational homeowners, previously harvested by the Gullah Geechee.

The oysterman has a cultural lease covering one percent of the oyster beds in South Carolina. An individual from out of state, he scoffed, leases the majority of the oyster beds. “Don’t the folks take the oysters that are right in front of their homes?” I inquired. “Yes, but I don’t mind that. If they’re taking them to eat that’s fine, it’s people taking to sell that’s the problem”. We moved further along the channel towards another shoreline flourishing with oysters that is also one of his harvest areas. The oysterman cultivated the area for two years before he received notice from SCDNR informing him that he did not possess a lease for the area harvested. He showed another area just beyond the beds teeming with oysters. Viewing only vegetated landmass I asked him to confirm the area he was referring.

The area delineated in his updated cultural lease was an elevated area of marshland approximately ten feet from the shoreline. The area behind the embankment was inaccessible marshland and unsuitable for oyster cultivation. “What am I supposed to do with that”, he stated as he shrugged before maneuvering us further down the river. On the south bank most of the embankment was barren unlike the thriving embankments near the docks. “That’s all my land,” he indicated pointing to a barren embankment barraged by incessant wakes. “I’ve put shell on it several times but they just wash out. See all these powerboats and shrimp boats we just passed? They create huge wakes that don’t allow the oysters to take hold. I can’t grow anything here, but this is what they give me. They think I can’t anyway, that’s their intent. I’ve got other plans.” He continued describing the difficulty in establishing oyster reefs in areas shared with a steady stream of recreational and commercial boats.

The oysterman asserted that he was only able to obtain a cultural lease after threatening to file a discrimination claim against South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. In retaliation for his persistent pursuits of self-sufficiency the oysterman’s lease was granted in the less desirable low yield areas. “People from out of the state get better leases than me” he declared. In responding to my inquiries regarding the rationale for inequitable allocations and resource access he stated racism without hesitation. The oysterman aptly

assessed racist ideology that legitimates norms and customs producing inequitable resource allocations as he astutely expounded on racially motivated practices (Agrawal, 2005). "It's just a way to limit me. It's not just them (White people), he continued exasperated "I can't even get Black folks to work for me. They rather work for the white man. I pay more and they still rather work for white people." He described collaboration attempts with other oystermen and crabbers who were efficient in securing high yields, that preferred to contract their labor to larger commercial operations rather than work for themselves. The no-show oysterman also exemplified such behavior.

In spite of the immense difficulties inherent within an atmosphere of exclusionary practices and intentional failure the oysterman persisted in his self-determination pursuits. After surveying a substantial portion of his former and present harvest areas the oysterman docked at one of his oyster cultivation sites a 2.5-acre area. Jumping on shore with nothing more than an ordinary yard rake, he explained how oysters have to be cared for just like a garden. "You've gotta open them up and thin 'em out so they can get the nutrients in the mud" he stated. "They need space just like a garden so they can grow big. If they stay bunched together they're small". In the sweltering 95-degree humid climate, the oysterman cultivated the bed by breaking the tall oyster columns down and spreading them throughout the mud. "You do this all by yourself", I asked incredulous. "Yes", reiterating, "I can't count on people to show up". Most of his leased areas required approximately a week to complete. In sync with the tides, he cultivated the oyster beds as much as the river allowed during low tide. After cultivating an area approximately thirty feet by ten feet he returned to the boat to tour the rest of the area.

An ideology of abundance and self-sufficiency permeated the oysterman's every utterance and action. As we glided over St. Helena Sound to our final destinations the roar of the engine created an opportunity to reflect on practices and beliefs responsible for the tenacity and confidence in self-sufficiency several Gullah Geechee exhibited. Gazing at the miles and miles of oyster and clam beds along the shoreline, I recalled an earlier conversation I had with his brother. "My parents always worked for themselves. I was confused. I thought I was poor. I believed what others said...I realized later that we weren't poor. We had everything we needed". The oysterman's brother went on to describe the shipping of boxes of crabs, shrimp, fish and oysters to family that had migrated north. He further commented on his perception that family members who moved north were rich, even though they were always in need of shipments of the abundance of food his parents cultivated and harvested at home. The practice of obtaining an ample supply of the island's seafood abundance while visiting or through regular shipments continues to present day. The brother who now "lives too far inland" as he stated, relishes the moments he can return home to St. Helena Island and go shrimping and crabbing. In fact, the out-of-town brother enjoyed reminiscing to the extent that a prompt regarding oyster cultivation and harvesting during his childhood was rarely necessary. "We harvested so many oysters when I was a child I had to shovel them into a dump truck, the large trucks with a hydraulic lift," he emphasized. "Once loaded we'd head out to Charleston to sell to the oyster houses. I'd forgotten how involved I was in the family business," he laughed.

The traditions of living off the land and self-determination values were instilled in the oysterman by his parent. His parents opened and operated the bait shop in the 1950s. In spite of competitors attempting to undercut fair market value with imported shrimp dumped in local markets, demand for the oysterman's shrimp continued to escalate to an extent exceeding his capacity at times. His traditional ecological knowledge enabled the acquisition of geographically specific shrimp species that were the appropriate prey for the predators including bass, blue tuna, flounder and black drum desired by recreational fishers. As a result, fishers who were frequently dissatisfied with low yields, produced by using foreign shrimp provided by chartered fishing boat captains, actively sought the oysterman's products.

The oysterman's traditional ecological knowledge is also demonstrated in his understanding of sustainable cultivations methods, such as managing the oyster bed "like a garden through the meticulous raking of the land in sync with low tides during the appropriate season. Further, he also illustrates proficiency in analyzing his role in SCDNR's community based natural resource management (CBNRM) approaches in his description of resource access and the ecological integrity of harvest sites. For example, SCDNR's designating highly productive land near property owned by recreational homeowners and resort developers as "polluted". Although the oysterman aptly notes that he is intentionally assigned the least desirable and productive land allocations due to the identity politics of race, he is not dissuaded. Failure may be the objective of SCDNR he asserts, but failure is by no means an option for him. This sentiment is also supported by scholars who argue that the outcome of CBNRM participatory approaches are often in conflict with community priorities or fail to address the needs and desires of indigenous resource users (Agrawal, 2005; Li, 2002; TallBear, 2013).

Fresh Crab Here: Rural-Urban Economy

In addition to having a livelihood that bridges the rural and urban economies, the crabber also lives in both spaces. He maintains his property on the island while only living in a urban space as his job as a direct service health provider requires. The crabbers has juggled between both spaces for nearly thirty years in hopes of one day being able to once again become self-sufficient through the traditional practices of crabbing alone. I met the crabber at a public boat dock and marina in Savannah. He was busily equipping his flat bottom outboard single engine boat as I approached. Just before we depart he anxiously retrieved a life vest brought specifically for my benefit. Once again I attempted making a convincing argument about my comfort on the water and thus not requiring the fluorescent orange personal safety device. Although not thoroughly persuaded my host conceded, yet still handed me the vest in the event I changed my mind. Using it once again as a cushion, I promptly positioned the vest on the stern deck.

As we bucked across the river crashing over wakes from larger vessels and skillfully maneuvering through the white caps of churning currents, the crabber blissfully described life on the river. He began by describing the evolution of his boat. "This used to be an ordinary rowboat" he started "I added the engine a while back. Later I added a steering wheel to make traveling and transporting people, animals and supplies through the creeks

and rivers a lot easier. I do it all myself.” Passing through the channel between Savannah and Hilton Head Island he reminisced about carrying his prize calf in his boat before adding the steering wheel. “I was fine as long as the water was calm and she didn’t move. There were a few scary moments” he laughed “but we made it safely to the island”. We continued bobbing and bouncing across the choppy waters blanketed by the river’s sprays every so often. Initially he kept a cautious eye on the river and me as though at a tennis tournament. Halfway to our destination he relaxed and allowed a small smile to escape as he admitted my statement of comfort was genuine. “Most researchers I’ve given tours don’t like riding in my little boat” he stated. Waving his arm over the expanse of the river as though a wand he described abundances accessible throughout the river while also identifying particular areas that are more productive than others.

The crabber used two 24” x 24” x 24 “ traps. Commercial crabbers are allowed to use up to fifty traps. Competing with the white crabbers has become more intense since the housing crisis, he explained. Most are from out of state and harvest on average with thirty traps. As a result of out of state commercial licensees aggressively harvesting a finite resource as though infinite, a phenomenon of scarcity was produced. I recalled earlier comments from local commercial fishers about the pressure to achieve higher yields in a climate of decline. One shrimper lamented that “shrimp doesn’t grow like corn” in response to industry’s unrealistic demand of the sea’s bounty. The crabber described the violence over territory breed by competitiveness precipitated by the notion of scarcity. He elaborated on several instances of sabotage by out of state commercial harvesters that intentionally cut buoy markers necessary for locating the submerged traps of local harvesters. He went on to describe how on other occasions, conflicts ensued as a result of out of state crabbers encroaching on traditional Gullah Geechee harvest areas. The typical practice was for outsiders to inundate informally governed common areas with their traps and guard against the trap’s removal with rifles cocked. Violence over territory was not uncommon and thus necessitated many local recreational and commercial harvesters to also carry weapons in order to preserve common pool resource areas in addition for self-protection.

Prior to an atmosphere of heighten competitiveness, the crabber harvested seasonally during the warmer month from April through September. The cooler winter months were deemed a non-harvest period by the Gullah Geechee in order to allow for growth and rejuvenation of the crabs. However, compelled by the competitiveness breed in a constructed climate of marine population abundances decline, crabs are now harvested by the crabber year round. After passing through the conflict zone, we approached an island where the crabber mentioned he hunted as a child. Identifying a densely wooded area, he explained how the land was annually cleared with fire to control growth and maintain habitat for wild hogs, deer and smaller game. “We cleared the area out with fire until the sheriff stopped us. Now it’s overgrown with trees and we can’t hunt there anymore.” Continuing along the waterway, the crabber also showed the former site of the island’s biggest employers, the oyster shucking plant. “It closed because the river got polluted”, he explains. “A lot of people left after it closed”. The blighted area now serves as a landmark of lost traditions and livelihoods for the Gullah Geechee, particularly women.

At the conclusion of our journey across the Savannah River to the island, his uncles, brothers and cousins met us at the dock. The lone bar and restaurant at the public dock operates a brisk business, particularly during dusk the crabber mentioned in passing. Boatloads of tourists, from Savannah trek out during happy hour for nightly entertainment, often nearly swamping his flat bottom boat as they whisk by in speedboats and cabin cruisers. Although perturbing, the nightly commotion on the river was not an unexpected phenomenon for the crabber, since the restaurant owner rakes in handsome profits from tourists seeking an authentic indigenous experience (Anderson, 2007). We proceeded over to his relatives fishing along the dock. No catches thus far, they responded to the crabber's inquiries about their progress. Slow progress along the river was a common trait among the Gullah Geechee fishers. Reaping the river's bounty was a way of life. The Gullah Geechee view the river as a living being, yielding abundances in sync with the rhythms of the land- and seascapes of the island. In other words, the river determines the appropriate time for a catch. Therefore, no catch is equally important as receiving a gift from the sea. The crabbers and his relatives were acutely aware that even though technological advances enable the production of increased yields, of a particular product, sustaining high yields of a finite resource is impossible (Behan, 1975; Berkes, 2008).

Forced to harvest crab year round, he noted that the water rarely reaches temperatures low enough to limit catches. It may require however harvesting at deeper depths to secure an adequate yield. He also described how crabs bury themselves in the mud during winter, thus allowing the use of the bogging harvesting method, whereby crabs are expertly scooped up from indentations in creek- and riverbeds. Again demonstrating his wealth of traditional ecological knowledge, the crabber noted the spatial and temporal criteria for harvesting blue crabs (*callinectes sapidus*). Mirroring western scientific methodology, the crabber affirmed an expertise in observations of nature by effortlessly explaining the behavioral patterns of blue crabs. The crabber and biologists, using separate frameworks in which the former operates through a lens as being a part of nature, noted areas deeper in the channels were the best locations to secure the larger blue crabs, as male migrate further inland during warmer months. He further described how female crabs, the smaller species, migrate to sounds and the ocean where salinity levels are more suitable for spawning (Burrell, Jr., Whitaker, Wenner, & DeLancey, 2009).

The crabber and his uncles used their bounty to supply the women on the island with crab. Transforming the morsels into an island delicacy, the women prepare and sell deviled crab to the boatloads of tourists visiting the island on their nightly treks and throughout the day on the weekend. They also sell their wares to vacation homeowners as part of a thriving catering enterprise and essential component of their livelihood strategy. In exchange for providing the women with crabs and an island ferry service, the crabbers receives goods and services including deviled crab, jams, canned goods of okra, tomatoes and corn, produce of tomatoes, watermelon, yams, blueberries and squash, livestock of chicken, pigs and goats and services of golf cart and bateaux use. The crabber considered his harvesting a hobby in spite of serving as one of the primary sources for fulfilling the Gullah Geechee islanders' demand for crab. A similar attitude, seemingly under valuing their traditional practices, was also attributed to an array of skills as evidenced in the description of daily

tasks performed by a Gullah Geechee met during the tour. “He installs most of the electrical wiring for the houses on the island,” he stated. “He also runs all the telephone wiring,” showing a recently installed pole and wiring. “That’s his house over there”. “The one with all the golf carts out front?” I inquired. “Yes, he’s also a mechanic”. I expressed seemingly because as was evidenced in the Gullah Geechee’s connection to the land- and seascapes of the island, in disowning representations of subsistence and poverty, actual behaviors and practices were frequently misinterpreted. In this case, the performance of tasks was conducted as a form of reciprocity in relation to the overall wellbeing of the community, rather than as a result of individual gains or benefit (Gordon, 2006; Opala, 1987).

The crabber envisions preserving the legacy of the Gullah Geechee on the island by transforming his unofficial ferry and tour services into an official business that is owned and operated by indigenous community members. Possessing a vague awareness of the efforts of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor¹² his objective is to form a productive collaboration with the National Park Service in which Gullah Geechee are substantively engaged in the process. Eager to portray an accurate account of Gullah Geechee contemporary realities and history, the crabber reminisced on representations in which islanders were perceived as primitive and isolated. “People are always saying we never got off the island. My daddy made moonshine and he had a lot of customers in Savannah including public officials. I used to ride with him almost every night back and forth to Savannah delivering goods. But that’s not what people want to hear. They want to think we never set foot off these islands, giving folks the impression that we’re ignorant and backwards. And backward people need help”. The crabber aptly alluded to the antithesis of progress produced by the dominant imaginary depicting Gullah Geechee identity as primitive and static. Framed within conventional ideologies of race, the Gullah Geechee’s blackness is equated to people without a culture, history and national or historical connection (Ng’Weno, 2007; Wade, 2013). Further, they are perceived to be incapable of providing any intellectual contributions to modernity as a racially inferior and uncivilized race (Wade, 2013).

We proceeded to other indicators of “progress”, in this case in the form of big development projects. Substantial island acreage is presently comprised of vacant vacation homes surrounding a massive manicured golf course. The crabber identified a tree in the center of the golf course as a former hiding place he used for camouflage while hunting hogs and rattlesnakes as a teenager. The crabber stated that this type of progress was not all bad, since the Gullah Geechee islanders were generously compensated for manicuring vacant landscapes and conducting maintenance on people-less houses. Ending our tour at another private dock on the periphery of the golf course, he described the unnerving phenomenon of fencing. Nothing incensed a Gullah Geechee more than erecting a fence, I recalled numerous interviewees stating. Vacation homeowners often erected fences on the perimeter of property lines, in an attempt to keep indigenous populations at bay. Scholars argue that fences represents “technologies of access control both because it physically

¹² The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor was designated by Congress in 2006 to assist states and local governments in interpreting the story of the Gullah Geechee and preserving Gullah Geechee history, folklore, arts, crafts, and music.

keeps people away from recourses and it symbolizes or communicated intent to restrict access (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). The crabber noted that the fence demarcating private property adjacent to the dock was actually encroaching on public lands. However, enforcement of such infractions was incredulously slow on the island.

As dusk fell, we raced back to his boat in order for the crabber to resume his informal ferry service. Due to the Gullah Geechee's frequency of travelling between the island and Savannah, the official ferry's cost was prohibitive for most. Assuming his obligation of ensuring the wellbeing of the community, the crabber willingly provides an unofficial ferry service. The official government subsidized ferry is mainly for tourists and vacation homeowners the crabber explained. Even though satisfying the high demand for his services appear taxing, the crabber rarely complained. Casually mentioning that he had two more trips to make across the river after ferrying me back to Savannah, before heading home, is just another example of the Gullah Geechee prioritizing the well being of the community over individual needs.

Crabbing for Food: Rural

Harvesting for the family is the final narrative illustrating an abundance of scale within the land- and seascapes of St. Helena Island. The familial crabber has worked in the service industry for approximately fifteen years. She has also consistently crabbed to fulfill the expectations of family and community members in relation to seafood abundances. I met the crabber at a local fishing spot, TomBee Bridge where she immediately began describing the sheer pleasure of fishing and crabbing. She further emphasized that she crabs for food. Fishing for food is an important distinction of resource use and value in an environment being transformed by an influx of tourists that experience the same level of excitement by engaging in catch and release activities. To catch and release or "toy with and toss" a gift of abundance is unfathomable to indigenous populations that view all flora and fauna as relatives as Nadasdy (2003) notes. As part of a life long practice of harvesting seascapes, the crabber spends most evenings and Saturdays hauling in the latest catch, a tradition encouraged by family members, particularly parents and siblings.

The crabber started her explanation of traditional ecological knowledge by elaborating on the importance of knowledge of the full and new moons rather than merely tide timing. The greatest crab yields are available four days after a new or full moon, she asserted. During this period and regular tide shifts, higher abundances are achieved by positioning baskets in the river during the changing of tides towards high or minus, she continued. During this particular meeting on the bridge the tide was shifting to high. Three crab baskets, as regulated for non-commercial harvesters, were baited and dropped strategically along the bridge in the minor whirlpools created with shifting tides. The crab baskets, also referred to as drop or hoop nets, consisted of net hung from a three- to five-foot diameter galvanized iron ring (Burrell, Jr., Whitaker, Wenner, & DeLancey, 2009). A sinker or weight was secured in the center underneath while the bait, typically chicken necks, was attached on top of the weight inside the basket. Three lines, attached evenly around the ring were secured to approximately fifty feet of twine. The twine was used for lowering and retrieving the crab baskets. The crabber skillfully baited the first basket before patiently observing my clumsy attempts to secure chicken necks to the remaining baskets. Due to

additional preparation time, for instructions and the swiftness of tidal change, the optimum window for prime crab yields closed prior to me properly positioning the baskets. Once finally lowered, the baskets were checked every five to ten minutes and emptied of the sea's bounty or re-lowered to wait patiently for the river's gift. In spite of the tardiness of my efforts and a tide too swift to allow the baskets to settle on the riverbed, we caught six legal size male crabs.

Although initially the crabber was somewhat amazed at our success due to the improper placement of the crab baskets, upon reflection she later attributed our bounty to the river's productivity in particular landscapes. The meandering tributaries through the TomBee marshland are preferred habitat for the male crabs, which are larger than female crabs. The larger blue crab male averages nine inches across the back of the shell from one tip of the lateral spine to the opposite lateral spine. Female crabs harvested in St. Helena Sound during a previous outing, were closer to minimum regulation size of five inches (Burrell, Jr., Whitaker, Wenner, & DeLancey, 2009). The crabber began reminiscing about other crabbing excursions, prompted by our securing the unexpected bounty. "My friend from Georgia loves to fish, and I love to crab. So we taught each other our passions. Now he boasts of crabbing better than me," she laughed.

Natural resource policies and regulations represented an additional level of bureaucracy that could potentially affect traditional practices due to the complicatedness of the regulatory process. Commercial fishing licensing has been in effect "for as long as I can remember" a SCDNR staff person stated, during an earlier interview with regulatory agency representatives. Licenses for recreational fishing, however is a relatively new requirement, only becoming effective in 2009 (SCDNR 2014). The effectiveness of regulatory process is not easily comprehended however, due to the consistency in Gullah Geechee responses of confusion and disregard, in spite of apparent adherence to regulations that they generally professed minimal knowledge. One explanation for this phenomenon was the adoption of regulations by SCDNR that mirrored practices of the Gullah Geechee observed over time.

In responds to inquiries regarding crab types, the crabber continued demonstrating her keen traditional ecological knowledge that also met regulatory specificity for harvesting, although she professed unfamiliarity with the official process (Mosse, 2004). For instance, as the crabber continued to describe the proper harvesting of specific crab types, she noted sustainable harvesting techniques in this case for the stone crab. "No one ever takes the entire crab so it can regenerate and be caught by others", she stressed. She further explained that only one claw was removed from stone crabs possessing two claws before returning the live crab to the water. Further, crabs were immediately returned to the water in instances in which they only had one claw. Conferring a common sentiment of Gullah Geechee fishers, the crabber stressed that a license for shoreline crabbing was "not needed 2-3 years ago".

The crabber continued explaining temporal and spatial harvesting practices for shrimp, clam, conch and oyster. A common Gullah Geechee refrain for sustaining abundances while protecting human health was that shellfish could only be harvested in the Fall and Spring during months that have a "R". Non-R months, the crabbers noted presented a greater risk

of obtaining oysters and clams with “milky” fluids, an indicator of elevated bacterial levels and thus are not suitable for consumption. After describing a few tantalizing recipes she also noted the significance of managing resources sustainably asserting that “most people just throw shells away in their yards, but I return shells to marshlands and the ocean so they can regenerate”. The crabber also discussed the proper harvesting of oysters, noting the importance of only taking the larger oysters and leaving the column intact, so the smaller oysters could continue to grow. Although the commonality of practices was often unacknowledged officially, the harvesting and recycling methods of oysters were also practices promoted by regulatory agencies.

Although ignorance of official regulation proclaimed, the crabber’s harvesting method was exactly as prescribed by SCDNR. A disconnect between local users knowledge and practices and regulatory agencies policies and regulations is not uncommon. As discussed in the governance chapter, the Gullah Geechee have limited engagement with the regulatory process even when physically present at agency meetings. David Mosse (2004) argues that practices in fact produce policy rather than policy producing practice. Thus in some instances indigenous knowledge even though unacknowledged is vital to effective resource management schemes. Abundances, the lens through which the Gullah Geechee view the world, thus becomes linked to specific practical knowledge about the resource. In other words, lack of favorable population abundances may merely be the result of a regulatory resource manager’s limited knowledge of the resource (Berkes, 2008; Ostrom, 1990). Actual users however, are generally more adept at sustaining resource abundances by adapting harvesting practices as necessary. Further, scholars note that actual resource users recognize the “highly situational and highly localized” nature of particular species and habitats (Behan, 1975; Capra, 2010; Prigogine, 2008). Policy prescriptions, as a result, may or may not reflect the realities on the ground.

The crabber loved crabbing anytime she could manage, that did not conflict with her employment in the tourist industry. A common practice adopted by the Gullah Geechee in response to unpredictable employment schedules is to leave fold-up crab traps, strategically positioned in creek and riverbeds, for retrieval at the end of a work shift. Most traps are typically reclaimed within twenty-four hours. Several such traps were submerged under the TomBee Bridge while we crabbed. “I don’t leave traps much anymore because people take the crabs,” she replied in response to asking if she owned any of the traps. “I don’t really mind people taking the crabs as long as they re-bait the trap and drop it in the water. That’s what folks used to do. Nowadays they just leave them in the sand.” She proceeded in vividly describing the abundances of her youth noting “you could just rake them in at low tide, scooping up as many as you could carry”. She recalled, while smiling broadly, since crab abundance was not an issue, traps were used as a communal resource that contributed to the wellbeing of the entire community. Indicative of a zero-sum game¹³ approach, equilibrium is maintained when the majority of the collective share the common pool resource equitably (Ostrom, 1990). However, as also noted by scholars, in the event of over extraction the resource has a higher probability of collapse (Platteau, 2008).

¹³ Zero-sum game represents the gain or loss of each participant within common pool resources is balanced by the gain or loss of other participants.

“Not so many crabs around now” she lamented. “Not sure why, but I guess it might be due to overfishing”. The crabber was accustomed to catching at least a five gallons bucket full of crab during most harvests. During rare occasions when she was unsuccessful in securing sufficient crab for family and neighbors, the crabber purchased crabs from a fellow crabber equipped with larger traps and a boat that enabled him greater access to suitable harvest locations. The crabber proceeded to elaborate on her preference for remote sites generally absent from the official maps that indicate the public spaces where people are allowed to harvest such as public piers, boat landings and state parks. She noted that there were far too many people at the public sites to enjoy the island’s tranquility. The positioning of Gullah Geechee at public sites designated by regulatory agencies also supports the state’s unarticulated economic development objective of “peddling nativism” for the tourist industry (Anderson, 2007). Although TomBee bridge is not an official public harvesting site, its location along a main route through the indigenous community, prompted a steady stream of inquiries about our progress from ninety percent of the drivers and their passengers as they zipped by. “It’s fine to say hello to folks slowing for a brief conversation, but it also nice to sit peacefully and look out at the marsh”, she noted.

Packing up our gear as daylight shifted to dusk, I made one last inquiry regarding distribution of her daily catches. Reiterating that she harvests shellfish and fish for consumption by family members primarily in her immediate household before distributing to extended family and non-familial community members, she proceeded to describe a communal feast, that perhaps explained the constant inquiries while crabbing on TomBee bridge, regarding our progress. A highly anticipated weekend ritual is a feast of the week’s bounty from the land- and seascapes of the island. The feast begins with family and neighbors contributing whatever seafood available after familial distributions to a communal grill at a community member’s home (Platteau, 2008). The crabber’s feast occurred in her backyard, over an open pit dug previously by many of the same people participating in the weekend ritual. A cornucopia of scrumptious morsels were added to the grill. Crabs, oysters, clams, deer, frog legs and corn all sizzled over the pit as the mollusks smoldered under burlap until popping open, signaling of their readiness. The crabber’s communal feast usually lasts for several hours with some folks not leaving until the wee hours of the morning. The feast is a typical gathering on St. Helena Island where everyone settles in for an evening of stories food and laughter, the crabber casually mentioned, as we packed up our gear.

Conclusion

The commercial oysterman, local crabber and community crabber represent abundances of scales in South Carolina’s Sea Island, each fulfilling a specific niche critical to their unwavering pursuits of self-sufficiency and determination. Banking on the sea using traditional ecological knowledge enabled access to abundances spatially and temporally harvested. Continuing ancestral traditions from West Africa and those co-mingled on the Sea Islands with Native Americans, Gullah Geechee managing common pool resources through scales of a formal cash and informal exchange and gift economies exemplify a culture of reciprocity in which the well-being of the community remains first and foremost. The oysterman, crabber and familial crabber use the same levels of scales prominent in

West African and Central African fisheries: medium-to-large scale commercial, rural-urban trading and rural (local). In Africa and the Americas commercial fisheries operate on a cash basis while rural-urban fishers exchange goods for fish for household consumption and cash transactions in urban markets. The final category, rural fishers conduct transactions primarily through non-monetary exchanges. Large-scale fisheries, and to a lesser degree rural-urban exchanges, are controlled by men. The oysterman operates within a cash economy. However, in the event the urban-rural fisher, for example, is unable to provide seafood to his network, he can purchase goods from the oysterman. In some cases an exchange such as ferry service, mechanical work or resource access can also occur in lieu of cash. The rural-urban fisher operates through primarily exchanges but may also conduct cash transactions.

Due to the fluctuation of population abundances and adaptive harvesting practices, fishers occasionally experience a surplus of seafood in relation to their scale of distribution. As a result, the rural-urban fisher for example, can sell surplus crabs to the oysterman who has a greater capacity for distribution. The familial crabber, as is also the case for women in Africa, worked primarily in rural markets (Gordon, 2006; Spivak, 1999). She remains substantially engaged in self-sufficiency and self-determination strategies by distributing vital resources through kinship networks. The weekend feast, although seemingly insignificant, enables a distribution of goods beyond the immediate family. It is important to note, that the immediate and extended family equally anticipates the crabber's food distribution. In instances in which the crabbers is unable to secure sufficient crab and seafood for kinship networks, she relies on the rural-urban crabber to assist in fulfilling the expectations of the kinship network. The familial crabber operates within a modern day gift economy that uses non-monetary transactions to function (Weiner, 1992).

As descendants of the West African Mandé peoples, an African philosophy grounded in an ideology of metaphysics and reciprocity is vital to the Gullah Geechee's worldview and traditional ecological knowledge guiding their practices and behaviors (Bilby, 2005; Opala, 1987). As a result, their belief system is deeply intertwined with spirituality and acknowledgement of the unknown. In other words, it is unnecessary for the Gullah Geechee to have a concrete understanding of the logical order of the universe or knowledge of the intricacies of how all elements of their world are interrelated in order to make sense of their reality. In concert with their rejection of poverty frameworks, the Gullah Geechee also refuse to subscribe to notions of scarcity. Instead as part of their indigenous articulation in the Americas, they persist in the tradition of viewing the world through a lens of abundance (Griaule, 1970; Opala, 1987; Thompson, 1983). More important, poverty is not a part of the Gullah Geechee's consciousness or worldview.

A consciousness of abundance does not allow for polarizing notions of rich and poor. As a result, poverty ideologies have no meaning to the Gullah Geechee. Thus, they do not perceive themselves to be poor, because concepts of rich and poor are not a part of their worldview. I am not implying that the Gullah Geechee are unaware of poverty frameworks, but rather poverty ideologies are a foreign concept to the way they visualize the world. In relation to traditional ecological knowledge, the most vital tenet taught to the Mandé through foundational myths, is that the land and sea is a gift, from a deity, to be honored

and cared for by the tribes (Gordon, 2006; Thompson, 1983). The spirit of the deity, who gave the gift, resides in all beings and thus provides for all those acknowledging her power. Land therefore cannot be viewed as a commodity to be bought or sold, but is rather embraced as an inalienable possession of the tribe endowed in perpetuity (Gordon, 2006; Weiner, 1992). As a result, the tribes are given the distinction of being “owners” of the land- and seascapes. In so doing, reverence and stewardship of all human and nonhuman beings is expected of tribal members. In striving for harmony and communal wellbeing, African societies sought to exemplify goodness through daily selfless acts by framing good and evil within a binary of honor and shame. The epitome of honor rests in deeds of goodness of behalf of the whole community. Gifts, as was granted by the deity in the foundational myth, is one means of attaining honor as act of reciprocity are also integral to African cosmology.

The oysterman, crabber and familial crabber used cultural traditions and practices guided by a consciousness or worldview of reciprocity that is vital to Gullah Geechee beingness and self-determination pursuits in the Americas. As Berkes (2008) posit, the level intricately weaved throughout all levels of traditional ecological knowledge is consciousness or the worldview that “provides meaning to an individual or community’s perception about the world”. All three Gullah Geechee fishers illustrated astute awareness of the four levels fundamental to traditional ecological knowledge. First, they were knowledgeable about marine and freshwater species in the area, including their habitat and behaviors. Second, the fishers demonstrated their understanding of the importance of applying appropriate practices in order to sustain population abundances. Third, they prioritized their own governance, management and distribution of coastal resources. Last, as mentioned previously, they adhered to cultural traditions and practices guided by a belief system and ideology of reciprocity, sharing and cooperation.

In fact, the ritual with the life jacket also serves as an example of levels three and four in relation to social relationships and resource sharing. In spite of my role as researcher/outsider, the fisher’s persistence in ensuring my safety showed their concern for my wellbeing. My part in the ritual was also to acknowledge my role as researcher, but in a way that illustrated my objective of being a witness to their daily practices and traditions (Hurstons, 2008). In so doing, my goal was to illustrate that I was a fisher with the intent of being fully engaged in crabbing, oyster cultivation or cast netting. Further, my goal was to demonstrate that I was not a “spectator” who was unfamiliar with the rhythms of a river (habitat) or the unpredictability of the sea’s willingness to offer a gift (species behavior). As a result of successfully completing the ritual, I was also able to participate in the sharing of traditional ecological knowledge with the fishers. Thus, the Gullah Geechee wielding their own authority, situationally, are actively engaged in governing, managing and sustaining abundances through self-defined livelihood strategies and self-determination pursuits.

Conclusion: Landscapes of Abundance

The Gullah derive their identity from their land. As early as the end of the civil war, they possessed two things blacks still struggle to attain today: a sense of identity, and ownership of their own property and businesses.

John Blake, Atlantic Journal and Constitution Sun
June 3, 1990

Indigenous Articulation

I arrived in South Carolina prepared to analyze the phenomenological landscape of St. Helena Island with two primary objectives: to reveal local preoccupations and concerns, and to map critical relations orchestrating and structuring local practices and processes (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). Snakes slithered in the grass, alligators slinked into murky swamps, snowy egrets took flight just over head, mullet skittered over the river, dolphins churned lagoons into whirlpools and the ground rippled as tiny blue crabs scrambled across the sandy shoreline with each step I took along the shorelines and through the marshes. Admittedly, being surrounded by snakes, alligators, and insatiable mosquitos was initially overwhelming, but once I allowed my fear and discomfort to subside I also found the experience of abundance to be intriguing. In a calmer state, I was able to see that abundance represented an island teeming with all types of life. I also observed a people that related to the land- and seascapes of St. Helena Island within a framework of reciprocity.

Hidden through silences, yet revealed through practice, the unacknowledged or invisible relationships were a significant component of the Gullah Geechee's beingness. The Gullah Geechee's identity is derived from the abundances and cultural practices linked to the land through human and nonhuman encounters. Even though I discovered little evidence in official governmental accounts, the encounters between the human and nonhuman inhabitants of St. Helena Island was in fact a "critical relation orchestrating and structuring local practices and processes" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991). As a result of the contradictory worldviews held by regulatory agency representatives and Gullah Geechee fishers, it was necessary for me to extend my analysis beyond a coastal resource and management property-centered structure to a people-centered livelihood and self-sufficiency framework. In so doing, I transitioned from a Western anthropocentric worldview of domination to an African ethical framework of human and nonhuman reciprocity and cooperation. I was thus better equipped to grasp the power dynamics of structures of authority producing identity and indigeneity within small-scale fisheries managed as common pool resources (CPR) in the Sea Islands.

We Gullah! As discussed in the indigeneity chapter, the Gullah Geechee are descendants of enslaved West Africans who have articulated cultural traditions of their ancestors with the land- and seascapes of the Sea Islands. Due to their culture-based sovereignty, the Gullah Geechee cannot be described by biological determinism, but rather on the relationships, acceptance and engagement in the particular place of their emergence (TallBear, 2013; Wade, 2013). Constituted by the human and nonhuman inhabitants of the Sea Islands they emerged as a new people in the Americas. Embracing an ideology derived from the physical

and metaphysical, the Gullah Geechee also cannot be understood solely within a romanticized ideology of resistance. As Scott (2004) argues their existence in the New World plantation slavery established the Gullah Geechee as the producers of civilization as modern subjects and thus could not possibly be primitive. Slavery is only one reactionary reality to Gullah Geechee beingness that disregards the complexities of who they are as an evolving people. Scott therefore suggests dispensing momentarily with the whole questioning of slavery in relation to the Africa Diaspora.

Admittedly a controversial position, but his intent is to disrupt the normalized epistemological anticolonial revolutionary frameworks. Drawing heavily on C. L. R. James historical account in the *Black Jacobins* of the Haitian Revolution lead by Toussaint L'Overture, Scott relies on Talal Asad's framing to analyze how modern power shaped the cognitive and instrumental condition in which the lives of enslaved Africans were lived. As a result, Scott reveals the constitutive roles enslaved Africans played in making the modern world. Suggesting as Hall also argues, that in the process of "destroying the old and constructing the new conditions", hegemonic power shifts from those perceived to possess absolute power to people that seemingly lack any manner of power, depending on the particular situation.

In a recognizably...Foucauldian way, Asad focuses our attention on the constitutive and therefore productively conditioning features of power; what he sets at the center of the analysis is less the actor's volitional subjectivity (her or his agency) than the conditions of possibility for that subjectivity to be and to act.

Gullah Geechee beingness is therefore not merely a reaction to the conditions of slavery, but rather is a direct result of their integral role in constituting the New World squarely in the present space as creators of history. Following such a path, places the Gullah Geechee beyond the "negative realm of teleologies of anticolonial resistance and liberation" and into a space of emergence as a new people (Scott, 2004). For example, unlike the Maroon's objective to reconstruct the materiality of their place of origin in Africa or of enslaved Africans forging an entirely new identity embodying a distinctively Caribbean mode of life in the New World, the Gullah Geechee extend roots into both spaces constituting who they are as a merging of the past and present (Clifford, 2001; Glissant, 2010). The Gullah Geechee's articulation in the Americas thus includes retaining *and* creating in the positive realm of constituting an alternative personhood as modern subjects in the New World. In other words, their intent is to continue evolving as Gullah Geechee without having a singular focus of reclaiming old traditions and practices.

The pervasive mantra in St. Helena Island is "we Gullah!" which is used to self-proclaim their profound distinctiveness as a people in the Americas. Gullah Geechee beingness thus extends beyond the retentionist creationist ideological binary to an interventionist framing in which both merge producing a mosaic identity of the past, present and future (Scott, 2004). Through an analysis of the intersection of indigeneity, governance and livelihoods, in this dissertation I illustrated how in the liminal spaces unrecognized by most, the Gullah Geechee persist in etching out livelihood and self-determination pursuits derived from the

co-mingling of Africans of the Diaspora and Native American cultural traditions and practices.

The Sea Islands provided an ideal site for conducting indigenous articulation research due to its remarkable retention of traditional fishing practices. Although additional research is necessary, preliminary data support my hypothesis that Gullah Geechee indigeneity and sovereignty are constituted by their distinct cultural practices linked to the land. As descendants from Africa they brought particular technologies and practices to the Americas (Opala, 1987; Creel, 1998; Jones-Jackson, 1987). These practices are fundamental to Gullah Geechee indigeneity and sovereignty. As indigenous people, the Gullah Geechee possess histories of belonging, resisting and dispossession, as is true of most indigenous groups.

The Gullah Geechee's sovereignty however, is not based on traditional claims through treaties or other legal constructs. Rather than a biological hybridization inheritance identity-based sovereignty, the Gullah Geechee's sovereignty is derived through a geographical and social type of hybridity. In other words, their identity-based sovereignty is constituted culturally and not biologically. Who they are disrupts the dichotomy of traditional or historical indigeneity and diasporic identity (Clifford, 2001; Yeh, 2007). The Gullah Geechee's indigenous articulation challenges the dominant assumption on what constitutes indigenous identity (Sturm, 2002; TallBear, 2013). They are diasporic and also situated in a particular place. De jure sovereignty is not the reality but rather de facto assertions of belonging to the land (Ng'weno, 2007). As a result, the indigenous knowledges of Africans of the Diaspora and Native Americans co-mingled to articulate new traditional practices in St. Helena Island that are still evident today.

Conversations about land were always first and foremost with the Gullah Geechee in St. Helena Island. They spoke passionately about losing access to coastal areas used for traditional practices through the steady loss of heir property to recreational homeowners, developers and the government. "Folks say ooh the Gullah culture is a beautiful culture. But I'll offer you so much for that land you know". The informant continued to describe the contradiction inherent in the paradox of plenty. Once land is transferred in these types of transactions, new property owners "build your house in a spot where the fishermen want to get to the river and fence them off!" For instance, recreational homeowners interviewed generally commented that they only fished for sport and never for food. Fish desired for personal consumption, was purchased from markets up north. In the St. Helena Island area, sport fishing symbolized attainment of a higher standard of living for recreational homeowners and tourists.

Five white males, between the ages of 25-35 year olds, bellow out rap interspersed with shouts of "my nigga" as they glide away from the marina dock in an imposing yacht. Raucous laughter briefly interrupts a chorus of rapper Lil Wayne's "hit the club" in response to *accidentally* tossing a 5-foot Bluefin tuna overboard. The boat is christened *Black Gold*.

Beaufort Marina, South Carolina June 2011

Access to land continues to be one of the greatest challenges affecting indigenous identity in relation to the tourist industry (Anderson M. A., 2009). Increasing state revenues through tourism is one strategy governments use to strengthen national economies. As a result, more tourists are lured annually with promises of an untouched, unspoiled paradise and exoticisms causing indigenous populations to be thrust deeper into struggles over resources vital to traditional practices and their beingness (Said, 1979). Recognizing that struggles over resources are struggles over identity, privatization of land through laws, regulations and purchases is a direct threat to Gullah Geechee beingness as a people (Gramsci, 1971; Glissant, 2010). Market-oriented reform through tourism, as a result, is one of the most prevailing factors dispossessing Gullah Geechee of land (Ruether, 2008; Anderson, 2009).

Land is communal, within the Gullah Geechee's belief system, whereas entitlement is assured through local informal governance, such as common pool resources management of shorelines and creeks (Opala, 1987; Jones-Jackson, 1987; Thompson, 1983). Access to marshlands, rivers and sounds adjacent to properties "owned" by indigenous families is an expected and common tradition in St. Helena Island (Guthrie, 1996). However, neo-colonial tourism continues to change the land- and seascapes of the Sea Islands. Unlike recreational homeowners and resort developers of today, that prioritize the aesthetic value of waterfront property due to its symbolic capital, indigenous property owners understand how essential the waterways are to cultural traditions and practices fundamental to their indigenous identity. The lack of or limited access to land and waterways, generally symbolized with fences, is thus in stark contrast to the Gullah Geechee's worldview or consciousness in which reciprocity, sharing and cooperation are essential (Gordon, 2006; Ribot & Peluso, 2003).

The Gullah Geechee are keenly aware of how many of the tourists relate to the land- and seascapes in vastly different ways from themselves, as was evidenced at the Beaufort Marina. Although inundated with contrary narratives and representations, harvesting the land- and sea's bounty is not viewed as sport or recreation but rather as an integral part of Gullah Geechee identity (Carney, 2001; Joyner, 1985). The tuna, for example, had it been provided to the Gullah Geechee women, would have been distributed in accordance to traditional kinship networks. Land dispossession resulting from big development projects, primarily for the tourist industry, causes struggles throughout the landscape due to privatization in which resources including labor becomes a commodity that is bought and sold (Ruether, 2008; Tokar, 2008).

Ironically, in spite of its consistent failure in eradicating poverty, neo-colonial tourism, continues to be touted by state and federal governments, as the solution for addressing wealth disparities and ensuring South Carolina's economic stability (US Census, 2011). Even though golf courses, plantation resorts and timeshares continue to proliferate, the failure of state economic reform initiatives is largely attributed to the fact that local populations generally receive minimal benefits from big development project. Hence, the "impoverished" are incapable of actively participating in a cash economy except as a

depended on or ward of the state. For example, Gullah Geechee informants frequently asserted that they were unable to obtain permanent jobs in the service industry that were promised during the planning stage of resort projects. "They start bringing in people from other places for the service jobs" an informant noted. Somewhat amused by the contradiction, she continued describing the primary attraction for developers and tourists was that the Sea Islands had small populations. The same reason, that is insufficient labor, was also given as the justification for recruiting laborers from other areas. Several informants unconvinced by such arguments, suggested instead that developers preferred hiring immigrants primarily from South America in order to keep wages low. Scholars support the informants' astute assessment noting that in addition to keeping wages at a minimum, surplus labor also intentionally increases competitiveness between ethnic groups (Ruether, 2008; Tokar, 2008). Further, the Gullah Geechee's ecological knowledge enabled a greater degree of self-sufficiency. In other words, due to their intimate knowledge of the land and seascapes they were able to maintain levels of self-sufficiency that precluded an absolute dependency on livelihoods based on a cash economy. As a result, immigrants unfamiliar with the land and seascapes and thus dependent solely on service jobs were preferred over the local population (Takaki, 1998).

The fact that Gullah Geechee are representative of a different metaphysics in which linkages to the land and communal use of resources are integral to their beingness cannot be overstated. Gullah Geechee families presently living on the land in St. Helena Island have done so for four, five or six generations (Guthrie, 1996). As inhabitants of the landscapes, the Gullah Geechee use the land to plant food in addition to harvesting the sea's bounty for communal consumption. Now the "comyas", the Gullah Geechee word for island immigrants, prefer cultivating a "new crop" called timeshares (Campbell, 2002). "Most Gullah don't know how to grow the new crop," an informant lamented. Thus, the 25 to 30 shrimp boats that previously headed out to the sounds and Atlantic daily, a few decades ago, have dwindled to just under five today. Instead of relying on local harvested agricultural crops and seafood, most inhabitants of the Sea Islands, including the "benyas" (individuals born and raised on the islands), depend on shipments of goods from foreign markets (Business Roundtable, 2007). A few decades ago, oysters from the Ashepoo, Combahee, Edisto (ACE) basin were shipped throughout the world. Today, even local consumption demand exceeds the supply from the ACE basin.

Often unwilling to acknowledge the direct linkages between development and ecological integrity, regulatory agency sporadic enforcement of particular projects enables the degradation of oyster beds in the ACE basin from point and non-point source runoff to continue (Miley, Gallo & Associates, 2008; Walker, 2005). As a result, indigenous livelihoods based on cultural traditions and practices relying on healthy habitats and aquatic population abundances are jeopardized. Additional cultural traditions, integral to who they are as a people, have also been affected the "new crop" as timeshares clutter shorelines that not only substantially aided in the Gullah Geechee self-sufficiency pursuits but also provided spiritual nourishment as refuge for ancestral spirits. According to African cosmology, in order for the spirits of ancestors to move unencumbered between the Americas and Africa, access to waterways is essential (Campbell, 2002).

Reflexivity and Knowledge Production

It's 3 am as I timidly exit the house. Vivid images of snakes lounging during the day on the banister, beneath the steps and in the huge moss covered oak in front of the house paralyze me. Then I recall a conversation with my advisor. "What type of snakes?" he asked.

Reluctantly acknowledging my role as researcher, I hurriedly stomp down the steps and across the mossy sand in hopes of frightening away any snakes in my path or those finding refuge under the car. Breathing a bit more easily securely inside, I now ponder my ability in identifying landmarks leading to the main road in the black of night. The oysterman was adamant that I meet him at 5 am if I wanted to go out to the oyster beds. Keenly conscious of the intense darkness and unnerving stillness, I set off with the mere wish of seeing at least one other headlight headed towards town. No such luck. Two hours later I arrive at the bait shop, coffee mug in hand, exuding the confidence of an experienced researcher.

Regardless of whether or not I believed I genuinely warranted the title of researcher, first and foremost I recognized that as an analyst of social behaviors, beliefs and practices my presence changed the dynamics of situations in which I was involved. Granted, initially I attempted to assume the voyeuristic position of outsider that Deloria (1998) criticizes. In so doing, my objective was to be the consummate objective observer, that ensures an appropriate distance or disconnect between researcher and the "subjects" researched is attained. Yet, as scholars argue the mere act of observation affects the very situation, including the behavior of the individual or groups, researchers observe (Glissant, 2010; Haraway, 1988).



One of several snakes that frequently lounged on the steps of my field site residence

As an academic scholar, a basic knowledge of the place and people being investigated is expected. Thus, to become disconcerted by common phenomena such as snakes and total blackness would undoubtedly alter how I was perceived as researcher. I therefore performed the role anticipated in the field, consciously participating in the dance between us, as academic, and them, the community, (Ebron, 2002). I also presented myself as a fisher. My motivation for emphasizing my "fisher" identity initially was to increase the probability of establishing an ongoing relationship with the community, particularly since there was always a presence of "academic experts" in the community conducting anthropological research.

Yes, I was another researcher from the university, but I was attempting to conduct my research in a reciprocal manner and forego the exploitative tactics of "mining" communities for knowledge for which they receive nothing in return. In other words, I was attempting to employ an approach that was not simply extractive, but also provided benefits to the community. As a "witness" I also embraced my role as an active participant in all interactions with Gullah Geechee (Hurstons, 2008). As a result, I was more than just a researcher; I was a fisher who also held a high regard for

aquatic population abundances and the ecological integrity of coastal resources. Thus, I commenced my investigation attempting “not to analyze or explain a given tradition or praxis but to understand and to comprehend it” (Scolte, 1972). In so doing, I attempted to avoid becoming “wedded to any particular theoretical framework” in order to employ a dialectic ethnographic approach rather than analytical (Scolte, 1972). Due to engaging a more flexible or fluid methodology, my capacity to recognize “the real” or the daily realities of the Gullah Geechee’s way of life, often hidden beneath the surface of the mundane, greatly increased (Hegel, 1977; Scolte, 1972).

In spite of my best intentions, who the Gullah Geechee are, regardless of the methodology I used, was still not easily understood, particularly given that dispensing with the conventional canons of academia was more challenging than I imagined. For example, subconsciously adhering to traditional approaches, I frequently drifted in to “translating” direct quotes of community members into established standards that in effect altered the entire meaning of what they actually said. For instance, in the Gullah language gender is unspecified. The same pronoun of ‘e is used for she and he. Gullah language also is devoid of plurals. Placing ‘dem behind the noun is used instead (Campbell, 2002; Jones-Jackson, 1987). However, in transcribing the audio recordings, I automatically changed ‘dem to them, e for she, dat for that, and dey for they.

It was several transcriptions later before I realized that I had gradually slipped into translating, revising, reframing what I saw and heard to fit the framework of academia. Ironically, one informant aptly assessed the lack of legitimacy attached to particular knowledges by arguing that little demand existed for research conducted by local people about local people. “Most of the research is done by outsiders,” he stated and most publications he continued “are nothing more than a repeat of somebody else’s work”. As a result, even though unintentional, I too was producing data that appeared appropriate by relying more heavily on the knowledge produced by scholars from outside the community, rather than the empirical data I collected of “the real” or the actual daily realities of which I was a participant as I observed the Gullah Geechee (Hegel, 1977). My slippage into structures that align with traditional academic standards also illustrates the informant’s argument that local knowledge by local people (including transcriptions of local people) holds less value in academic institutions. My difficulties in moving beyond traditional expectations, in fact, persisted throughout various stages of my doctoral training and research.

For several months I grappled with determining the appropriate framework to comprehend who the Gullah Geechee are and not merely who others perceived them to be. Initially committed to a poverty framework as a result of the dominant literature, I attempted to graft the prevailing canons of blackness over Gullah Geechee identity (Anderson, 2009; Kodras, 2008). During my fieldwork however, the Gullah Geechee rarely mentioned being poor. Further, why are the Gullah Geechee poor if the “war on poverty” is intended to lift individuals out of poverty? I therefore began questioning, the privileging of poverty frameworks. In doing so, I was able to

distance my analysis from dominant ideologies on race and identity to determine that the empirical data I collected was more indicative of a livelihoods framework rather than poverty. Further, standard of living analyses fundamental to cash economies used to define wealth, failed to adequately explain Gullah Geechee behaviors and practices. Additional literature reviews however, revealed pertinent economies for the Gullah Geechee that was based on communal sharing, bartering and exchange (Béné, Steel, Luadia, & Gordon, 2009). Thus, the imposition of a cash economy and divergent worldview, primarily through tourism and big development projects, substantially affected Gullah Geechee identity and their way of life. Not discouraged by the continuous evolution of research frameworks and approaches, I persisted in attempting to recognize and comprehend Gullah Geechee beingness, as I continue to do today.

Policy doesn't work!

During an interview with anthropologist Elizabeth Colson, she adamantly asserted that policy doesn't work.¹⁴ She continued to describe how the governance and regulator process often becomes an ends to a means, rather than a means to an end. In other words, documenting the process for a particular issue is usually sufficient, even though the bureaucratic process fails to effectively address the concern or problem (Nadasdy, 2003). "So what if you document increased morbidity, mortality etc. People on the ground already know. Causality more relevant," Colson argued.

The previous coastal resource management and policy framework was insufficient to adequately grasp a worldview contrary to the dominant Western worldview. Although Gullah Geechee adoption of alternative strategies are recognizable in some cases, several livelihood and self-determination strategies are invisible to most and are therefore not reflected in state agencies economic strategies (Agrawal, 2008; Li, 2007). For example, SCDNR regulations frequently caused severe harvesting restrictions in areas rarely monitored due to insufficient personnel. Local users, on the other hand, are often dismayed by such actions as a result of their firsthand knowledge of the resource, as noted by a Gullah Geechee informant. "We didn't have regulations. But she (grandmother) would say 'no dat not hardback dat mean those little old shrimp just growing. And dey not ready until 'bout a month from now.' But local knowledge not recognized. You have to go to school and come back with degrees and make policies. You pay no attention to me, like you doing now. You come back and tell them, rather than listen".

Policy prescriptions typically fail to prioritize quality of life reform rather than cash-based standard of living approaches fundamental market-oriented strategies such as tourism. Further, even though women's substantive engagement in natural resource management is often omitted from conventional agency strategies in favor of male-biased frameworks, the Gullah Geechee's gendered roles of females and males are equally critical to livelihood and self-determination pursuits (Carney, 2001; Cecelski, 2001; Ray, 2007). Federal and state agency representative's understanding of how the Gullah Geechee use coastal resources is

¹⁴ Interview with author April 2011.

essential to devising effective livelihood and resource management strategies including exceptional projects such as the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

Gullah Geechee expectations are exceedingly high for the success of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (GGCHC) project managed by the National Park Service. Established in 2006 by Congress, the primary goal of the project is to assist in interpreting the story of the Gullah Geechee and to preserve Gullah Geechee folklore, arts, crafts, music, sites, artifacts and historical data (GGCHC, 2012). The corridor expands over the four states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, and represents a remarkable feat for an indigenous population lacking *de jure* sovereignty. The Gullah Geechee view the government-backed corridor as a critical component of their self-determination pursuit for one crucial reason. Commissioners leading the initiative are Gullah Geechee who were identified and selected by Gullah Geechee. The intent of the community lead effort, in partnership with state governments and the National Park Service, is to develop genuine collaborations than enable government agencies to work with rather than for indigenous communities (TallBear, 2013). For instance, one objective of the GGCHC commission is to pursue economic development that supports Gullah Geechee cultural traditions and practices such as ecotourism.

Although ecotourism can also be extremely destructive to indigenous communities, the commissioners specifically stress that viable projects must ensure the human and ecological integrity of the Sea Islands. In other words, projects must ensure fish and shellfish abundances continue to flourish in addition to fishers still being able to make a living from catching, harvesting and marketing local seafood (Campbell, 2002). This type of livelihood thus supports cultural practices fundamental to indigenous identity and self-sufficiency. GGCHC appears to employ a sound participatory approach in which equity in knowledges and resources are central. However, substantive engagement in identity politics is not without constant challenges.

During a tour of St. Helena Island led, I paid close attention to the Gullah Geechee tour guide. I noted that he appeared weary, exhausted and his movements perfunctory. Also paying attention to the tourists as closely as the guide, I observed how he slowly exhaled each time someone asked him to speak Gullah. Seemingly no longer possessing the inspiration to tell a story devoid of the racial injustice realities of the South, even though evident in the contemporary plantation culture, he performed. The performance transformed him into the exotic native tourists expected and state economic development initiatives depended (Anderson, 2007, Ebron 2002). The tour guide never verbalized any displeasure in his task, yet his posture gave a different impression.

The guide was responsible for conducting the two-hour “performance” twice a day, seven days a week. The tour narratives also supported an imaginary of exoticism and racial hierarchies. Perhaps not intentionally, however tourists’ questions and requests kept the discussion focused on consumptive Gullah Geechee identity indicators such as speech, dress, voodoo and living in ecological harmony (Ebron, 2002; Innes, 2013). At the conclusion on the tour, I left gazing at him sitting slumped in the van, tiredly chatting with the last tourists’ stragglers, as they slowly disembarked. Alone, on the van he appeared

weary and dejected. Looking up, as I passed the van however, he smiled and remarked, “hurry and publish your dissertation”.

Elizabeth Colson argued that participatory approaches designed to genuinely address sustainable development and the needs of the community should assess causalities rather than engage in typical approaches preoccupied with outcomes. Although the Gullah Geechee have high expectations for the collaborative efforts with the National Park Service for the physical establishment of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, the process, as is true of similar collaborations between government agencies and community groups, could result in minimal benefits for the community while maximizing agency accountability focused solely on outcomes. For example, rather than directing resources to documenting the planning process, that is quantifying meetings conducted, attendance, brainstorming session transcriptions on agency identified objectives, resources could be devoted to identifying the cause of oyster bed declines in a particular area or why seafood sales from local merchants to local markets have substantially decreased over that past two years. In so doing, participatory approaches can “begin and end with the standpoint of indigenous lives, need, and desires” rather than integrating community priorities with governmental agencies and academic priorities (TallBear, 2013).

*To you the earth yields her fruit, and you shall not want
if you know how to fill your hands
It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth
that you shall find abundance and be satisfied*
Kahlil Gibran

The Gullah Geechee’s anti-materialist worldview engenders behaviors of reciprocity, sharing and cooperation (Hurston, 2008). Contrary to the perceptions of federal and state agencies, success as self-defined by the Gullah Geechee enables the ownership of property (McMillan, 2009) and businesses through livelihoods and self-sufficiency strategies integral to their identity that is not driven by a preoccupation with the material world (Blake, 1990; Hurston, 2008). The fact that they never initiated the topic of poverty, during interviews and participant observations, is due to the way the Gullah Geechee view the world. The land- and seascapes are gifts from a deity that the Gullah Geechee, as designated “owners”, are responsible for ensuring the gifts’ wellbeing, according to African mythology (Gordon,



Family harvesting crabs and shrimp along the Harbor River in Beaufort County

2006). Polarizing notion of rich and poor, as a result, are merely foreign concepts within the Gullah Geechee's consciousness.



Bushel of blue crab harvested in the ACE basin

livelihoods, as a desire to expand the body of literature on Gullah Geechee based on primary sources. It also could be interpreted, as Deloria (1998) argues, as an attempt at validating myself of fulfilling a need to feel necessary as an academic scholar.

Abundances from the land- and seascape's bounty are therefore always possible as long as they have access to the land. Tourism, although often challenging, is a way of life the Gullah Geechee. It aids in supplementing cultural practices and traditions that are not base on monetary economies, particularly for women. During breaks on the St. Helena Island tour, the guide seemed more interested in discussing my research than continuing specific narratives about the Gullah Geechee. Upon leaving his weariness appeared more pronounced as I watched him in the van. I interpreted his imploring me to publish soon, an ethnographic account of Gullah Geechee identity and

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