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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

RACE MATTERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF CULTURAL EDUCATION AND  
PRESERVATION IN THE GULLAH-GEECHEE COMMUNITY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Triba Gary-Davis

November, 2019

Doug Leigh, Ph.D.—Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Triba Gary-Davis

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

“A people without the knowledge of their past history,  
origin and culture is like a tree without roots.”

Marcus Garvey

This dissertation is dedicated to the past and present purveyors of the Gullah-Geechee culture who courageously share their history, despite the many challenges they face, they continue to lead, support and inspire others.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Today is the day...me writing the final pages of my dissertation. This has been a journey filled with many ups and downs, from me watching my sons graduate from middle school, high school and college to me saying my final goodbye to my brother before he transitioned to heaven. I am eternally grateful for my support system that helped me survive and stay sane on this academic journey.

First, thank you to My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for giving me the strength to pursue my dreams fearlessly.

To my sons, Cameron, Bronson and Emerson, you guys provided unwavering patience and unending inspiration while I traveled to Pepperdine.

To my wonderful colleagues of TEGS: Erica, Gabrielle and Sunny. Every project was a chance to put forth our best efforts which included stimulating discussions, exponential growth and fun in making every project a masterpiece.

To my *Pepperdine Posse*—Ladonna Boyd, Lisa Brooks, Mary Brown, Doug Quist, Dossier White, and Britta Wilson—may we continue to reflect on Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” May we continue to make a commitment to integrity and trust God for favor in everything we do.

To my family and friends, Dorothy Gary, Donna Williams, Mary Grant, Vanessa Cospers, Natasha Moon, Melissa Just, Wanda Rice, Lesia M. Davis, Danielle Antonacci, Cynthia Montgomery, Cindy Howes and Carol Young thanks for your support, holding me accountable and checking-in to make sure I remained focused on completing my dissertation.

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It truly took a village...thank you all!

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**LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS**

Gary-Davis, T. (2016, January). Exploring cultural education and preservation of an indigenous population. Presented at the Hawaiian International Conference on Education, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Gary-Davis, T. (2014, July). Symbolic Annihilation of Women in Social Media. Presented at the International Center for Global Leadership, Belize City, Belize.

Gary-Davis, T. (2014, March). Symbolic Annihilation of Women in Media. Presented at the Women's Leadership and Empowerment Conference, Bangkok, Thailand.

**AWARDS RECEIVED**

Randy Clark Endowed Scholarship

PCOM Alumni Scholarship

Above and Beyond Award

## ABSTRACT

Even with the success of the American Preservation Movement and National Trust, most preservation efforts in the United States are focused on sites with patriotic significance favoring the nation's dominant culture and overlook protecting the land and culture of minorities and indigenous populations (Stradling, 2003). The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore, through the lens of the Critical Race Theory, the extent to which, if at all, race, racism and environmental injustices impact the preservation efforts of members in the Gullah-Geechee community. This study also explores what programs and activities, if any, that members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community, perceive as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities. By examining the semi-structured interviews of 10 cultural preservationists and educators in the Gullah-Geechee community, the researcher gathered common themes to provide gather information to bring awareness to race-related challenges in cultural education and preservation initiatives.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

“Until the lion learns to write, the story of the hunt will continue to glorify the hunter.”

—African Proverb

Most Americans were taught that the Civil War was the only war fought on American soil that involved slavery. However, the years from 1739 to 1858 were marked by ongoing revolts by enslaved Africans and battles with American colonists along the southeast coast (Goodwine, 1998). Based on extensive reviews of contemporary documents and other artifacts, Goodwine (1998) argues that these battles were purposefully undocumented and unacknowledged since the success of the enslaved Africans and the development of alliances with Native Americans threatened the enslavement system and global misconceptions that the slaves were content. Unlike the mainland slaves that adapted to Euro-American cultures, the isolated resistant slaves formed their communities along the marshlands of coastal Carolinas, Georgia and Florida (National Park Service, 2005).

### **Background**

Today, the descendants of these enslaved Africans are known as Gullahs and Geechees. They remain isolated beyond the Spanish moss and sand gnats of the Low Country and surrounding regions unscathed by Western civilization. Unbeknownst to most Americans, including African Americans, the Gullah-Geechee community offers African Americans a direct connection to their African heritage (Cross, 2012). Although Native Americans were the first population in North America, the Gullah-Geechees are considered indigenous because of their affinity for the land and the distinctive Gullah-Geechee culture was developed along the coast (National Park Service, 2005).

The Gullah-Geechee population's affinity for the land is based on an ancestral connection to the Rice Coast of Africa, known today as the region that extends from Senegal to Liberia (Opala, n.d.). According to Opala (n.d.) these slaves were imported to the coastal region mainly for their expertise in rice cultivation and irrigation systems. During the Civil War, some members of the Gullah-Geechee community purchased the abandoned coastal land through a special program entitled The Port Royal Experiment (Dean, 2013). During that time the coastal properties were undesirable and considered inhabitable since the coastal region was not fertile like the mainland and required extensive ecological knowledge to sustain (Dean, 2013). In addition to the Gullah-Geechee community's indigenous ecological knowledge, the culture's uniqueness and resiliency has been recognized globally for its ability to sustain its African heritage for over 400 years, across two continents, despite slavery, wars, tropical diseases, oppression, major hurricanes, and most recently influx of tourist development (National Park Service, 2005).

However, the recording of Gullah-Geechee history and culture was challenging for slaves since they were not afforded the opportunity to properly document their history, and since written American history purposefully manipulates readers to favor the dominant culture (Goodwine, 1998). With only an oral means of historic preservation, the Gullah-Geechee culture is often a missing component in America's published or understood heritage. In addition to the challenges of recording Gullah-Geechee history, the mass diaspora of African Americans to other regions created a disconnection from the African heritage maintained along the coast (National Park Service, 2005).

National preservation efforts to save the historical land, sacred sites, and cultural resources are well documented in American history. After the Civil War, Congress and local

organizations acted to protect historic battlefields. For example, the Supreme Court used eminent domain to uphold the historical site, Gettysburg, in the *United States v. Gettysburg Electric Railway Company* (Nevitt, 2014). In 1816, the city of Philadelphia purchased Independence Hall from the state of Pennsylvania to prevent this historical structure from being destroyed (Mires, 2012). The Mount Vernon Ladies Association was established in 1859 to rescue George Washington's estate from developers because this association, like the city of Philadelphia, had a natural propensity for the guardianship of historical properties (Stradling, 2003).

In 1906, the federal government enacted the Antiquities Act to allow US presidents to create national monuments and historical sites for protection from the ongoing pressures of growth and development (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2015). In addition, the rise of public interest in historic preservation and a booming economy after World War II led to the establishment of the American Preservation Movement and the National Trust (Stradling, 2003). The National Trust is a non-profit advocacy group created to protect and support grass root historic preservation efforts (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2015). Unfortunately, developers and policy-makers direct most preservation efforts. Most preservation initiatives are aimed at sites, which celebrate the history of the dominant culture; however, to establish a complete narrative of U.S. history, preservation efforts must include chattel slavery. While chattel slavery is considered by some to be a national disgrace, the numerous and various contributions of America's slaves void the premise of white supremacy. Therefore, historic preservation is rooted in racism and environmental injustices systemically designed to suppress the African-American experience.

Understanding the role of race in the awareness, preservation and sustainability of a minority culture is imperative. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) concluded that racism is a

pervasive, integral and insidious component of U.S. institutions and the quotidian experiences of most minorities. Racism also disempowers communities by devaluing their identities and renders them inferior (New South Wales Department of Education, 2015). Therefore, preservationists and cultural educators of minority communities cannot promote cultural preservation without an analysis of the effects of race and racism. Analyses to unveil racism today is challenging because racism does not take the blatant forms seen in the past, but it is masked in the form of micro-aggressions that can be easily overlooked and denied by the dominant culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Racism in indigenous communities also includes the practice of environmental racism. Bullard (2001) described environmental racism to be any racially driven policy or practice that negatively impacts the environmental and spatial practices targeting marginalized communities. Indigenous communities of today must learn from the egregious acts of the past to recognize symbolic gestures and racist development arguments disguised as cultural preservation. Most importantly, environmental justice efforts must work synergistically with cultural preservation efforts to prevent discrimination in the development of government policies and practices to create a post racial society.

### **Statement of Problem**

Even with the success of the American Preservation Movement and National Trust, most preservation efforts in the United States are focused on sites with patriotic significance favoring the nation's dominant culture and overlook protecting the land and culture of minorities and indigenous populations (Stradling, 2003). Little (2007) challenges historical archaeologists to work as social consciences against the dominant historical narratives by providing transformational learning. Lee (1993) reports that the first property to obtain the National Park



Registry for its relationship to black history was the George Washington Carver Monument in Diamond, Missouri. However, the George Washington Monument is considered to be innocuous and does not remind Americans of the nefarious past of chattel slavery, a significant component of American history.

**Indigenous challenges.** According to Rural Poverty Portal, the indigenous population accounts for five percent of the world's population but fifteen percent of the world's poor. Yunus (2007) postulates that developed countries described the needs of the poor and indigenous populations as asocial liabilities, and traditional programs to help this population are void of self-sufficiency. On the other hand, some successful social programs to assist indigenous and poor communities have the following common themes:

- Development of a strategic mind-set in search of opportunities within the community for growth,
- Overcoming myths and stereotypes about the community in need of support,
- Development of positive approaches to emphasize the strength of a community,
- Forming partnerships with social businesses to resolved social and economic problems. (Yunus, 2007)

In addition to obtaining the appropriate themes to successfully sustain an indigenous population, community leaders must be taught the importance of ongoing innovation to ensure the sustainability of future generations (Srinivasan, 2006). Known as Queen Quet, Goodwine (1998) is the elected leader of the Gullah-Geechee Nation and understands the importance of innovations and cultural solidarity, and her efforts to empower the Gullah Geechee community to return to being self-sustaining has been recognized globally (National Park Service, 2005). Research shows that the structure methods of assistance programs should also be designed and

organized with community and community leaders' involvement to create the desired future with redefined relationships and redesigned work practices (Holman, Devan, & Cady, 2007)

**Gullah-Geechee preservation initiatives.** Preservation efforts have been ongoing throughout the Gullah-Geechee region. For example, the Gullah-Geechee community banded together to create legislation to make it illegal to develop private properties with gated communities on St. Helena Island (National Park Service, 2005). In addition, Sapelo Island, off the coast of Georgia, is protected by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as a natural wilderness and ecosystem (Cross, 2012). Cross's (2012) research examined the 70 residents of Sapelo Island and the fact that they have successfully maintained their Gullah-Geechee heritage. Visitors of Sapelo Island experience the richness of the Gullah-Geechee culture and lifestyle with tours and festivals on the secluded island. Even with preservation efforts and cultural awareness with festivals and federal legislations, the Gullah-Geechee culture was named one of the Most Endangered Historic Sites. Therefore, the National Park Services performed a special report to research and preserve the Gullah-Geechee culture, which lead to the development of the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor Commission (National Park Service, 2005).

**The Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor Commission.** The Gullah-Geechee community remained intact culturally for two primary reasons: most slaves brought to the region were from the same regions in West and Central Africa and the community was considered diseased with malaria and was not desirable. Today, preservation efforts have often been viewed as ineffective especially with the diminishing Gullah-Geechee population, land ownership, and cultural lifestyles of the region. Therefore, in 2007 federal legislations under the leadership of Congressman James E. Clyburn established the Gullah Geechee Corridor Heritage Commission (GGCHC) to develop strategies to provide cultural education and public awareness of the

Gullah-Geechee culture (Cross, 2012). The GGCHC is also a resource for the Gullah-Geechee communities to preserve their culture through empowerment and economic development (Campbell, 2011). According to Wolfe (1994), locals within the Gullah-Geechee community have always used governmental agencies, like the GGCHC, to construct their purpose in relation to power and domination. Even with government assistance, most of the land and culture have been lost due to what close observers conclude is excessive property taxes and encroachments, and the community has limited economic resources and employment opportunities to continue their cultural lifestyles. Yunus (2007) concurs that governmental programs are not sufficient to address serious social problems since governmental initiatives are historically proven to favor the interests of powerful groups. Another social theorist concluded:

There is hardly a study of an ethnic group now that does not describe how the locals use “agency” to “construct themselves” in relations to power or interest. It transcends the bland, power irrelevant relativism of much of the talk about “culture.” (Wolfe, 1994, p. 6)

Consequently, the locals in the Gullah-Geechee community have come to together to sponsor many activities in the region despite the fact that the community must “grapple with the increasing forces of modernization, urbanization, and globalization that endanger their collective cultural memory and their traditional social identities” (National Park Service, 2005, p. 93).

**Gullah-Geechee sustainability.** There are many festivals in the Gullah-Geechee region that are organized by community leaders, and some leaders have partnered with national sponsors. For example, the Original Gullah Festival is held annually in Beaufort, South Carolina. This festival includes consumer and educational workshops, along with art exhibits, music, and traditional Gullah-Geechee cuisine. Furthermore, the Gullah-Geechee Nation hosts many cultural activities throughout the year including The International Music and Movement Festival. The

International Music and Movement Festival provides quilt and sweet-grass basket-making classes and workshops for cast netting and crab trapping. Another event held the entire month of February is the Gullah Celebration on Hilton Head Island. The organizers of this event have established partnerships with national sponsors like Coca-Cola and the Westin and regional organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and the Arts Center of South Carolina. Activities include the Taste of Gullah, Arts, Craft, and Food Expo, storytelling, African dance and gospel music. In fact, several cultural-based non-profits were developed in the region including the St. Simons African Heritage Coalition (SSAHC) and the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation (DIHF) to provide cultural learning and preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture (National Park Service, 2005).

Community leaders have also endorsed educational programs in the Gullah-Geechee region to provide a deeper understanding of the culture. For instance, the Gullah Studies Summer Institute at the Penn Center is a two-week program providing students an overview of the history, language, music and heritage of the Gullah-Geechee culture (Cross, 2012). Cross (2012) notes the other educational programs on regional college campuses including a course at the University of South Carolina that introduces Gullah culture covering the key components of the Gullah-Geechee lifestyle.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the extent to which, if at all, race, racism and environmental injustices have on the preservation efforts of members in the Gullah-Geechee community. This study will also explore what programs and activities, if any, that members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community perceive as having the

most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities. Through semi-structured interviews of these leaders in the Gullah-Geechee community, the results of this study will bring awareness to race-related challenges and environmental injustices in cultural education and preservation initiatives. Other cultural leaders will have enhanced comprehension to implement actions to effectively promote cultural identity and eradicate cultural preservation inequalities.

### **Research Questions**

This study will examine the following research questions:

1. How do members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve the history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community perceive the impact of race and racism in their preservation efforts in the Gullah-Geechee community?
2. What are the challenges shared by members of the Gullah-Geechee community members who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators involving environmental injustices that hinder education and preservation initiatives?
3. What types of programs and activities do cultural leaders perceive as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Understanding the role of race in cultural education and preservation of an indigenous culture is imperative to its survival. According to Parker and Lynn (2002) racism is engrained in American society, and provides the basis for this study by utilizing the Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework and analysis tool. According to the UCLA School of Public

Affairs (n.d.), the CRT understands the importance of “preserving the history of marginalized groups whose experiences have never been legitimized within the master narrative” (p. 1). The CRT provides a means to properly document and provide solutions for the societal ills of non-privileged and non-white groups (Parker & Lynn, 2002). In addition, critical race theorists have identified three primary objectives of the CRT: (a) to present stories about discrimination from the viewpoint of people of color; (b) to argue for the eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously acknowledging that race is a social construct; and (c) to deal with other matters of dissimilarity, such as sexuality and class, and any injustices experienced by communities (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

### **Operational Definitions**

1. Race: the by-product of social classification that does not correspond to biology or genetic reality based on skin color and other physical characteristics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). To be measured via semi-structured interviews with cultural educators and preservationists.
2. Racism: Practice of discrimination, segregation, mistreatment based on race and white supremacy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). To be measured via semi-structured interviews with cultural educators and preservationists.
3. Environmental injustices: the racialization of people of color within their communities in order for them to abandon their land, rights, and cultural practices (Dickinson, 2012). To be measured via semi-structured interviews with cultural educators and preservationists.

### **Key Terms**

1. Gullah: The slave descendants that reside in South Carolina and North Carolina.

2. Geechee: The slave descendants that reside in Georgia and Florida and the creole-based language used by the Gullah Geechee people.
3. Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor: The region of land that extends from Wilmington, North Carolina in the north to Jacksonville, Florida in the south.
4. Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor Commission: A commission developed by Congress in 2007 as part of the National Heritage Areas Act of 2006. The commission consists of fifteen members: five cultural educators and ten representatives from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. The purpose of the commission is to promote historic preservation of the Gullah Geechee culture.
5. Low Country: Region along coastal South Carolina.

### **Importance of the Study**

According to Thomas-Hoffman (n.d.), cultural identity is crucial for civilizations to cooperate peacefully. Many resolutions and declarations by the United Nation (UN) promote cultural preservation including: (a) Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance Based on Religion and Belief, (b) Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious and Linguistic Minorities, (c) The Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, (d) The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and, (e) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. A deeper understanding of the Gullah-Geechee culture is needed and can provide African Americans with a sense of personal identity and provide a guideline to teaching self-sufficiency and community respect. Furthermore, with the current racial tension within our society, a comprehensive account of American history to include the contributions of African Americans to our nation's heritage and mutual respect and appreciation for all cultures can promote reconciliation and national well-being (National Park

Service, 2005). By increasing awareness and eradicating race-related challenges in order to develop strategies to provide cultural education and public awareness of the Gullah-Geechee culture is instrumental in preserving the culture. More importantly, the African-American experience can be incorporated into common humanity by cherishing individual differences and taking pride in the distinct heritage of African descendants (Pollitzer, 2005). According to New South Wales Department of Education (2015), cultural identity starts at birth and is shaped by values and attitudes expressed in the home and community. Schiele (2005) concurs that most social problems experienced by African Americans are linked to lack of cultural identity or cultural oppression. Furthermore, mass media and popular culture can create new cultures and cause cultural estrangement and override the cultural values prevalent at home and in the community if there is not a strong appreciation of one's culture heritage (New South Wales Department of Education, 2015). Cultural estrangement may preclude many African Americans from recognizing the presence and importance of their human particularity. This acknowledgement is critical, some say, to a group's ability and willingness to truly express its positive potentiality, to educate others about its contribution to human history, and to form institutions that infuse its interpretive frameworks that protect its political and economic interests (Schiele, 2005).

African American and other minorities must be free to express and learn the uniqueness of their culture and any denial of culture can negatively impact how minorities view themselves. For example, in the movie *A Soldier's Story*, Sergeant Vernon Waters told the character Soldier C.J. Memphis,

See, C.J., the Black race can't afford you no more. There used to be a time, we'd see someone like you singin', clownin', yassuh-bossin'... and we wouldn't do anything.



Folks liked that. You were good. Homey kind of nigger. When they needed somebody to mistreat, call a name or two, they paraded you. Reminded them of the good old days. Not no more. The day of the Geechee is gone, boy. And you're going with it. (Jewison & Schwary, 1984)

Furthermore, in the 1994 movie *Inkwell*, one character describes the unattractive, less-desired girl as Geechee. Moviegoers accepted the screenwriters' descriptions of a Geechee as someone with a stereotypical buffoonery behavior or unattractive person not as the highly esteemed carrier of the African-American culture. Unfortunately, African Americans were robbed of an allegiance to the Gullah-Geechee culture. Most importantly, understanding one's cultural heritage leads to an understanding and valuing of other cultures and most importantly overcomes racism (New South Wales Department of Education, 2015).

Future preservation efforts of indigenous cultures and populations can be improved by exploring the challenges of the Gullah-Geechee community in order to maintain the lifestyles of indigenous populations globally in Russia, Canada, the Philippines, Australia, Cambodia, Mongolia, the Amazon, all over Latin America and Papua New Guinea, for example.

### **Assumptions**

This study will operate under the following assumptions:

1. From a CRT perspective, the experiential knowledge of minority communities provides a counter-narrative to the dominant culture that is valid and critical toward eradicating racial inequalities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).
2. The inclusion of members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators assures that the participants have all experienced race-related challenges in their preservation initiatives.

3. Members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators have a sincere interest to participate in this study in order to uncover common themes to develop strategies to improve cultural education and preservation of marginalized communities.

### **Limitations**

The following are unavoidable limitations to researching this topic:

1. The sensitive nature of culture and race could prevent honest and truthful responses from the sample population.
2. As an African American, the researcher will bring her own bias to the study. It should be noted that researcher's bias is present in every study; however, biases within this study minimized with the trustworthiness criteria.
3. The goal of the researcher is to interview as many cultural educators and members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community; however, the researcher is limited to the geographical regions of Georgia and South Carolina.
4. The researcher is a peripheral member of the Gullah-Geechee community, which could lead to a lack of trust for sample population.

### **Summary**

Chapter One of this study provides an overview of the challenges associated with preserving the Gullah-Geechee culture. To thoroughly explore how race and environmental injustices influence cultural education and preservation, the researcher will interview members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community. By utilizing a CRT lens and giving voice to these

cultural leaders, the research findings can bring awareness to race-related challenges and environmental injustices in cultural education and preservation of indigenous populations globally to provide a platform for future research.

Chapter Two provides the relevant literature on the Gullah-Geechee history, Critical Race Theory, Environmental Justice Movement other dissertations on the Gullah-Geechee culture. Chapter Two also provides historical, theoretical, and empirical data on race, racism and environmental injustices.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

“Will the U.S. ever be us? Lord willing! For now, we know, the new Jim Crow they stop, search, and arrest our souls.”

—Lonnie Rashid Lynn, Jr. *aka* Common

With the dominant culture controlling the recording of U.S. history, many historical narratives can be described as racial micro-aggressions supporting the ideology of white supremacy excluding the narratives of minority and indigenous communities. Most White Americans are not complicit in the U.S. legacy of white supremacy; however, many covert day-to-day social injustices including education disparities, pervasive discrimination, and healthcare inequalities go unnoticed and remaining silent can attributed to the marginalization of minority populations. Following in the tradition of other Critical Race scholars, this research seeks to discover if the most dangerous forms of white supremacy are the routine privileges and interests of the dominant culture that goes unseen in mainstream institutions, which could include the efforts in cultural preservation and education.

For a complete understanding of the challenges in cultural preservation and education, reverse historical trends and give honor to the voices of minorities, this chapter will unveil the literature pertaining to the causes of white supremacy and its linkage to race, racism and environmental injustice. The research questions outlined in Chapter One will be answered through analysis of collected data to determine if race, racism and environmental injustices are factors to the diminishing Gullah-Geechee community in order to challenge the status quo and overcome the negative physical and psychological impacts of white supremacy on a larger scale.

Since historical and contemporary literature in cultural education and preservation favor the dominant culture, these views failed to specifically address the sociopolitical dynamics and

challenges in cultural education and preservation of minority communities, and thus are not specific to the challenges of the Gullah-Geechee community. Therefore, this dissertation uses the CRT theoretical framework to examine cultural preservation and education in the Gullah Geechee community to provide members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators an opportunity to speak their truths.

This chapter begins with a historical overview of the Gullah-Geechee culture, Critical Race Theory and Environmental Justice Movement. In this chapter, the researcher continues with an exploration of contemporary literature related to the formation and definition of race, racism and environmental injustice. This chapter concludes with a brief summary and critique of current dissertations pertaining to the Gullah-Geechee culture.

### **Selection of Articles**

To generate the following narrative summary of research and writing on the Critical Race Theory, Environmental Justice Movement, race, racism and environmental injustice, the researcher used a variety of search engines to construct a wide-ranging interdisciplinary database of materials. Such engines included Google Scholar, ProQuest, JSTOR, ERIC, Dissertations & Theses and the Pepperdine University Library System. The Pepperdine University Library System allowed the specific search of peer-reviewed studies. The process of selection was based on the relevancy of materials to indigenous communities specifically the Gullah-Geechee community. Relevancy was determined by a careful examination of the articles' abstracts. While this study is specific to the Gullah-Geechee community, the researcher sought a holistic overview of racism and environmental injustices in the United States and included Native Americans.

## Criteria for Inclusion or Exclusion of Literature

This research includes the following literature:

- Peer-reviewed journals and articles based on race, racism, and environmental injustices
- Peer-reviewed journals and articles on the Critical Race Theory and Environmental Justice Movement
- Books and book chapters on race, racism, and environmental injustices
- Books and book chapters on the Critical Race Theory and Environmental Justice Movement
- Books and chapter books on the Gullah-Geechee culture
- Doctoral Dissertations from 2007-2016 regarding the Gullah-Geechee culture
- Government reports on the Gullah-Geechee community, historic preservation and education

Although most of the literature was published within ten years of this dissertation, the researcher chose to also include older literature to establish the legacy of the social constructs of race, racism, environmental injustice and the Gullah-Geechee culture. Even though race, racism and environmental injustice are global phenomena, the researcher excluded literature regarding these topics based on data outside of the United States.

## Historical Overview

Geertz's (1983) book entitled *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* states that early documentations of cultures relied on the assumptions and perceptions of explorers, missionaries, traders, and colonists without allowing the culture to articulate their own narratives. Early written documents of the Gullah-Geechee culture did not reflect the perspective of the community, since the community was isolated and residents could

only provide oral narratives. In the book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903) notes the earliest account of the Gullah-Geechee culture in literature. Du Bois (1903) details the accounts of the Port Royal experiment where the white Northerners met the Southern slaves for the first time and described them as primitive and untouched by the world around them. The Northerners met with the Gullah-Geechee community with the intention to change the community by adopting Western standards (Smalls, 2012). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2012) argues that the theory of anti-dialogical action leads to cultural invasion due to a disrespect of the invader's belief in the invaded culture's potential that eventually leads to cultural conquest and inauthenticity. Smalls (2012) concurs that during 1862-1954, schools for Gullah-Geechee students known as the Penn School and Avery School demoted Gullah selfhood and oral communication by their teaching strategies and educational philosophies. Two Northern missionaries founded the Penn School to provide a formal education for the Gullah community (Pollitzer, 2005). Freire describes the formal education at these schools as a cultural invasion and "camouflaged with the invader assuming the role of a helping hand" (p. 153).

Conversely, others describe the same period at the Penn School (later named Penn Center) as successful: "The Penn School helped serve to preserve their culture and left a continuing legacy, nowhere more enduring" (Pollitzer, 2005, p. 67). The first scholar to specifically study the Gullah language and oral communication intensively to make it a legitimate language was Turner (1949). His pioneering work promotes the unique history and folklore of the Gullah-Geechee culture in a positive light by dismissing the idea that the Gullah-Geechee community was using poor English (Turner, 1949; Campbell, 2011). The Gullah-Geechee culture is shown by Turner's (1949) research to be a product of merging diverse cultural experiences and communication to retain African roots and is the only African-American

creole language in the United States (National Park Service, 2005). Turner's (1949) findings led to a sense of pride and respect for the culture that had been previously described as inferior (National Park Service, 2005). Turner (1949) sparked a sense of pride for some African Americans to discover their ancestral roots. However, Cross (2012) establishes that without a written language the passing of knowledge from an oral culture could not be upheld with only a school; furthermore, a culture can quickly disappear when there is a gap in passing along traditions primarily because younger generations become ashamed of the traditions and seek a more accepted culture. The urgency of concerted efforts to preserve the Gullah language is based on the findings of field studies and data analysis that conclude that of the estimated 7,000 languages spoken globally, most of them indigenous, are endangered of being extinct by the end of the century (Wilford, 2007). The maintenance of one's language is essential to cultural identity and historical and historical accounts of linguistic suppressions have been used to suppress minority cultures (New South Wales Department of Education, 2015). According to Wilford (2007), distinct oral languages without a written form are susceptible to extinction with the dominance of the English language and the overwhelming usage of dominant languages in all forms of media.

During the late 1950's and early 1960's the family-oriented Gullah-Geechee community was self-sufficient as well as interdependent (Goodwine, 1998). The National Park Service (2005) from a special report entitled "Special Resource Study of Low country Gullah Culture," details the task system and community activities that allowed the community to sustain on the coast. National Park Service (2005) states that the community was able to maintain their lifestyle with the fishing, timber, and farming industries. However, the availability of air-conditioning, newly constructed bridges and beachfronts made coastal properties more appealing to tourists



(Cross, 2012). The once undesired marshland and coastal properties became ideal properties for commercial fisherman and high-class resort communities; therefore, caused a population explosion and increased property values and taxes to the residents of the region (National Park Service, 2005). The industrialized coastline led to massive coastal tourism and presented a threat to the Gullah-Geechee lifestyle (Jones-Jackson & Joyner, 1987; Lee, 1998; Pollitzer, 2005). New resorts, golf courses and gated communities created fences and gates that inhibited the Gullah-Geechee community from natural resources for hunting, fishing and maintaining their lifestyles (Cross, 2012). To add insult to injury, the high-class resorts to many Gullah-Geechee community leaders were considered to be a reincarnation of the slavery system, since most of the resorts had “plantation” as part of their names and some members of the Gullah-Geechee community was forced to work in the resort industry for little pay, losing self-sufficiency and autonomy (National Park Service, 2005).

As noted in the research, the Gullah-Geechee people speak a creole-based language called “Geechee,” which has also been the subject of debate by Americans (National Park Service, 2005). Du Bois (1903) notes his fascination with the oral language used by the Gullah-Geechees because of the use of accents and cadences from Africa. Turner (1949) argues that Europeans, mainland African Americans and some Gullahs viewed the Gullah language negatively. To illustrate, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas (as cited in Wermiel, 2002) was raised in a Gullah community southeast of Savannah and states:

But I’m going to give you a more personal reason, and I think this is probably the first time I ever even told anybody about it... When I was 16, I was sitting as the only black kid in my class, and I had grown up speaking with a kind of dialect. It’s called Geechee. Some people call it Gullah now, and people praise it now. But they use to make fun of us

back then. I was self-conscious...I was trying to speak Standard English. I was thinking in Standard English but speaking another language...I just started developing the habit of listening...I didn't ask questions in college or law school. And I found that I could learn better just listening. (p. 318)

Some members of the Gullah community have negative feelings toward Judge Thomas because he was initially ashamed of his heritage (National Park Service, 2005). Turner (1949) describes African Americans like Justice Clarence Thomas as being brainwashed into believing that any deviation from the European culture is inferior. Public schools in the region discouraged the use of the Gullah language and taught the community to move toward "progression" rather than a balance and appreciation of the heritage (Pollitzer, 2005). Historically, members of an invaded culture are separated from their culture and want to pattern themselves after the invaders and lose their true identity (Freire, 2012), like seen with most African Americans.

Today, many members of the Gullah-Geechee community attempt to benefit from the tourism industry with partnerships with the mainstream industry by providing Gullah-Geechee specific heritage tours, festivals, restaurants, and cultural centers throughout the region. Many in the community do not favor tourism. Alderman (2013) and Butler (2008) describe the relationship between southern African-American communities and tourism as complex since tourism in the Antebellum South was built on the suffrage of African-Americans and many mainstream historical sites and landmarks attempt to ignore the atrocities of slavery, a key component in American history. The Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor Commission has provided aid in the community to educate the community in eco-tourism (Tyler, 2003) and geo-tourism (Thibeault, 2006) to eliminate residents in the Gullah-Geechee region to only have access to menial hospitality jobs from the mainstream industry. Efforts have also been made to

provide well-balanced narratives to visitors in the Gullah-Geechee community, by educating others on slavery, as well as, the Gullah-Geechee significance in American history.

### **The Critical Race Theory**

From the perspective of the Critical Race Theory, race and racism are ubiquitous throughout American social structures. This research will centralize the experiences of cultural educators and preservationist in the learning process of cultural preservation and education of the Gullah-Geechee culture.

In the book, *Racial Formation in the United States*, Omi and Winant (2014) describe the Critical Race Theory as a cultural phenomenon based on social and historical components and can be seen in contemporary contexts. The Critical Race Theory is “the consciousness of racial minorities and acknowledges the feelings and intangible modes of perception unique to those who have historically been socially, structurally, and intellectually marginalized in the United States” (Barnes, 1990, p. 1894). The CRT was developed from a national movement known as the Critical Legal Studies which began “in the late 1960s when a number of legal scholars and activists around the nation realized that gains in the Civil Rights era has stalled and indeed were being rolled back” (Delgado, 2003, p. 125).

The five tenets of CRT are used as the guiding principles of this study and are as follows:

1. **Centrality of Race and Racism:** The research questions focus on an examination of race and racism and the intersection with intersection of cultural education and preservation in the lives of cultural educators and preservationist in the Gullah-Geechee community.

2. **Challenging the Dominant Perspective:** This dissertation challenges the dominant culture's perspective that racism is of the past and minority communities are monolithic groups with homogenous experiences and expertise.
3. **Commitment to Social Justice:** Transforming the cultural education and preservation of racially marginalized cultures will require the development of a racially diverse and conscious teaching force committed to creating social justice.
4. **Valuing Experiential Knowledge:** All data in this study is qualitative. Through semi-structured interviews, the experiential knowledge of cultural educators and members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community will provide a different narrative.
5. **Being Interdisciplinary:** Utilizing history and current research about internalized racism within cultural education as a central framework, this research is interdisciplinary in nature. It draws from the fields of Psychology, Sociology, History, and Education. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012)

On the other hand, there are some critics who object to the use of the CRT as a theoretical framework. In the article entitled "Some Critical Thoughts on Critical Race," Litowitz (1997) discusses his views about the limitations of using the Critical Race Theory in academia. Litowitz (1997) states that the CRT should include the views of the dominant culture or the "outsiders" to provide balance and to give thought to competing interests. Litowitz (1997) also suggests the CRT's tenet of interest-convergence lacks evidence and intent of the dominant culture's motives. Other scholars have questioned whether the CRT constitutes a legitimate scholarship since storytelling and narratives play on emotions and overlook doctrine policies and federal laws (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Litowitz, 1997; Taylor, 1999). Most traditional academic

scholarship includes empirical data, objectivity, rational, and traditional or Eurocentric forms of knowledge construction; therefore, narratives and storytelling can be criticized for lacking valid scholarship (Farber & Sherry, 1995; Kennedy, 1995). Conversely, storytelling in research can expose the dominant's culture racial forces that materialize through the lived experiences of minorities (Delgado, 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Unlike CRT scholars, some sociologists seek to make race irrelevant with ideologies like race-neutral ideologies. Bonilla-Silva (2013) in *Racism Without Racists* claims that in the post Jim Crow era, colorblindness exists since it is believed that racism is no longer a threat to the progress of minorities, and some citizens believe that any negative social issues experienced by minority communities are thought to be self-inflicted. Alexander (2012) describes the era of colorblindness as taking race out of the equation but now the criminal justice system engages in the discriminatory practices. By shifting to race-neutral analyses will ensure that race-related inequalities continue (Haney-Lopez, 2014).

Haney-Lopez (2014) reveals the problems of colorblindness as follows:

1. The ill effects of race are woven in our society and ignoring the societal reality cannot overcome the problems.
2. A false sense of victory is felt with colorblindness.
3. Comfort through silence creates a safe zone when race-related thoughts are not exposed.
4. Colorblindness is now code for opposition to affirmative action.

Most important to this research, Love (2004) describes the CRT as a methodology that “represents a paradigm shift in discourse about race and racism...by challenging existing methods of conducting research on race and inequality” (p. 228). Furthermore, Tate (1997) utilizes the Critical Race Theory to expose the social inequalities from covert and overt

injustices in our society. The CRT “implies that race should be the center focus and charges researchers to critique practices and policies” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 30) in order to bring about social change where researchers use counter-storytelling as a qualitative methodology to identify the permanence of racism.

### **Environmental Justice Movement**

The U.S. colonists sought the African slaves not only for free labor but also for their traditional ecological knowledge. Rice harvesting on the West African coast was a spiritual connection and time for celebration and renewal (National Park Service, 2005). According to Dorsey’s (2002) article, “The Presence of African American Men in the Environmental Movement (Or Lack Thereof),” with the institutionalization of slavery, most African Americans began to associate agriculture and the harvesting of crops with misery and humiliation without any financial benefit. During the Jim Crow era and Civil Rights Movement, many other socioeconomic problems were viewed as more significant than the environmental activism; therefore, the initial environmental movement focused on wilderness and wildlife preservation and was supported mainly by middle-class and upper-class whites (Bullard, 2008). Mainstream wildlife refuges, conservations, and preservation organizations did not address the diminishing Gullah-Geechee land and cultural sites (Bullard, 2001, 2008; Dickinson, 2012). Dickinson (2012) also states that environmental justice activists questioned the whiteness of traditional environmental movements since these movements lacked varied cultural perspectives and failed to recognize social injustices and poverty issues in environmentalism.

Dorsey (2002) explains the absence of African Americans and other minorities in environmental organizations and activism is a result of systemic neglect, prejudice, and invisibility of minority communities. Nevertheless, communities of color and poor communities

had no choice but to become activists in environmental issues since these issues had a negative impact on their land and health. Taylor (1993) concludes “people with little knowledge of environmental issues or experience with political activism have been compelled to take a radical action” (p. 55). For example, the environmental injustice view of toxic dumping and locations for hazardous facilities is viewed as an appalling demonstration of racism with the Location of Locally Unwanted Land (LULUs; Bullard, 2008). As the literature indicates, poor communities of color were easy targets in racially motivated environmental injustices since these communities were not connected to policymakers, lobbyists and industrial boards, and they lacked the finances to hire legal experts (Bullard, 2001). Bullard (2008) states that the federal government and business elites were the key decision makers to determine land use and growth potential without input from the community.

Limited research has been devoted to the causes and effects of environmental inequality in the African-American community compared to other disparities including crime, unemployment, drugs, health, and education (Bullard, 2008). Nevertheless, the studies that were performed were significant and led to the landmark Environmental Justice Movement, headed by advocates from minority communities consisting of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders to eradicate toxic assaults and illegal land encroachments (Bullard, 2008).

The birthplace of the Environmental Justice Movement was Warren, County, NC. In 1982, the state government of North Carolina approved a landfill to dump 32,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil containing highly toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the small community of Afton, which had the highest percentage of African Americans in the state at 84% (Bullard, 2008; Dorsey, 2002). The contaminated soil was from an illegal dump of PCB-laced oil

from Raleigh-based Ward Transfer Company. The federal government decided to bury the contaminated soil in Afton only five to ten feet below the surface of the community drinking well (Bullard, 2001, 2008). Even with protests in Afton and national attention, the toxic wastes were deposited. However, the Afton protest did bring to the forefront environmental injustice, environmental racism, and the patterns of toxic facilities in poor communities of color (Bullard, 2008; Dorsey, 2002).

Prior historical protests did not receive the media attention like the Afton protest. For example, Latino farmers fought to prevent harmful pesticides in the San Joaquin Valley, California in the 1960s (Huang & London, 2012). In 1967, African American students in Houston, Texas, protested a city garbage dump that killed two children; the residents of West Harlem, New York fought to prevent a sewage treatment plant in their community (Bullard, 2001); the DDT contamination of the lands and waterways in Tiana, Alabama, an African-American community in 1981 (Bullard, 2008; Dorsey, 2002).

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), an independent nonpartisan agency established to monitor the federal government in the protection of all Americans, conducted a study entitled, “Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities,” that revealed that three out of four hazardous landfill sites in the Southeastern United States were located in predominantly African-American and Latino communities (Bullard, 2001, 2008). Even with these findings, the federal government provided no corrective actions. The Commission for Racial Justice released a national report in 1987 to reveal the correlation between the treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste and race (United Church of Christ, 1987). According to the “Toxic Race in The United States” report, based on two cross-sectional studies to compare



African-American, Latino, Asian-American, Native American and Pacific American communities' exposure to hazardous waste compared to White communities. The results of the study were as follows:

- A disproportional number of minorities, with a deliberate and consistent pattern, reside with commercial, hazardous facilities or with hazardous waste activities in highly dense populated areas.
- Communities with two or more hazardous waste facilities their average minority population is more than three times the population of minorities with no facilities.
- The most prominent factor in the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities was race. Other socio-economic factors were value and ownership of home. (United Church of Christ, 1987)

Goldman and Fitton (1994) expand on the results from the GAO study and Commission for Racial Justice to discover that between 1980 and 1993, people of color living near a hazardous waste facility had increased to 47%. Bullard (1983) discovers similar findings in Houston, TX, six out of eight waste incinerators and all of the city's landfills were in African-American neighborhoods. Critics of the results of the study argue that the location of waste siting is based solely on the cost of the land and favorable business climates (Office of Legacy Management, 2016).

In 1992, President Bill Clinton made environmental justice a part of his national agenda. President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898 to mandate federal agencies to address the disproportionate environmental conditions in minority and poor communities (Bullard, 2008). Core principles of the Environmental Justice Movement were adopted at the National People of

Color Leadership Summit (Dickinson, 2012). Bullard's (2001) research, "Environmental Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," outlined the common objectives of the principles:

1. To uphold the rights of communities against environmental degradation
2. To become proactive to prevent future injustices
3. To hold perpetrators accountable for their actions
4. To include more objectives to challenge injustices beside in the fight against environmental injustices

In the article, "Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: Why Race Still Matters After All These Years," Bullard, Mohai, Saha, and Wright (2008) research toxic waste landfills twenty years later to document the progress of protection of communities of color and low income since the last study and Executive Order 12898. Despite the achievements with the Environmental Justice Movement, these communities are still targets for dumping toxins and the placement of waste facilities, and with empirical data, race is still found to be the dominant factor to determine toxic waste facility locations. Based on the literature, institutional discrimination is alive and well and continuous support to communities of color and pro-active steps to regulate the decisions of the city, state and federal governmental policies are needed to continue the fight in the Environmental Justice Movement.

In order to fully understand the current research study, clear definitions and understandings of the terms race, racism and environmental injustice are imperative. Therefore, the following section of this literature review will examine literature to address these terms and their importance in this dissertation.

## **Race**

In "The Social Construction of Race," Haney-Lopez (1994) describes race as:

A vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry. Race must be understood as a *sui generis*, social phenomenon in which contested systems of meaning serve as the connection between physical features, face and personal characteristics. Race is neither an essence nor illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and micro effects of day decisions. (p. 1)

Nonetheless, race is a concept of society that insists there is a genetic significance behind human variations in skin color that transcends outward appearance. The American Association of Physical Anthropology (AAPA, 2016) statement on the biological aspects of race is as follows:

Generally, the traits used to characterize a population are either independently inherited or show only varying degrees of association with one another within each population. Therefore, the combination of these traits in an individual very commonly deviates from the average combination in the population. This fact renders untenable the idea of discrete races made up chiefly of typical representatives. (para. 7)

As reported by the Human Genome Project (HGP), most humans are 99.9% genetically identical and race has no biological basis (Hamilton, 2008). However, race has no scientific merit outside of sociological classifications, and most historical academic theories of race were based on the European and American colonial experiences (King, 1982). In a racialized society, the realities and perceptions of shared social constructs of race can lead to biological, physiological and epidemiological deficiencies (Fuentes, 2012).

**History of race.** In the book, *The Invisible Man*, Ellison (1995) states how the U.S. colonists created the concept of race based solely on white and black skin to provide a hierarchy

in the master-slave relationship and provided the foundation for white supremacy. Most importantly, race justified the co-existence of white liberty and black slavery (DeGruy, 2005; Ellison, 1995) According to Fredrickson (2002) racialized societies based on racial bias share the following:

- A display of unrestrained racial ideology.
- Ideas of racial purity.
- Changes in the categorization of race

Without scientific finding regarding race, many authors today claim there is a distinct racial classification to explain the differences in behavior, intelligence quotient, and athletic ability. These publications include Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) book entitled *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*; Rushton's (2000) *Race Evolution and Behavior: A Life History Perspective*; Entine's (2000) *Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We're Afraid to Talk About It*; and Wade's (2014) book, *A Troublesome Inheritance: Genes, Race and Human History*. Ironically, these publications claim racial differences genetically without mention of the differences socially in the form of unequal treatment based on race. Hamilton's (2008) article, "Revitalizing the Difference in the HapMap: Race and Contemporary Human Genetic Variation Research," revisits racial science and focuses on the 0.1% human genetic variation with projects such as the International Haplotype Map (HapMap) in genetic research to understand human diseases.

Humans vary slightly in genetic makeup but not by the common racial categories of black, white and Asian. In one of Fuentes's (2012) many books, *Race, Monogamy and Other Lies They Told You: Busting Myths About Human Nature*, concludes that the most genetic variations are among the people on the continent of Africa who physically look similar. Despite

attempts by early researchers like Carolus Linnaeus, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Carleton Coon to discover taxonomy on race, based on physical features, cultural differences, and geographical location, there is no scientific evidence for support (Fuentes, 2012). DeGruy (2005) states that it is impossible to separate individuals in racial groups based upon biological racial differences and the unchallenged belief that biological racial differences account for intellectual and moral abilities is the primary factor that leads to racism in this country.

**Skin color.** Skin color is the most frequently used tool to racially divide humans to produce a hierarchical of humans as frequently articulated by the following racial connotations – “blackie,” “darkie,” “ashy,” “colored,” “tar baby,” “yellow,” and “redskin.” Rothenberg (1998) concludes that the “rightness of whiteness” (p. 12 ) is symbolized in the usage of the colors white and black, and portray the ingrained images of how the races are viewed by our society i.e. white is positive, good cowboys in movies wear the white hats and angels wear white. On the other hand, the color black is associated with negativity and the bad guys and devils wear black (Rothenberg, 1998). Even historical movies are distorted by the dominant culture i.e. Egyptians are portrayed as white while historic artifacts and paintings show Egyptians as Africans with dark skin. Unlike white children, African-American children are aware of race and the negative stereotypes associated with their race as early as 8 years of age (Wise, 2011).

From the book, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*, Haney-Lopez (2014) states that skin color forms a reliable gauge to determine who is American and who is not, and whiteness was synonymous to American. All human skin has melanin and varies only in its distribution and production and serves as a protection mechanism for different light absorption and reflective activity (Fuentes, 2012). Skin color variations are attributed to ultraviolet light stress and researchers have

examined indigenous populations' original locations as a determinant for skin color (Fuentes, 2012). Skin variations of indigenous populations to illustrate that darker skins are located around equatorial regions and lighter skins are located further away (Fuentes, 2012). Without regard to scientific evidence, the myth of race is used in the United States to include and exclude certain groups from resources, basic human rights, and equal protection and to falsely label specific behaviors and traits (DeGruy, 2005; Haney-Lopez, 1994).

Many scholars, journalists, politicians, and citizens argue that the election of President Barack Obama created a post-racial society. According to Wise (2011), the election of Barack Obama can be compared to the elections of women to lead countries like Great Britain, Pakistan and India. These elections did not end sexism and the presidency of Barack Obama did not eliminate the ideology of race. Furthermore, even with the most negative stereotypes and biases, individual success is labeled as the exception while the false narratives of the ethnic group as a whole continue. Many activists also concur that President Barack Obama's campaign was structured to avoid conversations about race in order to appease to the dominant culture (Wise, 2011). However, President Barack Obama candidly addressed race and racism before the end of his term.

### **Racism**

In President Obama's Farewell Address, he posed the following:

The effects of slavery and Jim Crow didn't suddenly vanish in the 60's-that when minority groups voice discontent, they are not just engaging in reverse racism or practicing political correctness; when they wage peaceful protest, they're not demanding special treatment but equal treatment that our Founders promised. (Obama, 2017, para. 30)

Racism is based on three fundamental concepts: hate, structural racism, and implicit bias (Haney-Lopez, 2014). Racism coupled with Manifest Destiny, the ideology of white supremacy-cultural, economic, political, mental and physical domination of communities of color (Ogbu, 1978) are marked by malevolence and illustrate how the well-being of people of color has not been of paramount importance even in the early stages of our democracy. Several authors propose that the privilege of domination and the very thought of losing this status leads to systemic exclusion of a particular group (Alexander, 2012; DeGruy, 2005; Haney-Lopez, 1994; Higginbotham, 2013). One explicit definition of racism from the literature was as follows:

Racism, is one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. Its practice perpetuates too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings to be countenances under any pretext. Racism retards the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims, corrupts its perpetrators, and blights human progress.

Recognition of the oneness of mankind, implemented by appropriate legal measures, the oneness of mankind, implemented by appropriate legal measures, must be universally upheld if this problem is to be overcome. (Bahai Reference Library, 1985, p. 8)

Other authors define racism as the attitude one groups develops by an imbalance of power dynamic resulting from sociopolitical domination of one race over another to carry out unequal treatment to the believed inferior group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002; Tyson, 2014). Wise (2011) defines racism as another example of imposing the dominant society's reality of an ethnic group into society. For example, the false reality of the dominant culture includes the notions that slaves were content with their conditions, freed slaves were violent, and Native Americans were uncivilized. Many societal imbalances between different ethnic groups are caused by racism and are aligned with the false realities that have

come to fruition based on the marginalization of people of color-incarceration rates, test scores, health outcomes, unemployment rates and wealth (Fuentes, 2012; Haney-Lopez, 2014). Tyson (2014) provides a distinction between racialism and racism, the later involves a power dynamic and a belief in white supremacy.

**Signs of racism.** As originally seen in the U.S. with the Naturalization Act of 1790, this act provided naturalization to white immigrants who were of good character and race-based exclusion of Native Americans, African Americans, and Asians (Wise, 2010). The ability to immigrate to America, obtain land, and own a slave was all based on European ancestry (Wise, 2011). Many African Americans have heard about the promised reparations of 40 acres and a mule in return for the years of free labor in chattel slavery. The U.S. Government did provide reparations for slavery, but these reparations were given to slave owners, whom were paid three hundred dollars per slave following emancipation for compensation of property loss (Wise, 2010). Other governmental programs that were instrumental specific for the dominant culture exclusively included the Homestead Act of 1862 that distributed over 250 million acres of free land that had been occupied by Native Americans to U.S. citizens (at the time of the enactment African Americans and other minorities were not U.S. citizens); The Social Security Act of 1935 provided income after retirement and excluded two occupations-housekeepers and farmers, professions at the time that were predominantly African American, Latino, and Asian; Warner Act granted collectively bargaining power to unions and unions excluded access to membership to minority groups; Federal Housing Administration help grant home ownership to first time home buyers-program set up with appraisal system linking mortgage eligibility to race and 98% of the 120 billion home loans were given to Whites (Wise, 2010).



**Origins of systemic racism.** Numerous authors support the claim that racism is described as any institutional arrangement where a group has experienced injustices based on race (Hill, 2010). Most U.S. history books include the stories of how Christopher Columbus “discovered” America, a region that was inhabited by millions of Native Americans before his arrival (Hill, 2010). This lack of acknowledgment of the existence of Native American lives, families, and cultures displays only the beginning and how the dominant culture exercises its rights to take over land with genocidal colonization without regards to the occupants of the land. Most importantly, the moral dilemma of the U.S. colonists was justified by the development of the concept of race leading to white supremacy to ease their conscience over the colonial invasion, chattel slavery and genocide of non-white individuals (Rothenberg, 1998).

Before the European colonization of the Americas, the land was densely populated with an estimated 70-100 million indigenous inhabitants (Hill, 2010). Even with internal conflicts amongst the culturally diverse population, these conflicts failed to compare to the genocidal and cultural annihilation stemming from racism after the European invasion (Hill, 2010). The European invasion eventually led to systemic racism that included policies like forced enslavement and encomiendas. Encomiendas were systems instituted in the 1500s in which colonists were allowed to encroach land that were previously occupied by Native Americans. Native Americans were also forced to work in hazardous mines that led to the death of millions of Native slaves (Hill, 2010). The infamous Trail of Tears and the Indian Removal Act was another form of systemic racism where Native Americans were forced westward in the winter to obtain their fertile land. State governments and President Andrew Jackson were active participants in the stratagem that killed many Native Americans (Hill, 2010). Indigenous slaves

of Native Americans were forcibly “imported” to Europe to work and later millions of African slaves were brought to the United States to continue systemic racist patterns.

Historical narratives also use words to distort, demean, and justify the inhuman conquest of the indigenous homeland (Rothenburg, 1998). “Distortion of history by the choice of loaded words use to describe historical events is a common racist practice” (Rothenburg, 1998, p. 471). For example, Native American battles successfully defending their lands were described as massacres while colonial extermination of Native Americans were described as victories (Leonardo, 2013). The dehumanization of African slaves including using the term “slave” denounces the human aspect of the slave and justifies the atrocities that happened to them (Rothenberg, 1998). Freire (2012) defines sadism to be the transfer of humans into inanimate objects as seen by more control of oppressed populations lead to more dehumanization of their existence. Freire (2012) argues that oppressors victimized themselves by labeling “those people” (p. 38) as violent when the oppressed react to or acknowledge the onslaught of violence at the hands of the oppressors. Haney-Lopez (1994) concludes that ignoring racial injustices promotes racial discrimination further by accepting these injustices as normal.

Systemic racisms led to systemic oppression of minority groups. Young (2003) outlines the five types of oppression:

1. Exploitation: forcibly using labor of a particular group without compensation.
2. Marginalization-restricting a group’s socio-economic attainment by means of exclusion linked to white.
3. Powerlessness: The dominant culture inhibits the development of the minority group’s inner capabilities and involvement in the decision-making process with disrespectful treatment to create a culture of silence.

4. Culture Imperialism: the ideas of the dominant culture become the norm.
5. Violence: oppressed groups live in a state of fear of unprovoked attacks.

In the book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, DeGruy (2005) notes that even in school systems today, the genocide of Native Americans and oppression of African Americans are missing from history books and school curriculums. Rothenberg (1998) states that invisible forms of social control and injustices are most effective since they go beyond rationalization of equality and tend to blame the victims for their conditions.

By making inequalities and suffering appear to be the result of personal or group deficiency rather than the consequences of injustices, stereotypes, ideology, and language reconcile people to the status quo and prevent them from seeking change. (p. 449)

Scholarly opinions are divided in the significance of institutional racism and need for race focused analyses. In the book entitled *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* Wilson (1987) theorizes the social pathology marginalized African-American communities to be the result of race-neutral macroeconomics, not centuries of injustices. Expanding on Wilson (1987) work, William (2015) argues that our society faces a paradigm shift from racism to classism based on significant economic and political changes in minority communities.

The systemically organized forms of racism are the foundation of the U.S. political, educational, healthcare and social systems. *In Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy*, Gillborn (2008) investigates the role of racial oppression in institutional and structural systems. If our society does not address racism affirmatively, racism will continue to be a societal problem. Unlike the United States, the South African government admitted to their racial crimes during Apartheid with the Truth and Reconciliation Hearing (DeGruy, 2005).

Based on their admission and concerted efforts to seek reconciliation with the victims of Apartheid, DeGruy (2005) concludes that the level of racial tension in South Africa is far less than the United States because of the resistance of some Americans to accept the responsibility of slavery with excuses or efforts to trivialize the negative effects.

As the literature indicates, Bell (2004) outlines the historical patterns that hinder civil right policies to overcome racial equalities:

- The concerns for African Americans achieving racial equality are only tolerated when the interest coincides with the interest of the policy-makers of the dominant culture.
- Even when the interest coincides with the interest of the policy-makers, policies fail that threaten the superior societal status of the dominant culture.
- The rights of African-Americans are always subject to be compromised as needed to settle differences between contending policy-makers and other groups.

According to Haney-Lopez (1994), African-American slaves were primarily described as non-violent, jovial, and content during the slavery era; however, when slavery ended dangerous stereotypes and descriptions of former slaves emerged including-violent, criminal, and lust-filled to satisfy the interest of wealthy Whites. A new form of labor exploitation was needed to replace chattel slavery, and former slaves and their offspring were used to satisfy this need in prisons with a system of convict leasing (DeGruy, 2005; Haney-Lopez, 1994). The Alabama prison population of African-Americans increased from 2% in the 1870s to 74% in the 1890s.

Alabama's prison mortality rates were high because Southern whites and institutions did not suffer from a financial loss in the death of a prisoner with convict leasing as compared to slavery (Haney-Lopez, 1994). Convict leasing did not end until after Second World War not due to the inhuman treatment of prisoners, but the image of the United States was in jeopardy (Bell, 2004).

During the fall of 1957, then-governor of Arkansas, Oval Faubus stated that before he let African-American children enter into public schools, “blood would run in the streets” (Haney-Lopez, 2014, p. 171). Haney-Lopez (2014) argues that this level of hatred is more about the protection of the social hierarchy of races, and social programs, like social programs the integration of public schools, threatened the natural order of privilege. Throughout history, wealthier Whites including policy-makers can selectively avoid school, job and neighborhood integrations, since they can afford private schools, professional jobs, and affluent neighborhoods remaining racially segregated, and the middle and lower classes of Whites are forced to integrate causing more resentment to social programs.

Other historical events, like school integration, have been labeled as moral victories in the fight against racism, many scholars view them as political gains for the elite. Bell (2004) argues that the Supreme Court’s landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* was not a ground-breaking moral responsibility for democracy. Instead, the Supreme Court ruled against state-mandated racial segregation, because the global image of the United States was of the utmost importance after the Second World War. Ironically, German officers and citizens immigrated to the United States after the war and took advantage of the benefits of white supremacy while the African-American war heroes were given disparate unfair treatment (Bell, 2004). Furthermore, the U.S. economy could not afford domestic unrest after the negative economic impact of the Korean War and Second World War (Bell, 2004). Segregation was also detrimental to the Southern economy since it inhibited the transformation of rural plantations to the postwar industrialized South (Bell, 2004). Bell (2004) concluded that *Brown v. Board of Education* has proven to have only symbolic value without government enforcement and funding resulting in minority public schools today that racially segregated and academically unequal.

The maintenance of racism can be seen when the lower socio-economic class members of the dominant culture vote in defiance of their self-interest to give them a false sense of superiority against African Americans (Bell, 2004). Therefore, the ideology of white supremacy negatively impacts the lower socio-economic class of the dominant culture as well as African Americans. In addition, most ethnic groups' perception of racism is vastly different. In the height of the Civil Rights Movement marked by media coverage of the hosing of African-American protesters, boycotts, school protests, bombing of African-American churches and the assassinations of civil rights leaders, a Gallup poll revealed that 66 to 90% of Whites felt that African-Americans were treated equally in the employment, school and housing markets (Wise, 2010). Today, the protests of groups like Black Lives Matter are viewed more negatively by some members of the dominant society than the injustices these groups protest against.

As a society, substantial process has been made in overcoming racism. However, even with some shifts in public consciousness, the atrocities of the past still influence the present. Social activists must remain vigilant and any form of reticence will exacerbate the problems. Ayres' (2001) book entitled *Pervasive Prejudice? Unconventional Evidence of Race and Gender Discrimination* disproves the traditional economic theory that states free markets eliminate racial discrimination. Ayres (2001) provides empirical data and economic methodologies to demonstrate how racial prejudice is specially seen in the car sales industry, bail bonding, and even in kidney transplantation. The sociologist Pager (2007) conducts field experiments studying discrimination in African Americans and ex-offenders in entry-level jobs. She concludes that being African American was more of a deterrent in the selection process than committing a crime (Pager, 2007). Western (2007) and Alexander (2012) research the mass incarceration among

African Americans and conclude that mass incarceration is the new form of racism and racial equality in the Post-Jim Crow era.

**Internalized racism.** Although African Americans are no longer in physical slavery, they are still mentally enslaved by racism. Film producer Owen Alik Shahadah (2005) explains in the documentary, *500 Years Later* that “mental slavery is far more sinister than physical slavery because the chains are invisible are transmitted across generations.” Du Bois (1903) explains the effects of prolonged racism and the struggles with self-identity and double-consciousness:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others... The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed or spit upon by his fellow, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (pp. 2-3)

After centuries of racism, minority groups often accept the notion of their inferiority mimicking the attitudes of the dominant culture and belief that they are socially and intellectually inferior. Some African Americans identify with the dominant culture and promote the myth of inferiority among their psyche at the expense of their own self-identity (Freire, 2012; DeGruy, 2012). Freire (2012) describes the attitudes of the oppressed populations of themselves and the superiority of the oppressors as self-hatred and self-depreciation. Signs of internalized racism are

seen daily within our society. To illustrate, many minorities equate beauty to European standards and spend billions of dollars to lighten skin tones, change non-European physical features, and straighten hair. Many researchers have studied internalized racism with various minority communities (Cokley, 2007; Taylor & Grundy, 1996) and the solutions to overcome the negative impact Lipsky (1987). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was believed that African-American sororities, fraternities, and colleges used a paper bag test as part of the selection process. Being lighter than the paper bag, or closer to white, was a criterion for admission (Kerr, 2006).

Padilla (2001) argues that internalized racism has its roots in internalized oppression, but is directed more specifically at one's racial or ethnic group. The effects of internalized racism are seen in the landmark Doll Study in the 1940s used to examine the racial perceptions of African-American children. Psychologists Clark and Clark (1940) found that 67% of the children preferred Caucasian dolls, 59% described the Caucasian dolls as nice and 60% stated the Caucasian dolls had a nice color. On the other hand, 59% of the children stated the African-American doll looked bad and only 58% stated that the African-American doll looked like them (Anderson & Kharem, 2010; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: Legal Defense and Education Fund, n.d.). The doll study illustrates that during that era African-American children preferred Caucasian dolls to their own racial identity and believed in the notion of white supremacy (Clark & Clark, 1940; Higginbotham, 2013). In a more recent documentary, the same test was repeated on African-American children and modeled interview questions after those from the Doll Study. Fifteen of the 21 children preferred the Caucasian doll (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: Legal Defense and Education Fund, n.d.). Anderson and Kaharem (2010) suggest that the negative views of self-identification and race were similar to the 1930s.



Padilla's (2001) research, "But You're Not a Dirty Mexican," focuses on understanding how oppressed communities, specifically the Latin community accepted the racist ideology of the dominant culture by highlighting negative stereotypes of the Latin community. Padilla argues that this internalized oppression creates low self-esteem and negates social justice efforts and community empowerment. Social activists must create dialogue and activism to address the innate intra-racial self-hatred to focus on efforts to eradicate systemic racism. Along with internalized racism, the Gullah-Geechee community must also understand another system of racism known as environmental injustices.

### **Environmental Injustices**

Most literature regarding environmental injustices explore the relationship of pollutes and demographics (e.g., Berry, 1977). Some scholars now specifically focus on environmental destruction and other environmental racism and injustices (e.g., Agyeman, 2007; Baden & Coursey, 1997; Dickinson, 2012; Endres, 2009; Hamilton, 1995; Heinz, 2005; Kreig, 1995; Pulido, 1996; Peeples & DeLuca, 2006; Pezzullo, 2003; UCG, 1987). Many scholars concur that the dominant culture's environmental decisions are racially driven and disproportionately affect people of color in regards to exposure to toxins, land rights issues and omission from the decision-making process (Bullard, 2001; Loh & Sugerman-Brozan, 2002). Sze and London (2008) describe environmental racism as an environmental disadvantage specific to a racial or ethnic group. Environmental justice is the concerted efforts by a racial or ethnic group to obtain restitution from environmental harm (Cutter, 1995). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2013) defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies" (p. 1).

**Current cases of environmental injustices.** According to Dickinson (2012), “cultural and spatializing practices silences marginalized and racialized local Indigenous groups and degraded the environment” (p. 58). In latest case of environmental injustice with national media attention, the Standing Rock Sioux tribe is experiencing unethical construction of the North Dakota Access Pipeline (Elbein, 2017). The original plans for the pipeline were designed for Bismarck, a community with a white population of 92%. According to Elbein (2017), policymakers later decided to desecrate the sacred lands of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe that was once used for prayer and burial sites instead of using Bismarck. This project could be in direct violation of the 1966 Historic Preservation Act and the 1970 National Environmental Act. Although substantial process has been in understanding social inequalities including environmental injustices, race is still a powerful indicator of environmental inequalities (Bullard, 1993, 2001; Bullard & Wright, 1993; Holifield, 2013).

In 2014, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, known for his tax breaks to the wealthy, decided in an effort to be fiscally responsible to change the water source from Lake Huron to Flint River in the predominantly African-American city of Flint, MI (Shafer, 2016). Flint also has a poverty rate of 41.6%. Pulido (2016) makes a convincing argument of environmental racism since elected officials used Lake Huron initially over the Flint River because of the known industrialized contaminates from General Motors and the deteriorating infrastructure of the Flint water system; however, the lives of the residents of Flint were so devalued that it was easy to compromise their health and quality of life for fiscal solvency. General Motors complained that the Flint water caused their engine parts to rust so General Motors was allowed to return to using Lake Huron (Pulido, 2016). Shafer (2016) states the Flint water contained hazardous levels of lead that could predispose the residents to damage to every system and organ

in the body and children under six are also subject to behavioral problems, lower IQ, slowed growth patterns, hyperactivity, and hearing problems. According to D. Moore, Pandian, and Kosek (2003), race and environmental injustices often are viewed as separate entities of environmental destruction or racism and these factors should be as co-creators arising from similar systems of power of the dominant culture.

**Environmental injustice in the Gullah-Geechee community.** According to Dean (2013), the majority of the growth and development in the Southeastern United States will be along the coast with the development of retirement and vacation communities. The previous developers within the Gullah-Geechee region did not make attempts to coexist with the indigenous community, since they built gates and barriers to prevent the communities' usage of maritime and land resources (Dean, 2013). Case studies regarding environmental injustices provide a wide-range of coverage among many minority populations, although investigations specifically for the Gullah-Geechee community have shown the culturally and ecologically questionable land development that favors development over tradition (Dean, 2013). The Gullah Geechee Sea Island Coalition has spent over 20 years to protect traditional land, burial sites and culturally significant landmarks from environmental injustices (National Park Service, 2005). Environmental justice activist Adamson (2011) analyzes threats specifically to indigenous cultures' ways of life. In addition, Leonard III (1997) explores indigenous culture resource exploitation. Furthermore, environmental justice includes efforts by the affected population to obtain restitutions from the environmental harm (Cutter, 1995). According to Dean (2013) the major problem in the environmental protection of the Gullah-Geechee region is the lack of formal property rights including the protection of natural resources. Dean (2013) concludes that

land trusts, conservation easements, protective covenants and federal mandated preservation initiatives can be used to prevent the decimation of the Gullah-Geechee land.

History and research have proven that the ability to prevent unwanted encroachment and land use is granted to certain populations with power and influence (Bullard, 1993; Chess, Burger, & McDermott 2005; Mohai et al., 2009). The most vulnerable communities are least resistant and are easy targets for unwanted land uses (Bullard & Wright, 1993; Mohai et al., 2009), as seen in the Gullah-Geechee community. Environmental quality disparities between African-American and White communities stem from institutional racism that determines land usage, location of hazardous facilities and enforcement of environmental policies (Bullard, 2008).

Historical case studies also establish how economic vulnerabilities of Native American tribes are linked to natural resource extraction leading to environmental and socioeconomic harm either directly or indirectly. For example, the Mescalero Apache tribe in New Mexico suffered from decades of exploitation since the discovery of uranium on their land (Leonard, 1997). Under severe economic pressure, housing shortages, and lack of school system, the tribal council had no choice but to consent to the proposal to store nuclear waste on the land.

Another form of environmental injustice is based on race, land usage, and the racialized politics of property taxes, zoning and encroachments. Bullard's (2001) research shows how ordinances and local and state governmental land use decisions have negatively impacted communities of color and the poor. In the article, "Environmental Genocide: Native American and Toxic Waste," Brooks (1998) states racist land-based acquisitions are "perpetuated by the U.S. government and by private corporations alike" (p. 105), and "some of their methods are legal" (p. 105). Specific to the Gullah-Geechee community, the residents were also denied access

to clean water. Many Gullah-Geechee residents relied on septic systems on their property. The rapid development along the coast led to septic system failure and contamination of ground and well water. Therefore, the community petitioned along with the developers in the area to have access to public water on the coast. With access to a public water and sewer systems increased the development of residential and commercial properties in the area and higher property taxes causing the community to be vulnerable to lose their property (Tibbetts, 2001). In addition, the Center for Disease Control reported that the residents of Sapelo Island were exposed to the same toxins as the dolphins found in the region. In addition, a study by the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry determined that some Gullah-Geechee have has polychlorinated biphenyl levels at a 95% higher rate than the general population (Cooper, 2007).

### **Other Dissertations on the Gullah-Geechee Community**

Manigault's (2007) dissertation titled *"Ah Tulk to de Dead All de Time": Religion among Gullah-Geechee Women of the Carolina Low Country* conducted an ethnography to explore identity and its representation in music, religion, and practice by Gullah-Geechee women in South Carolina and the Gullah-Geechee women's contributions to American religious culture. This ethnography was important to this dissertation because it revealed the significance of self-identity compared the self-identity of Gullah-Geechee women to the theorized accounts from other writers.

L. Moore's (2008) dissertation titled *Gullah-Geechee Cultural Survival: Negotiating Family, Land and Culture on St. Helena Island, South Carolina* used an ethnographic qualitative approach to examine the challenges in sustaining land ownership and cultural survival in the Gullah-Geechee community and the relationship of nationalism, self-identification and land. With archival research, oral histories and interviews, this study provides a holistic overview from

the lens of individuals directly affected by tourism and development. This study opened the door for future research specifically from the perspective of leaders in the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission. The research in this dissertation will address race, racism, and environmental injustices through the theoretical framework of the Critical Race Theory.

Graves' (2010) dissertation, entitled *Communication, Development and Cultural Preservation: The Case of Gullah History and Culture on James Island, SC*, used an ethnographic qualitative approach to explore development and cultural preservation on James Island, SC. The methodologies in this study include the Carey Model of Ritual Communication and Innis' theory of bias communication to discover best practices for the development and historic preservation to co-exist and the media's involvement in local preservation efforts. With interviews with community leaders, this study provided an in-depth analysis of the communities' narrative of their history and their desired roles in the modern era of development. This study opened the door for further research to specifically race, racism, and environmental injustices through the theoretical framework of the Critical Race Theory with community leaders.

Hopkins's (2012) dissertation entitled *Performing Place: Race and Gender in Contemporary Southern U.S. Commemoration* examined case studies of the Confederate-Memorial Day, the Cherokee-Frontier Day, and the Gullah-Geechee-Sea Island Festival to determine the shared community experiences from racial, gender, and national conceptions of identity and provided an overview of the racial and economic realities of the coastal region. By examining the Gullah-Geechee festival specifically from this study, this dissertation gained valuable insight on the significance of songs, dance, and oral histories in the Gullah-Geechee culture preservation on St. Simon Island.

Ellis' (2013) dissertation, entitled *Fishing and Fish Consumption Pattern in the Gullah-Geechee Sea Island Population*, used a mixed methods approach to determine the influence of fishing and fish consumption in the Gullah-Geechee culture and the community's adherence to state fishing advisories. A statistical analysis was used to compare the methyl-mercury (MeHg) levels in the Gullah-Geechee population compared to the U.S. population. The results of the study revealed the cultural significance of fishing and fish consumption in the Gullah-Geechee community, and found no significant difference found in the MeHg levels between the Gullah-Geechee population and the U.S. population. The present dissertation will expand on the ways to continue cultural related activities by exploring the root causes of diminishing Gullah-Geechee culture.

White's (2015) dissertation, entitled *Food on the Move: Gendered Representation, Cultural Sustainability and Culinary Practice of Gullah Women*, conducted an interdisciplinary study to examine food preparation as an essential part of sustaining the Gullah culture. Food-centered narratives and cookbooks from Sea Island, SC highlight the important role of women in preservation of the Gullah culture and how the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission will be instrumental in Gullah cultural preservation. The importance of this study is its exploration of the Gullah culture and processes for social and culture change. The present dissertation will give cultural educators and members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community an opportunity to share their experiences.

Grabbatin's (2016) dissertation, entitled *The Land is Our Family and Water is Our Bloodline: The Dispossession and Preservation of Heirs' Property in the Gullah-Geechee communities of the Low Country South Carolina*, used a mixed methods approach to explore historical narratives of African-American landownership in the Gullah-Geechee community.

With the utilization of historical geography, legal geography and Common Property Theory (CPT), this research examined historical narratives, archival data, and case studies to review conflicts in heir property settlements based on education inequities and a distrust of the legal system in the Gullah-Geechee community. This study provided an up-to-date, in-depth analysis of heir property from a legal standpoint. The present dissertation will expand more on the social aspect and challenges in cultural education and preservation.

There is an abundance of research on culture education and preservation and extensive scholarship on the Gullah-Geechee. However, most scholarship on the Gullah-Geechee culture has been limited to the culture's African origins, exploration of cultural activities, foods and artifacts and their significance in cultural preservation, cultural retention and invasion and the decline in landownership because of land development, tourism and injustices associated with heirs' property. The present dissertation is distinct and addresses the gap in literature to the challenges in cultural education and preservation based on the perception of cultural educators and members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community throughout the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor. In addition, this study will seek to determine if these challenges are linked to race, racism and environmental injustices.

### **Summary**

Chapter Two contains the criteria for literature selection and provides the databases used and inclusion and exclusion methods. Chapter Two reviews the literature on the historical perspective of the Gullah-Geechee culture. This chapter also provides a relevant literature review on the Environmental Justice Movement. Chapter Two reviews the literature related to the historical, theoretical and empirical data on race, racism, and environmental injustices to conceptualize their roles, if any, in cultural education and preservation. The variables in this



research all stem from the global phenomenon of racial and ethnic supremacy and knowledge of these terms is crucial to exploring the challenges of cultural preservation and education an indigenous population by providing cultural educators and members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community an opportunity to speak their truths.

In order to preserve and educate others on the Gullah-Geechee cultures for its proper place in American history, more research needs to be conducted to address the challenges cultural educators and members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community are experiencing to maintain the culture and increase awareness while land ownership is dwindling. There are many factors that can contribute to challenges experienced by the Gullah-Geechee community in preserving its culture. According to prior research, race is not genetically supported to distinguish populations. Although, societal problems associated with minority groups can be associated with the hierarchical need for racial categories to maintain white supremacy (DeGruy, 2005). The literature also indicts racism as negatively impacting many U.S. institutions by systemically excluding minorities by means of influence and power (Haney-Lopez, 1994). Many scholars have researched environmental injustices in African-American communities like the Gullah-Geechee region. These environmental issues must also be addressed to protect the residents' landownership and health. Most of the research concludes that environmental injustices in communities of color are seen in the form of the location of toxic waste sites, land usage and zoning (Bullard, 1983, 1990, 2008; Goldman & Fitton, 1994; UCC, 1987; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 1983).

This chapter also reviews recent dissertations regarding the Gullah-Geechee culture to determine the need for further research to enhance the preservation efforts in the Gullah-Geechee

community and prevent development and tourism to push the culture into silence and invisibility. Most dissertations of the Gullah-Geechee culture are limited to the cultures, African origins, cultural activities and their linkage to their West African roots, cultural foods and artifacts, heirs' properties, commercial and residential development, and the impact of tourism.

As noted earlier in chapter, this dissertation distinguishes itself from other studies by specially applying the Critical Race Theory to cultural education and preservation. This qualitative phenomenological study seeks to reveal multiple interpretations in efforts to preserve and educate other of the Gullah-Geechee culture through the lens of the Critical Race Theory. With the erasure of community voices in cultural preservation and education will further promote marginalization and possible obliteration of the Gullah-Geechee culture.

Chapter Three provides the research design and rationale, the sampling of participants, the data collection method as related to the research questions, interview questions as related to the CRT framework, response rate, and the data analysis methods used to produce valid and reliable findings. Chapter Three also outlines the process for requests and approvals to be completed prior to recruitment and data collection.

### **Chapter Three: Methods**

“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Chapter Three focused on the research design and rationale, sampling population, response rate, data collection methods and measures that will be used as related to the research questions. Chapter Three contained the interview questions as related to the Critical Race Theory’s core principles and the data analysis methods that will be used to produce valid findings. According to Schwandt (2007) in data analysis, researchers cannot avoid the influence of their social beliefs and experiences in their interpretation of data. Therefore, in order to overcome intersubjectivity and demonstrate credibility in research interpretation, the researcher employed the trustworthiness criteria.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the extent to which racism impacts the preservation efforts of members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve the history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the culture. In addition, this study explored what programs and activities, if any, that cultural educators and members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community perceived as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities. Through semi-structured interviews with these cultural leaders in the Gullah-Geechee community, the results of this study will bring awareness to race-related challenges and environmental injustices in cultural education and preservation initiatives.

Cultural leaders will have enhanced comprehension to implement actions to effectively promote cultural identity and eradicate cultural preservation inequalities.

### **Restatement of Research Questions**

The research questions for the qualitative study was as follows:

1. How do members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community perceive the impact of race and racism in their preservation efforts in the Gullah-Geechee community?
2. What are the challenges shared by members of the Gullah-Geechee community members who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators involving environmental injustices that hinder education and preservation initiatives?
3. What types of programs and activities do cultural leaders perceive as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities?

The variables for this study were also formulated from the research questions and are race, racism and environmental injustices.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research involves the use of a discipline-specific theoretical framework to study a particular group's perspective of their lived experiences leading to a deeper understanding of a specific social problem. In this study, qualitative research was utilized in conjunction with the Critical Race Theory to get detailed descriptions of the experiences of members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve the history and culture of the community and cultural educators regarding racism and environmental injustices in their

preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture. Merriam (2009) notes the following core competencies required for qualitative research:

- A questioning mind-set in addressing social problems.
- Tolerance for ambiguity and inductive reasoning in the data analysis process.
- Systemic and acute observations.
- Effective researchable interview questions based on relevant variables.
- Comfort in writing large amounts of information in obtaining data.

The detailed experiences of members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators are difficult to measure in a quantitative sense, as their numbers are relatively few; therefore, a qualitative research paradigm will be used versus a quantitative research design. The primary goal of this research was to give voice to those seeking to preserve the Gullah-Geechee culture. Consequently, a more holistic research approach was used to understand the influence of race and environmental injustices in the preservation efforts of the Gullah-Geechee leaders. To obtain these goals, the researcher used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions to guide this study. Recurring trends emerged explaining challenges and successes in preservation and cultural education in the Gullah-Geechee culture.

Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to predetermine the questions around particular theories and factors, while open-ended questions allowed the research participants an opportunity to further explain and deepen their responses (Creswell, 2013). By using this method, the researcher had an opportunity to create an authentic counter-story of preservation movements within the constructs of the traditional preservation movement. Furthermore, using this type of interview guide allowed the researcher to provide detailed descriptions, multiple

perspectives, and varied interpretations of how race and environmental injustices influenced cultural preservation of the Gullah-Geechee community. Demographic questions allowed the researcher to categorize the interview response data into meaningful groups.

Creswell (2013) provides the purpose of phenomenological research: “to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (pg. 76). In addition, Husserl and Moran (2002) postulates that phenomenology is to study phenomena void of considering questions of their causes, reality or appearance. Creswell (2013) notes that researchers must address their biases through bracketing to ensure validity of the study. Bracketing is described as an attempt to refrain from any assumptions before collecting or analyzing the data. Another component to ensure trustworthiness of the research is that the researcher will act as if she is viewing the phenomena, ideas and data for the first time. This process allows the researcher to view the data more objectively and helps reduce researcher biases. Phenomenology includes the concept of intersubjectivity-social relationships with others to determine how we experience the world (Giorgi, 1970). The literature review in Chapter Two identified a gap in the research in the Gullah-Geechee community. As a result, in order to explore how race, racism, and environmental injustices influenced the preservation and cultural education efforts of the Gullah-Geechee Community, this study used a phenomenological research design.

### **Population, Sampling Method, Sample and Response Rate**

According to the literature, Gullah-Geechee preservation and cultural educational efforts are underrepresented on a national level in the Preservation Movement. Currently the population size to be studied was unknown. As a result, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling to identify potential participants for this study. Through snowball sampling, participants were asked

as part of the interview process for additional participants (Merriam, 2009). During the data collection process, the researcher developed a better understanding of the population size. The researcher began this process by consulting the website of the Gullah Nation, the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Commission and the National Trust to develop a database of contact information for potential participants this study. Once the database was complete and required approval obtained, the researcher contacted the individuals by phone and/or email to solicit their participation. Participants were currently active in preservation and cultural education of the Gullah-Geechee culture.

Ten participants were identified as members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve the history and culture of the community or educate others about the Gullah-Geechee culture. The first two participants were identified based on the researcher's knowledge of their involvement in cultural preservation of the Gullah-Geechee community. The remaining eight participants were recruited by snowball sampling. All participants signed the approved consent form and gave the researcher permission to digitally record their interviews. One participant requested a copy of the transcribed interview. All 10 participants were informed of the purpose of this study.

While inviting participants to take part in the interview process, the researcher also explained the benefits of the research to our society to inspire an acceptable number of members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve the history and culture of the community and cultural educators to participate in the study. The anticipated response rate was 8-12 participants during the data collection period of March to May 2018. If there was a lower response rate, the researcher would have visited the Gullah-Geechee community to seek additional participants.

## **Human Subject Considerations**

The three basic principles of the Belmont Report for the protection of human subjects in research provides the moral framework for this study and are summarized as follows:

- Respect for humans,
- Beneficence,
- Justices (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979).

The individual rights of all subjects will also be protected in compliance with Title 45 Part 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Data for this research was obtained through semi-structured interviews by purposeful sampling from the websites of the Gullah Nation, Gullah-Geechee Heritage Commission, National Trust and the contacts from the researcher's board membership in the non-profit organization, Supporting Cultures in Peril. Participants approved their participation by signing a consent form; therefore, it was not necessary for the researcher to obtain site or organizational permission.

To protect the human subjects of this study, the researcher completed the CITI Social and Behavior Research Basic Training. In addition, all risks to the participants were discussed prior to the interviews and was listed on the informed consent form. The anticipated length of the interviews was 30 minutes; however, the researcher made herself available as needed. The researcher discussed the length of the interview prior to the interview to minimize this risk. Since the Gullah-Geechee community receives public funding to assist in many preservation endeavors, the researcher coded all personally identifying information to ensure confidentiality. The researcher clearly stated the intended benefits of the findings as solution-oriented for future preservation initiatives. The Gullah-Geechee community will also benefit from this research by knowing that their narratives regarding the successes and challenges in cultural education



preservation are imperative in the Gullah-Geechee culture sustainability, facilitate consciousness for self-identity for African Americans, and establish their place in American history.

The researcher submitted the research proposal and expedited application to Pepperdine's Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP) Institutional Review Board for approval. After approval from GSEP Institutional Review Board the researcher began to obtain contact information of members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators.

The researcher developed the interview questions based on the Critical Race Theory Core Tenets stated in Chapter Two (Table 1). The questions ranged from background information to more specific questions regarding the influence of race and environmental injustices in the preservation and cultural education efforts in the Gullah-Geechee community.

The researcher provided consent forms to all participants stating that participation was voluntary and participants could have chosen not to answer any question, and/or withdraw their responses at any time during the data collection period of March 2018 to May 2018. Permission to digitally record the interviews was also sought. Participants were informed that the study is to examine the influence, if any, of race, racism, and environmental injustices so that future initiatives and recommendations to protect and interpret the Gullah-Geechee culture can be successfully executed. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher did not use the names of the participants and cultural educators in analyzing and reporting the data. As a result, a numerical code was assigned to each completed interview guide that was link to the contact information of the participants to their responses to ensure confidentiality. All hardcopy material was secured in a locked cabinet and digital files were password-protected on the researcher's personal computer, with identifying codes until the study was complete. All hardcopy data, including signed consent

forms, will be kept for 3 years and then destroyed. Digital data was maintained for possible subsequent analysis.

Table 1

*Interview Questions*

| Questions  | CRT Core Principles  |
|--|--|
| Demographics: age range, educational status, marital status, and work status   | N/A  |
| Tell me how you came into your current status in the Gullah-Geechee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal history: education, family influences</li> <li>• Professional history: skills, positions, networks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling</li> <li>• Experiential Knowledge</li> </ul>   |
| Tell me about your most successful experiences in preserving the Gullah-Geechee culture and promoting cultural awareness.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storytelling</li> <li>• Commitment to Social Justice</li> <li>• Experiential Knowledge</li> </ul> |
| How successful are federal programs in historic preservation and the education of others of the Gullah-Geechee culture?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to Social Justice</li> <li>• Challenging the Dominant Perspective</li> </ul>           |
| In your experiences of the preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture, how has racism and environmental injustices influenced the success of programs with the community?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centrality</li> <li>• Experiential Knowledge</li> <li>• Commitment to Social Justice</li> </ul>   |
| What role, if any, does racism and environmental injustices play in maintaining the Gullah-Geechee culture with Gullah-Geechee corridor?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdisciplinary</li> <li>• Centrality</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary</li> </ul>                   |

*Note.* CRT core principles adapted from Delgado and Stefancic (2012).

### Measures and Data Collection Procedures

Merriam (2009) states the three basic methods to record interview data: digitally record, take notes during interview, and take notes after interview. While each method has its pros and cons, this study used verbatim transcription from digitally recorded interviews with the assistance of a software for transcription. Data collected from semi-structured interviews for two months.

**Sites.** The sites for interviews for the members of the GGCHC were commission meetings at various locations within the Gullah Heritage Corridor. The GGCHC has quarterly

public meetings within the Gullah-Geechee Corridor. The researcher conducted interviews at various festivals within the Gullah-Geechee community during March 2018-May 2018. The locations for the festivals are within the Corridor and activities included tours, speakers, concerts and a worship service. The audiotaped interviews took place in an isolated location at the festivals, or in the participants' offices, to prevent distractions. The recorded data from the interviews was later transcribed. The researcher conducted interviews in public locations within the Corridor. The data from the participants' interviews were stored on the researcher's laptop, and all files were password protected. The researcher made back-up copies of all data and developed a master list containing all the information that will be gathered (Creswell, 2013).

**Field issues.** According to the Special Resource Study of the Gullah Low Country, the Gullah community had expressed concerns with previous researchers using their acquired information for financial gain without providing results back to the community. This concern can create many field issues for the researcher; therefore, the researcher spent a great deal of time within the year of data collection building rapport, establishing relationships and working in preservation efforts. The researcher did not have a conflict of interest or financial gain from this study. The researcher also moved interview locations if the participants expressed concerns with public locations and request a more private setting. The researcher addressed this issue by conducting interviews in the participants' offices if they desired. The researcher also made herself available for multiple visits to the communities within the Gullah Geechee Corridor.

### **Analytic Techniques**

Lincoln and Guba (1986) outline how the researcher should establish trustworthiness by utilizing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility in this research was established by the following:

1. Prolonged contact with persistent observation with respondents
2. Peer debriefing with colleagues
3. Search for negative case analysis
4. Continuous checking of information with respondents. (Lincoln & Guba, 1986)

Lincoln and Guba (1986) posit that transferability will be established by obtaining thick descriptive data with sufficient details in data collection; while an external audit and the researcher's use of an audit trail satisfied dependability and confirmability. With a qualitative research study, the researcher performed data analysis by preparing, organizing, and reducing data into meaningful segments or themes (Creswell, 2013). Data analysis for this research was based on the seven-stage process developed by Colaizzi (1978). The text from the interviews was transcribed into Microsoft Word verbatim and coded, question-by-question into spreadsheets by the qualitative data analysis computer software. By categorical aggregation, the researcher began the process of coding to identify themes and patterns (Creswell, 2013). The researcher first organized all data in computer files and categorized demographic characteristics to determine any trends. The software extracted statements and descriptions developed themes based on the researcher's set parameters. The common themes and meaning developed from pattern significant statements and themes grouped into units. The software was used to organize the statements into clusters to identify key themes. The researcher generated reports from the software and key themes described from the different perspectives so the results served as an example of what cultural educators, preservationists, and governmental programs should do or should not do to promote cultural awareness and learning regarding historic preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture.

According to Creswell (2013), proper data storage is imperative to qualitative research and provides the following principles:

- Develop backup copies of computer files
- Use quality tapes for recording of interviews
- Develop master list to categorize data
- Protect the identity of study participants or keep personally identifiable information confidential
- Develop data collection matrix to locate and identify information pertaining to the study

The final stage of analysis was using the data to summarize findings and create recommendations for cultural preservation and education. It was the hopes of the researcher that this data provided recommendations for systemic improvements in the cultural preservation and education of the Gullah-Geechee culture and other marginalized indigenous cultures worldwide. The phenomenological approach provided the freedom to examine the effects of racism and environmental injustices that are present in the cultural preservation and education.

### **Summary**

Chapter Three discussed the rationale for the phenomenological research design. Chapter Three also explored the study's sampling methods, sample population response rate, research and interview questions, data collection procedures, and analytical technique. Chapter Four presented the findings of the study and answered the research questions from the data collected from the interviews.

## Chapter Four: Findings

“What’s past is prologue.”

—William Shakespeare

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore, through the lens of the Critical Race Theory, the extent to which, if at all, race, racism, and environmental injustices impact the preservation efforts and cultural awareness of the Gullah-Geechee community. This study also explored what programs and activities, if any, that members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve the history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community, perceive as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities. Furthermore, the interview questions were also developed through the lens of the CRT to give voice to the members of the Gullah-Geechee community.

### Demographics

The researcher categorized the demographics characteristics of the 10 participants. The gender of the participants was five (50%) males and five (50%) females. Most participants (50%) were in the age range of 45-54 years old, while two (20%) participants were in the age range of 35-44; two (20%) of the participants were in the age range of 55-64; and one (10%) of the participants was in the age range of 65-74. Furthermore, most of the participants (50%) had graduate degrees. One (10%) of the participants had an undergraduate degree; three (30%) of the participants had some college, no degree; and one (10%) of the participants was a high school graduate. Participants’ marital status was as follows: five (50%) of the participants were single, never married and five (50%) of the participants were married. Most participants (50%) were full-time employees; four (40%) of the participants were self-employed; one (10%) of the

participants was retired. Figures 1-5 are graphical representations of the demographics of the participants for this research.

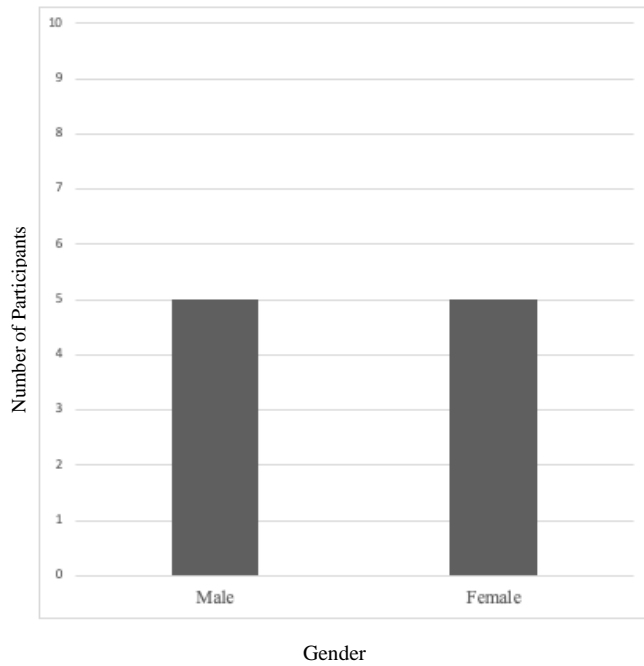


Figure 1. Number of participants by gender.

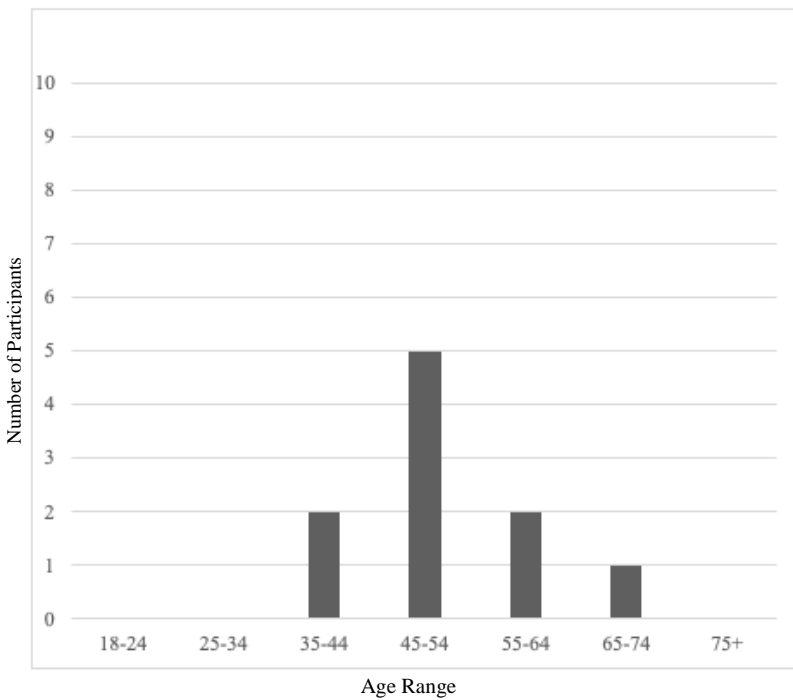
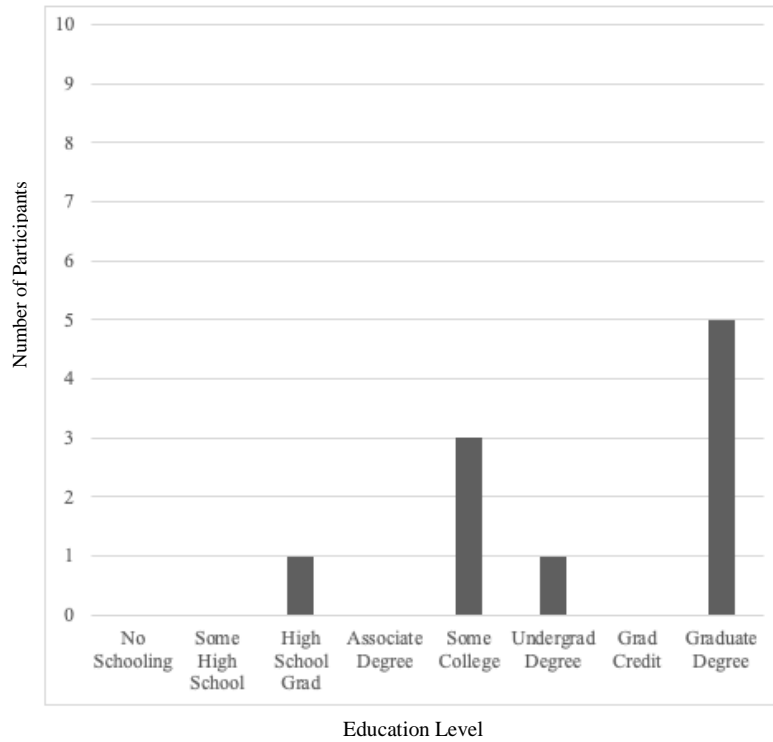
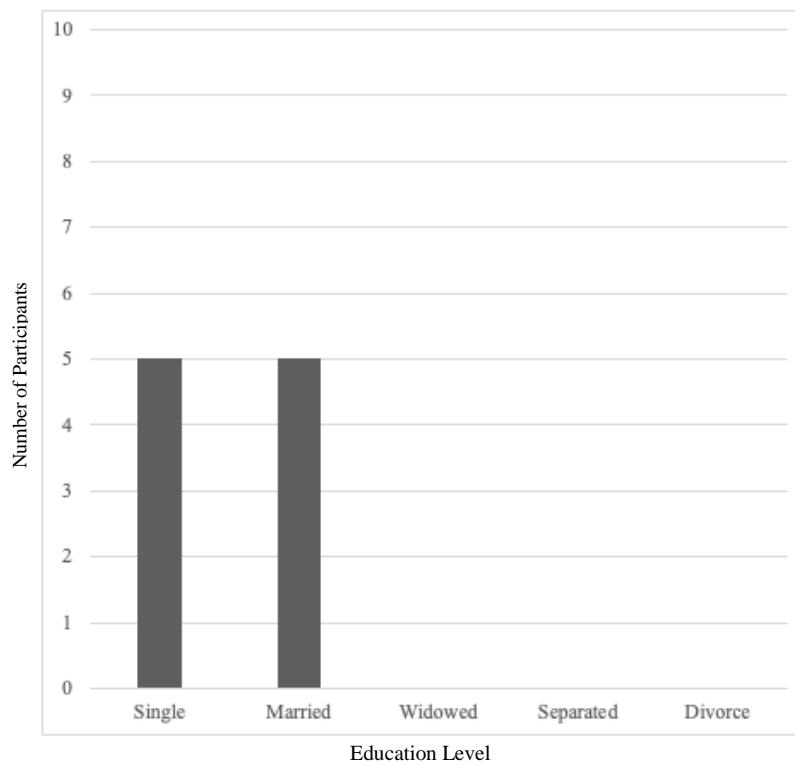


Figure 2. Age distribution of study participants.

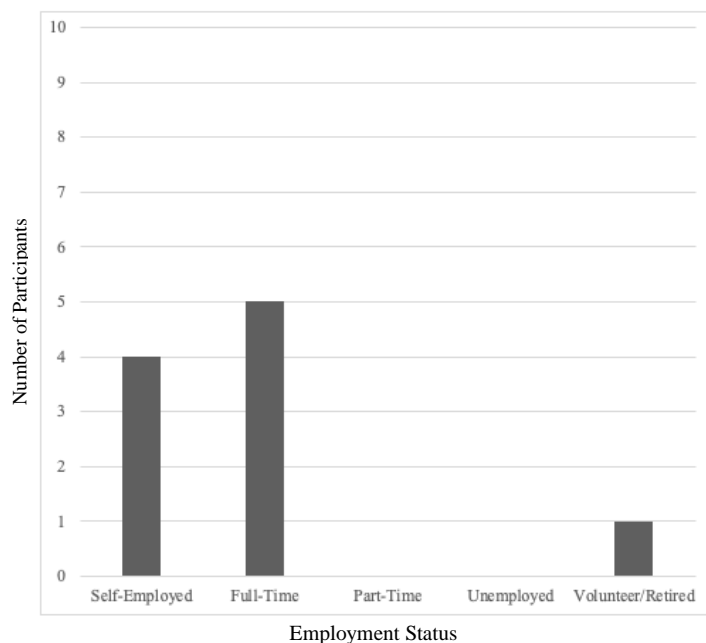


*Figure 3.* Educational status of study participants.



*Figure 4.* Marital status of study participants.





*Figure 5.* Work status of study participants.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews from March 2018 to May 2018 throughout Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. The interviews lasted between 22-50 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded with quality tapes. The researcher also took notes during the interviews. After each interview, the researcher provided a code for each interview to protect the identity of study participants and kept personally identifiable information confidential. The researcher also took notes and forwarded the digital recording to Rev.com for verbatim transcription. The transcriptions were processed within 24 hours and the final copies were emailed back to the researcher. The researcher stored a digital copy of each transcription on a computer with password protection. A hard copy of each transcription was stored in a locked file cabinet with the researcher. The hard copy will be stored for three years, after which the records will be shredded. The researcher did not have a conflict of interest or financial gain from this study and none of the participants expressed any concerns regarding these matters. Three

participants from this research requested a final copy of this dissertation for use within their organizations.

### **Data Analysis**

This research utilized Colaizzi's (1978) seven-stage process to code each question in a master list to discover common themes for each interview question. The researcher identified themes and patterns by categorical aggregation based on the researcher's set parameters that were established from the literature review pertaining to white supremacy and its relationship to the CRT, race, racism and environmental injustice. The common themes and statements were later organized into clusters, and significant statements grouped into units. The researcher developed a data collection matrix to locate and identify information about this research. The findings within each theme were also validated within the theoretical framework of the CRT. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) stated that "racism is endemic in the U.S. Society. It is deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and psychologically and reinforces traditional ways of thinking and being which omit the experiences of people of color" (p. 235).

### **Coding Process**

The data from the interview was transcribed and coded. During the coding process, the researcher went through the following process. In step one, the researcher conducted a quick or cursory reading of each transcription to highlight key terms that made an impression on what participants communicated. The second step entailed a close reading of the transcriptions to identify carefully key terms, phrases, or sentences that showed relationships. The practitioner-researcher also counted the frequency of the responses. The practitioner-researcher noted the number of responses that repeated two or more times to create themes. The researcher then looked for responses that were repeated more than once, surprising, or responses participants

explicitly stated as being important. Most importantly, the researcher kept an open mind when coding to alleviate biases.

### **Color-Coding**

The researcher created a color-coding system to organize, cluster, sort, and categorize the data from the transcripts to extract emerging themes. First, the researcher read through each interview twice. The first reading was a cursory reading whereby the researcher used a color-coding system to highlight key words, phrases, and salient points. The second reading entailed a closer reading of the transcripts to identify key terms, phrases, and frequency of responses. From the coding process, twelve major themes emerged. Table 2 illustrates how the color-coding system was used in this qualitative study.

### **Findings Compared to CRT**

The Critical Race Theory argues that the stories of Gullah-Geechee preservationists and educators are integral to understanding cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities. As previously stated in the literature, there are five major components or tenets of CRT: (a) centrality of race and racism, (b) challenges the dominant perspective, (c) commitment to social justice, (d) valuing experiential knowledge, and (e) being interdisciplinary (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The counter-narratives of this study aligned with the aforementioned tenets.

Table 2

*Color-Coding System Used for each Research Question*

| Color  | Q1                         | Q2                                    | Q3  | Q4   | Q5                         |
|--------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| Red    | Descendant                 | Education of youth                    | Challenges with federal programs                  | Institutional racism   | Gentrification             |
| Blue   | Shame of culture           | Festivals                             | Federal programs do not address land preservation | Economic in land outweighs cultural interest                           | Isolation                  |
| Green  | GGCHC                      | GTCHC                                 | GGCHC successful in short time                    | Agricultural skillset not utilized                                     | Self-esteem                |
| Yellow | National heritage program  | Film: <i>Daughters of the Dust</i>    | Section 106 of the National Preservation Act      | Historic preservation profession ruled by dominant culture             | Education of Gullah people |
| Orange | 1st African Baptist Church | 1st African Baptist Church            | Federal programs not successful                   | White people want to learn   | Education of youth         |
| Purple | Penn Center                | Penn Center Heritage Days celebration | Did not know they existed                         | Racism is why Gullah-Geechee exist to isolated some black on the coast |                            |

*Note.* Researcher developed tool used to organize data and extract emerging themes.

**Centrality of race and racism.** From the analysis of the counter-stories, the participants identified that racism and white privilege negatively impacts the historic preservation efforts within the Gullah-Geechee community. Cultural programs designed to assist with the preservation efforts of the Gullah-Geechee community cannot compete with the economic gains of the dominant culture creating more societal inequalities. Preservation challenges seen within the Gullah-Geechee community are typical of other marginalized communities, and any preservation effort led by the dominant culture would not consider the unique challenges of this

marginalized communities. In Participant 09's counter-story, the CRT tenant of the centrality of race and racism was revealed. Participant 09 argued:

Just as I was speaking just now about not seeing the federal funding, I think part of the reason why some of these grassroots efforts haven't received the infusion of federal funds, I believe racism plays a major part in that. They've been denied because there's a segment of our population that doesn't want that to be preserved.

Participant 01's narrative aligned with the anti-dialogical theory, "Because this is the same narrative as always. The slaves were treated less than human. Today, there is not respect for these people as they are being taken full advantage of."

Participant 09 later explained:

Racism is always going to be a part. It plays a major part now in what's going on from Sapelo Island to Golden Isles down in South Georgia, all the way up through the barrier islands of South Carolina, on up to North Carolina. The whole Gullah-Geechee Corridor, you're seeing the same thing. If white folks feel like they want to come in and commercialize the land because it's waterfront property or whatever, they use eminent domain or whatever they have to wrestle that land out of black folks' hand.

According to Participant 04 specifically regarding cultural preservation:

That's going to mean that African Americans or Gullah-Geechee in this case more specifically, are not going to be able to again meet the standards, are not going to be able to again compete equally because of traditional oppression that is executed through the institutions, whether it be government, whether it be banking. When I say government, I'm speaking about zoning, the laws that are passed by governments, whether it be banking, whether it be even real estate transactions, which has traditional practices that

have created standards that Africans and people of African descent haven't been able to meet. It weaves through almost every aspect of preservation work in the Gullah- Geechee Corridor.

**Challenges to the dominant perspective.** One goal of critical scholarship is to uncover ongoing acts of inequalities based on the dominant culture's perspective. The lived realities of the study participants helped to reveal innate acts of white supremacy. For example, when the Gullah-Geechee community seeks to establish its culture in the mainstream historic preservation society, preservation efforts were subjected to standards made by the dominant culture. These standards did not address the unique challenges within this marginalized community. One participant specifically described the challenges presented by the dominant culture. Participant 04 asserted:

Other techniques like oral history has evolved as an alternative to the documentation, the written papers that weren't kept about our cemeteries, that weren't kept about our churches, that weren't kept about our schools. Even that is now being questioned because standards are now being produced by the mainstream that are saying "Okay, you did this oral history, but did you record it in this way? Did you transcribe it? Have you registered it was a university or college to ensure that it continues to exist or what it accessible by researchers?" That is the perpetuation of the racism finding its way into the alternatives that we've developed in an effort to preserve our history. We have to continue to be vigilant and mindful about how these racist practices are joining us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We still have to be mindful of that.

**Commitment to social justice.** The participants' counter-stories also voiced that the preservation efforts of the Gullah-Geechee community must have a commitment to social justice and hold policymakers responsible for the egregious acts used to obtain the land. Freire (2012)

discussed literacy and education as a way to empower the oppressed; they must be educated of the politics behind historic preservation to be change agents for the community. Like Participant 07's counter-story, the CRT component of commitment to social justice was revealed.

Participant 07 argued:

What's happening with the Gullah-Geechee is not different than what they've done to Black people and Native Americans throughout the history of this country. It's just, you know, when are we going to be...first of all, when are we going to accept what is happening, understand it, and then be proactive and say, not again. You're not disrupting our community again. You're not pushing us out of our community. We wanna stay here. We wanna be a community. These things have been ongoing. There's an African proverb that says, "When the fools learn the game, the players disperse." So, when we stop being the fool and learn the game.

**Valuing experiential knowledge and storytelling.** The value of the experiential knowledge of the preservationists and educators for future preservation initiatives was not revealed in this study. However, the value of experiential knowledge of the Gullah-Geechee elders was mentioned to benefit the coastal community in land development. In Participant 02's counter-story, experiential knowledge of the land is needed to preserve the green space.

Participant 02 suggested:

The elders of the Gullah-Geechee community understood the land, they were agricultural engineers and their knowledge was not sought by the powers at be. For example, the resorts enlisted the expertise of developers to maintain the green space and used chemicals destroyed the land, instead of utilizing the knowledge of the Gullah-Geechee members who eventually could not afford to follow the federal and state legislations.

Participant 07 discussed:

But to bring these Africans over who were used to the climate number one, who were number two, highly skilled and could do the work. You didn't have to supervise them, you didn't have to teach them. You could leave them in these isolated, swampy islands, and they could work and you didn't have to worry about oversight so that means you could be off wherever you lived, whether it was in mainland, you know, in Charleston or up North. But then you have this society of enslaved people who were skilled and who could go ahead and cultivate these crops and make money for you.

**Being interdisciplinary.** Through counter-stories of the participants and as the CRT suggests, effective cultural preservation measures must adopt an interdisciplinary approach to overcome the negative impact of race, racism and environmental injustice. Future preservation initiatives must identify all stakeholders, partnerships, and potential solutions to place the contributions of Gullah-Geechee culture in American history. Participant 05's creativity within his business displayed an interdisciplinary approach. Participant 05 demonstrated:

Through wisdom cards, we hope to get people to get an understanding from their own family histories, and their own historical or cultural perspectives to rely on information about the Gullah-Geechee heritage, because cultures are the same. Dynamics are the same, and if they understand that dynamic from the perspective of Gullah-Geechee people, they will be more receptive to understanding and gaining appreciation of our culture.

Participant 06 argued:

And we learned to survive again. And that was difficult also. But here we are today. We survived. We've done a lot of things. Me and my business, things like that, very



successful. We provided housing and different things for people. I literally have raised over ten million dollars to help people with economic development and help keep my culture. And many other college professors, and well, Michelle Obama, her ancestors came from the Gullah-Geechees, and there she sat in the Oval Office with her husband a few years ago.

### **Research Question One**

How do members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community perceive the impact of race and racism in their preservation efforts in the Gullah-Geechee community?

The findings of the following interview questions were used to answer research question one:

1. Tell me how you come into your current leadership role in the Gullah-Geechee?
5. What role, if any, does racism and environmental injustices play in maintaining the Gullah-Geechee culture with Gullah-Geechee corridor?

The researcher discovered common themes from both questions that contributed to answering research question one.

#### **Tell me how you come into your current leadership role in the Gullah-Geechee?**

After review of the data, the following emergent themes were revealed from the counter-stories of the participants: (a) descendants of Gullah-Geechee; (b) some involvement with the GGCHC; and (c) involvement with other organizations within the area that lead them to their current leadership role in the Gullah Geechee.

***Theme 1a: Descendants of Gullah-Geechee.*** Eight out of 10 participants (80%) stated that they were descendants of Gullah-Geechee. Participant 06 affirmed: “I was birthed into it. I’m a seventh generation Gullah-Geechee.” Additionally, Participant 08 shared, “Living it.

Living off the land, coming from a farming family” and Participant 01 stated, “I was born into this position.”

**Theme 1b: Involvement with the GGCHC.** Five out of 10 participants (50%) also stated some involvement with the GGCHC. The five participants either currently work with the GGCHC, a current commissioner or worked in the past as a charter member or commissioner.

**Theme 1c: Other organizations with the area.** Other participants work or volunteer for the National Heritage, First African Baptist Church, and the Penn Center.

**What role, of any, does racism and environmental injustices play in maintaining the Gullah-Geechee culture with Gullah-Geechee corridor?** After review of the data, the following emergent themes were revealed from the participants’ counter-stories:

(a) Gentrification, (b) Isolation, and (c) Self-esteem.

**Theme 1d: Gentrification.** Four out of 10 participants stated that gentrification is part of the racially motivated challenges that hinder the maintenance of the Gullah-Geechee culture.

Participant 07 stated:

But if you look at what happens to the Gullah-Geechee people, that what’s happening all over America where you have people of color, especially African Americans, has always been about what I call migration. We just go through periods of forced migration. We are forced because of oppression. Or you know, politically, but every 50-60 years, you have us being forces either to the city or out the city. It’s either for jobs or because of you know, oppression or terrorism. What’s happening with the Gullah-Geechee is no different than what they’ve done to black people and Native Americans throughout the history of this country.

Participant 10 shared:

Communities that had two-story Victorian homes that were owned by black folks.

Again, I repeat the people. I say, two-story Victorian homes that you see people going into right now, some of them were owned by Black folks, but they got rid of it. They had... This is an age of communities right here. Got rid of them. Wiping out our stories. You had businesses all along in industry wiping those stories out. So, guess what? The special memory of those people here now is gone. It's wiped out.

**Theme 1e: Isolation.** Two out of 10 participants' counter-stories included isolation as part of the challenges. For example, Participant shared:

With the Gullah-Geechee community being one that was formed out of isolation, it's a challenge because that isolation was the way that the ancestors and our elders believed they protected themselves. To come out of this isolation, you make yourself known, to be more visible, it could possibly a threat to your culture, to your home, to your community because that would make you vulnerable to be penetrated by these traditions and these standards that did not respect your value or your history in the first place.

**Theme 1f: Need for more self-esteem.** Two out of 10 participants the need for more cultural pride and self-esteem to withstand the challenges of the dominant culture. According to Participant 10, "In fact, we have the richest tapestry of American history. African-American history also, in the entire country right here. We're the beginning of the story right here. This is the holy land of African America." Participant 09 concluded that,

We have to keep educating and enlightening people to what has taken place and what is taking place, and hopefully educating those whites who do have a concern, but more than anything, educating black folks who tend to be ashamed of their heritage.

Like Turner (1949), Participant 10 also argued, “The other thing I began to realize too is that culture equals self-esteem... When you have an understanding of your culture, your self-esteem also is sky high.”

### **Research Question Two**

What are the challenges shared by members of the Gullah-Geechee community members who preserve the history and culture of the community and cultural educators involving environmental injustices that hinder education and preservation initiatives? The findings of the following interview question four were used to satisfy research question two:

4. In your experiences with preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture, how has racism and environmental injustices influenced the success of programs with the community?

From their counter-stories, the researcher discovered common themes from the interview question that contributed to answering research question two.

**In your experiences with preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture, how has racism and environmental injustices influenced the success of programs with the community?** Upon reviewing the data, the following themes emerged: (a) Institutional racism still exists, (b) Economic interest in land outweighs cultural interest, and (c) Historic preservation profession is ruled by the dominant culture.

***Theme 2a: Institutional racism.*** Nine out of 10 participants stated that institutional racism exists and negatively impacts the success of the Gullah Geechee preservation efforts.

Participant 03 continued:

I know you parse out environmental injustices as different [from racism], but I don't necessarily see it as different. Environmental injustices are fueled by racism. They're fueled by this belief that African Americans and people of African descent are inferior

and therefore, they don't need clean air. They don't need clean spaces. They don't need efficient infrastructure that doesn't pollute. It's those environmental procedures or processes that impact people of color are fed out of those, or come out of those institutions that are built on this belief that we deserve to be oppressed because we are of a different race.

Participant 01 continued, "The same white people of power are using their influence and power to manipulate their situation and take full advantage of the Gullah-Geechee people."

**Theme 2b: Economic interest.** Three out of 10 participants identified economic reasons as part of the challenges with Gullah-Geechee cultural preservation. Participant 05 stated:

So, there is an appropriation of this cultural tie for economic reasons that would not necessarily benefit those of that community or those of that heritage. Those are the kinds of racially motivated economic concerns that have been and can continue to be problematic.

Participant 07 continued:

Not only is it an affront to them being able to preserve it, but now these people are on the land and they're there. Not only do you have to fight to preserve your cultural heritage, you have to fight to preserve your land, but who economically benefits from your culture 'cause a lot of time when people come in and they push people off and displace them.

**Theme 2c: Historic preservation profession is ruled by the dominant culture.** Two out of 10 participants expressed and shared counter-stories of the historical preservation profession, which is dominated by the majority culture. For example, Participant 07 stated:

When you have this situation, there is room for racism and for it to be very elitist and quite frankly it is a very elitist profession. There is racism in this profession. If you look

up the department of education and statistics and I'm gonna quote them from 2014 'cause that's the latest one I'm familiar with. You look at cultural resource management in history fields, okay. The demographics in this is 90% white. You're talking about a field that's 90% white, 4% African American, 3% Hispanic. Then what's left will take up Asians and Pacific Islanders, okay. The majority of these 90% white people happen to be women. So, there aren't a lot of people of color in this field number one. So, when it comes to decision making, who is driving the direction that preservation is going in the U.S.? Who determines when funding comes in? What projects are the Focus? What gets funded? Who is even seen as the quote-unquote, gatekeeper, for things like the National Register or historical places? These are mainly white people who are familiar with white America history and who were looking at preservation and approaching it through a very European, westernized point of view.

### **Research Question Three**

What types of programs and activities do cultural leaders perceive as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities?

The findings of the following interview questions were used to satisfy research question three:

2. Tell me about your most successful experiences in preserving the Gullah-Geechee culture and promoting cultural awareness?
3. How successful are federal programs in historic preservation and the education of others of the Gullah-Geechee culture?

The researcher discovered common themes from both questions that contributed to answering research question three.

**Tell me about your most successful experiences in preserving the Gullah-Geechee culture and promoting cultural awareness?** Upon review of the data, the following emergent themes were revealed from the counter-stories of the participants: (a) GGCHC, (b) programs that specifically educate the youth, and (c) other culturally-related activities.

**Theme 3a: GGCHC.** Five out of 10 participants revealed that the GGCHC was the most successful in promoting cultural awareness. While Participant 06's counter-story reveal the importance of the GGCHC, the participant also stated that the "most successful is being aware of my own ancestral roots, and the motivates me to learn more." A former commissioner of the GGCHC stated that there was still a need for better appropriation of monies and partnerships with the GGCHC. However, this participant stated that the "new executive director is on the ground trying to ensure that partnerships happen."

**Theme 3b: Programs that specifically educate youth.** Four out of 10 participants shared stories of the effectiveness of programs that specifically educate youth. Participant 09 stated the importance of his daughter's participation in the Deep Writing Center in Savannah. "Getting them to wire about and learn the history of the Gullah-Geechee people, that has helped with making sure that the next generation doesn't lose that history, I think that's been very effective." Participant 07 stated that Ryan and Natalie Bays research about Gullah Geechee culture "going into schools and putting together presentations that engaged children through arts, they were successful at introducing children in South Carolina to Gullah culture." Participant 08 stated that at the Gullah Geechee Institute within the Penn Center hosts a workshop to educate teachers "on what Gullah is." According to Participant 09 stated, "So, helping with this next generation, our young people, to understand, this culture is nothing you have to be ashamed of."

***Theme 3c: Other culturally-related activities.*** Five out of 10 participants mentioned other activities as being successful. Participant 01 stated that “The most successful in preserving the Gullah-Geechee cultural must be Gullah-Geechee tours of Charleston because there are no other Gullah historians, only storytellers.” Other activities mentioned were Penn Center Heritage Days, Gullah- Geechee Festivals, First African American Baptist Church tours, and cultural newsletter.

**How successful are federal programs in historic preservation and the education of others of the Gullah-Geechee culture?** Upon review of the data, the following emergent themes were revealed from the counter-stories of the participants: (a) Challenges with federal programs, (b) Federal programs do not address land preservation, and (c) Success in a short time of existence.

***Theme 3d: Challenges with federal programs.*** Seven out of 10 participants perceived challenges with federal programs. Four out of the seven mentioned above stated that the allocation of funding is a major challenge seen with federal programs. Participant 09 stated that “no funds were allowed for educating others.” Participant 03 stated that “Federal support is based on congressional support, so it is an ongoing challenge; therefore, always seek independent funds.” Other challenges were also addressed. Participant 10 stated, “Education, economics, environment, and esteem. And these things are what we need to be working on, we need to be filling that up and establishing that, but that was not the purpose of the GGCHC.” Participant 08 acknowledged the success of the GGCHC; however, programs have to be tailored to the individual communities within the corridor. According to Participant 08, “All communities are individualized. They have their own successes, accomplishments, and issues that they are battling.”



Participant 09 emphasized, “All the Gullah history I’ve learned and the folk I’ve interfaced with that are fighting to preserve it really have been grassroots organizations.” Participant 03 stated, “I kind of compile a quarterly newsletter and I’ve been able to make our readers aware, we have about 2,000-plus subscribers...I’ve been able to include news about the Corridor Commission.” Participant 01 argued, “The most successful in preserving the Gullah-Geechee culture must be the Gullah-Geechee tours.” Participant 06 explained, “I think the most successful is being aware of my own ancestral roots, and that motivates me to learn more about it, number one.” Participant 10 noted, “When we created our museum in Riceboro, GA, Geechee Kunda.” Participant 05 stated, “My work when I served as a charter member of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Commission.

***Theme 3e: Federal programs do not address land preservation.*** Four out of 10 participants mentioned the need for programs to specifically address land preservation. Participant 01 stated that “The federal programs seem to be helping the Gullah-Geechee to lose their lands.” Participant 07 shared that “If you do not preserve the space or the land in which people are tied to or living or the community and space with which they had to practice whatever their culture is, then you’re not gonna be able to preserve the culture.” Participant 06 went on to say:

So, if we lose the land, then the heritage would begin to die and die and die. Just like Sapelo Island, it’s the last intact place where you find original Gullah-Geechee that were birthed. Some brought over on the slave boats, and some were, of course, born here, as we all know, for the next generation.

Participant 07 argued:

So, land is so important. Because they were isolated on the land, they were able to...and there was little oversight, they were able to maintain customs, they were able to maintain language...So the land was integral to us having this distinct culture here in America, the Gullah-Geechee. It's important for them to be able to preserve this culture.

**Theme 3f: Success in short time of existence.** Three out of 10 participants stated that the GGCHC had been successful in a short time of existence. "I think that there is so much potential for the GGCHC," stated Participant 07. Participant 02 stated that federal programs afford "some of the technical assistance that they can offer within the Corridor, as Gullah-Geechee people attempt to build awareness themselves on the ground." On the other hand, Participant 10 stated:

[GGCHC] was to maintain this area a national heritage area, but for the benefit of the government. Now, some people feel that that's not a problem. That is a problem, because that means somebody else is gonna tell your story, that the narrative's no longer been told by the people, but it's gonna be told by other folks.

### **Summary of Themes**

The counter-stories of the 10 participants led to the emergence of the following themes:

**Direct descendants.** Most of the cultural preservationists and educators in the Gullah-Geechee community are direct descendants of the Gullah-Geechee culture and have a personal connection and affinity for the culture. In addition, most of the cultural preservationists and educators have a connection to the GGCHC and/or other grassroots organizations that have proven to be key to cultural preservation.

**Isolation.** The cultural and ethnic distinctiveness of the Gullah-Geechee community have been attributed to its isolation from the dominant culture that prevented what Freire (2012) describes this phenomenon as cultural invasion. Therefore, isolation has been beneficial to how

the Gullah-Geechee community was able to retain its culture. On the other hand, isolation is now a challenge in historical preservation and awareness today and for future preservation initiatives since many African Americans, outside of the corridor, assume that slavery destroyed the African culture.

**Gentrification, institutional racism, and economics.** Gentrification is common in the U.S. for people of color and the eradication of the land once owned by the Gullah-Geechee community is a product of gentrification. Institutional racism is prominent in preservation efforts and accounts for many challenges in the preservation efforts. Most importantly, economic interest from the dominant culture accounts for land acquisition of the Gullah-Geechee community, as well as, economic benefits from exploiting the community from the dominant culture; therefore, a strategy must be in place to protect the community from profit-seeking coastal developers from encroaching the community and to provide entrepreneurial opportunities for current and future descendants.

**Self-esteem.** The historic preservation profession is controlled by the dominant culture and decisions normally benefit European descendants. Members of the Gullah-Geechee community would benefit from greater self-esteem and elimination of the shame that was once associated with the culture. With more self-esteem, the Gullah-Geechee community can tell their own stories and provide opportunities for descendants to enter the historic preservation profession.

**The success of federal programs and other organizations.** While the mission of the GGCHC is to “help us preserve and interpret the traditional cultural practices, sites and resources associated with the Gullah-Geechee people” (GGCHC, 2018, About us section, para. 3), the GGCHC has been very successful in a short time in bringing awareness to the Gullah-Geechee

culture. Politics, however, plays a role in the commission depending on what party is in office since it is a federally funded program. Some of the challenges of federal programs including the GGCHC pertain to the allocation of funds and the lack of attention to land/spatial preservation. However, to be successful the Gullah-Geechee community must development grassroots and community-driven approaches to their own cultural programs that educate the youth and this idea should be the primary goal of educators since it has proven to be beneficial for long term success. Other cultural activities including festivals, tours, newsletters, and workshops bring awareness to the culture and are very effective in cultural preservation and awareness but the Gullah Geechee community must have an active role to tell our own stories. In addition, from the counter-stories, the researcher discovered, not mentioned in the literature, that slaveowners specifically obtained slaves in areas where the slaves knew how to cultivate the land with unique agrarian skills. These slaves were crucial to the development of the United States; however, the removal of these agriculture leaders led to the destruction of African coastal communities.

### **Summary**

In Chapter Four, the objectives of this research were fulfilled by the counter-stories of 10 participants who preserve the history and culture of the Gullah-Geechee community and cultural educators. This chapter also included the demographics of the participants, data collection procedures, data analysis and finding. The counter-stories were analyzed to present this study's emergent themes. These themes will be further examined in Chapter Five to provide a discussion of the findings as they relate to the literature review including the implications of study, limitations of this research, and recommendations for future research in the cultural preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture.

## Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

“The inscription on the Statue of Liberty refers to America as the ‘mother of exiles.’ The tragedy is that while America became the mother of her white exiles, she evinced no motherly concern or love for her exiles from Africa.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Using a critical race theory lens and phenomenological methodology, this dissertation study used the counter-stories to explore the issues of race, racism, and environmental injustices that this group of leaders felt impacted their ability to succeed in cultural preservation. Drawing upon qualitative data, the researcher examined the experiences from members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve the history and culture of the community, as well as, those that educate others about the community. Furthermore, this study addressed the following research questions to implement actions to promote cultural identity and eradicate cultural preservation inequalities:

1. How do members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community perceive the impact of race and racism in their preservation efforts in the Gullah-Geechee community?
2. What are the challenges shared by members of the Gullah-Geechee community members who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators involving environmental injustices that hinder education and preservation initiatives?
3. What types of programs and activities do cultural leaders perceive as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities?

Data was analyzed using a color-coding process. Coding allowed significant statements and themes to emerge. Several themes regarding cultural preservation within the Gullah-Geechee community emerged. Chapter Five interprets these findings by connecting each theme to the research questions and aligning the themes in the theoretical framework of the Critical Race Theory.

The common usage of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been in higher education; however, the CRT can also be effective in other areas of social science research including historic preservation. As stated by Critical Race theorists Delgado and Stefancic (2012), “racism is endemic in U.S. society. It is deeply ingrained legally, culturally and psychologically and reinforces traditional ways of thinking and being, which omit the experiences of people of color” (p. 235). The researcher reviewed the findings of this qualitative study as they addressed the CRT and themes for Chapter Four within the parameters of the researcher questions. The results from this research agree with the current literature pertaining to race, racism and environmental injustices as contributing factors to challenges in marginalized communities. In addition, the researcher discussed the findings and the correlation with the literature provided in Chapter Two. This chapter also offers recommendations for cultural preservation policies and for future research on race, racism and environmental injustices ‘influences in the preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Critical Race Theory was used as an analytical lens to examine the success and challenges in cultural awareness and preservation of leaders in the Gullah-Geechee community. Based on the findings of Tate (1997), the CRT can be used to expose the inequalities in the preservation of land and culture of the Gullah-Geechee community. Through this lens, these

participants' counter-stories have meaning because their perspectives in cultural preservation and overall community life have the potential to create an understanding of the unique challenges this community faces. Increased understanding of the experiences of the participants provides a pathway in which the historic preservation community and policymakers can follow to adjust its relationship with the Gullah-Geechee community, thereby enhancing their preservation success.

According to DeCuir and Dixson (2004), race should be the center focus to critique practices and policies. According to Hill (2010), racism is described as any institutional arrangement where injustices have been based on race. Based on this definition the Gullah-Geechee community has experience racism and race-based exclusion. My own view is this research determined that race and racism were key to the cultural preservation efforts within the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor, and by the use of counter-stories of the participants this research identified the continuation of racism and race-based exclusion.

Young's (2003) five tenets of systemic racism can be seen within this research:

1. Exploitation-By using the dominant culture's usage of the spatial resources and adoption of cultural ideologies of the Gullah-Geechee community without compensation;
2. Marginalization-For many years the Gullah-Geechee community and history have be exploited by the dominant culture and relegated the community dependent on the dominant culture;
3. Powerlessness-The Gullah-Geechee community, for the most part, have not been active participants in the policy-making decisions within the community, with the exception of the GGCHC;

4. Culture Imperialism-The Gullah-Geechee experience is not included in the majority of preservation activities within the area; and
5. Violence-The Gullah-Geechee community has been exploited by aggressive means of environmental injustices to obtain the land once owned by the members of the Gullah-Geechee community.

My discussion of the effects of race, racism and environmental injustice is in fact addressing the larger matter of white supremacy. Most of the study participant's counter-stories supported the tenets of the CRT as they described their experiences to preserve the Gullah-Geechee culture in response to the research questions.

**Research question one: Discussion.** How do members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community perceive the impact of race and racism in their preservation efforts in the Gullah-Geechee community? Similar research carried by Freire (2012) states the theory of anti-dialogical actions which cause cultural invasion and disrespect of the invader's belief in the marginalized community and leads to cultural conquest and inauthenticity.

Many people assume that governmental policies are void of racist motives. According to the literature, the unfair state and governmental policies used to eradicate the Gullah-Geechee culture are not unique to this country. For example, even with the governmental claim of the legal protection of Native Americans with the Removal Act of 1830, this act was actually used to displace Native Americans from their land in the South. Therefore, it is vital for preservationists, educators, and activists to examine and challenge public policies and to educate themselves and their communities on their intent.



Furthermore, federal programs, like the Homestead Act of 1962, Social Security Act of 1935 and Warner Act, discussed in Chapter Two, showed biases in funding and these federal programs mainly benefited the dominant culture. Some participants of this research also felt that federal programs do not specifically address minority issues and the funding of federal programs is determined by the political party in office. Therefore, the Gullah-Geechee community must put forth significant efforts in grassroots organizations along with federal programs. Literature shows that historically policymakers have been in direct violations of the 1966 Historic Preservation Act and the 1970 National Environmental Act in cases like the land involved in the Standing Rock Sioux tribe that was once used for prayer and burial sites (Elbein, 2017). Participants also noted violations in the Gullah-Geechee community and federal funded projects that have destroyed the livelihood of the community.

Most importantly, cultural awareness was noted in the literature and by the participants to bring about an increase in self-esteem, which leads to greater cultural awareness. As shown by the literature, the foundation of the United Nation (UN) was built on the premise of cultural preservation, and the founders of the UN knew the importance of protecting and preserving one's culture (Thomas-Hoffman, n.d.). Although none of the 10 participants ever said directly, the participants gave the researcher an impression of a strong sense of pride while discussing the past contributions of the Gullah-Geechee community. Turner (1949) also argued that African Americans will develop a sense of pride once they discover their ancestral roots. All of the 10 participants, nine of which stated a direct lineage to Gullah-Geechee, expressed a need to educate other African Americans outside of the Corridor, so others can discover the Gullah-Geechee culture. Thomas-Hoffman (n.d.) stated a strong self-identity leads to civil interactions among other cultures to create a stronger societal structure.

**Research question two: Discussion.** What are the challenges shared by members of the Gullah-Geechee community members who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators involving environmental injustices that hinder education and preservation initiatives? The CRT explains the experiences of people of color, normalizes racialized experiences, and provides a systemic context for institutional oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As already documented in prior studies, the narratives from this research align with Dorsey's (2002) research pertaining to the absence of African-Americans and other minorities in environmental organizations and activism is a result of systemic neglect, prejudice, and invisibility of minority communities. Only one participant in this research had some involvement with a national preservation organization. This participant was very knowledgeable of the legality of the National Historic Preservation Act, along with the importance of the Gullah-Geechee community to seek listings on the National Register for Historic Places. Having knowledge of the national laws and protections can provide some benefit to a community oppressed with state and local laws.

Nevertheless, communities of color and poor communities are forced to be activists in environmental issues since these issues had a negative impact on their land and health. As the literature indicated, Bell (2004) outlined the historical patterns that hinder civil right policies to overcome racial equalities: (a) the concerns of African Americans to achieve racial equality coincide with the policy-makers; (b) policies fail that threaten the superior societal status of the dominant culture; (c) the rights of African Americans are always subject to be compromised as needed by policy-makers. These finding can be seen in the preservation efforts of the Gullah-Geechee community. For example, one participant mentioned the federal lawsuit against the state of Georgia and the residents on Hog Hammock on Sapelo Island. This Gullah-Geechee

community does not have any schools, firehouses or medical services even though the community pays taxes. County zoning ordinances were supposedly made to help the Gullah-Geechee community, but have only benefited the developers and residents seeking second homes on the island. If this community was equipped with leaders skilled in obtaining other measures like designation on the National Register of Historic Places could have protected eligible historic properties.

**Research question three: Discussion.** What types of programs and activities do cultural leaders perceive as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities? Despite the theoretical framework of the CRT, validating some of the race-related challenges of the Gullah-Geechee community, all participants identified success in their efforts to preserve the culture and educate others about the culture. This investigation showed that cultural activities engaged that youth, and the history told by the people is perceived as being the most effective. However, the Gullah-Geechee community must operate from an entrepreneurial spirit and energize the community members to overcome the feeling of the stagnation and hopelessness from the onslaught of their land. Thomas-Hoffman (n.d.) posited that real solutions to address cultural sensitivity often are most effective when they are developed on a local level with the direct participation of the cultural group involved and considering the specific challenges of each situation. Many members in the community do not have training in business management and governance, making it difficult to compete in the development initiatives within the area. Other research of indigenous communities discovered the need for practical applications in leadership development within the community for a sense of ownership and personal responsibility for the new development projects within the community (Calliou, 2012; Cowan, 2008; Ottmann, 2005). The Gullah-Geechee community

must embrace for inevitable change and strategize to benefit financially and bring awareness while keeping the Gullah-Geechee heritage alive.

### **Implications of the Study**

Critical Race Theory argues that the participants' counter-stories are integral parts to understanding the challenges faced by preservationists and educators in the Gullah-Geechee community. The following four recommendations are based on the finding from this qualitative study:

1. Cultural preservationists and educators within the Gullah-Geechee community must be visionaries and critical thinkers to develop a variety of programs and activities in cultural awareness and preservation committed to life-long learning to engage the community and introduce others to Gullah-Geechee culture. Also, the GGCHC and other grassroots organizations must work with leaders in the community to set a strategic direction for the community with long-term planning and goals to set a vision for the kind of community they desire. Federal programs and grassroots organizations must provide an educational component, i.e., workshops, and to all local events and celebrations. The Gullah-Geechee leaders must seek outside expertise in leadership development to create classes beneficial to the community. Classes should address many areas in leadership development and are taught at educational levels necessary for comprehension by the majority of the community. The Gullah-Geechee community must be committed to work with community partners at the county, state, and local levels to create strategic alliances to ensure that the community can look towards a brighter future.

2. Cultural awareness programs must be focused on the youth and build self-esteem and help to reinforce cultural identity within the community of the Gullah-Geechee heritage. At every Gullah-Geechee celebration, a focus on attendees under the age of eighteen must be incorporated. The Gullah-Geechee community should develop a preservation forum specifically to encourage and capture the interest of youth like the We are the Next's Youth Heritage Program (Bear, 2018). This forum will include cultural enrichment activities to effectively engage college and high school students to become active participants in cultural preservation. For example, college students could review the current preservation market activities and strategies and make suggestions for improvement and create marketing strategies and campaigns to give voice to the Gullah-Geechee community from a younger perspective. In addition, high school students could participate in community storytelling workshops with Gullah-Geechee leaders and hands-on activities such as basket-weaving, cooking, and art classes. Like the We are the Next's Heritage Program, all participants should receive preservation toolkits with Gullah-Geechee promotional materials that they can share with their communities back home (Bear, 2018). Community leaders could obtain local grants for Gullah-Geechee summer camps for youth to include agriculture, art, music and dance. Furthermore, schools within the states of the Corridor should add Gullah-Geechee history to current history classes to obtain a culturally relevant curriculums and engage students in the Gullah-Geechee heritage. The community should also partner with the school systems within the region to allow school field trips to the Corridor to educate students about the history of the Gullah-Geechee from their perspective.

3. According to the Center for International Environmental Law, the relationship between culture and land is crucial in cultural heritage preservation. Therefore, in order to quantify the cultural genocide on the Gullah-Geechee community, the researcher the harm by examining land ownership; however, census data of land ownership does not specifically address Gullah-Geechee land ownership but only African Americans. According to Douglas (2017), 45 years following slavery, freed slaves owned 15 million acres of land primarily in the South. In the 1920's, African Americans owned 925,000 farms, which accounted for only 14% of the all farms in the United States and by 1975, only 45,000 African-American farms remained (Douglas, 2017). Today, less than 1% of the rural landowners are African Americans. The Center for Heirs' Property in Charleston, SC specifically addresses heirs' property and discovered that 105,000 acres of heirs' property is in South Carolina (Douglas, 2017). Not only is the land ownership being threatened by institutional racism, but land ownership on the coast must also face development, flooding, oil drilling, and sea level rise, hurricanes that forced sewage into salt marshes of the coastal lowlands, seismic blasting activities, erosion, and ocean acidification. These challenges are unique to this community. In addition, without sustainable employment opportunities, the total Gullah-Geechee population was estimated to be 200,000 in 2005. The coastal land population at one time was over ninety percent Gullah-Geechee is now only ten percent with only two hundred to seven hundred acres of land on the highly developed Hilton Head Island (Douglas, 2017). At the forefront of federal programs, there must be funding to specifically address land ownership, heir property and zoning and tax laws. Federal programs should also

focus on encompassing the traditional experiential knowledge of the community to build trust and respect for all relations and increase the success of federal programs with input from locals. By acknowledging the effects of race, racism, and environmental injustice, the Gullah-Geechee community will be equipped to scrutinize federal initiatives designed to improve the lives of their community that actually benefit the dominant culture. Understanding the legal aspect of land retention is mandatory. For example, the heir properties owned by the Gullah-Geechee community could not receive FEMA assistance after the recent hurricanes, since clear ownership of the property could not be determined (Cary, 2019). Therefore, federal funding must offer specific classes regarding zoning ordinances, property tax laws, and the transferability of heir property. These classes could be offered as a partnership with established festivals and local events. The website of the GGCHC should include a tracking system to measure the success of land retention and conversion of heir properties to clear ownership since its inception in 2006. While the GGCHC should focus on home retention and stability, it should also focus on bringing employment opportunities back to the region. Entrepreneurial opportunities could encourage younger descendants of the Gullah-Geechee to remain in the community and help others to return to the community. Local residents should capitalize on the tourist industry by educational tours and the conversion of traditional homes to bed and breakfast inns. To aid with establishing business within the region, small business development classes should be offered to assist residents. Most importantly, the experiential knowledge of the Gullah-Geechee community could be used by establishing agricultural educational partnerships at universities in the area.

This partnership will allow the elders in the community to share their skills in agriculture to help future generations.

4. Programs must be developed on the federal, state and local levels to attract more minorities to the field of historic preservation so that the interest of Gullah-Geechee members and other marginalized communities will have significance in the overall preservation movement. Gullah-Geechee leaders can partner with national preservation organizations to offer promotional materials for membership at local events. Gullah-Geechee leaders must be educated on the importance of membership in national organizations and join national preservation organizations to give voice to the special needs and challenges of the Gullah-Geechee community. These leaders must also encourage other locals to participate in national history preservation organizations.

The researcher feels as though encroaching residential and commercial developments and gentrification will continue to pressure the remaining Gullah-Geechee properties. Most families cannot afford the rising property taxes, so they have to relocate. For example, the physical presence of the Gullah-Geechee is extinct on the luxurious Hilton Head Island, South Carolina and St. Simons, Island, Georgia. While many efforts have been made to address the concerns of the Gullah-Geechee community, the above-mentioned recommendations are hampered by the lack of funding specifically dedicated to the Gullah-Geechee community. From the counter-stories of the participants, the researcher discovered that the Gullah-Geechee community is not a monolithic group, discussions regarding the vision and strategic plans for the community must accommodate multiple perspectives. In addition, community members must establish trust with outside experts to learn how to adapt to the ongoing changes and obtain the formal training



needed to compete with racialized opportunists and programs that do not value their interests or experiential knowledge.

### **Limitations**

While this research explored the experiences of 10 participants who preserve history and culture of the Gullah-Geechee community or educate others about the Gullah-Geechee culture, its scope is limited. First, all participants mentioned land acquisition and its connection to race and racism; however, participants did not specifically identify environmental injustices within the community compared to the literature. Environmental injustices concerning the health and well-being of citizens in marginalized communities (Bullard, 2001; Cooper, 2007; Ellis, 2013) were a part of the literature for this study. Participants, however, did not specifically identify the environmental injustices regarding physical health.

This study included nine out of 10 participants that at least had some college to graduate degree, and all the participants were between the ages of 35 and 74. Generalizations to preservationists and educators within the community without a college education and those younger than 35 and older than 75 years of age cannot be readily made.

Furthermore, Florida is part of the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor, and none of the participants were from this state. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative studies are contextual and generalizations to participants outside of the parameters of those represented within a study should be made with caution. With only 10 participants, the transferability and external validity of this research could be limited. In addition, data collected from this research was based solely on the perspective and experiences of the participants without direct observations within; thus, this study is limited by the subjectivity of the participants and the researcher. Finally, participants in this study were all African-American or mixed race, and the researcher is also African-

American. The variables in this study, which includes race, racism and environmental injustice, coupled with the race of the participants and researcher, the participants' responses could have been adapted to suit what they thought the situation required (Gomm, 2008).

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

As stated in the literature, our society has made the inequities and suffering of marginalized communities appear to be the result of their own deficiencies rather than a product of injustices which prevents them from seeking change (Rothenburg, 1998). Although racism should not be used as an excuse, it does provide additional societal burdens and inflicts harm of people of color regardless of economic status (Higginbotham, 2013). Therefore, upon reflection and in the hopes of adding another layer of race-related research to the literature in historical preservation of a marginalized community, further research in cultural preservation and awareness is needed to protect the rights, history, identity, and future of the Gullah-Geechee community and to create an intercultural dialogue that encourages mutual respect from other cultures. Future research should examine specific environmental injustices that are currently being experienced in the Corridor leading to disparities in health and well-being. Other studies could explore the perspectives of cultural preservationists and educators without a college degree or younger than 35 and/or older than 75 years of age within the Gullah-Geechee community. It would be informative to the research field to have this study replicated included using these age groups or even conducted with participants from Florida.

Furthermore, the perspectives of community leaders that preserve the Gullah-Geechee culture without any connection to federal programs would enrich the understanding of preservation inequalities in this marginalized community. In addition, studies that employ different methodologies such as quantitative or longitudinal studies to objectively examine land

ownership and/or measure cultural awareness of the Gullah-Geechee culture and the inequalities in preservation. Other research could employ a case study approach to specifically examine the health-related issues impacted by the environmental injustices of the Gullah-Geechee community. Future studies could examine the ways countries outside the US preserve indigenous culture and history for best practices in historical preservation.

## **Conclusion**

Today, preserving the Gullah-Geechee culture is both complex and multifaceted. However, the success of preservation efforts will be seen in the future by the use of experiential knowledge, economic development, land retention, employment opportunities and active involvement of the Gullah-Geechee youth. The removal of barriers of social, political, educational, and economic opportunities are rooted in race, racism and environmental injustice and must be acknowledged. This acknowledgement will have significant application in cultural preservation of an indigenous community as well as in other areas of social science. The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of cultural educators and preservationists within the Gullah-Geechee Community. The Critical Race Theory (CRT) provided an insightful conceptual framework to examine data from their counter-stories to understand the racialized disparities in cultural preservation that have caused a significant decrease in the coastal Gullah-Geechee population. The CRT also provided the foundation for preservation reform to address disparities in marginalized communities.

This study focused on the following questions:

1. How do members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community, as well as those that educate others about the community

- perceive the impact of race and racism in their preservation efforts in the Gullah-Geechee community?
2. What are the challenges shared by members of the Gullah-Geechee community members who preserve history and culture of the community and cultural educators involving environmental injustices that hinder education and preservation initiatives?

What types of programs and activities do cultural leaders perceive as having the most positive impact on cultural preservation and the eradication of cultural preservation inequalities?

The variables of this research were race, racism, and environmental injustices. Through semi-structured interviews the counter-stories of 10 cultural educators and preservationists created a narrative to determine the variables relationship with the challenges in cultural preservation and awareness. After analysis of the counter-stories, several themes emerged. From the themes, the researcher developed recommendations to assist with overcoming the disparities within the Gullah-Geechee community.

The challenges of race, racism, and environmental injustices must continue to be identified and explored to continue the rich historical and cultural significance of Gullah-Geechee to bring awareness to the historical significance of this culture to American history. On the other hand, there has been progress in the acknowledgement of the Gullah-Geechee culture and the value of experiential knowledge that this rich community provides. For instance, just this year, Queen Quet of the Gullah-Geechee Nation spoke before the United States Congress about climate change and its impact along the coast and Sea Island communities. The Gullah-Geechee community was also officially recognized as the originators of the camp song, “Kumbaya.” In addition, Senator Tim Scott R-SC added to the most recent Farm Bill, aid to help determine ownership of heir property and assistance with farm loans for coastal residents (Cary,

2019). What is more important and it is my hope that this study adds to other research that have explored underrepresented groups in historic preservation and the contributions of all cultures will be acknowledged and included in American history.

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## APPENDIX A

## IRB Approval Letter



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

**NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH**

Date: July 24, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Triba Gary-Davis Protocol #: 17-05-551

Project Title: RACE MATTERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF CULTURAL EDUCATION AND PRESERVATION IN THE GULLAH-GEECHEE COMMUNITY

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Triba Gary-Davis:

Thank you for submitting your application for expedited review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. As the nature of the research met the requirements for expedited review under provision Title 45 CFR 46.110 of the federal Protection of Human Subjects Act, the IRB conducted a formal, but expedited, review of your application materials.

Based upon review, your IRB application has been approved. The IRB approval begins today July 24, 2017, and expires on July 23, 2018.

Your final consent form has been stamped by the IRB to indicate the expiration date of study approval. You can only use copies of the consent that have been stamped with the IRB expiration date to obtain consent from your participants.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for expedited review and will require a submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB. If contact with subjects will extend beyond July 23, 2018, a continuing review must be submitted at least one month prior to the expiration date of study approval to avoid a lapse in approval.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist



## APPENDIX B

## Recruitment Letter

Dear [Name],

My name is Triba Gary-Davis, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology of Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study to explore the extent to which, if at all, race, racism and environmental injustices have on the preservation efforts of members in the Gullah-Geechee community, and you are invited to participate in an interview for this study.

The interview is anticipated to take no more than thirty minutes to complete and will be audio-recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, you can still participate in the study. You can choose not to answer any question. The anticipated interview time is 30 minutes, but I am available if more time is needed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. I will guard against any breach in confidentiality by removing identifying information from the data collected, using pseudonyms, and keeping all information in a locked file cabinet and password protected computers.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Thank you for your participation,

Triba Gary-Davis, Doctoral Candidate  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

## APPENDIX C

### Informed Consent

#### PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

#### Graduate School of Education and Psychology

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

#### RACE MATTERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF CULTURAL EDUCATION AND PRESERVATION IN THE GULLAH-GEECHEE COMMUNITY

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Triba Gary-Davis, Doctoral Candidate with faculty advisor, Doug Leigh, PhD. at Pepperdine University, because you are members of the Gullah-Geechee community who preserve history and culture of the community or you educate others about the Gullah-Geechee. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which, if at all, race, racism and environmental injustices have on the preservation efforts of members in the Gullah-Geechee community. This study will also explore what programs and activities have the most positive impact on cultural preservation and education. The results of this study will bring awareness to challenges in cultural education and preservation initiatives.

#### **STUDY PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked six-interview questions- one question regarding your demographics and five questions pertaining to your experiences in cultural education and preservation in the Gullah-Geechee community. The interview will be audio-recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, you can still participate in the study. You can choose not to answer any question. The anticipated interview time is 30 minutes, but the interviewer is available as needed. If you do not have a private office, you can request a more private setting if there is a chance of others overhearing your answers. You can request a particular private setting or the interviewer will provide a private location that is comfortable for you. Your digitally record interview will be transcribed and analyzed for common themes with other participants. Data collected from these findings will be used to create recommendations for cultural preservation and education.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Your responses will be kept confidential. The potential risk associated with participation in this study includes the breach in confidentiality. The principal investigator will guard against such a risk by removing identifying information from the data collected and keeping all information in a locked file cabinet and password protected computers.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society which include:

- (1) By educating African-Americans about the Gullah-Geechee culture can provide them with a sense of self-identity.
- (2) A comprehensive account of American history to include the contributions of African-Americans can lead to an appreciation for all cultures to promote reconciliation and national well-being.
- (3) By increasing awareness and eradicating race-related challenges in order to develop strategies to provide cultural education and public awareness of the Gullah-Geechee culture is instrumental in preserving the culture and helping other indigenous cultures.

### **PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION**

You will not be paid for participating in this research study.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The records for this study are confidential. The data will be stored on a password-protected computer in the principal investigator place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. The data collected will be electrically coded de-identified, transcribed and analyzed using qualitative data analysis computer software. The principal investigator will remove identifying information from the data collected and keep all information in a locked file cabinet and password protected computers. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The digitally recorded tapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

### **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw your responses at any time during the data collection period of May 2017 to July 2017. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

**ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items which you feel comfortable.

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that if I have questions or concerns about this research, I may contact the following principal investigator and/or advisor:

Triba Gary-Davis (Principal Investigator)

Dr. Doug Leigh (Adviser)

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

**AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHS**

- I agree to be digitally recorded.*
- I do not want to be digitally recorded.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

|                           |
|---------------------------|
| SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR |
|---------------------------|

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D

## Interview Questions

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Age Range

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 years old   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-34 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-74 years old   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 years or older |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 years old |  |

## Educational Status

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No schooling complete.       | <input type="checkbox"/> Some college, no degree    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school, no diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate degree       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate/GED     | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate credit, no degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate degree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree            |

## Marital Status

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single, never married           | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married or domestic partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> Separated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed                         |                                    |

## Work Status

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed      | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time employee | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer or retired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employee |   |

1. Tell me how you come into your current leadership role in the Gullah-Geechee?
2. Tell me about your most successful experiences in preserving the Gullah-Geechee culture and promoting cultural awareness?
3. How successful are federal programs in historic preservation and the education of others of the Gullah-Geechee culture?
4. In your experiences with preservation of the Gullah-Geechee culture, how has racism and environmental injustices influenced the success of preservation programs with the community?
5. What role, if any does racism and environmental injustices play in maintaining the Gullah-Geechee culture within the Gullah-Geechee corridor?