Gullah Island Dispute Resolution: An Example of Afrocentric Restorative Justice
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Restorative justice has been suggested as a means to deal with disproportionate minority confinement and other social problems within communities of color, specifically the Black community. However, scholars and practitioners have pointed out cultural concerns that must be addressed in the restorative justice process. Afrocentric theory and its principles have been suggested as a way to deal with the cultural concerns within the restorative justice process. This article examines the contemporary and historical means of informal dispute resolution in the Gullah Islands of South Carolina. These strategies of dispute or conflict resolution were used to deal with crime, delinquency, civil matters, community grievances, and other social wrongs outside the traditional common and civil legal systems. Through on-site in-depth interviews, focus groups, and an analysis of archival documents, the research determined that the strategies used on the Gullah Islands fell within the Afrocentric restorative justice model.

Keywords: Gullah; Afrocentric theory; restorative justice; conflict resolution; African American; informal social control

The restorative justice approach calls for a balanced response to criminality and delinquency (Dzur & Wertheimer, 2001; Van Ness & Strong, 1997). Unlike the traditional criminal justice mechanism, restorative justice requires the active participation of everyone affected by the “criminal act.” The main vehicle used in restorative justice is the technique commonly referred to as alternative dispute resolution (ADR). In the criminal justice system, the formal mechanism of the judiciary is utilized, and the primary focus is
to determine the guilt (or nonguilt) of the defendant. The process within the framework of restorative justice is less formal, and the primary focus is the repairing of the relationship between the offender, the victim, and the community.

The debate within the academy and between practitioners is whether this process can be effective in communities of color. Umbreit and Coates (1999) and Arrigo and Schehr (1998) also argued that there are serious multicultural implications and concerns that must be addressed under the restorative justice model. Gavazzi (1996), Pattison (1998), and Jenkins (2004b) argued that the use of culturally specific principles within the justice framework could benefit people of color and others. In addition, because of the disproportionate numbers of Blacks who are either offenders or victims of crime or delinquency, the importance of a culturally specific approach cannot be overstated. Jenkins (2004a) and Jenkins and Boss (2003) proposed the use of Afrocentric theory as the foundation within the restorative justice process as a means of dealing with Black offenders, victims, and communities.

Cultural processes to resolving disputes have at their core four fundamental principles: cosmology (worldview), axiology (values), ontology (nature of people), and epistemology (source of knowledge). Afrocentric and Eurocentric processes differ in four fundamental principles (see appendix). From the Eurocentric perspective, the dominant worldview focuses on control. Key values of the Eurocentric perspective include materialism and individualism. Under the Afrocentric perspective, community rather than the individual is the primary focus. Under the Eurocentric approach, people are fundamentally competitive, operating in a “dog-eat-dog” world. Afrocentric theory emphasizes cooperation rather than competition. Finally, individuals using the Eurocentric perspective derive their knowledge through the scientific method. The Afrocentric perspective assumes that spirituality provides a primary source of knowledge (Warfield-Coppock, 1995). Jenkins (2004a) argued that the approaches to justice in the United States fall under either a Eurocentric approach or an enculturated concept. The enculturated approach to justice would be culturally sensitive;
however, it fails to incorporate all of the principles of a culturally specific Afrocentric approach.

There is a wide variety of research on the Gullah culture. Extensive research has been conducted on the Gullah language and its relationship to West African culture (Jones-Jackson, 1984; Miller, 1999; Mufwene, 1997; Pargman, 2004; Wade-Lewis, 2001), Gullah cooking (Beoku-Betts, 1995; Sutton, 2003), religious tradition (Jones-Jackson, 1982), genetic variations between West Africans and Gullah inhabitants (Parra et al., 2001; Pollitzer, 1993), and preservation of the culture (Brouwer, 1995; Smith, 1991). There has been very little research on dispute resolution and social control strategies in communities of color in the United States. The current study determines whether past and present informal dispute resolution processes used in the Gullah Islands of South Carolina utilize traditional Afrocentric principles. In addition, the current study explores whether the techniques are or were considered “restorative” in nature.

LITERATURE ON TRADITIONAL AND NONTRADITIONAL JUSTICE

Many ancient cultures including many traditional African, Japanese, Polynesian nations, and Native Americans have used and/or presently use a restorative justice approach (Benham & Barton, 1996; Childs, 1998; Nielsen, 1998). This approach is popular in Native American culture where justice is a way of life and not a product of the rule of law (Meyer, 2002; Yazzie, 1997). The ancient approaches to justice are the roots of the restorative justice model and can be an effective means of achieving justice and harmony in disjointed and chaotic communities (McElrea, 1997). In these systems, the state transfers some or most of its powers to the community. In other words, the true concept of restorative justice falls under many of the “buzz” words that our politicians use to argue for less governmental intervention, such as community empowerment and the old African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” (McCold & Wachtel, 1997).
The use of traditional forms of dispute resolution is still present in African countries, even though the dominant legal system is one with European roots (Rathbone, 2000; Sarkin, 2000; Stern, 1999, 2001). The approaches used were very similar to the approach of the Kpelle tribe in Liberia (Benham & Barton, 1996). These approaches emphasized that elders of the tribe or village mediate or arbitrate the dispute between the parties. The goal of the process in each country was to restore the relationship between the parties and obtain spiritual harmony in the community. In Nigeria, it was found that the restorative justice process retained many of the traditional Afrocentric principles and the community was very active in the process (Elechi, 1996). In South Africa, the indigenous people had a formal legal system based on the philosophy of ubuntu (the human spirit and how it relates to the community at large). The ubuntu philosophy of justice demands that individuals within the justice system, victims and offenders, have their humanity restored through the legal process (Ramose, 2001). Skelton (2004) found that ubuntu and other aboriginal African philosophies were the foundation for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) set up in South Africa in 1993. The TRC, serving as the foundation, led to groundbreaking restorative juvenile justice legislation. Skelton argued that this approach should be used in Western nations.

Guthrie (1996), John (1991), Twining and Baird (1980), and Moore (1980) found that many of the Gullah folk on the Sea Islands of South Carolina retained much of their traditional African culture. Thomas-Watkins (1993) found that social control strategies and dispute resolution techniques incorporated many aspects of traditional African culture. During and immediately after slavery, Blacks in the Gullah communities were subjected to social control under the auspices of the Protestant church (Washington, 1994).

The current study expands on this to determine to what extent the process is restorative in nature and whether Afrocentric principles are followed.

These strategies are viewed as alternative approaches in the United States. Americans tend to believe that the use of the law is the best way to deal with all social problems, especially crime and delinquency (Elikann, 1996). The belief is that without law, the
people would not control themselves, and a state of anarchy would exist (Hasnas, 1995). Restorative justice moves away from the state as the primary actor in dealing with crime. This is a movement that many other countries have initiated to deal with crime and delinquency issues (Baird & Samuels, 1996; Benham & Barton, 1996; McElrea, 1997; Rathbone, 2000; Sarkin, 2000; Skelton, 2004; Stern, 1999). However, the United States has been slow in adopting this approach and has continued to be more punitive toward juvenile offenders (Baird & Samuels, 1996). The state’s objective seems to be the emphasis on the maintaining of “law and order” rather than the seeking of justice for the offender, the victim, and the community.

The reason why the myth of the rule of law has survived for 100 years despite the knowledge of its falsity is that it is too valuable a tool to relinquish. The myth of impersonal government is simply the most effective means of social control available to the state. (Hasnas, 1995, p. 219)

The Eurocentric paradigm assumes that the state (under the rule of law) rather than the community carries the responsibility of dealing with crime and other social problems. This approach, which is derived from English common law, uses the state as the primary agent in dealing with the behavior of individuals, treatment of offenders, and compensation (if any) of victims. The community is subordinate to the needs of the victim and the rights of the defendant under this concept.

This Eurocentric approach to dealing with crime in society has its roots in the value of individualism (Nunn, 1997). This ultimately means the individual is responsible for his or her actions, the system must reform the individual, or the individual must compensate another individual. Also important is the assumption that the voice of the community (in this case, the Black community) is the same as the voice and values of the state. In addition, under most Eurocentric legal paradigms, the rule of law trumps the concept of justice. The primary goal remains social control and punishment of the individual who violates the statute (Nunn, 1997).
This approach has caused mistrust of the criminal justice system by many Blacks. The recent events covered by the mainstream and popular media, including the O. J. Simpson trial, the Susan Smith situation in South Carolina, the Charles Stuart fiasco in Boston, and the Rodney King trials, have highlighted the mistrust of the criminal justice system by Blacks. As a result, this approach has led to a call by some legal scholars for Blacks to reject the legal system in certain situations and nullify the law (Butler, 1995). The use of a restorative justice process, grounded in Afrocentric principles, could reduce not only crime and delinquency but also the apprehension many Blacks have about the political and legal systems.

METHOD

The current study investigates Gullah ADR using folkknography (Jarrett & Lucas, 2002). Folkknography is similar to ethnography because of the philosophical commitment to investigate cultural norms, values, beliefs, practices, and artifacts and the connection of these aspects of culture to the wider social “way of life.” However, “Folkknography promotes a conscious decision to investigate social reality from the subjective perspective of particular folk (Jarrett & Lucas, 2002, p. 13). There were interviews with key informants and focus groups (set up with and through South Carolina Coastal Community Development Corporation). During a 1-month period, 33 past and current residents of the Gullah Islands were interviewed. The ages of the respondents ranged from 15 years to 89 years. There were 20 female and 13 male respondents.

As with all ethnographies, there are obstacles and methodological issues that must be addressed (Beoku-Betts, 1994). Many times, being an outsider can be a hindrance in ethnographic research. The outsider has no shared cultural norms and may be unfamiliar with cultural interpretation (Beoku-Betts, 1994). As a researcher from a northern university, I do have an outsider status. I was aware of that status and knew that the Gullah inhabitants would perceive me as an outsider. However, my inside status of being Black and a descendant of the Gullahs allowed me access to the community. I was
aware and understood much of the language and the culture. Eating seafood, grits, okra, and goat was a norm in my family. In addition, I spent many weeks each year of my life visiting relatives and friends all throughout South Carolina. Much of the time during the current study was simply used to socialize and talk about the past in South Carolina. This socialization led to my obtaining valuable insight into the Gullah residents’ perception of social control and conflict resolution on the Sea Islands.

Schreiber (2000) argued that an Afrocentric method should be used for intercultural research. Although this research could be considered intracultural, the use of strategies and methodologies rooted in Afrocentrism were employed. The primary foci of the research were the views of the Gullah inhabitants, and there was an attempt to view the world through the lens of the Gullah. In other words, reality was viewed through a “non-European” lens (Schreiber, 2000, p. 656). This active research strategy reduced the distance between the researcher and participant.

Archival research was conducted at the Penn Center, St. Helena Island, and the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, the College of Charleston. These methods gave me a clear and in-depth understanding of the ADR techniques used in the past and the present by Gullah folk.

The *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives From the Federal Writers’Project, 1936-1938* were examined. These narratives were collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and assembled and microfilmed in 1941 as the 17-volume *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews With Former Slaves*. The narratives of former slaves from the Gullah vicinity were analyzed and examined for information about the secular and religious responses to conflict.

**THE GULLAH COMMUNITY AND CULTURE**

The geographic area of the Gullah Islands stretches from the southern part of North Carolina down through South Carolina and
Georgia to northern Florida and extends 30 miles inland. This research was conducted on the islands near Beaufort, South Carolina, in the extreme southeast corner of the state.

During the beginning of the U.S. Civil War, plantation owners abandoned the land along with their slaves. After the “Big Shoot” in November of 1861, northern military occupation of the South Carolina Sea Islands and the area of Beaufort, South Carolina, began. The northerners were confronted by “a peculiar people” who were pure black and had a strange way of speaking and a foreign culture (Washington, 1994). The Blacks on these islands were used as labor, supervised by the U.S. Treasury Department, and the fruits of the labor were used for the Union war efforts. Even though there was apprehension among northern policy makers that the ex-slaves would not succeed as free laborers, the Gullah inhabitants were given wages and a possibility of purchasing the land on the islands after the war.

W’en Yankee been come de Blunts leab Beaufort, and I walk out house and go back to Parri Islandt. De yankee tell we to go en Buckra corn house and get w’at we want for eat. Den I come back to Beaufort and got to wuk in cotton house (gin). De Yankee pay we for wuk and I tek my money and buy twenty acrc ob land on Parri Islandt (Martin, 1941, Project #1655, p. 280).

In addition, the Union used many of the male inhabitants of the island in the first Black Union regiment, the First South Carolina Volunteers (Washington, 1994).

During the early 19th century, some of the slaves in the Gullah vicinity were introduced to Christianity. There was major conflict between the Methodist and Baptist slaveholders on which denomination should be introduced to the slaves. The Methodists were primarily blamed for the slave revolts that occurred on the mainland as well as the 1822 Denmark Vesey conspiracy that occurred close to the Sea Islands. The Baptist, the dominant religious culture in the Gullah vicinity, refused to “Christianize” the Gullah people. However, after 1845, the Baptist slave owners allowed baptism and worship on a large scale. The Baptist slaveowners, using Presbyterian and Episcopalian literature that portrays Jesus as a docile, humble,
and obedient servant of God, used religion as a means to control the slaves. The slaves were attracted to the Baptist denomination because the slavemasters would allow the Gullahs to worship with little or no White supervision. This allowed the Gullahs to incorporate many traditional African customs and rituals in their Christian worship. In addition, religion served as a foundation for the social structure in the Gullah community.

On the plantation as a meetin’ house in which wen’ used to meetin’
every Chuseday night, Wednesday night, an’ Thursday night. . . .
Collud people had no preacher but dey had leader. Every slave go to
church on Sunday ’cause dey didn’t have any work to do for Massa.
My grandma use to teach catekism an’ how to sing (Mobley, 1941,
Project #935, pp. 88-89).

The leaders in the Black church would also be in charge of planta-
tion discipline and social control. Even though this structure served
the master well, the use of religion and the structure of the worship
served the slave community as well. The slaves accepted certain
aspects of Christianity that were relevant and rejected others. Some
of the traditional African spiritual beliefs were similar to those of
Christianity. The structure allowed for the Gullah community to
incorporate folkways and mores, some based in Christianity, to
have a cohesive and productive community. The religious leaders,
or elders, were viewed as the leaders of the slave communities on
the islands, taking away some of the power from the “drivers”
(Black overseers) on the plantation (Washington, 1994).

At the end of the Civil War, the praise houses became the center
of the Gullah community. Using the scriptures and other traditional
African folkways as the law and the Praise House as the location,
elders came up with creative ways to deal with social wrongs. For
example, during slavery, stealing from a fellow Black was consid-
ered a breach of the sacred trust. This law was grounded in Chris-
tianity (thou shalt not steal) and traditional African customs. To
gain reentry into the community, the sinner, through a ritual that
combines the sacred and secular, must pick up a benne (sesame)
seed with his nose (Washington, 1994). When slavery ended, most
social wrongs within the community were dealt with by these
praise houses (Thomas-Watkins, 1993; Washington, 1994). The primary role of the Praise House was to keep the community functioning. Although Christianity served as much of the foundation, research in the 1940s showed that the Gullah culture’s concept of community and its importance was distinct from the concept of community in other places. It was found that the Gullahs retained much of the community concept and many of the customs from West Africa (Bascom, 1941).

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the praise houses were used as the community’s political, social, and judicial center. Members of the community gained membership through “catching sense” and becoming a member of the Praise House and obtaining full membership into the community. Reconciliation, rather than punishment, was the objective of the community grievance process (Guthrie, 1997; Washington, 1994). Very few complaints were taken to the authorities outside of the Gullah community. In fact, inhabitants of the island who took matters to the authorities were viewed with scorn and many times were banished from the community.

In the 1950s, bridges between the Islands and the mainland were built. This allowed for easier access to the Gullah Islands and eventually the takeover of islands such as Hilton Head by real estate developers. The role and functions of the praise houses were diminished to a point where there are only two active praise houses on St. Helena Island today. The Gullah community on the island has been incorporated into greater Beaufort County. Today, the political, social, and legal structure of the community is similar to that of other counties in South Carolina. However, there are groups and coalitions that are attempting to revive and retain many aspects of Gullah culture.

**PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

Literature and interviews made it clear that in the past there were two distinct forms of justice on the Gullah Islands: “just law” and “unjust law” (Campbell, 2002; Thomas-Watkins, 1993). The just
law is the law of the church where rules within the Bible dictate whether there is a violation and what form of punishment would take place for the violation. This form of justice evolved from the justice systems that were a part of West Coast African culture (Coleman, 1997; Johnson, Jang, Li, & Larson, 2000). Through the decades after slavery, this informal process of dispute resolution was made formal through the churches and praise houses located throughout the Gullah Islands (interviews of older residents on St. Helena Island). However, with the informal use and the more formal use of just law within the church system, there was no involvement of the state. The just law is an approach that is restorative in nature. According to all of the older respondents, the community helped raise the children on St. Helena Island until the recent past. According to one respondent age 55 years,

Everyone here tried to raise me. When I got into trouble, I got a whuppin from my neighbors and then another one from my parents when I got home if I did anything wrong. After that the Deacon would probably whup me and then give me a sermon about my behavior.

According to many of the older respondents, the church is still an important part of the community. However, one should separate the concept of spirituality from the concept of religion. According to one respondent, a long-time resident of St. Helena Island, “Spirituality represents your personal relationship with God” and the church is “simply a place to fellowship.” As people, we allowed for the “White man to keep the land and we kept the Bible.” Another respondent, also a long-time resident of St. Helena Island, stated, “We as Black people are very spiritual, however we must be careful with the idea of Christianity.” The respondent added “the KKK are Christians. Bush is Christian and the Christian agenda is not the agenda in our community.” For example, “Abortion was and is not an issue in the Gullah community. If there is a problem, the family or a resident in the community would adopt the child informally.” This respondent believed that “it is up to community, rather than the church, to take the lead in the move for social change.” Notwithstanding the issue of the importance of religion, spirituality was
and still is an integral part of Gullah culture. Meetings, meals, and other gatherings I attended always commenced with a prayer or a moment of silence that not only referred to God but also made references to either the community or the Gullah ancestors. This spirituality leads to a sense of community. One male respondent age 61 years stated,

True Gullah people are very spiritual. You see a lot of them smiling cause they are in good stead with God. As long as you don’t touch them, cause if you do you might see the devil come out. We are really strong, family people. Community is stronger than the individual. If a person is in need, you help them. You don’t let them stay in need.

Unjust Law is the formal law of the state that is grounded in Eurocentric principles. According to all of the older respondents (older than age 50 years), St. Helena Island and other Sea Islands began to rely on this form of justice after the building of the bridge from the mainland to the island. According to one respondent, “the problems here on the island [St. Helena Island] and our reliance on the White man’s law did not occur until after integration.” Prior to integration, the islands were a very homogenous culture, and the community was relatively peaceful. According to another respondent, “there were minor problems like stealing, drinking, and fights, but the community or the praise houses dealt with the problem.” Even after integration, minor infractions were dealt with by the community. In fact, near one of the interview sites was a building that was used as a jail by the community (and not the state) to hold some offenders until they could meet with the elders of the Praise House for these types of infractions.

Even though many of the respondents older than 30 years respected the unjust law, there was still a distrust of it by the residents. One male, older than age 50 years, from a county near the island summed up the sentiments of most of them:

Our [Black people] reliance on the government as caused as to stop trusting one another. This is the issue . . . we need to change some of the laws. Also we need to take some power back. The Geechies
knew. We knew how to do it here in Dorchester County too. We gotta watch our kids. Can’t watch them 24/7. All of us have a duty to watch them. We gotta get back to our culture, stop letting dem rich people muck it up. White folk and others are trying to get us outta of the culture, telling us how bad it is. That’s why we [family and neighbors] still watch out for each other.

Another resident (female older than 40 years) stated that “we [African Americans] are the only culture that allows the enemy [White Americans] to educate us.” The respondent continued:

Take for example the Jewish culture, every holiday and event is used to teach the younger folks about their culture. That includes all of the trials and tribulations. We as a people don’t do that. We don’t teach our children our history. This teaching adds to the sense of community. . . . It’s like we are ashamed of our culture. We are ashamed to talk about our enslavement. It is like we are the oppressors, the ones that should be ashamed. That takes away from our sense of community.

One of the major issues brought forth by many of the older residents was the integration of the public schools. The schools, in conjunction with the community, not only educated the young people about their past and the importance of African culture but also created an environment that was the foundation of a sound community. In the past, de jure segregation forced people on the islands to work together on all levels. In the segregated schools, there were children from all socioeconomic backgrounds. The common factor that united them as a school and community was the color of their skin. Many of the older respondents on the island and ones residing in counties near the island had the sentiments of this island resident (female, age 51 years):

Everyone in school looked like me. What happens to me, happened to others in my classes. We had a lot of bad things going on, but we all stuck together. Didn’t matter if you were the kid of a doctor, sharecropper, or janitor, we were all the same. The teachers gave all of us a sense of self. That sense of self helped us deal with internalized racism. That is what is needed today. I am an optimist, and I think we as a Black community can do it. With all of the bad about
segregation, that was and should still be today the outcome that should occur. We need to go back to how it was in those days.

Disputes on the islands were handled through an informal process that used just laws as the foundation. The primary goals of just law were reparations for the harmed party, community peace, and an assurance that individuals would follow either church or community norms. The benne-seed ritual is an example of a process where offenders would be restored to their place in the church and/or society after going through spiritually based counseling, some form of ritual and/or material or nonmaterial reparation to the aggrieved party. This approach is clearly one that falls under the restorative justice paradigm. Although this formal process is rare, there were many examples of an informal process that was used in recent times on the island. For example, there was an accidental killing of a Gullah by a Gullah on the island 2 or 3 years ago. The victim’s family did not take the offender to civil court. During a community coalition meeting, the event was brought up. According to the respondent telling the story, the offender was chastised by many in meeting for being drunk at the time of the incident. The offender was an economically challenged individual and was an individual that did not verbally express his feelings well. However, each month after the meeting, a basket of food has been left at the home of the victim’s family. In addition, the offender, victim, and the rest of the community are presently living in harmony. Another respondent, older than 40 years old, spoke of the process on Wassau Island. Even though the praise houses are gone (only two active ones are in the St. Helena Island vicinity), this small community of Gullah people still conducts community meetings to deal with issues and problems that may arise. The process used in this community was similar to the one used by the praise houses in the past. However, the meeting has no leader or facilitator. To the respondent, who lives on another island, the process seems wild and chaotic. They deal with the issue by arguing back and forth in a “manner that would seem insane to an outsider.” The residents all have a say on the issue, and usually there is a positive resolution. “The next day, the folks get together like nothing went on.”
The Praise House process, and the process used on Wassau Island, focused on the restoration of the victim and offender. However, especially in the past, the dominant theme and primary goal was to ensure the community was functional and harmonious. The organization and coalitions on St. Helena Island are promoting a community-based theme for adults and especially the young inhabitants on the island.

According to younger (ages 15 to 18 years) respondents, the only accepted approach to resolve disputes today falls within the guidelines of unjust law. Young people on the islands know nothing or very little about Gullah culture and the dispute resolution techniques within the old culture. Of the six teenage respondents, only one stated that he would live on the island as an adult. However, the organizations involved in the research have programs to teach young people about the Gullah culture.

The young residents on the island were aware of how extreme individualistic behavior can lead to social problems, delinquency, and crime. The respondents spoke of violence that occurred because one person or group felt that they were “better” than the other person or group. They also felt that the primary goal of education and life in general was to “make money” for themselves. As with culture in general and specifically Black culture in the United States, popular culture has a profound impact on the attitudes and behavior of young Gullah residents. However, each of the respondents wanted the “older” members of the community to help guide them. Each respondent knew of the importance of community, and in this case, each of them felt that the church was an excellent support system.

Even though most of the young people interviewed stated that they may leave the island for better opportunities, all of the young people possessed a working knowledge of the importance of community. Through oral traditions and other educational strategies, groups on the island are teaching young people about their Gullah “roots.”
CONCLUSION

Preliminary findings indicate that past Gullah dispute resolution tactics fall within the parameters of restorative justice and Afrocentric principles. The process was rooted in traditional African culture and was widely used throughout the islands on the southeastern United States coast by descendants of slaves. In addition, the axiology, ontology, and epistemology of the Gullah system were in line with Afrocentric principles. It is unclear whether all parties (cosmology) were involved in the process because in the Praise House approach, church elders, and/or deacons dominated the process. As with society in general, females held very few positions of leadership in the religious community on the island. The church was the focal point of the community in the past. The church has been and in many cases still is the main informal social control mechanism in the Black community (Johnson et al., 2000). However, it is possible for another formal or informal (i.e., Wassau Island) organization or institution to lead the process. It appears that segregation laws and policies forced members of the Gullah community to rely on non-Eurocentric means of survival in the past. Current de facto segregation and institutional racism could be the impetus to go back to community restorative justice. Kruger (2004) researched a community in the Missouri Ozarks composed of individuals of European descent. Kruger found that members in this community used restorative justice as a means to maintain a healthy environment and a communal foundation. Many of the principles of this community are in line with Afrocentric theory.

Further research in the Gullah Islands and locations throughout the African diaspora, including other predominately Black cities and towns in the United States, is needed to determine the prevalence of restorative justice processes that incorporate Afrocentric principles. This research could lead to more active participation of Blacks and other disenfranchised groups to the restorative justice movement. Research could also lead to a move to help retain the Gullah culture. Gullah culture incorporates more than the focus of the research. As one respondent stated,
Gullah is a way of life. One must live and eat right. You must remember the past and have a relationship with God. . . . Some years back a White lady moved here from the North, New York I think, could’ve been D.C. She kept saying she was Gullah. I used to laugh when she said it. She kept trying to talk, eat, and act like us. After a while, I just gave in and said she was. After looking back I see she is. She incorporated Gullah into her life and now she is Gullah.

Afrocentric restorative justice is not the panacea to social problems. Other restorative approaches could be effective in communities of color. However, restorative justice, using Afrocentric theory as the foundation, could be an alternate process when other approaches fail. In addition, further research is needed to determine the influence of Native American culture on the Gullah and other Blacks. These and other questions need to be addressed through further research. However, the recognition of the Afrocentric theory by individuals in the restorative justice movement will lead to its incorporation within the restorative justice paradigm and initiation into communities of color.
# APPENDIX

## Cultural Justice Model Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Dimension</th>
<th>Eurocentric Model of Justice (The Current Legal System)</th>
<th>Enculturated Model of Justice (Usually Culturally Sensitive But Not Culturally Specific)</th>
<th>Afrocentric Model of Justice (Culturally Specific)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cosmology (worldview)</td>
<td>Control of others. Decisions should be made by a third party (i.e., judges and legal system).</td>
<td>Individuals involved in the &quot;process&quot; make decisions. Victim needs and offender responsibility dominate.</td>
<td>All parties make decisions equally. Community has the same voice as offender and victim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axiology (values)</td>
<td>Individualistic and/or materialistic. What benefits the individual is important.</td>
<td>Quasi-individualistic. Relationship between victim and offender is primary.</td>
<td>Communal Orientation Relationship with the community is primary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontology (nature of people)</td>
<td>Humans can be good or bad. Humans who are bad need to be punished.</td>
<td>Hunaas are good; however, there are some bad &quot;seeds&quot; that need to be treated or rehabilitated.</td>
<td>Hunaas are naturally good. Community should support everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology (source of knowing)</td>
<td>Self; validation through the scientific method. Strictly secular.</td>
<td>Self and spirit is secondary.</td>
<td>Spiritual source is primary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


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