



We Got Our Way of Cooking Things: Women, Food, and Preservation of Cultural Identity among the Gullah

Author(s): Josephine A. Beoku-Betts

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Gender and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 5 (Oct., 1995), pp. 535-555

Published by: [Sage Publications, Inc.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/189895>

Accessed: 04/01/2013 14:08

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Sage Publications, Inc. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Gender and Society*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

WE GOT OUR WAY OF COOKING THINGS

Women, Food, and Preservation of Cultural Identity among the Gullah

JOSEPHINE A. BEOKU-BETTS
University of Georgia

This article examines the significance of cultural practices related to food and women's role in the formation and continuance of these practices in Gullah communities in the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina. I argue that although food preparation, under pressure of dominant cultural practices, may be viewed as a measure of gender inequality and women's subordination in the household, analysis of the relationship between women and food preparation practices can broaden understanding of the construction and maintenance of tradition in marginalized cultural groups, a neglected aspect of the study of social organization within sociology. The study uses ethnographic data based on field observations and semistructured interviews with 22 women over several visits made between 1989 and 1992.

Food preparation and dietary practices have rarely been studied by sociologists, although they hold great potential for an understanding of gendered social relations, knowledge construction, and cultural identity in communities. Because this area of work and cultural activity traditionally has been viewed as a "natural role" for women, its value has not been acknowledged seriously or appreciated in the production of cultural knowledge systems (Smith 1987, 18-9). Analysis of the relationship between women and food preparation practices, however, can broaden our understanding of the construction and maintenance of tradition in culturally defined systems, a neglected aspect of the study of social organization within the discipline of sociology. Feminist studies show that examination of this aspect of

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This article is a revised version of presentations given at the annual meetings of the American Folklore Society, Jacksonville, Florida, October, 1992, and the South East Women's Studies Association, Nashville, Tennessee, April, 1993. The data were gathered under grants received from the University of Georgia Research Foundation and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Summer Faculty Mini-Grant. I wish to thank Linda Grant, Jude Preissle, Doris Slesinger, Edward Wellin, the editor, and the two anonymous reviewers for their challenging comments and helpful advice on earlier versions of the article. My special thanks also go to the Gullah families who welcomed me so warmly into their homes and the many women who shared their experiences with me.*

REPRINT REQUESTS: *Josephine A. Beoku-Betts, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602.*

GENDER & SOCIETY, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 1995 535-555
© 1995 Sociologists for Women in Society

535

women's work clarifies the character and significance of women's household activities (DeVault 1991; Oakley 1974). Even though food preparation perpetuates relations of gender inequality in the household, under given circumstances it can provide a valued identity, a source of empowerment for women, and a means to perpetuate group survival (DeVault 1991, 232).

This article illuminates how women, as primary actors responsible for managing and preparing food in the household and the community, contribute to our understanding of the formation and continuance of food-related cultural practices in Gullah communities. I argue that although food preparation, under pressure of dominant cultural practices, may be viewed as a measure of gender inequality and of women's subordination in the household, it also can promote resistance and strengthen cultural identity in marginalized cultural groups.

By drawing on the analytical constructs of an Afrocentric value system (self-reliance, women-centered networks, the use of dialogue and connectedness with community, spirituality, and extended family), Black feminist studies provide a framework for conceptualizing knowledge construction and cultural identity from the perspective of Black women's lives (Gilkes 1988; Gray White 1985; Collins 1990; Reagon 1986; Steady 1981; Terborg-Penn 1987). These studies show that cultural beliefs, values, and traditions are transmitted largely in women-dominated contexts such as the home, the church, and other community settings.

The work of scholars such as Angela Davis (1971, 7) illuminates how African American women have contributed to the formation and continuance of African American cultural institutions. Davis argues that under slavery, cultural beliefs and practices were transmitted largely by the performance of nurturing and caregiving roles, which enslaved women provided primarily in the family and the community. Although caregiving activities may have reinforced women's oppression in the household, these roles were significant in that they provided women with the only meaningful opportunity to influence their families in ways not immediately subject to control by their oppressors.

In discussing women's role in more recent struggles affecting African Americans, Johnson Reagon (1986, 79) argues that African American women have helped to create and maintain a cultural identity in their communities that is independent of the dominant culture. For example, she contends that if women did not teach these traditions to younger members of their communities, the youths would never know how far African Americans had come, or the depth of that struggle. Hill Collins also stresses the importance of viewing the Black woman as "the something within that shape[s] the culture of resistance and patterns of consciousness and self-expression in the Black community" (1990, 142). She postulates that Black women may seem to conform to institutional rules of the dominant culture, but closer examination reveals that historically they have resisted such structures by promoting their own self-definitions and self-valuations in safe spaces that they create among other Black women.

This article contributes to this discourse by examining the significance of cultural practices related to food and the role of women in forming and continuing these practices in Gullah communities in the coastal region of Georgia and South

Carolina. I give particular attention to the significance of the natural environment as a primary food source in the culture, the centrality of particular foods such as rice, the rituals and norms of food preparation, and efforts to preserve these practices under pressure of social change and intrusion by the dominant culture.

Historically in Gullah communities, both men and women have played a vital role in procuring and preparing the food necessary for their families' survival. Studies, however, reveal very few examples of men's activities in domestic food preparation. Food preparation in Gullah households tends to be gender-specific and organized around particular tasks; each successive task is more highly gender-stratified. Although men are more likely to engage in activities such as hunting, fishing, gardening, and preparing meat and seafood for cooking and barbecues, women also participate in these activities when they choose to do so. Although most men are knowledgeable about cooking, and most mothers seem to teach both their sons and daughters how to cook, men rarely cook regularly in the household. Women more often take responsibility for cooking and feeding, and they appear to be the custodians of food rituals and practices that perpetuate the group's survival.

DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS

This study uses ethnographic data based on my field observations and semi-structured interviews with 22 Gullah women in the Sea Islands and neighboring mainland communities in South Carolina (Wadmalow, St. Helena, John's, Edisto, and Coosaw Islands) and Georgia (Sapelo and St. Simon's Islands, and Harris Neck community) over several visits made between 1989 and 1992. My research interest in this region stems from my background as an African scholar who was raised in a West African rice-cultivating society; later I conducted research on rural households and rice cultivation in that society. As a result, I felt that I was uniquely prepared to examine historical and cultural connections in the food practices of West African and Gullah rice cultures. To collect naturalistic observational data on the significance of Gullah food practices, I arranged to stay with selected families in two of the communities I studied. I also kept a journal of my daily experiences and observations while living with my host families.

Women participating in the study were drawn from each of the communities mentioned above. The criteria for selection were that they were descendants of formerly enslaved African Americans from these islands and that they had been raised there. I found participants through key individuals and community organizations. Through snowballing and by a process of proving my credibility as an African woman researcher interested in making cultural connections between the rice culture of West Africa and the rice culture of the Gullah, I selected a number of women willing to work with me as study participants.

Semistructured interviews were designed to give the participants an opportunity to voice their opinions and experiences in their own terms. Although the interviews followed guidelines, they allowed ample opportunity for women to elaborate or to introduce issues they considered relevant. Interviews with each participant usually

were completed in one and a half to two hours, although in some cases subsequent interviews were necessary. Interviews focused on participants' knowledge of Gullah food practices and rituals, management of food practices in the home and community, and their role in preserving and transmitting these practices to later generations. About two thirds of the interviews were tape recorded; the others, with women unwilling to be taped, were written down verbatim.

The strategies I used to gain access and establish trust among the participants varied according to the situation of each community. In communities where local residents seemed to be better informed about their African heritage, I worked under the auspices of key individuals and community groups. Sometimes they sent a representative to accompany me to interviews and extended invitations to social events to which I might not have had access otherwise. In other communities, where local residents seemed more reluctant to talk to outside researchers because of negative experiences in the past, it worked to my advantage to distance myself from my university affiliation and to engage myself in the life of these communities. In one community, regular attendance at church services and midday meals at a local community center helped me develop a kinlike relationship with two respected senior women. They taught me the importance of being associated as the guest, relative, or friend of a respected person to gain acceptance among community residents.

Study participants range in age from 35 to 75. They include nine widows living alone or with their children or grandchildren, two single parents, and eleven married women living with their families. Most of the younger women are employed in service or public-sector jobs; the older women are more likely to be homemakers or retired from wage employment. Although the youngest respondent has two years of college education and the oldest has no formal schooling, education for the majority ranges from completion of the third to the twelfth grade. All names used in the study are pseudonyms.

Eight other women whom I asked to interview declined to participate in the study. Most of these women came from one particular community and were the daughters of older women who were participating. They were more ambivalent about my presence than were their mothers because they felt that past experiences with university researchers or journalists had proved to be exploitative. Time constraints from family responsibilities and wage employment also contributed to these women's reluctance to participate.

In analyzing the interviews with study participants, I regarded their narratives both as individual accounts of daily experiences in managing food practices and as a form of custodianship and conveyance of oral traditions about the significance of the Gullah food system. I took this approach because many of the interviews contained an element of reflection about the past as a backdrop for commentary on the present. Although some of this reflection was deliberate because of my interest in establishing historical and cultural connections, the participants and the other community members to whom I spoke also tended to organize their talk so as to provide a background to contextualize their meaning.

The data analysis strategies used in this study are qualitative and inductive. As described by Anselm Strauss, qualitative research is a form of data analysis that "occurs at various levels of explicitness, abstraction, and systematization" (1990, 4-6). It involves extensive use of field observations and intensive use of interviews as data collection techniques, and emphasizes "the necessity for grasping the actors' viewpoints for understanding interaction, process, and social change" (pp. 4-6).

The data were transcribed almost verbatim, although I did some light editing (such as inserting explanatory or connecting words in a bracket) or excluded small sections of an interview when the material seemed somewhat peripheral to the issue under discussion. After transcribing the taped data, I searched for themes repeated in both taped and untaped interviews, focusing on the rituals and management of food preparation over several stages of the process. My aim was to develop a detailed understanding of these ritual practices in the Gullah household. By looking for detailed, perhaps even mundane, information about each stage of food preparation, styles of cooking, flavors of food, eating practices, and (if possible) the meanings attached to these practices, I hoped to show any variety occurring among households and to establish connections for historical and sociological analysis. I also used my daily journal entries to provide context when analyzing the data.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GULLAH

Gullah communities in the Sea Islands and neighboring mainland regions in Georgia and South Carolina provide a unique opportunity to study some of the distinctive elements of African cultural influences on African American culture in the United States. Despite variations in the demographic structures and economic practices of communities on or near these islands, strong similarities exist in proximity of location and in historical and cultural background. One significant characteristic of these communities, for example, is that most residents are descendants of enslaved Africans who worked on these islands as early as the seventeenth century. Beginning in that period, Africans were captured and transported as slaves from various regions in Africa, extending from Angola to the Upper Guinea Coast region of West Africa. Between 1670 and 1800, however, Africans from rice-cultivating regions in West Africa, such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea, were sought because of their knowledge of cultivation of rice, which was then a lucrative crop in Georgia and South Carolina (Holloway 1990, 4; Littlefield 1981; Wood 1974). Rice planters were particularly interested in enslaving Africans from the "Rice Coast" of West Africa because the planters themselves lacked knowledge about rice cultivation in tropical conditions. The system of rice cultivation adopted in these coastal regions of Georgia and South Carolina drew on the labor patterns and technical knowledge of the enslaved West Africans (Littlefield 1981; Opala 1987; Wood 1974).

Because of the geographical isolation of these islands, cohesive communities evolved and preserved African cultural traditions more fully than in any other group

of African Americans in the United States. These traditions are represented in the Gullah language spoken among Sea Islanders, in birth and naming practices, in folktales, in handicrafts such as grass-basket weaving, carved walking sticks, and fishing nets, in religious beliefs and practices, and in a food culture based on rice (Creel 1990; Georgia Writers' Project [1940] 1986; Jones-Jackson 1987; Opala 1987; Turner 1949).

Today the sources of livelihood in these Sea Island communities vary according to available economic opportunities. In communities such as John's, Wadmalow, Edisto, St. Helena, Ladies, and Hilton Head Islands, many inhabitants are engaged in the vegetable truck industry; others are involved in fishing, crabbing, and marketing of crafts. Most of the young and the old in these communities garden, fish, hunt, and sell crafts and other services to supplement their incomes (Jones-Jackson 1987, 17). As a result of development of the tourist industry, such as on Hilton Head and St. Simon's Islands, many inhabitants (particularly women) work in minimum wage service positions. Limited employment opportunities on islands still inaccessible by bridge, such as Sapelo Island in Georgia and Daufuskie Island in South Carolina, have led many of the younger or more highly educated community members to seek work elsewhere, causing an imbalance in the age structure of their populations. Sapelo Island, for example, has a population of just 67 people; a disproportionate number are in the economically dependent years, over 60 and under 18.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND GULLAH FOOD PRACTICES

The value of self-sufficiency in food supply is an integral aspect of the Gullah food system. Men and women of all ages are conversant with hunting, fishing, and gardening as ways to provide food. From an early age, both men and women are socialized into the concept and the practice of self-sufficiency as a primary goal of the food system and are encouraged to participate in the outdoor food-procuring activities of parents and other kin or community members. Velma Moore, a woman in her mid-40s and a key participant in my study, became sensitive to environmental causes when, as a child, she accompanied both parents on daily walks in the woods. This experience taught her a variety of survival skills involving the use of the island's natural resources for subsistence and medicine. She learned how and where to collect medicinal herbs, and when and for what purpose they should be used. She also learned various folk remedies that had been passed down in her family for generations, such as life everlasting tea for colds or leaves of the mullien plant for fever. Velma recollected that when she was a child, her mother kept these herbs on hand in the kitchen and stood over a reluctant patient to make sure every sip of the tea was consumed. Now married and the mother of five children, Velma pointed out that she encourages the practice of these traditions among her sons and daughters. She even performs regionally as a storyteller and writes local newspaper articles about the significance of these traditions in her culture.

Grandparents also play an important role in developing children's skills in food self-sufficiency. A typical example was Maisie Gables, a lively and active woman about 70 years of age. When I interviewed Miss Maisie, as she was called, I did not know that our scheduled appointments conflicted with her plans to go fishing with her five-year-old granddaughter, whom she was teaching to fish. Miss Maisie explained later that her granddaughter liked fishing from an early age, so she had decided to cultivate this interest by teaching her the necessary skills, as she had once been taught by her mother. By transmitting these skills, which are part of collective memory, the senior generation of Gullah women fosters and sustains cultural identity intergenerationally, thus broadening the base of cultural knowledge in the community.

While the Gullah depend on their natural surroundings as a reliable source of food, they also have a deep understanding of their coexistence with other living things and believe that the use of these resources should be moderate and nonexploitative. This sense of shared membership in the natural environment stems from Gullah belief systems, which emphasize harmony and social exchange between the human and the natural world. Such a view is influenced by African spiritual beliefs, which are community centered and involve a set of relationships involving God, the ancestors, other human beings (including those yet unborn), and other living and nonliving things. In this complex system of relationships, the well-being of the whole is paramount; individual existence is woven into the whole.¹

Some aspects of this worldview are reflected in my interview with Velma Moore. She describes herself as a self-taught woman, although "self-taught" does not adequately describe her intelligence, strong will, and vast knowledge of Gullah history and culture. During one interview, she revealed that she, like many Gullah women, had been taught to hunt and would do so if necessary. Even so, she considered herself a keen environmentalist, with concern for the protection of nature, and would not engage in such activities for recreation because "it is not sporting to go up and kill animals that can't shoot you back." In other words, although she would rely on these resources for survival, anything beyond that purpose would threaten the harmony with nature.

Velma also expressed concern about the threat of environmental destruction in the region, a result of increasing tourism and economic development. She conceptualized this problem in connection with the struggle to preserve her own endangered cultural heritage:

I always felt that if you don't deal with one and the other, if you just strictly deal with one, then you're losing the rest of it. Because you cannot have stabilization in a minority community in this area here unless you recognize the culture and the environment. And if you mess up the environment, and you move the people away because the environment is not right, then you are taking away their culture at the same time. So if you take away their land, you are also taking away the culture when you move the people, and so forth. (Velma Moore, 1991)

In making this connection between the threat of environmental destruction and the survival of her own cultural heritage, Velma reveals an awareness of her relationship, represented by culture, with other living beings, both human and nonhuman. She does not distinguish between the two because she perceives them as natural allies in a struggle to protect tradition from the intrusion of dominant cultural practices. Because both are woven into her existence, the survival of one depends on that of the other and must be defined and challenged from this standpoint.

Interviews with Gullah women suggest that engagement in fishing, gardening, hunting, and other outdoor activities is not based strictly on gender role divisions. Although many of the outdoor activities related to food procurement are men's domain, women are more likely to be associated with these activities than men are with activities regarded as women's domain. In other words, it seems that at each successive stage of food preparation (which can overlap somewhat), work activities become more gender-specific. This is true, for example, of role expectations in some fishing activities, such as men's use of the cast-net method and women's use of the reel and rod method.

I observed, however, that women make judgments about what is appropriate for them, which give them some flexibility in choosing activities they wish to pursue. In the Moore family, for instance, Velma's husband and son were responsible for planting vegetable crops for their garden, while Velma took responsibility for weeding and maintaining the garden. Velma, however, also expected their help in weeding because she did not want to be burdened with an activity that is monotonous and unpopular among men. Similar attitudes were revealed in my discussions with these women:

Interviewer: Do you both do the same type of fishing?

Velma Moore: Well, yes and no. We both fish with the reel rod and he fishes with the cast net more than I do, although occasionally I go fishing with the cast net, too. But he basically does that.

Interviewer: But you do cast-net fishing, too?

Velma: Oh yeah. Most of us women here can. Most—I retract that—most of the older womens here can.

Interviewer: You mean you still go hunting?

Willietta Davies: Um hum. Like we [self and husband] go hunting for coon and thing in the night. We goes with the truck. We usually go at night anywhere around the island. I use an A-22 gun and a flashlight. I like to take the light and blind their eyes. I catch the eyes of that raccoon, and I stop and shoot.

Interviewer: What do you catch?

Willietta: Raccoon, possum.

Interviewer: I can't believe that (laugh).

Willietta: That's the only two sport I like now. I don't go dancing and I don't drink. I like to go [hunting] and fishing, and that's the truth. I love it.

THE CENTRALITY OF RICE IN GULLAH CULTURE

Dependence on rice as a staple food is the most significant way the Gullah express cultural identity through food practices. Rice is the main food that links Gullah dietary traditions with the food traditions of West African rice cultures; women play a primary role in fostering the continuance of these practices. In such cultures a person is not considered to have eaten a full meal unless rice is included.

Although most Gullah families no longer cultivate rice regularly, people are still conscious of its significance. Rice was described as the central part of the main family meal by at least 90 percent of the women I interviewed. Typical were responses like

It's the one that makes us fat because we go to sleep on it. . . . My father used to say, "Eat something that sticks to your rib." (Velma Moore, 1991)

Many people feel if rice isn't cooked, they haven't eaten. Take my grandson, for instance. No matter what you cook, whether it's potatoes or macaroni, you have to prepare a separate portion of rice for him. Otherwise he'll feel like he hasn't eaten. (Carla Bates, 1989)

Rice is security. If you have some rice, you'll never starve. It is a bellyful. You should never find a cupboard without it. (Precious Edwards, 1992)

Well, they have to have that rice 'cause, see, they be working hard at the farm and they have to have something to give them strength. They don't hardly bother with too much grits. They eat that grits in the morning now. But when dinnertime come they have to have that rice. They always say that Black people like too much rice. They don't eat like the white people. I don't know why they always say so. (Wilma Davies, 1991)

Because of Gullah women's daily involvement in food preparation in the home, they are very conversant with the stories and traditions passed down in their families about the significance of rice to their culture. On the occasions when I stayed as a guest in study participants' homes and helped prepare evening meals, women often shared stories and folktales with me, as well as songs and dances connected with their rice culture. On Sapelo Island I learned about formerly enslaved women who prepared special rice cakes made with honey for their families on particular days and months of the year, in observance of Muslim religious festivals.² Women also told me about folk traditions such as a song called "Blow Tony Blow." This accompanied a traditional dance still performed by Gullah women at cultural festivals to demonstrate how rice grain was removed from its husk with a flat, round, woven grass-basket called a fanner.

Several elderly women also recalled a time when rice held such a special place in their communities that children were not permitted to eat it except on Sundays or special occasions:

They have folklore on rice down here. One of the things we grew up with, for instance, after the birth of a child you wasn't given rice—no rice. Because rice is supposed to be too starchy for the newborn baby to digest through the mother's milk, and so you wasn't given rice to eat at all. (Velma Moore, 1991)

Some of the old folks believe that rice was also a cure for sick chickens, believe it or not. If your chicken were looking like they were kind of sick, you was to feed them raw rice, and it supposed to make them feel better. So they will take raw rice and toss them in the chicken yard. (Velma Moore, 1991)

I've known people to parch rice and make their coffee. Put it in the frying pan or something, and you toss it lightly and keep shaking it lightly until it brown—you mix it and you can drink it, and you put water and you make [it] like coffee. (Velma Moore, 1991)

These accounts are distinctive because of choice of words and expressions used to communicate custodianship of these traditions. For example, the use of terms such as “security,” “strength,” “bellyful,” “makes us fat” helps us to understand the role of this food not only as a means of survival when families are on the brink of economic disaster but also in times of plenty. Recollections of folklore traditions similarly enable us to explore the versatility of the culture, as expressed in the ability to transform rice into a form of coffee or a cure for animal ailments.

It is also significant that these recollections are narrated by women, because through such stories we learn how marginalized cultural groups construct a familiar and identifiable world for themselves in a dominant cultural setting. This point is addressed in Orsi's (1985) study of the role of popular religion in an Italian Catholic community in Harlem between 1880 and 1950. Orsi contends that identity is often constructed through a people's ability to discover who they are through memory. Although pressure from a dominant culture may weaken their ability to reproduce their knowledge and perceptions of themselves and of their world, the ability to remember and to create a communion of memory in the group provides the foundation for establishing membership and continuity of that group (p. 153). A parallel can be drawn in the role of Gullah women in maintaining a sense of shared tradition through food practices. Through their recollections of stories and songs and in their performance of dances and enactments of past traditions, they create a frame of reference alternative to those promoted in the dominant culture, while at the same time transmitting collective memory to the next generation.

One way of promoting an alternative frame of value reference through food practices is in the daily observance of strict rituals of rice preparation. In Gullah and West African rice cultures, for example, it is typical to commence the preparation of rice by picking out any dirt or dark looking grains from the rice before washing it. Then the rice is washed vigorously between the hands a number of times before it is considered clean enough for cooking. As a girl growing up in Sierra Leone, I was taught to cook rice in this way. I still follow this practice faithfully, even though most of the rice available for sale today in the United States is labeled as prewashed.

Whenever Gullah women speak of cooking rice, they distinguish between the various types of grains before explaining which cooking method will be most appropriate for a particular grain. They also take pride in describing the proper texture and consistency of a well-cooked pot of rice, although the suggestion that food must have a particular appearance to be satisfying is as culturally specific to

the Gullah as to other ethnic groups.³ Indeed, the belief that well-cooked rice must be heavy to be filling to the stomach is a cultural trait that the Gullah share with many African societies that eat heavy staple foods (Bascom 1977, 83; Friedman 1990, 83).

Gullah women also control the interaction of their food practices with those of the dominant culture by emphasizing the preferred place of rice in the main meal. For example, even though foods associated with other ethnic groups are generally eaten in Gullah families (e.g., lasagna, pizza, hamburgers), the women I interviewed tend to categorize such foods as snacks, not meals. To illustrate this point, the following discussion took place between me and one participant.

Betty: Well, occasionally there is, you know, maybe lasagna. That is an occasional thing.

Um, pizza is something that the kids love. And we have that like—that is never a meal. That's like if you have a bunch of guys dropping over and you are going to have pizza and pop, or tea, and a salad, you know, something like that. But it is never a meal, never.

Interviewer: For you it is like a snack.

Betty: Yeah, it is more like a snack. Yeah, definitely. It's like a snack. . . . You need to have some type of rice. (Betty Smith, 1992)

In the following accounts of how various women cook a pot of white rice, we see how Gullah women establish cultural boundaries by situating rice at the center of their food system:

Interviewer: How do you like to prepare your rice?

Maisie: Well, I scrub it real good with water. With my hands scrub all that dirt off it.

Interviewer: Yes, that's how we do it too back home.

Maisie: I know, I'd say most Black people [do that]. Some Black people don't wash it you know, they try to take the vitamins from it. How can you eat all them germs? [If] I can't wash it [then] I don't want it. Then I put [the rice] in my pot and just put enough water, you know, to steam it without draining it off. I don't drain my rice. That's it. (Maisie Gables, 1991)

Two others commented

Well, I don't like it real dry and I don't like it real soft. Just medium. Some people, they cook their rice so that all the grain just fall apart, but I don't like it real dry. I wash all that stuff off. Pick those strings and things out of it 'cause you have to take all that out. So we wash it good. Now the one that you plant and beat yourself has more starch on it than the one you buy at the store. And you have to wash it real good. [Then] I average the water, put a little soda in it. I don't use so much salt now. And if it have too much water on it, I pour it off. Then I let it boil according to what kind of heat—now that you have electric or gas stove, now you see you turn it down medium until it soak down. I don't wait until it get real moist. Even up [turn the heat] on it to steam it down. (Willietta Davies, 1991)

and

Gosh, some of that depends on the rice too because you got short grain rice, you got long grain rice. And sometime you tend to fix one a little different from the other. I

basically starts mine in cold water, I wash it in the same pot. I will just pour it in the pot. We don't measure it. So I just pour it in the pot what I think the amount I need. I go to the sink and I'll wash it . . . twice to clean it off. Pour the necessary water back on it and salt it and put it on the fire, and let it come to a full boil. The heat is usually reduced about three times, 'cause it's high until it starts boiling, then the middle, you let it cook a little normally for a while, then once all the water has evaporated or boiled into the rice, then you turn it real low so that it stay back there and soak and get just right. (Velma Moore, 1991)

Each of these examples reflects a sense of continuity of tradition as each stage of the process is described. For example, measurements are not discussed. This means that such recipes have been handed down by word of mouth and depend to some extent on one's particular taste. Also, each person emphasizes that the rice has to be washed well and that it must be cooked in just enough water to allow it to steam on its own, without the interference of draining or stirring. All of these descriptions might be said to follow a common tradition handed down from the period of slavery and still practiced in present-day West African rice cultures.⁴

These examples also reveal that the task of cooking rice is laborious and time-consuming. The Gullah, however, are fairly conservative in accepting innovations that might alter some of their existing practices. For example, labor-saving devices such as rice cookers, now in common use, do not seem to be used in the Gullah households I visited. One possible example of this cultural conservatism can be demonstrated in the story of a rice cooker I gave to a family with whom I often stay and with whom I had shared the joys of a rice cooker when they visited my home. Although they appreciated the gift and showed it off to neighbors and family members, on two subsequent visits I noticed that it was still in its box and that rice was cooked in the familiar way. The family's reluctance to use the cooker more regularly might imply a lack of respect for custom, as well as fear of jeopardizing the survival of a tradition that is already endangered.

Such a line of reasoning is developed in Williams's (1985) analysis of the role of tamales in the food practices of Tejano migrant families. Williams suggests that in the wider context of Tejano culture, the preparation of tamales symbolizes the Tejanos' sense of who they are in an alien cultural setting and is a means of strengthening interpersonal bonds within the community. Tejano women play a key role in this process by monopolizing the traditional skills and knowledge necessary to enhance understanding of the significance of this food in their group identity (Williams 1985, 122-23). In the case of the Gullah, one could argue that by conforming to the traditional rice-cooking practices, women serve as a medium to control the limits of interaction between their food practices and those of the wider dominant culture. As shown by their covert reluctance to use my gift, which is a major time-saving device for those who prepare rice daily, my friends may interpret a change in their way of cooking to mean the eventual loss of skills and practices they are striving to keep alive for future generations of their people.

RITUALS AND NORMS OF MEAL PREPARATION

Gullah culture is influenced strongly by rules and norms of West African food preparation. Many women who cook perpetuate these practices daily. One of these practices involves the selection, the amounts, and the combination of seasonings for food. These elements differentiate Gullah cooking practices from those of other cultures, according to many women I interviewed. Although the Gullah identify certain foods as their own, such as Hoppin' John (rice cooked with peas and smoked meat), red rice, rice served with a plate of shrimp and okra stew, and collard greens and cornbread, the interaction between European American, Native American, and African American food systems in the South has carried these popular southern dishes across ethnic lines. One way in which Gullah women try to control cultural boundaries in their way of cooking these foods, as distinct from other southern practices, is to assert that although similar foods are eaten by others in the South, their style of preparation and the type of seasonings they use are different. Just as West African cooking is characteristically well seasoned with salt, pepper, onions, garlic, and smoked meat and fish, Gullah food is flavored with a combination of seasonings such as onions, salt, and pepper, as well as fresh and smoked meats such as bacon, pigs' feet, salt pork, and (increasingly) smoked turkey wings (to reduce fat content). The Gullah women's views are expressed clearly in the following statements:

Interviewer: As an African American living in this area, what do you think makes the food you eat different?

Culture and what's available to you. I call it a "make do" society on Sapelo because you can't run to the supermarket to get things. We are plain cooking. We use salt, pepper, and onion as basic additives. Our flavoring comes from the type of meat we put in it. Bacon is white folks' food, pig tails, neck bones, and ham hock is what we use. Soul food is what other Americans call it, but we consider these to be foods we always ate. We never label ourselves or our food. (Velma Moore, 1991)

On Sapelo you got things like red peas and rice. You know, they cook the same things on that side over there too, but we assume that we have the monopoly on it, that nobody cooks it the way we cook it . . . although they call it the same thing, the ingredients may be a little different than they use, or the taste is definitely different. So it's considered Sapelo food. I mean very few places you go [where] they cook oysters and rice or they cook clam and gravy the way we do, and stuff like that. So we got our way of cooking things. So we pretty proud of calling it Sapelo food. Yes. (Vanessa Buck, 1989)

By claiming these features of the food system as their own through daily cooking practices, and by situating this knowledge in the community through the use of such words as "we" and "strictly ours," the Gullah women maintain the credibility and validity of a familiar and recognizable tradition in resistance to pressure to conform to dominant cultural practices.

A strong preference for food produced and prepared from natural ingredients is another norm of Gullah food practice. In many of my interviews, women stated that much of the food they prepare for their families is grown locally and naturally. When asked to comment on what makes Gullah food distinctive, Betty Smith, who is married, in her mid-40s, and an active community and church member, explains:

A lot of what we eat is locally grown. Not the rice, but everything else. We dabble in other things that are imported, but . . . I guess the type of food we eat is indigenous to this area. It's what we have kind of grown up on. Most of my food is still prepared traditionally. My rice is usually boiled. I don't buy parboiled rice. I don't buy too many processed foods.

Annie Willis, who is in her 70s and also is active in church and community activities, lamented the demise of locally grown foods and expressed concern about the quality, taste, and health implications of store-bought foods:

When I was a child coming up, we never used to put fertilizer in our crop to rush up the food. Food used to taste much better than now. The old folks didn't have as many health problem as we are having and they ate all those forbidden foods. I think it's the fertilizers and chemicals they put in the food now. Seem to me that children were more healthy in those days than they are now. (Annie Willis, 1989)

The suggestion that the younger generation of Gullah may no longer prepare food strictly from naturally produced sources implies that the Gullah way of producing and preparing food is symbolically significant and a mark of their difference from other cultures. These statements also reflect a concern for the customs and traditions threatened by the influence of urban development in the region. By recalling a past that their foremothers and forefathers created, these women set a context in which the values of their community can be understood and reclaimed for future generations of Gullah.

The women's statements also reveal concern about the expectations of custom and tradition and how these can be accommodated to the demands of present-day family life and employment. Certainly many of the traditional foods eaten by the Gullah must be time-consuming to prepare, and one cannot always prepare them regularly if one has a full-time job or other commitments. How do women cope in these circumstances? Several women employed outside the home admitted that they had made some adjustments. Pat Forest, a 43-year-old woman who is employed full time as a nursing aide in a local health clinic, lives with her husband and four children, who range from 10 to 22 years of age. Because of the demands of her job and her role as primary caregiver in the family, I was not surprised to learn that she prepares red rice by using a precooked tomato-based sauce rather than cooking from scratch. Traditionalists in the community would frown on this type of cooking, however. Some women told me that they often save time by preparing part of the meal the night before serving it or that they might prepare traditional meals only on specific days of the week such as Saturday and Sunday. Some women even said that they simply do not set a time for the main evening meal until it is prepared to their satisfaction. Several also mentioned that they had taught their sons and

daughters to take on some of the basic responsibilities of cooking, especially the daily pot of rice.

The ways in which these women manipulate time constraints to accommodate the customary demands of their food practices suggest efforts to uphold the central role of these food practices in the home, but also to exercise the flexibility needed for modern living. Although the women show respect for the culture and even express some guilt about failure to conform fully, their actions suggest that they are walking a fine line (albeit rationalized by time pressures): They are maintaining tradition while adjusting to modern influences that potentially might endanger that tradition.

In common with West African cultures, the Gullah tend to prepare excess amounts of food for a meal in case someone should pay a visit. In West Africa, in fact, it would be embarrassing for a host to prepare or send out for food for unexpected guests (Bascom 1951, 52; Finnegan 1965, 67). Even under the economic constraints facing many West African societies today, such a tradition is upheld as strongly as possible because it is still viewed as a mark of prestige for both the head of the household and the cook. Although the Gullah do not necessarily view this tradition as a symbol of prestige, some of its elements are common in many of the homes I visited while conducting this study. As Velma Moore explained to me:

I'm always able to feed another person in my home. People [here] will automatically cook something more just in case a stranger drops in.

As my study proceeded, I knew that the local residents were beginning to open up to me when, after several visits, I was offered food, whether or not it was mealtime.

EFFORTS TO TRANSMIT TRADITIONAL FOOD PRACTICES

Much effort is being made to keep these traditions alive through oral tradition and everyday practice. Observers are pessimistic about what the future holds for a people who now consider themselves an endangered species (Singleton 1982, 38). One of the leading concerns expressed by residents of these communities is that the survival of this coastal culture is threatened by the rapid economic growth and development of tourist centers in the region. According to Emory Campbell, director of the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina:

The Black native population of these islands is now endangered, and we don't have too much time to protect oysters, fish, and crab. Developers just come in and roll over whoever is there, move them out or roll over them and change their culture, change their way of life, destroy the environment, and therefore the culture has to be changed. (Singleton, 1982, 38)

The lack of stable employment opportunities on these islands is also cause for concern, because it has created an imbalance in the age structure; a high percentage of young adults leave for employment elsewhere. Also, it is felt that the drive toward

a more materialistic way of life in the region will lead, in the long term, to an array of social problems such as alcoholism, marital conflicts, and youth delinquency (Singleton 1982, 38). The task of transmitting cultural traditions to a rapidly declining younger generation of Gullah poses a challenge to those committed to preserving this way of life. Such transmission will be difficult unless the living context of the culture can be preserved according to Charles Joyner, a folklorist and scholar of Gullah history and culture (Nixon 1993, 56). The women I interviewed also expressed this attitude:

You've got to have culture in order to make your community stable and stay in one place. And so how else can white people come in and say, "Oh, these people down here speak Gullah or Geechee," and want to learn more about your culture, but at the same time they want to buy your land and push you out. How can you come down and visit me in my area, but I'm hanging on by a thread because you want my area. What do you suppose they'll show their friends and talk about? You know, they'll say, "This used to be a Gullah community, a Geechee community, but now they all live there in the heart of Atlanta or someplace else." It's not going to work. You can't move papa from [here], sit him in the middle of Atlanta, and say, "Make your cast net." Who's he going to sell cast net to in the middle of Atlanta? . . . all of a sudden he'll die. So you can't move the culture and tradition from one area and just plant it in another area. . . . You've got to nurture it here, pass it down, teach children, and so forth. It's a slow process. You've got to know how to do it and you can teach other people how to do it. (Velma Moore, 1991)

In view of these concerns, how does the analysis of women's role as carriers of food preparation practices inform us about cultural survival strategies among the Gullah? How do women transmit knowledge of these practices to the younger generation? How do their strategies relate to emerging themes in the study of Black women?

Perhaps the most relevant context for understanding knowledge transmission among Gullah women may be African-derived cultural practices that stress motherhood, self-reliance and autonomy, extended family, and community-centered networks (Collins 1990; Steady 1981). Each practice is centered in either the home or the community, and the two spheres of activity are mutually reinforcing. Within these domains an alternative framework of identity is constructed and women serve as transmitters of cultural knowledge.

The concept of motherhood illustrates how women use their spheres of activity to transmit cultural traditions. Motherhood among the Gullah is not limited to a biological relationship, but also can embrace other relationships with women termed "othermothers" (women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities) (Collins 1990, 119). Othermothers may include grandmothers, sisters, aunts, or cousins who take on child care, emotional support, and even long-term responsibilities for rearing each other's children. According to Jones-Jackson (1987), "It is not unusual for a child [in the Sea Islands] to reach adulthood living not more than a block from the natural parent but residing with another relative who is perhaps childless or more financially secure" (p. 24). It is also common to see a neighbor helping to prepare a meal next door or being offered a meal without concern that parental permission would be required.

The concept of family extends beyond the nuclear family to include extended and even fictive family ties. Responsibilities and obligations within the family are defined in this context; they facilitate the development of family communities where relatives live close to each other, and promote cooperative values through shared roles and socialization practices. Women of all generations, as mothers and as extended-family members, play a critical role in fostering self-reliance and a sense of collective memory in their children of both genders. They do so through the daily preparation and eating of traditional foods and by using informal conversation to teach family history and cultural traditions.

I learned about the use of informal conversation when I attended a funeral at the home of a Gullah family. In the evening, after the funeral ceremonies were finished and most people had left, all the women of the family sat together in the living room with their children at their feet, eating and telling each other family stories. Someone asked about the people in a family photograph. My hostess described the context in which the photo was taken (which happened to be a family meal) and recalled each family member present, including the wife and mother, who was in the kitchen cooking when the photo was taken. Because children are expected to eventually manage their own lives, both sons and daughters are taught the skills of self-reliance through cooking. Parents believe that their children must know these things to survive in the wider culture.

Much of this socialization takes place around the mother or in the family, but much is also learned from trial and error. Velma Moore recalls:

I learned to cook by trial and error and mama. Nobody teaches you how to cook, not over here. They allow you to play cook in the kitchen and watch them. Tradition always leaned towards girls cooking, but that boy, if he was hungry, he was expected to go in there and fix something for himself. Not that he had to sit there and starve all week until somebody's sister come home. So he learned how to cook, just like his sisters did. If a parent was home and he was home, they'd come up and ask him, "Hey, you was home all day. How come you didn't put on the rice?" or "How come you didn't boil the beans or something?" And so they would ask him the question that they would ask girls. At least I know mama did (laugh).

Strong bonds between women are also established through women-centered networks, which promote cooperative values in child care and informal economic activities (such as grass-basket weaving and quilting), in the opportunity to share experiences and ideas and in fostering the development of positive self-images, self-affirming roles, and self-reliance as women (Bush 1986, 120; Collins 1990, 119; Steady 1981, 6). The social exchange of goods and services and the flow of information and ideas that emanate from this type of networking encourage the development of positive self-images and community awareness in the children in these communities. While staying with Gullah families, I often observed exchanging and giving of food and other goods and services among women and their families, although many people commented that this practice was declining. Often when people went fishing or gathered vegetables and pecans, the women sent these foods to neighbors and friends, especially elderly individuals or couples who could no longer move around easily.

Finally, as Jones (1986) points out, preparation and serving of food by Black women in a secular communion of fellowship "symbolize[s] the spiritual component of collective survival" (p. 230). Women who prepare food for church activities play a vital role in helping these community-centered institutions to become sites of cultural preservation and spiritual fellowship, because food is an integral part of the ritual activities associated with spiritual fellowship. During the planning of church functions such as church anniversaries, weddings, and funerals, women who are known for their skills in preparing particular dishes are usually asked to prepare foods such as collard greens, red rice, peas and rice, cornbread, and chicken.

When we go on a church picnic, we have a little cook-out like hot dogs and hamburgers, stuff like that. When we have the anniversary of the church, we cook soul food. And we have collard greens, and string beans, butter beans, fried chicken, some kind of roasts, macaroni and cheese, cornbread, and red rice. (Bernice Brown, 1989)

We eat our food every day on St. Helena Island, and we also eat it at church anniversaries, weddings, and funerals. When we raise money to help the church, like women's day, the pastor's anniversary, the choir anniversary, we cook our food. (Queenie Moore, 1989)

Some women, including a study participant from Wadmalow Island, also raise funds for their church by preparing meals for sale in their homes.⁵ Organizing such a party often involved considerable work in preparing traditional dishes such as red rice, fried fish, barbecued pigs' feet, collard greens, and shrimps and okra served with rice. Usually, my informant's friends and relatives helped her to prepare the food. Members of the church congregation and other community members then were expected to show their support by attending the party and paying for the food, as they would in a restaurant.

By extending food preparation to embrace the church family, the actions of women, who usually do this work, promote a sense of shared tradition and spiritual identity among church members, especially among youths and those who lack the time or talent to practice these traditions. This activity also reinforces community-centered networks by providing a context for dialogue, mutual mentoring, and spiritual development, especially among women in the community (Young 1992, 16).⁶

CONCLUSION

Although women in most societies serve as primary preparers of food for the household, this aspect of their daily lives has not received much analytical attention. Not only have women been largely excluded from the process of knowledge construction and validation, the work of food preparation has also been devalued and rendered invisible because of a dominant culture that views it as a "natural role" for women (Collins 1990; Smith 1987). Even in feminist scholarship there is an underlying tension when this issue is discussed because of the dual nature of food

preparation as a valued work activity and as “women’s work.” On the one hand, it provides women with a source of valued identity and empowerment; on the other, it is a means of perpetuating relations of gender inequality and women’s subordination in the household (DeVault 1991, 232). Feminists who advocate changes in this sphere usually recommend equitable distribution of housework among household members, cutting back on housework, and creating new family roles for men (Chodorow 1978; Hochschild and Machung 1989; Oakley 1974). DeVault (1991), however, argues that in changing the organization of food preparation in the home, one must be careful not to trivialize its value and its symbolic meaning in the expression of shared group membership. In other words, DeVault advocates preserving the essence of caring that is built into this activity, although in a way that would not maintain relations of inequality for those who perform it (DeVault 1991, 233-35).

I have argued here that through regular food preparation and management of feeding in the family and the wider community, African American women in Gullah communities perpetuate cultural identity and group survival. Cultural preservation through food preparation and feeding is a highly conscious act on the part of these women; it is tied closely to their judgments about when to accept, and when to resist, change. Gullah women, therefore, are willing to take shortcuts in cooking when time pressures demand it, but they seem less willing to compromise their feelings about nature and environmental protection or to tamper with the “unique” seasonings they say are a component of true Gullah cooking.

Gullah women devise and transmit alternative ways of understanding their culture by relying on African-derived systems of knowledge, which promote motherhood, women-centered networks, self-reliance, extended family, and community-centeredness. Reliance on these values has enabled Gullah women to resist negative images of their past; they use common but resourceful strategies such as everyday practice, teaching by example, and providing constant recollections of their past through storytelling and other oral traditions. Although present attempts to define and preserve the unique cultural tradition of these communities are threatened seriously by the pace of economic development in the region, Gullah women have learned from their mothers and grandmothers that the observance and practice of the underlying principles of their traditions are vital to the survival and preservation of their culture.

NOTES

1. See Margaret Washington Creel (1990) and Patricia Jones-Jackson (1987, especially 24-28). A good background to African spiritual philosophy is John Mbiti (1969).

2. Former slaves Katie Brown and Shad Hall from Sapelo Island, Georgia, when interviewed by the Federal Writers’ Project in the 1930s, vividly described a special rice cake made with honey that their African Muslim grandmother prepared for the family on particular Muslim fast days (Georgia Writers’ Project [1940] 1986, 162, 167). Thomas Winterbottom ([1803] 1969), a British physician who worked in Sierra Leone at the end of the eighteenth century, also reported that the Muslims he encountered liked to make cakes of rice and honey.

3. One may find that even when a meal displays the qualities they claim it must have to be satisfying or filling, it still might not be acceptable to a given people if that food is not their preferred staple.

4. See Charles Joyner (1984, 96) for a description of how rice was cooked on some slave plantations in South Carolina, given by Goliah, who was enslaved on the plantation of Robert F.W. Allston.

5. Interview with May Taylor, Wadmalow Island, 1989.

6. Although I recognize the important contributions of Gullah women in the development of the Black church and in its spiritual leadership and community development activities, they have made this contribution at the expense of holding leadership positions. In the formal authority structure of African American churches, men generally control these positions. Women lack due recognition and status, and they continue to fight to attain a measure of power and influence in many Black churches. At the same time, they have shown different patterns of leadership within the church community by fostering a sense of collective autonomy and "woman consciousness" (Gilkes 1988, 228). Like the activities of women who organize voluntary missionary societies, teach Sunday school, raise funds, and become prayer band leaders and church mothers, the activities of women who prepare food for church functions show that women use this sphere of influence in the church to foster a sense of shared tradition and spiritual identity in their communities.

REFERENCES

- Bascom, W. 1951. Yoruba food. *Africa* 21:41-53.
- . 1977. Some Yoruba ways with yams. In *The anthropologist's cookbook*, edited by J. Kuper. New York: Universe Books.
- Bush, B. 1986. "The family tree is not cut": Women and cultural resistance in slave family life in the British Caribbean. In *In resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American history*, edited by G. Y. Okihiro. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Chodorow, N. 1978. *The reproduction of mothering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Collins, P. Hill. 1990. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Creel, M. Washington. 1990. Gullah attitudes toward life and death. *Africanisms in African-American culture*, edited by Joseph E. Holloway. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Davis, A. 1971. Reflections on the Black woman's role in the community of slaves. *Black Scholar* (December):3-15.
- DeVault, M. L. 1991. *Feeding the family: The social organization of caring as gendered work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Finnegan, R. S. 1965. *Survey of the Limba people of northern Sierra Leone*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Friedman, C. G. 1990. Africans and African-Americans: An ethnohistorical view and symbolic analysis of food habits. In *Encounters with American ethnic cultures*, edited by P. Kilbride, J. C. Goodale, and E. R. Ameisen. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Georgia Writers' Project. [1940] 1986. *Drums and shadows: Survival studies among the Georgia coastal Negroes*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Gilkes, C. 1988. "Together and in harness": Women's traditions in the Sanctified Church. In *Black women in America: Social science perspectives*, edited by M. R. Malson, E. Mudimbe-Boyi, Jean F. O'Barr, and M. Wier. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gray White, D. 1985. *Ar'n't I a woman? Female slaves in the plantation South*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Hill Collins, P. 1990. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston and London: Unwin Hyman.
- Hochschild, A. R., and A. Machung. 1989. *The second shift: Working parents and the revolution at home*. New York: Viking.
- Holloway, J. 1990. *Africanisms in American culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Jones, J. 1986. *Labor of love, labor of sorrow: Black women, work, and the family from slavery to the present*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Jones-Jackson, P. 1987. *When roots die: Endangered traditions on the Sea Islands*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Joyner, C. 1984. *Down by the riverside: A South Carolina slave community*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Littlefield, D. 1981. *Rice and slaves: Ethnicity and the slave trade in colonial South Carolina*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Mbiti, J. 1969. *African religions and philosophy*. New York: Praeger.
- Nixon, R. 1993. Cultures in conflict: Sea Island communities are fighting for their survival, stirring new hopes along the coast of South Carolina. *Southern Exposure* (Fall):53-56.
- Oakley, A. 1974. *The sociology of housework*. New York: Pantheon.
- Opala, J. 1987. *The Sierra Leone-Gullah connection*. Freetown: USIS.
- Orsi, R. A. 1985. *The Madonna of 115th street: Faith and community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press.
- Reagon, B. Johnson. 1986. African diaspora women: The making of cultural workers. *Feminist Studies* 12:77-90.
- Singleton, V. 1982. We are an endangered species: An interview with Emory Campbell. *Southern Exposure* 10:37-39.
- Smith, D. E. 1987. *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Steady, F. 1981. *The Black woman cross-culturally*. Cambridge, Mass: Schenkman.
- Strauss, A. L. 1990. *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Terborg-Penn, R. 1987. *Women in Africa and the African diaspora*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press.
- Turner, L. 1949. *Africanisms in the Gullah dialect*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Williams, B. 1985. Why migrant women feed their husbands tamales: Foodways as a basis for a revisionist view of Tejano family life. In *Ethnic and regional foodways in the United States: The performance of group identity*, edited by L. Keller Brown and K. Mussell. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Winterbottom, T. [1803] 1969. *An account of the Native Africans in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone*. London: Frank Cass.
- Wood, P. 1974. *Black majority: Negroes in colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Young, K. Porter. 1992. *Notes on sisterhood, kinship, and marriage in an African-American South Carolina Sea Island community*. Memphis, Tenn.: Memphis State University, Center for Research on Women.

Josephine A. Beoku-Betts is Assistant Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at the University of Georgia. Her research focuses on the significance of women's historical and cultural role in the preservation of cultural identity in African American communities in the coastal islands of Georgia and South Carolina. In the area of Third World development, her research addresses the gender implications of science and technology policies in Africa, focusing on training and employment.