

**White Supremacy and Food Media:
Identifying and Challenging Racism in Popular Food Discourse**

by

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Capstone Research Synthesis

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Abstract

This Capstone concerns the social problem of racism in the United States' food system. The present boom in popular food discourse (PFD) influences how Americans define and relate to the United States' food system. I reviewed critical race discourse analysis (CRDA) critiques of PFD to identify how racism presents in PFD and how it is challenged. Using Fraser's (2000, 2003, 2008) Social Justice framework, I found that dominant PFD caters to hegemonic whiteness by employing frames laden with white supremacist ideology that cause maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation for people of color (POC) involved in the U.S. food system. The racist frames of dominant PFD reflect and perpetuate the systemic racism in our food system and violate the racial equity aspect of social justice. Emergent PFD content challenges this systemic racism primarily through self-recognition which can subsequently lead to redistribution of resources and representation for POC, together amounting to Fraser's three dimensions of social justice. However, this strategy alone cannot disrupt systemic racism within the PFD industry or the broader U.S. food system because it does not alter the system of privilege and oppression established by white supremacist ideology. A parity of participation by all who participate in PFD—creators and consumers, white and non-white—is necessary to decenter whiteness, the ideological root of the problem, to achieve social justice for those oppressed by racism in the U.S. food system.

Keywords: food discourse, racism, social justice, decentering whiteness, critical race discourse analysis

Dedicated to those behind the kitchen doors of New Orleans.
You are vital to our city.

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Table of Contents

Tables	vii
Figures	vii
Abbreviations	viii
One—Introduction	9
Two—Background and Significance	13
Domain of Food Systems and Society	13
Social Problems and Social Justice in Food Systems and Society	15
Capstone Research Problem and Overall Research Question	23
Three—Methodology and Methods	25
Capstone Research Paradigm	25
Capstone Research Questions	27
Capstone Research Design	33
Four—Research Application and Contribution	37
Research Findings	37
Contribution	66
Five—Conclusion	70
References	73

Tables

Table 1. CRQ 1 Results	39
Table 2. CRQ 2 Results	54

Figures

Figure 1. Illustration of social justice derived from Fraser's framework.....	17
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Abbreviations

CC	culinary colonialism
CDA	critical discourse analysis
CRDA	critical race discourse analysis
CRQ	constitutive research question
CRT	critical race theory
CS	culinary signifying
DW	decentering whiteness
ETO	eating the Other
ORQ	overall research question
PFD	popular food discourse
POC	people (or person) of color
U.S.	United States
WCN	white culinary nationalism

One—Introduction

The American public is flooded with food-related content on television, print, radio, and social media, turning communications about food into omnipresent lifestyle entertainment. We now have more food-focused media channels than ever before, and even general media channels are jumping onboard. You can tune into *Bon Appetit* magazine's YouTube channel to see what the Test Kitchen is cooking up; the *New York Times Cooking* app had more than one million paying subscribers in December 2021 (NYT Company 2021); restaurants design their dishes and dining rooms to attract Instagram food pornographers (Hotson 2018); and even National Public Radio produces a podcast, *The Splendid Table*, described as “a culinary, culture, and lifestyle program” which boasts two James Beard Awards (American Public Media 2022), the food industry's version of the Academy Awards. And all this sells.

I cannot help but wonder about this phenomenon's impact on how Americans relate to food and the U.S. food system. Certainly not all Americans are planning gluttonous trips abroad or themed dinner parties for a dozen friends, but Condé Nast and the Cooking Channel would have you think otherwise. And for those who are not, what messages might they be receiving from this type of content? It likely leads many Americans to believe that something is preventing them from living a supposedly “normal” American lifestyle. For example, Caldwell (2017) notes that ubiquitous imagery of edible abundance on social media shrouds the reality of how average Americans eat, especially food insecure families. While variations of hashtag #foodie trend, Caldwell muses, “have you ever seen the hashtag #foodless?” Caldwell's questions reception of food media according to Americans' socioeconomic class. In this Capstone I explore differences in reception to what food media conceals and reveals according to race.

Who is producing this multi-media onslaught, anyway? A quick Google of a producer's name reveals that the hosts, authors, bloggers, and other producers of mainstream food media are overwhelmingly white. A critical read of their content reveals that many of them presume an audience of similarly described peers (more on this later). The white homogeneity of food media producers results in an equally homogenous portrayal of the U.S. food system according to white producers' experiences. This excludes a huge swath of people in the United States whose experiences in the food system differ from what is broadcasted because they are not white. The people involved in the U.S. food system are immensely diverse, we differ by gender, race, ethnicity, class, and other identities, though this fact that is not accurately conveyed in food media. My Capstone research focused on food media's omission of our food system's racial diversity which is reflective of a long history of racism against people of color in the United States' food system and society.

My interest in racism within our food system stems from a decade spent as a professional cook at New Orleans restaurants with mostly African American colleagues. Being white, I have no doubt that our experiences differed in more ways than I can imagine. I cannot know the toll of years' worth of orders from a chef belonging to a dominant race relative to my own or how it feels to prepare meals for people more privileged than myself just because they were born with a different skin color. I do know what it is like to be a woman in the food service industry, another identity that is outnumbered, outranked, and overshadowed in professional kitchens. In this sense, I am no stranger to reckoning with systemic privilege and oppression, though my experience relates to patriarchy rather than racism.

Like most of my former colleagues, I am drawn to food media like a moth to a light. I still indulge in the talk of who's who among chefs and what they are doing to garner media

attention. I process this discourse with a grain of salt because I have first-hand knowledge of the discrepancies between media and reality. For instance, at the restaurants where I worked most of the cooks were African American yet Dickie Brennan, Emeril Lagasse, and John Besh, all white men, were lauded as the chaperones of New Orleans' famous cuisine. I am personally acquainted with dozens of people sequestered "behind the kitchen door" (Jayaraman 2013) who are not showered in the media accolades that our white figurehead bosses received. This reflects the deep-rooted social problem of racism in our food system.

In this Capstone I explore how racism is present and challenged in popular food discourse according to what is and is not featured in its content. It is important to understand how the framing of popular food discourse can reproduce or confront racism in our food system so that we can recognize when this discourse is contributing to social justice or perpetuating unjust conditions. This research addresses racism in the U.S. food system by asking about its presence in PFD so that we can better understand the ways in which racism in our food system is perpetuated and challenged. I find that popular food discourse can be an instrument that replicates or fights racism in our food system. There is evidence of both, with notable actions by people of color to diversify the content of popular food discourse. Diversifying the perspectives conveyed by popular food discourse facilitates social justice by advancing the position that all participants in the U.S. food system are contemporaries who should enjoy equitable status and power regardless of race.

The forthcoming chapters guide you through my critical inquiry on racism in PFD. Chapter Two, Background and Significance, defines fundamental concepts including food systems, discourse, social justice, and racism. Chapter 3, Methods and Methodology, describes my research philosophy and how I constructed my Capstone research. Chapter 4, Research

Application and Contribution, discusses my research findings and their significance. Finally, I conclude with Chapter Five, a personal reflection on the Capstone process and the application of my findings to the overall state of social justice in U.S. food systems and society.

Two—Background and Significance

The purpose of this chapter is to define the domain and foundational concepts of this Capstone. First, I discuss food systems and society, the overarching domain of this work. Other key concepts to this Capstone are introduced as well, including discourse, social problems, social justice, and racism. Articulating definitions of these concepts sets the scene for investigating the social problem of racism in the United States' food system. I introduce the research problem at hand: the presence of racism in popular food discourse (PFD). The chapter concludes with my overall research question and research statement which relate to PFD and racism.

Domain of Food Systems and Society

What is food systems and society? A **food system** is an umbrella of relationships, interactions, and outcomes that affect food economies, social welfare, and the natural environment (Brouwer et al. 2020, 3). Food systems are composed of all the people, institutions, and infrastructure involved in food is production, distribution, and consumption by a society. Food discourse is a compositional institution of food systems because it influences how society understands and relates to food production, distribution, and consumption. If a food system is all the relationships involved in the production, distribution, or consumption of food, then **food discourse** is all communication concerning those subjects.

What is discourse? **Discourse** is a structure of communication, verbal and nonverbal (Matwick & Matwick 2019, 1). This means that discourse includes the language *and* the norms and conventions on a subject (Crossley 2005, 61). Discourse is a powerful thing, capable of shaping how we define our physical and conceptual worlds. As P. Allen (2004, 81) puts it, discourse “allows us to see in certain ways and not in others,” meaning that the content and

context of discourse can determine what we accept as truth. This happens through gradual internalization of the values, attitudes, and tones of the discourses we partake in (Crossley 2005, 61). Just like society, discourse is constantly evolving (P. Allen 2004, 81). A construction of reality by discourse is considered dominant when it is so widely disseminated that it becomes socially accepted as ubiquitous truth, or common sense (80). Emergent discourses suggest alternative ways of perceiving reality, usually progressive but not always. Residual discourses represent lingering past values and perceptions of reality that lend context to the present (Williams 1977, 122). Popular food discourse is a subset of food discourse that is rapidly shaping how the American public defines and understands the U.S. food system.

I define **popular food discourse (PFD)** as any communications within the new food-lifestyle genre described in Chapter One pertaining to food, cuisine, cooking, dining, and eating that is televised, printed, recorded, published online, or posted on social media. Matwick & Matwick (2019, 3) identify a shift in PFD in 1996 from food-related instruction to food-related entertainment when Food Network hired a new programming director who prioritized “aesthetically pleasing” settings and dishes.¹ At this pivotal moment, Food Network put into motion the transformation of PFD into the booming industry that it is today. PFD went from almost exclusively instructional (think: Julia Child) to portraits of food as entertaining, competitive, and a symbol of status (think: *Iron Chef America*). This was a significant reframe of PFD that essentially turned the spectacle of food and eating into a commoditized sport.

What is framing? **Framing** is strategic coverage by which creators of discourse can shape public perception of a concept, in this case the U.S. food system. The use of framing can manipulate social relations, perceptions, and behaviors according to the content society is or is

¹ Spoiler alert: this raises the question, aesthetically pleasing to whom?

not exposed to (Staggenborg 2015, 23-24). For instance, lack of PFD coverage on fieldhands' working conditions can result in consumers having an inaccurate perception of the conditions under which their food is produced. Conversely, if PFD made shoppers aware of these conditions, their perception of conventional groceries and their shopping habits might change accordingly. Whether audiences realize it or not PFD shapes public perceptions and behaviors according to which aspects of our food system are illuminated or obscured. Seeing as discourse is influential by nature, this Capstone explores the influence of PFD on the social problem of racism in the U.S. food system.

Social Problems and Social Justice in Food Systems and Society

Societies have social problems. A **social problem** is a social condition with undesirable consequence(s) felt by one or more people that was socially cause and is therefore socially curable (Alessio 2011, 3). Food systems, a vital part of any society, can be riddled with social problems. A drought in California killing an entire season's crop and resulting in a food shortage can be considered a social problem: the drought was likely caused by overuse and overpopulation of the land, hunger due to the food shortage is a social consequence and changing agricultural practices could be a social cure. Social problems are **social justice problems** when the consequences of a social problem are experienced inequitably. **Inequity** is characterized by systems of privilege and oppression—when one group is privileged, another is inevitably oppressed (Johnson 2013, 17). Ratios of privilege and oppression result in power differentials, thus causing people to experience social problems differently. Now reconsider that drought-caused food shortage: what if food prices rose due to the shortage so that only the wealthy could afford to eat, and a disproportionate number of poor people went hungry? Our social problem is

now a social justice problem. All social problems have social consequences, however social justice problems have inequitable social consequences reflective of socially constructed differences in privilege, oppression, and power.

What is social justice? Social justice is a social condition and a social process. According to social justice scholar Fraser (2008, 405), **social justice** is a condition in which all members of society exist in a “parity of participation.” This means that all citizens are free from institutionalized forms of oppression and enjoy equitable opportunity to participate in the social, economic, and political realms of society. In this equitable parity no person or group has a comparative advantage or disadvantage to another. Social justice is also the process of identifying and removing institutionalized inequity (Bell 2013, 35) so that social justice, a parity of participation, can be made possible.

Fraser (2000; 2003; 2008) fashioned a three-dimensional framework for identifying and achieving social justice. Her framework suggests that three social processes—redistribution, recognition, and representation—are necessary for social justice. I call these the **Three R’s**. The inverses of Fraser’s Three R’s are the **Three M’s**—maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation. The Three M’s are violations of social justice; each is representative of a privilege-oppression dynamic that obstructs justice. For the purposes of this Capstone these concepts are defined as follows:

- **Redistribution** (Fraser 2003, 380) is the economic dimension of social justice. It refers to reallocation of resources so that all members of society have equitable economic capacity. The opposite of redistribution is **maldistribution**, which is direct or indirect deprivation of resources by one party (an individual or social group) to economically oppress another. Redistribution alleviates maldistribution.

- **Recognition** (Fraser 2000, 113) is the sociocultural dimension of social justice. It relates to equitable social status among all members of society. Equitable social status means that everyone is valued fully as a peer and no party is misrecognized. **Misrecognition** is the social subordination, inferiorization, or exclusion of an individual or group. Recognition reforms patterns of misrecognition so that all members of society can partake in cultural traditions and social interactions as equals.
- **Representation** (Fraser 2008, 407) is the political dimension of justice. It pertains to all individuals or groups having equitable decision-making power. Representation redresses **misrepresentation**, a social injustice in which certain members of society are counted in principle but not in practice. When this happens, certain voices are muted or ignored while others are amplified. Proper representation ensures that all parties' views, opinions, and needs are considered.

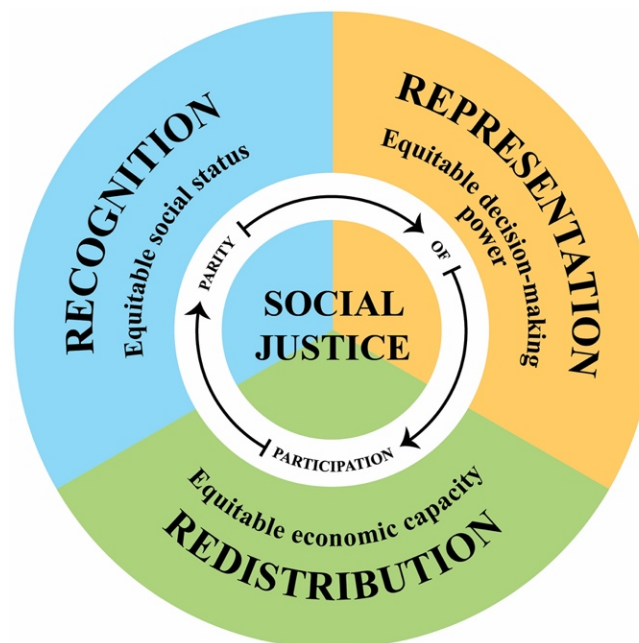


Figure 1. Illustration of social justice derived from Fraser's framework.

Figure 1 illustrates the Three R's, what they accomplish, and how they constitute social justice. In a socially just society, everyone has equitable economic capacity, social status, and decision-making power. Social justice is the intersection of the Three R's, a parity of participation for all in each realm of society (illustrated as the inner circle of Figure 1). Social justice is not possible if one or more of the Three M's is occurring. Racism in the U.S. food system is a social justice problem characterized by all Three M's and requiring all Three R's for remediation.

What is racism? **Race** is a social construction used to categorize people according to skin color (Guillem 2018, 362). Race is devoid of any scientific basis, its assignment is dependent solely on the eye of the beholder (Platt 2019, 94). **Racism**, patterned differential treatment of people according to their race, erects an unnatural hierarchy of racial groups intended to yield power, wealth, and status to one race over another (Platt 2019, 94; Johnson 2013, 16). Racial stratification in the United States is built on a cornerstone of **white supremacy**, a prejudicial ideology that white-skinned people are inherently superior to darker-skinned people and therefore can rightfully dominate them (Saad 2020, 12). White supremacy is the foundation of systemic white privilege, power, and domination over non-white people. Racism in the United States is a baseless, prejudiced belief system used to justify social behaviors and practices that uphold white supremacy and the detriment of people of color (POC).

White supremacy normalizes hegemonic whiteness. **Hegemonic whiteness**, sometimes referred to simply as whiteness, is the cultural dominance of white peoples' beliefs, customs, and perspectives. The concept of whiteness was not necessitated until Euro-Caucasians encountered people different from themselves and needed a way to differentiate and entitle themselves (R.L. Allen 2001, 479). Those Euro-Caucasians, referred to herein as **white people**, considered their

whiteness a default “normal” condition, thereby Othering² and implying inferiority of **non-white people** and their customs, a practice that continues to this day (Cabrera 2018; Delgado & Stefancic 2017, 86).³ Championing whiteness enables white people to assume that their “beliefs, values, behaviors, habits, and attitudes” (Conrad 2020, 2) are superior, even if they are not. This results in POC being classified as minorities⁴, a status rife with implications of inferiority compared to whiteness. Widespread racism and hegemonic whiteness are the basis of systemic inequity between white and non-white people and their social practices, regardless of an individuals’ personal perspective on race.

² **Othering** is the reduction of a people or group to a single characteristic for the purpose of separation and exclusion (Johnson 2013, 16).

³ I roughly define white and non-white people as follows:

White People: Of Euro-Caucasian ancestry. Originally limited to only those hailing from the Western European nations best known for imperializing the globe (i.e., Great Britain, Spain, France), over time the classification of being white has evolved according to sociopolitical contexts at various points in history (Castañeda & Zúñiga 2013, 58-59). Generally, being white now includes all Euro-Caucasians.

Non-White/People of Color (POC): Anyone who does not fit the above description at this time. This can include people of Asian(-American), Middle Eastern(-American), African(-American), Latin American, or Native American decent. This is not an exhaustive list. Ultimately, it is anyone who is alienated or Othered by hegemonic whiteness.

There is expansive gray area between “white” and “not white”, because race is not a science but a messy social construction. Some people “pass” as white, intentionally or not; some are speculated white or non-white by others despite how they personally identify; and sometimes ethnicities are judged as less white if their skin is white, but their customs are unfamiliar to Euro-Caucasians. These are not scientific classifications but a social tendency to classify people by appearance, subject to white positionality. None of this is legitimate or fair. Rather, I see this as a noteworthy illustration of the subjective and nonscientific nature of racism.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that these are oversimplified groupings. Every individual has a multitude of identities including their gender, nationality, class, occupation, religion, sexuality, and so on. According to intersectionality theory (Crenshaw 1989), individuals experience varying degrees of privilege or oppression depending on their collective identities. For example, a white man generally has more privilege than a white woman, while a Black woman has less relative power than the white woman.

⁴ Minority is technically a statistical term that is habitually incorrectly used in conventional rhetoric. An attestation that white people assume they are the majority, literally (statistically) and figuratively (culturally).

Racism is a social justice problem because it builds and fortifies inequitable systems of privilege and oppression. This Capstone focuses specifically on racism in the U.S. food system, a variant of this problem. Racism is rampant in the U.S. food system and causes all three of Fraser's social justice violations. POC experience limited economic capacity by maldistribution of resources, belittled sociocultural status by misrecognition, and diminished decision-making power by misrepresentation.

Racism became embedded in the U.S. food system and society in the country's infancy. During the age of imperialism in the 18th century, white Western Europeans from a handful of wealthy nations conquered indigenous territories and fashioned their empires into hierarchical systems in which they became the self-proclaimed superior race of the world (R.L. Allen 2001, 470). As previously discussed, this was the birth of white supremacy, an inverse correlation between privilege and melanin that grants unearned power and privilege to white-skinned people of European descent (476). Next, white supremacist ideology was used to justify the transatlantic chattel slave trade that the American colonies benefitted from. Touting this ideology, wealthy white colonists designed an economy dependent on the exploitation of enslaved Africans and their descendants to generate additional white wealth and power (Twitty 2017; Williams 2021). This system disproportionately allocated resources, status, and power to white people by oppressing POC. The colonial economy was a mostly agrarian one, reliant on rice and sugar production (Twitty 2017). Thus, racism was a fundamental principle of what would eventually become the U.S. food system.

The legacy of these racist beginnings persists in contemporary U.S. food systems and society. Some examples of racism in the present-day U.S. food system are:

- *Racism and farm labor.* The U.S food system depends on thousands of farmworkers who toil for poverty wages to provide us with an abundance of food. Mitchell (1996) chronicles how racism has been historically used to rationalize the exploitation of POC in California. He describes waves of supposedly “naturally” suited immigrant laborers labeled as such through extensive stereotyping until an even more vulnerable population comes along. American farmers are adept at identifying vulnerable populations and exploiting them for white benefit. Applying white supremacist ideology, white growers legitimize appalling pay, labor conditions, and dominance over their labor supply (Mitchell 1996, 107). Presently, race-based farm hand exploitation targets undocumented Latinx immigrants and migrant workers (Moriarty 2021; Lakhani 2021). The exploitation of their labor is a form of maldistribution and the stereotyping of them as cheap or unskilled workers is misrecognition and misrepresentation.
- *Racism and landownership.* Nearly 98% of African American⁵ farmers lost their farms in the last century (Newkirk 2019). African American growers began losing their farms during the Great Depression when USDA employees gave preferential treatment to white farmers for land grants, farm loans, and other funding thus leaving African American-owned farms susceptible to foreclosure (Horst 2019). Institutional racist practices continue at the USDA today making farms owned by POC prime targets for commercial land consolidation (Horst 2019). This is maldistribution and misrepresentation because the value and needs of farmers of color are discounted by the USDA.

⁵ By African American I specifically mean American descendants of the African diaspora. A **diaspora** is a population “born or migration and separation”—a forced migration in the case of African Americans’ ancestors—whose cultural identity is complicated by tension between their new and old cultures (Frost and Laing 2016, 37).

- *Racism and restaurant work.* Jayaraman, co-founder of the Restaurant Opportunities Center reports on racism in restaurant. An organizer of restaurant workers, Jayaraman notes that across the country the lowest paying restaurant jobs, those typically those performed “behind the kitchen door” (2013, 104-105), are held by POC. They are kept behind closed doors and out of view to maintain a sanctimonious ambiance of white civility in the dining room (117). This is subordination, a form of misrecognition. POC working in restaurants are also paid less, promoted less often, and more likely to live below the poverty line (106 & 118), which are maldistributions.
- *Racism in food media.* The exposure of racist practices at the offices of *Bon Appetit* magazine was breaking news in 2020. Frustrated *Bon Appetit* employees of color publicized that they were not being compensated at the same rate as their white counterparts (Nolan 2020). Additionally, POC at the magazine spoke out about the magazine executives’ preferential treatment of white recipe testers and writers, even for non-white “ethnic” foods (Pinnamaneni 2021). The magazine’s practices can be considered maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation.

These examples of racism in the contemporary U.S. food system demonstrate that racism is an ongoing social justice problem in the U.S. food system. Each of preceding examples exhibits at least one inequitable consequence that negatively impacts POC. The consequences can be remedied through collective social efforts of redistribution, recognition, and representation.

These three processes can remove the unjust ratio of privilege and oppression based on white supremacy in our food system and establish social justice for the POC participating in our food system. If our social actions can create injustice, then our actions can create justice too. Thus far

I have discussed racism in several arenas of the U.S. food system, but my primary interest is learning more about racism in PFD.

Capstone Research Problem and Overall Research Question

This Capstone's research problem is the presence of racism in PFD, the investigation of which can shed light on PFD's influence on how the American public understands and relates to our national food system. Two concepts are central to this research problem:

1. Society relies on discourse to define and understand its environment, including its food system. This happens through gradual internalization of implicit values and attitudes in the discourse they are exposed to. This is significant because what is featured or not featured in PFD content can impact public perception of our food system.
2. Racism is a historic and ongoing social justice problem in the U.S. food system and society. Institutionalized racism within our food system results in systemic maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation of POC contributing to unbalanced levels of power between races and constituting a socially unjust condition.

With these facts in mind, I wanted to know more about the presence of systemic food system racism in PFD and its consequences for social (in)justice. When PFD content spotlights whiteness, it omits the diversity of experiences lived by POC who also participate in the U.S. food system. I anticipated that this omission could cause maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation thereby perpetuating the social justice problem of racism in our food system. Alternatively, PFD can challenge this problem and invite social justice by producing content and instating practices that redistribute resources to, recognize, and represent all those who participate in the U.S. food system. This led to me to my **overall research question (ORQ)**, in

what ways is racism present and challenged in PFD? This research addresses racism in the U.S. food system by asking about its presence in PFD so that we can better understand the ways in which racism in our food system is perpetuated and challenged. In short, PFD can be a driver of racism in the food system, or it can be a part of the cure.

This chapter laid the foundation of my critical inquiry into racism in PFD. Food systems encompass all the people and agencies of a society involved in producing, distributing, and consuming food. This includes individuals, institutions, infrastructure, and interactions. Food discourse, communication about food, is a social interaction that shapes how we perceive and characterize food systems. PFD, a subsidiary of food discourse, is an expanding genre of lifestyle entertainment that influences the American public's characterization of the food system. Social justice is a parity of participation composed of equitable capacity for resources, recognition, and representation for all individuals and social groups in society. Racism in our food system violates this parity and is therefore a social justice problem. PFD can inform public awareness of social justice problems within our food system, or not, depending on what is or is not presented in its content. The focus of this Capstone is racism in PFD. Racism in PFD can replicate maldistribution of resources, misrecognition, and misrepresentation of POC initiated by racism present in the larger food system. Alternatively, PFD can reveal these injustices and adjust its content and practices toward social justice through redistribution, recognition, and representation for all those involved in the U.S. food system. My ORQ asks how racism is present and challenged in PFD. The next chapter covers the methods and methodology used to answer this question.

Three—Methodology and Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how I investigated the research problem and ORQ regarding racism in PFD. I begin by discussing philosophical and methodological approaches to research, including my own. Next, I articulate my **constitutive research questions (CRQs)**, which are questions that are posed and answered by the researcher to reach an informed conclusion to the ORQ. Finally, I describe my research design with specific research parameters for each CRQ. It is important to lay out these research elements because they shape the forthcoming research application, results, and analysis.

Capstone Research Paradigm

Research helps us to understand our physical and conceptual environments. It also allows us to identify and solve problems in an organized manner according to a research paradigm. A **research paradigm** is a discipline that prescribes how and why research should be performed (Lazar 1999, 10). Research paradigms differ by what they consider “real” or “true,” thereby guiding what is capable of being learned and how (Lincoln et al. 2018). Paradigms also differ by ontology and epistemology. **Ontology** is a preexisting package of assumptions of truth held by a researcher that informs their understanding of reality (Lincoln et al. 2008; Spencer et al. 2004). **Epistemology** is a researcher’s means of learning more about a condition or phenomenon within their ontology (Grix 2002, 177). With much at stake and so many possibilities, it’s easy to see how paradigms can be contentious among scientists (Denzin 2017, 10). There are many research paradigms such as positivism, critical, constructivism, and postmodernism to name a few.

Research paradigms range from traditional, or what is commonly considered “science”, to postmodern. Positivism and empiricism are at the traditional end of this spectrum. These

paradigms posit that research can lead to universal truths only by objectively testing theories to prove or disprove hypotheses (Spencer et al. 2014, 83). Researchers adhering to these paradigms are strict believers in the scientific method following the ordered steps of observation, hypothesis, test, conclusion. These paradigms favor quantitative data, data that can be observed without inductive reasoning (Spencer et al. 2014, 83), to achieve what are considered unadulterated objective truths (Lincoln et al. 2018, 135). Post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism lie at the other end of the paradigm spectrum. These paradigms propose that true objectivity is impossible because research will always be subject to decisions made by researchers (Lincoln et al. 2018; Spencer et al. 2014; Lazar 2004). Accordingly, these paradigms embrace interpretation of qualitative data in addition to quantitative data (Spencer et al. 2014, 91). This Capstone research falls within the critical paradigm.

Critical research embraces subjectivity and uses qualitative data in addition to quantitative data, but what really sets it apart is its intention. Critical researchers are responsible for critiquing data to suggest how conditions might be made more socially just (Lincoln et al. 2018, 110). Critical research is innately subjective because it requires agency and reflexivity on the researcher's part. Unlike research in other paradigms, critical research typically studies social patterns with the intention of improving social structures (Comstock 1994, 628). Comstock (628) describes the goal of critical research as "the emancipation of its subjects from ideologically frozen conceptions and the development of self-sustaining processes of enlightenment." In the eyes of critical researchers, social justice is a process of social enlightenment. This makes it particularly useful in social justice work with goals of removing systemic inequities.

Critical inquiry is a way of critical researcher of social conditions to make a society more socially just. Critical inquiry aims to transcend oppression by understanding the social

processes that cause, perpetuate, and cure the social justice problems that society creates. In the case of my own inquiry, my central ontological assumption is that racism is an endemic social construct that is institutionalized throughout the U.S. food system and society with social consequences, either positive or negative, depending on skin color. My epistemological orientation is that discourse constructs public perceptions and behaviors; therefore, studying PFD can provide insight on the construction or deconstruction of racism in the U.S. food system. I use qualitative data to expand my understanding of the presence of racism in PFD and to suggest what can be done about it. The following sections provide further details on my research approach, which stems from these ontological and epistemological principles.

Capstone Research Questions

Racism is a widespread social justice problem in the United States that impinges on our national food system as well. Food discourse, including PFD, is an element of the food system that bears the mark of historic racism against POC in this country. Rather than take on centuries worth of racism in the U.S. food system, I narrowed the research problem to the presence of racism in PFD. I posed an ORQ that asked how racism is present and challenged in PFD to better understand how racism operates in our food system and society and what can be done about it. I answered the ORQ by way of two CRQs, one for each facet of the ORQ:

ORQ: In what ways is racism present and challenged in PFD?

- **CRQ 1: In what ways is racism present in PFD?**
- **CRQ 2: In what ways is racism in PFD challenged?**

CRQ 1 considered ways that racism is present in PFD. The purpose of this question was to learn how to identify manifestations of food system racism in PFD and to better understand its

consequences relative to the social justice problem of racism in the U.S. food system. CRQ 2 considered ways that racism in PFD is or can be challenged. This question's purpose was to identify responses to racism in PFD, either under way or potential, to can make PFD and the U.S. food system more inclusive and equitable for POC. A handful of conceptual frameworks were key to developing and conducting this inquiry.

Conceptual Frameworks

My exploration of racism in PFD relied on several conceptual frameworks. Jabareen (2009, 57) defines a conceptual framework as “network, or ‘plane,’ of linked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. Each concept of a conceptual framework plays an ontological or epistemological role in the framework.” In short, a **conceptual framework** is a theoretical model used to conduct research. They can inform the basis of an inquiry if they are incorporated into a researcher's ontology or they can be integrated into a researcher's epistemology, how the inquiry is conducted. The conceptual frameworks of food systems, discourse, and social justice were introduced in the Background and Significance chapter. I incorporated these and some additional conceptual frameworks into my research design to learn more about the research problem. The following is a brief overview of conceptual frameworks essential to the formulation and design of my critical inquiry.

Nancy Fraser's Social Justice Framework.

Being as this was a critical inquiry, and the intention of critical inquiry is to advance social justice, Fraser's definition and framework for social justice are referenced throughout this work. According to Fraser (2008, 405), the essence of social justice is a “parity of participation” between all members of society (or in this case members of a food system, which is part of

society) consisting of equitable economic, social, and political participation opportunities for all. When social justice is not present, one or more of the Three M's (maldistribution, misrecognition, or misrepresentation) is occurring. These violations are redressed by the Three R's which are redistribution, recognition and representation (Fraser 2003, 380; Fraser 2000, 113; Fraser 2008, 407). See Chapter 2 for additional explanation of these concepts. The Three M's and R's were used as analytical criteria to assess conditions of social justice or injustice relative to racism in PFD.

Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory is a heavy influence on my ontology, and therefore the formulation of my research problem and questions. **Critical Race Theory (CRT)** is a conceptual framework that emerged in the 1970s to address subtler forms of racism still ingrained in U.S. society even after the Civil Rights Movement (Delgado & Stefancic 2017, 4). Although segregation and other blatantly racist policies were outlawed following the Civil Rights Movement, POC still confront racism regularly. CRT emerged at a point in U.S. history when white supremacist racism morphed from *de jure* to *de facto* (Mills 2003, 179), from unhinged and unchallenged to covert and institutionalized. CRT is the theory and study of how racism in the U.S. was reinvented by U.S. society and how it manifests in present-day systems of privilege and oppression (Delgado & Stefancic 2017, 5). CRT is often consulted in education and legal studies to reveal the consequences racism that is often overlooked or disguised by white people.

The topic of racism in PFD is an example of modern camouflaged racism, which is one reason why CRT was a pertinent framework to my research. CRT is pertinent to my research philosophy as well. I live in New Orleans, a city with a complex history of racism. The nuances

of this complexity became more apparent to me when I worked in restaurants and witnessed the differences in resources, recognition, and representation afforded to workers according to race. This is when I started viewing my food system as a series of inequitable conditions of privilege and oppression unfairly determined by race.

Raymond Williams' Cultural Process Framework.

Society and culture are constantly changing. Discourse is a cultural process that evolves with society. Williams (1977, 121-127) offers three stages for the evolution of cultural processes: dominant, residual, and emergent. A cultural process is considered **dominant** when it is so widely practiced that it becomes socially accepted as ubiquitous truth or normal. The other two phases exist in relation to what is dominant. **Residual** culture pertains to what was previously dominant. Residual culture lingers and is still "an effective element of the present" (122) because its influence gives context to present practices. **Emergent** culture pertains to what could potentially become dominant. Emergent culture consists of "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships, and kinds of relations [that] are continually being created" (123) as society evolves. For emergent culture to be adopted as dominant, it needs to be publicly recognized, acknowledged, and accepted (125).

To put this in terms relevant to my research, whiteness is the dominant culture of U.S. society. Dominant PFD replicates this by broadcasting a white-centric perspective of the U.S. food system which renders public acceptance of hegemonic whiteness in the food system as well. Hegemonic whiteness has residual roots in the white supremacist culture of our past, which is held away at arm's length but is still necessary to make sense of what is now dominant. Residual culture and discourse embody the more overt racism of our not-so-distant past to inform present

day racism. Today's emergent culture challenges hegemonic whiteness and favors diversity, inclusivity, and social justice instead. This emergent culture is demonstrated by the present Black Lives Matter social movement which sparked similar demands by other POC living in the U.S. Emergent PFD can convey the values of this emergent culture to challenge the racism of dominant PFD and culture.

Critical Race Discourse Analysis.

Finally, since my inquiry was about racism in PFD, I needed a conceptual framework for analyzing discourse for the presence of racism. Critical race discourse analysis played a crucial role in my epistemology. **Critical race discourse analysis (CRDA)** is a genre of discourse analysis that specifically critiques discourse for the presence and consequence of racism (Delgado & Stefancic 2017, 140). CRDA is a subset of **critical discourse analysis (CDA)**, a method used by critical scholars to assess discourse for evidence of inequitable systems of privilege and oppression and then offer insight into correction (van Dijk 2001, 352). According to van Dijk (2009, 63-64), CDA has three noteworthy properties:

1. CDA is performed to analyze the effects of and solutions for social problems relative to or compounded by discourse.
2. CDA exposes discursive practices that are oppressive and provides guidelines for intervention.
3. CDA values the experiential knowledge of victims of discursive oppression regarding its consequences and cures as they are the ones living it.

CRDA combines this framework with critical race theory by critically examining discourse specifically for scenarios of inequity between races and suggesting how discourse can be altered

to be more racially equitable. CRDA scours discourse for racist “ideas, thoughts, feelings, unconscious discrimination, stereotype threat, and implicit associations and their implications” (Delgado & Stefancic 2017, 140). This framework for interrogating and analyzing verbal and nonverbal forms of racist communication which made CRDA a logical framework to base my research approach in.

CRDA was also significant to my ontology. It was extremely important to me to be cognizant of my own positionality and respectful of others’ relative to race and racism. To be blunt, I did not want to come off as a white savior swooping in to speak on behalf of others, which I view as an unfair misrepresentation. Instead, I wanted to use this Capstone as an opportunity to present a collaborative analysis of racism in PFD with opinions representative of the diversity of American experiences. Keeping with van Dijk’s third property of CDA, I felt it imperative to emphasize the perspectives of POC, the unfortunate experts on the consequences of racism in PFD and beyond.

My decision to rely on CRDA critiques of PFD (“the critiques” for short) was one of methodological self-consciousness to mitigate potential projections of my own positionality on the subject. **Methodological self-consciousness** is a research method that scrutinizes how one’s own “positions, privileges, and priorities” (Charmaz 2017, 35) can potentially influence research outcomes. In effort to avoid this, all suggestions of instances, consequences, or cures for racism in PFD discussed in this paper originated from the literature, which was a wealth of observations and opinions on racism in PFD from an array of perspectives.

Capstone Research Design

Thus far, I have explained what I wanted to research and why. I wanted to research racism in PFD to learn how PFD's handling of racism influences how the American public defines and relates to the national food system. In the previous section I posed the ORQ and two CRQs designed to guide my critical inquiry on racism in PFD. Those research questions were:

- **ORQ: In what ways is racism present and challenged in PFD?**
- **CRQ 1: In what ways is racism present in PFD?**
- **CRQ 2: In what ways is racism in PFD challenged?**

In this section I transition into how I conducted my research to answer these questions. This section articulates how I designed my research beginning with my approach to CRQ 1 followed by CRQ 2.

CRQ 1: Racism in PFD

I will start by explaining my research design for CRQ 1. The **unit of analysis** for CRQ 1 was instances of racism in dominant PFD content. This was an appropriate unit of analysis because it captured the discourse of racism in PFD, the essence of what I sought to know by asking this question. I used Fraser's Three M's as **analytical criteria** to help me identify social inequity caused by racial discrimination in dominant PFD. My **unit of observation** was assertions of racism in dominant PFD by authors of CRDA critiques of dominant PFD, a genre of dialogical critique of PFD in which authors apply CRT to assert that the discourse in question portrays white supremacy as natural or normal which in turn oppresses POC (Solórzano & Yosso 2002, 28). CRDA analyzes discourse for the presence and consequence of racism in discourse, which is why CRDA critiques of PFD struck me as the perfect place to look for data.

My data collection method was exploratory. I began with online searches (Google, OHSU library, and SCOPUS) for material containing any combination of the keyword(s) food media, food discourse, CRT, CRDA, food system, discourse, discourse analysis, race, and/or racism. I picked up keywords for subsequent searches from the recurring language used in the critiques themselves which included white supremacy, erasure, culinary nationalism, culinary racism, and so on. Reference lists were also useful for finding additional data. Searches for the term “popular food discourse” were not fruitful, either because (a) PFD is a relatively new and unresearched genre of discourse or (b) my definition is unique and differed from that of other authors’. To make up for this I included results that critiqued discourse that I had personal knowledge of fitting my definition of PFD. My **scope** covered twenty years, 2001 to present. Even with this relatively short scope, there was too much literature for me to review within the allotted time frame, so I stopped collecting sources after obtaining 35 critiques. I narrowed down those 35 sources by assessing the content of each according to the following criteria to ensure that they fell within my unit of observation:

1. Does the source relate that race is a social construction?
2. Does the source relate that racism is institutionalized in U.S food system and society?
3. Does the source relate that whiteness is “normal” or culturally dominant in the U.S. food system and society?
4. Does the source apply these principles to critique a specific piece or aspect of PFD?

Criteria numbers one through three are adaptations of the tenets of CRDA (Cabrera 2018, 211-212; van Dijk 2009, 63-64) and the fourth was my own to determine whether the source’s use of CRDA was being applied to PFD. I eliminated 10 sources using this culling method, mostly because they failed criterion number four. This left me with a sample of 25 critiques of dominant

PFD for CRQ 1. This sample was a multimedia collection of analyses of PFD consisting of nonfiction books, cookbooks, academic articles, magazine and newspaper articles, blog entries, podcasts, social media posts, and television shows. Each discusses racism in an aspect of PFD and its consequences.

Once I had a sample of critiques to work with, I conducted a qualitative content analysis. **Qualitative content analysis** is when a researcher begins with an idea of what they are looking for and then allows categorical results to emerge from the data (Boreus & Bergstrom 2017, 24). The advantage of this method is that it allows patterns to emerge from a sample to be used for generalized conclusions about social patterns (25-26). Using this method allowed me to use patterns in the authors' assertions of racism in dominant PFD to construct generalized conclusions about the racism in dominant PFD. I recount the implementation of this design in the next chapter but first I review my research design for CRQ 2.

CRQ 2: Challenging Racism in PFD

My research design for CRQ 2 was like that of CRQ 1 with adjustments to account for the key difference between the two questions. CRQ 2 asked about how racism in PFD is or can be challenged. To find this out, the **unit of analysis** for CRQ 2 was strategies for challenging racism in PFD. This was an appropriate unit of analysis because it surveyed anti-racism, underway or possible, in emergent PFD. I used Fraser's Three R's as **analytical criteria** to identify positive social changes toward social justice for POC facilitated by emergent PFD. My **unit of observation** was actions or suggestions by producers of emergent PFD and CRDA critics to challenge racism in dominant PFD. I used the same method for collecting data sources and the same scope. I also used the same criteria to admit a source into my sample with an added criterion that the source suggested at least one way of challenging racism in PFD. I collected 20

sources and admitted 15 into my sample after applying these criteria, mostly disqualifying those that cited racism in PFD but neglected to offer a way of combatting it. This sample was composed of multimedia analyses of PFD, each critical of the presence of racism in PFD but hopeful for social justice. Equipped with this sample, I embarked on a second qualitative content analysis, this time with the intention of identifying evidence of the Three R's to generalize progressive action for racial equity in emergent PFD. In the next chapter I disclose what the literature taught me about challenges to racism in PFD, either underway or desired.

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Discussion of research philosophy can be tedious, but it serves a purpose. This chapter on methods and methodology introduced you, the reader, to me, the researcher. Another researcher might research racism in PFD, in a completely different manner and reach dramatically different results. As discussed, research is subjective; therefore, familiarity with my philosophy, motivations, and positionality gives context to my inquiry, design, and analysis. My work rests on the ontological assumption that racism is institutionalized in the U.S. food system and society, public perceptions of which are constructed by discourse, resulting in systems of privilege and oppression according to race. I designed a critical inquiry on racism in PFD in which I conducted a qualitative content analysis of CRDA responses to PFD to learn about the racism that occurs in PFD, its consequences, and how it can be challenged in pursuit of social justice. The purpose of this inquiry was to expand my own, and hopefully others', awareness of racism in the food system and how it can be disrupted. The next chapter describes the application of the research design (including some plot twists!) and relays my findings and analysis.

Four—Research Application and Contribution

The previous chapters set the stage for my critical inquiry into racism in PFD. The Background and Significance chapter introduced the domain of food systems and society, described the social justice problem of racism in the U.S. food system, and posed the research problem concerning racism in PFD. The Methods and Methodology chapter detailed what I wanted to learn about racism in PFD (how it presents and how it is challenged) and the way I planned to find out. In this chapter I share what I learned about PFD and relate the contribution of my findings on PFD to the state of social justice for race-based oppression in our food system.

Research Findings

To review, this was a critical inquiry into racism in PFD that asked about the ways that racism is present and challenged in PFD. This inquiry addressed the broader social justice problem of racism in the U.S. food system by investigating how PFD can be a driver or a solution to the social problem depending on its framing. Here, my results and analysis are presented one CRQ at a time, starting with how racism presents in PFD (CRQ 1) followed by how racism in PFD is or can be challenged (CRQ 2). My qualitative content analysis of CRDA critiques of PFD opened my own eyes to the extent of racism against POC in the content of dominant PFD and the industry that produces it. Luckily, there is also emergent PFD that challenges the hegemonic whiteness of dominant PFD content and practices. My hope for this research is that it widens awareness of racism in the U.S. food system, and its replication in PFD, by providing a framework for recognizing instances of the problem, its consequences, and its cures.

CRQ 1: Racism in PFD

CRQ 1 pertained to the first half the ORQ, ways that racism is present in PFD. I posed this question to learn what racism in PFD looks like and to gain a better understanding of its consequences. To answer CRQ 1, I identified CRDA critics' assertions of racism in dominant PFD and then analyzed them for qualitative evidence of Fraser's Three M's. This process first justified the presence of racism in PFD and then analyzed its consequences for social justice. While conducting my qualitative content analysis of the sample in this way, I noticed patterns in the assertions of racism in dominant PFD. It struck me that the assertions were all rooted in white supremacist ideology which was utilized in certain ways to strategically frame the discourse to favor whiteness and slight POC. The patterns in how white supremacist ideology was applied were identifiable by common language used by the CRDA authors. I categorized the similar assertions into three "frame themes."

Since the frame themes came as a surprise, I adjusted my research application to code the data by two sets of analytical criteria, "frame" and "Fraser". The frame themes were useful analytical criteria for typifying and categorizing the racist frames used of dominant PFD. I recorded three frame themes: culinary colonialism (CC), eating the Other (ETO), and white culinary nationalism (WCN). The eating the Other frame was explicitly named and articulated as such in the critiques. Culinary colonialism and white culinary nationalism are terms I crafted to characterize the other two racist frames that were repeatedly described in the critiques of dominant PFD. While the frame themes became a handy framework for typifying recurrent racist framing in dominant PFD, the originally intended Fraser analytical criteria were useful for parsing out the social consequences of those frames. The frame themes analyzed the strategic employment of white supremacist language, imagery, associations and implicit messaging in

dominant PFD and the Fraser themes analyzed the consequential social inequity between dominant and subaltern racial groups caused by the use of those frames in dominant PFD. Paired together, the two sets of analytical criteria, or themes, were effective for learning more about presence and consequence of white supremacist racism in dominant PFD.

Table 1 illustrates the sample for CRQ 1 and the themes that that I coded for each source. As you can see, themes were not mutually exclusive and, in many cases, more than one theme from of each set was applicable, which I see as evidence of the complexity and interconnectedness of social injustice.

Table 1. CRQ 1 Results

	CRDA Source		Frame Theme ⁶	Fraser Theme
	Author	Date Title (Abbreviated)		
Bhabha	2020	How Food Media Fails BIPOC	ETO; WCN	Misrecognition; misrepresentation; maldistribution
Bock	2017	Ku Klux Kasserole and Strange Fruit Pie	WCN	Misrecognition
Bock	2021	Fast food At the White House	WCN	Misrecognition
Cruz	2013	Gettin' Down Home with the Neelys	ETO	Misrecognition
Dejmanee	2019	The Food Network's Heartland Kitchens	WCN	Misrecognition
Dutta	2020	Reclaiming Indian food From the White Gaze	ETO	Maldistribution; misrecognition
Edge & Wey	2016	Who Owns Southern Food?	CC; WCN	Misrepresentation; misrecognition; maldistribution
Fong	2017	My Son Was Mocked for His 'Stinky' Ethnic Lunch	WCN	Misrecognition
Galarza	2021	Stop Calling Food 'Exotic'	ETO	Misrecognition; maldistribution
Ho	2016	The Restaurant Industry Is Very Diverse—But...	ETO; WCN	Misrecognition; misrepresentation; maldistribution
Johnston et al.	2014	Making Change in the Kitchen	WCN	Misrecognition; misrepresentation; maldistribution

⁶ ETO: Eating the Other

WCN: White culinary nationalism

CC: Culinary colonialism

Kelly	2017	From the Plantation to the Prairie	WCN	Misrecognition; misrepresentation
Vaughn et al.	2018	E77: Erasing Black BBQ (Podcast)	CC; WCN	Maldistribution; misrepresentation; misrecognition
Pinnamaneni	2021	#172 The Test Kitchen: Chapter 1 (Podcast)	WCN	Maldistribution; misrepresentation; misrecognition
Poniewozik	2013	Less than Accidental Racist	WCN	Misrecognition
Rao	2020	Food Brands Tweet #Blacklivesmatter	ETO	Maldistribution
Roth	2021	Do The [White] Thing	WCN	Misrepresentation; misrecognition
Tsui et al.	2017	Why We Can't Talk About Race in Food	CC; ETO; WCN	Misrepresentation; misrecognition
Twitty	2013	An Open Letter to Paula Deen	WCN	Misrecognition; maldistribution; misrepresentation
Wey	2017	Look to the Food World to Understand America's White Supremacy Problem	WCN	Misrecognition; misrepresentation
Wey	2018	The Power of Those Who Get to Tell the Stories	CC	Misrecognition
Wey	2020	White Food Media and the Commodification of Resistance	ETO	Maldistribution
Wilkes	2020	Eating Paradise	ETO; CC	Misrecognition
Wilson	2020	There Are More Black Lives Matter Posts in Food Media... (Tweet)	ETO	Maldistribution; misrepresentation
Workneh	2020	Exotic Africana	CC	Misrecognition

The remainder of this section elaborates my findings, which are organized by frame theme. Each frame is paired with an analysis of its social consequences using Fraser's violations of social justice, the Three M's. I provide select examples from sources that I considered particularly striking.

Culinary Colonialism.

The first of the three frames that I encountered in the critiques of dominant PFD was culinary colonialism, a phrase I crafted to name the CRDA critics' repeated allegations of residual colonialist discourse and implications in contemporary dominant PFD. **Culinary**

colonialism is a discursive tendency to portray non-white people and their food cultures and systems from a perspective rooted in Eurocentric colonialist ideology. As I see it, contemporary culinary colonialist framing evokes the age of European global domination when colonialist discourses were used to legitimize white Europeans' conquest of non-white peoples their lands. According to Cook & Harrison (2003, 297) colonialist discourses were language used by European imperialists to rationalize their actions as "cultural fixing of colonialized people" intended to assist them in conforming to whiteness. Instances of culinary colonialism in dominant PFD frame whiteness as normal and capitalize on a white fascination with "the spectacle of the 'primitive'" (Workneh 2019, 131) with a dash of "The White Man's Burden" (Kipling 1899) mentality. This frame portrays POC and their food cultures as less civilized and strange compared to white people and culture and it plays into white voyeuristic intrigue at how the other half lives, a misrecognition that POC often find insulting and harmful.

It shocked me to learn that some of America's favorite television shows highlighting international cuisines are prime examples of culinary colonialist framing. I have admittedly indulged on televised culinary tourism, savoring the chance to live vicariously through globetrotting taste-tasting hosts, without realizing they were embedded with racism until conducting this research. Wey (2018) and Workneh (2020) made me aware of this by their critiques of *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* and *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*, two shows that feature white Americans who travel to foreign places that are not typically inhabited by white people to taste their foods. It is worth noting that foreign does not always mean international; both shows have episodes that venture to domestic locales that are typically framed as crime ridden, impoverished, and inhabited by POC such as inner Detroit, the Mississippi delta, parts of Los Angeles, and New Orleans. In this sense, these domestic places are foreign for being

unfrequented by white people. CRDA authors Wey and Workneh point out in their respective critiques that the shows' titles frame their foreign subjects as odd and outlandish off the bat, relative descriptors that can only be made from a presumed position of superiority. "Unknown" and "bizarre" are subjective adjectives dependent on an individual's positionality. The use of these words in dominant PFD implies that non-white food systems and societies are mysterious and questionable...to its targeted demographic. Beyond the titles, Wey and Workneh discuss the shows' depictions of white men assuming the role of culinary colonialists to explore essentialized food cultures. This essentialization contrasts what is "normal" with what is "different" from a white perspective. Upon reflection, the framing of these scenes tends to emphasize uncleanliness, malnutrition, lack of utensils, consumption of organ meat or insects, and other caricatures of culinary savagery that's align with white supremacist beliefs originating from residual European colonialist discourse. Bourdain and Zimmern are merely two examples of culinary colonialists in dominant PFD objectifying and misrecognizing non-white people their cultures.

The inequitable consequence of the culinary colonialist frame is misrecognition, which is the social subordination, exclusion, or inferiorizing of an individual or social group. The use of culinary colonialist framing in dominant PFD violently pushes whiteness as a preferable and dominant condition dominant while misrecognizing POC and their food systems as less advanced or defective. Culinary colonialist framing misrecognizes non-whiteness as foreign. Even in situations where the white people are the foreigners, culinary colonialism insists that whiteness is the norm, and that other people and customs are inferior aberrations. My data coding shows a relation between culinary colonialism and another frame, white culinary nationalism, which I discuss next.

White Culinary Nationalism.

The second racist frame in dominant PFD that I noted is what I called White Culinary Nationalism. As shown in Table 1, most of the sources that I coded as culinary colonialism are also coded as white culinary nationalism, which is logical since they originate from the same era of white supremacist ideology. By applying Williams' theory of cultural processes, white culinary nationalist framing demonstrates that residual European colonialist discourse has relevancy in contemporary American discourse. **White culinary nationalism** in dominant PFD involves implicit invocations of white supremacy, white power, and nostalgia for more overtly racist times in U.S. history when POC were not offered full citizenship and were counted as three fifths of a person in the Constitution. This frame results in misrecognition as well as misrepresentation, which is the silencing of certain parties' voices and denial of their full legal representation.

What is white culinary nationalism? I crafted the term white culinary nationalism to blend the concepts of culinary nationalism and white nationalism. **Culinary nationalism** is sentimental national group identity through shared cuisine and food traditions that builds individual feelings of belonging (Ichijo and Ranta 2016, 2-7). Culinary nationalist discourses generate socially constructed parameters of "who we are and who we are not" (6) according to which foods a nation group feels culturally connected to. Though culinary nationalism can strengthen group identities, it can also lead to the exclusion of other social groups, such as nondominant racial groups. The overrepresentation of white Americans' perception of our national food culture and food system in PFD causes misrecognition and misrepresentation of POC in the U.S. food system and society.

The other reason I called this frame white culinary nationalism is because it relates PFD to contemporary white nationalism. In today's political rhetoric, "nationalism" is a loaded term. Dropping the critical adjective "white" from "white nationalism", politicians use the word "nationalism" to covertly provoke white supremacist ideology (Criss 2018). As a result, the concept of nationalism is now associated with the far-right, white supremacy, racial superiority, xenophobia, neo-Confederacy, and neo-Nazism by many Americans (Clark 2020; SPLC n.d.). As Segal, the director of the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism puts it, nationalism is "a new name for this old hatred" (Criss 2018). In my review of CRDA on PFD, I found that culinary nationalism and modern American [white] nationalism bleed into dominant PFD via exaggerated narratives of Americana that exclude the past and present contributions of POC to American food culture and their significant participation in our food system.

Certain dominant PFD is designed to appeal to white nationalist audiences. Specifically, the Food Network fabricates celebrity chef personas and framing that reflect existing power inequities in our society and the ideological beliefs that cause them (Kelly 2017, 3-4), including white privilege and white nationalism. Paula Deen, "a deep-accented, deep-Southern woman of a certain age [and race]," (Poniewozik 2013) famously hosted numerous shows on the Food Network from 2002 to 2013 (Bock 2017, 147). Deen's onscreen personality and recipes alluded heavily to family heritage and traditions, her own boot-strap success story, flippant disregard of doctors' orders, and nostalgia for the Old South (Bock 2017, 147-149). Over the years Deen became for her butter-drenched homecookin' and her celebrity persona became symbolic of a "specific vision of white down-home southernness" (148). Significantly, the Southern genteel host's discourse lacked acknowledgement of the South's history that forced Africans and African Americans to participate in the American Southern food culture and system for centuries (152).

It does not strike me as coincidence that this sympathizes with Neo-Confederate glorification of the Confederate States of America and trivializing of the oppression that the Southern society was built upon (Moffa 2022, 3). In this manner, PFD by Deen and Food Network appealed to white nationalists without explicitly calling it white nationalism. That is, until she got caught.

Deen had a lengthy tenure as a Food Network star until her public demise in 2013 when she admitted under oath to using racial slurs and planning a plantation themed wedding (Bock 2021, 142). Suddenly her loosely shrouded racism was publicly affirmed, forcing the Network to cut ties with Deen. African Americans were hardly surprised by Deen's slip of the tongue. Instead, Black twitter users were quick with tongue-in-cheek responses. They tweeted a storm of #PaulasBestDishes, fictitious dish suggestions for the star that derided her not-so-secret white culinary nationalism. Their satirical critiques included suggestions like "Coon on the Cob," "White Sheet Cake," and "Hot Flaming Cross Buns" (Bock 2017, 146).

Twitty, a culinary historian who studies historic African American contributions to the U.S. food system, wrote a more serious critique of Deen. In *An Open Letter to Paula Deen* (2013) he writes,

I wasn't flabbergasted, I was rather, relieved...In fact we Black Southerners have an underground saying, "better the Southern white man than the Northern one, because at least you know where he stands..." but Paula I knew what you meant, and I knew where you were coming from [...] Obviously I am not encouraging you to use the word [nigger] further, but I am not going to hide behind ideals when the realities of our struggles with identity as a nation are clear. No sound bite can begin to peel back the layers of this issue [...]

I want you to understand that I am probably more angry about the cloud of smoke this fiasco has created for other issues surrounding race and Southern food [...] *Systemic racism in the world of Southern food and public discourse not your past epithets are what really piss me off. There is so much press and so much activity around Southern food and yet the diversity of people of color engaged in this art form and telling and teaching its history and*

giving it a future are often passed up or disregarded [...] Culinary injustice is the annihilation of our food voices—past, present and foreseeable future—and nobody will talk about that like they are talking about you and the “n word.” For shame. (Emphasis added)

The culinary injustice that Twitty describes denies African Americans rightful recognition and representation for their past and present involvement in our food system. Instead, white culinary nationalism appropriates this social and political capital for white Americans. Timothy (2016, 3) would call this an example of “societal amnesia,” a questionably convenient distortion of history used to boost white culinary nationalism. Fraser would call it social injustice by misrecognition and misrepresentation.

Twitty also touches on the multi-layered issue of Americans’ contradictory performative abhorrence and private toleration of racism. Our society’s collective “struggle” not to excuse systemic racism explains the nature of Food Network’s split with Deen. Rather an advocacy for social justice, the Network’s decision not to renew Deen’s contract but a decision made to save face and disassociate from the scandal of unshrouded racism (Len-Rios et al. 2015, 162). In accordance with CRT, the Food Network and American consumers complied with Deen’s brand of racism so long as it was encrypted; it was only once her racism was plainly admitted that she was cancelled.

Although the Food Network abandoned Deen in 2013 for her exposed *de jure* racism, they still had her demographic of viewers to please. Cue Ree Drummond, otherwise known as “The Pioneer Woman.” Drummond is a popular blogger who writes about country life in Oklahoma and a relative newcomer to the Food Network. Despite belonging to a newer generation of Food Network stars, Drummond’s discourse strikes a similar chord as Deen’s. Drummond’s show, *The Pioneer Woman*, provides glimpses of life on the Drummond ranch with her All-American, churchgoing, football-playing, meat-and-potatoes-eating family living on the

Great Frontier. The show frames Drummond as a doting wife who prepares homecooked meals for her husband and four kids, who periodically join her for respite from ranch chores. She also feeds hungry ranch hands and church friends. Through Drummond, the Network trades in Southern romanticism for cowboy mystique, a mythical yet “essential component of American nationalist discourse” (Kelly 2017, 69).

Like Deen’s, Drummond’s discourse appeals to right-wing conservative values that align with today’s coded rhetoric of white supremacy. Kelly (2017, 66) and Dejmanee (2019, 76 & 81) write that Drummond’s show and blog are laden with typically white neoconservative values including traditional gender roles, conventional family structures, familial nostalgia and lineage, self-reliance, God-honest work ethic, private land ownership, personal liberty, and free market enterprise. No mentions are made of the Native Americans who were violently displaced and exterminated during American frontier expansionism (Kelly 2017, 67)—land that now sustains the white Drummond family and their cattle. Rather, the show glorifies pastoral tranquility and the resiliency of white cowboys living on America’s Great Plains (66). In doing so Drummond’s narrative disregards sacrifices and contributions made by POC, this time Native Americans, a continuation of Network endorsed “colorblind revisionism” (67). The sanitizing of racial oppression in American history in dominant PFD misrecognizes and misrepresents by erasing their sacrifices and roles played. Their contributions to the U.S. food system, albeit forced at first, are diminished leading the public to mistreat POC as less significant. This use of white culinary nationalist framing revises or omits the role of POC in the U.S. food system and society, replacing it with distorted white nostalgia that inflates white culinary nationalism and reinforces white supremacist ideology.

An alternate method of boosting white culinary nationalism is direct exclusion of POC from American culinary nationalism. Fong (2017) calls attention to a piece in the *Houston Press* called *The Five Smelliest Foods You Should Never Bring to the Office* published in 2010 (author unknown because it has since been taken offline). The listicle named Mexican food as the most offensive smelling lunch one could subject their coworkers to remarking, “if you need a Mexican fix that badly, stick to table service” (Fong 2017 quoting unknown author).⁷ The combination of this overtly racist scorn and the disappearance of the original piece piqued my interest, so I Googled “stinky office foods”. Low and behold, the action of bringing non- culturally white foods to work is frequently discussed online. With the click of a button, I located blog posts opining that bringing Korean, Thai, Chinese, and Persian dishes for lunch are office faux pas (Yug n.d.; Lorillard 2014).

This discourse may seem like a matter of etiquette or even humorous to some people, but Fong makes it clear that “lunchbox shaming” has damaging psychological effects on her Asian American son and herself. Other POC have felt this too. The video segment *Voices: The Lunchbox Moment* (NBC Asian America and Wallace Coulter Foundation 2016), asks Asian Americans to recall their experiences with lunchbox shaming as children. The interviewees become emotional as they recall distressing moments of not feeling American enough for acceptance by their white peers and remorse as adults for blaming their parents and not embracing their non-white cultures at the time. Lunchbox shaming is an example of culinary nationalist discourse causing divisive boundaries of “who we are and who we are not” (Ichijo and Ranta 2016, 6) within a national group. This aggressive style of white culinary nationalist framing conveys American culinary nationalism as a sentiment only permissible for white people

⁷ Coincidentally, this is also eating the Other rhetoric, the last of the three CRDA themes.

and undermines the possibility of American culinary nationalism that includes Americans of all races. I consider this misrecognition because it is exclusionary and misrepresentation because it amplifies white voices and perspectives as positions them as more American than the voices and perspectives of non-white people.

Eating the Other.

The last of the three frame themes that I encountered in the critiques of dominant PFD is something called eating the Other. “**Eating the Other**” is a phrase coined by author bell hooks (1992) borrowed by CRDA authors to critique the commodification of Otherness (non-whiteness) in dominant PFD. hooks (1992, 22) describes eating the Other as the surfacing of “all those ‘nasty’ unconscious fantasies and longings about contact with the Other embedded in the secret (not so secret) deep structure of white supremacy.” A prime example of this perversion is the performative “branded Blackness” (Cruz 2013, 327) of Pat and Gina Neely on the Food Network show, *Down Home with the Neelys*. According to Cruz, the Neelys, an African American husband and wife duo, are pressed to “turn up the heat on their authentic otherness and slather on a thick relish of exoticization” reminiscent of blackface minstrelsy, an animation of white “covetousness and repulsion” to Otherness (327). Casted to “bolster the Network’s truth claims, as reality television,” (325) POC in food media are expected to play up their otherness to an exaggerated extent to affirm the racial biases of viewers; as for the Neelys, they are compelled to affirm the obscene stereotypes of black hypersexuality and exuberant pleasure in domestic servitude through on-camera sexual innuendo, flirtatiousness, beaming laughter, and mammy vernacular (329-330, 336, 339). Eating the Other fulfills surreptitious white yearning for

encounters with the Other, but in a way that preserves, or better yet reinforces, the racial status quo (hooks 1992, 22).

When used in dominant PFD the Eating the Other frame transforms the cuisines, culinary practices, and food system participation of POC into a commodity for white people to enjoy. Flowers and Swam (2015, 25-26) use hooks' concept of eating the Other to explain the tendency of dominant white culture to commodify "ethnic", or not culturally white foods, into products either wiped clean of racial origins or replaced with an exaggerated or inaccurate perception of them, thereby catering to white consumers. This allows white people to get their fill of Otherness while maintaining a system of privilege and oppression. For example, Chinese food in the U.S. is infamously Americanized and a far cry from what Chinese American families eat at home (Ting 2021). Shah (2017) calls this the "Goldilocks problem" (to no one's surprise Goldilocks is a finicky white British girl): "if the food is too white or too brown, it will not sell. It must be just the right level of 'ethnic.'" Socially dominant and privileged white people are the Goldilocks class of U.S. society.

Eating the Other framing makes "ethnic" foods palatable to white people, the socially dominant group. Restaurant reviews in magazines, newspapers, and other public forums (e.g., blogs, Yelp, TripAdvisor) are excellent examples of this. Galarza (2021) draws attention to a review entitled *Afghan Food is Exotic, Yet Familiar—and Cheap* by Mark and Gail Barnett & Barnett published by the *Washington Post* in 1993. In their review of Sunrise Kabob in Bethesda, Maryland, the Barnetts assure their readers that "your visiting aunt from Spokane, WA can enjoy the adventure of an exotic cuisine with the reassurance of familiar looking food." Galarza has two problems with this statement. First, the Barnetts presume white hegemony and readership by employing a racial trope for whiteness. Then they reassure their white audience, stereotyped as

having myopic palates, that certain “ethnic” foods have sufficiently “crossed-over” (Cook & Harrison 2003), or culturally whitened enough, to be enjoyed by them. I consider this a misrecognition because it excludes POC as potential readers or restaurant patrons. Secondly, the Barnetts make it clear that Afghan cuisine does not fall within “familiar” white culture by calling it exotic. Galarza explains that calling the food “exotic”, a word coming from the Greek root “exo” meaning outside, positions Afghans as outsiders and their cuisine as Other relative to white people and their food culture. Galarza’s critique speaks to white peoples’ coveted but cautious contact with Otherness. Upon finding and reading the full review, I would add a third issue: the Barnetts praise the restaurant as “delightfully cheap,” which speaks to the commodification of Otherness to the benefit of white consumers. The Barnetts’ eagerness to sample a mysterious cuisine fits hooks’ theory of white fetishization of difference but even then, only at the right price. Capping the cost of non-white cuisine is a maldistribution that curbs the economic capacity of POC in the food system and alludes to the white expectation that POC heed the white supremacist status quo.

Eating the Other discourse was also evident in 2020 when a slew of corporate food giants pledged solidarity with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement protests. At that time CRDA writers observed a frenzy of solidarity pledges published on social media and other PFD outlets by powerful food system players such as General Mills, Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, *Bon Appetit*, *Food52*, and the James Beard Foundation (Rao 2020; Wey 2020). Wilson, a Black food writer and podcast producer, poignantly tweeted in response, “There are more Black Lives Matter posts in food media than there are actual Black lives at these organizations” (@korshawilson June 9, 2020). This stance exemplifies a desire to interact with the Other, but only to a limited extent. In this case the extent ends at expressing sympathy. There was no internal action taken to undue the

status quo of racial inequity, as noted by Wilson. Wey (2020) suggests that those corporations never intended deeper than surface level encounters with the Other, preferring to encounter them as consumers instead. Wey's theory is that corporations noted the enormity and momentum of BLM and realized that there was financial incentive to exploiting the BLM struggle against racial oppression. They did this by slapping #BLM on social media posts and releasing diversity stories to the press in hopes of spiking sales but the line was drawn at equalizing the status quo. As Flowers & Swam (2015, 17) eloquently contend, "eating the Other is more about appetite than generosity and narcissism than altruism." The examples of eating the Other discussed in this section, the fetishization of Otherness, devaluation of non-white cuisines, and the exploitation of BLM, demonstrate the narcissist white appetite for Otherness that is skillfully indulged in a manner that continually exploits the Other.

CRQ 1 Summary.

My investigation of CRQ 1 revealed that racism is unmistakably present in dominant PFD. The CRDA critiques of dominant PFD taught me that racism in PFD tends to a) portray POC as foreign, inferior, and less civilized compared to white people (culinary colonialism), b) sympathize with whiteness and white nationalism while ignoring or erasing other experiences and perspectives (white culinary nationalism), and c) frame the participation of POC in U.S. food system as a commodity for white consumption and benefit (eating the Other). In addition to these frames, I found evidence of Fraser's social injustices, the Three M's. My use of Fraser's Three M's as analytic criteria would have benefitted from further specification of indicators. Many times I struggled to definitively settle on which Fraser injustice the framing in question caused. Regardless, I able to logically conclude using qualitative evidence from the critiques that one or

more of the Fraser themes were consequential outcomes of the frame themes. Culinary colonialism, white culinary nationalism, and eating the Other can cause or exacerbate maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation between racial groups involved in the U.S. food system. This establishes that we have a social justice problem on our hands. The difficulty I experienced in categorizing the injustices illustrates that social injustice is complex, multifaceted, and subjective. Labels aside, dominant PFD consistently privileges white people at the expense of POC. This exposition of the presence and inequitable consequences of racism in PFD left me very curious to find out what ways, if any, racism in PFD is being challenged.

CRQ 2: Challenges to Racism in PFD

Even though the results for CRQ 1 confirmed that racism abounds in PFD, there is potential for social change since problems caused by social action can be solved by social action as well. Therefore CRQ 2 asked about how racism in PFD is challenged. To answer this question, I once again turned to CRDA critiques of PFD but this time I looked for observations or suggestions of ways that emergent PFD challenges the racist frames of dominant PFD. Again, I encountered unanticipated themes in the critiques which I call “emergent strategies.” My findings indicated two strategies suggested by CRDA authors and emergent PFD creators (collectively, “PFD critics”) for challenging the racism in dominant PFD: culinary signifying and decentering whiteness. These concepts were identified in the texts and not crafted by me. As I did in CRQ 1, I adjusted my methodology to adopt the emergent strategies as my primary analytical criteria and applied the originally intended Fraser criteria (the Three R’s) as a secondary set. I prioritized the emergent themes because they were more specific to the research problem (racism in PFD) than the Fraser ones, which are universal strategies for correcting social justice problems, including but not limited to racism. The two sets of analytical criteria paired

together well because the emergent strategies were essentially PFD-specific methods for jumpstarting Fraser's social justice processes in the PFD industry. Table 2 illustrates my sample for CRQ 2 and the themes I coded for each source.

Table 2. CRQ 2 Results

	CRDA Source Author Date Title (Abbreviated)	Emergent Strategy⁸	Fraser Justice Process
Carter 2020	Black Food Folks is a Living Thread of Black Excellence	DW	Representation; redistribution; recognition
Endolyn 2021	The Profound Significance of 'High on the Hog'	CS	Recognition
Harris and Leon 2020	Black Chefs Are Landing More Cookbook Deals	CS; DW	Recognition; representation; redistribution
Hutcherson 2021	For the Culture Magazine Celebrates Black Women in Food	CS	Recognition
Keskin 2018	"Chef's Table" Is Finally Doing the Work	DW	Recognition; representation; redistribution
Khorana 2019	Can Producers and Consumers of Color Decolonize Foodie Culture?	CS; DW	Representation; recognition;
Kludt 2018	Author Julia Turshen Launches Database	DW	Representation; redistribution; recognition
Nosrat 2018 (Interview by Ho)	Samin Nosrat Is the Hero We All Need Right Now	DW	Representation; recognition; redistribution
Richardson 2018	Where Are All the Black Restaurant Critics?	DW	Representation; recognition;
Satterfield 2021b (Interview by Nittle)	High on the Hog' Celebrates Black Contributions	CS; DW	Recognition; representation; redistribution
Tippen 2014	Squirrel, If You're So Included	CS	Recognition
Turshen 2018a (Interview by Kuo)	E60: Sheet Pan Chicken (Podcast)	CS	Recognition
Turshen 2018b	To Change Racial Disparity in Food, Let's Start with Cookbooks	CS; DW	Recognition; representation
Walker 2016	Mighty Matriarchs Kill It with a Skillet	CS	Recognition
Williams 2021	Our Roots (<i>High on the Hog</i> , Episode 1)	CS	Recognition

⁸ CS: Culinary signifying

DW: Decentering whiteness

As demonstrated in Table 2, culinary signifying exclusively correlated with increased recognition for POC, while decentering whiteness can potentially lead to all three of Fraser's of social justice processes. Here, I describe the two emergent strategies and analyze which Fraser process(es) they ignite using select examples from the reviewed texts.

Culinary Signifying.

Much of the emergent PFD content that counters the racist framing of dominant PFD falls under culinary signifying. Coined by Williams-Forsen (2006, 136), **culinary signifying** is communication about food that conveys “self-actualization, self-expression, and self-awareness through camaraderie, celebration, and competition...[it] is also a useful tool in social action, self-help, and social uplift.” Williams-Forsen's book, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power*, focuses on validations of power for individual Black women and broader Black culture brought on by unabashedly voicing their roles in the U.S. food system to compensate for inaccuracies and omissions in the dominant narrative. Culinary signifying can be performed by any member of a systemically oppressed group for its emancipatory effect. Culinary signifying is empowering because it allows POC to (re)claim prideful ownership of their roles in the food system and demand proper recognition of their physical and intellectual participation and contributions. Culinary signifying is prevalent in emergent PFD as a strategy used by POC to counter the white supremacist framing of dominant PFD.

Critiques of PFD discuss a counter-storytelling genre of emergent PFD in which POC document their roles and experiences in the U.S. food system for recognition. Culinary signifying commands recognition for POC in the U.S. food system whose agency in growing, processing, and cooking food in our food system has long been overshadowed, unacknowledged,

or even erased in dominant PFD. Stephen Satterfield, host of the *High on the Hog* Netflix series about African American contributions to the U.S. food system, describes how his work challenges oppression and what it means to him personally:

The work that we do is about reclamation. It's about pushing back against narrative exclusion and erasure and distortion and obfuscation and reclaiming our own identities and power and being connected to our history. You see this in the why that we present and promote that dialogue.

I think if anything the response for me has been validating for what has been my overall vocational thesis, which is food is a powerful way of connecting to people's identities, of radicalizing people and of instilling some necessary pride in one's culture that allows them to be themselves in the world. (Satterfield 2021a)

Satterfield sees so much potential for culinary significance to empower historically misrecognized African Americans that he's made it his life's work. The showpiece of chef-turned-magazine-editor Klancy Miller's vocational thesis is *For the Culture* magazine. Miller created *For the Culture* as a designated space for Black women and femmes to signify their varied labor in the food and beverage industry, past and present (2021a). Miller told Hutcherson (2021) that she had long been conscious of a lack of coverage of POC in food media which motivated her to counter that framing, "I am really interested in the stories that we tell and how we tell them—and by 'we' I actually mean humanity—and how those narratives and visuals change depending upon who's shaping them" (K. Miller 2021b). POC are embracing culinary signifying as a means of declaring their membership in the U.S. food system and society which is discriminatorily revised or omitted from the narrative of dominant PFD.

Cookbooks are a common venue for culinary signifying, especially in recently. Cookbook sales in the U.S. spiked in 2019 and 2020 (Severson 2021), a trend that I relate to the surging social movement for racial equity followed by national stay-at-home orders due to Covid-19. These are historic times infamous for a white supremacist President, fatal police

brutality against African Americans, a rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans, and a worldwide public health crisis. The silver lining to these unprecedented times is that they have increased public awareness of the dire need for social justice for POC.

Combining the tumultuous food system and society with the increased demand for cookbooks, cookbook authors seized an opportunity to share their experiences as POC in the U.S. food system alongside heritage recipes.⁹ Cookbooks are great for culinary signifying because they are an easy way of introducing people to new ideas and perspectives. Tippen (2014) conducted a case study of squirrel stew recipes that supports this. After studying the rhetoric of recipe narratives, she concludes that the authorship and publication venue of recipes lends certain perspectives and values to the dish. Much like how no two cooks' rendition of a dish is the same, neither are two written recipes. Cookbook author and social justice advocate Julia Turshen calls the optimal alignment of author and context in for social justice advocacy in cookbooks "sheet pan chicken with a side of justice" (Turshen 2018a, 10:35). She says that recipe vignettes are an opportunity for cookbook authors to present alternative food system perspectives and experiences in contrast to the overrepresented one of dominant discourse. Turshen's sheet pan chicken concept relies on the domestic and instructive context of cookbooks, cookbooks are intimate because we bring them into our homes and turn to them for inspiration and help (Turshen 2018b). Cookbooks are an advantageous media for challenging racism in PFD because they are a space for POC to share their experiential knowledge and expose readers to new ideas

⁹ To name a few:

New Native Kitchen: Celebrating Modern Recipes of the American Indian (Bitsoie & Fraioli 2021);

Black Food: Stories, Art, and Recipes from Across the African Diaspora (Bryant 2021);

Chicano Eats: Recipes from My Mexican-American Kitchen (Castillo 2020);

Jubilee: Recipes from Two Centuries of African American Cooking (Tipton-Martin 2019).

and perspectives. Cookbook authors aren't the only ones dishing out culinary significance in emergent PFD.

Emergent culinary signifying by POC can be found in nonfiction books, magazines, television, and radio. The expansion of culinary signifying content is garnering mainstream recognition too. Culinary historians J.B. Harris (2012), A. Miller (2013, 2018, 2021), Tipton-Martin (2015), and Twitty (2017) have collectively performed extensive research to recount the historical contributions by African Americans to the U.S. food system. Each of them has won at least one James Beard Award for their scholarship (James Beard Foundation 2014; 2016; 2018; 2020), a PFD tradition that began in 1990 and is often compared to the Oscars of the food and restaurant industry (Ho 2016). Dominant recognition of culinary signifying work is on the rise. The Beard Foundation is a dominant PFD magnate that disproportionately awards its accolades to white men (Ho 2016) so Twitty being the first African American to win the Beard for Book of the Year in 2018 (@KosherSoul May 2, 2018) and Harris being only the second African American woman to receive the Beard Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020 after the late Chef Leah Chase in 2016 (Hallinan 2020) are significant. *Racist Sandwich*, a podcast about race, gender, and class issues in the U.S. food system was nominated for James Beard Award in 2019 (James Beard Foundation 2019), a well-deserved and slightly ironic nomination given that Ho, the podcast's producer, reported on the white male homogeneity of Beard nominations in 2016 (with impressive quantitative data, no less). In 2021, Harris' book *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa* (1999) was turned into a docuseries by Netflix, another power player in dominant PFD.¹⁰ These instances of dominant PFD recognition of culinary signifying content are

¹⁰ Netflix dubbed the series a slightly different but even more signifying name, *High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*.

evidence of Williams' cultural process theory of emergent culture becoming dominant and of Fraser's recognition process of social justice.

The creators of culinary signifying PFD leverage the recognition it generates to make additional headway in challenging the whiteness of dominant PFD. The critiques suggest that successful signifiers often look out for their own by using their gained recognition to advocate for recognition, redistribution, and representation for other POC in the PFD industry.¹¹ For example, after winning a James Beard award in 2016, Tipton-Martin leveraged her success to require that her publisher hire more African American creatives, such as photographers, editors, and publicists, to work on her forthcoming books (E.A. Harris & Leon 2020). She also pledged a \$50,000 grant associated with the Julia Child Award she won to supportive programming for other marginalized food writers telling the *New York Times*, "I have spent most of my career trying to advance the marginalized members of our community...Now I'm able to actually make that a project that goes on forever" (Stewart 2021 quoting Tipton-Martin). On a similar note, Satterfield (2021b) stressed to Netflix the necessity of having an African American production team for *High on the Hog*, reasoning that the production needed a crew capable of conveying the cultural sensitivity and sentimental value of the show for the Black community. In yet another example, Turshen personally founded Equity at the Table (EATT), a free networking directory of women and non-gender conforming POC who work in the food system, which includes the PFD industry (Kludt 2018). In these ways, the recognition gained from culinary signifying can subsequently lead to redistribution and representation too. This is a promising finding; however, my review also revealed an opinion that culinary signifying as an anti-racism strategy does not

¹¹ CS is only correlated with recognition in Table 2 (CRQ 2 Results) because this advocacy is secondary to the initial recognition gain.

deliver the ideological departure from hegemonic whiteness necessary to disrupt the systemic racism in dominant PFD. PFD critics of this opinion suggest that a more direct and effective strategy for challenging racism in dominant PFD is decentering whiteness.

Decentering Whiteness.

Although emergent culinary signifying content diversifies the portrait of the U.S> food system in PFD, some PFD critics insist that culinary signifying as a strategy for challenging racism in PFD does not suffice. The PFD critics in this camp call for the decentering whiteness in PFD beyond content and into its industry practices. **Decentering whiteness** refers to an ideological shift away from the deep-rooted white centrality of dominant PFD evidenced by CRQ 1. The discourse of culinary colonialism, eating the Other, and white culinary nationalism are discourse produced under the white gaze and white management. The **white gaze** is a tendency to incorporate “racialized or Eurocentric expectations” (Khorana 2019, 6) into perceptions of reality. The late Toni Morrison and James Baldwin described the white gaze as the “little white man that sits on your shoulder and checks out everything you do or say” (Morrison 2019). They and other intellectuals allege that the white gaze causes members of society, white and nonwhite, to abide by “hidden signs of [white] racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive ‘othering’ of people” (Morrison 1992, x-xi). This results in binary racial tropes that associate authority, power, formality, advancement, superiority and other indicators of dominance with whiteness (Pailey 2019, 734). Decentering whiteness in PFD requires abandoning the white gaze. To truly challenge the root of racism in PFD, critics suggest that the PFD industry stop perpetuating these tropes—stop utilizing the white supremacist frames that allow whiteness to dominate.

Decentering whiteness in dominant PFD necessitates interracial, industry-wide commitment to challenging inequity generated by racism. Critics of PFD are skeptical of genuine white commitment to eradicating racism in PFD. Considering *Chef's Table*, Netflix's cinematic bibliographic docuseries about the world's most lauded chef, Keskin (2018) is hesitant to commend the show's producers for casting more women and POC in its fifth season. Why? Precisely because it took *five* seasons for the white male producers of the show to acknowledge and correct their bias, despite feedback from women and POC following the previous four releases. The eventual correction could be considered a victory, but the question of why it took so long to heed constructive criticism remains. In my opinion, the producers' positionality relative to the white gaze blinded them to the "oppositional gaze" (hooks 1992, 116)¹² of their critics. White producers and consumers of PFD are not racing to relinquish the privilege and superiority afforded to them by the white gaze.

Without genuine support from their white peers, the burden of disrupting racism in PFD falls on POC. Khorana (2019) writes about the labor entailed to decenter whiteness in PFD and who typically performs it. POC are currently doing most of the emotional pedagogic labor of deracializing PFD (4) as evidenced by the culinary signifying content of POC discussed in the previous section. I would add that culinary signifiers' colleagues and supervisors put an oppressive burden on POC to do this social justice work on their own, a conceivably impossible task. Remarking on the labor of creating a socially just cooking show while navigating her own relative disadvantage as a woman of color, chef/author/host Samin Nosrat told Ho (2018):

A big part of what I brought to the production team was, we have to go to extraordinary lengths to make sure that we are

¹² In response to the white gaze, hooks encourages an "oppositional gaze" by people of oppressed races. The oppositional gaze returns racialized expectations declaring, "Not only will I stare. I want my look to change reality" (hooks 1992, 116).

representing these places and these people as they are instead of [how] we want to use them in our narrative. I was trying so hard to not come with a discovery mindset or a colonial mindset...I take it really seriously that the thing I could give them is exposure to their story and sales...I have been that person whose work has been uncredited so many times. I've felt that feeling so many times and I never want to be the source of that for anybody else [...]

We made some mistakes but I also think that [*Salt Fat Acid Heat*] is probably in a lot of ways the most progressive thing I've seen in terms of food TV. Because I was like, this is my shot, I may never have a shot again. Here's what I worked for all these years. This is what I've always wanted to see on screen [...]

When I was a little kid, what wouldn't I have given to be able to see me on TV? It's too intense for me to even wrap my mind around, how normalizing it might have felt to see someone who looks like me on TV. So if I can understand that, in my body, how powerful that is to me, oh my lord, it would be amazing to see anybody else who isn't a traditional [white] person on TV [...]

I was like, this is what I have to do. In a way, because I'm so clear about the work, it squeezes out too much awareness of what it means to other people...maybe I do get to be the one who opens the door...If I'm gonna work within this system, what can I do, what can kind of choices can I make? I ask those questions a lot.

Nosrat's candidness conveys her deep desire to change "traditional" (dominant) PFD and the immense weight of that responsibility. Though she doesn't explicitly say it, being the designated person on the crew to ensure that "extraordinary lengths" are taken to be equitable is a difficult and daunting role, especially as a POC. Ho, a fellow POC, recognizes this and affectionately regards Nosrat as "the hero we all need right now."

Nosrat and other POC involved in creating emergent anti-racist PFD are facing a Sisyphean task of combatting systemic racism from within an institutionally racist system. The unmatched onus of responsibility on POC to disrupt racism in dominant PFD does not indicate a shift in power. Yes, they are being given a "shot" at diversifying PFD, but this is not a fair shot if the oppressed are up against racist industry culture that is stacked against them without back up.

I also wonder, are these situations a true shot or a financial windfall made by exploitation of racial injustice? If a media corporation of dominant PFD, like Netflix per say, publishes emergent content by POC on its platforms without altering any other structures and practices, then it is profiting from POC's labor to deracialize the discourse and industry without committing to the cause. Placing the burden of proving their oppression on the oppressed and exploiting their struggle against oppression suggests that emergent PFD content may not be inspiring an ideological shift within the industry, but rather is being permitted by dominant media outlets because it is profitable. Albeit the fact that emergent PFD is profitable cannot be discredited because this indicates that the American public is ready for social change regardless of whether executives in dominant PFD are or not. True decentering of whiteness will only occur if and when those benefitting from the oppression of POC in the content and industry practices of dominant PFD are open to relinquishing white privilege to make way for social justice.

Interest convergence might be a necessary evil to jumpstart receptivity to decentering whiteness within the dominant PFD industry. **Interest convergence** is the theory that social change is only permitted by members of a dominant group when the change benefits them too (Cabrera 2018, 211). Nosrat (2018) makes a controversial suggestion to permit interest convergence for the sake of future social justice:

Maybe if people see that they can make money off of a brown girl, you know, if corporations can see that I'm profitable—I mean how disgusting is that—then maybe they'll give other brown and Black and queer and whoever else isn't the traditional face of cooking TV a shot.

Permitting interest convergence to usher in social change is risky and by no means a perfect plan. The idea invites further capitalist exploitation of and still leaves the prospect of an ideological shift up to the white executives, which plays into their white privilege. But Nosrat has a point: the U.S. is a profit-driven society, and it might be advantageous to play the capitalist game for a

bit longer. Perhaps racial justice needs to be commodified to change an industry that is essentially defined by the commoditization of food and food culture.

What other options are there for decentering whiteness in PFD? Khorana (2019, 10) mentions replacing the eating the Other frame with an agency frame. This means instead of framing Others role in the food system as catering to white consumers, frame the skills and expertise that their positionality adds to our food system and its importance to us all. This reframe would be redistribute resources and recognize POC as valued food system agents. To address the dearth of representation of POC in the dominant PFD industry, POC have organized professional networks for connecting with those industry employers ready to decenter whiteness. Black Food Folks (BFF) is a professional network for Black people working in the U.S. food system, including PFD. Their mission is to see more “Black decision-makers throughout the food world... so we don’t have to depend on ‘being topical’ to be heard” (Carter 2020 quoting BFF cofounder, C. Williams). Turshen’s EATT steers the PFD industry towards inclusivity in its content and practices by providing a database full of professionals capable of producing discourse and with first-hand knowledge of the perspectives presently neglected by dominant PFD (Kludt 2018). More POC in PFD with decision-making power can challenge the white gaze productions of dominant PFD like the “pornographic level of blackness” of Food Network’s *Down Home with the Neelys* (Cruz 2013, 323). Diversifying decision makers in PFD can also decrease the likelihood of dominant PDF media channels exploiting the anti-racist content and labor of POC. The fact that POC are self-organizing to facilitate this deracializing is troublesome given the preceding discussion of the unfair burden of labor, but it is still noteworthy decentering work, and somebody has to do it.

The facilitation by POC to decenter whiteness in PFD still relies on white reflexivity, receptivity, and acceptance of change. White people who participate in PFD need to be cognizant of their racial privilege and be willing to let it go for the industry and its discourse to become more socially just. White people who are open to this can participate in dissolving white privilege by seeking, including, introducing, supporting, promoting, hiring, compensating, and treating POC more equitably throughout the PFD production and marketing processes (Turshen 2018b). Practiced on a wide scale, these actions can collectively neutralize white privilege within the industry thus allowing for a parity of participation by the many of races involved in our food system and challenging the current white centrality of dominant PFD. According to Williams' cultural process theory, incorporation of emergent culture takes recognition, acknowledgement, and acceptance (1977, 125). The influx of culinary signifying content and its success on national platforms covers recognition and acknowledgement. Acceptance, the remaining piece to modifying dominant PFD, depends on white receptivity to change and their agency in synergistic efforts to decenter whiteness in PFD.

CRQ 2 Summary.

The answer to CRQ 2 is complicated. There is emergent discourse, mostly in the form of culinary signifying, that challenges racism in dominant PFD. However, PFD critics are skeptical of the sufficiency of culinary signifying to fully disrupt racism in PFD. Culinary signifying is a source of recognition for POC that can also lead to redistribution and representation when those gaining recognition chose to leverage it to benefit other POC too. In short, culinary signifying challenges racism in dominant PFD by offering diversified perspectives of the U.S. food system. However, culinary signifying is a movement in *self*-recognition, which is invaluable empowering

for POC, but the recognition and subsequent redistribution and representation that result from culinary signifying are still subject to white dominance. Culinary signifying alone is not sufficient to disrupt systemic racism in PFD because the status quo of unbalanced power between white and non-white participants remains unchanged. With questionable receptivity by POC's white counterparts in PFD to decenter whiteness, progress towards eradicating racism in PFD is stalled. This is because transitioning to more equitable practices and content requires cooperation by all those involved in the current structure, the privileged and the oppressed. Privilege and oppression are reciprocals; for one to gain, the other must give. Exploring CTQ 2 taught me that social change to evict racism from PFD requires a mutual effort by all parties, a true "parity of participation" as Fraser would call it. So, what is the significance of these findings and what does it have to do with racism in the U.S. food system?

Contribution

Racism in PFD is a microcosm of the systemic racism of the U.S. food system. That said, how do my findings on identifying and challenging racism in PFD contribute to the larger issue of combatting racism in the U.S. food system? Knowing that racism has existed in our food system and society for centuries, I anticipated that racism would be present in PFD, a modern institution of our food system. In my personal engagement with PFD, I was vaguely aware of the hegemonic whiteness of dominant PFD, but I also noticed and appreciated the emergence of PFD about the culture, work, and experiences of POC in our food system. I conducted this research to learn more about how PFD is perceived by others and its impact it on racial (in)equity in our food system. To find this out, I designed a critical inquiry that asked about racism in PFD and how it is challenged. This was important to discern because discourse, PFD included, influences public perceptions and behavior. The manner in which PFD frames race shapes public action, or

inaction, regarding racism in our food system. I found that dominant PFD is packed with white supremacist framing but there are emergent strategies for countering this.

Dominant PFD uses three variations of white supremacist framing to replicate and reinforce white supremacy in the U.S. food system: culinary colonialism, white culinary nationalism, and eating the Other. These frames presume white audiences, white palates, and white lifestyles, thereby centering whiteness as the preferential norm in our food system and society. This framing allocates excessive resources, recognition, and representation for white people. Conversely, the contributions of POC to the U.S. food system are essentialized, commodified, or ignored in dominant PFD, which comparatively minimizes POC's resources, recognition, and representation. The evidence of white supremacist ideology in the prominent frames of dominant PFD and their inequitable racial consequences show that dominant PFD replicates and perpetuates food system racism that privileges white people at the expense of POC.

On the other hand, there are emergent practices that challenge the racism embedded in PFD. Culinary signifying in PFD is a welcome change of faces and perspectives, and its popularity affirms that the U.S. food system and society is capable of changing for the better. Expanded coverage of an array of American food system experiences validates the agency of POC in our food system and can raise public awareness of racial inequities in our food system. However, awareness alone is not enough to arouse an ideological shift to decenter whiteness. Most of the anti-racist work being done in PFD and the U.S. food system is facilitated by POC and their progress is bounded by white openness to social change. A consensus among all those involved in PFD is needed to continue deracializing PFD and our food system.

It had not occurred to me before this exercise that progress to deracialize PFD has been mainly one-sided and conditional to unwavering white privilege. From my situatedness, the abundance of diversified content of late struck me as excellent headway—and it is—but I was naively unaware of the depth of POC’s systemic disadvantage and exploitation in the industry itself. The emergent movement within PFD to challenge racism is now at a crossroads, POC can either continue to blaze the trail for social justice on their own, possibly to a dead end, or insist that their white contemporaries meet them in the middle. The same can be said of our food system.

Keskin (2018) sums up the immediate dilemma by asking, “Do we [POC] want to educate people that should have known better, or do we want to uplift those that already know?” Expecting POC to educate those who should know better intensifies the oppression and exploitation of POC. While uplifting those who already know can be empowering, it does not necessarily confront institutionalized white supremacy or sway those who benefit from white supremacist structures. Those who should know better—and in their heart of hearts I think they do—need to acknowledge the need for change and acquiesce that it means abandoning their white privilege and gaze. To me, the answer to Keskin’s question is that both actions are necessary, but the caveat is a parity of participation by all, white and non-white, to challenge racism in our food system and its replication in PFD. The white-led industry must embrace the growing demand for racial equity rather than regressing to tried and true racist formulas. As Aisha Silim, founder of Foodies of Colour, told Khorana (2019, 11), “in order for diversity to work, you have to do the work.” That means all of us.

The framing of race in PFD can replicate or challenge racism in the food system. I identified three frames used in dominant PFD that reinforce residual white supremacist ideology: culinary colonialism, white culinary nationalism, and eating the Other. These frames mislead the American public's understanding of food system dynamics thus perpetuating inequities between white people and POC in the U.S. food system. The white supremacist themes of dominant PFD cause additional maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation for POC. Fortunately, there is promising emergent PFD, produced mostly by POC, that conveys the diversity of American food system experiences in. A trend in culinary signifying PFD content increases recognition for POC which can tangentially lead to redistribution and representation as well. However, these gains are self-propelled and subject to white cooperation in the deracializing process. The complete disruption of racism requires decentering the hegemonic whiteness of PFD, which depends on a parity of participation by all involved in PFD, white or non-white, producer or consumer. Equity will only occur when both privilege and oppression in PFD are addressed. This finding applies to racism throughout our food system and other institutionally racist structures of our society. The concluding chapter discusses the significance and possible applications of this finding for expansive social justice from racial inequity.

Five—Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on my contribution of Capstone research on the particular social justice problem of racism in PFD and synthesize a conclusion about the overall state of social (in)justice in U.S. food systems and society.

My findings showed that racism is present in PFD, but it doesn't have to be. Presently, POC are slighted by dominant PFD which replicates and reinforces economic, social, and political inequities between white people and POC in the U.S. food system through embedded white supremacist ideology. As it stands, emergent PFD, characterized primarily as self-empowerment and self-recognition, cannot not address white supremacy, the ideological root of the systemic racism, on its own. The racism of dominant PFD is stalled but not stopped. Racism in PFD will truly stop when whiteness is decentered in the discourse itself and in the industry producing it.

Racial justice is the aspect of social justice specific to transcending race-based oppression that upholds racial hierarchies. Racial justice for POC in PFD, marked by all three of Fraser's dimensions of justice—equitable resources, recognition, and representation—is only possible if dominant PFD content and industry practices decenter whiteness by abandoning the present model of appealing to white gaze and privilege. Decentering whiteness in PFD entails that dominant PFD stop privileging white audiences and producers causing Americans to accept whiteness as the preferential American race and lifestyle.

The lesson of decentering whiteness applies far beyond fixing racism in PFD. White supremacy is the motor of systemic white privilege in American society; it is in no way limited to PFD or even to our food system. It permeates all aspects of U.S. society. The call to decenter whiteness is pertinent to all structures of U.S. society that are scarred by institutionalized racism:

the food system, education, policing and criminal law, the financial sector, healthcare, voting rights, and the list goes on...

At the start of this paper, I defined social justice as a “parity of participation” (Fraser 2008, 405). Applying Fraser’s social justice framework as analytical criteria demonstrated that a parity of participation is pertinent not only to the condition of social justice, but also to the process of achieving social justice. This Capstone research shows that redressing inequity in PFD, the food system, or any aspect other aspect of our society requires collaboration by all parties implicated in the inequity, both those oppressed by it and those privileged by it. This research focused on systems of inequity caused by racism but the same can be said of any systemic inequity whether it is caused by sexism, classism, or another socially constructed line of demarcation. Oppression cannot exist without privilege, and vice versa. For this reason, change needs to occur on both sides of the inequity equation. So long as privilege exists for some, oppression will remain for others.

How and when will white people be amenable to rescinding their privilege? I am hopeful that white receptivity to social change will rise with continued exposure to emergent discourse, food-related and beyond. Sadly, it may take financial incentive for those with more relative power to lose to participate in eradicating systemic racism. This is America, a capitalist, profit-driven society to a fault and PFD is a medium essentially defined by its commoditization. The industry leaders at its helm have made a lot of money by transforming dominant PFD into what it is today. From their position, the system is working perfectly and there is no reason for change it, in fact they are motivated for it *not* to change. The ugly truth is that we can secure their cooperation by aiming for their wallets. We need to find an angle to sell racial justice, an aspect of social justice, to commoditize it in a way that matches the commoditization of white

supremacy in dominant discourse and culture. This could be the ticket to anti-racist discourse and culture graduating from emergent to dominant practice in the United States.

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