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# Food Discourse: The Communicative Gateway Toward Understanding Formerly Colonized Representation in Parts Unknown

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FOOD DISCOURSE: THE COMMUNICATIVE GATEWAY TOWARD UNDERSTANDING  
FORMERLY COLONIZED REPRESENTATION IN PARTS UNKNOWN

Mitch Combs

102 Pages

CNN's television series, *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown*, merges food and travel genres to communicate representations of local, indigenous, and other formerly colonized cultures. This thesis will present the significance of *Parts Unknown* through a review of literature that concerns postcolonial theory and food discourse to which critical insights emerge and explain how indigenous cultures are represented within Western "foodie" television. These insights will then guide a postcolonial investigation of the food rhetoric used to represent/discuss colonized and local groups within three episodes of *Parts Unknown*. Additionally, potential applications for rhetorical criticism are discussed by using *Parts Unknown* as an example for scholars interested in conducting postcolonial media analyses.

KEYWORDS: postcolonial theory, television, representation, indigenous, food television, journalism, travel television

FOOD DISCOURSE: THE COMMUNICATIVE GATEWAY TOWARD UNDERSTANDING  
FORMERLY COLONIZED REPRESENTATION IN PARTS UNKNOWN

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Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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2018

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FOOD DISCOURSE: THE COMMUNICATIVE GATEWAY TOWARD UNDERSTANDING  
FORMERLY COLONIZED REPRESENTATION IN PARTS UNKNOWN

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M.C.

## IN MEMORY OF ANTHONY BOURDAIN

When the television show *Parts Unknown* received a Peabody Award in 2013, host Anthony Bourdain explained in his acceptance speech that their coverage of diverse cultures and people relied on a few simple questions: “What makes you happy? What do you eat? What do you like to cook?” Wherever Bourdain was at in the world, asking basic questions about one’s food ultimately uncovered “unknown” aspects about their culture.

Bourdain showed us how food and culture are intertwined. In *Parts Unknown*, he proved to have an uncanny ability to provide unique, captivating, and rigorously authentic discussions about different cultures across the globe from his culinary vantage point. As a world-renowned chef, bestselling culinary author, and host for a variety of food television programs, he displayed a firm understanding that communicating and learning about each other through food could bring us together—despite our differences.

Bourdain’s perspectives were always one-of-a-kind because he diverged from the mainstream. He cultivated a special brand rhetoric through unfiltered, cynical humor, which frequently critiqued commercialized and mass-produced versions culture. The natural storyteller’s essay-like reports were riddled with sarcasm and irony that provided viewers with a laugh, but also made them reconsider their own worldviews. However, Bourdain did not speak as if his morality was superior to the common person’s. He was equally critical on himself, often discussing his own biases, perspectives, and emotions about his experiences with other people and cultures.

For 11 seasons, Bourdain led *Parts Unknown*’s conscious attempt to challenge stereotypes, prejudice, and forms of discrimination attributed to groups of people around the globe by joining them at the dinner table. He will be remembered as an advocate for the

marginalized and the misunderstood and as someone who's genuine curiosity created an opportunity for silent voices to be heard. At the end of the day, Anthony Bourdain showed us that simple things like sharing a meal can bring people together—no matter how distant or different. Rest in peace Anthony Bourdain, and thank you for showing us how to understand the value of ourselves and our differences one meal at a time.



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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The phrase, “you are what you eat” is more than just a cliché within the English language. Rather, it explains a distinct communicative phenomenon. According to Welch and Scarry (1995), food has become “a stage on which a multitude of social relations are symbolized and reinforced” (p. 397). Moreover, food functions communicatively to represent who a person is, to what social groups they belong, and how they socialize with others (McKerrow, 2012). Food is more than just simply a nutritional substance that sustains life. Rather, it can be conceptualized as objects that render social interaction. These interactions are inherently communicative and have developed into a unique form of discourse.

In general, a discourse is a system of thought that constitutes reality through the compositions of ideas, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and practices (Foucault, 1972; Lessa, 2006). These are often expressed and referenced through language or symbol use (Foucault, 1972; Hall, 1997). There are systems of thought around food that are expressed through an array of social interactions involved with its production, preparation, and consumption (Welch & Scarry, 1995). Furthermore, the practices and conventions that surround food solidify bonds with others and express notions of social identity (Welch & Scarry, 1995). The languages, symbols, nonverbal behaviors, and channels utilized to interact with food yield the potential to communicate with others. This phenomenon can be considered food discourse.

Frye and Bruner (2012) suggest that “food rhetoric is an increasingly dominant discourse and suffuses co-cultures, popular culture, counter cultures, global economics, and environmental policies” (p. 1). Consciously and unconsciously, our interactions with others are influenced through and around food (McKerrow, 2012). Food discourse can be considered a symbolic rhetorical exchange that communicates aspects of culture through specific practices and

traditions involving food. Throughout this thesis, I will argue that food discourse is any form of verbal or nonverbal communication that utilizes food to interact with others. This includes conversations around the table, culinary texts, food blogs, commercials, and especially food television.

Overall, food discourse has immense relevance and scope within the field of communication; however, little scholarly effort has attempted to understand this phenomenon. Since food discourse is influential to the ways we interact and develop relationships with other people, it becomes even more relevant within the field of intercultural communication where languages, expressions, and social concepts among people of different cultures vary. One must be mindful and open to difference in order to understand the communicative practices of other cultures because the behaviors of people within those cultures are often outside of one's self-conception of the "ordinary." Like all forms of social interaction, food discourse too varies between nations, states, societies, and cultures. However, no matter the culture with which one identifies, all people must eat. This means all human beings can communicate through food discourse and the cultural meanings embedded within it can be interpreted by others. Therefore, food discourse has the potential to communicate cross-culturally and provide mutual understandings between different people. If treated progressively, food discourse could help dispel ethnocentric viewpoints and foster harmonious multicultural societies and geo-political situations.

In our modernized world of globalized and mediated communication, the cultural dimensions of food discourse provide significant influence through modern multimedia technologies. When it comes to conveying notions of food, culture, and society, television happens to be one of the most prominent channels. Food discourse is influential within

contemporary television due to the rising popularity of food and travel programs, which often rely on framing their narratives around food (Kelly, 2017; Ketchum, 2005). These programs are important sites of investigation for communication scholarship because food discourse often becomes its platform for cultural discussion.

CNN's television show, *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown*, presents a unique communicative approach toward cultural expression through food discourse. The show's host, Anthony Bourdain, is a world-renowned chef and published culinary author who is the focal point for discussions about food and culture in the show. The plot of each episode is centered around a primary goal: to communicate understandings about places and people considered "unknown" to the rest of the world by exploring their culture through cuisine. The show itself is directed toward an American audience, and its content includes discussions of global politics, day-to-day practices, histories, and other components of culture.

One striking feature about *Parts Unknown* is that several of its episodes take place in postcolonial societies. The show often discusses complications of the postcolonial situation, which is the tension between a nation's dominant social structures established by former colonial powers and the resistance movements of once-dominated indigenous and local cultures (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Much of this tension is based on issues regarding the expression and recognition of formerly colonized people. The languages, alternative histories, and politics of these formerly colonized cultures have been overwhelmingly unrecognized and misunderstood. Mainstream media especially have failed to represent the formerly colonized on television as compared to modernized Western cultures. Although these groups are not completely absent from representation on Western television, their presence is often objectified, presented as inferior, or essentialized as "interesting" or "exotic" (Said, 1978). Even when formerly colonized

people are the main characters of a television show or movie, their representation is often culturally appropriated. Cultural appropriation is when a dominant group of people adopts the cultural elements of a non-dominant group and often occurs forcefully or without consideration of these non-dominant groups (Young, 2010). We only need to consider films like *Pocahontas*, *The Jungle Book*, and *Peter Pan*, all of which have produced stereotypical, ethnocentric, and colonizing representations (Clark, Galella, Jones, & Young, 2017; Ono & Buescher, 2001). However, taking a closer look at the way *Parts Unknown* discusses the postcolonial situation through food discourse could help facilitate and reverse issues of representation of formerly colonized groups.

Unlike most food and travel shows, *Parts Unknown* seems to make a conscious attempt to accurately portray cultural difference and allow formerly colonized groups to achieve agency through food discourse. Despite obvious cultural differences, Bourdain reduces the power distance between Western society and formerly colonized groups by sharing meals with local and indigenous people to engage in mutual conversation. Koivurova (2010) suggests that the formerly colonized often strive for agency, specifically in terms of self-determination and the freedom to express their social and cultural development. Therefore, I will argue in this thesis that food discourse in *Parts Unknown* acts as a “communicative gateway.” I use the metaphor of a gateway because food discourse can bridge an epistemological gap between the Self and Other through communication. This is resembled by Bourdain’s role as the introspective Westerner who uses food to connect, understand, and redefine Western society’s relationship with the formerly colonized Other. Overall, the expression and utilization of food discourse, especially through television, yields the potential to allow the Western world to receive a better understanding about the complexities of formerly colonized cultures who are largely

marginalized from mainstream society. This “gateway” should be understood as a step forward toward understandings of formerly colonized groups. Since television provides mediated representations, it is impossible for these productions to capture the totality or the complete reality of the people it depicts. Overall, food discourse in *Parts Unknown* can and should be recognized as a conscious attempt to bring awareness to the representations of groups within postcolonial societies who struggle or simply do not have the ability to define and express themselves to the rest of the world.

### **Summary**

As discussed, food has developed its own form of discourse through social interactions involved with preparing, cooking, and conversing about food. Among these interactions, symbolic and social meanings are communicated. These interactions can be interpreted between cultures, especially through globalized television programs. Overall, this chapter has established the importance of televised food discourse and its impact on culture. Additionally, it has addressed the inaccuracies and lack of representation regarding the portrayal of formerly colonized people on television. Furthermore, I suggest here that *Parts Unknown* utilizes food discourse as a communicative gateway that conveys accurate understandings about formerly colonized cultures by allowing them to achieve agency. In this thesis, I will be exploring postcolonial meanings within the food discourse of *Parts Unknown* and explain how these meanings convey accurate or inaccurate understandings of people who have experienced colonial subjugation. As such, the following chapter will analyze the relevant literature pertaining to postcolonial rhetorical representations, food discourse, and depictions of culture through food rhetoric. Finally, the third chapter will detail the rhetorical methodology to be used in my investigation of the food discourse in *Parts Unknown*. In order to analyze *Parts Unknown*



effectively, we must consider it within the context of previous research and literature involving aspects of postcolonialism and cultural representations on food and travel television shows.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

To engage in useful scholarly discussion about the significance of *Parts Unknown* and its relationship with postcolonial theory and food rhetoric, previous research involved with this topic area must be examined. This chapter provides a review of literature summarizing how previous studies and criticisms have analyzed food discourse and the representation of formerly colonized people. Since *Parts Unknown* is a television show, this review will first explore how mediated representations of these cultures are communicated in mass media. Then, it will provide coverage of food discourse and its depictions of culture through the televisual apparatus. In this way, previous research will build a context for analysis of *Parts Unknown* and point toward the explanation of food discourse as a “gateway” for competent cultural exchanges between postcolonial and Western cultures.

### **Representations of Formerly Colonized People**

The influence of Western culture has overshadowed the representation of people from postcolonial societies. Through long histories of colonial subjection, formerly colonized groups of people have been limited in their power, voice, and influence which has ultimately affected their global representation. The subjects of focus in this thesis are the “formerly colonized,” or groups of people who have been subjected and effected by colonization. This includes both indigenous and local groups of people who are distinct, but share common histories, effects, and problems due to colonialism. Regarding indigenous groups, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2006) explain that indigeneity is inherently political and focuses “a series of debates about identity, resistance, and transformation” (p. 6). Indigenous groups are also referred to as natives, first nation people, or aboriginals; however, these groups share the collective understanding that they were the original inhabitants of a specific land or region (Moreton-Robinson, 2004;

Prokhovnik, 2015; Waldron, 2003). Locality, however, refers to those tied to a specific settlement or a community (Lovell, 1998). Locality implies the notion of belonging and “serves to provide collective identity and a sense of cohesion and cultural commensality” to a group of people (p. 4). Local people may not necessarily consider themselves original inhabitants of a place, but can create a sense of collectivism in terms of their geographical placement and experience. While being mindful of the specific differences and nuances of culture, I categorize locals as individuals living in a specific location and indigenous groups as the first inhabitants of a specific area. However, I consider both categories as the “formerly colonized” based on their shared colonial and postcolonial experiences.

Overall, formerly colonized groups consider themselves separate from dominant structures established by imperial rule (Cobo, 1981). Developing the agency to self-determine and achieving the freedom to express social and cultural development are often struggles for formerly colonized people (Koivurova, 2010). Due to the lasting effects of colonialism, adequate expressions of indigenous and local representation are often challenged, obscured, and sometimes removed by dominating sets of discourses imposed by Western colonization (Ashcroft et al., 2006). Therefore, the shared problem among the formerly colonized regard their self-representation, which is limited and controlled by Western discourse.

Many postcolonial scholars agree that the effects of Western European imperialism have resulted in several forms of social control (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006; Shome & Hegde, 2002). This control has suppressed accurate understandings of the formerly colonized people through imperial narratives and other forms of colonial discourse. In other words, the issue of representation toward previously colonized groups is a communicative one. The dominating effects of Western narratives, texts, languages, and other forms of communication have

discursively pushed the representation of these cultures to the margins (Ashcroft et al., 2006). This has reinforced a binary between cultures, where modernized Western culture is considered the “center” of society, while formerly colonized groups are positioned at society’s margins (Ashcroft et al., 2006). As a result, postcolonial perspectives and forms of cultural expression have been and continue to be overshadowed by the dominant voices of Western discourse. Thus, the mainstream representation of formerly colonized people becomes filtered through a Eurocentric point of view.

One of the main reasons why the representation of formerly colonized groups remains marginalized is because Western discourse has objectified them. Moreton-Robinson (2004) claims that formerly colonized people have “often been represented as objects—as the ‘known.’ Rarely, are they represented as subjects, as ‘knowers” (p. 75). Some of the first notions about the objectification of people within postcolonial societies are discussed in Edward Said’s (1978) book, *Orientalism*. Said defines Orientalism as “a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p. 11). By saying the “Orient,” Said is referring to cultures and societies in the East that have been dominated by Western imperialism. Therefore, Orientalism considers postcolonial societies in the East as inferior, static, uncivilized, and unfamiliar (Said, 1978). When local and indigenous people are represented in this way, they are treated as passive objects that are acted upon and discursively controlled by Western societies.

Some postcolonial scholars argue that Said’s (1978) notion of Orientalism is an outdated concept because its theorization is based on a historical divide where borders between the West and the East were more rigid (Bhabha, 1994; Shome & Hegde, 2002). Due to contemporary postcolonial phenomena such as globalization, decolonization, post-independence movements, and contemporary diaspora, the divides between nations, cultures, and people have become

blurred (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Canclini (1995) extends this notion of blurred boundaries to say that even the inequity of indigenous and local representation cannot be described in polarized terms such as the “dominant” versus the “dominated” (p. 65). Thus, many scholars today have utilized the term “Othering” or “Otherness” in conjunction with or in place of Orientalism. Much like Orientalism, Othering focuses on the significance of difference.

According to Stuart Hall (1997), “Meaning arises through the ‘difference’ between participants of any dialogue” and therefore the Other is essential to constructing meaning (p. 236). However, cultural difference expressed through the notion of the Other has been fabricated, essentialized, and ultimately objectified by dominant discourses. As a result, the Other has become a spectacle, an object controlled and gazed upon (Hall, 1997). Debord (1995) defines the spectacle “a concrete inversion of life, and as such, the autonomous movement of non-life” (p. 12). What Debord is suggesting here is that spectacles are ontologically distanced or detached versions of reality because they are mediated images and representations of real-life entities. Furthermore, spectacles are often the signs and languages produced by dominant structures, which serve as a “total justification for the conditions and aims of an existing system” (p. 13). In other words, the spectacle intentionally and unintentionally reinforces dominant modes of perception that become the norms and expectations of a society. Since spectacles create distance between reality, representations of the Other are often diffused and altered through the established norms of dominant Western structures. From a discursive standpoint, this suggests that Western society has control over these representations to which the local, indigenous, or postcolonial Other is denied the opportunity of self-representation. Anderson (2006) claims that the control involved with cultural Othering stems from an emotional desire within Western societies to declare their own nations as dominant and more civilized. Thus, Western discourse

has typically constructed and controlled local and indigenous representations by fabricating their cultural difference through spectacles that depict them as the unfamiliar and inferior Other (Hall, 1997; Said, 1981).

A common strategy that has objectified and fabricated cultural difference through communication is fetishism. Fetishism is the process of becoming overly fixated or obsessed with an object (Freud, 1927). In terms of representation, these obsessions are often expressed through stereotypes, which convey flawed notions of locality and indigeneity in Western discourse (Bhabha, 1983). These often include stereotypes about expressions of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation. According to Bhabha (1983), stereotypes act as a fetish because Western societies become fixated on the simplification of stereotypes. When the complexity of culture is simplified, stereotypes are fetishized because one feels like they have gained “understanding” of a culture and are satisfied as a result. In other words, the stereotype objectifies aspects of the formerly colonized allowing Westerners to feel like they are in control. McClintock (1995) also points to the idea that, through fetishism, Western discourse become a “discipline of containment” for formerly colonized people (p. 182). She explains that Western discourse has cultivated specific sexual and racial stereotypes about these groups, which have depicted them as erotic deviants (McClintock, 1995). Therefore, these depictions of deviance have allowed Western discourse to consider formerly colonized people as something to be controlled for the entertainment and pleasure of “civilized” Western societies.

Griffiths (1994), however, recognizes a deeper and more nuanced form of fetishism through the myth of authenticity. Popular Western discourse claims to represent “authenticity,” but has instead overdetermined the complexity of difference involved with formerly colonized groups (Griffiths, 1994). This is often recognized within the liberal tone of Western discourse,

which tends to support the revival of traditional local and indigenous languages and cultural practices. Western discourse has assumed that recovering traditional practices creates a more authentic representation of indigeneity or locality (Griffiths, 1994). Instead it has fetishized the traditional past of formerly colonized groups as a qualifier for authenticity. As a result, these people are denied representation as a group that is involved with contemporary cultural changes and societal advancements (Fee, 1989). Additionally, Griffiths (1994) suggests this might also construct the belief “that issues of recovered ‘traditional’ rights are of a different order of equity from the right to general social justice and equity” (p. 71). Overall, Griffiths (1994) suggests that the “authentic” in Western discourse has become a fetishized commodity utilized to maintain a liberal perspective. Here, signs of authenticity are fetishized and expressed by liberal agendas that subtly oppresses and controls the voices of the formerly colonized people.

Formerly colonized groups are also represented through notions of exoticism, which are referenced frequently in postcolonial literature. Zilcosky (2016) claims that exoticism explains one’s “taste for that which is perceived to be outside, distant, and ‘different’” (p. 21). However, Huggan (2002) provides a more critical definition and explains that exoticism is a mode of aesthetic that renders people, objects, and places as strange and manufactures them into “Otherness” (p.13). In terms of representation, exoticism sensationalizes cultural difference to make postcolonial cultures seem more exciting or appealing to dominant Western societies. This is often seen within tourism, of which Fursich (2002) considers the “search for difference” as one of the motivations (p. 217). As a result, the tourism industry has exotified postcolonial difference through promotional images to maintain consumer interest (Van den Berghe, 1980). This supports the claim that formerly colonized groups are objectified as the “known,” with exoticism enhancing the Other as a controlled spectacle (Hall, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). Exoticism

has also been used to rewrite historical narratives about postcolonial cultures. Larkin (2002) explains that exoticism was used to romanticize the horrible acts of violence toward Native Americans in America's frontier history into stories of popular myth. Thus, the representation of those formerly colonized is objectified through exoticism by sensationalizing difference and is repressed by repurposing violent histories into mystical narratives.

Overwhelming evidence confirms that formerly colonized groups have been objectified through notions of Orientalism, cultural Othering, fetishism, and exoticism. A common thread among these concepts is the assumed discursive control by Western society, which works to objectify formerly colonized groups. The overall objectification imposed by Western discourse has symbolically pushed these cultures to the margins of society. However, several scholars offer theoretical insights that could work toward the deconstruction of these objectified representations.

Clifford (2001) identifies the notion of articulated sites as an appropriate form of representation for formerly colonized groups. According to Clifford, articulation debunks reductive assumptions presented by authenticity claims. This includes the assumption that the representation of formerly colonized groups is about reviving "primordial, transhistorical attachments" such as ancestral laws, spirituality, and other cultural traditions (p. 180). Rather, the notion of articulation denies social binaries such as Black-versus-White and the Third World-versus-First World. Overall, articulation refers to the "concrete connections" between cultural differences that are expressed as a collective voice (Clifford, 2001, p. 181). Furthermore, articulation is a fluid and malleable concept, allowing for these connections to disconnect and adjust. Clifford's understanding of articulation also expands on Hall's (1997) claim that difference is necessary to establish meaning; however, articulation empowers cultural differences



by making them more salient, while at the same time denying rigid assumptions about one's identity or representation. Thus, Clifford's notion of articulation allows for the removal of reductive assumptions and includes formerly colonized groups within the discursive formation of their own representation.

Many scholars have also referenced hybridity as a solution to the inequity and objectification of representation (Bhabha, 1994; Kraidy, 2005; Shome and Hegde, 2002; Steeves, 2008). Overall, hybridity is an inclusive description of culture that interconnects the realms of race, language, and ethnicity (Kraidy, 2005). In addition, hybridity opposes the idea of identity as a singular notion. Echoing Clifford's (2001) perspective, Bhabha (1994) postulates that hybridity is produced and reinforced by articulating cultural difference through discourse. This develops a more complex and realistic depiction of identity as liminal, or in Bhabha's words an "in-between" (p. 1). Within this liminality, a variety of characteristics that make up one's identity becomes inclusive, fluid, and less restricted. These hybrid, liminal identities become socially unifying because they allow for more complex identities to be accepted. Overall, hybridity can be considered a key notion of resistance within colonial hegemonies because it resists or challenges standard, formulaic notions of identity portrayed through the representation of formerly colonized people.

### **News Media Framing of the Other**

News media coverage plays a vital role in cultivating knowledge and opinion about the representations of formerly colonized people (Ponting, 1990; Wilkes, Corrigan-Brown, & Ricard, 2010). Since *Parts Unknown* is broadcasted on CNN's television network, the narrative of the show is often conveyed in a journalistic style. Even Bourdain frequently refers to himself as a "journalist" within most of the series' episodes. Therefore, it is important to understand how

Western news media have represented formerly colonized people to recognize similar phenomena that could emerge within my analysis of *Parts Unknown*. The same issues involved with the objectification of formerly colonized groups such as Orientalism, cultural Othering, fetishism, and exoticism are also expressed within the discourse of Western news media. In our contemporary mass media environment, these notions are embedded within messages conveyed to mass publics through various technological platforms, especially television. Based on the global reach of modern communication technology, people in mainstream society often develop an understanding of formerly colonized people through news media messages. However, discursive forms of objectification and control embedded within these news media representations can create misunderstandings and damaging false notions about formerly colonized groups.

One of the more prominent areas of criticism in terms of the representation of formerly colonized cultures involves media framing. According to Wilkes, Corrigan-Brown, and Ricard (2010), “Media framing results from a system of reporting wherein reporters use a particular narrative structure, rely on officials as sources, and invoke public opinion in particular ways that, taken together, serve to marginalize collective actors and their issues” (p. 41). As such, media framing conveyed by dominant Western media outlets has often contributed to the marginalized representation of formerly colonized groups.

Commonly, Western media frames countries and nations beyond the West in their narratives as areas experiencing immense conflict and crises (Lule, 2003; Said, 1981). As a result, formerly colonized people who live in these parts of the world have been represented as uncivil, which reflects Said’s (1978) notion of Orientalism. Several scholars have produced studies that have supported this claim. Baylor (1996) analyzed a series of NBC *Nightly News*

segments about Native American protests that aired from 1968 to 1979 and discovered that 90% of the media utilized a “militant frame” (p. 244). Under the militant frame, stories about Native American protesters focused “on violence and the breakdown of law and order” (p. 244). The Orientalist notion of incivility is also reflected in Valaskakis’ (1994) media frame analysis on news stories covering the 1990 “Oka Resistance.” Her discussion explains how news outlets framed the symbolic meaning of “Warriors” in Mohawk Indian culture as people of chaotic violence (i.e., incivility). According to Valaskakis, “the media’s ‘Warriors’ were monolithic representations of Indian activists,” which depicted them through military images and criminalized them through association with terrorism (p. 61). However, “Warriors” in Mohawk society actually symbolize a defender or keeper of peace (Valaskakis, 1994). Therefore, news media discursively manipulated the public’s understanding of the Mohawk Warrior as a symbol of violence and chaos. This caused the Oka Resistance to be interpreted as an event of incivility rather than as a protest struggling for equal rights. Through these Orientalist depictions of incivility, media framing perpetuates an “us” versus “them” dichotomy between Western and formerly colonized cultures (Wilkes, Corrigan-Brown, & Ricard, 2010, p. 43).

The media have also framed the formerly colonized through cultural Othering. Miller and Ross (2004) discuss how stories in the *Boston Globe* framed Native Americans as the Other. According to Miller and Ross, representations of the Other are perpetuated by “in-group/outgroup language” used in Western news media to distinguish Native Americans from Western society (p. 249). They discovered that most the stories published by the *Boston Globe* framed Native Americans as either “generic outsiders” or as “degraded Indians.” If framed as a generic outsider, Native Americans were considered as “non-participants” in mainstream society’s decision making (p. 252). However, the degraded Indian depicted them as

manipulative, greedy, and deceitful. Regardless to which type of framing the *Boston Globe* used to describe Native Americans, they were still represented and distanced from mainstream society as the Other.

Allen and Bruce (2017) suggest that media framing is able to construct formerly colonized groups as the Other through negative and narrow stereotypes that separate them from dominant racial groups. Their content analysis argues that news media in New Zealand sensationalized crimes committed by indigenous and other non-dominant groups in South Auckland. Since 52% of South Auckland's population is constituted by indigenous Pacific people, the South Auckland area has been discursively segregated as the Other in news coverage. Allen and Bruce's study discovered that the media segregated South Auckland by highlighting "issues of crime and violence, associating brownness with non-normative behavior, and limiting the ability of people in South Auckland to publically define their lives and experiences" (p. 238). In other words, New Zealand's news media have utilized stereotypes about indigenous people to depict South Auckland as a dangerous area. Thus, media framing reflects yet another form of Western discursive control that has manipulated indigenous representation and marginalized them as Others.

Overall, Western media framing has manipulated components of local and indigenous representation discursively to maintain global dominance. Sometimes, representations of formerly colonized people are stressed and manipulated by more than one form of discursive power. Willems (2005) describes the tense postcolonial relationship between Britain and Zimbabwe, and how both power structures utilized elements of local and indigenous representation within news coverage to achieve global dominance. In 2000, a series of invasions occurred on White-owned farm land, which were allegedly supported by Zimbabwe's president

Robert Mugabe (Meredith, 2002). As a result, the British media framed the situation as “a Black-versus-White conflict” (p. 98). Much of this was because of the power imbalances within Zimbabwe’s society, from which organizations that represented white farmers constantly influenced British media (Willems, 2005). Mugabe responded in Zimbabwe’s government-controlled media that, as a former colonial power, Britain was trying to “derail Zimbabwe’s land reform” (p. 101). Thus, Mugabe exploited this already-framed racial conflict opportunistically to gain support from Black diasporic activists and re-frame Britain’s claims. Here, both the British and Zimbabwean media utilized race and diaspora, components that represent the formerly colonized, to frame the conflict in their favor. Although this issue is very nuanced, the representation of local and indigenous groups was manipulated by two conflicting forms of power to maintain control.

### **Travel Television**

Scholars have also examined representations of formerly colonized groups in travel television. Travel television can be understood as a genre that considers a globalized market through non-fictional, mediated documentation of worldwide destinations that appeal to and emphasize tourism (Fursich, 2002). Today, travel television has gained significant attention in popular culture. This is because the tourism industry established itself worldwide as an extremely profitable economic sector (Roe & Urquhart, 2001). To extend this profitability, the television industry has capitalized on the rising interest in tourism by expanding their “development of travel-related media products” (Fursich, 2002, p. 204). Thus, postcolonial and communication theory have been utilized in conjunction with each other to examine representations of formerly colonized groups in travel television.

Most postcolonial media scholars criticize the representations and effects of travel television. These concerns focus on how globalized television perpetuates objectified representations of formerly colonized people for capital gains. Loshitzky (1996) claims that indigenous and local cultures have been deprived of accurate representation due to the commercial goals of travel-related television media. She explains, “Western networks have flooded the ‘nativist’ periphery with mediatized commodities of late capitalism” (p. 328). Here, television networks have marketed formerly colonized cultures and societies within television shows to satisfy Western curiosity. Thus, the commercialized appeal to Western audiences has repackaged aspects of other cultures as objects of fascination or revulsion (Loshitzky, 1996). This aligns with notions of exoticism and Orientalism, in which the formerly colonized are commercialized through both frames of representation. However, the tourism industry tends to rely on exoticism due to its commercial appeal of positivity and exploration (Steeves, 2008). According to Furisch (2002), the travel television genre is “fundamentally structured by the search for difference, which results in the perpetual replay of manufacturing, celebrating, and exoticizing difference” (p. 223). Therefore, exoticism is used in travel television to manufacture local and indigenous difference through different types of aesthetic and sensational rendering to make its content seem more “exciting” to viewers (Huggan, 2002). Travel television shows often rely on exoticizing aspects of the formerly colonized through television discourse to market content (Furisch, 2002). Overall, formerly colonized people are not accurately depicted in travel television because they are objectified through superficial and essentialized glimpses of “culture” such that the televisual apparatus filters their actual representation (Loshitsky, 1996).

Much like news media, travel television also perpetuates cultural Othering and Orientalism within its discourse. According to Said (1978), the Western mindset is ethnocentric

and reductive in terms of cultural diversity. This attitude is what facilitates the objectification of formerly colonized groups and continues the marginalization of its people. Numerous American travel television programs reflect these tendencies.

Gray's (2013) study on *The Amazing Race* claims that the show emphasizes cultural Othering through chauvinistic projection, or expressions of national superiority. According to Gray, "Much of the work that goes into nation-building takes the form of imagining those who are not like us and projecting onto them all manner of unsavory attributes" (p. 96). Ultimately, this is so Westerners can flatter themselves with the distinctions seen between "the savage them and the noble us" (p. 96). Gray points to several examples within episodes of *The Amazing Race*. He first critiques the show's production practices, which controlled all expressions of local representation. In Gray's analysis, for example, the producers decided which local people were cast and how they were represented (Gray, 2013). However, locals were often silenced and "functioned as backdrops," which limited them from contributing to any meaningful interaction or dialogue to show (p. 97). This situation provides an example of how the voices of local people are limited by cultural Othering through television. Spivak's (1988) notion of subjugated knowledges supports this idea of the hegemonic silencing of locals. Not only does the *Amazing Race* reflect the chauvinistic satisfaction of dominance, but it also limits the agency of local cultures to speak and participate in determining their own representation. Producers of *The Amazing Race* also contribute to these chauvinistic endeavors by essentializing cultures within the show, which influences cultural Othering. In one episode, contestants in Botswana were presented with a challenge called "Food or Water" (p. 97). Simply within the title, Botswanan culture is reduced and depicted as a largely impoverished country where local people are constantly searching for nourishment. Thus, travel television tends to objectify formerly

colonized groups through cultural Othering for the sake of producing an image of the West as more civilized or dominant.

Marx and Engels (1948) predicted that commodification, the process of treating something or someone as a commodity, would spread globally. According to Steeves (2008), forms of local and indigenous representation become objects for consumption by Western societies in travel television. In her qualitative analysis of *Survivor*, *The Amazing Race*, and a special segment of *American Idol*, Steeves suggests that these shows reinforce cultural Othering through “distant and homogenized” depictions of African culture (p.438). For example, representations of the Kenya’s indigenous Maasai were used to represent the entire continent of Africa within *The Amazing Race*. Although the continent is comprised of 54 different and unique countries and numerous indigenous groups, images and notions of the Maasai are appropriated to boost the show’s commercial value. Ultimately, this homogenizes understandings of indigeneity for capitalist gains.

Shome and Hegde (2002) warn that the continued depiction of formerly colonized groups as the Other “reproduces the violence of colonial modernities and fixes difference in a spectacle of Otherness” (p. 263). Consequently, formerly colonized people are objectified through commodification because it makes their representation static and easy for viewers to understand. At the same time, these reductively fixed representations reflect enough difference to be intriguing. Therefore, one could suggest that travel television contributes to cultural Othering by commodifying formerly colonized groups as a homogenized exotic for viewers to consume. It can be argued that travel television relies on the process of commodification to maintain a simple, yet recognizable image of local and indigenous difference to satisfy consumers of travel television.



However, criticism should not discredit travel television entirely because it would be impossible for a show to discuss all aspects of culture within a limited time frame. It should also be understood that the objectification of formerly colonized people within television is not often malicious or intentional. Peters-Little (2003) claims that this issue is more complex for he has “yet to meet anyone who makes a film for the soul purpose of inciting general hatred” (p. 17). Loshitzky (1996) suggests travel television creates a new political and cultural reality, which requires a new method to conceptualize its communicative impact. According to Fursich (2002), “These shows can widen narrow representations of the Other” (p. 223). Although these depictions of formerly colonized cultures are limited to mediated televisual representations, their authentic complexities can be exemplified in a positive way (Furisch, 2002). Rather, critics and viewers should be mindful of mediated forms of formerly colonized representation and recognize these “glimpses” of culture as a starting point to decrease Western ambivalence.

### **Indigenous Media**

Clearly, the representation of formerly colonized groups is objectified by the Western media industry’s pursuit of profit. Therefore, this issue is structural and is supported by Western discourse’s assumption of dominance within the global mediascape. However, independent local and indigenous media sources, specifically broadcast television, have resisted these narratives and attempted to bring equity to their representation. Markelin (2017) highlights the role of the World Indigenous Broadcasting Network (WITBN) in representing the “previously silenced voices” of indigenous groups (p. 443). Overall, the WITBN unites various indigenous broadcasters and produces a collective voice in mainstream media to restore indigenous language and culture through broadcast journalism (Markelin, 2017). Additionally, the organization’s content introduces viewers to the reality of indigenous life and conveys issues form an

indigenous point of view. For example, Smith's (2011) discussion of an indigenous television broadcaster, *Maori Television*, explains how their screenings of indigenous stories and indigenous histories "challenge orthodox understandings of New Zealand national identity" (p. 719). Therefore, indigenous television can be considered a form of discursive resistance to the domination and control imposed by Western media discourse. Overall, Western media have been unable to adequately articulate cultural diversity; therefore, media produced and conveyed by formerly colonized groups are necessary to create an inclusive public and a better functioning democracy (Markelin, 2017).

### **Food Discourse**

Although it is important to understand the context and issues of formerly colonized representation within travel television and news media, the primary focus of this investigation examines televised food discourse. Therefore, to understand how *Parts Unknown* utilizes food discourse, it is important to understand how other studies have attempted to conceive the relationship between food, culture, and communication.

Overall, the concept of food discourse has not been clearly defined within communication or food studies literature. To many scholars, discourse is a system of thought that constitutes reality through expressions of language and symbol use (Foucault, 1972). Discourse is then a body of knowledge containing specific forms of language and symbols used within a conversation for specific forms of scholarly analysis and social practice (Cruse, 2006; Foucault, 1972). People have developed a form of discourse specific to food through social interactions that utilize language and symbols in specific ways to convey meaning. Within food studies, these interactions are often referred to as "foodways," which involve the production, preparation, consumption, and all other conceivable actions or practices involved with food (Dawkins, 2009;

Edwards, 2011; Houston, 2007; Tuomainen, 2009; Welch & Scarry, 1995). Furthermore, foodways reinforce different symbolic meanings in a way that people can communicate through and around food (Frye & Bruner, 2012; Welch & Scarry, 1995). Through these interactions, food has developed a body of knowledge that is always embodied within the conversation, which is argued here as food discourse.

Food is an object, which means it cannot physically speak or communicate; however, it can symbolize or signify. Therefore, it is important to describe the relationship between discourse and food to understand its communicative abilities. According to Barad (2003), “The relationship between the material and discursive is one of mutual entailment” (p. 822). Both material and discursive phenomena exist in conjunction with each other in which “matter and meaning are mutually articulated” (p. 822). Thus, social interactions (the discursive) are elicited by the object of food (the material) and develop into systems of thought and meaning (Welch & Scarry, 1995). Therefore, food and social interactions are necessary components that construct food discourse. Based on this symbiotic relationship between the material and the discursive, food discourse can be understood as a distinct communicative phenomenon.

### **Postcolonial Food Discourse**

Food discourse is significant in that it has the potential to communicate cross-cultural meanings. Van den Berghe (1984) considers the foodways of people to be symbolic expressions of sociality, and along with language, they become markers for one’s ethnic or cultural identity. Furthermore, food discourse allows people within certain cultures to express their individuality, while at the same time discovering their group membership (Counihan, 1999). Thus, many studies have examined food discourse’s impact on culture from a postcolonial perspective. Previous research has shown that food discourse has been used as a communicative platform for

issues involved with the postcolonial situation. This includes issues of identity, representation, and power, all of which stem from the effects of the colonial period.

Postcolonial food discourse first contributes to the expanding conversation about formations of the formerly colonized Other. Dawkins (2009) supports the idea that food functions in multicultural societies as a marker of “cultural continuity, difference, and assimilation” (p. 33). However, her research analyzes specific ethnographic accounts of migrant and diasporic groups within postcolonial societies and examines how food acts as an “intimate frontier” between the Self and the Other (p. 33). Overall, the “intimate frontier” is a desire for and the consumption of familiar foods, which creates particular gendered, racialized, and class subjectivities through nostalgic and nationalist discourse. According to Dawkins, this can be inclusive and exclusive regarding representations of the Other. For example, Khan (1994) discusses how in Trinidad, the social function of *juthaa* foods bonds Indian diasporic groups, while people outside of this group who consume *juthaa* food are considered “polluted” and essentially excluded as the Other (p. 245). However, Manekar (2005) explains how Indian grocery stores owned by diasporic groups use food to establish a transnational identity that provides more inclusiveness between the Self and Other. She suggests that Indian grocery stores represent a sense of “Indianness” within dominant American society that incorporates Indian culture into American society. Regardless, the food discourse conveyed by diasporic groups essentially develops an “intimate frontier” through the nostalgic and nationalistic rendering of food to communicate aspects of the individuality and to establish a variety of group memberships. As Dawkins (2009) suggests, “The terms of exclusion and inclusion between the self and Other are constantly in flux” (p. 34).

Turgeon and Pastinelli's (2002) examination of Quebec City's ethnic restaurants finds that these areas as "microspaces of intercultural encounter and exchange" where people can consume the Other through food (p. 247). Their analysis discovered that ethnic restaurants reduce distance and difference between cultures (Turgeon & Pastinelli). However, these restaurants tend to do so by evoking geographical and cultural appropriation to make foreign concepts seem familiar (Turgeon & Pastinelli). For example, ethnic restaurant owners adapted to their Quebecois clientele by combining exotic elements of their own culture with local Quebec culture. Although cultural appropriation occurs, members from different ethnic groups are in control of their cultural expressions. Additionally, these expressions can be viewed positively because of the encouraged interaction between mainstream culture and the Other. Furthermore, this blending of cultures is reinforced through food discourse. Based on this analysis, it could be suggested that ethnic restaurants, in a way, reflect Homi Bhabha's (1994) idea of an ambiguous "in-between" space that reinforces intercultural contact and hybridity are reinforced (p. 1). Food discourse, then, allows this in-between space to exist and for cultures to intermingle.

Formerly groups have also utilized food discourse as a form of protest. Many of these protests aimed to reaffirm the groups' cultural representations in which food discourse functioned commutatively to resist colonial domination. This is because throughout history there have been several forms of colonial control that have imposed their influence and control upon the cultural practices of indigenous and local groups. For example, Ikpe (1994) discusses how missionaries in colonial school systems convinced Nigerians that their foodways were inferior and thus urged them to adopt European food customs to become "civil." Hence, local and indigenous expressions of culture through food and foodways are not excused from the effects of imperial dominance, which has sparked many forms of resistance through food discourse.

Houston (2007) examines the communicative strategies embedded within Caribbean women's literature that attempt to reaffirm their indigenous representation against colonial hegemonies. Female Caribbean writers applied the concept of "making do," a common understanding in Caribbean food culture that embodies the idea of using limited resources to create something meaningful (Houston, 2007, p. 99). Houston highlights food discourse within Kincaid's (1988) book, *A Small Place*, which discusses colonial exploitation of the Caribbean food trade. Kincaid outlines the inequity of food export policies that profited and sustained wealthier, Western countries, but left countries in the Caribbean without an even exchange. Even today, trade policies such as trade barriers and tariffs force nations in the Caribbean to buy back what they have already exported to Western nations. Thus, Kincaid refers to the Caribbean as a "small place" because it is currently an area that produces a large amount of goods for other countries; however, inequitable trade policies create a struggle for their own self-sustainment. Houston (2007) also analyzes the short story "Burnt Cake" written by Trinidadian author M. Nourbese Philip. Philip's (1992) story discusses the problems of Caribbean woman in New York and how baking a traditional Caribbean family cake reminds her of her individuality and identity as a Caribbean woman against the ubiquity of cultural influence imposed by the Western world. Houston's (2007) notion of "making do" is reflected in both literary works in which both stories reflect the trope of creating meaning about their culture through minimal resources. Thus, Caribbean literature has utilized food discourse as form of protest and as a reclamation of their representation.

### **Televised Food Discourse**

Food discourse has been utilized in a variety of ways on television. From competitive cooking shows to travel-related food programs, food discourse has a broad scope within the

television landscape. Yet, Western society still dominates the language, production and discourse of food television. Consider popular food shows like *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*, *Hell's Kitchen*, *Diners, Drive-ins and Dives*, and the subject under analysis, *Parts Unknown*. Each of these shows is produced by Western societies that feature White, English-speaking hosts. Overall, research that has examined Western-produced food television has discovered the perpetuation of Western values like competitive individualism and capitalist consumerism. At the same time, other studies have reflected forms of objectification like Othering, Orientalism, and exoticism. Based on the results of these studies, the insights and information they convey can be helpful to the present analysis of formerly colonized groups in *Parts Unknown*.

Philips (2016) explains that the genre of food television was traditionally used to be a platform to teach audiences how to cook. However, the discourse food television has been influenced by the competitive nature of cooking shows and its production is now in “favor of competitive individualism” (p. 169). Individualistic ideologies of passion and competition have framed food discourse in competitive cooking as shows of personal victory over others (Philips, 2016). These individualistic characteristics that are imposed by values in Western society have transformed the discourse food television from a platform of learning to competitive space. From a postcolonial perspective, Western individualism is perpetuated through televisual food discourse, which could overshadow representations of formerly colonized groups.

Wright and Sandlin's (2009) textual analysis of food television claims that its discourse also acts to promote the agendas of multinational corporations by supplanting food discourse in capitalist ideologies (Wright & Sandlin, 2009). They claim, “Cooking shows are cultural products encoded with meanings that help shape audiences' identities, lifestyles, and relationships to consumer culture” (p. 402). Thus, cooking shows have a significant hegemonic

influence by perpetuating a consumer culture (Wright & Sandlin, 2009). To support this claim, Wright and Sandlin analyze cooking shows that utilized “celebrity chefs” like Rachel Ray. Among their findings, these programs were flooded with sponsorships, commercials, and product placement techniques that advertise fine cooking technologies and luxurious culinary items (Wright & Sandlin, 2009). This influence cultivates materialistic ideologies that suggest certain cooking shows hold superior knowledges of taste and fine dining. Thus, the content of food television is shaped by the influence of Western corporations.

Lukacs (2010) expands upon the power of Western consumer culture and discusses its dominant influence within global economic flows of the television industry through a reception analysis of *Iron Chef*. She explains that *Iron Chef* is a competitive cooking show produced in Japan, but imported to the United States, Europe, Canada, and Australia. The show recruits cooks from around the world to compete against multimillion dollar celebrity chefs like Bobby Flay, Mario Batali, and Masaharu Morimoto. Philip’s (2016) notion of “competitive individualism,” is noticeably present within *Iron Chef*; however, Lukacs’ (2010) study focuses on contextualizing the globalization flows involved with the show’s production and dissemination. The bulk of Lukacs’ study understands these globalization flows by discussing the strategy of “soft power discourse” implemented Japanese television producers. Soft power discourse is a rhetorical tactic that uses the attractiveness of cultural values and ideologies to seduce audiences and retain power (Nye, 1990). This often occurs through the dissemination of imported pop culture commodities, like *Iron Chef*, which convey aspects of the host culture. For an example, made-in-Japan media entertainment has become widely popular within the United States (Lukacs, 2010). The idea here is that for countries like Japan, soft power discourse would allow these nations to achieve more global appreciation.



However, Lukacs (2010) argues that soft power discourse “simplifies the processes of cultural translation” in that the cultural values produced through these commodities are not always “transparent and significant” to viewers (pp. 410-411). In *Iron Chef*, this simplification process creates an “Orientalist framework” by exoticizing Japan (p. 417). For example, *Iron Chef* often uses tacky dialogue and production techniques often associated with Kung-Fu movies that conflate stereotypical sense of oddity to Japanese culture. Lukacs says this is a problem because viewers rely on the exotified aspects of *Iron Chef* and make Orientalist assumptions about Japanese culture as odd and unfamiliar—the exact opposite of Western society. Furthermore, many viewers in Lukacs’ study claimed to enjoy *Iron Chef*, but did not necessarily relate what they valued about the show to Japan. For example, many viewers enjoyed the “Hollywood-style” music, the competition, and overall lifestyle format of the show rather than Japan’s cultural values embedded in the show. Overall, Luckas argues that soft power discourse is limited by an audience’s response to imported media entertainment. Although Japan’s soft power discourse attempts to use commodities like *Iron Chef* to gain global appreciation, their cultural values are misperceived through exoticism, which perpetuates Orientalist assumptions. Considering the findings from Phillips (2016), Wright and Sandlin (2009), and Luckas (2010), food television is heavily influenced by Western values that can obscure representations of culture.

However, food television has also proved to be a site of resistance against Western capitalist hegemony. Wright and Sandlin (2009) analyze “alternative” cooking shows that were presented as more authentic, relatable, and realistic (p. 405). One show that exemplified resistance within their analysis was *Sam the Cooking Guy*. The show’s discourse positioned its host, Sam, as an average guy with no formal culinary education. The show denied the need for celebrity chef status and limited the use of flashy cooking equipment to make cooking

understandable to all audiences. Thus, *Sam the Cooking Guy* resisted the ideological dominance of consumer culture. Since representations of local and indigenous cultures involves problematizing issues of postcolonial dominance and resistance, this thesis can utilize Wright and Sandlin's critical insights on corporate hegemony within its analysis of food discourse in *Parts Unknown*.

Regarding food television that is also influenced by the travel genre, Ketchum's (2005) analysis of the Food Network argues that its reality-based programming "constructs a consumer fantasy world" for viewers (p. 217). Specifically, its food and travel related programs contribute to the cultivation of these fantasies through certain discursive styles. One of the shows that Ketchum analyzes is *A Cook's Tour*, which also hosts Anthony Bourdain. Much like *Parts Unknown*, many episodes in *A Cook's Tour* take place in many countries beyond the West. The show depicts Bourdain as a "rugged New Yorker" who's on-screen rhetoric is authentically direct, coarse, and explicit (p. 229). Ketchum continues to explain that Bourdain's discourse acts to invite the audience to experience unfamiliar cuisine, which contributes to the perpetuation of audience fantasies of experiencing different cultures and people. More importantly, images of other cultures cooking, eating, and preparing food are aesthetically rendered by slow motion effects, music, and other forms of production editing. Again, exoticism can be recognized as playing a role in the perpetuation of mediated fantasies in food television. When unfamiliar cultural practices like cooking and eating are mediated, the image of formerly colonized groups is manipulated and perceived as more exciting (Huggan, 2002). Additionally, exoticized food television presents the dilemma of whether or not it is possible to account for cultural difference without mystifying its representation (Huggan). Thus, the discourse of travel-related food television presents this postcolonial dilemma of representation and identity. Although authentic

food discourse may seem to portray accurate representations of formerly colonized groups, television risks manufacturing representation through the televisual medium to appeal to Western audiences.

By contrast, Kelly (2017) views Bourdain's rhetoric and articulation of the formerly colonized Other more optimistically in his analysis of *No Reservations*. He explains that Bourdain resists the mass-produced tourist vision of other food and travel programs. According to Kelly, "Bourdain's brand speaks to audiences who might be dissatisfied with the McDonaldization of global culture, a process whereby the exportation of Western mass consumer culture renders the world safe and familiar to travelers" (p. 119). Throughout the program Bourdain points the finger at Western society and disapproves their homogenous Eurocentric vision of culture. Bourdain's narrative frequently problematizes commercial tourism, other food and travel programs, and Western society's power and dominance within globalized industries and communication systems. Bourdain's rhetoric thereby presents an overarching criticism of Western society's lack of self-reflexivity toward other cultures, especially those who have experienced colonization.

Kelly suggests that Bourdain's rhetoric in *No Reservations* tends to be a counter-narrative to other forms of Western food and travel television. This counter narrative is established by Bourdain's act of "going native," which is accomplished through his multicultural culinary experiences (p.114). Tresch (2001) defines "going native" as "crossing a line of objectivity to the extent that the researcher comes to experience the world in the same terms as the people he or she studies" (p. 303). Thus, "going native" is when one attempts to remove themselves from their typical norms and expectations to experience and live among members of another culture. Kelly (2017) explains that Bourdain assumes this positioning by supplanting himself beyond the tourist

spectacle and into the authentic experiences of local cultures. Based on *No Reservations*' food and travel theme, these "going native" experiences frequently involve food. According to Kelly, *No Reservations* presents food as a "transgressive act, defying the well-worn paths of acceptable travel, violating the standards of decorum, and deterritorializing the culinary map" (p. 113). Thus, it is Bourdain's discursive positioning that allows him to utilize food as an entry point to explore and discuss the culture which he has embedded himself within. An example of this is displayed in one episode of *No Reservations* where Bourdain visits the Azores Islands. By "going native" through food, he articulates the hybridity of cultures within the Azores Islands by using "compositional elements of different cuisine" to make sense of the formerly colonized Other (Kelly, 2017, p. 120). In this episode, Bourdain's voice-overs provide a historical context about the cultures and groups of people who live in the Azores Islands by reflecting on their culinary traditions. He makes a point to express that these traditions were influenced by Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, African, and American cultures, not a singular group, thus representing the hybridity these cultures through food. Furthermore, comparisons like these are recognized through Bourdain's conversations with people from the local cultures that are usually in the presence of multicultural meals. Overall, his rhetoric in this specific episode suggests that the fusion of different food traditions connected Azores Island communities and maintained their uniqueness as a hybrid culture. Bourdain's positioning of "going native" through food allows *No Reservations* to provide discussions about other cultures that are complex and beyond reductionist Western assumptions.

### **Summary**

Scholars have provided an overwhelming amount of evidence of the objectification of representation toward formerly colonized groups, especially within food and travel television.

Regarding travel television, these groups are often depicted through notions of Orientalism and cultural Othering (Hall, 1997; Said, 1978). Additionally, televisual representations of formerly colonized cultures are also subject to fetishism and exoticism that commodify them as an object for Western pleasure and consumption (Furisch, 2002; Huggan, 2002; Loshitzky, 1996; Steeves, 2008). In terms of food television, the postcolonial effects of Western dominance are also reflected within its discourse. However, some postcolonial scholars suggest that formerly colonized groups can resist colonial hegemonies through proper articulation and hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Clifford, 2001; Kraidy, 2005; Shome & Hegde, 2002). Although many studies offer insights about resistance from indigenous and local groups, none of them have examined how food discourse and travel television work in conjunction to communicate understandings of formerly colonized groups. Therefore, this thesis will examine specific episodes of *Parts Unknown* and investigate how its food discourse functions as a “gateway” that communicates understandings about the representation of formerly colonized people. Furthermore, this thesis will also show how *Parts Unknown*'s food discourse resists objectifying the representation of formerly colonized groups. The following chapter will outline the specific methods that will be used to analyze *Parts Unknown*.

## CHAPTER III: METHOD

Before critiquing the representation of formerly colonized groups and the food discourse in *Parts Unknown*, a clear method of analysis must be outlined. Overall, method and theory are mutually reinforcing within textual and rhetorical criticisms. Therefore, I will use postcolonial theory and assumptions about food discourse to recognize certain aspects of formerly colonized groups and how they are represented in *Parts Unknown*. Then I will apply close textual analysis (CTA) to identify specific themes and clusters of terms. By using CTA, allows the meanings embedded in the text about formerly colonized representation will to emerge inductively through the food discourse of *Parts Unknown*. First, this chapter will describe my text, which are three episodes of *Parts Unknown* that take place in postcolonial countries and feature local and indigenous cultures. These detailed descriptions will explain why these episodes of *Parts Unknown* are significant to the representation of formerly colonized groups and food discourse. Then, this chapter will explain how I will conduct my analysis by outlining relevant concepts within postcolonial theory and food discourse. Overall, this chapter provides an explanation of how I will conduct my analysis.

### **Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown**

Anthony Bourdain is the host of CNN's, *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown*. A former chef in his own right, Bourdain uses his culinary expertise as a rhetorical strategy to convey meanings about the culture he is reporting. As a text, the show *Parts Unknown* is unique in that it combines the genres of food and travel television. Bourdain's use of food discourse communicates multiple aspects about different cultures such as art, history, politics, and society. Bourdain's show seeks to provide insights and encourage mainstream audiences to learn about "unknown" cultures through food. Although *Parts Unknown* is considered a television show, it

also incorporates elements of journalism within its production. Much of the show's voice-over narration by Bourdain reports on the historical, political, and social issues of nations in a "newsworthy" fashion and frequently incorporates food discourse within its messages. This is evident in that each episode's discursive content is consistently structured by several interviews with locals, well-seasoned travelers, and political figures in the presence of cultural dishes and food.

*Parts Unknown* also proves to be a significant as a cultural artifact based on its global reach and success among television audiences. The show retains many viewers from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America (cnnpressblogs.cnn.com, 2013). Although *Parts Unknown* is produced by the American production company Zero Point Zero and broadcasted on CNN's network, the show reaches a wide international audience. The series is available through online streaming platforms such as Netflix, Vudu, and Amazon Video, reflecting its adaptability to contemporary forms of television and its accessibility to audiences. Regarding the show's success, *Parts Unknown* has won 5 Emmy Awards, a 2013 Peabody Award, and 11 nominations for writing, sound mixing, editing, and cinematography. After the second episode of its premier in 2013, *Parts Unknown* boosted its viewership by 30% and retained 974,000 viewers. Today, the show is number one across cable news channels for viewers between the ages of 25 and 54. The wide reach and overall success of *Parts Unknown* also suggests its potential to impact how representations of formerly colonized people are understood and valued within society.

Since this analysis focuses on representations of formerly colonized people, the specific texts I will examine are episodes of *Parts Unknown* that feature postcolonial countries. The first episode I will analyze will be "Madagascar," which was aired during Season 5. Then, I will

analyze “Sri Lanka,” an episode that aired during Season 10. Finally, I will analyze “Trinidad,” which aired during Season 9. I have chosen these episodes because combined, they provide a broader scope of representation involving formerly colonized groups that come from various ethnic backgrounds and establish a diversity of cultural identities. I chose to analyze three episodes because each of them is between 40 and 50 minutes long, is extremely dynamic, and provides a sufficient amount of content to analyze. Additionally, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad are often “after-thoughts” because they are located off the mainland of the more widely known geographical areas of Africa, India, and the Americas. Therefore, critical inquiry is necessary to bring the representation of indigenous groups who live in these areas to fruition.

Individually, these texts also provide reasons for critical analysis. First, Madagascar has often been represented on television through nature shows and documentaries based on its abundant wildlife and exotic landscapes. On television, the nation has hardly ever been considered as an area where people live. *Parts Unknown*, however, features local and indigenous people from Madagascar and aspects of their history in the episode. Thus, analyzing “Madagascar” as a text could provide new information or knowledge about indigenous Malagasy. The second episode, “Sri Lanka,” is also an important text because the nation recently ended a 26-year long civil war between the Sri Lankan military and a resistance group known as the Tamil Tigers (Stone, 2011). Thus, Sri Lanka is experiencing contemporary forms of postcolonialism; an analysis of *Parts Unknown* could provide a better understanding of about the representation of formerly colonized groups who have been entrenched in this conflict since 1983. Although the final episode of analysis is called “Trinidad,” *Parts Unknown* represents both Trinidad and Tobago as they are twin island sovereign states. Trinidad and Tobago are often exoticized and commodified through tourist appeals for vacation. For example, the popular



“Carnival” celebration is marketed as a tourist product and attracted over 35,000 tourists to visit Trinidad and Tobago in 2016 (OxfordBusinessGroup.com, 2016). Thus, representations of Trinidad and Tobago tend to be subjected to the dominance of Western tourist discourse, which has limited perspectives and understandings about the local and indigenous people who live there. Since *Parts Unknown* exclusively features local and indigenous folks, analyzing the episode “Trinidad” could provide a more authentic understanding about Trinidad and Tobago’s formerly colonized groups. Overall, “Madagascar,” “Sri Lanka,” and “Trinidad” are relevant texts because each location was formerly colonized by European colonial powers and are populated by various local and indigenous groups that have experienced colonialism directly and/or its effects.

### **Postcolonial Theory**

Postcolonial theory presents a highly complex approach to communication. Therefore, a discussion of its foundations and assumptions are required to comprehend its influence within *Parts Unknown*. Overall, postcolonial research strives to establish an adequate understanding of culture after the influence of imperial dominance. However, postcolonial studies cannot be described under one simple definition. Rather, the theory relies on contexts situated in the historical facts of imperialism to guide its investigation (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006). To effectively utilize postcolonial theory for research purposes, one must discern colonialism’s historical impact. Loomba (2015) defines colonialism as “the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods” (p. 20). Colonialism itself is a phenomenon entrenched in human history. These include conquests of the Roman Empire, Genghis Khan’s occupation of the Middle East and China, civilizations of the Aztec empire, and a variety of other imperial endeavors (Loomba, 2015). Although postcolonial theory accounts for any formerly colonized

nation, most scholarly attention has focused on the 16<sup>th</sup> century imperialist movements of European powers into Asia, Africa, and the Americas (Ashcroft et. al, 2006; Said, 1978; Shome & Hegde, 2002).

Speculation toward the emergence of postcolonial scholarship has been traced sometime after World War II (Ashcroft et al., 2006; Shome & Hegde, 2002). This is because after World War II, various European powers were disseminated due to the war and numerous independence movements spread throughout Europe's colonized nations. However, it is important to know that postcolonial theory does not simply address phenomena after colonialism. Rather, it addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the first references of colonial contact to accounts of its effects in contemporary society (Ashcroft et al., 2006). Based on this acknowledgement of colonialism, postcolonial theory attempts to understand the influence of imperialist movements on contemporary cultures.

Shome and Hegde (2002) provide an encompassing definition of postcolonial studies as “an interdisciplinary field of inquiry committed to theorizing the problematics of colonization and decolonization” (p. 250). Amid the rise of decolonization after World War II, imperial culture found itself confronting the indigenous peoples and cultures it once dominated. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2006) explain that “the immensely prestigious and powerful imperial culture found itself appropriated in projects of counter-colonial resistance which drew upon many different indigenous local and hybrid processes of self-determination to defy, erode, and sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial knowledge” (p. 1). Therefore, two primary areas of focus guide postcolonial studies. First, these studies tend to explore the interactions between colonial influence and the cultural groups it dominated. This includes investigating intersections of people, nations, lands, politics, art, history, and a variety of other cultural

elements. Second, the temporal patterns of colonization and decolonization receive much attention. From the first attempts of colonization to contemporary independence movements, postcolonial studies view colonization and decolonization as a cyclical process that is in a constant mode of constructing and deconstructing power.

To recognize the interactions between local and indigenous cultures and colonial influence, postcolonial studies are primarily concerned with critiquing modernist logic established by imperial powers. According to Shome and Hegde (2002), modernity “constitutes the central investigative impulse of postcolonial studies” (p. 258). In general, modernist movements were concerned with the development of structure, industry, and the “civilization” of society (Lewis, 2000). This philosophy was carried over from dominant imperial powers and disseminated into colonized nations. Thus, postcolonialism problematizes modernist conditions set by imperialism, questions why those conditions exist, and discusses how society constructs and reconstructs its influence (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Moreover, critiques by postcolonial theorists of modernist logic represent a constant cyclical framework of constructing and deconstructing knowledge. Spivak (1988) presents the notion of “subjugated knowledge,” which refers to a whole set of knowledges that have been unarticulated, disqualified, and suppressed under modernist and imperial thought (p. 281). Spivak explains that the modernist, imperial perspective has become the “privileged narrative of history” (p. 218). Modernism has normalized understandings of what is considered knowledge, suppressing alternative forms of thought developed by non-dominant cultures. Therefore, postcolonial theory breaks down modernist knowledge and introduces subjugated knowledge into scholarship.

Based on its deconstructive view toward modernism, postcolonial work does not exist without its critical orientation. Its overarching critical goals are to break down structures of

knowledge established by imperial modernity, deconstruct powers emanating from colonialism, and reestablish those structures with hybrid knowledge influenced by formerly colonized cultures (Bhabha, 1994). Since postcolonial theory's critical approach challenges the structure of modernist thought, it is inherently interdisciplinary and does not limit itself to a certain methodology (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Rather, postcolonial theory can be viewed as a lens of examination that provides a unique historical, geographical, and geopolitical context to research.

The interdisciplinary nature of postcolonial theory has allowed it to develop into various areas of inquiry. According to Ashcroft et al. (2006), postcolonial theory is "engaged with issues of cultural diversity, ethnic, racial, and cultural difference" and the power relations of neo-colonial dominance (p. 5). Under this context, race, ethnicity, locality, and indigeneity have distinct conceptualizations. Race is an unavoidable, socially-constructed categorization of people that is ubiquitous within the social relations of contemporary society (Ashcroft et al., 2006). It is also a site of "daily discrimination and prejudice," which ultimately reflects power imbalances within its discourse (p. 6). Ethnicity extends notions of race by adding "symbolic, social and cultural markers of difference" determined beyond biological categorization. Indigeneity and locality, however, are distinct from race and ethnicity in that they are highly political and tend to be at the forefront of postcolonial discussion. Both indigeneity and locality are unique forms social categorization that are tied to geography and the colonial politics involved with a specific location. Although local and indigenous cultures are groups of people who are historically connected to formerly colonized societies, they consider themselves separate from the structures established by imperial rule, and they strive for self-determination (Cobo, 1981; Koivurova, 2010). Overall, race, ethnicity, indigeneity, and locality are important areas of discussion within

postcolonial theory because its framework maintains a critical focus on power relations within these concepts.

The cultural politics of formerly colonized people also involve their traditional or sacred beliefs. Issues of growing importance within the lives of local and indigenous people involve their rights to sacred beliefs, practices, and lands (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006). According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2006), notions of the sacred have “empowered” the people within postcolonial societies (p. 8). Indigenous and local conceptions of the sacred have been able to interject dominant Western views onto cultural identity, which has been transformed into an empowering identity where locality, indigeneity, and colonial influence meet. Since the Enlightenment, Western societies have privileged secular knowledge, which has suppressed belief systems of formerly colonized people within nations impacted by colonialism (Ashcroft et al., 2006). Under this suppression, sacred traditions of local and indigenous societies have been considered primitive by the West (Scott & Simpson-Housley, 2001). This is also supported by Spivak’s (1988) notion of “subjected knowledges” in that the Western perspectives’ of sacred practices as primitive disqualifies and silences their importance (p. 281). Therefore, postcolonial theory’s critical approach attempts to reconsider the sacred by breaking down secular barriers set by Western knowledge. Breaking down these barriers allows postcolonial work to create a more inclusive and heterogeneous conception of culture and society.

Another area of focus within postcolonial theory, especially in contemporary analyses, involves the impact of globalization. Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann (2006) define globalization as “a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences, of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities” (p. 2). According to Ashcroft, et al. (2006) the inevitable future of postcolonial research and theoretical expansion will be determined

in its relation to globalization. Within globalization, nations mesh and influence each other culturally, economically, and politically. Thus, the relationship between globalization and postcolonial theory is mutually reinforcing. However, globalization fails to develop a sufficient understanding without engaging postcolonial discussions of Western imperialism's historical political, cultural, and economic impact (Ashcroft et al., 2006). Many postcolonial scholars recognize that Western societies continue to have a hegemonic influence within globalization, which has limited indigenous, local, and other non-dominant perspectives from mainstream recognition (Fursich, 2002; Shome & Hegde, 2002). As globalization builds its structure of interconnected nations, postcolonial theory provides a necessary tool for deconstruction that pries open a door of recognition for local and indigenous communities. Therefore, postcolonial theory offers a nuanced perspective to globalization in that it seeks to understand how local or indigenous communities achieve autonomy over global hegemony (Ashcroft et al., 2006).

Related to discussions of colonial influence and globalization, much postcolonial theory is concerned with diaspora. Diaspora can be understood as a forced or compelled movement of people from their nation, state, or country of origin to a new geographical location (Ember, Ember, & Skoggard, 2005). Contemporarily, diaspora can be seen within the migratory patterns of post-independent nations, the influx of refugees, immigration trends and policy, and a variety of other movements of people. However, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2006) claim that postcolonial theory examines diaspora through the effects of colonialism. Specifically, this diasporic examination pays special attention to the effects of colonialism's "radical displacement of peoples through slavery, indenture, and settlement" (p. 7). Diaspora can be conceptualized beyond a movement or displacement of people, as migratory phenomenon that also associates itself with issues of identity and representation (Ashcroft et al., 2006). Therefore, postcolonial

theory understands contemporary diaspora through a historical context. However, it does not only work to make sense of current diasporic effects, but it also provides a more contextualized understanding as to how these effects came into being.

The histories and significant areas of focus within postcolonial theory provide a necessary context to interpret representations of formerly colonized groups within the food discourse of *Parts Unknown*. The impact of colonialism's effects on non-dominant cultures creates a clearer picture of the day-to-day political struggles of postcolonial peoples that are discussed within the show. Additionally, concepts of racial, ethnic, indigenous, local, and diasporic identities enhance and increase the complexity of these struggles. Understanding the effects of globalization will provide necessary insight as to how *Parts Unknown* is produced from a Western perspective to a worldwide audience. Concepts within postcolonial theory contextualize a necessary comprehension of culture, which will allow a more effective analysis of the show's food discourse. Although these assumptions help contextualize postcolonial theory, a variety of other postcolonial concepts overlap with the field of communication. These concepts explain how postcolonialism and communication influence each other, which will help decipher how culture is discussed through and around food.

### **Postcolonial Theory and Communication**

According to Shome and Hegde (2002) postcolonial and communication studies have “something to offer each other” in that a variety of their conceptions overlap (p. 249). The framework of investigation for this research is interdisciplinary and merges postcolonial theory with communication theory. Much of this is understood from the phenomenon of contemporary globalization efforts, which have pulled these disciplines together due to the rising technological complexity of contemporary society. Globalized technological advancements have influenced

communication systems and practices that cause “ripple-effects” within the political, economic, and social lives of various cultures and societies (p. 260). Cultures otherwise unknown to each other now intersect and interact due to globalized communication. For example, a Westerner could watch a travel documentary on Netflix about Myanmar and learn aspects about Myanmar’s society. However, without immediate globalized communicative technology, the average Westerner would probably not have a general understanding about Myanmar. Overall, communication, especially on a global scale, cultivates certain forms of postcolonial representation, which highlights a significant overlap between communication and postcolonial studies (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Based on this intersection, representations of formerly colonized groups can be understood in a more sophisticated and nuanced way.

### **Orientalism and Cultural Othering**

Representation has received an overwhelming amount of attention within postcolonial communication studies. Many of the ideas regarding representation stem from poststructuralist thought, which reflects postcolonialism’s critical tension with modernism (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Said (1978) problematizes what he calls Orientalism, in that it is based on its relationship with politics, power, and knowledge. In general, Orientalism is “a Western style of dominating, resurrecting, and having authority” over non-dominant Eastern societies (p. 3). Through communication, Western societies have represented formerly colonized people as inferior, uncivilized, barbaric, and overall, unfamiliar (Said). Once individual people or groups of people are considered inferior, they are cast as marginal subalterns of society and separated from opportunity by those who dominate (Spivak, 1988). Similar to Orientalism, representations of formerly colonized groups have also been objectified through cultural Othering. Stuart Hall (1997) claims that meaning emerges from “the ‘difference’ between participants of any



dialogue” (p. 236) Overall, the Other is essential to constructing meaning; however, cultural difference expressed by the Other is often fabricated, essentialized, and ultimately objectified by dominant Western discourses. As a result, cultural Othering polarizes indigenous groups from dominant groups and limits their inclusiveness with the rest of society. Regarding communication, the global discourse of journalism, television production, and other forms of media contribute to the construction and deconstruction of Orientalism and the objectified Other attributed to representations of formerly colonized groups.

### **Fetishism and Exoticism**

Under postcolonial theory, the representation of formerly colonized groups is also objectified through fetishized and exoticized forms of communication. Fetishism and exoticism are similar concepts within postcolonial theory, in that both treat local and indigenous people as objects to control. Freud (1927) describes fetishism as the process in which a person becomes overly fixated or obsessed with an object. In terms of representation, these obsessions are often fixated on stereotypes to convey notions of indigeneity and locality (Bhabha, 1983). However, these stereotypes are ultimately reductive and essentialize these representations. Bhabha (1983) explains that stereotypes and reductive notions act as a fetish because Western societies become obsessed with the simplification of stereotypes (Bhabha, 1983). Thus, stereotypes are fetishized because one develops a false “understanding” of formerly colonized groups and allows Westerners to feel like they are in control. Exoticism, however, attempts to make formerly colonized people seem more exciting or interesting by manufacturing aspects of their representation often through aesthetic manipulation (Huggan, 2002). Exoticism transforms the formerly colonized into a spectacle for consumption, in which the indigenous are gazed upon for entertainment value and pleasure (Hall, 1997). Much like Orientalism and cultural Othering,

fetishism and exoticism are perpetuated through the Western discourse that dominates our contemporary globalized mediascape.

## **Hybridity**

In terms of representation, postcolonial theory tends to rely on the assumption that Western societies have discursively created an irrational power imbalance that objectifies indigenous people through the colonial process. However, Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity has offered an alternative to Self-versus-Other, First World-versus-Third World, and other binary notions perpetuated by Orientalism, cultural Othering, fetishism, and exoticism.

Hybridity understands culture as an intersection between race, language, and ethnicity (Kraidy, 2005). Under hybridity identity is denied as a singular notion. Hybridity contributes to communication because it produces and reinforces proper articulations of cultural difference (Bhabha, 1994). When differences are articulated, they are carefully considered and develop into complex, yet realistic depictions of "in-between" identity that is liminal (p. 1). Within this liminality, the collection of characteristics that constitute one's identity are considered, thereby allowing identities to become inclusive, fluid, and less restricted. Multiplicity is also a factor in that hybridity allows for multiple ethnic, social, and cultural identities to exist together. Hybrid identities are also key notions of resistance within colonial hegemonies because hybridity resists static representations imposed by Western discourse. This allows postcolonialism to deconstruct essentialist, reductionist, or generalized conceptions of identity (Shome & Hegde, 2002).

However, hybridity is also a concept that transcends the identity of the individual and can also apply to theoretical and structural representations of society and culture. Theoretically this includes ideologies, beliefs, practices, and forms of culture. For example, *Parts Unknown* is a program that resembles both food and travel genres and is influenced by journalistic discourse,

which reflects its theoretical hybridity as a television program. Structurally, hybridity can be applied to an array of systematic entities including organizations, languages, governments, corporations, and disciplines. Consider the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, which is a government that considers two distinct nations with many different ethnic, cultural, and ideological influences to be a part of one system. Bhabha (1994) claims that hybridity made colonial masters and other forms of dominance ambivalent to the dominated, which altered notions of authority and power in society. Since power becomes ambivalent, dominant modes of production are deconstructed and recreate more inclusive understandings of places, spaces, systems, and people, allowing hybridity to thrive. Thus, the key notion to consider when articulating hybridity is nuance. It is the liminal, or “in-between” mixture where multiple entities and their thoughts, systems, beliefs, and practices co-exist (Bhabha, 1994). Therefore, not only can hybridity articulate liminal identities, but also the ideological fluidity of social structures.

### **Agency**

Finally, the concept of agency has a significant influence within postcolonial and communication scholarship. Within the communication discipline, agency has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. From a rhetorical perspective, Campbell (2005) defines agency as one’s ability or “competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one’s community” (p. 3). Regarding the critical approach of postcolonial theory, agency is often taken for granted within structures of domination (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Thus, agency is entrenched within the politics of sexual, national, class, racial, ethnic, and diasporic identity (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Spivak (1988) has been the most influential in accounting for how hegemonic colonial powers have affected the communicative agency of indigenous and non-dominant groups. Spivak explains that the hegemonic influence of Western

culture in postcolonial societies has created a reductionist and homogeneous voice, which has failed to incorporate non-dominant group perspectives. Therefore, underrepresented groups have had a limited influence within the culture, historical narratives, politics, and economic systems of societies. Postcolonial communication studies work to understand how the agency of underrepresented groups is expressed or suppressed under structures of Western imperial domination.

Therefore, my analysis of *Parts Unknown* will make use of the overlapping concepts between postcolonial theory and communication. The concepts of Orientalism, cultural Othering, fetishism, exoticism, hybridity, and agency will provide an analytical foundation to understand whether the program's representation objectifies formerly colonized groups, or if it is liberated from the control of Western discourse.

### **Food Discourse**

As mentioned in previous chapters, food discourse does not have an exact definition, but is emerging as a distinct communicative phenomenon. Since this concept is slightly underdeveloped, I intend on concretizing the concept throughout my entire analysis for future communication scholars to utilize.

The concept of food discourse has emerged from a common notion in anthropology and sociology known as "foodways." Foodways are the collective behaviors involved with food which include producing, preparing, consuming, and all other social behaviors involved with food (Dawkins, 2009; Edwards, 2011; Houston, 2007; Tuomainen, 2009; Welch & Scarry, 1995). Additionally, foodways reinforce different symbolic meanings in a way that people can communicate through and around food (Frye & Bruner, 2012; Welch & Scarry, 1995). Since food is an object, the communicative value of food is often overlooked. However, Barad (2003)

explains, “The relationship between the material and discursive is one of mutual entailment” (p. 822). Here, the material and discursive collaboratively communicate such that “matter and meaning are mutually articulated” (p. 822). I have combined the notion of foodways and Barad’s understanding of the relationship between the material and the discursive with Foucault’s description of discourse. As a result, the social interactions involved with foodways (the discursive) are rendered by the object of food (the material) and become systems of thought and meaning (Welch & Scarry, 1995). Therefore, food and social interactions are the necessary components that create food discourse, and the mutual relationship between the material and the discursive allows food discourse to emerge as its own unique form of communication.

Food discourse can be recognized in various forms and contexts. These range from simple face-to-face conversations around a meal to any mediated discourse that focuses on food such as restaurant blogs, online recipes, news articles, social media, and television. Research and literature that contributes to academic discussions about the relationship between food and communication should also be considered as food discourse. Therefore, food discourse has an enormous scope. In *Parts Unknown*, food discourse emerges through specific forms such as specific narratives, interviews, and images and production aesthetics that render meaning through food. Since this analysis will examine episodes of *Parts Unknown*, food discourse will primarily be identified through the medium of television.

In this thesis, food discourse will be conceived metaphorically as a “communicative gateway.” Burkholder and Henry (2009) explain that metaphors draw comparisons “between two things, people, places, situations, events etc., that belong to ‘different classes of experience’” (p. 98). Rhetorically, metaphors require audiences to comprehend one thing in terms of another thing. Therefore, the rhetorical function of metaphors allows audiences to draw connections

between two separate concepts, which clarifies or helps develop better understanding about another distinct concept. This helps clarify the “gateway” function of food discourse because it allows audiences to begin to craft understandings about formerly colonized groups through food.

Overall, food discourse functions to communicate meanings and representations of formerly colonized groups. The metaphor of a communicative gateway provides a clear conception of food discourse’s rhetorical significance in each episode of *Parts Unknown*. I argue that food discourse, represented by this metaphor, acts as a communicative gateway because it attempts to create understandings about formerly colonized groups to viewers of *Parts Unknown*. Ultimately, this method will utilize postcolonial theory to identify components of indigenous and local representation in *Parts Unknown* through the food discourse it produces.

### **Close Textual Analysis**

Close textual analysis (CTA) is a method in which a critic closely examines a text, looking for themes, (in)consistencies, and clusters or groups of words that convey specific meanings (Brummett, 2010; Sillars & Gronbeck, 2000). Traditionally, CTA was applied to written or spoken communication. However, as mass media expanded due to contemporary technological advancements and innovations, scholars began to apply the method to mediated texts as well. According to Philo (2007), textual analysis of the media should look beyond the text and into the context of production and audience reaction. He claimed that research should examine “mass media as a totality” and emphasized the idea that meaning is developed through the production and reception of content (p. 194). However, Fursich (2009) argues that “only independent textual analysis can elucidate the narrative structure, symbolic arrangements and ideological potential of media content” (p. 239). Based on these perspectives I will primarily focus my interpretation on both episodes of *Parts Unknown* as independent texts, but also

consider potential production and audience perspectives as they contribute to how each text is conveyed and understood.

Overall, CTA will be used to analyze specific episodes of *Parts Unknown*. From these episodes, I will first identify different forms of food discourse. This includes narratives that discuss food and specific cultural foodways, as well as visual images of food occurring in the show. I will also use CTA to identify specific concepts from postcolonial theory that involve representations of formerly colonized groups. This includes notions of cultural Othering, Orientalism, and exoticism, that tend to objectify the representation of formerly colonized people; however, I will also seek out notions of articulation, hybridity, and agency that tend to resist this objectification (Bhabha, 1994; Clifford, 2001; Spivak, 1988). I will pay special attention to a consistent situation in the show, which I will refer to as the “local food interviews.” Local food interviews are simply moments in the show when host Anthony Bourdain shares a meal and speaks with a local or indigenous person or someone who is relevant to each country’s postcolonial situation. This moment is recurring and significant because it is where food discourse is used explicitly to express elements of local and indigenous representation. Therefore, I will use CTA to analyze moments in episodes of *Parts Unknown* where food discourse is utilized to project meanings about the representation of formerly colonized groups. Ultimately, CTA will determine how *Parts Unknown’s* food discourse conveys meanings about the representations of formerly colonized people.

### **Summary**

Overall, the purpose of this chapter is to establish an adequate method of analysis for specific episodes of *Parts Unknown* that attempt to represent the culture of formerly colonized groups. Here, postcolonial theory and food discourse will be utilized to recognize aspects of

representation within the episodes “Madagascar,” “Sri Lanka,” and “Trinidad.” Postcolonial theory will allow me to recognize discursive forms of objectification toward formerly colonized groups such as Orientalism, cultural Othering, exoticism, and fetishism, as well as concepts like hybridity and agency that have been used to resist objectification (Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1988). More specifically, I will be examining how these concepts are represented through food discourse, which includes anything thing from aesthetics or images of food to actual conversations about food and its relationship to formerly colonized cultures. Therefore, I will also incorporate the method of CTA to identify specific, words, themes, and clusters of postcolonial terms that reflect the representation of formerly colonized people. Thus, meanings about formerly colonized groups embedded within each text will become recognized by using CTA to analyze food discourse of each episode. Moving forward in this thesis, the following chapters will apply this method and provide a detailed analysis of postcolonial food discourse in *Parts Unknown*.



## CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

The previous chapter outlined a specific rhetorical method of analysis that utilizes postcolonial theory, food discourse, and close textual analysis. This method will be applied in the present chapter to examine three episodes of *Parts Unknown*, “Madagascar,” “Trinidad,” and “Sri Lanka.” Overall, the purpose of this analysis is to provide an understanding for how representations of formerly colonized people are communicated via food discourse in *Parts Unknown*. I will explain that food discourse can be conceived metaphorically as a communicative gateway which creates conversations about formerly colonized groups. Interestingly, the content that emerges from these conversations tends to develop discourse that resists producing objectifying representations of formerly colonized groups. Therefore, I will argue in this analysis that food discourse in *Parts Unknown* creates conversations and awareness about formerly colonized groups, while also resisting the objectification as a result of their representation. Despite its conscious attempt to resist objectifying formerly colonized groups, I will also argue that *Parts Unknown* reifies these forms of objectification, albeit to a lesser degree, much like other forms of food and travel television.

### **Forms of Food Discourse in *Parts Unknown***

The episodes of *Parts Unknown* in this analysis, “Madagascar,” “Trinidad,” and “Sri Lanka,” carefully constructs messages through specific forms of food discourse. While analyzing each episode’s content, I noticed several communicative patterns and repeated techniques, to which I identify as forms of food discourse. As mentioned previously, food discourse can be considered as any form of verbal or nonverbal communication that utilizes food to symbolically interact with others. Each of the following techniques can be considered forms of food discourse because they uniquely use food to verbally and nonverbally communicate notions about formerly

colonized groups. Specifically, my analysis identifies three common forms of food discourse that frequently appear in each episode: 1) local food interviews, 2) transitions and camerawork, and 3) Bourdain's voice-overs. Although these forms of food discourse will prove to function differently from each other, these techniques ultimately provide a communicative gateway that forms representations of formerly colonized groups. All three episodes use these forms of food discourse; therefore, I organize this analysis by discussing each form of food discourse, why it is food discourse, and how it functions in each episode. These forms of food discourse challenge objectifying notions like Orientalism, cultural Othering, fetishism, and exoticism, are challenged. Previous research and scholarship has shown that these notions are still common ways that Western media express representations of formerly colonized groups (Ashworth et al., 2006; Shome & Hegde, 2002). Conversely, *Parts Unknown's* food discourse works to resist typical objectifying notions of Western discourse by articulating difference through hybridity and providing the opportunity for formerly colonized groups to achieve some agency. *Parts Unknown* is broadcasted internationally, thus potentially yielding a significant influence on global and mainstream representations of formerly colonized groups. By analyzing each *Parts Unknown* episode, I provide specific examples of where and how these forms of food discourse function as communicative gateways, and how the discussions they create consciously resist the objectification of formerly colonized groups.

### **Local Food Interviews**

The first strategic use of food discourse in *Parts Unknown* occurs in segments of the show where Bourdain interviews members of formerly colonized groups. It is first important to understand that food interviews are a form of food discourse. This is because individuals in the show are often depicted communicating and discussing the dynamics of culture through and

around the context of food during these interviews (Frye & Bruner, 2005; Welch & Scarry, 1995). Each episode features about five to seven food interviews per episode, which produces roughly up to five to ten minutes of content. Since each *Parts Unknown* episode in this analysis is roughly 50 minutes, much of the episodes are dedicated to understanding and representing formerly colonized groups through local food interviews. Other sites of food discourse including specific production transitions, carefully constructed camerawork, and Bourdain's voice-over narratives are also produced from the context of local food interviews. Since much of the communication revolves around food interviews, they function like the discursive skeleton for the production of food discourse in each episode. Based on these characteristics, I consider local food interviews to be the communicative framework for the entire show's discourse because they are consistently the most utilized form of communication. More importantly, they evolve into conversations that discuss other aspects of formerly colonized people

### **The Communicative Gateway**

Food interviews provide discussions about local food that eventually evolve into discussions about the specific histories, politics, practices, and other cultural nuances of formerly colonized groups. Therefore, I argue that food interviews can first be understood metaphorically as one of the communicative gateways that introduce audiences toward further cultural understandings of formerly colonized groups.

These communicative gateways are evident in all three episodes. For instance, in the episode "Madagascar," Bourdain interviews Malagasy Chef Mariette Andrianjaka. The food interview begins with a discussion about certain Malagasy dishes and Andrianjaka's culinary experience. As the dishes are described, Andrianjaka says, "Most Malagasy don't eat meat at every meal because it's expensive. Most eat rice, broth with vegetables and that's it"

(*Madagascar*, 29:38). Suddenly, the focus of the conversation shifts from discussions about food to issues of poverty experienced by many local Malagasy. Here, it can be recognized that the food interview acts as a communicative gateway because food discourse served as a talking point that evolved into a conversation about issues involving many impoverished local Malagasy communities.

Food interviews in “Trinidad” also act as communicative gateways. Within this episode, Bourdain conducts a food interview during a local Trinidadian steel-drum performance. Meanwhile, Bourdain is depicted sharing beers and a local dish, corn soup, around a cocktail table with his interviewees, local journalist Kim Johnson and famous steel-drum musician Lenox “Boogsie” Sharpe. After a short discussion about corn soup, Bourdain then questions Johnson and Sharpe about the complex history and cultural significance of steel-drum bands to Trinidad. For an example, Johnson explains that until the late 1960s, steel-drum bands “were partly like--like street gangs. They would fight one another, the ‘West Side Story’ kind of thing” (*Trinidad*, 08:30). However, he also explains that due to the oppressive influences of early European colonialism, drumming was used to help Africans physically and mentally endure slavery. Thus, *Parts Unknown* uses food within interviews to develop conversations about other aspects of Trinidadians and their colonial and postcolonial experiences. Like “Madagascar,” food interviews in “Trinidad” evolve into conversations about other experiences involved with formerly colonized groups, thus functioning as a communicative gateway.

The communicative gateway function of food interviews is also displayed within the episode “Sri Lanka.” In one food interview, Bourdain converses with several local Sri Lankan fishermen at a cookout on a local beach in Jaffna, which is the former capital of the Sri Lankan ethnic and religious minority group, the Tamils. Bourdain and the fishermen are depicted around

a table drinking local beer and eating grilled grouper wrapped in a banana leaf. Again, the conversation pivots from Bourdain asking questions about how they are cooking the grouper to conversations about how the Sri Lankan civil war effected local fishermen. The fishermen explained that the previous government created several fishing restrictions and limitations, while those who violated these consequences were often shot. Therefore, it is evident in this scene that Bourdain's food interview with local Sri Lankan fisherman acts as a communicative gateway. Conversations about food evolve into conversations about how Sri Lanka's violent and oppressive postcolonial conditions, such as military conflict and government corruption, affected Sri Lanka's local, working-class people.

Each of these examples display how *Parts Unknown's* food interviews act as communicative gateways that evolve into other discussions about formerly colonized people. Although these are just a few specific examples, the gateway characteristic is presented within nearly all the food interviews conducted in "Madagascar," "Trinidad," and "Sri Lanka." Overall, food interviews act as communicative gateways that frequently evolve into discussions about other cultural nuances involved with formerly colonized groups.

### **Food Interviews as Resistance**

Unlike many forms of Western television discourse, *Parts Unknown's* food interviews also create a communicative context that is resistant to the objectification of formerly colonized people. This is because food interviews are more than just communicative gateways. Additionally, it can be recognized that the discourse created within food interviews resists reproducing objectifying notions of representation like Orientalism, exoticism, fetishism, and cultural Othering that Western discourse typically uses to depict formerly colonized groups.

*Parts Unknown's* food interviews, however, are not completely excused from these objectifying tendencies despite its conscious attempt to authentically represent formerly colonized groups. One glaring aspect of this objectification is that Bourdain and CNN profit from the content *Parts Unknown* produces about formerly colonized groups. Within *Parts Unknown's* food interviews, the choices of images and decisions of whom to include reflect a sense of power and dominance over formerly colonized groups. Thus, representations of formerly colonized groups are clearly commodified and controlled based on *Parts Unknown's* power over what is or is not included in production of each episode (see Phu, 2010). This can be recognized in the way that the show manipulates and structures content to attract audiences for ratings and profit. Therefore, food interviews are not completely dismissed from the objectifying tendencies of formerly colonized groups, because they have become a spectacle for profitable consumption.

Despite its clear elements of commodification, food interviews in *Parts Unknown* do attempt to resist the objectifying notions often applied to formerly colonized groups. Primarily, this occurs through the show's provision of opportunities for formerly colonized groups to establish agency. Due to Western society's dominant, yet frequently objectifying influence on the representations of formerly colonized people, many people who belong to these groups seek the self-determination to represent themselves (Koivurova, 2010). As contended earlier, food interviews allow for conversations to evolve into discussions about other aspects of formerly colonized groups. These conversations evolve as such because formerly colonized groups are provided the opportunity to speak and represent themselves, or in other words, develop agency. Therefore, food interviews predominantly resist perpetuating objectifying representations by including members of formerly colonized groups within the conversation.

## Consummatory Rhetoric and “Going Native”

It is important to understand that Bourdain’s local food interviews *provide an opportunity* for agency. They do not simply “allow” members of formerly colonized groups to develop it. “Allowing” members to speak and establish agency would imply a sense of control, or a limit as to when or if formerly colonized groups could contribute to the conversation. The communicative context of the food interview supports this notion because everyone is invited to speak around a table of food, which limits Bourdain’s control within conversations. Here, the platform of local food interviews avoids the restrictive call-response format of traditional interviews and functions rather as form of consummatory rhetoric. Consummatory notions of rhetoric imply inclusiveness and use less direct forms of control. Above seeking direct answers or implementing change, the purpose of consummatory rhetoric is to gather “like-minded” individuals and establish collective understandings (Lake, 1983). Thus, consummatory rhetoric is more dynamic and welcomes multiple voices, which establishes an environment for individual members of formerly colonized groups to develop agency. Unlike the traditionally Western instrumental view of rhetoric as tools of persuasion to elicit intended outcomes, the consummatory view equates the power distance between rhetors and their audiences and works to establish common understandings as a form of persuasion (Freese, 1926; Lake, 1983). Although Bourdain questions members of formerly colonized groups about their cultural experiences, he relinquishes a sense of control over the direction of the conversation by presenting food interviews in a consummatory fashion that creates opportunities for formerly colonized groups to develop agency and speak for themselves. Yet, it should also be understood that in *Parts Unknown*, the Western White man always has the last word through power provided by the control over production editing. Anthony Bourdain and CNN make choices to include and

exclude certain portions of food interviews; therefore, we do not see these food interviews in their entirety. Thus, one could also argue that in a way Bourdain and *Parts Unknown* also silence while providing the opportunity for discursive agency. Although discreet and masked by *Parts Unknown*'s clear efforts to establish authenticity, the element of control from a colonizing agent is still present.

The consummatory nature of food interviews is also supplemented by Bourdain's specific rhetorical positioning, which allows *Parts Unknown* to provide opportunities for formerly colonized people to develop agency. In food interviews, Bourdain uses this "going native" positioning to decrease his power distance and immerse himself within the local cuisine and culinary practices of the culture he is visiting. *Parts Unknown*'s food interviews echo the findings of Kelly's (2017) textual analysis of *No Reservations*, which explains that Bourdain produces a counter narrative to Western discourse by "going native" (p. 114; see also Bamberg, 2004). According to Tresch (2001), going native takes "participant observation beyond its usual limits" by attempting to experience and participate within the systems of knowledge being investigated (p. 303). By eating meals unique to the cultures of formerly colonized groups, Bourdain participates in local and indigenous knowledge and often becomes more familiar about the norms and expectations of local foodways and other cultural notions (Foss & Foss, 1994). Thus, Bourdain relies on the knowledge of formerly colonized groups to explain certain cultural nuances that emerge within the food interviews. Based on this positioning, the opportunity for formerly colonized groups to develop agency is created through Bourdain's lack of local and indigenous knowledge. As I describe below, *Parts Unknown* also creates opportunities for formerly colonized groups to develop agency through Bourdain's conscious attempt of "going native." As Bourdain decreases his power distance by "going native" and relies on the



perspectives of the local, indigenous, and other formerly colonized groups for information, opportunities for these groups to develop agency become available.

Based on their consummatory nature and Bourdain's "going native" positioning in food interviews, opportunities for formerly colonized groups to achieve agency become readily available. It is important to understand that the knowledge and information that members of formerly colonized groups provide in food interviews can be considered "subjugated knowledge." Spivak (1988) explains that subjugated knowledges are ignored, disqualified, and suppressed understandings of formerly colonized groups that have been deemed inferior by Western society. Since subjugated knowledge is essentially silenced by Western hegemony, information about formerly colonized groups is often left unarticulated and suppressed (Spivak, 1988). Bourdain's food interviews, however, exposes the subjugated knowledges of formerly colonized people, which functions to resist objectifying notions applied to their representation including Orientalism, cultural Othering, fetishism, and exoticism. This is because consummatory rhetoric and Bourdain's "going native" positioning in food interviews provide opportunities for formerly colonized groups to develop the agency and represent themselves. Ultimately, the content emerging from these food interviews can be identified as subjugated knowledge, which has been suppressed by Western discourse, but emerges through *Parts Unknown's* food interviews to resist objectified representations of formerly colonized groups.

### **Food Interviews in *Parts Unknown***

In each episode of this analysis, several examples of food interviews are presented in a consummatory manner and utilize Bourdain's "going native" positioning. Therefore, by "going native" and utilizing consummatory rhetoric, the food interviews create a rhetorical context that provides opportunities for formerly colonized groups to express subjugated knowledge and

establish rhetorical agency. The subjugated knowledge that emerges from the discourse of food interviews also resists producing the objectifying tendencies of Western discourse including Orientalism, exoticism, fetishism, and cultural Othering.

In “Trinidad,” Bourdain conducts a food interview with local Trinidadian journalist LaShaun Prescott during Trinidad’s annual Carnival celebration. First, the rhetoric of this food interview can be recognized as consummatory. This is because Bourdain does not use his questions to elicit specific answers or control the way Prescott responds. Instead, Bourdain and Prescott are depicted eating a meal together at a small table in Queens Park Savannah’s Carnival celebration and exchanging dialogue about the cultural traditions unique to Trinidad’s Carnival celebration. Since Bourdain and Prescott are clearly seeking collective understandings in this particular food interview, its presentation can be recognized as consummatory (Lake, 1983).

The “going native” positioning is also evident in this food interview because Bourdain embeds himself within Trinidad’s Carnival tradition. This requires Bourdain to rely on Prescott to explain local and indigenous customs to him. For example, Bourdain relies on Prescott in the food interview to understand the concept of “wining.” She explains that “wining” is a style of dance in Trinidad practiced by many locals at Carnival and involves the intense shaking of one’s hips, legs, and buttocks. However, she makes it clear to Bourdain that a common misconception is that whining is seductive. Considering McClintock’s (1995) claim that Western discourse has fetishized the representation of formerly colonized people as overly sexualized erotic deviants, this conversation can be read as a message that resists the objectifying, hypersexualized stereotypes applied to formerly colonized groups. For example, Prescott explains to Bourdain, “If you are not used to the culture, you don’t understand what it [whining] means. You can interpret it the wrong way. When you see it for the first time, you can think its seductive. You

can think its sexual” (*Trinidad*, 04:15) She also elaborates on the fact that people can whine on each other, but it does not mean they want to have sex with each other. Rather, Prescott explains that whining is about “freedom” and “the expression of one’s self” (*Trinidad*, 04:33).

Therefore, Prescott works to demystify the seductive misconception of whining in the food interview by explaining that the dance is an expression of freedom and individuality. Prescott’s explanation of whining thus resists producing an overtly sexualized representation of Trinidadians by articulating local knowledge about whining. This perspective can be identified as the emergence subjugated knowledge, which works to establish Prescott’s agency. This is because the knowledge is presented as only understood by the locals, but is now being articulated to a show that is broadcasted internationally. Since the food interview with Prescott is presented on the global stage through *Parts Unknown*, she is provided the opportunity to establish agency. Overall, Bourdain’s interview with Prescott supports my claim that these forms of food discourse create on opportunities for formerly colonized groups to establish agency, allowing for subjugated knowledge to emerge and resist objectifying representations.

In “Sri Lanka,” the “going native” and consummatory aspects of food discourse are also evident during a food interview with two Sri Lankan women who are benefactors of the North Ceylon Community Project. First, Bourdain’s “going native” positioning can be recognized because he chooses to share a local Sri Lankan meal at the North Ceylon Community Project facility. Additionally, the context of this food interview is consummatory because all parties present at the table are offered the opportunity to speak and develop collective understandings about the experience of many Sri Lankan women during the Sri Lankan civil war. Even though one of the Sri Lankan women can only can speak certain phrases in English, she is accompanied

by a translator and still participates in the conversation. Therefore, the consummatory nature of this food interview still thrives, despite the language barriers.

Throughout the food interview, Bourdain and the Sri Lankan women discuss the former influence of Tamil's government and culture during the Sri Lankan civil war. Bourdain relies on the perspective of Sri Lankan women to explain how this experience affected women in Sri Lanka. They explained that women received few rights and experienced various forms of abuse and sexual harassment. This is because many women lacked financial independence and relied on men, who often abused them for survival. Therefore, the North Ceylon Community Project was built to be a safe-haven for women and children to escape Tamil oppression. Thus, the context of the food interviews provides the Sri Lankan women the opportunity to establish agency. By discussing the reasoning for the North Ceylon Project, subjugated knowledge about the abusive and oppressive experiences of Sri Lankan women emerges. These women also explain that although the North Ceylon Community project provides aid for struggling women and children, it also provides opportunities for women to find work, receive an education, and develop financial independence. This ultimately resists the Orientalist depiction of Sri Lankan women as different, primitive, and inferior perpetuated by Tamil society and Western discourse (Said, 1978). Therefore, expression of subjugated knowledge in this food interview also works to resist perpetuating objectifying representations of formerly colonized groups.

Based on these examples, food interviews in *Parts Unknown* can be interpreted as communicative gateways because conversations about food evolve into conversations about other aspects of formerly colonized groups. Additionally, food interviews function to provide opportunities for formerly colonized groups to achieve agency, allowing the subjugated knowledges of these groups to emerge and resist producing Orientalist, exotic, and fetishistic

representations of formerly colonized groups. Although *Parts Unknown* makes conscious attempts to resist these forms of objectification, the program still profits from the different formerly colonized groups featured within each episode which commodifies their representation.

### **Transitions and the “Gaze” of *Parts Unknown*’s Camerawork**

Other forms of food discourse that help portray aspects of formerly colonized groups in *Parts Unknown* include transitions and the “gaze” of camerawork crafted by the show’s production. The “gaze” of a camera produces representations of the Other that are filtered through the lens of the person or group in power, which is typically the manifest colonial authority or the Western scholar or film producer who controls the visual narrative (Minh-ha, 1991). In the case of *Parts Unknown*, transitions and the camerawork’s “gaze” incorporate images of another culture’s food and foodways with the show’s dialogue and other visual images, thereby making them a forms of food discourse. Additionally, these forms of visual communication function to engage and direct viewers’ attention toward understandings about formerly colonized groups. In a variety of nonverbal ways, the transitions and camerawork of *Parts Unknown* help to articulate specific messages about the representation of formerly colonized groups embedded in the show’s dialogue. Since the transitions and camerawork function to guide the attention of viewers toward further understandings about formerly colonized groups, they too can be identified as communicative gateways. However, it is also important to realize that these transitions and camerawork also function to emphasize important messages that resist the objectifying tendencies of Western discourse including Orientalism, exoticism, fetishism, and cultural Othering. Overall, the transitions and camerawork emphasize certain messages to make them more apparent to viewers, which can be read as *Parts Unknown*’s conscious attempt to adequately understand and represent formerly colonized people.

## **Transitions**

In each episode of *Parts Unknown*, food discourse can be recognized in the form of production transitions. What is unique about these transitions is that they purposely incorporate food with other images and dialogue. These transitions function to direct the attention of viewers toward important messages as subject matter shifts and flows throughout the episode. Transitions can often be identified in each *Parts Unknown* episode through certain sequences of scenes, which are segmented by transitions to create collective messages about formerly colonized groups. Overall, I argue that these transitions function to emphasize and guide the attention of *Parts Unknown* viewers toward important information about the representation of formerly colonized groups. Based on this characteristic, transitions can also be considered a communicative gateway because they make important messages about formerly colonized groups clear to viewers. However, these transitions work to articulate messages that resist producing objectifying the representations, thus reflecting *Parts Unknown*'s conscious effort to adequately represent members of formerly colonized groups.

### **Transitions in *Parts Unknown***

There are several examples of transitions that function to direct the viewers' attention of *Parts Unknown* toward specific messages about formerly colonized groups. In "Sri Lanka," *Parts Unknown*'s opening scene places Bourdain in a hotel with a complimentary breakfast café where several flocks of crows are flying around looking for a free meal. Then the scene transitions and depicts an abandoned military tower armed with a machine gun that was once used to fight the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a militant group that desired autonomy from the Sinhalese government (Zompetti, 1997). The conflict between the Tamil minority group and the Sinhalese government can be considered a consequence of Portuguese,

British, and Dutch colonialism in which Sri Lanka's national identity was "molded into an unsettled and violent mixture of competing ethnic groups" (Zompetti, 1997, p. 162). The scene then transitions back to the hotel breakfast buffet where a local hotel worker is depicted using a sling-shot to chase away the crows. In this sequence of scenes, I argue that transitions first use food as a communicative gateway that visually introduces the historical context of the Sri Lankan civil war and the effects it had on local Sri Lankan people. This is evident in that the scene sequence transitions to and from the breakfast café.

However, these transitions also work to direct audiences toward a more implicit message about Sri Lanka and its people. A shallow reading of the transitions in this scene sequence could be perceived as Orientalist, a notion that depicts formerly colonized groups as primitive and chaotic (Said, 1978; Said, 1981). This is because scenes of the breakfast café transition to an abandoned military tower which symbolizes chaos and instability, to a man chasing crows with a slingshot which could be read as a primitive representation since he is using a very simple and archaic weapon to chase away the birds. However, I argue that transitions in this scene sequence contrast these depictions to emphasize the message that local Sri Lankans are tired of the violent effects of the civil war and seek peace, thus challenging the Orientalist notion that Sri Lankans are violent, primitive, and chaotic people. By transitioning from the scene of the abandoned military tower equipped with an automatic weapon to a scene of a man chasing crows away with a slingshot, the quick transition between images functions to emphasize the message that many Sri Lankans are seeking less violent ways to solve problems, hence the stark contrast between automatic weapons and the slingshot. What initially seems like an Orientalist depiction is in fact a message articulated by contrasting scene transitions to emphasize more peaceful attitudes.

Therefore, these transitions not only act as a communicative gateway, but they can also function to reinforce how Sri Lankan people seek compromise over violence.

Transitions in “Trinidad” also incorporate food to direct the viewers of *Parts Unknown*’s attention toward important messages about Trinidadian culture. Much like the scenes at the breakfast café in “Sri Lanka,” “Trinidad” uses transitions to sequence scenes and convey messages about Trinidadian food and culture. One specific sequence depicts Bourdain interviewing a local Trinidadian family partaking in a “river lime,” which is simply a hang out by the river that involves eating, drinking, and music. The scenes transition back and forth between the montages of local dishes being prepared and conversations about Trinidadian identity. Then, the scene transitions to local Trinidadian man who says, “Being Trinidadian is not necessarily color-tone oriented, but it’s more. And I think what people really revel and enjoy is the common experiences. The food is the glue that binds society together” (*Trinidad*, 16:42). This scene is followed by another transition, which displays an image of a spoonful of meat and vegetables slowly served on a plate.

Since these transitions ultimately use food to understand Trinidadian identity, they function as food discourse and act as communicative gateways. Again, the transitions between images of food and conversations about identity function to direct *Parts Unknown* viewers’ attention toward a specific message about Trinidadian representation. This specific message is the comment made by the local Trinidadian who explains that instead of race and ethnicity, people in Trinidad are most interested in common experiences that bring people together like eating food. Prior to this comment, however, *Parts Unknown* repeatedly and purposely transitioned to images of food that functioned to foreshadow and emphasize the importance of common experiences involved with Trinidadian identity. Although food should not be perceived



as the only or most important contribution to Trinidad's multiethnic tolerance, transitioning between images of food and cultural identity emphasizes that common experiences help constitute Trinidadian identity.

The message emphasized by scene transitions makes it clear that these locals craft their Trinidadian identities through shared experiences instead of using differences between race, ethnicity, and skin color to define their identity. Therefore, these transitions also resist objectifying Trinidadian identity as culturally Othered. According to Steeves (2008), Western travel television programs fall into the habit of creating distant and homogenized depictions of formerly colonized groups, thus creating a representation that is culturally Othered. However, since these transitions help emphasize that common experiences are valued over racial and ethnic difference, Trinidadian identity is represented by its multiethnic tolerance. As one of the Trinidadian locals mention in this scene sequence, "We are a small island, and if you don't learn to live together you have to live in the sea" (*Trinidad*, 17:11). Therefore, the transitions in *Parts Unknown* bring together a sequence of scenes that collectively emphasize a resistance to cultural Othering imposed by other food and travel programs.

Overall, the transitions between scenes in *Parts Unknown* use images of food to emphasize important messages about formerly colonized groups, thus acting as a communicative gateway. Additionally, the messages emphasized by these transitions work to resist the objectifying tendencies of Western discourse like Orientalism and cultural Othering. Therefore, transitions in *Parts Unknown* can be conceived as forms of food discourse that also function to articulate adequate representations of formerly colonized people.

## The “Gaze” of Camerawork

Considering the camerawork involved with *Parts Unknown*'s production, it is more accurate to say that the specific “gaze” it perpetuates acts as a form of food discourse. This form of food discourse is primarily nonverbal, but it is portrayed through the food images and the various production effects applied to them. According to Hall (1997), however, formerly colonized groups often become represented through media images as Othered spectacles that are gazed upon and controlled by dominant forms of Western discourse. The “gaze” that *Parts Unknown*'s camerawork creates risks representing formerly colonized groups as fabricated, essentialized, and ultimately objectified media spectacles (Minh-ha, 1991). This is because these mediated visual images, or spectacles, are distanced and detached representations of reality (Debord, 1995). Meanwhile, the production and reinforcement of these representations by dominating forces like Western discourse sustain dominant modes of perception that become the norms and expectations of a society, even if they are false or oppressive (Debord, 1995). Huggan (2002) also warns that the aesthetic rendering of images could cause representations to be objectified through exoticism, cultural Othering, and other forms of objectification.

Although objectifying tendencies are present, *Parts Unknown* still attempts to use its camera gaze to strategically emphasize important messages about formerly colonized groups through food. The camera gaze of *Parts Unknown* functions as a communicative gateway because its aesthetic rendering helps highlight and articulate messages about formerly colonized groups and how they relate to food. Consistent with other forms of food discourse described in this analysis, the gaze proves to strategically resist the objectification of formerly colonized groups by appropriately articulating difference and emphasizing hybridity. Overall, these

messages are emphasized by surrounding the dialogue with images of food to strategically capture the attention of viewers.

First, the camerawork in each episode tends to surround the dialogue with images of food through a particular gaze. By repeatedly surrounding the dialogue with images of food, the camerawork in each episode functions to constantly relate food to other cultural nuances about formerly colonized groups, thus acting as a communicative gateway. There are several examples of this applied in each episode of *Parts Unknown*. In “Sri Lanka,” Bourdain meets with local chef and owner of the Ministry of Crab, Dharshan Munidasa. Bourdain asks Munidasa, “So what distinguishes between Sri Lankan cuisine and Indian?” (*Sri Lanka*, 05:35). Munidasa explains that it is the accent of seafood, due to Sri Lanka’s close location and access to the sea. He also claims that Sri Lankan curry is lighter in color than Indian curry. Meanwhile, images of crab, shellfish, squid, and other seafood being mixed into light curry sauce supplements the dialogue. Here, the images of seafood and light curry sauce help articulate that the difference between Indian and Sri Lankan cuisine. According to Hall (1997), meaning arises through the “difference” between participants of any dialogue. Presenting Sri Lankan food as distinct from Indian food ultimately symbolizes the cultural differences between Sri Lankan and Indian cultures and eliminates the reductive notion that Sri Lankans are the same as Indians.

Ultimately, the combination of dialogue and images can be read as a symbolic message that functions to articulate the distinctions between cultures; however, this form of food discourse can be read as an expression of hybrid identities. Regarding Bhabha’s (1994) theorization of hybridity, identities co-exist and are considered liminal or “in-between” (p. 1). The camera gaze of Sri Lanka’s seafood mixing into curry, a typical Indian spice, supplements Bourdain and Dharshan’s conversation about how Sri Lankan and Indian cuisine influence each

other. Since both Sri Lankan and Indian culinary influences are “co-existing” within the dish, these images symbolically emphasize the hybridity of Sri Lankan identity as “in-between.” Therefore, the camera gaze helps the dialogue emphasize and depict the representation of Sri Lanka’s hybrid cultural identity. Here, the gaze’s symbolic portrayal of hybridity resists reductive and stereotypical understandings often used by Western discourse to objectify formerly colonized groups. Bhabha (1983) explains that stereotypes often become fetishized by Western culture, making Western societies feel like they have maintained control by developing an “understanding” of culture (Bhabha, 1983). Therefore, it can be recognized that views captured by the camerawork are used here to resist the objectifying fetishistic tendencies of Western hegemonic discourse by articulating the hybridity of Sri Lankan identity through food.

The gaze of the camerawork in “Trinidad” also surrounds the dialogue with images of food to emphasize important messages about formerly colonized groups. In the episode, Bourdain interviews three fighters of Calinda, a martial art that involves stick-fighting and is unique to Trinidadian culture. Again, the camera gaze uses images of food to highlight understandings about Trinidad and Tobago’s brutal postcolonial past. During their discussion, the Calinda fighters explain that Calinda was practiced by African slaves as a form of resistance. They explain to Bourdain that slave fighters were often fed the “unwanted” remains of animals like pig’s feet and cow tongue. As a way of survival and resistance, slaves developed methods of cooking these “undesirable” animal parts to make them delicious. As the discussion between Bourdain and the Calinda fighters continues, images of pig’s feet and cow tongue being prepared supplement the show’s dialogue. Here, the gaze of the camera stresses the concept of “making do,” a common ideology expressed in Caribbean literature that embodies the idea of using limited resources to create something good or meaningful (Houston, 2007, p. 99). Furthermore,

the camerawork's emphasis of "making do" works to eliminate Orientalist assumptions that would consider the foodways of Trinidadian people as primitive, inferior, and unfamiliar (Said, 1978). This is because "making do" represents formerly colonized Trinidadians as innovators of circumstance, rather than as primitive beings who eat unfamiliar food. Therefore, the camerawork's accentuation on "making do" contributes to *Parts Unknown's* conscious attempt to portray representations of formerly colonized people without objectifying them.

In "Madagascar," the camera gaze also tends to supplement dialogue with images of food to emphasize the issue of poverty that many Malagasy's experience. This camerawork is evident in a scene where Bourdain's interviews Rossi, a famous local Malagasy musician. Bourdain is accompanied by Darren Aronofsky, the director of *Requiem for a Dream*, *Black Swan*, and the "vegetarian outcast" who frequently becomes the butt of Bourdain's jokes and jeering criticism about his lifestyle choice. During the scene, Bourdain says that he and Aronofsky meet Rossi at a local pork joint, since Aronofsky is "a vegetarian and all" (*Madagascar*, 06:50). Throughout the scene, Aronofsky is teased for being a vegetarian, while several images of decapitated pig heads and montages of locals cooking and preparing pork for customers surrounds the dialogue. Ultimately, this creates a sense of irony. What initially seems like a joke, however, is in fact a message about local Malagasy. After Bourdain's jeering dialogue toward Aronofsky supplemented by several images of pork, Rossi then explains that Madagascar's government is corrupt because many of its resources are directed toward tourism and wildlife conservation, but practically nothing is being allocated for the local people. This has ultimately led to starvation and poverty because Madagascar's natural resources serve the interests of Westerners instead of the indigenous people. It can be recognized that *Parts Unknown* surrounds Bourdain's teasing dialogue with images of pork to stress the point that Westerners are often privileged in having

the choice to become vegetarian, unlike many Malagasy who are starving and do not know when their next meal will be. Therefore, the camera gaze environs Bourdain's dialogue with multiple images of pork in this scene to highlight this contradiction and emphasize Madagascar's contentious politics involving corruption, food supplies, and starvation. Since Madagascar is often objectified by Westerners as an exotic paradise that is rich in natural resources, this camerawork also challenges exoticized representations by spotlighting the issue of poverty and starvation through the ironic composition of Bourdain's dialogue and images of pork. Not only does the camera gaze serve to raise issues experienced by local Malagasy, but it also works to resist exoticized representations of Madagascar as "a paradise."

Although there are clear elements of resistance within the food discourse of *Parts Unknown*'s camera gaze, Aronofsky's presence tends to commodify these "authentic" moments due to his immensely popular films and celebrity status. Almost as persuasive selling point to a viewing audience, one could make the argument that his status adds a profitable value to the program. In a way, Aronofsky's presence makes the unfamiliar seem more familiar, which could work to obscure or misrepresent the representation of formerly colonized groups while interacting with them in the show. The same could be argued for Bourdain, as his status as a world famous American chef functions to commodify moments with formerly colonized groups as well; Although Aronofsky and Bourdain's "going native" positioning is evident, their celebrity status tends to overshadow the representation of formerly colonized groups, especially for viewing audiences unfamiliar with these indigenous and local cultures. Unlike Wright and Sandlin's (2009) insights which contend that television programs can avoid the hegemony of consumer culture, *Parts Unknown* tends to engage with it based on its depictions of famous American celebrities with and among local and indigenous groups.

Hall's (1995) understanding of "making sense" helps explain how forms of nonverbal communication, like the transitions and camera gazes in *Parts Unknown*, can unintentionally reproduce ideologies that colonize and objectify representations of formerly colonized groups (p. 19). According to Hall, ideology is not produced by an individual's consciousness. Rather, ideology is produced collectively by "different forms of social consciousness" that often work unconsciously, not intentionally (p. 19). Furthermore, ideologies are pre-existing and influence the ways in which individual agents communicate. As such, communication works "through" certain ideologies, but is not created by individuals (p. 19). Therefore, images and other forms of nonverbal communication "provide frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and 'make sense' of communicative phenomena that emerge from ideology (p. 18). This becomes a problem when objectifying ideologies, like the colonizing nature of Western discourse, become normalized and are reproduced. Hall suggests these are the "taken-for-granted" norms and expectations of society. When Western celebrities are depicted, or when Bourdain himself is depicted within the transitions and camera gazes of *Parts Unknown*, this unintentionally produces the notion that Western society holds a dominant perspective on the representation of formerly colonized groups.

Overall, the transitions and camera gaze in *Parts Unknown* unintentionally commodify formerly colonized groups and reify Western colonial dominance. At the same time, the elements of postcolonial resistance in *Parts Unknown*, such as hybridity and the invitation for the voice and agency of the indigenous Other, might provide an opportunity to expose and rupture the cracks in hegemony, particularly during certain historical moments.

### **Bourdain's Voice-Over Narration**

Bourdain's voice-over narration can also be recognized as a form of food discourse. It, too, acts as a communicative gateway because food is used to discuss understandings about formerly colonized groups. These voice-over narrations frequently describe the specific foodways of formerly colonized cultures. However, Bourdain's voice-overs articulate descriptions of local dishes and foodways in a manner that conveys other aspects of formerly colonized groups. As a result, Bourdain's voice-over descriptions of food and foodways are loaded with insights about other cultural nuances that work to represent formerly colonized people. Much like food interviews, transitions, and the gaze of camerawork, Bourdain's voice-overs also function to resist objectifying formerly colonized groups. Therefore, I contend that Bourdain's voice-overs describe the food or foodways of formerly colonized groups in ways that directly and symbolically communicate adequate understandings about these groups while avoiding objectification of their representation.

#### **Voice-Overs in *Parts Unknown***

First, Bourdain's voice-over descriptions of food preparation can be identified in "Trinidad." During this episode, Bourdain stops at a local concession stand where local Trinidadians are serving doubles, a popular Trinidadian street food. Within this scene, Bourdain's voice-over describes the preparation of doubles which ultimately reflects the hybrid, multiethnic representation of the Trinidadian people. Bourdain's voice-over says, "Doubles are a Caribbean take on the Indian channa bhatura. Two floppy, tender pieces of soft Indian-style bread, loaded with a wet heap of curried chick peas, pepper sauce, and mango" (*Trinidad*, 11:24). Although Bourdain is describing the elements of the dish, his voice-over narration reflects the multiple cultural influences of the dish. For example, Bourdain articulates that



doubles are influenced by Caribbean cultures which are represented by the elements of mango and pepper sauce, and Indian cultures, which are represented by the style of bread. Additionally, the influence of Middle Eastern cultures is also seen by the presence of chick peas, an ingredient often used in Middle Eastern cuisine. Therefore, Bourdain's description of the multicultural ingredients used to make doubles symbolizes and communicates the notion that Trinidad is comprised of multiple ethnic groups. The description of doubles reflects the communicative gateway function of Bourdain's voice-overs because audiences develop an understanding about Trinidad's multiethnic society through food.

Bourdain's voice-over description of doubles also articulates hybridity, which challenges the common Western stereotype that all Caribbean cultures are black or of African descent (Meeks & Lindahl, 2001). Bhabha (1994) suggests that proper articulations of hybridity resist producing reductive and objectifying representations of identity because multiple forms of identity co-exist as a liminal and fluid representation under this notion. Bourdain's voice-over narration of doubles highlights Indian, African, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean influences as co-existing in one dish, which resists reducing the identities of Trinidadians as simply black or African. Therefore, Bourdain's voice-over narrations function as a communicative gateway by introducing the multiethnic influences unique to Trinidad, while also resisting reductive representations.

Bourdain's voice-over descriptions are also apparent in "Madagascar" and function as communicative gateways that resist the objectifying local Malagasy. Bourdain's voice-overs can be recognized during a scene when he shares a meal with Mariette Andrianjaka, a local chef who specializes in Malagasy cuisine. As their meal is prepared, Bourdain's voice-overs explain that Andrianjaka specializes in Malagasy Royal cuisine, which uses ingredients from Madagascar,

but is cooked through methods and techniques influenced by French colonialism. Here, Bourdain's voice-overs act as a communicative gateway because he uses food to discuss colonialism's impact on Malagasy cuisine. Thus, viewers can recognize that Madagascar was once colonized by the French and retain a better understanding about the history of Malagasy culture.

However, Bourdain's voice-over is also resistant to Orientalist representations of Malagasy cuisine. The episode frequently discusses issues of starvation and poverty involved with Madagascar, given its lack of food resources, Malagasy cuisine could be perceived as inferior to British, French, Italian, and other forms of dominant Western cuisine. Therefore, Bourdain resists Orientalist tendencies by expressing hybridity, which gives credence to Andrianjaka's Malagasy take on professional cuisine. Hybridity can be recognized in Bourdain's voice-over when he explains that Malagasy ingredients were combined with French techniques and methods to create a new form of cuisine. The food discourse emanating from Bourdain's voice-over allows viewers to understand that Malagasy and French cuisine influence each other to produce unique flavors and a unique style of cooking, which ultimately represents the larger culture. Therefore, Bourdain's voice-overs resist objectifying and essentializing aspects of Malagasy representation, like cuisine, as inferior to more dominant forms of Western cuisine.

Finally, Bourdain's voice-overs are also evident in the "Sri Lanka" episode where Bourdain uses his narration to describe Jaffna crab curry. Bourdain describes Jaffna crab curry as "spicy and fiery, a cuisine known for being spicy and fiery already," to foreshadow the issues experienced by local Sri Lankans through his descriptions of the crab curry (*Sri Lanka*, 34:33). Bourdain's then explains that due to the Sri Lankan civil war, it was hard to obtain crabs and still is today since the majority of crabs are being exported abroad. Thus, Bourdain uses his voice-

over description of Jaffna crab curry to highlight the issues of globalization that limit the ability of local Jaffna people to cook and enjoy food unique to their culture. Here it is evident that Bourdain's voice-overs use the description of crab curry to explain how the locals of Jaffna are still impacted by the effects of the Sri Lankan civil war and globalization. Therefore, Bourdain's narrative descriptions can be identified as a communicative gateway because he uses food to communicate issues involved with formerly colonized groups in Jaffna. His voice-overs that describe the lasting effects of the Sri Lankan civil war also resist notions of exoticism. Although crab curry is initially presented as plentiful and abundant, Bourdain's comments make sure audiences understand that Sri Lanka is not a tropical paradise where food is always available. Thus, Bourdain's voice-overs also function to resist potential exoticizing notions that could be applied by viewers of *Parts Unknown*.

Thus, examples of Bourdain's voice-over descriptions from each *Parts Unknown* episode prove to be communicative gateways because food is used to develop further understandings about formerly colonized groups represented in "Madagascar," "Trinidad," and "Sri Lanka." Furthermore, these voice-over narrations also resist objectifying these groups through exoticism, Orientalism, and reductive stereotypes. However, Bourdain's voice-over narrations are not completely resistive. As a host, Bourdain acts as the mediator or the beholder of knowledge about formerly colonized groups to viewing audiences. Therefore, Bourdain ultimately has the last word within *Parts Unknown* despite its attempts to resist the objectifying tendencies of Western discourse. This positioning allows Bourdain, the White Westerner, to have the last word about formerly colonized groups in the production. Despite its conscious attempts to resist objectification, *Parts Unknown* also perpetuates colonial power over the indigenous Other.

## Summary

My analysis discovered three forms of food discourse: local food interviews, transitions and camerawork, and Bourdain's voice-over narrations. Collectively, these forms of food discourse act as communicative gateways because their conversations, images, and descriptions of food evolve into discussions about formerly colonized groups. Additionally, these forms of food discourse challenge notions of Orientalism, cultural Othering, fetishism, and exoticism that objectify the representation of formerly colonized groups. Food interviews provide this resistance by developing opportunities for formerly colonized groups to establish agency and to articulate subjugated knowledge. Transitions and camerawork manipulated images of food and dialogue to emphasize important messages in the show that resist objectifying representations of formerly colonized groups. Furthermore, Bourdain's voice-over narrations also resisted these objectifying tendencies by articulating complex understandings of formerly colonized groups. Based on these findings, the food discourse of *Parts Unknown* can be conceived as a metaphoric communicative gateway that articulates understandings of formerly colonized groups to viewers.

Overall, these findings support my claim that food discourse in *Parts Unknown* makes conscious attempts to resist objectifying the representation of formerly colonized people. However, *Parts Unknown* is not completely innocent of objectification. The show proves to be guilty of commodification and manipulating certain camera gaze depictions and editing procedures that center power on the dominant Western media mouthpiece of Anthony Bourdain, CNN, and *Parts Unknown*. While obviously contributing the objectification of formerly colonized groups, *Parts Unknown* still intentionally challenges many of the colonizing and Otherizing notions that are so predominant in Western media portrayals. Although the commodification of formerly colonized people presents a shortcoming for *Parts Unknown*, its

self-reflexive conscious attempt to represent these groups as authentically and respectfully possible through food discourse can be recognized. Considering these findings, the following chapter will discuss their meaning implications for future food and travel productions that intend on representing formerly colonized groups.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The findings that emerged from my analysis support my overall claim that *Parts Unknown*'s food discourse retains significant communicative value, and that it can be understood metaphorically as a “gateway” for effective exchanges of information. This is because the show conveys understandings, messages, and representations about formerly colonized groups through food. Although my analysis also discovered that *Parts Unknown* makes a conscious effort to resist objectifying formerly colonized groups, in many ways it perpetuates these forms of objectification. Since *Parts Unknown* has won several awards, is consistently one of the top-rated programs on CNN's television network, and is broadcasted internationally, the findings emerging from my analysis should be considered significant. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss my findings and how their conclusions expand postcolonial notions, food discourse, and the representation of formerly colonized people. This chapter will also discuss the implications of these findings and why they are important to provide a direction for future research, while offering suggestions as to how Western discourse should represent formerly colonized people in mass media.

### **Conceiving Food Discourse**

First, these findings are important in that they provide evidence of food discourse's communicative value and contribute to the theoretical and conceptual development of food rhetoric. The rise of “foodie culture” is evident within contemporary popular culture, with eight in ten adults watching cooking shows (Bruni, 2010). Food has become a noteworthy site of communication. Chefs, restaurant owners, food critics, writers, and television hosts have all developed their lives and careers around food, which has resulted in the production of various forms of popular mass media food discourse. This includes cook books, food blogs, social media

sites, news articles, and television shows. Furthermore, these bodies of “food knowledge” articulate, represent, and exchange experiences and narratives that incorporate food. Therefore, this study suggests that food provides a significant avenue for communication and deserves recognition from rhetoricians and other scholars as a meaningful form of discourse.

Previous scholars like Frye and Bruner (2012) have claimed that notions of “food rhetoric” in that it is becoming “an increasingly dominant discourse that suffuses co-cultures, popular culture, counter cultures, global economics, and environmental policies” (p. 1). Furthermore, the discourse, materiality, and power involved with food rhetoric becomes defining elements for “human culture and identity” (p. 1). Anthropologists and sociologists have also discussed the concept of “foodways,” or specific sociocultural and socioeconomic practices involved with the production and consumption of food (Dawkins, 2009; Edwards, 2011; Houston, 2007; Tuomainen, 2009; Welch & Scarry, 1995). McKerrow (2012) claims that consciously and unconsciously, our interactions with others are influenced through and around food.

Considering these perspectives, this thesis expands on the concept of food discourse by utilizing Foucault’s (1972) description of discourse and Barad’s (2003) theorization of the relationship between the material and the discursive world. To Foucault (1978), discourse is a system of thought that constitutes reality through compositions of ideas, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and practices. Thus, discussions and other forms of communication surrounded by food can be considered as systems of thought that constitute reality. Related to this, Barad (2003) considers the relationship between the material and discursive as symbiotic to which “matter and meaning are mutually articulated” (p. 822). In other words, material objects like food produce and contextualize symbolic meanings that function to communicate and become forms of

discourse. This includes face-to-face conversations around food, images of specific cuisines, and other mediated forms of food rhetoric. Therefore, food proves to communicate specific meanings and can be understood as its own form of discourse. Based on the theoretical understandings provided by Foucault (1978) and Barad (2003), this thesis expands upon the conception of food discourse and defines it generally as any form of verbal or nonverbal communication that uses food to articulate its messages. Thus, future rhetoricians and communication scholars can utilize these theoretical insights to apply and create more scholarly conversations about the concept of food discourse.

### **Overview of Findings in *Parts Unknown***

In addition to my theoretical development of food discourse, the findings within my analysis of *Parts Unknown* also provide significant insights about food discourse's role within the realm of intercultural communication and television studies. Specifically, I utilized postcolonial theory and conceptual elements of food discourse to understand how members of formerly colonized groups are represented in *Parts Unknown*. As such, my thesis provides several insights about the representations of formerly colonized people and conclusions about how they are crafted through food discourse in *Parts Unknown*.

In each episode, I identified three consistent forms of food discourse: 1) local food interviews, 2) transitions and camerawork, and 3) Bourdain's voice-over narrations. In food interviews, conversations about food quickly evolve into conversations about other aspects of formerly colonized groups. Interestingly, I discovered that food interviews provide most of the content in *Parts Unknown*, which means they provide the conceptual frameworks for the entire show. This is because each episode of *Parts Unknown* is about 50 minutes long, and conducts five to seven food interviews that provide between five and ten minutes of content. Furthermore,



I argue that other forms of discourse like transitions, camerawork, and Bourdain's voice-overs emerge from food interviews often as supporting material to emphasize, articulate, and portray important messages. Considering these forms of food discourse that emanate from food interviews, I discovered that transitions functioned to emphasize and communicate specific messages about formerly colonized groups by sequencing scenes with images of food. Meanwhile, the camerawork, specifically its "gaze," helped portray certain images of food that also symbolize and represent messages about formerly colonized groups. Finally, Bourdain's voice-overs articulate messages about another culture's food and foodways in a manner that reflects notions about formerly colonized groups. Despite the different ways in which these forms of food discourse function in each episode, they ultimately work collectively to convey messages about formerly colonized groups through food discourse. Therefore, I consider all forms of food discourse in *Parts Unknown* to be communicative gateways that create conversations about the representation of formerly colonized groups.

However, the problem that this thesis confronts is Western discourse's tendency to objectify the representation of formerly colonized groups through notions of Orientalism, cultural Othering, exoticism, and fetishism (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006; Shome & Hegde, 2002; Steeves, 2008). Several popular Western-produced food and travel shows like the *Amazing Race*, *Iron Chef*, and *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*, have re-produced these objectifying tendencies (Gray, 2013; Kelly, 2017; Lukacs, 2010). Therefore, this thesis also attempted to discover if the food discourse in *Parts Unknown* resisted or perpetuated the objectification of formerly colonized groups. My findings explain that while *Parts Unknown's* food discourse makes a conscious attempt to resist these objectifying tendencies, they can, perhaps, work to reify these tendencies as well.

All forms of food discourse in the episodes of *Parts Unknown* conveyed several messages of resistance against the objectifying tendencies of Western discourse. Local food interviews primarily resisted objectifying formerly colonized groups by offering them an opportunity to establish agency. This is because the context of food interviews in *Parts Unknown* is presented in a consummatory manner. Interviewees are depicted sharing a meal with Bourdain and converse in a way that seeks common understandings about formerly colonized groups, rather than exact answers intended for premeditated outcomes (Lake, 1983). Also, food interviews utilized the “going native” positioning which functioned to decrease Bourdain’s power distance by depicting him as embedding himself within and among a particular culture (Kelly, 2017). This facilitated Bourdain’s participation in the knowledges and foodways of formerly colonized groups, often relying on them to articulate understandings about their food and culture. This context ultimately provided the opportunity for members of formerly colonized groups to establish agency and represent themselves, which allowed subjugated knowledge to emerge (Spivak, 1988). Transitions, the “gaze” of camerawork, and Bourdain’s voice-overs also resisted objectifying formerly colonized groups by emphasizing hybridity and articulating difference within *Parts Unknown*’s messages. Collectively, I discovered that all forms of food discourse in *Parts Unknown* attempt to defy these stereotypical, reductive, and discriminating representations often applied by Western discourse.

Despite *Parts Unknown*’s conscious effort to resist the objectifying tendencies of Western discourse through food, the show in many ways contributes to the objectification of formerly colonized groups. First, I discovered that power is ultimately centered around Anthony Bourdain, CNN, and *Parts Unknown* because these Western entities control how messages are produced in the show. Thus, the power of editing allows the White Westerner to have the last

word because Bourdain, *Parts Unknown*, and CNN make choices about what to include and exclude through production editing. For example, only certain portions of food interviews with formerly colonized groups are depicted, which means viewers do not witness these interviews in their entirety. Additionally, the famous social status of Bourdain and other guest celebrities tends to commodify their interactions with formerly colonized groups. This ultimately works to overshadow the actual representation of formerly colonized groups. Based on these dynamics, I argue that, while some aspects of *Parts Unknown* attempt to provide agency for formerly colonized groups, their lack of control over production functions to perpetuate the hegemonic silencing of these groups.

My findings also suggest that *Parts Unknown* objectifies formerly colonized groups through commodification. Appadurai (1988) suggests that commodification treats anything like an object, which becomes intended for exchange and retains an economic or market value. People's actions, behaviors, and identities can become commodified as well (Appadurai, 1988). In *Parts Unknown*, the perspectives and representations of formerly colonized groups are commodified in that they are sold to viewing audiences. Ultimately, Bourdain, *Parts Unknown*, and CNN profit from the show, which functions to objectify the representation of formerly colonized groups by treating them as commodities of exchange for ratings and profit.

Overall, these findings support my initial thesis that food discourse in *Parts Unknown* functions and can be understood metaphorically as a communicative gateway. This is because food and the conversations surrounding it provide opportunities to discuss representations and understandings about formerly colonized groups. In my analysis of three *Parts Unknown* episodes, "Madagascar," "Trinidad," and "Sri Lanka," food discourse emerged through food interviews, transitions and camerawork, and Bourdain's voice-over narrations. As Shome and

Hegde (2002) suggest, hybridity and agency “are of mutual interest and concern to both postcolonial and communication scholarship” because of their conceptual ability to challenge and problematize Western discursive power over the Other (p. 266). Therefore, these forms of food discourse functioned to resist objectifying formerly colonized groups by expressing hybridity, articulating necessary differences to eliminate stereotypes, and providing opportunities for formerly colonized groups to establish agency. However, *Parts Unknown* also may reify these forms of objectification by profiting from these representations. The subjects of these episodes—the indigenous Other—ultimately lack control over the show’s production and editing process which perpetuates the hegemonic silencing of formerly colonized groups.

### **Implications**

Despite the conflicting conclusions resulting from my analysis of *Parts Unknown*, these findings provide several implications for the ways in which Western discourse represents formerly colonized groups. Overall, communication platforms in Western discourse must be more self-reflexive about their history of objectifying of formerly colonized groups. *Parts Unknown* provides a starting point to implement this ethic due to its conscious attempt to resist the objectification of formerly colonized people. Whether it is presented directly or indirectly, I argue that Western discourse’s self-reflexivity within television and other forms of mass media is necessary to provide adequate representations for indigenous groups. This will allow producers of Western media to understand the complexity of these issues and recognize that the producers themselves are often part of the problem. These moments of self-reflexivity are also seen beyond *Parts Unknown*. For example, *National Geographic*’s Editor-in-Chief Susan Goldberg published an issue of the magazine called “The Race Issue” (Goldberg, 2018). Within it, she recognized and researched the *National Geographic*’s ugly history of objectifying formerly colonized people

and other non-dominant groups through racist and discriminatory stereotypes. Goldberg claimed that it was time for the magazine to acknowledge its history and rise above it. Like *Parts Unknown* and *National Geographic*, Western media platforms must provide conscious attempts to recognize that the objectification of non-dominant groups is often problem caused by themselves.

Since Western media reinforce objectifying norms and expectations about the representations of formerly colonized groups, I also argue that the viewing audiences of mass media should recognize these representations as “glimpses” of culture. This coincides with the implication of Western media producers’ need to be more self-reflexive about their objectifying tendencies. To resist these tendencies, viewers of media who encounter these objectified representations also need to have the self-reflexivity to recognize their inadequacies. This also requires viewing audiences to be adequately and sufficiently educated in critical thinking and media literacy skills. Through a collective effort, viewing audiences can resist reproducing objectifying representations of formerly colonized groups by recognizing that these are not complete or absolute representations.

Although the objectification of formerly colonized groups can be deliberate in Western discourse, these findings suggest that this problem is often ignorance. Many of the (mis)representations of formerly colonized groups recognized in Western media are not purposefully crafted to be racist, discriminatory, or objectifying. This is supported by Hall’s (1995) process of “making sense,” in which communication unintentionally works through dominant ideologies that “naturalize” oppressive social norms (p. 19). Often, this is due to Western society’s ambivalence and lack of knowledge about the effects of postcolonialism, the developing world, and the many cultures of formerly colonized groups. Similar to the findings of

this thesis, Fursich (2002) suggests that travel shows “can widen narrow representations of the Other” (p. 223). Although formerly colonized groups are limited to mediated representations, their authentic complexities can be exemplified in a positive way (Furisch, 2002). Therefore, I argue that producers of Western media who intend on representing formerly colonized groups should seek to educate themselves about those groups before they represent them in production. Since education is clearly an issue, I would also argue that academic institutions that prepare media professionals for careers should incorporate courses and curricula that discuss postcolonialism and the complex issues it presents. In these ways, Western media producers can articulate more complex understandings of formerly colonized groups and provide more accurate representations.

My findings in *Parts Unknown* claim that certain forms of food discourse resist the objectifying tendencies of Western discourse by expressing hybridity, articulating cultural difference, and providing opportunities for formerly colonized groups. Therefore, other food and travel television productions like *Parts Unknown* can incorporate these resistive elements. Like *Parts Unknown*, food and travel productions can provide communicative contexts that are more consummatory in nature and provide formerly colonized groups with the opportunity to establish agency. Formerly colonized groups have been hegemonically silenced by Western discourse and often seek the self-determination to represent themselves (Koivurova, 2010; Spivak, 1988). Therefore, opportunities for self-representation are a necessary precondition for formerly colonized groups to establish agency and effectively resist objectification. This will allow Spivak’s (1988) notion of “subjugated knowledge,” or the local and indigenous knowledges that have been oppressed and disqualified by Western discourse, to emerge and provide formerly colonized groups with the agency to represent themselves.

Television productions can also strategically symbolize hybridity and articulate difference through production techniques like transitions, camerawork, and voice-overs to resist objectifying formerly colonized groups. Since these groups are often misrepresented through oppressive stereotypes and reductive identities, reflecting hybridity would communicate to viewers more inclusive and accepting norms toward the fluid, liminal, and often complex identities of formerly colonized groups. At the same time, emphasizing and articulating necessary cultural differences through production techniques would also resist the perpetuation of these objectifying stereotypes. As Bhabha (1994) suggests, using hybridity to articulate the liminality or the “in-betweeness” of postcolonial identities that can eliminate reductive notions applied to formerly colonized groups. Although I emphasize television shows in this thesis, these specific implications are not limited to television. Due to the rising convergence and globalization of multimedia platforms, these suggestions can apply to all forms of mass media that intend on representing formerly colonized groups through different production techniques (Shome & Hegde, 2002).

Finally, these findings also present a limitation in Western discourse’s ability to depict non-objectifying representations of formerly colonized groups. Overall, mass media is a business. Thus, the motive to retain a profit is always inherent within production. This presents the dilemma of whether or not it is still possible for Western media to represent formerly colonized groups without ultimately objectifying them through commodification. Mass media platforms like *Parts Unknown* ultimately profit from the representations and messages they create about formerly colonized groups. Thus, representations of formerly colonized people are treated as objects of viewing and entertainment pleasure, which are sold to viewers in exchange for profitable ratings. This problem becomes inflated when these representations are also

Otherized, exotified, and fetishized to sell, which creates an objectifying double-bind. The problem here is that these profitable media outlets are often reluctant to change their program's content, especially while they remain profitable and retain viewership. However, programs like *Parts Unknown* that are profitable through commodification, but make conscious attempts to resist the objectification of formerly colonized groups can act as a starting point to find a balance between commodification and adequate representations. Therefore, I suggest that future research regarding the objectification of formerly colonized groups should focus on discovering ways in which mass media can eliminate, or at least limit, the ways in which these groups are commodified.

Overall, the implications from my analysis of food discourse in *Parts Unknown* create new avenues for scholars to investigate the relationship between food, communication, and culture. My findings also provide implications for viewers and producers of Western mass media in that they should be more self-reflexive and should seek more information about postcolonialism and formerly colonized groups before representing them. Additionally, these productions should make conscious efforts to create opportunities for formerly colonized groups to establish agency while expressing hybridity and cultural difference within their messages. Although it is difficult for those within the mass media business to avoid commodifying representations of formerly colonized groups, their productions can still make conscious attempts to resist objectifying formerly colonized groups like we see in *Parts Unknown*.



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