

Notes

1 Introduction

1. Terms used to identify people of color are textured by complex social and political histories, and are subject to change as we move through history. I use the terms “Black” and “African American” interchangeably throughout this book since both terms are used today in intra-group settings as well as across racial groups—although the term African American carries with it a particular history involving the African slave trade, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement, as different from the histories of recent African immigrants and refugees to the United States. Black, as per conventional editorial standards, is not capitalized because it is used as an adjective to describe skin color, rather than a racial or national designation. However, following the work of MacKinnon (1982) and Crenshaw (1991, 1988), I capitalize Black because I see it not merely as a descriptor of color, but as “a heritage, an experience, a cultural and personal identity, the meaning of which becomes specifically stigmatic and/or glorious and/or ordinary under specific social conditions. It is as much socially created as, and at least in the American context no less specifically meaningful or definitive than, any linguistic, tribal, or religious ethnicity, all of which are conventionally recognized by capitalization” (MacKinnon 1982, 516). Put differently, Black is capitalized, because “Blacks, like Asians, Latinos, and other ‘minorities,’ constitute a specific cultural group and, as such, require denotation as a proper noun” (Crenshaw 1988, 1332n2).

2. The data in this book draw from the research project titled “The Food-Based Community Economy: Understanding How Community Enterprises Provide for Those Experiencing Food Scarcity,” a four-year, mixed methods project examining the various ways in which individuals who experience food insecurity provision themselves. All research protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Minnesota as well as Chum’s Director and Executive Board and Ruby’s Pantry Steering Committee in Duluth. Consent was obtained at the individual level for each client, staff member, and volunteer interviewed. Entrance to Chum and RP–Duluth was initially made by contacting the manager and program

heads at each organization. A formal presentation was made to the board of RP–Duluth, which voted to allow the study to be conducted. At Chum, entrance was gained through more informal personal relationships with board members and program directors. Semistructured interviews were conducted with twenty-two clients, eight volunteers, and three staff members from Chum and with twenty-one clients, ten volunteers, and two staff members from RP over the course of two years. Each interview lasted between thirty and ninety minutes, and participants received fifteen dollars in gift cards to use at the local supermarket. Interviewees were between the ages of eighteen and sixty-five. An additional twelve formal interviews were conducted with food experts, advocates, and leaders in the food movement. Three interview protocols were developed in an iterative manner—one for clients, one for volunteers, and one for staff/managers/directors. For the first two, the protocols contained several sets of questions, including questions about initial contact with the food pantry, relationship with volunteers, quantity and quality of food, methods for coping, faith beliefs, positive and negative experiences, impressions of clients, stigma, and relationships with other clients. For organizational leaders, questions focused on vision, institutional pressures, and program sustainability. The interviews were recorded, professionally transcribed, and analyzed for themes using NVivo. Except for the executive directors of the organizations, all other names of staff, volunteers, and clients were anonymized using pseudonyms. In addition, certain identifying details were removed to maintain confidentiality. I wrote field notes after each time I volunteered; the notes described the people present, the events that played out during the session, the roles and functions of individuals and groups, and the types of interactions. These memos and field notes were entered into NVivo, which was used to inform the analysis. The study also included an analysis of organizational documents (websites, promotional materials, press releases, and newsletters), which were key to understanding the ideological underpinnings. Finally, I attended numerous food conferences, including the Food Access Summits held in Duluth. Through these conferences, I engaged with actors in the food movement, including activists, legal aid representatives, staff from local food pantries and food banks, and legal, health, and government officials. On several occasions, I brought food home from RP to get a better sense of the quantity and quality of food distributed and with the goal of recentering the body in this research project about hunger. Approximately four hundred surveys were conducted at Chum and RP; however, given my interest in discursive practices related to stigma, the analysis in this book relies primarily on interviews and observations.

3. In this study, I used Charmaz's (2001) constructivist approach to grounded theory to analyze the data. This is a process-oriented methodology that organizes qualitative data and allows for new relationships and theoretical propositions to emerge. I used NVivo to code and organize the data. The first step in the analysis is *open coding*, which involves a line-by-line reading of all text (including transcripts and field observations) to code for "what is happening" in the data—a mostly descriptive

process. At this time, approximately 950 descriptive codes were identified, which were labeled variously (e.g., “talking about nutrition and whole grains”). The second step—*selective or focused coding*—involved moving the analysis from description to conceptualization; this was a way to reduce the data meaningfully. Here I brought together 950 descriptive codes into sixty more analytically incisive codes, representing the major recursive themes in the data. For instance, forty-one codes in the data were eventually brought together to constitute the theme and meanings of “food consciousness”—one of them being whole grains and nutrition. These codes came from twenty-seven unique interviews. Although I did not count how many times something was talked about, if the meaning was frequently occurring, repetitive, or displayed a pattern, then it was codified as a major theme and something to be presented in the final write-up. The last step of the analytical process involved *synthesizing* and *interpreting the data*. This was the most grueling part of the process because it happened in a fluid, ground-up, and organic manner. It had been my intent to study hunger and food insecurity as they related to health, healthy choices, and strategies for coping—and these were indeed the themes that I coded. Stigma was one piece of the study, along with all the rest. However, as I listened to participants and heard their stories, what bubbled to the surface were the multiple ways in which people experienced, expressed, and managed stigma around these more particular food- and health-related themes. The attributions of shame, blame, identity, and difference rooted in race, gender, religion, and politics formed connective tissue across the data. In terms of method, this now meant that instead of simply listing volunteer perceptions of clients, I was compelled to interpret these perceptions through the lens of stigma. This is where I began the work of theorizing neoliberal stigma, which involved a sequence of reading, reflection, interpretation, and continually checking ideas and assumptions to ensure rigor and richness. After this, I used several techniques to validate my findings. I kept memos to establish preliminary relationships between themes and clarify ideas, and I also ran the themes by folks who worked in such spaces paying attention to the standpoints and positionalities of these individuals. I had no idea when this study began that I would find myself so deeply in political and racial terrain; this emerged in a grounded sense from the voices of my participants and my own social justice sensibilities.

8 Conclusion

1. I would like to recognize Pastor Kathy Nelson of Peace United Church of Christ, Duluth, Minnesota, for her sermon on “The One-Sided Approach of the Good Samaritan” in July 2016, which called my attention to this lesser-known interpretation of the parable.
2. Freire’s (1970) *conscientization* refers to a dialogic process through which people become aware of their own oppressed status and then take action to overcome oppression. Building a critical consciousness necessarily involves the incorporation

of a critical understanding of the sociopolitical context, as well as the cultivation of skills for social action. Through the development of a critical consciousness, the oppressed come to “read the world” and name and evaluate the problem. This process involves a problem-posing method consisting of a cycle of listening-dialogue-action, which enables participants to engage in continuous reflection and action. For Fraser (1992, 123), the *subaltern counterpublic* refers to a space in which “members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.” Subaltern counterpublics have a dual function: to function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment for oppressed groups and to serve as training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. “It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides” (124). Importantly, subaltern publics are arenas not only for understanding beliefs and opinion, but for the formation and enactment of social identities, spaces where people can speak in their own voices, idioms, and styles. Simply put, there are no “masculinist bourgeois” rules that individuals are beholden to in these spaces; instead, the subaltern can freely express her personal and cultural identity here. Last, but not least, Dutta’s (2007) conceptualization of the *culture-centered approach* (CCA) is founded on the principle of bringing the voices of people in the margins into focus. The CCA highlights the roles of culture, structure, and agency in this process. *Culture* is conceptualized as “a complex and dynamic web of meanings that is continuously in flux, as it interacts with the structural processes that surround the culture” (310–311). Culture is not static but is found in the continuous interweaving of the past, present, and future through meanings co-constructed by cultural participants. The CCA reinforces the importance of identifying structures and systems that perpetuate disparities because inequity ultimately resides in the social organization of societies and institutions. Finally, the CCA asserts that social change occurs through the agency of cultural participants expressed in communication at multiple levels—communication among community members, policymakers, program planners, and other communities in a manner that expands the network of influence (Dutta 2008).

3. See <http://www.surjnorthland.org/calendar/>.

4. See <https://breakingbreadfoods.com/>.

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Feeding the Other

Whiteness, Privilege, and Neoliberal Stigma in Food Pantries

By: Rebecca T. de Souza

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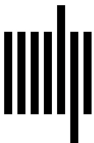
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