

## CHAPTER THREE



# Race and the Social Construction of Whiteness

In Gregory Howard Williams's extraordinary memoir, *Life on the Color Line: The True Story of a White Boy Who Discovered He Was Black*, Williams offers a powerful account of race in America. Williams was born in the southern United States and raised until ten years of age as white, the child of a white mother and supposedly white father. Williams grew up thinking his father's "deeply tanned" skin, "heavy lips and dark brown eyes" came from his Italian heritage.<sup>1</sup>

At around nine years of age, Williams's family's fortune took a turn for the worse. They lost their restaurant and with it, their income. At this point, Williams's mother left his alcoholic and physically abusive father. She took the two youngest children with her and abandoned the two older children, Williams and his brother, Mike. Williams and his brother traveled with his father to the northern town of Muncie, Indiana, to live with his father's family, ostensibly until they got on their feet again. As they traveled, Williams's father, James A. "Buster" Williams, stunned his two sons. He confessed to Gregory, nicknamed "Billy," and Mike that he was actually a Black man, and thus, that they were Black, too. "Remember Miss Sallie who used to work for us in the tavern?" Williams's father asked them about a Black woman who had worked with the family in the restaurant and bar they had owned and lost in the early 1950s, the Open House Cafe.<sup>2</sup>

"It's hard to tell you boys this." He paused, then slowly added, "But she's really my momma. That means she's your grandmother."

"But that can't be, Dad! She's colored!" I whispered, lest I be overheard by the other white passengers on the bus.

"That's right, Billy," he continued. "She's colored. That makes you part colored, too."<sup>1</sup>

Buster Williams tells his sons that they are "part colored," but as Williams finds out when he is suddenly transformed into a Black boy growing up in Muncie, Indiana, there is no "part colored" or, for that matter, part white, at least not in the 1950s in the United States. A person is one or the other, Black or white, and these categories are understood to be opposites. They are opposing sides of a false binary. People of color are on one side, and white people on the other. Each side, our society tells us, has its own characteristics, traits that exist in opposition to the other side of the binary.

Of course, in reality there is no such thing as a human binary. Human beings are human beings, each with the human capacity for myriad abilities, characteristics, and faults. With gender, men are not the opposite of women. Men and women do not each contain one half of all human characteristics, opposing each other. And with race, people of color are not one type of human completely distinct from the other, white type. However, even though our biology does not determine our race, even though our traits are neither fundamentally Black nor white, our cultures and our societies do shape our internal and external realities and the possibilities that exist for us in life.

In other words, if people understand race to be a real, fundamental, and biological fact of human life, the consequences for this thinking about race will shape our lives in multiple, profound, and very real ways. As sociologist W. I. Thomas said, "If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."<sup>4</sup> We can see those consequences in, for example, the gap between Black and white earnings<sup>5</sup> (as will be discussed in chapter 7) and the segregation of Black from white communities.

Societies springing from and influenced by western civilizations have long thought about and understood much of life in terms of binaries or dualisms. This either/or framework patterns western individual lives and western societies and cultures. We tend to think of people in either/or terms, Black is one thing, white another, men are one way, women another. Our understandings of race both come from and reproduce these dualisms that exist in our cultures and in our thinking.

What is perhaps most fascinating about Williams's story is that he carries those of us who are white over the "color line" into the "other" group, the other side of the dualism, where most white people will never, ever go. In the first part of the book, we who are white identify with this white boy, as we

read his story of growing up with lower-middle-class white parents who have to work too hard to make ends meet. At the beginning, around the edges of his story we encounter other people, Black people, whose lives are not ours. White people, much like the storyteller, watch but rarely enter the lives of people of color. It need not be malicious that most of us—us who are white—will never go to the other side of this racial binary. We have no reason to go there. Many of us do not even realize that there is a "there" to go to. Indeed today, this lack of knowledge is one fundamental piece of what it means to be white. We do not know the other side of the color line simply because we do not have to, we do not need to know it. We live our lives and benefit from our privileged position without ever having to recognize that there are other positions, other places on the other side of whiteness.

Halley experienced this privileged lack of knowledge in multiple ways as she read Williams's book. Muncie, Indiana, is a town Halley, like many sociologists, had read quite a bit about. It is the subject of Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd's famous and highly regarded sociological study, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*.<sup>6</sup> Lynd and Lynd investigated what they considered a typical small American city and the "typical" Americans who lived there. For Lynd and Lynd, as for many Americans, typical means white. In this book there are very few references to the lives of people of color. Indeed, in the index, one finds three pages noted where the book addresses Black people, under the heading "Negroes" (as would be common language of the time). Early in the book, Lynd and Lynd state, "In the main this study confines itself to the white population and more particularly to the native whites, who compose 92 per cent of the population." Lynd and Lynd explain their decision:

In a difficult study of this sort it seemed a distinct advantage to deal with a homogeneous, native-born population, even though such a population is unusual in an American industrial city. Thus, instead of being forced to handle two major variables, racial change and cultural change, the field staff was enabled to concentrate upon cultural change.<sup>7</sup>

Reading Lynd and Lynd, Halley nearly forgot that a Black community existed in Muncie. As a white person, she forgot about race, and whiteness became invisible to her. Reading Williams pushed Halley to see Black lives in all of their stark contrast from the white "Middletown" reality.

After having been white for ten years, when Gregory Williams finds out that he is Black, he is shocked. "The unsettling image of Miss Sallie flashed before [him] like a neon sign. Colored! Colored! Colored!" In the 1950s,

much of the United States and particularly the South lived in a sharply segregated society. So while Williams never needed to know the Black side of the color line, he did know that as a white boy, he was on the "right" side, the side with the power. After his father's disclosure, Williams's brother, Mike, asked his father, "Daddy, we ain't really colored, are we?" And Williams answered for his father, "No!" Williams thought fiercely, "I'm not colored, I'm white! I look white! I've always been white! I go to 'whites only' schools, 'whites only' movie theatres, and 'whites only' swimming pools! I never had heard anything crazier in my life! How could Dad tell us such a mean lie?"<sup>8</sup>

In the first ten years of Williams's childhood, his father, Buster, "passed" as a white man. In our society, we use the term *passing* to describe the phenomenon when a person lives with an identity other than the one socially assigned to her or him. Buster was Black by the standards of his social world. Because being Black in that racist society limited his life in so many deep ways, Buster chose to hide his African American heritage and live as a white man. Being white opened up many life opportunities for Buster and his children. Stigma is a socially constructed phenomenon and tends to involve a characteristic that is devalued in a specific social setting, including within a culture at a specific historical time. For Buster, his identity as a "colored" man was stigmatizing in the United States as he reached adulthood in the early half of the twentieth century. At that time in the United States, Buster's opportunities as a Black man were deeply limited. While many never face the level of oppression faced by Buster, most of us will find ourselves experiencing stigma of some kind. Stigma exists on a continuum; it might cause mild discomfort at one end and profound oppression at the other. For example, this experience can range from a temporary embarrassment (such as a breakout of acne right before an important social event) to something more encompassing, like having to carefully manage social situations in which others' knowledge of a trait one holds might deeply discredit the individual (such as a lesbian woman who works in a daycare setting where parents might have misperceptions about how her sexuality may affect her care for their children).

When an individual has concerns about how a stigma may influence his or her opportunities or social interactions, it can be very tempting to pass. The famous sociologist Erving Goffman explores "passing" as a social phenomenon in his book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*.<sup>9</sup> Some experiences of stigma are so life-altering that it would be challenging to choose not to pass, given the potential benefits of others perceiving one as "normal" rather than as stigmatized. In seeking to understand stigma and passing, it can be helpful to recognize that, as Goffman argues, most people

pass and hide a stigmatizing aspect of their identity at some point in their lives. Goffman writes that "the problems people face who make a concerted and well-organized effort to pass are problems that a wide range of persons face at some time or other."<sup>10</sup> Even when an aspect of one's identity seems to be *always* apparent, often one finds that there are exceptions. For example, a young woman with disfiguring burn scars, who regularly deals with managing the discomfort of others in face-to-face interactions as casual as approaching a cashier in a store, may choose to create a new, nonstigmatized identity for herself on the Internet by selecting a nonhuman icon for herself and passing as a "normal" person, one who is not disfigured. Passing can be a continuum from something one does occasionally to a fundamental change of life, as in the case of Buster. Buster passed even in his own family such that his mother lived with his family for a period of time and the children never knew she was their grandmother.

Passing can even be unintentional. For example, Goffman points to a child with a physical disability and limited use of one leg. When the child meets new people, they might at first assume that the child was in an accident and that the disability is temporary. Someone who is visually impaired might be thought to see by strangers sitting around her in a dark restaurant. Or Goffman writes, African Americans with dark skin who have never intentionally passed "may nonetheless find themselves, in writing letters or making telephone calls" passing as people with light or even white skin.<sup>11</sup> And of course, people who are gay or lesbian live in a constant process of coming out (or not). They have to decide in each situation—when they apply for a job, get their partner's check cashed, wish to hold hands at the movies, and so on—whether they want to "come out" as gay or lesbian in that moment and place. For a whole variety of reasons, sometimes they might decide to "pass" as heterosexual.

Being able-bodied, having sight, being heterosexual, or having white skin is normative, and not only understood to be "normal" but also valued as better than other possibilities. As Goffman claims, "Because of the great rewards in being considered normal, almost all persons who are in a position to pass will do so on some occasion by intent."<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, because white people are considered "normal," white people have the profound privilege of not needing to pass in terms of race.

When Buster lost everything and needed to return to his childhood home—home where he could no longer pass as white because people knew him, his family, and his race as Black—he and his children became Black. Williams spent the rest of his childhood growing up in utter poverty in the African American community in Muncie, Indiana. For most of those years,

he did not have enough to eat. His clothes were tattered and worn. He lived in tiny, ramshackle housing, sleeping for one period crammed between his grandmother's toilet and the wall in her minuscule house. Deeply impoverished, Williams and his brother lived through their first bitter cold Muncie winter with no heat—the stove did not work—and almost no food.

Williams experienced ongoing discrimination. Williams was harassed and humiliated by white students and white teachers at school and by white members of the Muncie community. In spite of his athletic prowess, he was overlooked for the best positions by football and basketball coaches.

Although he faced profound racism, Williams excelled as a student. Indeed, upon graduating from eighth grade, Williams almost received the honor of being the top student in his class. A well-meaning teacher, who did not understand the way race worked in Muncie, told Williams that he would be recognized as the top student at their school's graduation ceremony. Williams invited his father, who even managed to get some new used clothes for Williams to wear at the graduation ceremony. Williams and his teacher were reminded of the power of race when the school awarded the honor to another—white—student who had performed academically significantly below the level achieved by Williams.

Williams's story begs the question of what it means to be a raced human being. What does it mean to "have" a race? And how do we become this race? Williams's story exemplifies the argument we make in this book. Williams is no more Black or white than his society defines him and his culture shapes him. When he was in the South with his two white parents and three white siblings, he and the world believed him to be white. And so he was. When he lived in Muncie, Indiana, where his father was known to be Black, then Williams became Black. In other words, race most fundamentally is neither fixed in one's biology nor psychology. Ultimately, race is born from and reproduced by the social, or in other words, by the "chaotic cofunctioning of the political, economic and cultural dimensions" of human life.<sup>13</sup> Race has everything to do with power, social power. As discussed in chapter 2, and as historian Noel Ignatiev identifies, race cannot be defined in biological terms. Biology has never

been able to provide a satisfactory definition of "race"—that is, a definition that includes all members of a given race and excludes others. Attempts to give the term a biological foundation lead to absurdities: parents and children of different races, of the well-known phenomenon that a white woman can give birth to a black child, but a black woman cannot give birth to a white

child. The only logical conclusion is that people are members of different races because they have been assigned to them.<sup>14</sup>

Whereas the *origins* of race are neither biological nor psychological; nonetheless, in some sense, race becomes both psychological and biological due to the social. The social and those who wield social power mandate social phenomena—like segregation—that result in other phenomena like physical characteristics. Segregation, for instance, limits who interacts with whom in a human community in a particular place. In the United States, through laws, social customs, and sometimes, even outright terrorism (as in the case of organizations like the Ku Klux Klan), white people have perpetrated ongoing and profound racial segregation of Black from white communities for centuries. Thus, for example, African Americans have largely lived only with other African Americans, and largely gone to school, worked, made friends, married, and had children only with other African Americans. To a great extent this segregation exists still today, albeit no longer mandated by law. This social phenomenon, segregation, has meant that the physical characteristics of the Black community have been reproduced and passed on largely just to other members of the Black community.

The social even mandates how we decide who qualifies for the white community and who for the Black. Historically, numerous states defined race by the "one drop of blood" rule, also known as hypodescent.<sup>15</sup> Legal scholar Ian F. Haney López writes, "Under this rule, historically given legal form in numerous state statutes, any known African ancestry renders one Black."<sup>16</sup> In other words, if you had "one drop" of Black blood, someone who was Black in your family ancestry, even someone very remotely related to you, then you were Black. In 1970 Louisiana made this more specific by passing legislation that anyone with 1/32 African ancestry or more was legally Black. If you had less than that 1/32 part, then you were not Black.<sup>17</sup> Being 1/32 part Black means that a person has one great-great-great grandparent of African descent.

In Fannie Flagg's novel, *Welcome to the World, Baby Girl!* her character Marguerite Le Garde, who has spent years passing as a white woman in order to bestow whiteness and white privilege on her daughter, ends her life delusionally, yet unintentionally, by cutting her wrists and ankles to bleed out that one drop of Black blood. "Where was it, she wondered? Was it on her left side? Where was it lurking? Did it stay in one place or did it travel throughout her body, running and hiding, determined to haunt her year after year? She would just get rid of it once and for all. First the left side, the

ankle, then the wrist. She must let it escape. Then the right side. . . . Soon it would be gone. Oh, what a relief to finally get it out. Then she and Dena [her daughter] would be free."<sup>18</sup> Race is, of course, not one drop of somehow distinct blood.<sup>19</sup> Race is socially made; it is socially constructed.

López shows that in U.S. history whiteness was defined only by its negation. In other words, U.S. "courts defined 'white' through a process of . . . systematically identifying who was non-White."<sup>20</sup> Legal scholar Neil Gotanda writes, "The metaphor is one of purity and contamination: White is unblemished and pure, so one drop of ancestral Black blood renders one Black. Black is a contaminant that overwhelms white ancestry."<sup>21</sup>

### Social Construction of Race

In this chapter, indeed in this book, much like sociologist Michael S. Kimmel in his work on gender, we intend to unsettle racial categories, to problematize whiteness. In doing this, we use the theory of social construction. Social construction theory builds on the idea that social norms change over time (in history) and place (through culture). Social construction theorists argue that the unequal distribution of economic and social power reinforces (and helps to create) differences between groups and their cultural norms. In turn, the norms shift and change over time and place, again deeply influenced by power.

In his exploration of our "gendered society," Kimmel defines the theory of social construction in terms of how the theory has been applied to gender. His definition is useful to us as we explore race, like gender, as a socially constructed phenomenon. For Kimmel, "Social constructionism builds on the other social and behavioral sciences, adding specific dimensions to the exploration," in our case, of race.<sup>22</sup> Sociology adds to our investigation of race through the sociological analysis of differences between (and among) social groups such as Black and white people. Sociology helps us see the role of social power in action. With sociology we begin to understand the ways that race is not a fixed fact that we are born with but rather a lived experience perpetually changing in the midst of our societies, families, schools, governments, and so on.

Social construction theorists also use disciplines outside of sociology such as anthropology to explore differences between cultures; history to examine changes within cultures over time; and developmental psychology to investigate differences and similarities in individual human beings' lives from younger to older, from one developmental stage to another. Finally, returning to sociology, Kimmel reminds us of variation that occurs within a culture

in a particular time. For example, a poor, young, white woman who is homeless probably experiences her race differently than a rich, highly educated, elderly white woman. Definitions and understandings of whiteness "will vary within any one culture at any one time—by . . . class, ethnicity, [gender,] age, sexuality, education, region of the country, etc."<sup>23</sup>

Evidence supporting a social construction explanation of race is revealed by the historical disagreements among scholars when attempting to classify races and by the changes in these classifications within disciplines across time. While evolutionary theorist Charles Darwin argued that there is only one race of humans, he noted in 1871 that others had attempted to identify up to sixty-three distinct races. The fact that scholars could not agree on racial distinctions, creating their own categories of race separate from each other, reveals that race is not an obvious biological fact, but is, instead, socially constructed. Many anthropologists historically classified humans into multiple races, but the majority of modern anthropologists argue, like Darwin, that there is only one race of human beings. This shift in thought about race across time reveals that race is not fixed and apparent for anyone to observe. Race is constructed within historical and cultural contexts, based as much on prevailing ideology as on empirical evidence.<sup>24</sup>

Kimmel identifies a major distinction between a nurture-based perspective and a perspective based on social construction. Someone using nurture to explain racial differences would argue that experiences throughout life create differences between racial groups and that these differences lead to unequal treatment and experiences of inequality. The nurture perspective argues that racial groups truly become different through experiences and that inequality is a response to those true differences. A social construction argument challenges the nurture perspective. Social constructionists would argue that inequality creates differences. Different racial groups are treated in unequal ways because of societal and individual expectations of the groups; in other words, because of stereotypes. That unequal treatment is responsible for many of the differences between the groups. For example, white people are more prone to certain diseases and less prone to others (such as asthma) than Black people. These biological differences spring from inequality. For example, as we note in chapter 2, Black people are more likely to be exposed to toxins in the environment. These toxins predict the development of asthma.

For social constructionists, the key to any understanding of social phenomena is power, social power. By way of comparison to another point of view, multiculturalism, like the nurture perspective, offers yet one more way of understanding race and difference in the United States. While social

constructionists think about race in terms of power, multiculturalist thinking tends to ignore or even deny the relevance of social power, often portraying every group as *equal* but different. For multiculturalists, the answer to social problems involves respect for each other and the celebration of our differences. In contrast to multiculturalism, social constructionists argue that we *should* be equal (and that all cultures are worthy of celebration); however, when it comes to social power, we are not equal.<sup>25</sup>

When explaining the social construction of gender, Kimmel emphasized the importance of understanding power. Focusing on power is essential to understanding whiteness. Applying Kimmel's argument on social construction to race, we argue that race "is about inequality, about power. . . . [race] is about the power that [white people] as a group have over [people of color] as a group."<sup>26</sup> As noted above, power produces what we observe as distinctions between the groups we consider to be racial groups.

The focus on power is what makes the theory of social construction markedly different from approaches to race that accentuate multicultural celebration. While we fully agree that each ethnicity and culture has significant aspects worth celebrating, we are concerned that the multiculturalist approach fails to create a critical analysis of race because it fails to recognize the power of whiteness over all other groups in the United States. Like Kimmel, we acknowledge that focusing on power is controversial, yet we insist that focusing on power is critical to a fully honest exploration of race. (In chapter 6, we address alternative ways of learning about difference and the importance of curiosity.)

Unfortunately, because the multiculturalist approach fails to focus on power, it often feels safe to white people. Multiculturalism might entail a superficial investigation of the foods, clothing, language, and public customs of different cultures or subcultures. For example, at one such event when Eshleman was a college student, a young Japanese woman, an international student, knelt before her white peers serving them tea. The event included no critical examination of culture or of power. Students and teachers alike might find an uncritical multiculturalist celebration delightful, but in the absence of an exploration of power, a shallow approach to multiculturalism is unlikely to move individuals to a greater understanding of how social injustice or inequality create many differences, differences considered *racial* differences. Worse yet, a multiculturalist approach can reify the power of whiteness over people of color in a setting purported to be a multicultural celebration. In other words, the presentation of those who are "ethnic" to those who are *understood* to be not ethnic and thus "normal"—white—is also

a problem at many such events. These celebratory multicultural events can be eerily similar to visiting a carnival freak show.

In a freak show, a barker encourages others like himself to "Step right up!" and marvel at the curious appearance and behaviors of the "freaks" in the show. The "freaks" have volunteered to be on display because they desire to share their distinctiveness with members of the dominant group. Without a critical inspection of power, a well-meaning, predominantly white institution might appoint one or more whites to work with people of color to create an event in which other whites gawk at the unusual (to mainstream white people) clothing, music, dance, and food of other cultures. If power is not addressed, the event reinforces the power of whiteness as the whites amuse themselves in a position of comfort as people of color work to entertain them.

Outside of multicultural events, yet living still in this framework of white, unrecognized power, white people sometimes feel free to ask the race and ethnicity of people of color, as though there is nothing intrusive or inappropriate about putting another person on center stage regarding his or her cultural background. Not only does the questioner come from and situate herself in a position of power when asking the question, the assumption behind the question for white people is "Because I am white, I am normal. Because you are not white, you are not normal and I, from my privileged position of normalcy, want to know *what* you are."

On a weekend trip that brought together friends of friends, Eshleman overheard a new white acquaintance ask a friend, and the only man of color in the group, "What language do you speak?" The Chinese American friend politely tried to dispel the question: "American." The new white acquaintance seemed frustrated and did not accept that answer, "No, like do you speak Mandarin?" Eshleman wondered why the white woman did not accept the man of color's respectful attempt to discourage her question about his ethnic background. Was this white woman aware of her relative power in this situation? Was she aware of making this man of color feel uncomfortable? Eshleman concluded with some horror that the white woman seemed clueless about her relative social power when Eshleman heard the woman later teasing the friend about eating bok choy.

The incident reminded Eshleman of a family story in which a cousin's young, modern, three-year-old daughter was introduced to three similarly aged Amish girls wearing traditional dress. The young relative asked aloud, "What are these?" We may all have curiosity about others who are distinct within any given situation, but racial awareness requires that we develop beyond a young child's demand for information to be able to quickly categorize.

Halley recently overheard a group of college students sharing their ethnic and religious background during a discussion. One young woman turned to a young man who had not volunteered any information and pointedly asked the Latino man with a light complexion, "What are you?" On Eshleman's trip, the acquaintance also, essentially, asked, "What are you?" And in a *Newsweek* article entitled "Please Ask Me Who, Not 'What,' I Am," journalist Jordan Lite writes about her regular experience as a biracial person of being asked, "What are you?" She notes, "Isn't it rude to ask 'what' someone is when you've just met? Common courtesy would suggest so. But many people seem to feel uncomfortable if they can't immediately determine a new person's racial or ethnic background."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, many of us have heard (or asked) some version of the "What are you?" question. What makes each of these individuals feel she has a right to demand to know the race or ethnicity of someone who chooses not to volunteer that information?

While it is much more comfortable for white people to avoid addressing power, such an analysis of race without exploring social power will fail to lead to greater justice in our society. One challenge of addressing power is arousing "white guilt." If such feelings of guilt cause whites to avoid thinking critically about race, then the guilt will be ineffective and unhelpful. Beverly Daniel Tatum offers an important argument related to white guilt. No one is responsible for the actions that occurred within one's group before a person had power to affect those actions. In other words, no one should feel guilt regarding the injustices committed by one's group in the past. But everyone is responsible for addressing the injustice that currently exists in our world. We should feel responsibility to understand the injustice and to act within our spheres of influence to combat it.

Further, Tatum argues that whites have a choice—they can fight against racism or they can be racist. This is another controversial line of reasoning. A white person can be actively antiracist, working within his or her social network and within his or her means to reduce the impact of racism. A white person can be passively racist, doing nothing to address racism. Or a white person can be actively racist. When reading Tatum's options, many white students in Eshleman's classes have responded that they want a passively antiracist option. They do not want to take any action, and they want to be absolved of responsibility. Tatum notes that *doing nothing supports racism*. In a racist society, going with the flow allows racism to continue. To be passive in regard to racism is to be racist.

We acknowledge that some white readers may feel uncomfortable processing this argument. Many whites (including the two white authors of this book!) have been passive at some point in our lives with regard to race.

Tatum acknowledges that being called a racist feels like a slap across the face. Eshleman and Halley admit that they have felt this sting when others have pointed out their own racism. It feels awful. It takes a moment to recover. But Eshleman and Halley would much rather be called on their unintentional racism (even though it smarts!) than to be unaware and inadvertently harming others in ways much more devastating.

Tatum and Kimmel both address the fact that individuals with power are unlikely to recognize the power and may feel uncomfortable when someone tries to reveal it. Because white privilege tends to be invisible, Tatum notes that any given individual white person is unlikely to be aware of racial advantage. Kimmel identifies that white people might not feel *personally* powerful, and that because of this, arguments about power in the theory of social construction might not resonate with them. If the focus is shifted from individuals' feelings of power to an analysis of who tends to hold power as a group, it becomes clear that whites are highly likely to be overrepresented on corporate boards and in legislative bodies. When an important decision is made that affects many others, it is disproportionately more likely to be made by a white person than a person of color. "Power is not the property of individuals—a possession that one has or does not have—but the property of group life, of social life. Power is. It can neither be willed away nor ignored. . . . And it is so deeply woven into our lives that it is most invisible to those who are most empowered."<sup>28</sup>

Social constructionists argue that the phenomenon of race springs from social relations that both enact and reproduce social power. White people as a group have power over people of color as a group. As we explore in other chapters, white people make more money and have access to better educations; better housing; more interesting, higher status and professional careers; better health care; and more leisure time and leisure activities. This very real lack of equality between white people and people of color must be addressed for any meaningful social change to happen. Celebrating and respecting each other is, quite simply, not enough.

### *How the Irish Became White:*

#### A Case Study of the Social Construction of Whiteness

Since 1492, every group that has immigrated to the United States (including recent African immigrants) has struggled with the issue of race. Many groups came to the United States with one "race"—Italian, for example—and slowly changed into another, in the case of Italians, white. Such change,

such transformation enacts social construction. Society constructs race through particular phenomena like the cultures of groups and the social systems that produce and reproduce the power that some groups have over other groups. In part, white people become white and maintain their whiteness through white and middle-class culture and social power. Assumptions about “normal” manners, child-rearing practices, physical contact, sexuality, and norms around physical space, education and governmental systems, and cultural ideals like that of individualism all play a part in the production of whiteness.

As Ignatiev explains in his seminal book, *How the Irish Became White*, when the Irish first emigrated from Ireland, they were one race, Irish.<sup>29</sup> Over the ensuing century, they shifted from Irish to white. Halley’s Irish American family took part in this transformation. Prior to immigrating in the nineteenth century, when Halley’s family came to the United States, most Irish in Ireland were Catholic and lived as agrarian peasants. Deeply disempowered in a feudal society, Terry Golway notes that Ireland was “a country of landless peasants and farm laborers who worked fields they did not own and raised crops they could not eat.”<sup>30</sup>

Although they grew and raised many things, the Irish Catholic majority themselves ate potatoes. Other crops, crops more desirable to elites, were paid as rent to landlords who were neither poor nor Catholic. Crops such as wheat, oats, and barley, and livestock such as pigs, cows, sheep, and chickens thrived in abundance, even in the worst years of the infamous potato famine. How strange for Halley’s Irish ancestors—in the midst of a famine when at least one out of every eight Irish died—to have enough food all around and to have grown this food through their own backbreaking labor, and nonetheless, to starve. No one was prepared for the six years of famine in Ireland from 1845 to 1851. The loss of potato crops was immense, producing only “20 percent of its pre-Famine yield” in 1846.<sup>31</sup> The loss of human lives was, also, vast. The figures vary. Yet most believe that during the six-year famine, Ireland lost one million to immigration and one million to death.

Here it is important to note that most of us know this history, that of the potato famine, because the Irish *did become white*. Groups in power, like white Americans, tend to be the ones most studied in school, written about, researched, celebrated, known, and understood. Indeed, Vijaya learned about the Irish potato famine as a child in school in India. In contrast, growing up in the United States, Halley and Eshleman knew nothing about the Bengal famine of 1770 in which the death toll was so extensive the full population of Ireland would have been killed twice over. In the Bengal famine, approxi-

mately fifteen million people died. If the Irish had not become white, their history as a colonized people would probably have remained unknown to most of the world.

The issue with both the Bengal famine and the potato famine was not a lack of food (or of laziness on the part of the Indian or Irish “races”). As with most human catastrophes, the issue in both cases was social power—and powerlessness. Robert Kee, a British historian and journalist, noted the profuse amounts of food shipped out of Ireland for profit by Irish landowners during the potato famine. In the Bengal famine as well, there were plenty of crops being grown. Yet those in power appropriated the food for trading purposes rather than local human consumption. About the situation in Ireland, Irish immigrants to the United States, years later, told their children, “of the sight of food convoys under armed guard making their way past hollow-eyed men, women, and children whose mouths were green from eating grass.”<sup>32</sup>

Devastating effects of colonization similar to those documented in Ireland and India have been observed around the world. Evolutionary biologist Joseph L. Graves Jr. notes the “evidence for the negative biological impact of colonialism on the colonized.”<sup>33</sup> Under colonization from 1832 to 1872, the Hawaiian Islands lost two-thirds (68 percent) of its population. Like in India and Ireland, colonization in Africa and Latin America forced systems of producing crops for export rather than food for local consumption. “Thus, the contradiction of these colonial agricultural economies was that although their agricultural productivity was high, they produced little food for the indigenous populations.”<sup>34</sup> Malnutrition and reductions in population were common results. Near complete elimination of native populations also occurred under colonization, as happened post-Christopher Columbus in large areas of the Americas.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Ireland was a colony under England. This meant that England controlled all Irish resources. As in many other colonial situations—many of them British—England did not do the work of being a colonial power on its own. Middlemen were effective tools of colonization. Underneath the British but above Irish Catholics in Ireland were “the Dissenters.” These Irish non-Catholic Dissenters, “who were mostly Presbyterian farmers, mechanics, and small tradesmen,” helped maintain the oppressive hierarchy imposed by Britain.<sup>35</sup> They saved the English labor and trouble, often receiving relatively little in return. They did gain one important benefit from their social position. Like Irish Catholics, they themselves might live in terrible conditions, but as Protestants, they could at least consider themselves part of the dominant—the better—race. In other words, in terms of their “race,” all Protestants benefited from the



British-imposed hierarchy. No matter how poor they might be, Protestants gained a psychic power from being Protestant Irish, not Catholic.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, Halley's Irish Catholic ancestors living in Ireland under what were called the Penal Laws were not allowed to: "vote; . . . practice law; hold a post in the military or civil service; teach in a school; . . . attend the university; educate their children abroad; manufacture or sell arms, newspapers, or books; own or carry arms; own a horse worth more than five pounds; take on more than two apprentices (except in the linen trade); be apprentices to Protestants; rent land worth more than thirty shillings a year; lease land for longer than thirty-one years; [or] make a profit from land of more than one-third of the rent paid."<sup>37</sup>

Through the six years of the potato famine, the English—Anglo-Saxons—ruled Ireland. They believed (like many elite conservatives in the United States today) that no one should hinder the supposedly natural movement of "free" trade and the "free" market. In other words, they thought that if people and nations were allowed to trade food and other goods without restrictions imposed by governments, then a natural balance would be found in this "free" global market. They held that this "free" market, unencumbered by laws and restrictions, would be fair, just, and balanced. The reality behind this thinking was that the relatively wealthy landowners in Ireland, as well as the British government, depended on the exporting of crops to maintain their powerful position and wealth. In other words, the ideology of a "free" market supported the reality of elite power (again, not unlike the thinking of global elites today). Ideas about race played an important role in Anglo-Saxon thought. Because Anglo-Saxon elites believed Irish Catholics to be a race, and a less civilized, more animalistic race at that, Anglo-Saxon elites justified their exploitation of Irish Catholics. Anglo-Saxons and Irish Catholics alike *also* considered Anglo-Saxons a race, and an idealized one. In reality, Anglo-Saxons held power over Irish Catholics through colonization and exploitation. The ideology of those in power maintained that Anglo-Saxons held power *because* they were racially superior.<sup>38</sup>

In spite of British greed sitting at the heart of the famine, British ideology held that the real problem sprang from the Irish character. Charles Trevelyan, appointed by the British prime minister to oversee relief operations in Ireland during the potato famine, wrote about the Irish, "The great evil with which we have to contend [is] not the physical evil of famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the people."<sup>39</sup>

The Irish, of course, are no more a race than any other group of human beings. As discussed above, race is an idea born out of culture, the manifestation of structures of social power. As described in chapter 2 and by Ignatiev,

outside of the cultural labels regarding race "and the racial oppression that accompanies them, the only race is human." Yet the Irish, or more specifically, the Irish Catholics, have been in a variety of positions when it comes to *ideas* about race, and when it comes to oppression. In other words, Irish Catholics have been raced in diverse ways at different times. When Halley's family and other Irish Catholics immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800s, "they were fleeing caste oppression and a system of landlordism that made the material conditions of the Irish peasant comparable to those of an American slave."<sup>40</sup> (The material conditions were the actual, concrete circumstances of their lives.)

Most Irish immigrating to the United States up until the 1830s were Irish Presbyterians who came to be called "Scotch-Irish" or Irish Protestants. This group was originally known in the United States as simply "Irish." However, over time, the Scotch-Irish worked to disassociate themselves from the poorer and Irish-speaking Catholic immigrants who came to the United States just before and during the potato famine. These Irish Catholics who came later were so poor that most could not pay their own ticket for the trip. During the potato famine, for many of the destitute Irish Catholics, their only option was to die of starvation on the land they farmed (but did not own). Yet, the Irish landlords paid the cost of travel for some as a means to get them off the land.

When Irish Catholics arrived in the United States—before becoming white—many lived and worked in and among impoverished and free Black communities. The Moyamensing district in Philadelphia was one such Irish and African American neighborhood. Black and Irish people had children and made families together as well as lived and worked in the same places. The African American and Irish communities also played and worshipped together. For instance, Ignatiev writes that a church "in Philadelphia was presided over after 1837 by an Afro-American minister; baptismal records for the next twenty years suggest that one-third of the members were Irish."<sup>41</sup>

The Anglo-Saxon middle class witnessed Irish and Black intermingling with anxiety and disapproval. For example, a contemporary newspaper article described the multiracial inhabitants of a Philadelphia lodging house in horror:

The walls were discolored by smoke and filth, the glass was broken from the windows, chinks in the frame work let in the cold air, and every thing was as wretchedly uncomfortable as it is possible to conceive. Yet in every one of these squalid apartments, including the cellar and the loft, men and women—blacks and whites by the dozens—were huddled together . . . keeping

themselves from freezing by covering their bodies with such filthy rags as chance threw in their way.<sup>42</sup>

While the Irish in the 1800s United States were not Black, they were also not white; so such mixing of communities was not seen by the middle class to be as terrible as it would have been for Anglo-Saxon and Black people to live and build families together. About the question of whiteness, Ignatiev writes,

The first Congress of the United States voted in 1790 that only “white” persons could be naturalized as citizens. Coming as immigrants rather than as captives or hostages undoubtedly affected the potential racial status of the Irish in America, but it did not settle the issue, since it was by no means obvious who was “white.” In the early years Irish were frequently referred to as “niggers turned inside out”; the Negroes, for their part, were sometimes called “smoked Irish.”<sup>43</sup>

Irish Catholics arrived in the United States as—and understanding themselves as—an exploited and oppressed “race,” akin to African Americans. Of course, there is an enormous difference between being a slave and not being a slave. Yet the work, life, and material conditions of these two groups were not so distinct. The new Irish immigrants found a set of diverse work relationships that further complicated the experience of race in the United States.

Prior to the American Revolution, in the eighteenth century “the range of dependent labor relations had blurred the distinction between freedom and slavery. The Revolution led to the decline of apprenticeship, indenture, and imprisonment for debt.”<sup>44</sup> The decline in these slavery-like work relations, along with the growth in slavery itself as the foundation of Southern life, “reinforced the tendency to equate freedom with whiteness and slavery with blackness.”<sup>45</sup> Because race is a social construction, not a biological reality, people consciously and unconsciously construct racial groups in a particular society, place, and time. And these social constructions change.

The Irish who migrated to the United States went from a preindustrial society to one rapidly industrializing. “In America, where domestic manufacture had grown as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, there was a shortage of wage laborers. The country scooped up the displaced Irish and made them its unskilled labor force.”<sup>46</sup> The new industrial work that was available tended to involve brutal, unsafe conditions and long hours. The Irish Catholics and others who took up this industrial work recognized that their lives were in many ways not so different from those who were enslaved. Indeed, early on, factory workers often called their work “wage slavery.” Nonetheless, the

Irish moved from being Irish and akin to people of color to being white and understanding themselves as different from, and better than, people of color. They took the “wages of whiteness” instead of the greater bargaining power of organizing together with all working-class people.<sup>47</sup>

As historian David R. Roediger points out, past and present-day white, working-class people and working-class people of color share many interests economically in the United States.<sup>48</sup> Together they could have organized around their shared power as workers, or in other words, as “labor.” When workers (labor) join together, they have the power of their numbers to help them make demands on those who hire them (in sociological and economic terms, the owners/employers are also called “capital”). Coming together as a large group, workers have greater bargaining power; with this, they are in a better position to demand higher wages, shorter working hours, better working conditions, and so on. However, in spite of sharing many concerns, historically white working-class people have organized *against* working-class people of color by joining white working-class movements and workplaces. And due to this, the working class in general has been less powerful and more vulnerable.

Why would the white working class shoot itself in the foot, so to speak, by keeping people of color out of white working-class movements? Drawing from the seminal work of the famous African American labor historian W. E. B. Du Bois and his idea about the “psychological wages of whiteness,”<sup>49</sup> Roediger argues that instead of organizing together across racial/ethnic groups to gain greater working-class power, “the white working class [settled] for whiteness.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, in their racism, the white working class gained something in exchange for their loss of shared working-class power. They settled for the gains of whiteness, or what Roediger, following Du Bois, calls a “psychic wage”; that is, “status and privileges conferred by race . . . to make up for the alienating and exploitative class relationships” within which they lived and worked. Roediger writes, “White workers could, and did, define and accept their class positions by fashioning identities as ‘not slaves’ and as ‘not Blacks.’”<sup>51</sup> This is perhaps similar to the situation and choices of the Protestant Irish in Ireland. The Protestant Irish, like the white working class in the United States, chose greater psychic power instead of opting for the potential power of greater numbers—bargaining power—had they organized together with the least powerful in their society.

Again drawing from the work of Du Bois, Roediger argues, “White labor does not just receive and resist racist ideas but embraces, adopts and, at times, murderously acts upon those ideas. The problem is not just that the white working class is at critical junctures manipulated into racism, but that it comes to think of itself and its interests as white.”<sup>52</sup>

Irish Catholic immigrants like Halley's ancestors took part in a process where they increasingly distanced themselves from African American and other members of color of the working class. Indeed, Roediger argues that "working class formation," the development of an identity as working class, and "the systematic development of a sense of whiteness went hand in hand for the U.S. white working class."<sup>53</sup> As the United States industrialized and a class of people—the working class—developed in and around that industrialization, for those among this group that were white, their new identities as working-class people were inextricably bound with their developing identities as white people.<sup>54</sup>

Karl Marx developed the concept of *false consciousness* to reveal beliefs that are inconsistent with the interests of a group, such as working-class white people preferring to exclude people of color from workers' movements when inclusion may have created greater bargaining power. While false consciousness may be caused by multiple factors such as failing to recognize an unjust situation or resisting social change,<sup>55</sup> social psychologists John T. Jost, Mahzarin R. Banaji, and colleagues have focused on explaining false consciousness.<sup>56</sup> Across fifteen years of research, these scholars have acknowledged three ways that people justify their support for discrimination. *Ego justification* is the first label—extensive evidence reveals that individuals whose self-esteem is threatened are more likely to use stereotypes and act in ways that disadvantage other groups.<sup>57</sup>

*Group justification*, the second label, is highly relevant for explaining white working-class discrimination against workers of color. Group justification is the term used to identify people who seek to distinguish their own group—their ingroup—from other groups—outgroups.<sup>58</sup> In the case of white workers, they perceived their ingroup as white rather than as being a worker in solidarity with people of color. By identifying as white, people of color became an outgroup.<sup>59</sup> Through group justification, people may seek to separate their ingroup from an outgroup, even at the expense of the ingroup. When one perceives oneself in competition with an outgroup, one may sacrifice the gains of the ingroup for the sake of clearly distinguishing the ingroup from the outgroup. In a classic study by Henri Tajfel, when one faces a choice either to allocate a large amount of reward to one's ingroup along with a nearly-as-large amount of reward to an outgroup or to allocate a moderate amount of reward to one's ingroup along with a small amount of reward to an outgroup, individuals are likely to choose to take less for the ingroup in order to make sure to give the least to the outgroup.<sup>60</sup> Such research may provide insight into situations such as Protestants in Ireland supporting a social sys-

tem that treated them unfairly while the system treated Irish Catholics even more unfairly.

*System justification* highlights a third type of justification for discrimination that offers an explanation for some instances of false consciousness. "According to system justification theory, there is a general ideological motive to justify the status quo and bolster the legitimacy of the existing social order. People want to believe that the social system affecting them is fair and legitimate and they are willing to sacrifice personal or group interests to bolster such beliefs."<sup>61</sup> People tend to want to believe that justice is the norm in the world and that people are treated fairly, that "we get what we deserve and deserve what we get."<sup>62</sup> Believing in a just world can create a false sense of security at the expense of failing to acknowledge injustice, even when that injustice targets you. System justification reveals an ideology that validates social systems, encouraging individuals to "accept existing inequality as fair and legitimate."<sup>63</sup>

Social justice movements must first recognize injustice and overcome the tendency to perceive injustice as inevitable. Personal or group needs can become so great that they overwhelm inclinations that favor system justification.<sup>64</sup> Chapter 4 identifies movements that have been inspired by the recognition of injustice. Moving toward social justice can also be sparked by empathy toward an outgroup. In chapter 9, we will explore how a more inclusive ingroup identity could lead to social justice work that is inclusive across race.

### Discussion Questions

1. How do we become/get/be a race? And how can one race change into another?
2. Why are individuals sometimes motivated to pass? How is passing related to stigma? Explore the difference between intentionally passing and unintentionally passing. Intentional passing will range from being pointedly dishonest about one's identity to consciously allowing others to make an assumption about one's identity. Do you perceive these different forms of passing as relatively similar or as distinct from each other?
3. Why did only one drop of Black blood make a person Black? Why did the reverse not work? Why did not one drop of white blood make a person white? In this (racist) thinking, is whiteness an exclusive club easily "tainted" by other races? Or is whiteness fragile and Blackness powerful? What is the meaning behind the one-drop rule?

4. Who decides someone else's race? When asked to think of an African American person, what family history do you picture for that person? Who would you include or exclude? What race would you ascribe to a man who was raised primarily by his white mother and white grandparents and whose father was an international student from Kenya, such as Barack Obama? To what extent does Obama share a common social history with other African Americans? To what extent is this true for any race? If author Jane Lazzare claims that because she is a white mother of Black sons, she is no longer merely white, is she?<sup>65</sup> Historically, some people of color have passed and lived as white. Does this mean that they and their descendants today are now white?
5. Is it ever okay to ask someone about his or her racial/ethnic background? Is it okay to be curious about people, about their culture and heritage? Conversely, is not asking or discouraging curiosity similar to doing nothing when it comes to racism? Does asking about someone's racial/ethnic background perpetuate racism? If one is curious about another person's race or ethnicity, what might be a socially sensitive way to inquire?
6. If one feels uncomfortably placed in a spotlight when another person asks, "What are you?" in terms of race or ethnicity, what sort of response would be appropriate from the person in the spotlight? In other words, if one feels that a question was asked in an insensitive way, what would be an apt response?
7. Describe the social construction explanation of race. What evidence supports this explanation of race?
8. Have you ever attended an event intended to celebrate multiculturalism? If so, did it address social power? How might such events move from ones that do not address social power to being ones that do address social power? Argue for or against the importance of addressing social power at multicultural events. What do you think the effects might be of multicultural events that do, and that do not, address social power?
9. Think of a time you or someone you know intentionally or unintentionally "passed" as something you/they are not. What were the circumstances? How can you explain or understand why "passing" was important (or even necessary) given current ways of thinking about race, ethnicity, or/and sexuality in our culture? If you were in charge of organizing a major social event that was mixed in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability, what could you do to reduce or eliminate individuals feeling compelled to "pass"?

10. Suppose a good friend asked you to explain the concept of the "social construction of race" and how the concept is useful for understanding our culture. Using chapter 2, contrast the theory of social construction with the eugenic perspective on race.
11. Suppose you were asked to design a "multicultural" event for your school or some other organization of your choice. How would you avoid doing this in a superficial way? What would you do to take issues of social power into consideration?

### Notes

1. Gregory Howard Williams, *Life on the Color Line: The True Story of a White Boy Who Discovered He Was Black* (New York: Plume, 1995), 33.
2. Williams, *Life on the Color Line*, 33.
3. Williams, *Life on the Color Line*, 32–33.
4. W. I. Thomas in Lisa J. McIntyre, *The Practical Skeptic: Core Concepts in Sociology* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 3.
5. For example, Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins write that in 2007, the "median income for non-Hispanic white households was \$54,920 (meaning half of such households earned more than this and half below); this is the 'middle.' Black households had a median income of \$33,916" (*Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*, Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010, 71).
6. Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929/1957).
7. Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown*, 8–9.
8. Williams, *Life on the Color Line*, 33–34.
9. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), 74.
10. Goffman, *Stigma*, 74.
11. Goffman, *Stigma*, 74.
12. Goffman, *Stigma*, 74.
13. Brian Massumi, "Requiem for Our Prospective Dead (Toward a Participatory Critique of Capitalist Power)," in *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture*, eds. Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Jon Heller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 40–64.
14. Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.
15. Joseph L. Graves Jr., *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
16. Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 27.
17. David L. Brunnsma and Kerry Ann Rockquemore, "What Does 'Black' Mean? Exploring the Epistemological Stranglehold of Racial Categorization," *Critical Sociology* 28, no. 1–2 (2002).

18. Fannie Flagg, *Welcome to the World, Baby Girl!* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 440.
19. Halley's grandfather's brother, her great-uncle, was an avid racist and a medical doctor who in the 1960s argued to Halley's mother that Black people's blood was different from white people's blood. Unfortunately, this racist thinking was probably not unusual among white people of his generation, even white health professionals.
20. López, *White by Law*, 27.
21. Neil Gotanda in Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 27.
22. Michael S. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 95.
23. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 95.
24. Graves, *The Emperor's New Clothes*.
25. Please do see chapter 6 for a discussion of critical multiculturalism.
26. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 99.
27. Jordan Lite, "Please Ask Me Who, Not 'What,' I Am," *Newsweek* (July 16, 2001), [www.newsweek.com/id/78724/page/1](http://www.newsweek.com/id/78724/page/1).
28. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, 100, emphasis in original.
29. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*.
30. Michael Coffey and Terry Golway, *The Irish in America* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 4.
31. Coffey and Golway, *The Irish in America*, 5.
32. Coffey and Golway, *The Irish in America*, 5.
33. Graves, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, 68.
34. Graves, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, 68.
35. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 35.
36. For further exploration, also see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).
37. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 34.
38. For further explanation of similar ideologies, read about social Darwinism in Graves, *The Emperor's New Clothes*.
39. Charles Trevelyan quoted in Coffey and Golway, *The Irish in America*, 14.
40. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 1–2.
41. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 41.
42. Quoted in Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 40–41.
43. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 41.
44. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 95.
45. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 95.
46. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 38.
47. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*.
48. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*.
49. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935).

50. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 6.
51. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 13.
52. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 12.
53. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 6.
54. For an insightful critique of Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness*, please do see Theodore W. Allen, "On Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness*," *Cultural Logic* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2001).
55. John T. Jost, "Negative Illusions: Conceptual Clarification and Psychological Evidence Concerning False Consciousness," *Political Psychology* 16, no. 2 (June 1995): 397–424.
56. John T. Jost and Mahzarin R. Banaji, "The Role of Stereotyping in System-Justification and the Production of False Consciousness," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 33, no. 1 (March 1994): 1–27.
57. For a classic example, see Steven Fein and Steven J. Spencer, "Prejudice as Self-Image Maintenance: Affirming the Self through Derogating Others," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73, no. 1 (July 1997): 31–44.
58. John T. Jost, Yifat Kivetz, Monica Rubini, Grazia Guermandi, and Cristina Mosso, "System-Justifying Functions of Complementary Regional and Ethnic Stereotypes: Cross-National Evidence," *Social Justice Research* 18, no. 3 (September 2005): 305–33.
59. Classic theory on group justification is presented by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* 7 (1986): 7–24.
60. Henri Tajfel, "Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination," *Scientific American* 225, no. 5 (May 1970): 96–102.
61. Jost et al., "System-Justifying," 308.
62. Don H. Hokenbury and Sandra E. Hokenbury, *Psychology* (New York: Worth, 2008), 505.
63. Jost et al., "System-Justifying," 310.
64. John T. Jost, Mahzarin R. Banaji, and Brian A. Nosek, "A Decade of System Justification Theory: Accumulated Evidence of Conscious and Unconscious Bolstering of the Status Quo," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 6 (December 2004): 881–920.
65. Jane Lazzare, *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996).