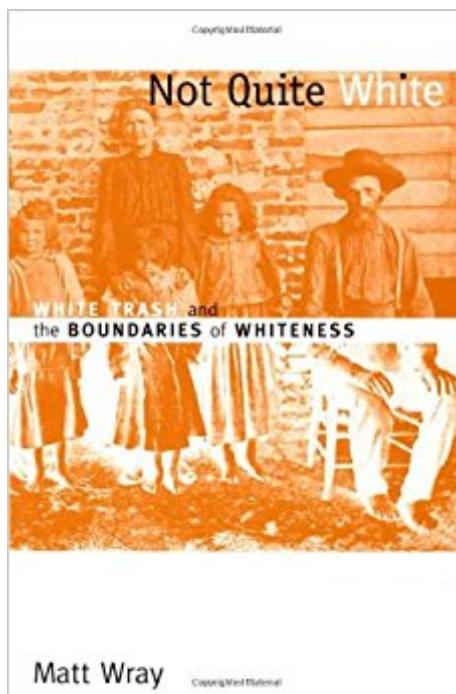


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Not Quite White: White Trash And The Boundaries Of Whiteness



Synopsis

White trash. The phrase conjures up images of dirty rural folk who are poor, ignorant, violent, and incestuous. But where did this stigmatizing phrase come from? And why do these stereotypes persist? Matt Wray answers these and other questions by delving into the long history behind this term of abuse and others like it. Ranging from the early 1700s to the early 1900s, *Not Quite White* documents the origins and transformations of the multiple meanings projected onto poor rural whites in the United States. Wray draws on a wide variety of primary sources—literary texts, folklore, diaries and journals, medical and scientific articles, social scientific analyses—to construct a dense archive of changing collective representations of poor whites. Of crucial importance are the ideas about poor whites that circulated through early-twentieth-century public health campaigns, such as hookworm eradication and eugenic reforms. In these crusades, impoverished whites, particularly but not exclusively in the American South, were targeted for interventions by sanitarians who viewed them as “filthy, lazy crackers” • in need of racial uplift and by eugenicists who viewed them as a “feeble-minded menace” • to the white race, threats that needed to be confined and involuntarily sterilized. Part historical inquiry and part sociological investigation, *Not Quite White* demonstrates the power of social categories and boundaries to shape social relationships and institutions, to invent groups where none exist, and to influence policies and legislation that end up harming the very people they aim to help. It illuminates not only the cultural significance and consequences of poor white stereotypes but also how dominant whites exploited and expanded these stereotypes to bolster and defend their own fragile claims to whiteness.

Book Information

Paperback: 232 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (November 3, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822338734

ISBN-13: 978-0822338734

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 0.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (14 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #258,071 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #284 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Poverty #672 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Ethnic Studies #931 in Books > History > Americas >

Customer Reviews

Matt Wray has put together an extremely powerful treatise on the cultural construction of poor whites in the U.S. With wonderful historical detail and depth, he has shown how poor whites have come to be perceived over three centuries, and in various regions of the United States. Wray's book is theoretically sophisticated in a direct, eloquent, and very "alive" way. As a result, it should appeal to a wide variety of academic and non-academic audiences. For students of race and class in America, this really should be required reading. More than an historical text, this book is also deeply anthropological, psychological, and sociological. Extremely well empirically substantiated, it also sits right on the cutting edge of social theory.

It's funny that the term "white trash" seems largely regulated to poor whites. As a rule, that is usually where they are found. As a Southerner I have known plenty of white trash, but they weren't always poor. We in the South tend to give the term to those in our population that have few or no morals. We base it on behaviour and not economic standing. Some of the best people I have ever known were poor as gully dirt and some of the trashiest people have held tenure at the local university.

This book was very well written. Sometimes a little wordy, but the author leaves you feeling that you are getting the complete knowledge on the subject. I found myself stopping throughout the book to do research on different things mentioned to get a better picture. I found the book very interesting and would strongly suggest others to read it. It is not a book you will read in one sitting. But it is worth taking the time to read. It should be required reading in schools. I will go one better it should be a course called the Social History of America. Every American should have a working knowledge of this information.

This book will be too academic for many readers. It is well researched and well written but many non academics will find it difficult to read in many places and difficult to figure out what the message or intent of the book is. It is definitely written for academics and has been reviewed by a few. I create and maintain educational websites, Midwest Independent Research. I have one on sociology, mwir-sociology.blogspot.com.

The first couple chapters feel derivative but the chapters on Eugenics and Hookworm are well done

and provide an interesting point of analysis for understanding the development of whiteness. I used this in class on Race in the Americas and it was very popular with the students.

Thoroughly researched and illuminating. This book is both engaging and academically sound. Matt Wray draws from history, sociology, and his own life experience to describe the American relationship with the "other" kind of white people.

This book appears to be aimed at academia as the desired audience. A significant portion of the first half of the book seemed to be making sure it hit all the key ideas that the instructor wanted addressed in the class research project. The subject material is very interesting to me, as I'm a "white trash graduate" and was hoping to read some insightful history and commentary on the subject. Unfortunately, it came off as very mechanical. While I wouldn't recommend this to the normal every day reader, it might interest the career university crowd.

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