

Poor, White, and Wormy: Hookworm Eradication in the South and the Boundaries of Whiteness and Citizenship

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The ideas expressed in this paper are a shortened version of a chapter in the author's dissertation, which focuses in part on conservative counter-responses to the Americanization movement of the 1910s and 1920s, specifically through work with poor whites in Appalachia. The work is still in a very early stage, and the author asks that NO references or citations be made from the materials enclosed herein. She may be reached at tina.irvine@gmail.com.

In Medical reformers believed hookworm eradication was important because it helped reinforce the boundaries of “proper whiteness.” Images of barefoot and emaciated families, living in extreme poverty and filth due to the draining nature of hookworm disease, made it hard to boast of the universal superiority of the white race. Although interventionists agreed that there were many steps in remedying “the poor white problem,” eradicating hookworm seemed to be a crucial component to re-making cultural perceptions of the class of people most often afflicted with the disease. Those involved with the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission’s anti-hookworm work hoped their involvement would be enough to turn poor whites’ “improper whiteness” into “proper whiteness,” thereby strengthening the race’s associated cultural and political authority.¹

Because whiteness had been traditionally required for American citizenship, hookworm eradication also mattered to those concerned with that boundary, which was, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, incrementally expanded to include more groups of people. Black men received the right to vote in 1870, women’s suffrage was amended to the constitution in 1920, and the same decades saw a steady stream of “immigrants of a different color” gain the right to participate in the democratic process.²

These changes troubled a significant number of Americans concerned about how the adjustments might destabilize the cultural and political power of whiteness in America. In response to that potential threat, and in rejection of the increasing heterogeneity of the United States, some reformers set their sights on the poor white population of the American South. Although the nation had long spurned poor whites as the “trash” of the race, twentieth century America’s shifting social

and ethnic makeup drove some philanthropists and reformers to reconsider the malleability of that group. The RSC rejected the contemporary degenerist paradigm that framed poor whites as racially unsalvageable in favor of one that viewed the group as reformable *because* of their racial heritage. They acknowledged hookworm infected whites were “handicapped” by the disease, but also stressed that they were of the “purest Anglo-Saxon stock” and would become some of the nation’s best citizens when treated. Medical intervention for 7.5 million infected American citizens, albeit improper in their whiteness, seemed the perfect solution for transforming poor whites from liabilities to “human assets” for white America. When considered as part of a counter-response to the well-known Americanization movement, the RSC’s attempts show us an important example of a conservative strain running through Progressivism. Their efforts to reinforce the power and scope of a white American citizenry in the face of ethnic influx indicate that many white Americans saw hookworm eradication in poor white communities specifically, and public health work more broadly, as a possible antidote to immigration. Their message resonated deeply with traditionalist groups at the turn of the twentieth century as the nation debated what it meant to be an American and to whom the rights and privileges of citizenship would extend.

Twentieth century Americans found it was harder to define “proper whiteness” than it was to rebuke examples of “improper whiteness.” To many nervous urbanites, newly arrived immigrants were a clear example of the latter. Even recent transplants with light skin-- like Irish and Germans -- were not considered part of the “Caucasian” race until the 1920s.³ But the notion of imperfect or improper whiteness was hardly a new phenomenon. Since colonial times, critics had disparaged poor white southerners and Appalachians as sub-groups of the American population who were somehow “not quite white.”⁴ Cultural commentators ridiculed the groups in novels, songs, and jokes as a negative “type,” referencing their “backwardness” as the epitome of imperfect whiteness.⁵

This conceptualization lodged itself deeply in American cultural thought, and by the twentieth century, most Americans thought very little of poor whites. They assumed the group was uniformly lazy, unintelligent, and apathetic, content to live in their own filth. Middle class observers particularly scorned poor whites for their disinterest in national politics, their alcohol abuse, and their subsequent feuding. Additionally, many outsiders saw the group's failure to adhere to traditional standards of gendered labor as culturally and morally suspect. Worst of all, some critics believed, rural poor whites had been isolated from "civilization" so long that these flaws had developed into inborn deficiencies, passed down from one generation to the next.⁶

By 1909, the narrative of the backward, unintelligent, and lazy poor white had been repeated so often that Marion Hamilton Carter wrote in *McClure's* magazine that "Every one who lives in the South or who has traveled there knows the 'crackers,' 'sandhillers,' [and] 'barrenites.'" They were "Feeble, slow-moving creatures," she said, distinguishable by their "lusterless eyes and a peculiar pallor."⁷ Each state assigned their poor white population a different label, but the aspersions shared a common sting, signifying a group of people deficient in their literal and cultural whiteness.⁸ Poor whites fared so badly in terms of social respect, that even southern blacks joked that they would "rather be a niggah than a po' white trash."⁹

Poor white culture offended a variety of middle-class standards, but medical reformers were most struck by their sloth and ill health. Although hookworm was certainly not the only illness contributing to poor public health in the South, it was a major one. Many health officials fixated on the disease because of its emaciating effect on its victim's bodies. The RSC estimated in 1910 that 40% of the southern population, or 7.5 million people, were infected with hookworm.¹⁰ Preliminary surveys of Puerto Rico and the South in 1902 made it clear that the disease was a significant issue in both locations, and the major culprit behind poor worker efficiency.¹¹ That same year, parasitologist Charles Stiles presented his findings on the American hookworm (*Uncinariasis*), to the Pan-American

Sanitary Conference in Washington D.C. with dramatic results. In addition to explaining the technical nature of the disease and its transmission, he proclaimed that generations of hookworm infection were actually to blame for poor whites' strange habits. By this measure, he said, "dirt-eating,' 'resin-chewing,'" and even the "proverbial laziness" of the group could be accounted for.¹²

Stiles' decision to frame hookworm as the "embryo" of poor whites' laziness and cultural impropriety was revolutionary.¹³ This context dramatically shifted public perception about the malleability of poor whites as a class. Rather than viewing the group's cultural and physical deficiencies as "in-born" and "natural," Stiles' environmental framework led contemporaries to a more nuanced consideration of heredity and environment. When businessmen, philanthropists, and reformers realized that hookworm might be "the germ of laziness" for so many poor white southerners, it did not take long for them to consider the positive implications for its eradication.¹⁴ They wondered: if hookworm made poor whites so "poor" in their "whiteness," what could the group be like if it was healthy? With medical attention, would they continue to be poor whites at all?

The Commission felt emboldened by the success of their work and wasted no time in explicitly linking hookworm eradication in poor white communities to the preservation of white nationalism. Doctors broadcasted how hookworm treatment had inspired entire towns to become more productive, healthful, educated, and civically involved. They were delighted to see treated poor white families enjoy a level of "prosperity never known before," and boasted how their lives were transformed "from squalor and wretchedness to health, comfort and happiness" in the course of a few months after being "restored in health and vigor."¹⁵ Many formerly sick people moved out of their run-down shacks and into respectable homes as well, and started to live "cheerfully" thanks to the practice of "industrious living."¹⁶ All of this proved to the Commission and its supporters that theirs was a "great and grand work for humanity." With "proper treatment,"

one doctor noted, the Commission made “healthy bodies, bright minds and happy faces out of what was before but human wrecks.”¹⁷ Another described how the group showed “a remarkable increase in ... intelligence” when treated, and was shocked to see how quickly their former “pallor and leaden” features were replaced with “rosy cheeks and bright eyes.”¹⁸

Nativists, eugenicists, and other conservative groups witnessed these changes gleefully. It was exhilarating for those people to observe poor whites’ “rehabilitation” as they were converted from racial embarrassments to racial assets for the nation.¹⁹ Traditionalists understood that the Commission’s efforts crucially set in motion the larger work needed to “reclaim” the group for white America. Poor whites’ total “redemption,” one RSC worker proclaimed, would require an “inseparable process of cure, education, [and] Christianizing.”²⁰ Although the Commission could not and did not intend to offer that comprehensive level of reform, they remained optimistic about the results of their specific endeavor. Curing hookworm would not be enough to remove all of poor whites’ cultural and physical improprieties, but they understood it was an important first step. Hundreds of letters of support from grateful patients, and the visible evidence of thousands of healed people supported that view and further convinced them that Mr. Rockefeller’s money had done the nation a tremendous good.²¹ For the first time in their lives, many poor white southerners began to live and behave as functional American citizens because of their renewed health. The Commission’s work seemed a particularly timely gift for people who were nervous about the future of whiteness’ political and cultural influence in the new century. As poor white men grew strong enough to return to farming, mining, and factory work, and poor white women retreated back to their homes to tend to traditional domestic tasks, America’s “trash” looked increasingly like it might be a national treasure.

In that light, hookworm treatment became a twofold issue of racial preservation and a means for reinforcing the power and scope of a white American citizenry. Hookworm was a “matter of national concern,” the editor of the *American*

Medicine Magazine declared in 1909, because the disease was a “removable ... part of our own racial deterioration.”²² As long as the Commission remained dedicated to fighting the parasite, its supporters knew that hookworm’s days of “impair[ing] the intellectual character and capacity of its [white] citizenship” were numbered.²³ This was especially important in light of increased immigration rates in the 1910s and 1920s. Rural North Carolina nurse Lydia Holman warned, for example, that the nation made a grave error by “Helping Immigrants” while “Neglecting Native Youths.”²⁴ The nation would be forced to turn to other sources for American citizenship if it were not careful to “cultivate” the “spirit and soul and mind” of “the American rural boy and girl.” Without better infrastructure for white uplift, she said, America’s citizenry would be “draw[n] from the foreigner, whom we are importing all the time....”²⁵

Nativists and those concerned about the power and authority of the white race in America’s democracy were of course, alarmed at such an idea. They agreed with Holman that the best way to avoid to avoid foreign admixture was by “cultivat[ing] rural America” through “Rural Service on a National Scale.”²⁶ To such people, the RSC’s work and the potential for poor whites’ rehabilitation marked “a new epoch in [America’s] national history.”²⁷ Thymol treatment ensured that interventionists could “cultivate” and “harvest” a white citizen base. County School Superintendent J.W. McFarland, for example, praised the Commission’s “crusade” for the way it made “strong bodies” and “strong minds” out of weak and listless children. He declared the anti-hookworm work the “best movement” ever taken in the county, and explained how local efforts might strengthen the nation at large.²⁸ Because America’s “achievement ... depend[ed] upon the development of the minds of our boys and girls who are our future citizens and homemakers,” McFarland said, destroying hookworm ensured that “we increase our possibility of a large crop of strong and useful men —The greatest resource of any country.”²⁹

McFarland celebrated hookworm treatment for the way it “rehabilitated” poor whites by re-making embarrassing examples of the white race into American

citizens who strengthened, rather than weakened, the race's authority. Hookworm doctors in other parts of the South echoed that sentiment. At the 1922 Covington County Fair in Alabama, a few clever physicians demonstrated how they might "cultivate" poor whites for citizenship by returning them to good health. The doctors showcased two sickly boys with moderate hookworm infections and promised to treat them over the course of the year. Playing off of the agricultural theme of the fair, the men proudly exhibited the clean, vibrant and healed boys one year later and declared them "Covington County Products."³⁰ The metaphor was both amusing and apt. By calling the healed poor white boys "products" of the county, the RSC surreptitiously sent a message about the real "fruits" of their labor. Americans concerned by any number of the demographic and political sea changes of the area would have understood the joke, and appreciated how the Commission's work healed the boys' maladies and transformed them from racial liabilities to persons who strengthened whites' claim to superiority.

Cases like the Covington County boys bolstered the RSC's argument that poor whites were "material for splendid citizenship" if they were placed "under conditions of good health, sanitary surroundings, and proper training."³¹ The Commission published dozens of similar stories to demonstrate how formerly sick and wormy poor whites took on the "energy, initiative, and progressive drive" associated with the white race when they were cured of the disease.³² It did the doctors "good all over to look at these boys and girls and see how happy and bright they look[ed]" after treatment.³³ Part of their joy stemmed from witnessing their subjects' return to health, but the political and civic ramifications of treatment also motivated doctors. Poor whites' renewed health meant that "Many of them [were] going to be fine citizens some day."³⁴ Taking that into consideration, A.T. McCormick urged the head of the Commission to increase funding for the work in Kentucky. He assured Rose that the extra financial expenditure would be worthwhile since "The fruit [was] absolutely ripe" and the RSC lacked "only... the harvesters to gather it..."³⁵ It would be "such a pity," he said, "to waste the opportunity when the harvest [was] human life."³⁶ Rose would

have appreciated McCormick's analogy. As a wordsmith himself, he understood the former man's point: the very color and composition of America's future citizenship was at stake in "harvesting" Kentucky's poor whites.

A large and active white citizenship base was especially important to nativists in the face of increasing ethnic immigration. In that context, poor whites represented more than a "problem" to the nation as it sought to expand imperially.³⁷ Southern poor whites also seemed to be an immediate domestic challenge: the group was of no political benefit to the nation if it were so weakened by hookworm that it could no longer fulfill its duties and roles as a white citizenry. Poor whites' apathy and disinterest also hurt white racial claims to superiority, and their lackadaisical approach to civic participation and the obligations of citizenship threatened the future of white America's power. Nervous opponents of the Americanization movement therefore would have feared naturalized immigrants' ability to vote in ways that advanced their groups' interests at the expense of white ones. The RSC's work curing poor whites of hookworm would have therefore been positively received—interpreted as a way of preventing white political voices from being drowned out in a sea of color. Nativists, eugenicists, and other traditional groups who felt uneasy about demographic and social changes would have found comfort in the RSC's measures. In their view, the work provided America with an active, participatory white citizenship base that it might use to preserve its white supremacy.

Reformers' effort to uplift southern poor whites was therefore a reflection of white Americans' fear that the supremacy of their race was under attack. Elites were unnerved to see 40% of their southern white brethren made "pale, flabby, useless hulk[s] of flesh" by the disease, reduced to the mental state of persons eugenicists referred to as "imbiciles" and "morons." Indeed, little in the way of mental capacity and social contributions separated poor white adults infected with hookworm from that group. When poor white adults were reduced to economic dependency and unable to effectively reproduce the race because of the disease, they did, in many ways, seem like permanent children.³⁸ But whereas

some eugenicists interpreted these deficiencies as evidence of the group's racial degradation and worthlessness, the RSC dismissed the alarm to underscore how the "cumulative effects" of the disease were "handed down from generation to generation" through social circumstance rather than genes.³⁹ Hookworm, they said, was ultimately the root of all vices in poor white communities. It was "handmaiden of poverty, a handicap of youth, an associate of crime and degeneracy, [and] a destroyer of energy and vitality."⁴⁰ It reared its head in the form of "stunted physical and mental growth, blighted health and efficiency, retarded economic progress, and general degeneracy and decay." Worst of all, hookworm "lowered" and "inhibited" labor, home standards, and poor whites' mental development to cause "the human machine to wear out before its time."⁴¹ Philanthropists and businessmen understood that if southern poor whites were not swiftly healed of their affliction, the group would remain an embarrassing exception to the "rule" of white supremacy in America and its associated political authority. Conversely, if they were healed, poor whites could be transformed from liabilities to human assets for white America.⁴²

All of this evidences a quiet but important undercurrent of displeasure with multiculturalism and expanding notions of citizenship in the Progressive Era. Conservative in the purest sense of the word, then, the RSC looked to maintain and safeguard the cultural and political authority of whiteness in America. Like other traditionalists at the turn of the century, the RSC felt threatened by the prospect of an American citizenry that included ethnic immigrants, blacks, and women. They turned to poor whites in the South and Appalachia to contest that development, and hoped their reforms might serve as a counter-response to the Americanization of immigrants and the Progressive Era's expanding definition of citizenship.

This counter response was subtle, for the most part. In rare moments, RSC workers lashed out at a dearth of federal funding for poor white uplift in the face

of millions of dollars spent on foreign aid. Dr. Benjamin Washburn for example, complained in 1913 that the “The United States government place[d]... a value of \$885.00 on every ... poor, illiterate foreigner.... who in many instances cannot speak our language,” while it denied funding for county health work for poor whites in Alamance County, North Carolina.⁴³ It was disheartening, he said, to witness the nation “value her citizenship at such a low rate...”⁴⁴ But Washburn’s outburst was a rare moment in the Commission’s history, as it almost never attacked urban reformers’ assimilative work. The Commission instead preferred to show the value of their white uplift efforts implicitly. Indeed, their programs’ success stories offered a clear rebuttal to the assimilationist ideas of the Americanization movement.

The Commission’s conservatism found good company in a variety of other reformist trends of the era, some more organized than others. Eugenicists, anti-birth control advocates, and prohibitionists, for example, offered scattered opposition to the new century’s progressive trends. In the South, a mix of medical and educational professionals, missionaries, philanthropists, and businessmen all sought to reform the region.⁴⁵ Suffice it to say, the RSC was by no means the only organization to turn to poor southern whites as a counter response to social and political changes of the day. Conservatives rejected cultural and ethnic pluralists’ idea that the new arrivals brought “immigrant gifts” by virtue of their presence. They sincerely hoped that when healed, poor whites might serve as “reservoir” of good American stock from which the nation might draw. One Kentucky doctor, unaffiliated with the RSC, stated this view explicitly. In an undated lecture to fellow medical professionals, he shared his vision that America might “[draw] a constant stream of the same vigorous native manhood and womanhood, in the deepest sense American,” from the population of healed poor white southerners.⁴⁶ Even Woodrow Wilson spoke to the way health care reform in poor white communities might serve as an antidote to immigration. As New York pastor Stewart M. Robinson shared in a piece he wrote for *The Rotarian*, Wilson believed that “that the millions of people ... in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and the Carolinas had been preserved there to supply a

great future need in American life.”⁴⁷ On another occasion, the president encouraged Americans to focus less on preserving the nation’s “obvious” and “superficial” resources like “minerals, forests etc.,” and more on preserving what was most important: its human assets. The call of the moment, he said, was in conserving “the American people, their energy, their elasticity, their originitive power and capacity to hope and achieve.”⁴⁸ Cultural assumptions about the superiority of the white race of course, meant that Wilson did not need to clarify which group of Americans he most hoped to “conserve.”

The Commission’s motivations and ideology should therefore be understood within the context of a broader discontent with the liberal social order. The RSC shared other traditionalists’ views that America would be better served by reforming and healing its “purest” and “oldest” stock, rather than catering to its newest ethnic arrivals. Dr. Steele, who worked with the Commission in Stearns, Kentucky, expressed this view to his supervisor subtly. Steele described poor white Kentuckians as “A splendid people; an appreciative people. A very small percent are educated, but they manifest the highest type of common sense.”⁴⁹ He explained the benefit of the group’s geographic isolation. Because their communities were so remote, “There are no foreigners and but very few negroes in the county. All are natives of good names—Stevens, Creekmores, Bell’s, Worley’s, Fosters etc.”⁵⁰ By listing the surnames of the poor white families with whom he worked, Steele emphasized the “purity” of the people and implicitly referenced their “pioneer” qualities. Those appellations were easily identifiable Scotch-Irish surnames that served as a plus for turn of the century Americans fascinated by a quickly disappearing frontier and “authentic” Americans. He implied that these “natives of good names” would positively improve mainstream American society by virtue of their birthright and race.

Others involved with the Commission were more explicit in their vision for poor whites and America’s future. Dr. W. L. Heizer for example, believed that “redeemed” Kentuckians could fundamentally reshape and revitalize the white race in the twentieth century. He lamented the way the “best hearted, kindest,

most generous and potentially ... strongest people of the state,” were “Benighted and Bedamned” due to hookworm-- but remained optimistic about their potential when healed.⁵¹ “Time, hardship, and disease had left their scars” on the people, but Hiezer Heizer looked past those physical blemishes to focus on the group’s racial heritage and associated traits. “One wonders,” he said, what poor whites might “accomplish” if they were “Freed of [their] disabilities and rugged environment” and “armed with education and culture.”⁵² Then, using one wizened mountain woman as an example for the larger group’s healing, he predicted: “...Backed by her anglo-saxon (sic) aggressiveness, [...] Her progeny like her sons of old [would] become masters of men, leaders in the world of finance and industry. The old race would revive and infuse new life and new force which, modified by Christian influence, would find vent not in wars of conquest upon the battlefields but in the more strenuous conflict where right must prevail in the individual, community, state and nation.”⁵³

Heizer described nothing less than a eugenic utopia that utilized poor whites’ genetic heritage to improve the “quality” of American whiteness. In his view, eradicating hookworm allowed poor whites to join forces with white America and in the process, encouraged the white race to new levels of achievement. Heizer’s imagined syncretism was, of course, fundamentally rooted in the assumption that poor whites would discard their “backward” culture while retaining the “inner” drive and worth of the race. Few contemporaries would have been troubled by that belief. In all likelihood, the RSC and its supporters would have shared Heizer’s view and interpreted the poor white situation as both a moral imperative and one of political expediency. According to his formulation, curing poor whites’ hookworm resolved both of those crises: “freed of their disabilities,” the best aspects of “native” whites’ heritage merged with the best of “modern” American’s traits. In doing so, it appeared that the Commission just might have found the way to create 7.5 million ideal citizens.

In 1910, a local newspaper in Jackson, Tennessee declared that “conserving” poor whites’ health through hookworm treatment was “one of the greatest calls of the moment.”⁵⁴ That publication unwittingly described, in one succinct sentence, the scope and mission of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission. Although the RSC focused on hookworm eradication for the way it quickly improved millions of poor southern whites’ lives, its efforts were also fundamentally linked to the preservation of white authority and power in the American republic. Whereas many Progressives embraced the demographic and cultural sea changes of the era through Americanization programs for recent immigrants and the extension of citizenship rights to black men and white women, turn of the century traditionalists rejected the idea of “immigrant gifts” and political inclusivity.

As a counter-response to those changes, groups like the RSC turned to uplift work with southern poor whites. The group was imperfect in their whiteness and presented serious challenges to whites’ claim to racial superiority, but poor whites were importantly *white American citizens*. The Commission and its supporters hoped that healing poor whites might thwart what they saw as liberal encroachment on the proper composition and color of America’s citizenry. Hookworm treatment’s miraculous effects emboldened the Commission; when they were healed, poor whites quickly took up the mantle of decent white citizenship and engaged in respectable economic, civic, and cultural practices. Those developments made the RSC optimistic that hookworm eradication might transform the group into one that no longer threatened the race’s political and cultural authority, and even one that helped to reinforce the scope and power of whiteness in America.

The Commission’s turn to uplift southern poor whites in the wake of a variety of inclusionary measures represents an important but under discussed conservative strain within Progressivism. Although the Commission did not rhetorically engage with or challenge the Americanization movement or those seeking to expand the definition of citizenship in America, its efforts to salvage poor whites—a group of people long discarded by the nation for their presumed

worthlessness—proves that the ethnic and political changes of the 1910s and 1920s created a tremendous sense of unease about the power and future of whiteness in America. In that moment, the American South’s “hookworm issue” became a national concern for those nervous about the future status of whiteness and its attendant privileges. The RSC hoped that by curing poor whites of hookworm, they might drown out the dissenting voices and viewpoints of “minority” groups who threatened to take away the power of white citizens.

The RSC’s efforts were, of course, a singular aspect of the counter-movement to cultural and political pluralism in the Progressive Era. But, they are a deeply important one. Unlike Americanizers’ work with recent immigrants, or settlement schools for urban blacks, the RSC’s efforts with southern poor whites rested on assumptions of that group’s racial worth. Whereas reformers uplifted immigrants and blacks *in spite* of their race, the Commission healed poor whites and hoped to set them on the path to ideal citizenship *because* of their genetic heritage. The Commission’s work with poor whites, like other educators, missionaries, businessmen, and philanthropists of the day, suggested that reformed poor whites might help to preserve the authority of white voices in America’s democracy.

Recognizing the racial bias and motivations of the organization and its supporters should not slight the incredible scope and benefit of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission’s work in the American South. The RSC provided a real public service to the South through its hookworm dispensaries, and positively influenced the trajectory of public health work in the region like no other organization had done previously. But history must also acknowledge many turn of the century Americans’ ethnic concerns and the way those views affected philanthropic giving, social reform, and conversations about national belonging and Americanness. Those perspectives offer a more complete picture of the Progressive Era, and demonstrate that the Commission and its conservatism were just as integral to the moment as its better-known Progressive developments.

¹ Natalie Ring explains that the discourse around the “poor white problem” in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries “suggests [that] whiteness was an unstable racial category that had to be continually reinforced and redefined.” See Natalie Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930*. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012) p. 141.

² For a discussion of the shifting inclusivity of “whiteness” in America from the colonial period to the present, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.)

³ See Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, (1999). Jacobson focuses on this complicated and multi-faceted process in the second half of his book. He sees emergent American imperialism, and the logic of pan-white supremacy, naturalization laws, and civil rights politics that embraced the black-white binary as essential to the creation of a unified Caucasian identity.

⁴ Sociologist Matt Wray uses the term “not quite white” to think about poor whites in American history. See Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁵ For a useful overview of poor whites in American history, from the colonial period to the present, see Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400 Year Untold History of Class in America*, (New York: Viking Press, 2016.)

⁶ Eugenacists particularly promoted this idea. The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a series of “eugenic family studies” which considered the lineage of poor heredity and/ or character traits in poor whites throughout the country. These studies and brief analyses of the contemporary works can be found in Nicole Hahn Rafter, *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877-1919* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988).

⁷ Marion Hamilton Carter, “The Vampire of the South,” *McClure’s Magazine* 33, (October 1909.) p. 617.

⁸ Poor whites were known as “‘Tar Heels’ in North Carolina, ‘Sand Hillers’ in South Carolina, ‘Crackers’ in Georgia, ‘Clay Eaters’ in Alabama, ‘Red Necks’ in Arkansas, ‘Hill-Billies’ in Mississippi, and ‘Mean Whites,’ ‘White Trash,’ and ‘No ‘Count’ elsewhere.” See Ring, *The Problem South* p. 140.

⁹ Carter, “The Vampire of the South,” p. 617; Brownlow cites similar sentiments in his piece on hookworm and poor whites. See Louis Brownlow, “The Passing of the ‘Po White Trash’: The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission’s Successful Fight Against the Hookworm Disease.” *Hampton- Columbian Magazine*, Volume 27, Issue November 1, 1911. p. 634-646.

¹⁰ John Ettling, *The Germ of Laziness: Rockefeller Philanthropy and Public Health in the New South*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,) 1981, p 2. Charles Stiles even remarked that it would be easier to find young children someone with hookworm than without it. See Correspondence, Charles Stiles to Wickliffe Rose, August 15, 1912, quoted at <http://rockefeller100.org/biography/show/charles-wardell-stiles>. Contemporary reports vary on the number of people they say were infected with hookworm. They range widely. *The New York Times*, for example, estimated in October 1909, that 2 million southerners were infected. See “Two Million Have Hookworm,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 1909.

¹¹ Charles W. Stiles, “Early History, In Part Esoteric, Of the Hookworm (Uncinariasis) Campaign in our Southern United States.” Reprinted from the *Journal of Parasitology*, August, 1939, Vol. 25, No. 4, p 294. Rockefeller Sanitary Commission (hereafter RSC), Series 1, Box 2, Folder 33, Rockefeller Archive Center.

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- ¹² Stiles, "Early History," p. 293. RSC, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 33.
- ¹³ For a brief discussion of the formation of the RSC and the beginning of American medical discussion of hookworm, see Marcus, Alan I. "Physicians Open a Can of Worms: American Nationality and Hookworm in the United States, 1893-1909," *American Studies* 30 (2): p. 103-21, 1989. Alan argues that the RSC's work should be seen "within the context of larger debates and actions concerning American nationality," specifically the relationship of the South with the rest of the country.
- ¹⁴ Stiles, "Early History," p. 296. RSC, Series 1, Box 2, Folder 33.
- ¹⁵ Newspaper clipping "These pictures Show What Hookworm Relief meant to one Family," *The Weekly Mercury*, Huntsville, Alabama, December 1912. RSC, Series 2. Box 4, Folder 81.
- ¹⁶ Newspaper clipping "What Hookworm Relief meant to one Family," RSC. Series 2. Box 4, Folder 81.
- ¹⁷ Untitled list, Dr. Alanson Capehart, of Bertie County, North Carolina, from collection of quotes RSC. Series 2. Box 9 Folder 145- North Carolina- General.
- ¹⁸ Correspondence, Dr. H.O. Hyatt to Dr. Jonathan Ferrell, March 30, 1911. RSC, Series 2, Box 8, Folder 143.
- ¹⁹ W.L. Heizer. "Report on a visit to a hookworm-infected county in Kentucky" Photos Removed, 220 H (Original report subtitled- "Report: Benighted and Bedamned," (1913). IHB papers. RG 5. Subseries 2_220: Special Reports - Kentucky, 1912-1925. Box 10 Folder 57 "Kentucky, 1913." RAC
- ²⁰ W.L. Heizer. "Report on a visit to a hookworm-infected county in Kentucky" IHB papers. RG 5. Subseries 2_220: Special Reports - Kentucky, 1912-1925. Box 10 Folder 57 "Kentucky, 1913." RAC
- ²¹ See Correspondence, Mrs. Dora M. Harrell to Dr. Morgan Smith, January 8, 1912. RSC, Series 2, Box 4, Folder 86, "Arkansas." Harrell was treated for hookworm and wrote to her doctor to thank him for treatment. She referred to hookworm as the "bane of our sunny south-land" and thanked Mr. Rockefeller and "our gran Old Government" for their help. Wickliffe Rose noted Kentuckians' immense appreciation for Mr. Rockefeller's work, too. He said that they were so thankful for the RSC's work that it had made several people comment that "Mr. Rockefeller will go down in history as the wisest philanthropist that this country has produced." See Rose to F.T. Gates, October 17, 1912. RSC, Box 6 Folder 115, "Kentucky."
- ²² H. Edwin Lewis, "The Prevalence of Uncinariasis in America," *American Medicine* 15, (1909): 497-98. quoted in Alan I. Marcus "The South's Native Foreigners: Hookworm as a Factor in Southern Distinctiveness," in Eds. Todd L. Savitt and James Harvey Young, *Disease and Distinctiveness in the American South*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press), 1988, p. 93.
- ²³ Walter Hines Page, "The Hookworm and Civilization." *The World's Work*, n.d. p 509. RF Pamphlet Collection, Series I, Box 1, Folder 9, "Disease: Hookworm: United States, 1911-1928;" IHB Annual Report, 1918, p 65.
- ²⁴ Lydia Holman, "Civic Conditions in Our Mountain Communities," oral address delivered May 1913 at the annual meeting of the American Civic Alliance in Baltimore. Later published in their volume, *Civic Progress*, No. 13. RSC, Series 2, Box 8, Folder 141.
- ²⁵ Holman, "Civic Conditions in Our Mountain Communities," RSC, Series 2, Box 8, Folder 141.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Page, "The Hookworm and Civilization." p 504. RF Pamphlet Collection, Series I, Box 1, Folder 9, "Disease: Hookworm: United States, 1911-1928"

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- ²⁸ Open letter in support of the RSC's work in Georgia, by J.W. McFarland, County School Superintendent for Franklin County, Georgia. February 14, 1914. RSC, Series 2, Box 5, Folder 101.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Photo 201 H- 11106. RF Photograph Collection, FA 003, Subseries 201H: Alabama – Hookworm, Box 42, Folder 1044.
- ³¹ Photo 250 K- “Heizer - Report on a visit to a Hookworm Infested County, 1913.” RF Photograph Collection (FA003) Subseries 220H: Kentucky – Hookworm. Box 49 Folder 1184; Correspondence, A.T. McCormack to Wickliffe Rose, July 31, 1912. RSC, Series 2, Box 6, Folder 114, “Kentucky: January – July 1912.”
- ³² Ring, *The Problem South*, p. 88.
- ³³ Correspondence, Dr. H.O. Hyatt to Dr. Jonathan Ferrell, March 30, 1911. RSC, Series 2, Box 8, Folder 143- NC General 1910-1911 (June).
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Correspondence, A.T. McCormack to Wickliffe Rose, July 31, 1912. RSC, Series 2, Box 6, Folder 114, “Kentucky: January – July 1912.”
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ring, *The Problem South*, p. 137
- ³⁸ Correspondence, A.T. McCormack to Rose, January 5, 1913. RSC, Box 6, Folder 115, “Kentucky: August- December 1912.”
- ³⁹ IHB annual report, 1918, p 59.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Newspaper clipping, “Our National Health is Physically The Greatest National Asset” *Eufaula Times and News* (Alabama), April 18, 1912. RSC, Box 4, Folder 81. This piece declared that “600,000 American lives [were] ruthlessly sacrificed every year because, it seems, we cannot learn that a nation can be sick just as a man can.” “National Health” the piece asserted, was possible only when the bodies of its citizens were healed. As it was though, the American nation itself was sick with hookworm and other diseases, in desperate need of medical attention. Two million of those Americans, he said, were “pale, weak, and unhealthy because the nation is infected with hookworm disease....” Similar stats are offered for typhoid and chills and fever. In each case, the language is framed not in a way that when individuals were sick, so to was the nation.
- ⁴³ B.E. Washburn, “Report of the Hookworm Campaign in Alamance County, North Carolina August 8 to September 20, 1913.” RSC, Series 2, Box 9, Folder 149.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ See William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 1992 for a discussion of southern Progressive reform in the areas of education, child labor, prohibition, public health, women's suffrage, and race relations.
- ⁴⁶ J.A. Stucky referred specifically to Kentuckians in this lecture and was not affiliated with the RSC. His sentiments were not unique, though. Many other contemporaries used similar language to describe the region and its people as a “reserve” or a “reservoir” or a “preserve” of the finest American citizens. J.A. Stucky, “Notes for Los Angeles Lectures” n.d. Box 1, Folder 11, J.A. Stucky Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky.
- ⁴⁷ Stewart M. Robinson, “Unusual Stories of Unusual Men” *The Rotarian*, October 1927, Vol 31, No 4. p 47.
- ⁴⁸ Dr. Pierce Bailey, “Memorandum Regarding the Establishment of a Federal Department of Health,” October 1917. IHB, RG 5. Subseries 2, Box 2, Folder 8 .

⁴⁹ Correspondence, Dr. Steele to A.T. McCormack, June 19, 1913. RSC papers. Series 2. Box 6 Folder 116.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ W.L. Heizer. "Report on a visit to a hookworm-infected county in Kentucky" Photos Removed, 220 H (Original report subtitled- "Report: Benighted and Bedamned," (1913).IHB, RG 5. Subseries 2_220, Box 10, Folder 57.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Newspaper Clipping, "To Fight Hookworm," *The Jackson Whig*, local paper in Jackson, Tennessee, January 23, 1910. RSC, Box 1, Folder 20.