



The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality

Justin Gest

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It wasn't so long ago that the white working class occupied the middle of British and American societies. But today members of the same demographic, feeling silenced and ignored by mainstream parties, have moved to the political margins. In the United States and the United Kingdom, economic disenfranchisement, nativist sentiments and fear of the unknown among this group have even inspired the creation of new right-wing parties and resulted in a remarkable level of support for fringe political candidates, most notably Donald Trump.

Answers to the question of how to rebuild centrist coalitions in both the U.S. and U.K. have become increasingly elusive. How did a group of people synonymous with Middle Britain and Middle America drift to the ends of the political spectrum? What drives their emerging radicalism? And what could possibly lead a group with such enduring numerical power to, in many instances, consider themselves a "minority" in the countries they once defined? In *The New Minority*, Justin Gest speaks to people living in once thriving working class cities--Youngstown, Ohio and Dagenham, England--to arrive at a nuanced understanding of their political attitudes and behaviors. In this daring and compelling book, he makes the case that tension between the vestiges of white working class power and its perceived loss have produced the unique phenomenon of white working class radicalization.

The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality Details

Date : Published October 13th 2016 by Oxford University Press, USA

ISBN : 9780190632540

Author : Justin Gest

Format : Hardcover 268 pages

Genre : Politics, Nonfiction, Economics, Sociology, History, Psychology



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Peter McLoughlin says

The author is very sympathetic to his subject and tends to minimize some really disturbing aspects of the nativism of the white-working class he has his finger on something important. I don't consider myself a Marxist in the least but Marx got a piece of the truth when he talked about the false consciousness of the working class. If the white-working class based its solidarity more on being working-class instead of its whiteness it could possibly make for a politics that would improve its conditions. If it could work with other marginalized groups to raise the floor instead of putting others in the basement maybe we could reverse the tide of neo-liberalism and improve conditions all around. It reminds me of a funny but ultimately sad SNL skit called "black Jeopardy" where a working-class white and two working class blacks found that they have more in common until the politics of race destroys the camaraderie.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7VaX...> Here is the video

Tom says

Some excellent insights scattered throughout (mostly in the last third) but it ultimately leans too much on quotes from the interviewees.

Jonathan says

This was interesting, but I'm not sure how you write about the white working class without a discussion of race or racism. Gest calls it nostalgia, but it's really a yearning for an even more strident racial caste system. Wwc is upset because people of color get cash assistance and, undocumented immigrants take job - okay, while noting this isn't the case, he doesn't delve into the dog-whistle these themes are. Gist ends asking us not to patronize the wwc, but then he does that by not holding them accountable for the racialized politics and voting - why do they vote against their own social and economic interests? It's not just racism, but that's a key piece that he's missed, and without this angle, the work misses the complexity of this group. No they aren't monsters, they're complex people trying to meet their groups' needs and race, not class is the rallying point - but they don't have a language for that kind of identity politics, nor a theorizing of whiteness that considers class - and that, not that people of color are competing with them, is the shame of their social, economic and political plight.

Bruce Reiter says

This is a two hundred page case study contrasting the Dagenham-Barking areas of East London with Youngstown, Ohio. It is an excellent look at the perceptions of what is left of the white working class raised in mill towns or factory towns and its support of populist candidates such as Donald Trump. The message

"Make America Great, Again" resonates with a community clinging to a past where it was economically secure and reasonably homogenous. Both parties of government have cast the American industrial worker aside in favor of an inexpensive global workforce. The theory was that people would retrain and be mobile, moving to the next job location. In many cases this has not happened and the level of discontent has risen due in part to the changing face of poor or lackluster communities being "invaded" by immigrants who are now in competition for the lower paying jobs. The English have their own problems because of the traditional class system but the extreme right and left appears to be coalescing which could be scarier. Our Democrat Party lost the Rust Belt due to inattention. It was not the Republicans who won, but Donald Trump. The economic elite will get the spoils.

Raebyn Kagawa-Burke says

DNF

I hate this book with a fiery passion

Billie Pritchett says

Justin Gest's *The New Minority* is, as its subtitle says, about white working class people, particularly in England and the United States, who are coping with what they see as problems of immigration and economic inequality. As Gest says in the book himself, although white working class people really do count as a minority, different in too many respects from their white upper-class counterparts, the white working class often mistakenly identifies its problem as other minority groups and fails to see the possibility for solidarity in joining together with these other groups as a class to protest upper-class economic policy.

Gest's book is a work of sociology and focuses on white working class people in two towns specifically: Youngstown, Ohio and Dagenham, England. The two towns represent two areas of the country that once thrived on manufacturing but now that manufacturing has left the white working class finds themselves poor. There are differences in self-perception and perceived problems in the two towns but there are some commonalities. One worth mentioning off the bat is that when politicians cater to them, they typically resent being lumped together with welfare recipients. Even though the white working class occasionally needs unemployment or welfare benefits, they are worried about perceiving as moochers and have adopted much of the political rhetoric about how welfare recipients are moochers.

Regarding issues of immigration, there is in general animosity toward immigrant groups. The white working class accuses immigrants of taking away jobs and the government of not doing more to protect native industries. There is something to the working class criticism of immigration policy. Immigration policy in terms of employment has mostly only targeted the working class and not the expert classes or technocrats. In other words, it's working class jobs that are taken by immigrants but not the job of doctors and experts in the so-called technical industries. This is because doctors and teachers and so on have unions to bar immigrants from taking their positions. Unions: something the working class has in short supply.

Immigration is often perceived to be of a piece with immigration, which, as just indicated, is partly true. Immigrants more easily replace factory workers than they replace doctors, for instance. There is a helplessness perceived toward using government to enact economic changes to ameliorate equality, and

generally when working class voters choose candidates they choose candidates who do not have their economic interests in hard. These candidates may self-identify with the heartland, the Salt of the Earth, and so on, but apart from rhetoric and the occasional social wedge issue, nothing is done on the economic front, the area where it matters, that could help these people.

This book is a diagnosis of the problem, and it poses some solutions at the end. Some have criticized the work for being too sympathetic to its subjects. But it's a work of sociology, not a polemic, and before anyone can do anything to solve problems, we have to first off understand what people perceive as the problems, whether they be right or wrong.

Marcus E. Huffman says

Enjoyable read

I read this very slowly, while observing people I thought exhibited some of the characteristics of this "minority." The stories at the beginning are interesting. The statistics sections might bore the average reader, though they appealed to me as a political science major. I think any aspiring politician would benefit from reading the last two chapters, as the author demonstrated the kinds of candidates and the appealing platforms that would best attract this "minority's" vote in future elections. Though I don't necessarily agree with the idea that white men of any socioeconomic status are the minority, I do understand the reason for the title and thesis of the book, as it specifically focuses on a subset of white voters. It's a good book.

Rick Folker says

some valid arguments but I questioned some of the methods he used and conclusions he drew from interviews with white working class people. I also felt that comparing East end London to Youngstown, Ohio was confusing and unnecessary - he should have chosen Youngstown or East end and not have tried to tackle both constituencies.

Carl A. says

A well researched, documented and relevant discussion - detail, context and perspective not found on Cable TV.

In many ways a "hard" but important subject concerning portions of the U.K./US societies. Written before the November election puts the rise of Candidate Donald Trump into perspective.

Recommend for individuals who wish to better understand contemporary political events, issues and political fault lines.

Carl Gallozzi

Joel says

Interesting and well written, but the conclusions are ultimately surface level.

Pechague says

I'll admit it's a bit boring to read. But this book provides important insights into understanding the rationale behind many voting patterns across the world these days (if one dares to extend the analyses beyond the cases covered by the author).

Carl says

Just too academic for my taste; I think it actually is a dissertation for a degree. On the plus side, there's a detailed & comprehensive character study into Trump's reprehensibles & the world they inhabit.

Bukata456 says

Very insightful look into working class opinions of the new racial divide.

Andrew Figueiredo says

One of the more interesting pieces on the White Working Class, although it's a study/thesis, so be warned that it's a little denser than a casual read.

Gmaharriet says

This was not an easy book to get into with all the discussion of how the author arranged his subject interviews. If you can get through that, it draws some interesting conclusions which sound spot on. He refrains from making judgments on whether his subjects are right/wrong to feel the way they do, and leaves it to the reader to readily see what he leaves mostly unsaid.

The research covered an area in Ohio and one in East London. Having never been to England, I found it harder to understand that portion of his research, but I learned a lot. The book was well worth my time.
