

# *Diversity and the White Working Class: white flight, anti-immigration politics and integration*

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A Demos symposium in partnership with Birkbeck College and the ESRC

DEMOS

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 Birkbeck  
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## ABOUT DEMOS

Demos is Britain's leading cross-party think tank. We produce original research, publish innovative thinkers and host thought-provoking events. We have spent 20 years at the centre of the policy debate, with an overarching mission to bring politics closer to people.

Demos is now exploring some of the most persistent frictions within modern politics, especially in those areas where there is a significant gap between the intuitions of the ordinary voter and political leaders. Can a liberal politics also be a popular politics? How can policy address widespread anxieties over social issues such as welfare, diversity and family life? How can a dynamic and open economy also produce good jobs, empower consumers and connect companies to the communities in which they operate?

Our worldview is reflected in the methods we employ: we recognise that the public often have insights that the experts do not. We pride ourselves in working together with the people who are the focus of our research. Alongside quantitative research, Demos pioneers new forms of deliberative work, from citizens' juries and ethnography to social media analysis. Demos is an independent, educational charity. In keeping with our mission, all our work is available to download for free under an open access license and all our funders are listed in our yearly accounts.

## DEMOS

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## EVENT DETAILS

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|------------------|--|
| Event time       | 10:00am – 4:30pm   |
| Please arrive at | Registration and refreshments from 9:30am  |
| Date             | Wednesday 3 April 2013   |
| Location         | The Council Room, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, University of London, WC1E 7HX |
| Set-up           | Roundtable symposium   |

## AGENDA

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**9:30am** Tea & coffee

**10:00am** Welcome by the Chair, David Goodhart, Director of Demos followed by an introduction from Professor Eric Kaufmann

**10:15am Session 1** 'White Flight' in England?

Dr. Gemma Catney, University of Liverpool

Professor Eric Kaufmann, Birkbeck College, University of London

**12:00pm** Lunch Break (catered hot lunch served)

**1:00pm Session 2** Contact or Threat?: the White Working Class, Immigration and The Far Right in England and Wales

Dr. Gareth Harris, Birkbeck College, University of London

Dr. Rebecca Taylor, Birkbeck College, University of London

**2:30pm** Coffee break

**3:00pm Session 3** Panel discussion chaired by David Goodhart, including summary of early discussions by speakers including:

Gavin Barwell, Conservative MP for Croydon Central

Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead

**5:00pm Finish**

## **DIVERSITY AND THE WHITE WORKING CLASS**

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In the UK, there has been a resurgence of academic interest and policy initiatives focusing on the 'white working class'. The term has become problematised in debates over community cohesion, support for the far right, immigration, national identity and multiculturalism.

The category is constituted by the twinning of class as a marker of socio-economic position and whiteness as an ethno-racial identity. The latter is key because many of these debates focus on the white working class and its presumed antagonistic relationship to immigration and multiculturalism, and support for ethnically exclusive forms of national identity.

Some hold that de-industrialisation, globalisation and the financial crisis has fuelled competition within the labour market; or for the allocation of increasingly scarce public goods between the white working class and both immigrants and minorities. Others suggest the appeal of populist right parties and hostility towards immigration is the result of profound disengagement with the political system amongst sections of the electorate who feel they have had little input into the political decision-making process. Some instead point to cultural dislocation, the erosion of communal boundaries and threatened ethnic status. American political theorist Michael Walzer argues that cultural groups are meaningless without boundaries and if states cannot enforce political boundaries, communal lines will reappear at the local level through segregation.

This roundtable brings academic researchers together with policy analysts, politicians, civil servants and journalists for an in-depth, discipline-crossing discussion. It will connect the research of political scientists who study far right voting with sociologists of attitudes towards immigration and inter-group relations, and geographers who analyse the dynamics of residential segregation. We seek to develop interdisciplinary approaches between political scientists, geographers, sociologists and historians to explore a number of interlinked issues:

- 'White flight', integration and other forms of white residential dynamics
- White attitudes to immigration and ethnic change
- British and English national identity in the context of multiculturalism
- Support for the BNP, other far right parties and street-based movements such as the English Defence League
- The effect of diversity on social capital, social cohesion, trust and civic engagement
- Whiteness and class in an age of change
- The historic relationship between immigration and national identity
- Dominant and majority ethnic identity

Through a series of short presentations and wide-ranging discussion among 30-40 invited participants, we wish to encourage a conversation between policymakers, journalists and academics that crosses disciplinary boundaries in order to better illuminate this pressing public policy issue.

| Name                    | Organisation                                    |
|-------------------------|---|
| Carl Cecil Allen        | Yorkway Tenants and Residents Association       |
| Rob Berkley             | Runnymede Trust                                 |
| Dr Gemma Catney         | University of Liverpool                         |
| Helen Connolly          | Department for Communities and Local Government |
| Bobby Duffy             | Ipsos MORI                                      |
| Professor David Feldman | Pears Institute, Birkbeck                       |
| Frank Field MP          | MP for Birkenhead                               |
| Nina Gryf               | The Work Foundation                             |
| Dr Gareth Harris        | Birkbeck  |
| Nicholas Hellen         | The Sunday Times                                |
| Stuart Hoggan           | The Department for Communities                  |

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|                   | and Local Government   |
| Stephen Jivraj    | The Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, University of Manchester |
| Catrin Nye        | BBC Asian Network  |
| Anna Reynolds     | The Department for Communities and Local Government                              |
| Dr Rebecca Taylor | Birkbeck College   |
| Dr Paul Watt      | Urban Studies, Birkbeck College  |
| Dr George Whale   | Liberty GB   |
| Peter Whittle     | New Culture Forum  |
| Max Wind-Cowie    | Demos  |