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EXPLAINING THE SUPPORT OF THE BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY (BNP)
IN THE 1999, 2004, AND 2009 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

by

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B.A. Florida State University, 2007

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ABSTRACT

In the past decade, there has been a surge of interest in extreme right Western European parties. Well-established parties such as the National Front (FN) in France, Vlaams Belang (formerly Vlaams Blok) in Belgium, and Lega Nord in Italy have been scrutinized. However, extreme right parties that have just recently begun to experience electoral successes such as the British National Party (BNP) have received less evaluation and discussion in the literature. Therefore, this study examines the BNP's electoral fortunes in the European elections of 1999, 2004, and 2009. I explore the support for the BNP using the traditional variables of unemployment, education, income, and immigration. In addition to these variables, I examine how support for other parties present in Great Britain, such as the right-wing United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the center-right Conservative Party affects electoral support for the BNP. I find that support for other right-wing parties in Great Britain do exert an influence on BNP electoral fortunes (the UKIP a positive one, and the Conservative Party a negative one). I also find a strong negative link between BNP support and education and a weak positive one between BNP support and unemployment. However, income and immigration rates appear to have no effect on voter support for the BNP.

Dedicated to my family and friends that have supported me during the thesis process
and assisted me in any way they could. I love you all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: HISTORY AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE BNP	9
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	17
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY	29
DATA	32
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS	36
CHAPTER 6: THE BNP IN BURNLEY.....	46
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	54
EPILOGUE	58
APPENDIX: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	60
REFERENCES	62

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Effects of the share of the vote on all tested variables, not including Scotland and Wales variable. Regions. N=33	38
Table 2 Effects of the share of the vote on all tested variables, including Scotland and Wales variable. Regions. N=33	45

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BNP: British National Party

BUF: British Union of Fascists

FPTP: First Past The Post

GDHI: Gross Development Household Income

NF: National Front

NUTS: Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics

PR: Proportional Representation

SMDPW: Single Member District Plurality to Win

SNP: Scottish National Party

UKIP: United Kingdom Independence Party

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On June 4, 2009, the British National Party (BNP) had its greatest electoral success to date, winning 6.2% of the votes across Great Britain and two seats in the European Parliament (Wainwright 2009). The success of the BNP immediately caused an outcry among many citizens as there was outrage over the triumph of this radical right party. Since then, many political commentators have questioned why the BNP fared so well in the European elections. The BNP had only been marginally successful in a handful of local elections, but quite unsuccessful in the European Union elections prior to 2009. Further, Great Britain had not had a viable far right party since Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the 1930s (Thurlow 1998, 61). Thus, many observers have questioned how the BNP has seemingly emerged out of nowhere to become a minor political force in British politics and expressed concern over whether the BNP may continue to show a presence in subsequent European Parliament elections (Morris 2009). In this thesis, I examine the factors that explain electoral support for the BNP during the European Union elections of 1999, 2004, and 2009. My study is conducted at the regional level and explores the effects of the following factors on the electoral support for BNP: unemployment, income, education, and immigration as well as support for other right-wing parties in Great Britain including the Conservative Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). These variables are also the main factors explored in the literature on radical right parties has examined whether

or not the aforementioned variables have played a role in predicting the support for radical right parties in Great Britain as well as other Western European countries.

Unemployment may be associated with the electoral support for extreme right parties because higher rates of unemployment “epitomize uneven economic performance that fosters support for the extreme right...” (Jackman and Volpert 1996, 517). Income is hypothesized to affect the support for the extreme right with poverty-stricken voters or voters with lower levels of income being more agreeable to the message from the extreme right (Jesuit and Mahler 2004). Education has also been cited as having a link to support for far right parties (Arzheimer and Carter 2009). Voters with lower levels of education are more likely to vote for far right parties than voters with higher levels of education because they feel more threatened and are more susceptible to extreme right rhetoric (Norris 2005, 141). Immigration is seen as the variable with the strongest explanatory power for support of the far right, and almost every far right party is being classified as extremely anti-immigrant. Many voters who support parties such as the BNP list immigration first among their top priorities for governments and tend to fear or feel threatened by immigration (John and Margetts 2009, 499). Further, immigration is the variable most associated with far right support in previous literature examining the link between immigration and far right support (Norris 2005, Rydgren 2007, Rhodes 2010, et al.) Finally, other right-wing parties may have an effect on support for the BNP, thus vote totals for the Conservative Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) have been included in the analysis as well. If one of the parties occupies the same policy space, it could have a negative effect on the

vote for the BNP. Conversely, parties could complement each other and have a positive effect on the other's performance (Norris 2005, 192-196). The relationship between these two parties is discussed later in the thesis.

Also, I contextualize the quantitative results in an in-depth look at the city of Burnley, a city where the BNP first won a seat in in 2001; BNP has had at least one councilor on the local council ever since. This has been one of the BNP's main power bases over the last decade and an analysis of this case shows the strategies BNP uses in these elections.

The BNP was founded in 1982 by John Tyndall, after he was thrown out of the National Front (Sykes 2005, 115). At the time, the National Front was the preeminent party occupying the far right of the ideological spectrum in the United Kingdom. Initially, the BNP did not differ substantially from the National Front and carried on the same type of activities including holding street marches and having ties with violent Neo-Nazi groups such as C18 (Sykes 2005, 132). However, at the start of the 1990s the BNP began to behave differently in order to bolster its chances electorally (Sykes 2005, 103). Unlike the National Front that believed that the only way to be successful in mainstream politics would be under anarchic conditions and the dissolution of parliamentary democracy, the BNP moved relatively more toward the political center in the mid-1980s (Sykes 2005, 116). One of the key changes that the BNP made was to stop the protest marches that had earned them the scorn of the police and a public perception that the BNP was un-democratic and extremist (Sykes 2005, 121). The move to stop protest

marches did not transfer into immediate electoral success though and the BNP remained an insignificant political party until the early 1990s.

In the early 1990s the BNP had some marginal success in local elections, possibly stemming from the decline of the Conservative Party under the leadership of John Major (Heppell 2007, 473). In 1993, the BNP scored one of its first electoral victories during a by-election in Tower Hamlet, London, when BNP candidate Derek Beackon won a seat on the local council with 33.9% of the vote (Rhodes 2010, 77). This first success also may have been triggered by a “Rights for Whites” campaign led by the BNP in 1992 that claimed whites were the new minority in Great Britain and were discriminated against by numerous government programs which only served minorities (Sykes 2005, 131). The election of its first party member to a local seat gave the BNP a token of legitimacy that the party had not had before.

When the BNP’s current leader, Nick Griffin, took over the party in 1995, BNP’s electoral performance improved considerably. Not long after Griffin took the reins of the BNP from John Tyndall, the party competed nationally for the first time ever with a full slate of candidates in the European elections of 1999 (Sykes 2005, 131). Griffin has distanced the party from previously held positions such as Holocaust denial and forced deportation of immigrants that made the party unsavory to the mass public, and has tried to edge the party towards the center (Rhodes 2010, 84).

Although the British National Party (BNP) is still a political outsider, and has yet to make sweeping national gains, its local popularity in areas such as the North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber, East Midlands, and West Midlands has made it a

viable political threat even in certain single member district plurality to win (SMDP) elections. Despite the disadvantages of the first past the post (FPTP) system, the party still won 10%+ of the vote in recent national elections in the constituencies of Oldham East & Saddleworth (11.2%), Oldham West & Royton (16.4%), and Burnley (11.3%) (Rhodes 2010, 77-78). In the 2009 European elections, the party picked up almost a million votes, and fared especially well in the areas of Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, the North East, and the North West. For the first time ever, the party was electorally successful at the European elections as well with party chairman Nick Griffin winning a seat in the European Parliament from North West England and Andrew Brons securing a seat from the Yorkshire and the Humber region (Kelly 2010, 102). What may explain the party's electoral support in the last three European Parliament elections?

Understanding the factors that account for the electoral support for the BNP, an extreme right wing party, is important due to the resurgence of the extreme right in countries across Europe. In France, the National Front has won around 10% of the vote in every presidential election over the last decade and party leader Jean Marie Le Pen has become a prominent political figure during his time as head of the National Front. Though the party has been less successful in European and national elections, they were still able to garner at least 4% of the vote in each election since 2002. Le Pen was even able to take advantage of a divided left to win second-place in the 2002 French Presidential Election before succumbing to the incumbent Jacques Chirac in the second round of voting (Election Resources). In Belgium, Vlaams Belang (formerly Vlaams

Blok) has been a viable contender in national elections and received the fourth largest share of the vote in the 2007 national elections (Election Resources). In the Austrian elections of 2008, the Freedom Party of Austria and the Alliance for the Future of Austria combined to win 28.2% of the vote, receiving the third and fourth largest share of the vote respectively (Election Resources). In the Swiss elections of 2007, Christoph Blocher and the Swiss People's Party scored the biggest victory for an extreme right party in Europe, winning almost 30% of the vote and gaining a plurality of seats in the National Council with 62 out of 200 total seats (Traynor 2007). It is important to understand the factors that underlie electoral support for the extreme right across Europe and the sources of electoral support for the British National Party in Great Britain.

I extend the research in this area by examining the electoral support for the BNP in the European elections between 1999 and 2009. As there had not been a party of any major electoral consequence on the extreme right in Great Britain since the National Front in the 1970s prior to the 2009 European Parliament elections, there had not been much attention paid to Great Britain in the literature addressing the rise of the radical right in Europe. This thesis explores the electoral support for BNP since the 1999 elections for the European Parliament.

Beginning with the 1999 European election, the electoral system used for European Parliament elections in the United Kingdom was changed from first past the post (FPTP) to closed-list party-list proportional representation. There is an extensive literature that explains why proportional representation (PR) systems, compared to

majoritarian systems, favor minor parties, such as the BNP (Borisjuk et al. 2007, 672). In national elections in Great Britain, a plurality system is used, first-past-the-post, which places small parties at an electoral disadvantage as voters are likely to vote strategically. That is, voters do not want to waste their vote on a party with little chance at attaining electoral victory. On the other hand, the PR system produces a larger diversity of parties by promoting “sincere” voting, that is voters are more likely to cast their ballots on their first preference (Duverger 1954). In elections under a PR rule, small parties tend to perform better than they would under a plurality system of elections. Whereas in national elections the BNP struggles greatly and has had no significant success, in European elections the party stands a much better chance of having electoral success due to the rules of the electoral game. Further, evidence suggests that extreme right parties such as the BNP are strategically deserted in national elections (Givens and Glass 2006, 2). Therefore I study the performance of the BNP in European elections rather than in national elections.

Because European elections in Great Britain have been conducted under a PR system since 1999, these elections are more likely to reflect more accurately the voters’ preferences (Givens and Glass 2006, 14-15). The rationale behind this argument is that voters do not have to vote tactically as they do in elections under FPTP electoral rules and are more likely to vote for the party they prefer most (their first choice). However, others argue that European elections in general may not reflect the voters’ preferences as accurately as national elections (Givens and Glass 2006, 14-19). According to Givens and Glass (2006), voters cast their ballots for extreme right parties as a protest

vote against their favored party and thus vote for BNP to send a passive message to their preferred political party (Givens and Glass 2006, 16). Aside from the protest vote argument, there is also another argument that voters do not take European elections as seriously as national elections and may be more careless with their vote. Whereas national elections are generally referred to as first order elections, European elections have been viewed as second order because there is less at stake in European elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980, 9). The European Parliament has substantially less power than national parliaments do and thus voters do not treat European elections the same as national elections. Therefore, this is a tradeoff to take into consideration in the interpretation of the results of the analysis. Since support for the BNP varies greatly across Great Britain's twelve regions for European elections, my analysis takes place at the regional level and over time.

In the next chapter, I explore the history of the BNP under the leadership of party chairman Nick Griffin and trace the evolution of the BNP from a fascist party to a more moderate and electorally acceptable extreme right-wing populist party. In Chapter 3, I provide a review of the literature on the factors that account for the electoral support of extreme right parties. In Chapter 4, I discuss my methodology and model. In Chapter 5, I test my hypotheses and delve into the results of my analysis. In Chapter 6, I focus on a locality, Burnley, where the BNP has fared relatively well electorally, and discuss BNP's campaign strategy; this case serves to contextualize the results of the quantitative analysis. Chapter 7 concludes and also provides a brief overview of BNP's electoral fortunes since the 2009 European Parliamentary elections.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY AND CLASSIFICATION OF THE BNP

The BNP has only become a significant political force in the past decade. Over the past 12 years, party chairman Nick Griffin has turned the BNP into the most electorally successful extreme right-wing party in the history of Great Britain (Ford and Goodwin 2010, 3). Prior to Griffin's leadership, despite all the attention received by previous extreme right parties in the United Kingdom such as Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the 1930s and the National Front in the 1970s, extreme right successes had been limited to just six seats in local council elections between 1921 and 2001 (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 379). However, these parties did play other crucial roles that helped to highlight the potential for extreme right support in Great Britain.

The BUF was founded by Oswald Mosley in October 1932 in the image of Benito Mussolini's fascist ideology (Thurlow 1998, 61). The party quickly exploded in popularity, amassing an impressive 40,000-50,000 members by August of 1934 (Webber 1984, 577). However, just as soon as the party rose to prominence, the BUF lost a large amount of its political efficacy as it turned more and more toward militancy and anti-semitism as fundamental tenets of its program (Thurlow 1998, 74-75). Just over a year later, the British Security Service reported that internal support for fascism was weak and that the BUF got the majority of its money from Mussolini's regime; later concluding that the BUF posed no real threat to British society (Thurlow 1998, 75). By the time of the 1935 national elections, support for the BUF was so minimal that Mosley announced that the BNF would not run for any seats due to the party's limited campaigning ability (Thurlow 1998, 76). Despite the BUF's short time in the national

spotlight as well as its microscopic electoral impact, the ability of an extreme-right party to garner up to 50,000 members highlighted the potential for underlying support for extreme right-wing parties in the United Kingdom.

For the next three decades, extreme right parties in Great Britain were on the far edge of the political periphery until the breakthrough of the National Front in the early 1970s. The roots of the relative success of the National Front can be found in the infamous “River of Blood” speech given by then-Conservative politician Enoch Powell in 1968 (Thurlow 1998, 246). Powell’s speech sent shockwaves throughout the country as he decried large-scale immigration, claiming that allowing mass immigration would lead to the death of the United Kingdom (Hillman 2008, 83). Powell’s remarks led to him being ousted from Conservative Party leadership, but struck a chord with citizens who began to prioritize immigration as an issue and helped lead the Conservative Party to victory in the 1970 national elections (Hillman 2008, 94).

The increased attention and importance placed on the topic of immigration set the stage for the National Front to have a modicum of success in the 1970s (Thurlow 1998, 249). Many typically Conservative voters during this time period were concerned with the way the party leadership treated the issue of immigration, feeling that the leadership at the time was very liberal in its immigration policies (Thurlow 1998, 246). However, the National Front never made as big of a splash as the British Union of Fascists did and was quickly undone by the combination of anti-Nazi groups and the resignation of Conservative Party leader Edward Heath (Thurlow 1998, 256). After Heath resigned, Margaret Thatcher took over control of the party and adopted traditional

Conservative Party stances toward immigration, limiting the number of immigrants coming into the United Kingdom (Thurlow 1998, 256).

Following the BNP's initial electoral victory in the by-election at Tower Hamlet in 1993, the BNP was not electorally successful again until Griffin became party chairman, and started securing victories from 2002 on. Much of the groundwork for the BNP's subsequent electoral successes was laid in the local elections of 2000, although the party failed to win representation. During this time, Nick Griffin set about modernizing the party and making it more socially acceptable to support electorally by backing off some of its more extreme elements mostly involving its overt racism (Sykes 2005, 136-137). That year, the BNP won 2.87% of the vote in the London Assembly elections, 23.7% of the vote in Tipton Green (located in the West Midlands), 21% of the vote in a Burnley ward (located in the North West), and 16% of the vote in Dudley (located in the West Midlands) (Sykes 2005, 138). In 2002 local elections, the BNP had three councilors elected in Burnley, and ran sixty-eight candidates for councilor in elections throughout England (Tempest 2002). The next indication to suggest that the party was a real political force was that the local elections in Burnley were not an aberration and the BNP demonstrated this the very next year. In the 2003 local elections, the BNP fielded a record 221 candidates and won five additional seats in Burnley to become the second largest party on the Burnley council (Johnston and Stokes 2003). The BNP continued this trend of success in local elections, winning 12 seats on the Barking and Dagenham (in London) council during the 2006 local elections, and two years later had nine councilors on the Stoke-on-Trent (located in the West Midlands) local council

(Rhodes 2010, 78). After the 2008 local elections, the BNP held 55 seats on local councils across England, highlighting the growth of the party since the first electoral breakthrough under Griffin in 2002 (Rhodes 2010, 78). In addition, 2008 was the first year that the BNP had electoral success outside of local council elections. In the London Assembly elections in May of 2008, Richard Barnbrook received 5.3% of the vote and won one of the 25 open seats (BBC News 2008). This BNP victory showed that the party could be viable outside of local council elections for the first time in its relatively short history and signaled the stunning events to come in the 2009 European Parliament elections.

As the relative success of the BNP in the 2000 local elections helped to pave the way for its first electoral success in the 2002 local elections, the 2004 European Parliament elections were the first sign that the BNP could be a significant factor in the 2009 European elections. The BNP won 6% of the vote or more in five of the 12 United Kingdom regions during the 2004 European elections and tallied 800,000 votes (4.9%) across the country (The Guardian 2004). The 2009 European Parliament elections saw the BNP secure its biggest electoral win yet, with Nick Griffin winning a seat in the North West region with 8% of the vote and Andrew Brons winning a seat in the Yorkshire and Humber region with 9.8% of the vote (Wainwright 2009). Across the country, the BNP fared exceedingly well for a party of its ilk, totaling 8.9% of the vote in the North East, 8.7% of the vote in the East Midlands, and 8.6% of the vote in the West Midlands and secured at least 3.9% of the vote in every region of England and Wales (Wainwright 2009).

However, these vote gains did not translate into seats in the British Parliament during the 2010 national election; the BNP won a scant 1.9% of the vote nationwide and tallied just over 500,000 votes (*The Telegraph* 2010). Yet this was a 1.8% increase on their vote from the 2005 national election; the lack of representation may be viewed as the consequence of first-order elections and the first-past-the-post (FPP) electoral rule. According to Schmitt, minor parties such as the BNP do not stand much of an electoral chance in first-order elections (such as national elections) because voters cast their votes strategically and do not wish to waste their vote on a party with little chance of securing a seat; such parties do better in second-order elections (such as European Parliament elections) because of lower voter turnout and voters being able to vote for their more preferred party since less is at stake (Schmitt 2005, 4). Further, the implications of the FPP electoral rule for minor or third parties are found in Duverger (1954). According to Duverger's law, minor or third parties are disadvantaged in FPP electoral systems and more likely to receive representation in proportional representation systems (Duverger 1954).

Previous work has highlighted the importance of Nick Griffin modernizing the BNP from an electorally unsuccessful and irrelevant fascist party into an extreme right-wing party that is more acceptable to the general public. Wilks-Heeg (2009) writes that:

“...Griffin's leadership of the BNP has also been driven by his concern to render the external image of the BNP more publicly acceptable, by denying that the party is 'racist' or 'fascist', and by seeking to shed the party of associations with skinheads and violent behaviour, for instance by recruiting more female election candidates” (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 384-385).

It is this transformation of the BNP from a party initially classified as fascist to a party that is now classified as an extreme right-wing populist party that I will now discuss.

Golder (2003) highlights the importance of distinguishing between populist extreme right-wing parties and neofascist extreme right-wing parties. However, he also notes that there is no standard definition of “neofascist” party or “populist” party, and that many authors providing this distinction disagree on exactly which parties fall into each category. Golder notes the inherent error in categorizing neofascist parties as such based on whether or not they had roots in fascism (Golder 2003, 446). Parties constantly evolve and change over time; it would be inaccurate to classify some parties as neofascist just because they were founded as fascist parties. Instead, he classifies fascist parties as such based on their current ideology and dogma and dismisses their origin as a basis of classification (Golder 2003, 446).

Golder defines populist parties as those that appeal to voters by claiming to be advocates of direct democracy and by being anti-system rather than antidemocratic. At the time of his work, Golder classified the BNP as neofascist rather than populist. Golder was not the only one to classify the BNP as fascist either. Eatwell (2000) called the BNP a clone of its predecessor, the fascist National Front. This classification is probably due to the origins of the BNP and its policies. From 1982 to 1999, the BNP was led by John Tyndall, an admitted neo-Nazi who openly threatened violence and promoted overtly racist platforms (Laville and Taylor 2005). While this classification seems to have been apt under Tyndall’s leadership, according to Golder’s definition the

BNP should now be classified as an extreme right populist party instead of a neofascist one.

In order to move away from being viewed as a fascist or neo-Nazi party, the BNP under Nick Griffin even went so far as to expel Tyndall from their membership and explicitly tell him that his views and actions were harming the image of the party as they were trying to move away from their roots to construct a more electorally viable image (Laville and Taylor 2005).

Ford and Goodwin (2010) discuss just how Griffin has modernized the party since taking over as party chairman in 1999. The authors discuss how the BNP has asked campaign workers not to use extremist rhetoric and to dismiss words such as 'fascist' and 'racialist' instead calling themselves 'right-wing populist' or 'ethnonationalist' (Ford and Goodwin 2010, 5). The BNP has also toned down its racist and anti-Semitic tendencies, instead claiming that no race is superior to any other and that races are simply different from one another (Ford and Goodwin 2010, 5). Also, the BNP has refrained from trying to change or replace the democratic system, instead fostering an anti-establishment identity that is more politically acceptable and along the lines of those Golder discussed as needed for populist parties (Ford and Goodwin 2010, 5).

This antisystem appeal itself was enunciated by Nick Griffin on his election to a seat in the European Parliament in 2009. During his victory speech, Griffin stated, "For the last 50 years, more and more of the people of Britain have watched with concern, growing dismay and sometimes anger as an out-of-touch political elite has transformed our country before our very eyes" (*The Telegraph* 2009). This statement highlights that

the antisystem stance that Golder writes is a key determinant for distinguishing populist parties from neofascist parties.

Similar to many other extreme right parties in Western Europe, the BNP under Nick Griffin has also tried to model itself after the National Front in France (Goodwin 2007, 245). The National Front under Jean Marie Le Pen was the first extreme right party to achieve an electoral breakthrough and other extreme right parties adopted its strategies (Goodwin 2007, 243). The National Front launched intensive local campaigns, celebrated France's cultural heritage, and backed away from overtly racist platforms in favor of espousing 'differentialist' racism to help make itself electorally viable and it was this strategy that the BNP copied under Nick Griffin (Goodwin 2007, 243-247). In his study, Golder classified the French National Front as an extreme right populist party, a classification that many would agree with. Since Nick Griffin became the head of the BNP he has tried to model the party after the National Front, and thus the BNP has become much more like a populist extreme right party than a neofascist extreme right party (Golder 2003, 448).

One other way that the BNP has stepped outside its fascist roots is by changing its party platform that previously allowed only white members (Shipman 2010). The BNP now allows people who are non-white to become full party members, a major step away from its roots in fascism (Shipman 2010).

In the next chapter I discuss the literature on the factors that account for variation in the electoral support for parties of the extreme right.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an extensive literature on the electoral support of the extreme right parties in Western European countries. Sykes (2005) provides a fundamental understanding about the history of the radical right in Great Britain. The author analyzes the radical right in Britain from the early 20th century into the first decade of the 21st century and notes how the fortunes of the radical right in Great Britain have been traditionally tied to the salience of the immigration issue (Sykes 2005, 112). He provides an account of the past far right movements in Great Britain and what distinguishes Nick Griffin's BNP from far right parties in the past (Sykes 2005, 136). Further, he explains that the far right in Great Britain had little success prior to the BNP apart from the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the early 1930s and the National Front (NF) in the mid-1970s, but even then these successes were slight. In addition, he notes that the BNP has been able to make its platform more well-rounded rather than past far right parties who only campaigned around the immigration issue (Sykes 2005, 139). The book highlights the importance of immigration into the United Kingdom and how fortunes of extreme right parties such as the BNP are tied to it.

Norris (2005) examines Jens Rydgren's ten factors contributing to the emergence of far right parties: 1) Postindustrial economy 2) Dissolution of established identities, fragmentation of culture, multiculturalization 3) Emergence or growing salience of the sociocultural cleavage dimension 4) Widespread political discontent and disenchantment 5) Convergence between established parties in political space 6) Popular xenophobia and racism 7) Economic crisis and unemployment 8) Reaction

against the emergence of New Left and/or Green parties and movements 9) Electoral voting system 10) Experience of a referendum that cuts across old party cleavages.

Upon examining these, Norris argues that the share of vote won by the radical right at the national level cannot be fully explained by aggregate indicators of ethnic diversity, but cultural attitudes held by citizens do explain why people vote for radical right parties at the individual level (Norris 2005, 167). Among these, Norris finds that individual attitudes toward cultural protectionism are better predictors of extreme right voting than are economic attitudes. In addition, Norris argues that negative attitudes toward immigration, refugees, multiculturalism, and economic equality all predict individual extreme right-wing votes, and remain significant even after including the full battery of prior controls (Norris 2005, 182).

Norris examines the theories espoused by Van der Brug and Kitschelt regarding policy space and the emergence of extreme right parties. Assuming that parties are vote-maximizers, particularly in majoritarian systems, major parties will move closer to the center of the ideological scale in order to procure more votes. Both Van der Brug and Kitschelt argue that the movement of parties towards this fertile center ground leaves some former voters of the aforementioned parties disillusioned and makes them more likely to vote for extreme right or extreme left parties in subsequent elections. Kitschelt theorizes that the closer major parties, from both the ideological left and right, are to the center of the ideological scale, the greater the electoral support for extreme right or extreme left parties; Van der Brug, on the other hand, argues that only the location of the major right-wing party on the ideological scale will determine the electoral

success of extreme right parties (Norris 2005, 194-195). Upon testing these theories, Norris finds no empirical evidence to support Kitschelt's theory and only nominal evidence to support Van der Brug's theory (Norris 2005, 196). Norris finds that while there is a moderate difference in the size of the gap between the center right-wing party and extreme right parties in countries with relevant extreme right parties, there are a limited number of countries under analysis (Norris 2005, 196). Furthermore, she observes no correlation when comparing the ideological distance between the mainstream right-wing party and the extreme right party in a country with electoral support for that extreme right party (Norris 2005, 196). This finding may be explained by the fact that many mainstream parties have adopted tougher immigration laws after watching extreme right parties capitalizing on anti-immigrant sentiment among the populace during the 1990s and 2000s (Norris 2005, 264). Norris' findings and testing of theories were integral to the research design of my thesis and influenced the variables I decided to test for the thesis.

Rhodes (2010) highlights the anti-immigrant sentiment present in some BNP strongholds and shows how the BNP has been successful in creating the belief that whites are an "ethnic minority" in some parts of the country (Rhodes 2010, 85). Rhodes notes that in the town of Burnley, site of one of the BNP's first major victories at a local level, the BNP has helped nurture the belief that a large percentage of taxpayer money has gone to a mostly-Asian neighborhood (Rhodes 2010, 78). Rhodes also discusses how Nick Griffin has helped the party gain some legitimacy and given it a chance to do better electorally by stepping away from unpopular fascist aspects such as Holocaust

denial and a party platform of deporting foreign nationals (Rhodes 2010, 84). Rhodes' article helps to show that perceptions of immigrants and immigration as a whole can have a significant effect on the support of the BNP.

Wilks-Heeg (2009) examines the BNP at the local level and challenges arguments that BNP's success in these localities would be temporary and without significance (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 378). Wilks-Heeg notes that the BNP has been successful in a variety of areas, winning seats in six of the nine English regions, and seats that were previously held by Labour, the Conservatives, or the Liberal Democrats (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 382). Wilks-Heeg also highlights some factors for the rise of the BNP in local elections, notably the growing anti-immigrant sentiment and widespread Islamophobia (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 384). The author also espouses other widely-held beliefs about the success of far right parties, claiming that the BNP has also gained support due to party chairman, Nick Griffin, who has modernized the party, and also a "crowded center" occupied by the Labour Party and the Conservatives (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 385). Further, Wilks-Heeg argues that the BNP has been very efficient due to the party's limited resources and only targeted places where its central support is geographically concentrated (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 394). Finally, Wilks-Heeg notices a very interesting trend. Although the BNP has been successful across most of England, the party has had very little success in Scotland and Wales. According to Wilks-Heeg, this somewhat surprising finding could mean that the nationalist parties present in both of these regions (Scottish National Party in Scotland and Plaid Cymru in Wales) have capitalized on the decline of the traditional parties, instead of the BNP (Wilks-Heeg

2009, 396). This article provided a comprehensive account of the BNP's performance on both the regional and local levels.

John and Margetts (2009) argue that there has always been sizeable support for the far right present in Great Britain, but the parties have been unable to capitalize on this latent support (John and Margetts 2009, 497). John and Margetts also emphasize the link between immigration attitudes and support for the BNP, noting that 62.5% of BNP members considered immigration the most important issue in Britain (2006 State of the Nation Poll). The aforementioned poll is salient because the same poll also found that immigration was the most important issue to Britons today, with 35.9% of respondents responding that immigration was indeed their most important issue compared to just 14.7% for the next closest issue, terrorism (2006 State of the Nation Poll).

John and Margetts also find that much of the BNP's success can be attributed to its attention paid to local hot-button issues. The authors note how the BNP has been successful in part by crafting its campaigns around smaller issues of great concern to local constituents and is able to turn these fears into votes for the party (John and Margetts 2009, 504). However, because it is very difficult to quantify BNP mobilization on local issues, local BNP mobilization was not included in this paper's analysis. Also, although attention paid to local issues may work well in local and possibly even national elections, this strategy is not very logical in European elections as the entire Great Britain populace is divided into 12 regions, thus neutralizing local issues.

In addition, John and Margetts' study shows the increased acceptance of the BNP among the British public. The authors write that although the BNP is the least accepted party in Great Britain, it has come a long way since the 2004 European elections. In the 2004 European elections, 76% of Britons responded that they could never vote for the BNP. However, just two years later, 55% of respondents said that they could never see themselves voting for the BNP (John and Margetts 2009, 506). This growing acceptance of the BNP was well-reflected in the last European elections where the party had its best showing yet. This increasing tolerance of the BNP should bode well for the party in future elections and could also signal some support for the policy space theories of Van der Brug and Kitschelt as former Conservative voters may feel abandoned by the Conservative Party and vote for the BNP.

Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007) examine the increase of fortunes of far right parties in the 2004 elections to European Parliament. Perrineau and Minkenberg focus on the popular ultranationalism that the BNP and many of these parties espouse and their excoriation of the European Union as an unwanted entity and a threat to the sovereignty of their states (Minkenberg and Perrineau 2007, 34). The authors also concur with a number of previous radical right studies in that the radical right in Western Europe continues to hone its efforts around working-class citizens and highlights the threat of immigration to the economic security of the state (Minkenberg and Perrineau 2007, 51). This finding builds on the widely-held belief that the extreme right in Western Europe is largely supported by blue collar workers who have not received much

education and have felt especially threatened by immigration, as they fear that their jobs are being taken from them by these immigrants (Norris 2005, 177-178).

Van der Eijk and Van Egmond (2006) challenge the conventional wisdom that right-wing parties fare better in low-turnout elections while left-wing parties are hurt by low turnout and perform better in high turnout elections. It had been previously theorized that the more extreme a party's right wing ideology, the better that party will do in low-turnout elections. However, van der Eijk and van Egmond reach a different conclusion. In their study across every country in the European Union for the 1989, 1994, 1999, and 2004 EU elections, the authors find that right-wing parties do tend to perform somewhat better than left-wing parties in low-turnout elections. However, the authors find that this effect is moderate and more importantly for the purposes of this study, that as you progress along the right-wing spectrum, this effect diminishes at the expense of extreme right parties (van der Eijk and van Egmond, 13). The electoral success of extreme right parties may not only be contingent upon second-order elections or elections with low turnouts. Instead, the electoral performance of the extreme right wing parties in European elections may be attributed partly to electoral rules (PR vs. FPTP). Electoral laws may have a crucial impact on the electoral support of extreme right wing parties, assuming that van der Eijk and van Egmond's findings hold.

Rydgren (2007) explains commonalities of far right parties across different countries. Rydgren argues that ethnocentrism and anti-immigrant sentiment is the primary feature present across contemporary far right parties (Rydgren 2007, 244).

According to Rydgren, far right parties have constructed a multi-faceted approach to portray immigrants as a threat to the well-being of the country; claiming that immigrants are a major source of crime in the host country, a major cause of unemployment, and that they are abusing the welfare system in most of these western European societies (Rydgren 2007, 244).

In addition, Rydgren argues that prior research has shown that the working class and the old middle classes support the far right to a greater extent than other voters; according to Lubbers et al. (2002) education is a significant factor in determining who votes for the far right, with lower-educated citizens being more likely to support the far right than higher-educated citizens (Rydgren 2007, 249). However, Rydgren notes that Arzheimer & Carter (2006) and Evans (2005) found that the relationship between education and extreme right support seems to be curvilinear with the strongest support for the far right coming from those with a median level of education.

Regarding the effect of unemployment, according to Rydgren, most previous studies have found no link between unemployment rates and support for the far right. However, Golder found that there is a positive interaction effect between immigration and unemployment (Rydgren 2007, 249).

Golder (2003) argues that there are several flaws in how previous studies estimate the relationship between immigration, unemployment, and electoral rules on one hand and support for the extreme right on the other (Golder 2003, 433). According to Golder, “[m]any of these studies suffer from methodological problems relating to selection bias and the incorrect interpretation of interaction effects” (Golder 2003, 433).

In seeking to correct the problems in these analyses, Golder tests a number of hypotheses, including separating extreme right parties into neofascist and populist categories and testing whether differentiating these parties helps lead to different conclusions than would be seen by grouping these parties under just the extreme right branch (Golder 2003, 452). His analysis covers 165 national elections in 19 European countries over the past three decades.

Golder finds that there is indeed a significant difference between the effects of unemployment and immigration on populist parties compared to neofascist parties. Whereas the variables of unemployment and immigration have no observed effect on neofascist parties, the variables do exhibit an effect on populist parties (Golder 2003, 452). Further, Golder finds that unemployment only has an effect on the electoral fortunes of extreme right populist parties when immigration is high. According to Golder, unemployment only begins to influence support for extreme right populist parties when foreigners make up 6.3% or more of the total population (Golder 2003, 454). This means that by itself, unemployment has no relation to the support for extreme right populist parties. Also, Golder finds that higher levels of immigration lead to greater support for extreme right populist parties regardless of unemployment rates (Golder 2003, 460). Since the BNP is generally seen as an extreme right populist party rather than a neofascist party, it is important to consider the effects of unemployment and immigration on electoral support for the party and to also test for an interaction correlation between unemployment and immigration and support for the BNP.

In an attempt to explain the recent increase in the BNP support across Great Britain, John et al. (2006) examine how the BNP performed recently in local and national elections based on socio-economic variables and also, on the relationship between the BNP and other parties (John et al. 2006). Conducting their study at the local, national, and European levels over the past few elections, John et al. found that the only other party whose voters prioritized immigration as much as the BNP was the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and that there were a lot of similarities between supporters for the BNP and the UKIP (John et al. 2006, 8). John et al. also tested the relationship between income and support for the BNP, finding that the BNP was more likely to run candidates in wards with lower income (John et al. 2006, 15). However, somewhat paradoxically, the authors also found that BNP support was positively correlated with income (0.248 correlation), a finding not common in studies on the extreme right (John et al. 2006, 15). When testing the effect of education on support for the BNP, John et al. found that the BNP was somewhat more likely to run candidates in wards with lower average levels of education and won more votes in wards with lower average levels of education (0.149 correlation) (John et al. 2006, 15). Somewhat expectantly, the authors found a negative relationship (-0.251 correlation) between support for the BNP and support for the Conservative Party in wards where the two parties stood against each other (John et al. 2006, 23). Surprisingly, the authors found an extremely high correlation (0.89) between support for the BNP and support for the UKIP when examining the 2004 London Assembly and 2004 Mayoral elections (John et al. 2006, 24). Since the authors used mostly ward level data, their sample sizes

were much more robust than the ones I used. Accordingly, when the results of this paper align with what John et al. found, despite the small sample size, more confidence can be placed in the paper's findings.

Givens and Glass (2006) explore how second-order elections using PR electoral rules can be much more beneficial to far right parties than first-order elections using FPTP rules (Givens & Glass 2006, 2). Although the article focuses on the UKIP instead of the BNP, Givens and Glass still draw some important inferences about how much easier it is for smaller parties to do well in European Parliament elections, which are PR style elections, than in British national elections which use FPTP rules (Givens & Glass 2006, 3).

Hix and Marsh (2005) build on the previous work of Oppenhuis, van der Eijk, and Franklin (1996) when examining their main hypothesis of whether punishment votes or protest votes are the best way to understand European elections. The authors state that the two main reasons voters switch vote in European elections are that the nature of these elections allow people to vote more sincerely than strategically and they allow voters to show their disapproval against government parties and party policies at the ballot box (Hix and Marsh 2005, 4). Interestingly, the authors also found that parties on the edges of the left-right spectrum were more likely to improve electorally on their results in the prior national elections at European elections, particularly anti-EU parties (Hix and Marsh 2005, 18). Further, the authors found that small parties significantly increased their vote shares in European elections as well (Hix and Marsh 2005, 19).

These findings help to explain why the BNP has been much more successful in European elections than in national or local elections.

In my analysis I use the usual suspects in the literature reviewed above, immigration, education, income, and unemployment along with the support of other right-wing parties to understand electoral support for the BNP in the European elections of 1999, 2004, and 2009.

In the next chapter, I describe the methodology used in this analysis and how I constructed my experiment.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The variables I am hypothesizing have an impact on support for the BNP are unemployment rate, education, income, immigration rate, support for the UKIP, and support for the Conservative Party. Based on the work of Jackman and Volpert (1996), I hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between unemployment rate and voter support for the BNP. Also, I expect to find a negative relationship between education and support for the BNP. Further, I hypothesize that there will be a negative relationship between income and support for the BNP. In addition, I expect to find a positive relationship between immigration rate and electoral support for the BNP since the BNP is fervently anti-immigrant. Lastly, I expect a positive relationship between support for the BNP and support for the UKIP and a negative relationship between support for the BNP and support for the Conservative Party based on the work of John et al. (2006).

Unemployment rate is one of the factors associated with contemporary support for the radical right and is one of the most examined in the literature (Jackman and Volpert 1996, 502). Jackman and Volpert (1996) theorized that the largely xenophobic campaigns of extreme right parties would resonate better with voters when unemployment was high and jobs were scarce than they would when unemployment was low (Jackman and Volpert 1996, 507). Basically, Jackman and Volpert argued as people felt more threatened by an uncertain economy, they would be more likely to vote for an extreme right-wing party. Jackman and Volpert make a clear distinction though when they state that they are not suggesting that the increase in the vote comes from

the unemployed or economically marginalized, but instead from the general populace as higher unemployment provides a more fertile environment for the appeals of the extreme right (Jackman and Volpert 1996, 517). Thus, I expect that unemployment has a positive effect on the electoral support for the BNP.

It is theorized that education and electoral support for the far right have an inverse relationship (Ford and Goodwin 2010, 2-3). As the level of education increases, support for far right parties decreases. Betz (1994) found mixed results when examining whether or not extreme right parties did receive a disproportionate number of their vote from among the lower-educated (Betz 1994, 150-166). Arzheimer states that among other factors, extreme right parties tend to be more represented among voters with lower levels of education than higher ones (Arzheimer 2009, 259). Arzheimer builds on Weakliem's (2002) argument that "...voters with high levels of educational attainment are more likely to embrace liberal values and have little reason to feel threatened by low-skilled immigrants" (Arzheimer 2009, 263). Conversely, those with lower levels of education are more susceptible to the appeal of extreme right parties (Arzheimer 2009, 263). Based on these studies, I hypothesize that education has a significant negative effect on the vote share in support of the BNP.

With regards to income, political scientists have also hypothesized an inverse relationship between levels of income and electoral fortunes of extreme right parties. The appeals of these parties might mobilize voters struggling to make ends meet. Jesuit and Mahler (2004) found no support between income and vote for the extreme right in their study of causes for support of extreme right-wing parties when using

measures of income inequality and income redistribution at the national level (Jesuit and Mahler 2004, 27). However, the authors did find limited evidence that higher poverty rates were associated with a decrease in the electoral support for extreme right parties (Jesuit and Mahler 2004, 27). While this finding is contrary to the hypothesis, it is still reasonable to test that voters with lower levels of income are disproportionately represented among the ranks of the BNP.

Immigration rates are perhaps the most studied and conjectured reason behind support for the far right with the general premise being that people inclined to support far right parties such as the BNP would be the ones feeling threatened by the current pace of immigration. Betz (1994) was one of the first to argue that there was a relationship between the influx of immigrants and the growth of extreme right parties (Betz 1994, 81). Over the last two decades, immigration has been the primary issue in the party platform for contemporary extreme right parties in Western Europe. These parties blame unbalanced, out of control immigration as the pivotal reason behind many of society's ills (Betz 1994, 104-106). Indeed, John and Margetts (2009) find that BNP voters prioritize immigration among other political issues, with 77% of BNP voters saying that immigration was their top priority in the 2004 European Election exit polls and 62.5% saying that immigration was the most important issue facing Great Britain today in a 2006 State of the Nation poll (John and Margetts 2009, 498). Based on these findings, I hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between support for the BNP and immigration across regions.

Support for the Conservative Party and the UKIP is also hypothesized to have an effect on support for the BNP. John et al. (2006) find that the UKIP and the BNP “...draw upon the same well of social and political attitudes” and that the parties tend to do well in the same areas (John et al. 2006, 8). When examining the 2003 local elections, the authors find that the BNP is more likely to run candidates in areas with weak support for the Conservative Party (as judged by its performance in the 1999 national elections) and that support for the BNP and the Conservative Party is inversely related, with BNP successes coming at the expense of the Conservative Party (John et al. 2006, 23). Thus, I hypothesize that in line with the previous findings, support for the BNP and UKIP will be positively correlated while support for the BNP and the Conservative Party will be negatively correlated.

DATA

I used European elections rather than national or local elections for a number of reasons. First, constituencies in the United Kingdom are being constantly redrawn by the boundary committees in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (Rogers 2010). Of the 650 seats in the 2010 British National Election, 512 were redrawn differently than they were in the 2005 British National Election (Rogers 2010). Most of the changes were quite dramatic as well, making analysis of local or national elections at the constituency level quite difficult across different elections. Conversely, there have

been no alterations to the constituencies for European Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom since PR was instituted during the 1999 elections.

Also, the BNP has fared much better at the European Parliamentary elections than the party has in national and local elections. This difference in success is largely due to electoral rules where small parties are more likely to win seats in elections with PR than they are in majoritarian systems with FPTP rules (Duverger 1954).

The BNP is not able to field a full slate of candidates in national or local elections due to its limited resources as a smaller party, and only targets certain areas of the country where the party's resources can best be put to use (Goodwin 2010, 39-40). In the 2010 British national election, the BNP was only able to field candidates in a little over 300 of the 650 available seats (Roberts 2010). On the other hand, in European elections the party has been able to run a full slate of candidates since these elections don't take up nearly as many resources. Whereas national elections can have upwards of 600 candidates for parties to run (and local elections far more), the 2009 European Elections only had 72 seats for parties in the United Kingdom to contest (*The Telegraph* 2009). The decreased number of seats and the regional aspect of the European Elections, as well as the PR style elections mentioned above, make it easier for minor parties like the BNP to run and give us a greater chance to evaluate them.

As noted earlier, my analysis takes place across eleven of the twelve regions in the United Kingdom for the European elections of 1999, 2004, and 2009. I have collected data for the North East, North West, London, West Midlands, East Midlands, South East, South West, East of England, Yorkshire and the Humber, Wales, and

Scotland. I use the three month interval unemployment rate, and yearly regional Gross Development Household Income (GDHI) for the income variable. For the 1999 and 2004 elections, I use Headline GDHI for the same year as the election, but for the 2009 elections I had to use instead data from 2008 since the 2009 data will not be available until later this year. The data I use to measure education are available at the Eurostat website (Eurostat, 2011). Based on the data provided on this website, I was able to group education into three categories: Low education, Middle education, and High education. *Low education* includes all respondents who only received a pre-primary, primary, or lower secondary school education. *Middle education* includes those who received an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education. *High education* includes only individuals who had at least received a tertiary education. The immigration variable was compiled using statistics from the Migration Statistics Unit in the Office of National Statistics. Unfortunately, these data are not broken down into immigration from different countries of origin or by different racial groups and measure only total immigration into the United Kingdom. Finally, I have included the vote shares for the Conservative Party and the UKIP to determine if there is a relationship between the vote for the BNP and that of the other parties on the right side of the ideological spectrum.

Northern Ireland has been excluded from my analysis because this region failed to have the data needed in order to make a reasonable assessment of BNP support across all regions of the United Kingdom. When compiling regional immigration figures from across the UK, I found that there were no figures listed for Northern Ireland for

1999 or 2004. More importantly, Northern Ireland has a different set of political parties that are not present in the rest of the UK and none of the major parties in Great Britain have been able to transition themselves over to Northern Ireland, although there are similarities between the parties of Northern Ireland and the major parties of Great Britain. Thus, Northern Ireland has been excluded from the statistical analysis as there are too many variables missing (immigration, support for the Conservative Party, and support for the UKIP) for this region and running my model with Northern Ireland included would significantly skew my results.

In the next chapter, I present my results. For estimation I use a cross-sectional generalized least squares regression model. A check for multicollinearity does not yield problematic results (the magnitude of the correlations among independent variables would not affect estimation).

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Table 1 shows that despite the small number of observations in the dataset, there are some statistically significant effects. The vote percentage of the Conservative Party has a negative effect on the vote for the BNP. A one percent increase in the vote for the Conservative Party is associated with a .163 percent decrease in the vote of the BNP party on average. Although the Conservative Party and the BNP are on the right side of the ideological spectrum, it is not surprising to find that the fortunes of both parties have been inversely related over the past three European elections. John et al. (2006) found that there was a similar negative relationship in their study of the 2005 British national election. Further, John et al. expanded on these findings by discovering a negative relationship between the Conservative Party vote and the BNP during the 2003 local elections (a -0.130 correlation) and that the BNP did best in wards where Labour and the Conservatives underperformed (John et. al 2006, 23). Also, John et al. found that when comparing electoral performance between the 1999 and 2003 British elections the BNP seemed to benefit at the expense of the Conservative Party's (a -0.251 correlation), although this finding was less reliable since there were multiple parties that voters could have voted for instead. Also, since aggregate data were used, one cannot definitively determine that voters who backed the Conservatives in 1999 voted for the BNP in 2003 (John et. al 2006, 23).

The negative relationship between the BNP and the Conservative Party can also be explained at the local and national levels by the BNP's campaign strategies. Typically, the BNP attempts to capitalize on the electoral failures either of the

Conservative Party, Labour, or the Liberal-Democrats by fielding candidates in places where one or two of the major parties have had their vote shares diminished greatly in the last election (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 393).

However, I would not expect that these campaign strategies would account for the success of the BNP in European Elections. Whereas there are thousands of seats in local elections and over 600 seats in national elections, there are less than a hundred seats available to the United Kingdom in European elections. With these seats split into only 12 regions, the three major parties would be less likely to run ineffective campaigns as they sometimes do in local and national elections where resources may be stretched much thinner.

Two theories that could also explain the negative relationship between the Conservative Party and the BNP are espoused by Kitschelt and Van der Brug et al. Kitschelt states that extreme right wing parties such as the BNP tend to be more successful when the major right and left wing parties converge in the center to open up ideological space on the edges (Kitschelt 1997, 17). Van der Brug et al. differs slightly from Kitschelt by hypothesizing that extreme right wing parties tend to be more successful the closer their mainstream right-wing competitor is to the center of the ideological scale (Van der Brug et al. 2005, 548). However, Norris finds that neither theory is confirmed when examined in the case of the BNP (Norris 2005, 196). At the time of the BNP's first successes in the 2004 European Elections, the Conservative Party was away from the center ideological space on the key issue of immigration with party leader Michael Howard having just announced that the party would impose much

stricter immigration controls if the Conservatives won the upcoming general election (Givens and Glass 2006, 11-12). This move shifted the party to the right on the ideological scale with regards to immigration and away from the centrist ground it formerly held with Labour and the Liberal Democrats. The shift was supposed to capitalize on the increasing concern among the populace that immigration was becoming a major problem, and this part of Howard’s platform was somewhat co-opted from the stringent BNP stance on immigration that was receiving growing support. Later, when the BNP scored its first victories in European Elections in 2009, analysts noted that David Cameron had recently moved the party back towards the ideological center, particularly in issues such as gay rights (Wheeler 2009). Despite this move to the center however, the Conservatives still ran on a platform of rolling back immigration and putting a cap on immigration into the United Kingdom outside of the European Union (*The Economic Times* 2010). Thus, it does not appear that these policy space theories would be relevant regarding changes in the electoral support for BNP.

Table 1: Effects of the share of the vote on all tested variables, not including Scotland and Wales variable. Regions. N=33

Conservative Vote	-.163*** (.041)
UKIP Vote	.269*** (.061)
Immigration %	19.089 (67.099)
Low Education %	34.99*** (13.484)
Income	.0002 (.000)
Unemployment	.286* (.175)
Constant	-5.67 (3.742)
Wald Chi-squared Probability	78.82 0.000

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; two-tailed test

*** Significant at the .01 level

** Significant at the .05 level

* Significant at the .10 level

Table 1 shows a positive relationship between the support for the BNP and that for the UKIP. Here, a one percent increase in the vote of the UKIP is associated to a .269 percent increase in the vote for the BNP on average. A number of researchers see both the UKIP and the BNP as being quite similar to each other on the ideological spectrum (Givens and Glass 2006, 2-3). Both parties highlight that they are strongly anti-European and anti-immigrant and these issues are what they are most known for (John and Margetts 2009, 498-501). Also, UKIP supporters appear to be the most tolerant of the BNP, with 35.4% of UKIP voters in the 2004 European Election stating that they could see themselves voting for the BNP in the future (John and Margetts 2009, 506). No more than 20% of voters from any of the other parties could see themselves voting for the BNP in the future (John and Margetts 2009, 506). There are differences between the parties with the main focus of the BNP being immigration and the main focus of the UKIP being pulling out of the European Union and there is a huge difference in social acceptance with the BNP carrying much more of a social stigma than the UKIP. However, their similarities seem to outweigh their differences as BNP and UKIP voters have a lot more in common with each other than they do with other sizable political parties in the United Kingdom.

Other researchers have found a positive relationship between voter support for the UKIP and the BNP as well. John and Margetts report that there is a strong positive correlation between attitudes of UKIP and BNP voters of 0.532 (John and Margetts 2009, 509). Borisyuk et al. also find that in the 2004 European Elections there was a

strong positive relationship between support for the BNP and UKIP when analyzing the election at ward level (Borisyuk et al. 2007, 677).

Immigration is often viewed in the literature as the usual variable that accounts for the support of the extreme right, with many of the extreme right parties highlighting immigration as their main issue of focus. Previously, a number of researchers had theorized that there was a link between areas of high immigration and support for the far right. However, Norris found that there was no considerable link between immigration rates and electoral votes for the extreme right (Norris 2005, 5). In Table 1 above, we see that there is no association between immigration rates and regional support for the BNP. John et al. also found no relationship between the BNP and immigration rates when examining the 2004 local and 2005 national elections (John et al. 2006, 17). The authors hypothesize that this lack of association could be the result of government intervention, that is, the British government may purposely try to settle immigrants in areas with low levels of support for the BNP and high levels of tolerance (John et al. 2006, 17). This government intervention hypothesis would be interesting to explore.

It should be noted that this result may be due to the measure used. This measure does not distinguish between immigrants from the European Union and those outside the European Union. After all, the initial support for the BNP came in areas such as Burnley where the BNP capitalized on concerns that an Asian neighborhood was getting special treatment from the government (Rhodes 2010, 78). There is also ample evidence to support the theory that white and non-white immigrants are perceived and treated differently; preferred immigrants would be those who “look”

British (Innes 2010, 470). However, only census data include European Union and non-European Union immigrant categories; such data are not found at the regional level during these time periods.

Whereas immigration rates appear to have no effect on support for the BNP, previous studies have found a link between anti-immigrant attitudes and support for extreme right parties across Western Europe (Semyonov et al. 2006, 429). This proposed link between anti-immigrant attitudes and support for extreme right parties very well seems to be the case in Great Britain as the BNP has increased its vote as citizens have become more concerned about the immigration issue. Prior to the 1999 European elections, the percentage of citizens who responded that immigration was the main issue in the country was less than 10% and BNP support was low, garnering less than 1% of the vote in most elections. Throughout the middle of the decade, people who responded that immigration was the biggest issue facing Great Britain today increased dramatically, increasing to almost 36% by 2006 (John and Margetts 2009, 499). The number of people who highlighted immigration as their primary concern was more than twice as large as the next choice of respondents, terrorism at 14.7%. Indeed, respondents who stated that immigration was their primary issue of concern also felt that the BNP was one of the best parties to handle the issue of immigration with 25% of people believing that the BNP was the most equipped party to tackle immigration (Carey and Geddes 2010, 853). However, the public opinion polls and exit polls that could be used to formulate the argument that anti-immigrant attitudes have an

effect on support for extreme right parties are only at the national level and thus outside the scope of the author's study.

Education appears to have a significant effect on the share of the vote for the BNP across regions. Arzheimer and Carter find a strong negative link between education and support for the extreme right in eight Western European countries based on data from the 2002 European Social Survey (their analysis does not include Great Britain) and a similar effect can be seen in Table 1 (Arzheimer and Carter 2009, 998). The British National Party is overrepresented by voters with relatively low levels of education and there is a negative relationship between BNP votes and education levels. Using polling data from the 2009 European election, Kellner reports a similar finding: respondents with low education are much more likely to support the BNP than respondents with higher levels of education (Kellner 2009, 469). According to Kellner's measure, 11% of voters with the lowest classification of education voted for the BNP, while just 2% of voters with the highest classification of education supported the BNP (Kellner 2009, 469). John et al. (2006) also report that not only does the BNP win more votes in areas with low levels of education, but also that the party is more likely to run candidates in areas with lower levels of education. Thus, this analysis confirms the negative association between education and vote for anti-immigrant parties found in the literature.

Though education is somewhat related to income, with people who have greater amounts of education more likely to have higher incomes, there is enough of a difference to treat income as an additional variable that may explain support for the BNP

(O'Neill 1995). Multicollinearity tests were run to make sure there was enough of a difference between these two variables to warrant including both income and education in the analysis. As Table 1 shows, income does not affect the share of the vote for the BNP. This is somewhat surprising due to the aforementioned relationship between education and income, but consistent with prior findings on the association between income and the vote for extreme right parties (Jackman and Volpert 1996, 508).

Finally, I consider the effects of unemployment. Although Norris finds no evidence to support the theory that unemployment rates and support for extreme right parties are positively correlated, Table 1 shows a weak positive relationship between the two (Norris 2005, 5). A one percent increase in unemployment across regions of the BNP is associated with a .286 increase in support for the BNP. This finding is plausible as the BNP has typically fared better among the working class and in areas where there was concern about immigrants coming into Great Britain to take jobs.

Golder (2003) speculated that there was an interaction effect happening between immigration and unemployment. Golder hypothesized that while there was a positive relationship occurring between immigration and support for populist extreme right-wing parties, unemployment only helped to predict support for these parties when immigration rates were high (Golder 2003). I tested this theory, but found no discernable interaction effect between unemployment and immigration rates on support for the BNP.

The United Kingdom in European terms is made up of nine English regions, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. As there are differences between the English

regions and those of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, I have controlled for Scottish and Welsh residency (Northern Ireland was not included in my analysis for reasons previously discussed) in order to determine if BNP support is hindered in areas outside of England.

Now, both Scotland and Wales show lower levels of support for the BNP than other regions of Great Britain over all three time periods studied. The deflated vote totals of the BNP in Scotland and Wales may be due to the nationalist parties [Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland and Plaid Cymru in Wales] that are present in these two regions. Indeed, Wilks-Heeg theorizes that the nationalism of the SNP and Plaid Cymru in these regions has drawn away voters that otherwise would have voted for the BNP (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 396). Further, it could also be due to the nationalist aspect of the BNP itself (Sykes 2005, 146). In fact, just a few years ago, BNP's treasurer David Hannam penned an article in *Identity* magazine calling for the BNP to pull out of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland and to focus on England (Hannam 2007). To explore this argument I have treated the two regions as a dummy variable to explore whether the support for the BNP is lower in Scotland and Wales than in the other areas of Britain.

Table 2 shows that in Scotland and Wales electoral support for the BNP is lower by 2.332 percent on average than in the other regions in Britain. Whether it is from the presence of the SNP and Plaid Cymru or some other factor, the BNP's fortunes are significantly dampened in Scotland and Wales compared to the nine English regions used for European elections.

Table 2 Effects of the share of the vote on all tested variables, including Scotland and Wales variable. Regions. N=33

Conservative Vote	-.235*** (.059)
UKIP Vote	.225*** (.071)
Immigration %	-14.926 (70.724)
Low Education %	31.202** (14.027)
Income	.0002 (.000)
Unemployment	.231 (.239)
Scotland/Wales	-2.332** (1.199)
Constant	-.998 (4.874)
Wald Chi-squared Probability	104.71 0.000

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; two-tailed test

*** Significant at the .01 level

** Significant at the .05 level

* Significant at the .10 level

CHAPTER 6: THE BNP IN BURNLEY

Understanding how the BNP has campaigned also sheds some light on their recent electoral successes and why voters have supported the BNP in the latest European Parliament elections. According to the literature, the BNP is most successful in areas where they can take a local issue and contextualize it with xenophobia and racism (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 385-386). The issue can be as mundane as trash collection or placement of speed bumps or it could be a deeper, more pertinent issue such as resource distribution, access to public services, or housing allocation (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 385-386). The goal of the BNP in these cases is to tinge whatever the issue may be with accusations of racial discrimination and that with regards to this issue, the current government favors immigrants and non-whites at the expense of the “disadvantaged” white majority.

Another factor seen as influencing where the BNP decides to run is the presence of a long period of Labour rule, although this is still contested in the literature. Ford and Goodwin (2010) note that the BNP has systematically targeted traditional Labour seats by campaigning that the BNP is “...the Labour Party your grandfathers voted for”. The BNP claims that Labour has abandoned the working class that helped bring them to prominence and that they are the party that represents the true interests of the people (Ford and Goodwin 2010, 6). From 2005-2008, 52 of the 58 seats that the BNP won in local council elections were previously controlled by a Labour Party member, giving some credence to the assertion that the BNP targets Labor incumbents more so than other parties (Ford and Goodwin 2010, 6).

However, John et al. (2006) argue that the BNP actually take more votes from the Conservative Party than they do from Labour or the Liberal Democrats and reject the notion that the BNP mainly focuses on traditional Labour seats. Rather, the authors argue that it just so happens that the areas where they run are traditionally Labour, but the BNP actually gets most of its votes at the expense of the Conservative Party and does the best when both the Conservative Party and Labour do less well, not just one or the other (John et al. 2006, 23).

In Burnley, the issue that the BNP campaigned on was perceived favoritism of council services towards ethnic Asians; this was based on a previous perception that funding was being unequally distributed between different wards with Asian wards receiving more than their fair share (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 386-387). This perception was first raised in the early 1990s by council member Harry Brooks, a member of the Labour Party at the time (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 386). This view grew quickly and in less than a decade, Brooks was able to lead an independent coalition that won eight local council seats in Burnley during the 2000 elections on the premise that predominantly Asian wards were getting advantages that white wards weren't receiving (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 387).

The preeminence of this issue came to a head the next year when race riots took hold of the city for three days. Following these riots, the BNP joined in with the members of the electorate who felt disadvantaged by these Asian wards, with the slogan, "They get more than we get." (Vasagar 2001). Not long after the riots, 42% of the electorate surveyed responded that "white people being treated unfairly" was a

major factor behind the incident that helped spawn BNP's 2002 slogan of "Fighting for Fairer Funding" for that year's local elections (Rhodes 2010, 89).

In the 2002 local elections, the BNP took advantage of the opportunity afforded to them, winning three seats on the local Burnley council thanks mostly to mobilization by the BNP on the issue of perceived reverse discrimination (Tempest 2002). The BNP claimed that they were not racist, but that attitudes like multiculturalism and positive discrimination had sparked reverse racism and this led to Asian wards having unfair advantages (Rhodes 2010, 87). The BNP insisted that they were simply asking for equality among wards (Rhodes 2010, 87). However, later studies would show that perceived inequality was not the case and that despite the Asian wards in question being classified as some of the poorest socioeconomically in all of England, just 13% of council funds over the previous decade had been allocated to these wards (Rhodes 2010, 90).

Although the perception of unequal funding between wards of different ethnic backgrounds was the major reason for the BNP success, there were other factors behind the electoral success of the BNP in Burnley as well. Rather than solely focusing on local issues that could be construed with a xenophobic message, the party maintained a local presence and an attentiveness to local issues that was unmatched by the traditional parties. For instance, the BNP started a website titled *Burnley Bravepages* back in December of 2001 that acted as a sounding board for local issues with local residents being asked to write in any grievances they had with local government (Rhodes 2009, 40). The BNP then went out and worked to address the

biggest grievances listed, doing everything from calling for a 20 KPH speed limit in certain areas, to trying to prevent a public swimming pool from being shut down due to lack of funding, to campaigning to prevent the shutdown of historic 100-year old landmark buildings (Rhodes 2009, 40). These actions helped to not only ingratiate the party among certain parts of the populace but also gave it a degree of legitimacy and showed that the party was getting things done. Amplifying this effect was the widely held perception that the Labour Party (dominant in Burnley for the three decades prior to 2001) had grown apathetic to its constituents, feeling that Burnley was a safe Labour seat and did not need the attention or patronage that more hotly contested areas did (Rhodes 2009, 27).

The BNP further ingratiated itself with Burnley, and again emphasized the importance of locality by recruiting candidates with strong ties to the community they were chosen to stand in (Rhodes 2009, 41). Candidates chosen to run for council seats were very well known and held in high regard by their community; twenty-five percent of BNP voters stated that they personally knew at least one of the BNP councilor candidates that they voted for (Rhodes 2009, 41). This emphasis on local issues is seen as a main factor behind the success of the BNP in certain areas and was articulated by Rhodes (2009), Wilks-Heeg (2009), Rhodes (2010), and Ford and Goodwin (2010).

Another major factor for BNP's success in Burnley was the collapse of both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party in years prior to the BNP breakthrough (Rhodes, 2009). In a span of just seven years, support for the Labour Party plummeted

in Burnley, from a dominant 61% of the votes in the 1996 elections to just 30% of the votes cast in the 2003 elections (Rhodes 2009, 26). During this monumental collapse of support, the Labour Party lost control of the Burnley local council for the first time in 30 years after a poor result in the 2000 local elections (Rhodes 2009, 26).

Further helping to set the stage for the eventual BNP triumphs was the relative non-existence of the Conservative Party in Burnley between 1992 and 2003. During this time frame, there were nine local elections and in all nine elections the Conservative Party failed to field a full slate of candidates (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 389). In fact, the best the Conservative Party ever did was contest a little over seventy percent of the seats in the 1992 election and bottomed out in the 2000 local elections, running candidates in just twenty-five percent of seats (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 389). Even when the Conservative Party did finally run a full set of candidates again in 2004 (for the first time in 13 years) a local party official said off the record that of the 15 seats up for grabs, the Conservatives only stood a chance to win in two and only ran a full slate to appease calls to counter the rise of and support for the BNP (Wilks-Heeg 2009, 390).

Thus, the literature highlights that the BNP successes in Burnley were largely based on turning a local hot-button issue into a race-related issue, focusing on local issues that mattered greatly to the local electorate, and the collapse of either the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, or both. Now, the variables hypothesized in this thesis to potentially have an effect on BNP support (Conservative vote, UKIP vote, immigration, low education, income and unemployment) will be examined with regards to the case of Burnley starting with the 2000 local elections.

I was unable to find specific vote shares for each party for the 2000-2003 local elections in Burnley. However, the Conservative Party's weakness in Burnley was still readily easy to see with the party holding just three of the 48 total local council seats after the election (BBC News 2000). During the 2002 local elections, the BNP scored their electoral breakthrough by winning three seats on the Burnley local council, while the Conservatives managed to do only slightly better, winning just four seats out of a total of 45 available due to the local districts being redrawn prior to the election (BBC News 2002). This initial support made the party the main opposition party to Labour after the 2003 local elections after winning seven new seats in the election (BBC News 2003). Meanwhile, the Conservatives lost the one seat they had up for grabs bringing their total number of seats in the Burnley local council back down to three. Based on these observations, it is hard to say that the BNP benefited at the expense of the Conservative Party as the Conservative Party number of seats remained the same throughout these three elections, while the seats for the BNP grew substantially.

Since the central campaign issue of the UKIP is pulling out of the European Union, the UKIP has been a non-existent force in local elections until only the last few years (Wheeler 2011). Even with their recent emergence in certain localities though, the UKIP has failed to make a dent in Burnley, notching just 145 votes in the 2011 local elections (BBC News 2011).

Immigration was not found to have an impact on votes for the BNP during the 1999, 2004, and 2009 European Parliament Elections but may have had an impact in Burnley. Whereas the 2001 Census found that minorities only made up 7.9% of the

population in the United Kingdom as a whole, and only 4% were described as “Asian or Asian British”, the census reported that Burnley had almost double the number of “Asian or Asian British” as the national average with 7.2% of the town’s population fitting this category (Rhodes 2009, 35) (The Guardian 2008). As previously discussed, immigration figures in non-census years are sparse at best so it is hard to compare this one-time snapshot over time to try to determine if there may be a relationship between the number of immigrants residing in Burnley and support for the BNP; it cannot be done with the limited amount of information available.

The regional education statistics found at the Eurostat website and used in the analysis are not available at a level lower than the district level. Therefore, the level of education in Burnley relative to that in the United Kingdom cannot be determined. Attempts to find additional information on education in Burnley only yielded graduation rates of the city’s primary and secondary schools.

Whereas unemployment was found to have a slight positive effect on electoral support for the BNP at the regional level, it would be hard to argue that this was the case in Burnley. The 2001 United Kingdom Census reported an unemployment rate of just 3.14% in Burnley, lower than both the regional unemployment rate (North West) of 3.63% and the national unemployment rate of 3.43%. Attempts to find the unemployment rate for Burnley in successive years have yielded no results.

The measure used for income (GDHI per head) was only broken down into the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS 3) sub-regional levels and thus specific numbers for Burnley could not be found during this timeframe. Further, GDHI

data are not available in the 2001 UK Census at any level. Therefore there is not enough information to determine whether the electoral success of the BNP in Burnley may be explained by low income rates. However, there is information for the county (Lancashire) where Burnley is located. In 2001, Lancashire's GDHI was £10351 per capita while the North West's GDHI was £10743 per capita and the United Kingdom's GDHI was £11843 per capita. In 2002, Lancashire's GDHI was £10630 per capita compared to £11094 per capita for the North West and £12226 for the United Kingdom. In 2003, Lancashire's GDHI per capita was at £11068 while the North West's was £11569 and the United Kingdom's was £12776. Thus, Lancashire had below average GDHI levels compared both to its region and the United Kingdom and was indeed one of the poorer counties in the country.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The BNP has seen a dramatic rise in support over the last decade since party chairman Nick Griffin took over. Nick Griffin helped to modernize the BNP and transformed the party from its fascist roots into a more electorally respected extreme right-wing populist party (Wilks-Heeg 2009).

Compared to extreme right wing parties in other Western European countries, little has been written on the BNP in Great Britain. However, with the rise in support for the party, particularly in European elections, it is important to attempt to understand the sources of electoral support for the BNP in the European parliamentary elections over the last decade. Immigration, education, income, unemployment, support for the Conservative Party, and support for the UKIP are the variables hypothesized to have an effect on the electoral support for the BNP.

Immigration is the issue most identified with extreme right wing parties of the last decade and thus it was expected that immigration rates would have a positive correlation with support for the BNP. However, this hypothesis received no support in this study, despite findings by previous authors (Golder 2003) that immigration rates accounted partly for the electoral support of extreme right wing populist parties.

Education, on the other hand, appears to have a significant effect on support for the BNP. As expected, voters with lower levels of education were far more likely to support the BNP than voters with medium or high levels of education. This finding is consistent with recent findings by other political scientists (Arzheimer and Carter 2009).

No significant relationship was found between income and support for the BNP, contrary to the expectation that there would be a negative relationship between the two. Although John et al. (2006) had previously found a positive relationship between income and BNP votes, most of the prior literature found a negative relationship between income levels and support for extreme right wing parties such as the BNP.

Finally, unemployment was found to have a slight positive effect on support for the BNP. This result is consistent with the findings of Jackman and Volpert (1996) and contrary to the findings of Golder (2003). However, Golder's classification of the BNP as a neofascist party (Golder 2003, 448) may not be applicable in more recent years; given the changes in the party's policy positions in the last eight years the BNP may be classified more accurately as "populist". Further, Golder's hypothesis that unemployment and immigration may have an interaction effect on the vote for the extreme right was tested but no significant relationship was found in this study.

It was found that Conservative Party support has the expected significant negative correlation with support for the BNP. This relationship between support for the Conservative Party and support for the BNP appears quite logical as both parties are located at the right of the political left-right axis, and previous authors (John et al. 2006) have found this relationship in past elections.

Conversely, it seems counterintuitive that a significant positive relationship was found between the BNP and the UKIP. The UKIP is even closer to the BNP than the Conservative Party on the left-right spectrum and thus most would surmise that the UKIP and the BNP would diminish each other's support. However, a negative

relationship between the UKIP and the BNP where one party benefited at the expense of the other was not supported in the results. Again, previous research on the relationship between these two parties (John et al. 2006) has found a significant positive relationship between support for the UKIP and support for the BNP.

Also, the BNP has failed to garner the support in Scotland and Wales that it has in the English regions for European elections. When holding other variables constant, there was a negative relationship between support for the BNP and voters in Scotland and Wales. Wilks-Heeg (2009) hypothesized that the BNP is hurt by the presence of nationalistic parties like Plaid Cymru in Wales and the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland and this may indeed be the reason behind the BNP's relative lack of success in these regions.

All in all, the findings in this study suggest that in European parliamentary elections the BNP finds support among unemployed voters and voters of lower education. In addition, support for the BNP dramatically decreases in Scotland and Wales relative to the other regions in Great Britain. Finally, it appears that electoral support for the UKIP reinforces the electoral support for the BNP rather than diminishing the BNP's vote share.

The in-depth look at Burnley in Chapter 6 helped to explain how the BNP first won seats on the local council there in 2001. Here, the BNP was responsive to the issues locals thought were important, grabbed an issue and exploited it in the context of anti-immigration, and both the Labour and Conservative Parties collapsed; creating a power vacuum that the BNP was ready to step into.

Due to the dearth of observations, it would be useful to repeat this analysis following the 2014 European elections. Further research could also examine extreme right-wing parties in other Western European countries and their support in the last three European elections taking into account the variables listed here (using other competitive right-wing parties in these countries in place of the Conservative Party and the UKIP). Examining the support of the BNP over local and national elections could produce significant results and also buttress the strength of the claims made in this paper.

Also, it would be useful to examine the effects of other variables such as age and social class on support for the BNP. Greater delineation in the variables used could also yield more far-reaching results. Yearly figures breaking down immigrants based on the country or region of origin are unavailable at the regional level in Great Britain, but should be present in the 2011 Census. It is reasonable to assume that whereas no relationship was found between total immigration rates and support for the BNP, a relationship could exist between non-EU immigration rates and support for the BNP. Further, instead of using Gross Development Household Income (GDHI) as a measure of income, perhaps indicators such as the Gini coefficient which measures income inequality could yield different results. In addition, using different measures of education could produce different results as well. A more detailed classification for education, for instance, pre-primary school, primary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school, post-secondary non-tertiary, and tertiary levels could yield a more detailed picture of the effects of education on electoral support for the BNP.

EPILOGUE

After winning two seats in the elections for European Parliament in 2009, the BNP was riding high coming into the 2010 British national elections and fielded candidates to contest over 300 seats for the first time in the party's history (Taylor and Muir 2010). However, the BNP was solidly trounced in every seat they ran at the national level and lost many of their seats they previously held at the local level, including all 12 of the seats where BNP candidates were incumbents in the strongholds of Barking and Dagenham (Taylor and Muir 2010). The party was already at a disadvantage due to the FPTP system used but was harmed even more the night before the election when their chief campaign strategist was caught on tape fighting a group of young men, leaving many to feel that if the BNP were elected to office they would bring back the fascist tenet of street fighting (Taylor and Muir 2010).

Not long after the party's disastrous 2010 general election showing, the party faced another crisis as news emerged that the party could soon go bankrupt and owed creditors more than £700,000 (McTague 2010). The party's poor state of financial affairs meant that Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons were both at risk of losing their seats to the European Parliament (McTague 2010).

This past year, the BNP took even more of a hit at the polls during the 2011 local elections, losing 11 of the 13 seats it was defending in the election while failing to win a single new seat (BBC News 2011). The sudden collapse of electoral support as well as their financial problems has caused much consternation for a party that appeared on the

rise following the 2009 European Parliament elections. These colossal failures led to a number of party members leaving the BNP, as well as two overt leadership challenges; in July 2011 Griffin barely won over Andrew Brons with a margin of just nine votes (BBC News 2011).

All in all, the party appears to be significantly weaker than it was following the 2009 European elections and members no longer believe the party is on the cusp of an electoral breakthrough at national elections. Going forward, it will be interesting to see how the BNP performs in upcoming elections, including the 2014 European elections.

APPENDIX: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variable	Mean	Standard Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
BNP vote	4.247	2.922	.4	9.8
Cons. vote	28.885	7.537	16.8	44.4
UKIP vote	12.858	6.268	1.3	26.1
Immigration %	.008	.006	.003	.028
Low educ. %	.194	.029	.095	.241
Unemployment	6.297	1.784	3.4	10.2
Income	12423.03	2332.273	8971	19038

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