

Anti-immigrant, politically disaffected or still racist after all?

**Examining the Attitudinal Drivers of Extreme Right Support in Britain in the 2009
European Elections**

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Abstract

The elections to the European Parliament held in June 2009 marked a breakthrough for the extreme right British National Party (BNP), while in other European states extreme right parties (ERPs) similarly made gains. However the attitudinal drivers of support for the BNP and ERPs more generally remain under researched. In this article, we draw on unique data that allows unprecedented insight into the attitudinal profile of ERP voters in Britain, an often neglected case in the wider literature. We separate out a series of possible motivational drivers of extreme right support: racial prejudice, anti-immigrant sentiment; protest against political elites, Euroscepticism, homophobia and Islamophobia. We find that BNP support in the 2009 European Parliament elections was motivationally diverse, with racist hostility, xenophobia and protest voting all contributing significantly to BNP voting. Our analysis suggests that the BNP, which has long been a party stigmatized by associations with racism and violent extremism, made a key breakthrough in 2009. While racist motivations remain the strongest driver of support for the party, it has also begun to win over a broader coalition of anti-immigrant and anti-elite voters.

Introduction

The elections to the European Parliament in June 2009 marked a breakthrough moment for the British National Party (BNP), the dominant extreme right party (ERP) in Britain.¹ Almost one million citizens voted for the BNP and sent two of the party's representatives into the European Parliament. This set of elections also saw ERPs in other European states make gains, such as in Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands and Slovakia. The enduring electoral appeal of these parties is well documented (e.g. Carter 2005; Eatwell 2003; Kitschelt 1995; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2007), although the drivers of support for the extreme right in Britain are under researched. In this paper, we contribute to the wider pan-European literature by presenting the first ever empirical analysis of the attitudes that motivate extreme right voting in Britain. We utilize the first British survey to contain a wide range of data on the attitudes of a representative sample of British voters. This unique data allows us to examine for the first time the significance of different motivations as drivers of electoral support for the BNP.² We find that racial prejudice is the strongest driver of BNP support, while anti-immigrant sentiment and populist hostility to the political mainstream are also significantly correlated with BNP voting. Our evidence, therefore, suggests that recent efforts by the BNP to replicate the more successful formula of ethno-nationalist xenophobia and anti-establishment populism (Rydgren, 2005), which has proven so electorally potent in other European states, has started to bear fruit, enabling the party to move beyond its traditional racist support base and mobilize a broader constituency of anti-immigrant and anti-establishment voters. However, it is not clear whether this motivational diversity is partly the result of the

exceptional conditions under which the 2009 European Parliament elections in Britain were conducted. All of the three mainstream political parties were embroiled in a scandal over the misuse of public funds by legislators, leading to a widespread populist backlash against the political mainstream that also benefitted other minor parties such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and Green Party.

Although diverse motives contribute to BNP support, we find that extreme racist views, such as the belief that black Britons are intellectually inferior, still loom large as the strongest motivation driving BNP support. By racist hostility we are referring here to the classical biological racism that is characteristic of the 'old' extreme right, and which stresses the inequalities of races on the basis of their biological characteristics, as opposed to the 'new' cultural racism based on ethnopluralism (see Carter 2005: 35-41). The BNP's continued association with ideas rooted in biological racism is likely to handicap its future development. This old classical racism has become socially unacceptable in mainstream British politics and is rapidly losing popular support, particularly among younger generations who have grown up in a more ethnically diverse society and exhibit lower levels of racial prejudice (Ford, 2008). The ability of the BNP to further expand its electoral support base in future domestic elections will depend on its ability to expand its appeal to the much broader anti-immigrant and anti-establishment constituency of voters that have provided a more stable and enduring support base for the larger and more successful continental populist radical right.

The Attitudinal Drivers of ERP Support: An Overview

Recent studies argue that socio-structural and protest-based models provide only a partial sufficient explanation of what drives ERP support. Instead, stronger emphasis is placed on the role of instrumental motives and ideological affinity with ERP policies as crucial predictors of support (Eatwell 1998a; Van der Brug 2003; Van der Brug & Fennema, 2003; Van der Brug et al. 2005). Following this school of thought, in this paper we focus on five sets of attitudes that have to varying degrees been linked in the wider literature with ERP voting, namely: political dissatisfaction; Euroscepticism; homophobia; hostility to immigration, and; racism.

Earlier protest-based models interpreted ERP voting as a by-product of citizens' dissatisfaction with mainstream parties and discontent with the political system more generally (Mayer & Perrineau 1992; Lubbers et al. 2002). Implicit in the protest model is the assumption that 'voters have reasons to vote for them [ERPs] that have more to do with deficiencies of mainstream parties than with the attractions of anti-immigrant parties per se' (Van der Brug et al. 2005: 541). In various national contexts, ERP voters have been shown to exhibit disproportionately high levels of distrust and dissatisfaction toward the political system (Kitschelt 1995; Lubbers et al. 2002; Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen 2009; also Van der Eijk, Franklin, & Marsh 1996). Moreover, we can reasonably expect this protest sentiment to be especially likely to translate into votes for an anti-establishment challenger party like the BNP in the context of a 'second order' European election that is the focus of this study (Reif & Schmitt 1980; Van der Brug and Van der Eijk 2007).

Other analyses, however, emphasize the role of core values and ideology in driving ERP support. Seen through this instrumental lens, ERP voting is an end in itself; it is not so much an act *against* ‘the establishment’ as an act *for* policies offered by the extreme right. Underneath this broad umbrella, however, are different aspects of the extreme right formula that may appeal to voters. One factor that is especially relevant in the context of a European Parliament election is Euroscepticism. Not all ERPs adopt hostile positions toward the European Union (EU) and European integration, though parties like the French National Front (FN) and Danish People’s Party (DFP) have campaigned strongly against Europe. This strategy has reaped some dividends among an electorate that is generally more Eurosceptic than mainstream elites (e.g. Hobolt et al. 2009). In Britain, the BNP has adopted a strongly Eurosceptic line, calling for withdrawal from the EU which it argues will ‘bring about the eventual liquidation of Britain as a national and a people’ (BNP 2005: 5). As yet, no research has examined whether this anti-European stance has helped the party win support among one of Europe’s most Eurosceptic electorates.

The attitude most frequently associated with ERPs, however, is hostility toward ethnic out-groups, though mainly xenophobic hostility toward newly-arrived immigrants. Several studies stress the strong link between hostility to immigrants and a desire to halt or reverse immigration and support for the extreme right (Eatwell 1998; Kitschelt 1995; Norris 2005; Van der Brug 2003). One weakness in this literature, however, is that it often fails to disentangle the source and nature of this hostility, which is often branded simply as ‘anti-immigrant’. In an attempt to shed light on the role of different kinds of intolerance, Rydgren (2008) suggests three overlapping but distinct constituencies,

namely; immigration sceptics, xenophobes, and racists. As Rydgren highlights; ‘These categories overlap, but not systematically: racist voters are probably xenophobic and immigration sceptics as well, but xenophobic voters are not necessarily racists and immigration sceptics are neither necessarily xenophobes nor racists.’ Rydgren finds that it is immigration scepticism (i.e. the desire for reduced or zero immigration) that most strongly predicts ERP support in his six country sample, and subsequently warns against explanations that lean too heavily on xenophobia or racism: ‘The fact that the radical right-wing parties pursue xenophobic political programmes and discourses does not automatically imply that xenophobic attitudes among the voters are a major reason why these parties get the support they do in elections’ (Ibid. p.760).

However, there are reasons to doubt whether this finding will generalize to the British case. Unlike the new radical right parties in Rydgren’s sample, the extreme right BNP holds its roots in a narrow right-wing extremist subculture that has stronger associations with racism, extremism and violence (blinded for peer review). In contrast to new radical right parties that emerged from anti-tax movements or more diverse ideological currents, and so have been able to constructed ‘reputational shields’ (Ivarsflaten 2006), the BNP is the direct descendent of the overtly biologically racist, anti-Semitic and confrontational National Front (NF) of the 1970s. As a result, many leading BNP activists have been socialized in this ‘old’ right-wing extremist ideology, the core pillars of which are biological racism, anti-Semitism and an overt if not outwardly hostile critique of liberal parliamentary democracy (Carter 2005). While in recent years the BNP has sought to modify its exoteric ideology through a strategy of ‘modernization’, downplaying this ideological legacy in favour of xenophobia and anti-

establishment populism, it is not clear to what extent this effort has succeeded. The BNP still has an extremely negative public image, even by the standards of ERPs that are often reviled by large sections of the public. In one poll in 2009 66 per cent of respondents said they would 'never consider' voting BNP and only 4 per cent said they would 'definitely consider' voting for the party.³ The BNP also faces more competition for the immigration sceptic vote than is true in other European states. The fringe right-wing United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) originally targeted the single-issue of Euroscepticism but now advocates restrictions on immigration and employs anti-Muslim appeals, while the centre-right Conservative Party have long been regarded as 'tough' on immigration following the very restrictive immigration reforms passed by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. The result is that the BNP faces greater obstacles in winning over a broader immigration sceptic electorate and so may be more reliant on 'core' extreme right voters who have stronger feelings of xenophobia and racism.

To test this hypothesis, we construct latent measures of anti-immigrant sentiment and racism to test the separate impact of these factors on BNP support. Voters who are driven toward ERPs as a result of anti-immigrant attitudes dislike immigrants and desire a more restrictive immigration policy but they are not necessarily motivated by racist hostility. In contrast, voters who are driven toward ERPs as a result of racist hostility are driven primarily by ethnic nationalist beliefs and claims over biological racial superiority. In existing studies, findings on the role of racist hostility appear mixed; while some find that racist attitudes influence individual policy preferences over immigration (Ivarsflaten 2005; Burns & Gimpel 2000), others find that economic competition and economic insecurity may be more important (Citrin et al. 1997).

Out-groups defined by race and place of birth are not the only groups stigmatized and targeted by ERPs. These parties also often mobilize hostility to out-groups defined by sexuality, for example attacking homosexuals as being morally bankrupt and exerting a negative influence. In the late 1970s, for example, the BNP founder heavily criticized fellow activists in the earlier National Front (NF) on the basis of their homosexuality. Although homophobia in modern Britain is in decline (e.g. in the 2009 British Social Attitudes survey the percentage of respondents who thought that homosexual acts were 'always' or 'mostly' fell from 62 per cent when the survey was first carried out in 1983 to 36 per cent), homophobic rhetoric may still resonate among groups that are associated with stronger opposition to gay rights, namely older and less well educated working class voters who are also more likely than others to vote BNP (blinded for peer review). The incumbent Labour government has pursued a liberal approach to issues of gay rights: gay couples have legal rights to adopt and form civil partnership, and discrimination against homosexuals has been made illegal. High profile disputes have emerged over the enforcement of this legislation, most notably a widely reported battle between the government and the Catholic Church, with the latter resisting providing opportunities for homosexual couples to adopt through its adoption agencies. In such an environment, arguments seeking to mobilize homophobia politically may be a valuable resource for an ERP.

The uniquely detailed survey data we analyze in this paper allow us to test the influence of a much wider range of motivations for BNP voting than have ever been examined before. We simultaneously test the influence of anger with the political establishment; Euroscepticism; homophobia; anti-immigrant sentiment; and racism, using

robust measures constructed utilizing multiple indicators. We also test the impact of three other motivations for BNP support, for which only single indicators are available: Islamophobia (e.g. Bowyer 2008), anti-Semitism and concern about the War on Terror.

We control for the socio-structural variables that have often been associated with ERP or BNP support (i.e. age, social class, region, economic insecurity), and also test the impact of three additional variables that have received less attention. The first is anti-immigrant newspaper readership. In Britain, certain newspapers run highly politicized campaigns against immigrants, writing regular and very hostile articles about the issue. We test whether regular exposure to these arguments is associated with higher support for the BNP. Second, we test whether the BNP appeals particularly to more socially isolated voters, namely citizens who do not involve themselves in traditional forms of civic and political activity. Third, we test the impact of political socialization that has been shown, for example, to be a strong driver of active support for ERPs (Klandermans & Mayer 2006). In Britain, many commentators argue that the BNP draws support from disaffected ‘traditional’ Labour voters – particularly working class voters in regions that have strong traditions of Labour voting. We test whether those who recall growing up in a Labour supporting household have been particularly likely to support the BNP.

Data and Methods

To test the impact of these attitudinal drivers we examine a range of survey questions to obtain an attitudinal profile of BNP voters. We use survey data gathered in the YouGov

online panel carried out one week prior to the European Parliament election. Recent comparisons of opt-in internet panels with traditional stratified random sample interview and random digit dial techniques conclude that the biases introduced by this methodology are small, and in general are more than offset by the much larger sample sizes the internet based methodology permits (Hill et al. 2007). The YouGov panel is nationally representative and only contains adults who were eligible to vote at the time of the election.⁴ The data is weighted to the profile of eligible voters in the UK, including people without internet access, on the basis of age, gender, social class, region, party identity and newspaper readership. Targets for the weighted data are derived from the 2001 census, a national readership survey⁵, and YouGov estimates of party identity. Overall, the European Parliament election survey we examine contains 32,268 respondents. After asking each respondent their voting intention, the survey produced a total of 985 self-identified supporters of the BNP.⁶ This represents the largest sample of BNP voters ever to be identified in a survey of this kind and is therefore a unique opportunity to examine the attitudinal profile of ERP voters in early twenty-first century Britain.

Our dependent variable is vote intention, with BNP voters coded 1 and all other voters coded 0. In the YouGov survey, many of the attitudes and several variables were categorical and therefore coded as a five-valued variable, such as ‘strongly agree’; ‘agree’; ‘neither disagree or agree’; ‘disagree’; ‘strongly disagree’. Such scales are not well suited to OLS regressions because of the few values and arbitrary relative distance between them. We therefore code our data into dummy variables where either a combination of ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ are

coded 1, while all other remaining categories are coded 0. The survey includes multiple questions about the five factors of interest: hostility to the political establishment, homophobia, Euroscepticism, anti-immigrant feeling and racial prejudice. In order to use as much information as possible about individual attitudes toward these issues we combine the relevant survey questions to produce estimates of an underlying (or latent) unobserved variable corresponding to each factor. The five latent variables are then used as predictors of BNP support. The final model combines socio-economic variables, political characteristics, additional attitudinal variables and the five latent factors to determine the main drivers of the BNP vote. We employ the social structural characteristics as controls.

The modelling approach we use in this paper falls into the broad category of latent variable modelling whereby it is assumed that unobserved ‘latent’ variables can be estimated from a number of observed ‘indicator’ variables. In this case and consistent with our overview above we create five latent variables. We adopt a multiple indicator, multiple cause or MIMIC model that is derived from Item Response Theory (Jöreskog and Goldberger, 1975). MIMIC models are a variety of structural equation modelling where the latent variable that is considered to be the cause of the relationships among a set of indicator variables, that is itself caused by other, exogenous, variables (Zumbo, 2005). The general MIMIC model structure is presented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1

In this simple example, the unobserved latent variable is represented by a circle (η) and the observed variables by boxes; the Ys are the indicators of the latent variable and the Xs are its exogenous causes; the arrows represent the strength and direction of the causal relationships between observed and latent variables, γ for the causes (X) and λ for the indicators (Y).⁷ Indicator variables are subject to measurement error (indicated by ϵ). Random or unmeasured effects on the latent variable are captured by ζ . For simplicity, where there is one latent variable, the model can be written as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \lambda_{ij} \eta_j + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

where

$$\eta_j = \gamma_{ij} X_{ij} + \zeta_j. \quad (2)$$

Y_{ij} is the i -th indicator of the j -th latent variable η_j , with corresponding loading λ_{ij} and unique factors ϵ_{ij} (i.e. unshared variance and error). In addition, the latent variables η_j represent the effects of the regressions γ_{ij} on the exogenous causes X_{ij} , as well as the variance ζ_j not accounted for by X_{ij} . Here it is assumed that error terms (ϵ_{ij} and ζ_j) have a mean of zero. By including direct effects of covariates on BNP vote, the model is an extension of the MIMIC model outlined above. It can therefore be more generally described as a structural equation model (Jöreskog 1979; Bollen 1989). In addition to the model structure shown in equations (1) and (2), a covariance matrix was specified. The latent variables η_j were allowed to correlate freely, reflecting the fact that latent constructs such as racism and hostility to immigration are likely to be correlated. The model also allowed all exogenous predictors to covary freely.

Who votes BNP?

Table 1 presents a comparison of the social background and attitudes of BNP supporters with those of the overall sample. We first provide a brief overview of background characteristics before presenting our more sophisticated models. The socio-economic distribution of support in our sample corroborates previous research findings on BNP supporters: the BNP draws support particularly from men, older age cohorts, the working classes, the financially insecure and the more industrial Northern regions of England. BNP supporters are also less likely to work in the public sector, perhaps due to the stricter application of rules sanctioning discrimination in public sector bodies. There is some evidence that BNP supporters are less likely to be engaged in civic groups, but they are by contrast more likely to be politically active. We find only weak evidence supporting the hypothesis that the BNP draws support from traditional Labour supporters – while nearly half claim to have grown up in a Labour household, this is only a few percentage points above the sample average. BNP supporters are, however, a lot more likely to read anti-immigrant papers, though of course their political views could be driving their choice of newspaper rather than vice versa.

The attitudinal profile of BNP supporters is largely in line with our expectations. BNP supporters' exhibit higher than average support for all five of the attitude clusters we put forward as possible motivations for ERP voting: they are very much more anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic, racially prejudiced, homophobic and hostile towards mainstream

parties than the average respondent in the YouGov sample. The other attitudes we hypothesized as possible drivers of BNP support are also more strongly held by BNP supporters than the wider electorate, in particular the desire for a halt to immigration and concerns about the threat of Islam: 95 per cent of BNP voters desire a total halt to immigration, compared to 55 per cent of the wider electorate, and 81 per cent agree that Islam is a danger to the West, compared to 42 per cent of the wider electorate. A range of beliefs are thus more strongly held by BNP supporters than the wider electorate, but it is not clear which of these are truly significant in driving voters to the BNP. To separate out their effects, we now move to a multivariate MIMIC analysis.

Insert Table 1 here

Attitudinal predictors of BNP support: defining the latent factors

The general form of the MIMIC model was described above. For this model we introduce five latent variables. The first is ‘political dissatisfaction’. We define this as hostility to mainstream political elites, which voters may be motivated to put on record by voting for ERPs such as the BNP. We operationalize this motivation using three binary indicators: that most MPs are personally corrupt; having no trust at all that one’s local MP will tell the truth; and agreeing that there is no difference between the main political parties. Only a couple of measures of ‘homophobia’ are available in the YouGov survey. We define a latent variable using two indicators: opposing civil partnerships for homosexuals and agreeing that gays and lesbians have an unfair advantage in Britain today. Euroscepticism

is measured with three variables that capture hostility to Europe and its political significance: rating Europe as the one of the top four important issues facing the country; supporting withdrawal from the European Union; and denying that membership of the EU has brought prosperity.

As Rydgren (2008) observes, a desire to halt immigration is theoretically separable from xenophobic hostility to immigrants. For instance, voters may feel that Britain is unable to economically support immigration despite these voters otherwise accepting the benefits of immigration, a sentiment which is especially true in the midst of an economic recession. A closer inspection of the data confirms that the desire for a halt to immigration is much more widespread than hostility to immigrants, as measured by the three other items. As found by Rydgren (2008), there are individuals who want immigration into Britain stopped but who do not share anti-immigration attitudes. Moreover, the desire to halt immigration is essentially a policy item while the other four items represent sentiments towards to immigrants. We therefore define our fourth latent variable 'anti-immigration' using only sentiment items: disagreeing that immigration has helped Britain's economy grow faster than it would have done; rating immigration as one of the top four issues facing the country; disagreeing that Britain has benefitted from immigration-generated diversity; and supporting the repatriation of settled migrants. By defining our variables in this way, we can adopt a similar approach to Rydgren, examining the impact of a desire to halt further immigration as a motivation for BNP support separate from hostile sentiments towards already settled migrations. To measure racial prejudice, we employ three items that capture key aspects of racism, namely: agreeing that employers should favour whites over non-white job applicants; agreeing

that ethnic minorities are not ‘really’ British; and agreeing that black Britons are intellectually inferior. Individual socio-economic and political characteristics are incorporated into the model as predictors of BNP vote directly, along with additional individual attitudes such as the threat of Islam, whether Afghanistan/War on Terror is an important issue facing the country and the policy orientated variable Immigration should be halted. The survey data also allows us to probe the significance of anti-Semitism.

Measurement Model of Attitudinal Latent Variables

The models are properly identified⁸ and fitted using Mplus 5.⁹ The fit of the full model was assessed against standard goodness of fit measures including the Comparative Fit Index (= .93) and the Root Mean Square of Approximation estimate (.002).¹⁰ Each of these indicated a ‘good’ model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).¹¹ However, these are global model fit indices that tell us little about how well the model explains particular outcomes. We therefore also report the R-Square statistic for the regression. All the latent factors are derived from binary items so we use a strict weighted least square parameter estimation method (WLSM) using a diagonal weight matrix with standard errors and mean adjusted chi-square test statistic that uses a full weight matrix.

Insert Table 2 here

Table 2 provides the standardized and unstandardized regression estimates of measurement indicators on the five latent variables (for the full model), which we refer to as ‘political protest’, ‘racism’, ‘xenophobia’, ‘homophobia’ and ‘Euroscepticism’. The standardized estimates (the final column: StdYX) are equivalent to factor loadings from a common factor analysis.¹² The unstandardized estimate for one indicator in each model¹³ is constrained to equal one, with estimates for other indicators providing relative values.¹⁴ All indicators on each of the five latent variables are significantly and positively correlated with each latent variable. This is confirmed by the r-squared statistics given in the final column which denote the proportion of variance in each indicator which is explained by the model. Because the indicators are regressed only on the latent variables, the r-squared values are directly proportional to (i.e. the square of) the standardized coefficients discussed above. Thus, using the ‘xenophobia’ latent variable as an example, it reproduces more than 65 per cent of the variance in the immigrants should leave the country indicator, and more than 70 per cent of the variance in the no economic benefits indicator. For each latent variable, we test the significance of the independent contribution of each indicator by re-specifying the model without each of the indicators in turn. We found that the addition of each indicator on each latent variable made a significant contribution in the reduction of log likelihood.

Explaining the BNP vote

Table 3 presents three probit regression models of BNP voting.¹⁵ The first model focuses purely on the social and political base of BNP support. The second model also includes

the attitudinal latent constructs, except for the racism latent variable, along with additional attitudinal covariates. Our final model adds the racism factor to illustrate its independent effect on BNP support and the effect that its inclusion has on the other coefficients within the model.¹⁶

Model 1 in Table 3 focuses on the social and political drivers of BNP support. In order to determine the social and political base of the BNP vote and substantiate our descriptive findings stated earlier, we conduct a probit regression analysis. The results of the null model in Table 3 suggest that BNP voters share the distinct socio-economic profile of ER voters identified in the wider European literature: BNP voters were significantly more likely to be male, working class, work in the private sector and live in Northern industrial regions of England. It is precisely in these Northern industrial regions where the BNP has targeted most of its campaigning efforts, and where the party has enjoyed much of its local electoral success (ref blinded for peer review).¹⁷ BNP voters also share other socio-political characteristics: they are more likely to be politically active, more likely to be pessimistic about their economic prospects, are more likely to read anti-immigrant newspapers and to have parents who supported the Labour Party. While this is not central to our main analysis, it is interesting to note that BNP voters are less likely to be a member of two or more social groups, a finding that provides some tentative evidence for the ‘social breakdown’ thesis (Eatwell 2003). The social background model supports the argument that ERP support tends to concentrate among economically marginal or insecure groups: economic pessimism has the highest standardized effect in this model, and seems to be an important driver of BNP support.

However, only by taking account of the attitudinal profile of the BNP vote can we obtain a more complete picture of what drives the BNP vote.

Insert Table 3

Our second model examines the impact of all the latent attitudinal variables, except for racism along with additional attitudinal measures of Islamophobia, concern about the war on terror, anti-Semitism and the policy item 'immigration should be halted' into Britain. Many of these variables prove to be highly significant predictors of BNP support. Hostility to immigration had the largest impact, and in the predicted direction. Those citizens who have strongly anti-immigrant attitudes were much more likely to vote for the BNP (indeed the standardized estimate is more than twice that of the next most important predictor in the model without racism). However, the item asking whether further immigration to Britain should be halted has a significant negative relationship with BNP support, suggesting that those who are concerned with halting further immigration but who are not hostile to already-settled migrants are not willing to consider voting BNP.

We also find evidence of considerable 'protest voting' for the BNP, with those expressing a high level of disillusionment with the mainstream parties showing a greater propensity to support the extreme right. The BNP, therefore, did profit from the general climate of public hostility in Britain during the 2009 European Parliament election, when a scandal over expenses paid to legislators dominated the headlines and tainted all three of the main parties. While we might expect minor parties to prosper in such an environment, it is notable that the BNP succeeded in doing so despite its own very

negative public image and considerable competition for angry voters from other well established minor parties such as the UKIP. However, there is little evidence that the BNP's Eurosceptic stance won it much support from the large pool of Eurosceptic voters in modern Britain. In fact, our second model indicates a significant negative relationship between Euroscepticism and BNP support. One possible explanation is that the BNP faced stiff competition at the 2009 Euro elections for the Eurosceptic vote from the UKIP which is a very high profile Eurosceptic party that performed strongly in both the 2009 and 2004 European elections. UKIP provided Eurosceptic voters with a ready and more credible vehicle to express their negative views about the EU, with none of the racist and extremist associations of the BNP. Moreover, our model reveals that not all forms of intolerance are associated with BNP support. We find no evidence that homophobic attitudes encourage support for the BNP. There is also no correlation between anti-Semitism or perceiving Islam as a threat to Western civilisation, and BNP support, although those most concerned about the 'War on Terror' were more likely to support the party.

The final column of Table 3 presents the final model, which adds the racism latent factor. Racism is very strongly associated with BNP support – its standardized effect is larger than any of the other significant factors. Controlling for racial prejudice considerably reduces the impact of anti-immigrant sentiment on BNP support, although this remains a significant and powerful predictor of BNP support. The final model suggests that around half of the anti-immigration effect in Model 2 is in fact the result of racial prejudice. The BNP thus draws support most strongly from the minority of voters who hold strongly prejudiced views about ethnic minorities. However, in 2009 the party

also succeeded in attracting support from the wider constituency of voters who do not harbor such prejudices but who are hostile to new immigrants.

The other effects in the final model are broadly unchanged; we continue to find little evidence that the BNP has mobilized hostility to Jews, Muslims or homosexuals, although concern about the 'War on Terror' is associated with BNP voting. While this finding is surprising given that the BNP, like other European ERPs, has redirected its programmatic focus toward anti-Muslim frames, it is consistent with studies elsewhere that similarly do not find strong support for the Islamophobia thesis (Rydgren 2008). However, this negative finding may also reflect the weakness of the limited measures of hostility to Islam that are available in our data. We are only able to test two items, neither of which refers to Muslims as a group in Britain, instead referring to the general threat posed by Islam to the West and the importance of the 'War on Terror' as a political issue. These items are not ideal indicators of anti-Muslim sentiment and so it may well be that better measures yield a different pattern of results.

Turning to the social background variables, we find that the coefficients of social class and economic insecurity variables greatly reduced when attitude factors are added into model. This finding suggests that the link between economic background and BNP support is mediated by attitudes: working class and economically insecure voters are more willing to vote BNP primarily because they are more hostile towards immigrants and ethnic minorities. However, working class voters remain somewhat more likely to vote BNP even after controlling for their attitudes. This may be the result of the negative public image of the BNP, which is heavily stigmatized particularly among the affluent middle classes. Middle class voters who hold views consistent with BNP support may be

less willing to vote for the party as a result of these negative associations. Other demographic effects in the model remain significant even after controlling for attitudes in particular age, gender and region. Voters over 55 and women are less likely to support the BNP even when they hold attitudes that are consistent with BNP voters. This may once again reflect a greater reluctance among these groups to consider supporting a stigmatized party and in the case of older cohorts suggests the enduring influence of party identification. BNP support remains concentrated in the Northern industrial regions of England in the full model that may reflect the greater concentration of party activity and local level support in these regions, which in turn facilitated the mobilization of voters in the European elections.

Conclusions

The BNP's recent electoral successes have led many commentators to claim that the party has now moved beyond the racist fringe to attract a broader constituency of anti-immigrant or anti-establishment voters. Our analysis provides some evidence in support of this argument: BNP voters are not motivated solely by racism. Voters who do not express racial intolerance but who are hostile to immigrants or angry with the political establishment were also willing to support the BNP. The historically unsuccessful extreme right in Britain, therefore may be taking its first steps toward constructing a broader 'right-wing populist' coalition of voters similar to that assembled by the larger and more establishment new radical right parties in other European states.

The progress of the BNP, however, remains limited. Despite its concerted attempt at 'modernization', the party's support remains concentrated most heavily among the smaller minority of voters who endorse open racism and discrimination. The BNP's campaigning against the EU did not win over Eurosceptic voters, while other forms of intolerance such as homophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism did not add large numbers of voters to its base. Moreover, despite an exceptionally favorable combination of widespread public unease over high immigration and a public backlash against the existing parties (described by the BNP itself as a 'perfect storm'), the party was only able to win over an additional 140,000 voters to its cause. Nearly three times as many voters opted for UKIP, a party that combines Euroscepticism with an anti-immigration and populist programme similar to the BNP but which is free of extremist baggage.

Despite its recent advance, the BNP is still struggling to break out of its traditional core support among the dwindling pools of racially prejudiced voters that remain in modern Britain (Ford, 2008). This is problematic for the party given that race-based arguments have lost legitimacy in the eyes of most voters, and are heavily stigmatized in postwar Western democracies more generally (Rydgren 2005). The BNP's heavy reliance on, and its association with, this core base of 'traditional racists' is likely to impose a much lower ceiling on its support than that which applies to new radical right parties that have built a broader constituency of voters.

Why has the BNP failed to make greater inroads among this larger 'radical right' electorate of voters who are anxious about immigration, hostile to Europe and disaffected with mainstream politics? Two complementary arguments appear especially valid. First,

in path dependent fashion the ability of ERPs to construct a broader coalition of voters is strongly influenced by their own history, and previous waves of mobilization (Art 2008; ref blinded for peer review). The most successful ERPs of the post-1980 'third wave' are those which hold their roots in anti-tax or more diffuse nationalist currents. In turn, these parties have constructed 'reputational shields' and have been able to present a plausible defense against accusations of crude racism and anti-democratic positions. Given that it grew out of a narrow right-wing extremist subculture the BNP does not fall into this category. The evidence above suggests that the party's effort to broaden its appeal has, so far, met with only limited success. The BNP's inability to effectively rebut accusations of racism or dispel associations with fascism and violence may well be a factor in this.

However, it also appears that the BNP is at a crossroads. Our findings suggest the appeal of the BNP remains concentrated principally among 'traditional racists', yet their success in entering the European Parliament may change this. The BNP has since received unprecedented media coverage, with its leader Nick Griffin appearing on the flagship political show 'Question Time' (the episode featuring Griffin was watched by over 8 million viewers). The oxygen of publicity provides the party with an opportunity to set out its stall to a wider electorate than previously, and may enable it to improve its image. The party is in the process of revising its 'whites-only' membership policy, and this may also facilitate its attempts to broaden appeals. The European victories also released significant resources to the party, which will enhance its ability to mobilize at the local level where it has enjoyed the most success, and where it may be better able to make a case for its legitimacy in face to face conversations with voters and by proving its ability to deal with local issues. Indeed, through its 'ladder strategy' the party views the

construction of an image of legitimacy in local communities as a crucial prerequisite to a wider national breakthrough.

Second, the BNP faces competition from the UK Independence Party (UKIP), a party that more closely fits the model of a successful new radical right organization. UKIP holds its roots not in extremist ideologies or even anti-immigration, but rather opposition to EU membership. In turn, it is hard to credibly stigmatize UKIP as a vehicle of intolerance and so the party has received much less negative media coverage than the BNP. Given that UKIP holds its roots in the more Eurosceptic right-wing fringe of the Conservative Party, it is generally accepted as a legitimate political player, in a way that the BNP is not. Following a change of leadership, more recent months have seen UKIP place much greater emphasis on radical right themes, including opposition to immigration, demands for greater integration of Muslim minorities and populist hostility to mainstream political parties, revealing that the party recognizes the electoral value of pursuing a broader radical right agenda. It is possible that the BNP's early successes helped attract UKIP towards this agenda, and there is evidence that the two parties are now competing directly for the same pool of voters (John and Margetts, 2009). A competition for votes with a party that has more resources, a larger base of support, greater legitimacy and no extremist baggage will be difficult for the BNP to win. In the long term, therefore, the likeliest candidate to occupy the radical right political niche in Britain is a radicalized UKIP rather than a normalized BNP.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1. Basic Structure of Multiple Indicator Multiple Cause model (MIMIC)

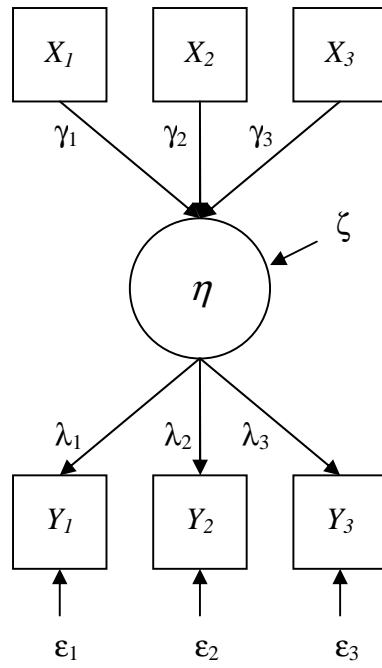


Table 1. Socio-Economic and Attitudinal Characteristics of the BNP vote in the 2009 European Elections

	% of BNP voters	% of YouGov sample
Socio-economic characteristics		
Male	62	48
Aged under 35	17	22
Aged over 55	42	38
North West	14	10
Yorkshire & Humberside	12	8
West Midlands	11	8
London	13	15
South East	<i>11</i>	15
Skilled Manual	16	6
Semi/Unskilled	15	7
Public Sector Employment	24	35
Parental Socialisation (Labour)	47	41
Associational Membership	<i>15</i>	23
Political Activism	21	18
Anti-Immigrant Papers	44	28
Financial Expectations (a lot worse)	56	40
Attitudes (very strong and strong agreement)		
<i>Political Dissatisfaction</i>		
Distrust local MP	55	26
Most politicians corrupt	79	48
No difference between the main parties	71	45
<i>Racism</i>		
Employers should favour whites	47	12
Non-whites not really British	45	11
Blacks intellectually inferior	31	13
<i>Homophobia</i>		
Oppose civil partnership	48	26
Gays and Lesbians have an unfair advantage	42	24
<i>Anti-immigration</i>		
No benefits from Immigration	82	35
Immigration most important issue	88	46
No economic benefits of Immigration	85	44
Immigrants should leave the country	72	24
<i>Euroscepticism</i>		
Britain should withdraw from EU	73	36
EU has not brought prosperity	66	36
Europe most important issue	31	17
<i>Other attitudes</i>		
Immigration should be halted	95	55
Islam is a danger to Western civilisation	81	42
War on Terror/Afghanistan most important issue	26	17
Conspiracy by Jews and Communists to undermine West	33	15

Table 2. Estimates of indicators on attitudinal latent variables (factor loadings, full model)

Variables	Estimates (β)	SE	StdYX	R²
<i>Political Dissatisfaction</i>				
Political corruption	1.00	0.00	0.81	0.65
Don't trust local MP's	0.76	0.02	0.64	0.41
No difference between main parties	0.43	0.01	0.38	0.14
<i>Racism</i>				
Ethnic Nationalism	1.00	0.00	0.80	0.63
Biological Racism	0.66	0.02	0.57	0.33
Employers should favour whites	0.97	0.02	0.78	0.60
<i>Homophobia</i>				
Civil Partnership	1.00	0.00	0.86	0.73
Gays and Lesbians unfair advantage	0.81	0.02	0.73	0.53
<i>Anti-Immigration</i>				
No benefits of immigration	1.00	0.00	0.88	0.77
Immigration most important issue	0.68	0.01	0.70	0.49
No economic benefits of Immigration	0.93	0.01	0.85	0.72
Immigrants should leave the country	0.86	0.01	0.81	0.65
<i>Eurosccepticism</i>				
Withdraw from the EU	1.00	0.00	0.91	0.83
Europe most important issue	0.56	0.01	0.58	0.34
EU prosperity	0.98	0.01	0.90	0.82

Table 3. Socio-structural and attitudinal explanations of BNP support

Predictor Variables	Null Model		Without Racism		With Racism	
	(β)	(StdYX)	(β)	(StdYX)	(β)	(StdYX)
<i>Thresholds</i>		1.85*		2.70*		2.71*
<i>Significant Socio-Structural Variables</i>						
Gender	-0.25*	-0.12	-0.21*	-0.09	-0.16*	-0.07
Young Age	-0.11*	-0.04	0.10	0.03	0.02	0.01
Old Age	-0.13*	-0.06	-0.20*	-0.08	-0.23*	-0.09
North West	0.20*	0.06	0.19*	0.05	0.18*	0.05
Yorkshire & Humberside	0.25*	0.06	0.19*	0.05	0.18*	0.04
West Midlands	0.18*	0.05	0.14*	0.03	0.14*	0.03
Petty Bourgeoise	0.20*	0.06	0.07	0.03	0.10*	0.04
Skilled Manual	0.47*	0.11	0.15*	0.03	0.17*	0.04
Semi/Unskilled	0.45*	0.11	0.17*	0.04	0.20*	0.04
Political Activism	0.18*	0.06	0.18*	0.06	0.15*	0.05
Anti-Immigrant Papers	0.24*	0.10	-0.12*	-0.05	-0.07	-0.03
Financial Expectations (a lot worse)	0.25*	0.12	-0.06	-0.02	-0.04	-0.02
Associational Membership	-0.20*	-0.08	-0.00	-0.00	0.01	0.00
Parental Socialisation (Labour)	0.06*	0.03	-0.00	-0.00	0.01	0.00
<i>Latent Attitudinal Factors</i>						
Political Dissatisfaction	-		0.40*	0.29	0.38*	0.28
Racism	-		-		0.42*	0.33
Homophobia	-		0.05	0.04	0.01	0.01
Anti-Immigration	-		0.59*	0.61	0.28*	0.29
Eurocepticism	-		-0.10*	-0.09	-0.04	-0.03
<i>Additional Attitudes</i>						
Threat of Islam	-		0.07	0.03	-0.02	-0.01
Islam/War on Terror/Afghanistan	-		0.20*	0.06	0.20*	0.06
Jewish/Communist Conspiracy	-		0.05	0.01	-0.05	-0.02
Immigration should be halted	-		-0.14*	-0.06	-0.01	-0.01
Model Fit Statistics						
CFI		1.00		0.94		0.93
RMSEA Estimate		0.00		0.02		0.02
R ²		0.10		0.53		0.55

*Significant at the 0.05 level

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APPENDIX

Attitudinal Latent variables

The 'Political Protest' latent variable is made up of three indicators.

These are: 1. Most British Politicians are personally corrupt (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree; 0 = All others); 2. How much do you trust your local MP to tell the truth? (1 = Do not trust at all; 0 = All others); 3. There is no real difference these days between Britain's three main parties – Labour, Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree; 0 = All others).

The 'Racism' latent variable is made up of three indicators.

These are: 1. When employers recruit new workers, they should favour white applicants over non-white applicants (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree; 0 = All others); 2. Non-white British citizens who were born in this country are just as 'British' as white citizens born in this country (1 = Strongly Disagree and Disagree; 0 = All others); 3. There is no difference in intelligence between the average black Briton and the average white Briton (1 = Strongly Disagree and Disagree; 0 = All others).

The 'Anti-Immigration' latent variable is made up of three indicators.

These are: 1. Britain has benefited from the arrival in recent decades of people from many different countries and cultures (1 = Strongly Disagree and Disagree; 0 = All others); 2. Immigration in recent years has helped Britain's economy grow faster than it would have done (1 = Strongly Disagree and Disagree; 0 = All others) 3. The Government should encourage immigrants and their families to leave Britain (including family members who were born in the U.K. (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree; 0 = All others); 4. Which three or four of these issues do you think are the most important facing the country (1 = Immigration/Asylum; 0 = All others)

The latent variable 'Authoritarianism' is made up of two indicators.

These are: 1. It is a good thing that gay and lesbian couples are able to enter into 'civil partnership' and have rights similar to married couples (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree; 0 = All others); 2. Gay and Lesbian men and women have an unfair advantage in Britain these days (1 = True; 0 = False)

The latent variable 'Euroscepticism' is represented by three indicators.

There are: 1. Which three or four of these issues do you think are the most important facing the country (1 = Europe/European Union; 0 = All others); 2. The existence of the E.U. promotes prosperity throughout Europe (1 = Strongly Disagree and Disagree; 0 =

All others); 3. The U.K. should withdraw completely from the European Union (Strongly Agree and Agree; 0 = All others).

Other Attitudinal variables

Islamic Threat: Even in its milder forms, Islam is a serious danger to western civilisation (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree; 0 = All others).

War on Terror: Which three or four of these issues do you think are the most important facing the country (1 = Afghanistan/War on Terror/Islamic extremists; 0 = War on Terror; 0 = All others).

Anti-Semitism: There is a major international conspiracy, led by Jews and Communists, to undermine traditional Christian values in Britain and other western countries (1 = Completely and partially true; 0 = All others).

Immigration halted: All further immigration to the U.K. should be halted (1 = Strongly Agree and Agree; 0 = All others);

¹ In adopting the term ‘extreme right’, we are influenced notably by Carter (2005) who identifies the BNP as right-wing extremist and also the work of Goodwin (2010).

² Others examine the drivers of support for the BNP, and compared these to earlier voting for the 1970s National Front (NF), but these studies look only at individual socio-structural and contextual effects, containing very few attitudinal measures. For example R. Ford and M.J. Goodwin (2010) ‘Angry White Men: Individual and Contextual Predictors of support for the British National Party’, *Political Studies*, 58(1), pp. 1-25

³ This was a YouGov poll for the Daily Telegraph conducted in October 2009. The poll asked respondents: “Are there any circumstances in which you might seriously consider voting BNP in a future local, general or European election?” 4 per cent of respondents would “definitely consider voting BNP”, 3 per cent would “probably” consider voting BNP, 15 per cent would “possibly” consider voting BNP while 66 per cent would “under no circumstances” consider voting BNP, and 12 per cent were not sure. Available online: <http://www.yougov.co.uk> (accessed November 10 2009).

⁴ YouGov draws a sub-sample of the panel that is representative of the U.K. electorate by age, gender, social class and type of newspaper. Only this sub-sample has access to the questionnaire. Respondents can only answer this questionnaire once.

⁵ The national readership survey is a random probability survey made up from 34,000 random face to face interviews conducted annually.

⁶ This is the weighted figure. 985 respondents stated they would vote BNP when the sample was unweighted. To obtain voting intention all respondents were asked: ‘*if you do vote, which party do you intend to vote for in the election to the European Parliament?*’ It is also important to note that while has at various points sought to encourage supporters to join YouGov panel in order to raise its profile in the polls, this does not affect the validity of the data as the YouGov panel administrators have an extensive series of safeguards in place to prevent their panel from being politically influenced in this fashion. Panel recruitment is monitored continuously for unusual patterns, and new recruits to the panel are not sent political surveys until they have been active on the panel for at least two years (CHECK DETAILS WITH YOUNGOV).

⁷ The arrows can be used to represent linear regressions for the Xs and continuous Ys, and non-linear regressions (e.g. probit, logit) for binary or ordinal Ys.

⁸ As a minimum condition for model identification, the number of free model parameters must be equal or fewer than the observed variances/covariances. These models cannot be estimated if there are more free parameters than there are observed variables. All our models satisfy this criterion and are therefore correctly identified.

⁹ For more details see L Muthén and B. Muthén ‘MPlus User Guide, 3rd Edition’ (Los Angeles, CA: Muthén and Muthén, 2005)

¹⁰ The fit of the measurement model (without covariates) also met the criteria for a ‘good fit’ on each of the tests.

¹¹ For the Comparative Fit Index, anything above 0.92 is regarded as a ‘good fit’. According to Hu and Bentler, (1999), the Root Mean Square of Approximation estimate (RMSEA) should have values below .06 to indicate a ‘good fit’ and the 90 per cent CI should be less than .08. Our models satisfy all these criteria.

¹² When all the variables are not on the same scale, it is preferable to use the StdYX standardisation, which is fully standardised.

¹³ Political corruption (‘Political Dissatisfaction’), that ethnic minorities are not ‘really’ British (‘Racism’) disagreeing that Britain has benefitted from immigration generated diversity (‘Anti-Immigration’), opposing civil partnership (‘Authoritarianism’) The U.K. should withdraw completely from the European Union (‘Euroscepticism’).

¹⁴ The unstandardized loading for the first item of the latent variable is fixed at one for ease of interpretation and model identification. This ensured that we set a variance for the latent variable because the size of loadings is scaled from the size of the variance. Setting the variance of the latent variable at one solves this problem and allows Mplus to provide standardised loadings.

¹⁵ Because we are using the default weighted least squares estimator to run our models in Mplus, it provides probit as opposed to the logit models. In a probit model, the function used to transform the dependent variable is the inverse of the standard normal cumulative distribution (z-score) as opposed to the logit function which is the natural log of odds in a logit model.

¹⁶ The separation of racism and anti-immigration into separate factors is statistically justified. Adjusted chi-square χ^2 difference tests between the restricted model (all items on one latent factor) and the unrestricted model with two latent factors confirmed that the latter is a better fit to the data than the former. Full details are available from the authors on request.

¹⁷ BNP party leader Nick Griffin stood as a candidate for the North West and was elected for the region. The party also managed to get another candidate elected in Yorkshire and Humberside, but narrowly failed to get anyone elected in the West Midlands region.