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Explaining the early Twenty-First Century electoral success of the British National Party: Nuneaton 2008 as a case study

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Explaining the early Twenty-First Century electoral success of the British National Party: Nuneaton 2008 as a case study

By

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Abstract

Popular support for the British National Party (BNP) in England reached unprecedented high levels during the early twentieth century. The BNP won a number of local council and European Parliament seats on the back of this popularity. This study seeks to provide a case study of one such poll success: Nuneaton 2008. Evidence from Nuneaton, a BNP success not previously studied, will be used to test the literature already generated addressing other locations of 'breakthrough', including Burnley and Stoke (Burnett 2011; Rhodes 2009). The thesis seeks to explain why the BNP was able to win elections where there had previously been no appetite for far right politics.

The research focuses on the role of demand and supply-side factors contributing to the electoral success of the BNP in 2008, showing that any analysis of the far right has to be multivariate in nature. The demand-side variables identified and analysed are: socioeconomics, immigration and Islamophobia. The supply-side factors assessed are political opportunity structures, the BNP campaign strategy and the role of the media. A mixed-method approach was undertaken which included interviews with voters and politicians, focus groups, a questionnaire capturing the views 308 constituents, and archival research of socioeconomic data and newspaper reports.

The findings of this research indicate that the BNP's electoral breakthrough in Nuneaton was multivariable in nature, and it is reasonable to argue that particular variables were more significant than others. Immigration stands out as the most prominent variable. In addition, the role of the media, the press in particular, was of great significance in explaining breakthrough in Nuneaton through the sanitising and legitimising of negative stereotypes of immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims. This case study also suggests that Islamophobia should be regarded as a key factor. Indeed, Islamophobia was an important part of the jigsaw and conflates with a number of variables tested in this thesis.

In sum, this research broadly corroborates the existing literature. It does however suggest that socioeconomics has been overplayed to a degree in previous studies, while Islamophobia has been underplayed.

Contents

List of tables
_____

List of abbreviations

_____

AN	National Alliance (Italy)
ANL	Anti-Nazi League
BNP	British National Party
BUF	British Union of Fascists
C18	Combat 18
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
FN	*Front National* (France)
FPÖ	Austrian Freedom Party
FPTP	First-past-the-post
GBM	Greater Britain Movement
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
JSA	Jobseekers Allowance
LEL	League of Empire Loyalists (Britain)
LN	*Lega Nord* (Italy)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MSI	Italian Social Movement
NF	National Front (Britain)
NLP	National Labour Party (Britain)
NNF	New National Front (Britain)
NSM	National Socialist Movement (Britain)
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PCF	*The Parti Communiste Français*
POS	Political Opportunity Structure

PS	*The Parti Socialiste* (France)
PR	Proportional Representation
REP	*German Die Republikaner* (The Republicans)
RPR	*Rassemblement pour la République* (France)
RPS	Racial Preservation Society (Britain)
RRP	Radical right party
SOA	Super Output Area
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UAF	United Against Fascism
UDF	*Union pour la Démocratie* (France)
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
UM	Union Movement (Britain)
VB	Vlams Blok (Flemish Block, Belgium)
WDL	White Defence League (Britain)

List of Maps

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List of Maps

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Introduction

The 2008 Nuneaton and Bedworth borough elections witnessed an electoral breakthrough for the British National Party (BNP). Martyn Findley and Darren John Haywood were respectively returned as local councillors for the Barpool ward and Camp Hill ward. The BNP had won elections for the first time in a borough traditionally dominated by the Labour Party, where the far right historically had no or very little presence previously (see Table 1).

Table 1: Local council elections Nuneaton and Bedworth

Year	No. of Wards	BNP Candidates	Elected BNP Councillors
2002	17	0	0
2004	17	0	0
2006	17	0	0
2008	17	12	2

Source: Democratic Support Services, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (2010)

Analysis of the 2008 local elections shows that, as well as success in Camp Hill and Barpool wards, the BNP received over 20 per cent in three more wards, (Galley Common, Kingswood and Wem Brook), and an overall share of the vote of 25 per cent across the town (Table 2).

Table 2: BNP local Election support in Nuneaton 2008-2012

Ward	2008 Local election Total no. of votes	2008 Local election % of the vote	2012 Local election Total no. of votes	2012 Local election % of the vote
Abbey	391	17.60%	96	6.10%
Arbury	347	18.10%	Did not stand	0%
Attleborough	322	16.70%	116	8.30%
Barpool	653	34.20%	402*	27.70%
Camp Hill	675	36.10%	100	8.40%
Galley Common	417	21.40%	Did not stand	0%
Kingswood	462	25.20%	Did not stand	0%
Wem Brook	519	24.90%	Did not stand	0%

*Vote split between BNP 121 votes and former BNP councillor Martyn Findley Independent 281 votes

Source: Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (2008/2012)

Moreover, the BNP drew support from across the political spectrum in Nuneaton. This 2008 success came on the back of a number of electoral victories for the BNP across England between 2001 and 2008. By 2008, the party boasted over fifty local councillors nationwide, and two seats won in European Parliament elections.[1] Multiple wards were held in Burnley, Stoke and Barking and Dagenham. The early twenty-first century had thus brought an electoral breakthrough for the BNP: something that had previously eluded the British far right throughout its history.

Understanding the factors behind the success of the BNP in Nuneaton in 2008 is what this study seeks to determine. In order to do this a case study was conducted. Part of the analysis included a comparison with locations such as Burnley and Stoke. The aim was to test the main factors highlighted in the literature which have analysed far right success in order to show just how representative Nuneaton is in comparison with other geographical areas. Nuneaton was chosen because, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, although it has many similarities with other locations where the BNP were successful it also offers many important differences which will add to the debate as to what are the necessary factors for far right success. For example, in the wards where the BNP were successful in Nuneaton these are amongst the most deprived in the country and in comparison they do not contain a large minority ethnic population. However, it does compare with other studies in that the BNP achieved electoral success in a location which had been a Labour Party heartland, and the far right had not been relevant in these locations prior to their successes in the first decade of the twenty-first Century.

Historically far right parties have existed in Britain. The first prominent far right political figure in Britain was Sir Oswald Moseley, who led the British Union of

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[1] The BNP vote increased from 808,200 votes in the 2004 European Election to 943,598 in 2009. The BNP leader Nick Griffin won 8% of the vote in the North West and Andrew Brons won 9.8 % in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Fascists (BUF) during the 1930s. Moseley was formally a Conservative member of parliament who 'crossed the floor' and joined the Labour Party. However, he turned to fascism because of what he perceived as the British parliamentary system's failure to radically respond to the growth in unemployment, and the continued economic and political decline of Britain during the depression of the 1930s (Thurlow 1998: 61-62). The BUF was the first widely supported far right organisation in Britain which actively sought to influence policy. The early 1930s witnessed the growth of the BUF as an organisation, and it is estimated that the BUF membership peaked at around 50,000 in July 1934, although in the latter years of the 1930s the BUF membership would never reach the high point of 1934 (Thurlow 1998: 91). Throughout this period the BUF failed to achieve any electoral breakthrough at either a local or national level.

As with other far right parties on the continent in the 1930s, the BUF became more radical, more violent and overtly anti-Semitic and this led its support to decline further. For example, the BUF employed the tactic of political violence, mainly against left-wing opponents, which famously culminated in the 'Battle of Cable Street' on 4 October 1936, and the Public Order Act being passed at the end of 1936 (Reading 2006). However, it was the outbreak of World War II, and the subsequent introduction of Defence Regulation DR18b which finally spelled the end of the BUF. Under DR 18b Moseley and other prominent BUF members were interned for much of the war, and this according to Thurlow, "destroyed British fascism" (Thurlow 1998: 158). Fascism in the form furthered by Moseley's BUF would not recover after the War.

With Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy defeated, the immediate post-war years proved barren for the British far right. The most prominent immediate post-War

figure was still Oswald Moseley. Moseley set up a new movement, known as the Union Movement (UM) from which he hoped to rebuild his pre-War support. However, by this time he had lost most of his "legendary messianic zeal" (Copsey 2008: 5). More importantly, the British public who had lived through the terrors of war with Nazi Germany, and were tainted by the horrors of the holocaust and the subsequent Nuremburg Trials, had no stomach for any far right or extremist party. Therefore, what developed in the immediate aftermath of the war was a variety of groups, with followers which numbered in the hundreds, such as, the White Defence League (WDL) led by Arnold Lesse who was a pro-Nazi, and the League of Empire Loyalists (LEL) led by Arthur K. Chesterton (a cousin of the author G.K. Chesterton) who later became leader of the National Front (NF) (Sykes 2005; Thurlow 1998).

These groups all had very different ideologies and political aims. For example, the WDL were openly neo-Nazi whereas the LEL and UM attempted to move away from any fascist or neo-Nazi labels. The LEL and UM attempted to do this by presenting themselves as patriots, defending British Imperial rights and fighting against 'coloured' immigration. During the 1950s and 1960s various other groups appeared such as, the Greater Britain Movement (GBM), National Socialist Movement (NSM) and an early incarnation of the British National Party (BNP). It was within these fringe movements that some of the leading far right members would serve their apprenticeships, most notably John Tyndall who would later become leader of the National Front (NF) and the BNP. Although, it is worth noting that during the 1950s and most of the 1960s the far right remained on the fringes, fragmented and irrelevant as political entities, and most pertinent to this study is that none of its groups registered any significant influence on British electoral politics (Copsey 2008: 6-21).

It was not until the late 1960s and the 1970s that the far right would have any significant impact on the mainstream political arena. In the 1960s immigration became a mainstream political issue, a period during which it was argued that institutional racism played a major part in the politicisation of immigration (Solomos 2003; Thurlow 1998; Taylor 1982; Edgar 1977). It was in this climate of increasing racial tensions and of politicians openly questioning immigration that the Race Relations Act (1965 and 1968) and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962 and 1968) came into effect. Moreover, on 20 April 1968, the influential Conservative politician Enoch Powell made his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech, which further politicised immigration (Solomos 2003: 48-75; *Birmingham Post* 1968). In his speech he warned of the dangers of immigration and according to Solomos, "helped to popularise the message that even tighter controls on immigration would not be enough to resolve the 'race problem'" (2003: 61). At the time this statement resonated with public feeling towards immigration, which is evident in the widespread backing received by Powell. In fact, Powell received over 100,000 letters of support and thousands of dock workers in London downed tools and marched in support of him (*Birmingham Post* 1968). Even though the speech led to the removal of Powell from the Conservative front bench, his popularity and support grew (*Birmingham Post* 1968). In fact Solomos argues that in the climate created in the wake of Powell's interventions, calls for a halt to immigration and to deal with the problems associated with it grew louder in both the media and within parliament (2003: 62). More importantly, Powell inadvertently helped the cause of the British far right, and in the hostile anti-immigration environment of the late 1960s several far right organisations realised that if they could unite as one organisation they could appeal to voters who had become disillusioned with the Tory party and those who supported Powell.

On 7 February 1967 the NF was officially formed with A.K. Chesterton as its leader. The NF acted as an umbrella organisation bringing together various far right groups such as the LEL, BNP and GBM. The future leader of the BNP, John Tyndall, rose to prominence within the NF and presided over the party's most successful period. During the 1970s the NF would achieve relative electoral success, evident in the increase in their vote from 11,449 in the 1970 General Election to 191,719 in 1979 (see Table 3). However, the NF remained an insignificant force and was unable to gain any significant representation at both local and national levels.

Table 3: NF General Election Results 1970 to 1983				
General Election Year	Candidates	Votes	% of Nat Vote	Lost Deposits
1970	10	11,449	0.01%	10
1974(F)	54	76,865	0.20%	54
1974(O)	90	113,843	0.40%	90
1979	303	191,719	0.60%	303
1983	60	27,065	0.10%	60
				Source: House of Commons Library (2004: 7)

As with all previous far right attempts to come together under the same banner the party's continuing ideological differences and leadership disputes meant that the NF was always one step away from fragmenting. There had been several leadership disputes and ruptures during the 1970s, but the decisive moment developed after the dramatic failure during the 1979 general election. Although the party had increased their national vote, they anticipated this would be their breakthrough year and had put forward 303 candidates. This did not materialise, and the NF got less than one per cent of the national vote and all candidates lost their deposits, which in-turn nearly broke the party financially and left it in terminal decline (Thurlow 1998: 261). Moreover, former members and leaders of the party began to openly attack the NF under Tyndall's leadership. More importantly, with the election success of Margaret Thatcher and the rejuvenated Conservative Party in January 1979 which promised a

major clampdown on immigration, issue ownership of immigration could no longer be claimed by the likes of the NF. As a result of the election failure, a loss of support to the Conservative Party and continuing infighting within the NF the organisation began to splinter. Indeed, by the end of 1980 the NF split in two with Tyndall forming the New National Front (NNF). This split had a detrimental effect on the membership of the NF, although the membership figures reveal that the party had been in decline since its peak in 1972 (Table 4).

Table 4: National Front Membership 1968-1980	
Year	Membership
1968	4000
1972	17500
1979	10000
1980	2000
	Source: Searchlight Magazine (1999)

Therefore, by 1980 the far right in Britain was represented by organisations on the political fringe, similar to its pre-1968 position. It was out of the fragmented NF that the BNP arose. By 1982 former leader John Tyndall had completely disassociated himself with the NF, and on the 7 April 1982 at a press conference he formally announced the creation of the BNP. The BNP incorporated the NNF and various far right groupings such as the British Democratic Party, the Nationalist Party and many defectors from the NF. However, the relative success that the NF experienced during the 1970s would not continue in the 1980s and 1990s. Copsey notes, this should not be seen as a period when the far right merely limped on with little or no purpose, in fact it marked a battle between the BNP and NF for "the soul of British nationalism" (2008: 29). By the 1990s the BNP had become the largest far right party and the NF was effectively reduced to a minor fringe organisation. Nevertheless, during the 1980s the BNP did not fare any better. For example, their membership fell to around a

thousand, the party only sporadically contested elections, and under Tyndall's leadership the BNP remained true to its core beliefs, and continued to use the methods which had been applied in the 1970s.

Table 5: UK General Elections contested by BNP 1983-2010

Year	Number Of Candidates	Number of MP's	Percentage of Vote	Total No. Votes
1983	53	0	0	14,621
1987	2	0	0	553
1992	13	0	0.1	7,631
1997	56	0	0.1	35,832
2001	33	0	0.2	47,129
2005	119	0	0.7	192,746
2010	338	0	1.9	564,331

Source: House of Commons Library (2010)

The BNP under Tyndall continued with the programme and policies which mirrored the NF, meaning that the party failed to establish any real electoral presence or gain any legitimacy. In the general elections of 1987 and 1992 the party only put forward 2 and 13 candidates respectively (Table 5). Moreover, at a local level the BNP also failed to have any real impact. However, there was one notable exception when the BNP won a local council seat in the borough of Tower Hamlets Millwall ward in 1993 after a by-election. This breakthrough occurred when Derek Beackon stood in the Isle of Dogs on a platform of 'Rights for Whites' and succeeded in becoming the first elected BNP councillor. Beackon was subsequently defeated in the local elections in May 1994, and there would be no other electoral success for the far right throughout the 1990s (Copsey 2008: 56-61).

Up to 1999, the BNP's failure to modernise and build on the success in Millwall led to discontent in the party, and after years of electoral failure under Tyndall's leadership the BNP's first ever leadership contest was announced. The outcome of the election in 1999 saw Nick Griffin, a prominent member within the far

right for over twenty years, become leader of the BNP. Griffin immediately set about reforming the BNP and setting it on a programme of modernisation (Copsey 2008: 100-123). Under Griffin the BNP steadily increased support at both local and national elections, which was evident in their increased general election support (see Table 5) and the election of over fifty BNP councillors between 2001 and 2010.

Prior to the leadership of the BNP by Nick Griffin, no far right party in Britain had ever achieved any significant electoral success. For instance, studies conducted prior to 2001 analysed the British far right in terms of their failure (see Eatwell 2000: Griffin 1996). However, since 2001 there was a dramatic increase in electoral support for the BNP. The BNP attracted over half a million voters at the 2010 general election (See table 5), which followed their most significant breakthrough at the European elections of June 2009, in which they polled just under a million votes (Table 6).

Table 6: European Elections since 1999

Year	Total Number of Votes	Number of MEP'S	Percentage of the Vote
1999	102,647	0	1.1%
2004	808,200	0	4.9%
2009	943,598	2	6.2%

Source: United Against Fascism (2009) and Hope Not Hate (2009)

This confirmed their growth and illustrated their ability to achieve success in a national election. The aim of this study is to address the British far right's change of fortunes in the early twenty-first century. Indeed, the breakthrough in Nuneaton in 2008 followed BNP success across the country.

Objectives

This thesis explores the factors that created this unexpected success between 2001 and 2010. Why, after some six decades of trying, did the British far right gain electoral success in the early twenty-first century? What had changed? How can the BNP's change of fortune be explained? Building upon the current academic literature addressing this 2001-2010 electoral successes, a case study has been conducted, centred on the 2008 Nuneaton and Bedworth borough elections. Data collected from this location is used to test this breakthrough literature, which is the body of scholarship which has examined the success of the far right. Are the published findings, often taken from more generic and national studies, borne out by the Nuneaton evidence? Do the pertinent political variables identified elsewhere as the main drivers of the BNP's electoral success stand up to the scrutiny provided by this Nuneaton case study? This thesis will explore the conditions that created this unexpected breakthrough.

In this respect, this thesis claims an original contribution to knowledge through its presentation of new data addressing the 2008 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough elections. It furthers the explanation of the BNP's 2008 Nuneaton breakthrough by providing a local case study in a location of BNP success not previously examined. In this respect, this thesis seeks to add to the Rhodes (2009) and John *et al.* (2006), studies which themselves have begun to test the more generic national literature that has dominated the explanation of the BNP's breakthrough previously. In short, this thesis tests the existing literature with local data gathered from the field. Does the Nuneaton case contradict or confirm what has been written on this subject to date?

Chapter overview

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter of this thesis will offer an analysis of the scholarship, looking at the breakthrough of the far right from comparative, national and local perspectives. It will highlight the broader debate in the literature concerning the far right's breakthrough through the analysis of historical accounts, national studies, comparative studies, local studies, and an analysis of the main demand and supply side theories as highlighted in the literature. It details the most important demand and supply-side variables and the main arguments put forward to understand the success of the far right. This review of the literature serves to identify the key variables of breakthrough, which are then utilised as the tools of analysis in the substantive chapters of the thesis.

The primary objective of this thesis is to examine why the BNP was successful in Nuneaton in 2008, testing the existing literature on this issue. Before the in depth analysis begins in the main chapters, this thesis highlights in chapter two why Nuneaton was chosen as a case study. It will demonstrate how the data was collected, analysed, and why this methodology was chosen. The chapter will set out the methodology which was used to test the hypotheses that the far right breakthrough in Barpool and Camp Hill wards identifies with the explanations in the literature.

Chapter three tests the first of six explanations of breakthrough prominent in the literature. The first variable relates to socioeconomic factors. This chapter sets out the socioeconomic factors in Nuneaton, using the census data, local social and economic data, and offers an understanding of the demographics of the case study population, as well as those who voted for the BNP. It offers a detailed examination of both the social and economic background of the electorate in the two wards where the BNP gained electoral success in 2008, including unemployment and levels of

deprivation. Contradicting the mainstream literature of socioeconomics, the findings of this chapter highlight that electoral success came in Nuneaton's two poorest wards. Elsewhere it suggested that BNP voters were in more affluent wards. The chapter does, however, support prevailing explanations of breakthrough in terms of other aspects of social profiling. BNP voters in Nuneaton tend to match others identified elsewhere in terms of social class, occupation and educational levels (Goodwin 2011; Rhodes 2009; John *et al.* 2006). It will also show that the data does to a large extent corroborate the view that BNP voters do represent a particular social profile, typically white and male. Finally this chapter will offer analysis of the social class of voters, looking specifically at occupation, housing status and educational attainment.

Chapter four is one of the most important chapters in this study. It focuses on the immigration issue and how this became politicised in the years leading upto the BNP's success in 2008. Particular focus is given to the ethnic demographics in Nuneaton, the growth of immigration as an electoral issue, the politicisation of race and the role of the BNP in acquiring issue ownership of immigration. It will demonstrate how immigration has become one of the most important issues affecting voter choices, and how voters have lost trust in the mainstream parties' ability to deal with the 'perceived' immigration problem.

Chapter five analyses Islamophobia and is also significant to the conclusions drawn from this analysis. It will look specifically at the location of the Islamic community in Nuneaton and the fear of Islam which developed in the 2000s. It will show how some voters have succumbed to anti-Muslim sentiment which was reflected in the questionnaire analysis. The chapter will make use of primary material produced through interviews and focus groups to demonstrate how the BNP message resonated with voters in Nuneaton. It will also highlight the BNP's discourse, and

how the media and mainstream political hostility towards Islam, post 9/11 (al-Qaeda terrorist attacks in New York and Washington in September 2001) and 7/7 (the al-Qaeda inspired attack on London in July 2005), fed into the BNP narrative. Indeed, this is one of the most important chapters which will highlight a clear link between rising Islamophobia and a rise in BNP support in Nuneaton. Finally, this chapter will demonstrate that any contemporary analysis of the BNP is not complete without analysing the effects of Islamophobia.

Chapter six focuses on how the BNP joined the mainstream parties in the competition for votes. It will offer an analysis of several variables including, political opportunity structures, fragmentation, disaffection and the decline of local politics. The chapter will show that in the case of the BNP's success in Nuneaton, the electoral system itself played little or no role in their breakthrough. Also important was the mainstream party convergence, and this chapter will demonstrate that this opened up a space for a protest vote for the BNP. It will also show that disaffection and disillusionment played a large part in creating apathy amongst some voters, and in some cases driving voters into the waiting arms of parties like the BNP.

Chapter seven sets out how the modernisation of the BNP was important, at both a national and local level in garnering support during the local election of 2008. It will do this by looking at how the party's modernisation widened its appeal, how the party focused on localised election campaigning, and how the BNP secured an element of political legitimacy which enabled them to fill a void as the mainstream parties crowded the centre ground. The examination of these factors will show how the BNP became normalised, and provided an alternative for some voters disillusioned with the mainstream political parties.

Chapter eight offers an analysis of the media and their role in legitimising the BNP in Nuneaton prior to 2008. Indeed, it will argue that the media was one of the most important platforms in setting a favourable environment which the BNP was able to exploit and achieve significant electoral gains. It examines both the local and the national tabloid press demonstrating how particular themes were reported. It will do this by offering a story and content analysis of the press in order to understand how important sections of the media were in constructing legitimacy for the BNP leading up-to 2008. It will focus on five main themes, highlighted through the analysis of the data produced in Nuneaton, which includes immigration, asylum, Islam, Muslims and terrorism. It will show how reports, in both the national and local newspapers, relating to these five themes, increased dramatically in the years leading upto the success for the BNP in 2008. Finally, it will show how the press used discourse which mirrored that of the BNP, and how it made particular issues more salient to the public. The lack of analysis on the role of the media in relation to the BNP demonstrates that there is a gap in the scholarship, which this chapter sought to address.

The final chapter offers a summary of the key findings of this thesis. The research indicates that the BNP's electoral breakthrough in Nuneaton was multivariable in nature, and it is reasonable to argue that particular variables were more significant than others. Immigration stands out as the most prominent factor. In addition, the role of the media, the press in particular, was of great significance in explaining breakthrough in Nuneaton through the sanitising and legitimising of negative stereotypes of immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims. This case study also suggests that Islamophobia should be regarded as a key factor. Indeed, Islamophobia was an important part of the jigsaw and conflates with a number of variables tested in this thesis.

In sum, this research broadly corroborates the existing literature. It does however suggest that socioeconomics has been overplayed to a degree in previous studies, while Islamophobia has been underplayed.

Chapter 1
Literature review
Explanations on the breakthrough of the Far Right

The Far Right Breakthrough – A Perfect Storm

The last thirty years has witnessed the emergence of the far right in many European countries at a national, regional and local level. This rise has been unprecedented since the end of World War Two with far right parties experiencing a revival in France, Austria, Holland, Italy and Britain. The first post-1945 far right party to rise to prominence was Jean-Marie Le Pen's French *Front National* (FN) during the 1980s. This was followed in successive years by a wave of far right successes, most notably that which occurred in Austria with Jorg Haider's Freedom Party forming a coalition government during 2000. Moreover, the National Alliance (AN) and *Lega Nord* (LN) in Italy, and Vlams Blok (VB) in Belgium, have also achieved relative success (Mudde 2007). More importantly to this research and as identified earlier, the BNP experienced an unprecedented rise during the 2000s with the election of over fifty local councillors across England, one seat in the London Assembly and two Members of the European Parliament (MEP) elected. Understanding the reasons for the recent breakthrough of the far right in this period continues to fuel debate. This chapter is about identifying explanations for this political success in the academic literature. What elements of this more broadly focused literature can be used as a starting point for the current investigation explaining the BNP's success in Nuneaton in 2008?

The literature on the far right's breakthrough has been developed through a number of debates, looking at historical events in Germany and Italy, while more contemporary studies have focused on recent far right successes in France, Austria and Holland (Art 2011; Hainsworth 2008; Mudde 2007). As the literature review will

demonstrate, the early studies of the contemporary far right in Europe focused primarily on demand-side factors, whereas more recent studies have given more credence to supply-side factors, and have often combined both supply and demand-side factors. Demand-side theory refers to the public demand for a far right party, specifically those factors centred on explanations for the changing preferences of voters, their beliefs and attitudes, focusing on the electorates socioeconomic development (Rydgren 2007: 241; Eatwell 2003: 48). Supply-side refers specifically to the messages which reach voters and involves the analysis of leadership, the parties and the media, and offers an explanation of how supply matches electoral demand (Rydgren 2007: 247; Norris 2005: 5; Eatwell 2003: 48).

The structure of this chapter broadly follows the development of this broader debate over the far right's breakthrough. The first section will identify the historical accounts which have focused on the successful breakthrough of the far right. The second section will then address the national studies and those which compare data between different countries. The chapter will then offer a detailed analysis of the main demand and supply side theories as highlighted in the literature. The final section will then look specifically at the localised breakthrough of the BNP, highlighting the literature which focuses on specific demand and supply side variables which will be applied in the case study of Nuneaton.

Historical accounts

Historical accounts relating to the success of the far right have been primarily focused on the rise of the Nazis, and who voted for them (Geary 1998; Brustein 1997; Noakes 1980; Lipset 1960). One of the best known studies was completed by Lipset (1960) who in his analysis argued that the rise of the Nazis was primarily linked to the

socioeconomic crisis which had engulfed Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s. It was this crisis which increased the appeal of the Nazi Party to the lower middle class in Germany and enabled the Nazis to achieve power. Lipset in his analysis also highlighted many similarities between the rise of the Nazis and the French Poujadist movement led by Pierre Poujade in the 1950s. For example, Poujade was an unknown figure in French politics who led a protest against the changes in the French economy such as urbanisation and the rise of big business. Lipset also argued that like the Nazis, Poujade's support came from small shopkeepers and rural communities, with strong anti-Semitic views and a pro-empire tendency. Many academics have also analysed the Poujadist movement and the roots of its populist appeal (Shields 2007; Davis 2002: Arnold 2000; Shields 2000; Eatwell 1998). In contrast, Eatwell (1998) unlike Lipset, argues that Poujadism like Nazism attracted a wide support which included working class as well as a lower-middle class electorate (for further examples see Brustein 1997: Noakes 1980). These studies of historical far right present an insight into who voted for the far right, pointing to the importance of variables such as their social background, education, and employment status. Most studies have adopted the multivariable approach, as, indeed, does the current study.

Looking more specifically at the available literature on the history of the far right in the UK, these have historically focused on Oswald Moseley's British Union of Fascists, and the rapid rise and of course the failure of the National Front (NF) (Rubin 2010; Sykes 2005; Thurlow 1998). Indeed, attempts to understand the relative success of the NF during the 1970s led to a growth in the literature. The research conducted provides some useful information on who voted for the far right and who became active members during this period (Husbands 1983; Harrop *et el* 1980; Billig 1978). For example, studies have shown that those who supported the far right in

Britain were predominantly working class and the marginal self-employed, and that immigration was their greatest concern (Husbands 1983; Taylor 1982; Harrop *et al.* 1980). Husbands (1983: 93) in his study also argued that the far right support historically in Britain was predominantly urban in nature, notably in cities where economic expansion came to a halt during the 1970s and in areas with declining industrial areas such as, London, Leicester, and Birmingham. The study also demonstrates that there was significant NF support in areas which had traditional, close-knit-working class communities, such as those which exist in East London, and Husbands argues that these locations are "areas with long standing traditions of ethnic intolerance" (1983: 93). This is with reference to the treatment of early immigrants such as the Irish community and the Jewish community in East London.

Many of the studies completed on the British far right in the 1970s have demonstrated the significance of immigration in galvanising far right support (Copsey 2008; Thurlow 1998; Husbands 1983; Taylor 1982; Fielding 1981; Billig 1978: Edgar 1977). For example, Husbands found that immigration was central to the success of the NF in the 1970s, and in his research found that fifty per cent of respondents, who were NF sympathisers, blamed the deterioration of their neighbourhoods on immigrants and that an even larger number held negative and extremist views of black people (Husbands 1983: 116-122). This view was shared by Copsey who states that the period of growth experienced by the NF was triggered by anti-immigrant sentiment, most notably the new wave of "Afro-Asian arrivals" (2008: 19). Moreover, Thurlow argues that the NF made political capital out of the immigration issue in the 1960s and 1970s with the highly publicised arrival of immigrants from Uganda (1972) and Kenya (1978), and the failure of the mainstream Labour and Conservative politicians to address the immigration issue, as well as racial populism espoused by

some of the mainstream politicians during this period (1998: 246). Furthermore, Edgar also argued that institutional racism and harsh state controls added to the feeling that immigration had become a problem, and the media and mainstream parties bolstered the NF cause with their response to the plight of the Ugandan Asians (1972) and the Kenyan Asians (1968) (1977: 120).

Adding to the anti-immigrant sentiment was successive legislation, most notably the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962 and 1968), which was aimed at ending all new settlement from the commonwealth. However, this legislation did not have the perceived effect. Even though the mainstream parties were responsible for restrictive immigration legislation during the 1960s and 1970s they were viewed as unwilling and even incapable of dealing with the perceived 'immigration problem' (Thurlow 1998: 246). There is also the argument in the literature that Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech made on the 20 April 1968 further legitimised the NF. Indeed, the role of Powell in the rise of the NF was highlighted by Thurlow who argued that "there can be no doubt that the NF would not have survived if Enoch Powell had not unwittingly given it such a helping hand in its infancy" (1998: 249).

Examination shows that it was not just Powell who lent a helping hand to the NF with the media and the mainstream political parties using language which further politicised the immigration issue, and entrenched institutional racism in Britain. For example, analysis of the literature on this period highlights many similarities with the political environment which developed post-2001, during which the BNP thrived. For example, as the chapters will show, the media and opposition politicians during the 2000s argued that the Labour party had lost control over immigration. However, this alone cannot explain why the BNP were more successful than the NF, and although

the literature offers an understanding of the NF historically, British studies have tended to focus on the failure of the British far right.

As well as understanding why support for the far right grew in the 1970s and highlighting the demographics of far right voters, there is a great deal of literature which focuses on the failure of the NF, with particular reference given to the role of groups opposed to the far right. For example, in Britain there is historically a strong anti-fascist movement, evident in the large anti-fascist groups such as the United Against Fascism (UAF), the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and organisations such as Searchlight. It has been argued that anti-fascist movements played a major part in the failure of the British far right, in particular the demise of the NF during the 1970s (Thurlow 1998). However, this theory has recently been downplayed. For instance, in the case of the NF it is argued that as a party they were already in decline by the time the anti-fascist movements really took off. Indeed, Mudde argues that the theory that strong anti-fascist groups are important in halting the growth of the far right is weak and lacks any real empirical evidence (2007: 247). Instead, Mudde posits that there are many other plausible factors which should be considered before concluding a relationship between anti-fascist groups and the decline of the far right. For example, in some countries such as Holland and the Czech Republic, low levels of anti-fascist activity has a comparatively higher level of success than countries such as France and Hungary that have higher levels of anti-fascist activity (Mudde 2007: 246-247). Despite this, it will be shown below that the role of anti-fascist movements remain important in understanding the positive and indeed more importantly the negative effects of their campaigning, most notably on the demise of the BNP in the post-2010 period.

As well as the role of groups opposed to the far right, many studies of the British far right have argued that historically there exists a culture which is not susceptible to extremes and that there is not a tradition of success for the British far right. This is one reason why the thesis that the far right success in Nuneaton can be attached to national tradition was not analysed as an independent variable in this study. The reason for the lack of national tradition in far right support in Britain stems from what many argue is the 'civic culture'. It has been argued that the political culture and a tradition of strong liberal democratic institutions in Britain have hindered the far right, whereas on the continent it has been a galvanising factor (Startin 2014; Ignazi 2006; Eatwell 2000; Almond and Verba 1963). In the post-War period this culture has developed post-1945 with historical reference to World War II and Britain's stance against the Nazis and the Italian fascists. In fact historians such as Thurlow (1998) argue that the NF success would have been hindered further by any open reference to Nazism and the success was not due to any Nazi or fascist agenda, rather the vote for the NF on the whole was a protest vote against immigration, cultural decline and the effects of urban renewal. Indeed, Thurlow concludes any links to fascism and Nazism would have hindered the case for the British far right and that British fascism effectively ended after World War two, stating that the relative success of the NF during the 1970s had little if anything to do with "any perceived or hidden fascist political programme" (1998: 261). However, it is worth noting that it has been argued elsewhere in the literature that all the indicators point to an influence of Nazi propaganda, and indeed neo-Nazi support and a leadership with neo-Nazi attachments (Copsey 2008; Sykes 2005; Taylor 1982; Fielding 1981; Billig 1978). For example, Copsey (2008) discusses former NF leader John Tyndall's attachment to the National Socialist Movement (NSM), and Taylor (1982) concluded in his work

that the NF was a party based on German Nazism. Taylor however, fails to provide evidence demonstrating that categorically the NF was conceived with the intention of enticing the British electorate to support a Nazi party and a Nazi ideology. Nonetheless, what these studies do offer is an insight into the culture thesis and how it can be applied in order to demonstrate the continued support for the far right. For example, the Italian Social Movement (MSI) and its successor the National Alliance (AN) made gains even though they are openly supporters of, and have links with Italy's fascist past. In fact the historical legacy in Italy continues to drive support for the far right. However, as with all studies of culture it does not help to explain why in some countries which have a strong far right legacy, such as Germany and Spain, the far right have been unable to make any recent electoral gains, yet in Britain which has a long history without any real far right breakthrough, the BNP did experience breakthrough between 2001 and 2010.

Therefore, although there is a history of far right parties and varying levels of support in Britain, as indicated in the introduction, there is not a national tradition similar to that witnessed in France or Italy. There has not been a consistent viable tradition questioning the fundamental values and institutions in Britain. For example, France has a far right tradition which dates back to the French Revolution. Since the revolution there has existed a reactionary tradition in France which challenged the values and institutions that were established.[2] This has not been replicated in Britain. Indeed this is evident in the Dreyfuss Affair, Vichy and the rise of the *Front National*. It is also worth noting that there is no far right ideological or intellectual movement in Britain similar to the *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right) in France (Shields 2007; Wolfreys 2003; Wolfreys 1993; Schain 1987; Vaughan 1987). In fact Vaughan argues that the *Nouvelle Droite* were central in preparing the ground for the FN "by clothing

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[2] For an explanation of the far right tradition in France refer to Shields (2007), Wolfreys (2003) and McClelland (1970).

widespread prejudices in unemotional language and endowing them with the prestige of scientific corroboration" (1987: 302). Moreover McClelland states that "French intellectual history is a fruitful locus of inquiry into the origins and nature of fascist thought" (1970: 14) which helps to explain the importance of tradition for the success of far right movements in France. Other factors why national tradition is not deemed important for this analysis is the lack of comparable success for far right parties on a scale witnessed in countries such as Italy and France, and the fact that in Britain these organisations are viewed as minor extreme fringe groups, even if the likes of the BUF achieved a membership of around 50,000 in the mid-1930s. Therefore, national tradition, or indeed the lack of national tradition in Britain, will not be the focus of this research and will not be tested as a variable when seeking to understand why the BNP were successful in Nuneaton.

It is also evident that many studies of the British far right that have focused on their failure to have any electoral success prior to 2001 (Ignazi 2003; Eatwell 2000; Thurlow 1998). Most of these have surrounded the NF's failure to secure any electoral gains during their high point in the 1970s. Many reasons have been highlighted for their failure, notably the role of anti-fascist movements, the lack of national tradition, the emergence of Margaret Thatcher and the resurgent Conservative Party, the NF's failure to secure any worthwhile political legitimacy, and the NF's failure to capitalise on their position and adapt to the political environment (Thurlow 1998; Eatwell 2000; Copsey 2008). Of course these are in complete contrast to the BNP under Nick Griffin's leadership. Under Griffin the party were able to capitalise on their local successes, and they increased their legitimacy among a certain part of the electorate. This enabled the BNP to have a presence in

British politics at a local and at a national level in the 2000s. The ability of the BNP to adapt to the prevailing political environment is the central argument of chapter seven.

Demand and Supply

This next section turns its focus towards more contemporary studies of the far right. It will highlight the most important factors championed in the literature and offer a breakdown of the individual variables. First, it will outline the most important demand and supply-side factors and then highlight some of the major contentions surrounding the analysis of demand and supply-side factors.

Many studies have offered an analysis of the major factors necessary for a far right breakthrough (Goodwin 2011; Hainsworth 2008; Mudde 2007; Eatwell 2003). As demonstrated in the previous section, historically qualitative studies have dominated research. However, it is evident from this research that academics are increasingly using qualitative and quantitative methods in order to understand the breakthrough of the far right. These studies have focused on the demand and supply side factors which it is argued have contributed to the far right at the breakthrough stage. The primary demand-side factors are the role of socioeconomic development, law and order, mass immigration and unemployment. The supply-side factors focused on are the role of the parties, their programmes, their leaders, political opportunity structures, and the role of the mainstream parties and the media in delivering messages to the electorate.

A study combining these supply and demand-side factors is Roger Eatwell's (2003) *Ten Theories of the Extreme Right.* Eatwell offers a critique of the five main supply-side factors and five main demand-side factors. The five supply-side factors are the single issue thesis, the protest thesis, the social breakdown thesis, the (reverse)

post materialist thesis, the economic interest thesis. The five main demand-side factors are political opportunity structures (POS), the mediatisation thesis, the national tradition thesis, the programmatic thesis and the charismatic leader thesis (2003: 48-69). Eatwell's analysis of the main factors was important in providing a list of factors that were tested using the data produced in Nuneaton. However, which factors, demand or supply, are more important in the success of the far right is not without contention. For example, although Mudde accepts that demand factors are central in creating the "perfect breeding ground" (2007: 201), and that socioeconomics are important, he suggests that it is the supply-side factors which offer the best understanding of the variables central for a far-right breakthrough.

On the importance of supply-side Mudde states that, "Every European country has a fertile breeding ground for the populist radical right, yet only in some countries do these parties also flourish in elections. The answer to that puzzle is not to be found in the demand-side, but in the supply-side" (2007: 298). The importance of supply-side factors was also developed in the theory by Herbert Kitschelt (1995). Kitschelt (1995) argued that the far right capitalised in countries where the mainstream parties converge and there is a failure to deal with the issues which the public perceive as important. It was these factors that according to Kitchelt opened up political space for the far right to move into and capitalise. Another study completed by Renton (2003) also focused primarily on the external supply-side factors. His analyses focused on the press, police and the role of the government in opening a space for the BNP during the 2003 local elections. A more recent study by Startin (2014) also highlighted the importance of supply-side variables. Startin (2014) focused on national tradition, political opportunity structures, charismatic leadership and the role of the media in his analysis of the far right in Britain and France.

The problem with many of these studies is not that they highlight the importance of supply-side factors, which they do, rather that they have demonstrated an over-reliance on supply-side factors. This approach in the literature is a narrow form of analysis, which is one of the major criticisms of the works. It also demonstrates the problem with selection bias because it distorts the results, and does not offer a true reflection of all the variables which should be tested in any analysis. It is also evident that many studies do not give credence to the important role of demand-side factors which are necessary in any far right breakthrough. The debate surrounding demand and supply-side factors continues to fuel academic argument on the emergence of the far right in a host country. This is where this analysis will aim to contribute to the debate and argue that it is a combination of factors, running in parallel, which can help explain the success of the far right.

The issue of the literature failing to reflect the complex interaction of supply and demand-side variables was compounded by 'single issue' explanations prevalent in the 1980s and the 1990s. The single issue thesis focuses on one single factor. More than often the focus has been on the single factor of immigration, POS, law and order, unemployment or voter de-alignment (Pitcher 2006: Mudde 1999; Veugelers 1997; Schain 1987). Indeed, there is a plethora of literature analysing the breakthrough of the far right in France using the single-issue thesis, with most studies focused on the issue of immigration and how the FN has achieved ownership (Rydgren 2004; Veugelers 1997; Hargreaves 1995; Wihtol de Wenden 1994; Wihtol de Wenden 1991; Mitra 1988). For example, it is clear that the FN became the main benefactor when race and immigration became politicised (Davis 1999; Hargreaves 1995). Hargreaves identified how FN voters believe that immigrants are the cause of unemployment and that if immigration flows were halted it would be a "potential solution to practically

every difficulty facing the nation" (1995: 184-185). Although these studies are no doubt important in any analysis of the far right, it is worth noting that most scholars accept that the far right success cannot just be attached to one issue, but rather a combination of factors. Indeed, as Copsey states "the truth of the matter is that far right parties cannot be reduced to one single issue" (2008: 179). This does not mean that the single-issue thesis should be discounted as this research can and will offer detailed analysis of the important variables. However, this narrow form of analysis will not be used in the understanding of the far right in Nuneaton. Indeed, the method of developing and testing a combination of factors offers the best approach to understanding the electoral success of the far right. For this analysis careful consideration will be given to selecting which variables were analysed in detail for this research. Explanation for this will be offered in the next section.

The Public demand

This section highlights the main demand-side factors in the literature. It will focus first on the immigration variable. Second it will examine the literature which tested the role of socioeconomics. It will then analyse the literature which focused on the role of political disaffection and corruption, and finally it will assess how important fragmentation has been in the success of the far right. This will be important in demonstrating why these particular demand-side factors were analysed for this study.

Immigration

Immigration remains one of the foremost researched demand-side factors advanced in the literature and has been frequently analysed as the major factor in the recent success of the far right (Goodwin 2011; Art 2011; Rhodes 2009; Copsey 2008;

Mudde 2007; Givens 2005; Golder 2003). Indeed, Copsey argues that the immigration issue is "undoubtedly of central importance" (2008: 179). Therefore, the first factor that will be analysed is immigration.

Over the last twenty years the far right have utilised the immigration issue. For example, there has been an ideological shift within the European far right which has sought to disassociate themselves with historical fascist and extreme right parties who espoused biological forms of racism. This is clearly demonstrated by the way far right parties now stress a form of cultural racism rather than the traditional form of biological racism (Copsey 2007 and 2008). This new racism is evident in the literature analysing immigration and the recent success of the far right, as is evident in much of the comparative literature on the far right (Mudde 2007; Givens 2005; Golder 2003). Golder (2003) analysed the effect of immigration and found that there was a conditional link between the number of immigrants and the success and failure of a far right party. The conditional link according to Golder was that the success of a far right party was only dependent on other factors, such as unemployment, when immigration was high, and it was on this basis that he argued that "immigration always helps populist parties" (Golder 2003: 460). Therefore, according to Golder (2003) it is immigration rather than the high unemployment which is the defining factor. Mudde (2007) in his research also analyses the link between immigration and the rise of the far right which will be significant for this research. However, his study which looked at the link between the number of asylum applications, the number of refugees and the success of the far right (See table 7, p.40), offers no significant relationship between the number of asylum seekers, refugees, and the success of the far right (Mudde 2007: 212-214). Rather, Mudde states that "while mass immigration certainly played a role in the electoral breakthrough of some parties, often as a

catalyst, it largely fails to explain the often huge temporal and regional differences in electoral support within single countries" (2007: 216).

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Furthermore, it is worth noting that Givens (2005) in her comparative study also found variations in far right support. For example, although there is a link in France and Austria between immigration and the far right success, in Germany there is no direct evidence to link the two. However, what these variations in the national breakthrough (or failure to breakthrough) of the far right highlight is the problems in the comparative analysis of Western Europe. For example, it cannot explain why in some countries with higher concentrations of immigration, and in areas with higher levels of minority ethnic groups, the far right have not been successful. What this

comparative study demonstrates is that there are evident regional differences in far right support and many other factors must be analysed alongside immigration. This will be important in understanding why in some areas of Britain, with similar immigration patterns, the far right have been unsuccessful.

As well as comparative studies which have highlighted the role of immigration there are also many national studies in the literature (Goodwin 2011; Copsey 2008; Shields 2007; Mclaren and Johnson 2004; Schain 1987). These have focused on the success of the far right and the positive effect immigration had on the far right vote in a host country. For example, Schain (1987) highlights the link between immigration and the rise of the FN in France, pointing to many electoral surveys which demonstrate its significance. Indeed, Schain states that in 1984, out of eleven per cent of those who voted for the FN, only twenty two per cent were concerned with law and order while forty eight per cent voted for the FN because of its immigration policy (1987: 237). Goodwin also offered an analysis of immigration and the vote for the far right. For example, Goodwin found that BNP voters are, "overwhelmingly concerned about immigration" and "almost nine out of every ten BNP voters rated immigration or asylum as the most important issues facing the country" (2011: 108). Goodwin also notes that the BNP was "rallying citizens who feel their positions or identities are under threat from immigration and rising ethno-cultural diversity" (2011: 119).

A further study which analysed the impact of immigration on British society was conducted by Mclaren and Johnson (2004). They used data collected from British society surveys that were completed between 1995 and 2003. Their research for the British Social Attitudes 21st Report found that there has been an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment. In fact when they asked participants whether they thought the number of immigrants should be reduced in 1995 only two thirds of respondents

believed it should, yet this number had risen to three quarters of respondents by 2003 (McLaren and Johnson 2004: 172). There was also an increase in the number of respondents who believed immigrants increased crime rates, rising from 25 per cent in 1995 to 39 per cent in 2003 (McLaren and Johnson 2004: 173). They also stated that the reason for the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment was, "related to the overall increase in the numbers of immigrants, which appears to have stimulated a rise in media coverage of immigration, and perhaps more importantly produced an increase in government statements and proclamations on the subject, many of which were quite negative in tone and content" (Mclaren and Johnson 2004: 196).

Understanding the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment will be very important for this research as will be highlighted in chapter four. However, it is worth noting that not all studies see a correlation between the amount of immigrants and the vote for the far right. For example, Mayer, in her analysis of who votes for the FN in Paris, found no correlation between the number of immigrants or the origins of immigrants, and the vote for the FN (cited in Givens 2005: 79). Nonetheless, what these studies do show is that the perception of immigration potentially remains one of the major themes running through any contemporary study of the far right. Further analysis of this variable in this thesis will be an important contribution in this field, and forms the basis of chapter four.

Socioeconomics

Another important demand-side factor which has been used in the historical and contemporary literature to account for the rise in support for far right is socioeconomics (Goodwin 2011; Rhodes 2009; Mudde 2007; Norris 2005; Eatwell 2003; Betz 1994). One important theory is Eatwell's (2003) economic and social

breakdown thesis which holds that the success of the far right locally is linked to growing social problems. These relate to a feeling of insecurity, inefficacy and economic problems, specifically the competition for local resources and the impact of economic change caused by globalisation. Undoubtedly, socioeconomic conditions remain an important factor in the rise of the far right. Indeed, Art in reference to the economic downturn notes that economic issues "undoubtedly give radical right parties an opening, but it will be up to them to seize it" (2011: 239). For example, the theory that high, or rising, levels of unemployment have been important in the success of the far right has been advanced in the literature (Azari 2004; Golder 2003; Jackman and Volpert 1996). Jackman and Volpert (1996) in their analysis of the conditions which have favoured the far right analysed all general elections between 1970 and 1990 in 16 West European countries, and unemployment data provided by the Economic Commission for Europe. What Jackman and Volpert found was a positive correlation between unemployment and immigration, but argued that this did not mean that far right supporters are drawn from the unemployed, but rather this reflects the broad economic conditions which are favourable to the far right thus making them more appealing to the electorate (1996: 57). However, Azari (2004) offers a different approach, with a general analysis of the impact of unemployment and its important role in mobilising a protest vote. What is interesting is that in the four countries he used for his case studies he found no correlation between levels of unemployment and the success of the far right. Azari also found that a high level of unemployment has not been a galvanising issue, and unemployment does not correlate with a rise in support for the far right (Table 8). The debate over the ways and extent to which socioeconomic conditions contribute continues, which will be picked up in the Nuneaton context in chapter three.

Source: Azari (2004: 21)

It is also worth noting that Goodwin in his study examined who votes for the far right. This study provides an insight into the social and economic factors behind the rise in BNP support. For example, Goodwin states that the BNP "draws most of its support from members of the more insecure lower social classes" and that "it has been most successful in areas where there are large concentrations of employed skilled workers" (2011: 104-105). Further analysis of this finding will be offered in chapter three.

The problem with the analysis of all variables tested in the literature is that there is always a relationship between the variables. Indeed, as the above research demonstrates, immigration and socioeconomic factors, like unemployment, remain a significant, if not universally accepted issue when linked to each other. In fact, it has been argued in the literature that the far right have benefited when the immigration issue is directly connected with socioeconomics, by creating a link in the public mind between immigration and increasing levels of unemployment (Golder 2003; Givens 2005). For example, Golder (2003) in his analysis of the relationship between

unemployment and large numbers of immigrants, found strong evidence to support this hypothesis. He argues that when unemployment rises and members of the majority population are exposed to social insecurity, immigrants are viewed as competitors for scarce resources. He states that this in turn increases "the voteshare of populist parties when there are large numbers of foreigners in the country" (Golder 2003: 460). Golder's interpretation is supported by Pierre Martin's, who used electoral geography in order to demonstrate a link between the FN vote and immigration. In Martin's analysis, where there is high unemployment and immigration there is clear evidence that the FN has been successful (cited in Givens 2005: 79). Indeed, linking immigration to unemployment, therefore politicising the race issue, has been a major theme for the far right and was championed by Le Pen and the FN in the 1970s and 1980s, evident in their slogan, "A million unemployed is a million immigrants too many! France and the French First!" (Shields 2007: 185). Therefore, the literature does highlight significant socioeconomic factors, however, as explored, it is the link between immigration and particular socioeconomic factors which it is argued are significant in understanding why the far right were successful.

Political corruption and disaffection

Also prominent in the literature addressing the electoral breakthrough of the far right are ideas relating to corruption and the growth of a disaffected electorate. Indeed, these theories are evident in a large section of the scholarship on the far right (Ford and Goodwin 2014; Goodwin 2011; Copsey 2008; Shields 2007; John *et al.* 2006; Hainsworth 2000; Marcus 1995). For example, Goodwin in his analysis of the BNP states that BNP voters are "extremely dissatisfied with the government and main parties" (2011: 113). In his research he found that nine out of ten BNP voters were

dissatisfied with the mainstream parties (Goodwin 2011: 113-4). This view was also shared by Copsey who argues that the far right have capitalised by appealing to an electorate who feel "dissatisfied, disconnected and alienated from the political system and the established politicians" (2008: 184). Evidence of this will be provided in chapter six.

The theory that the far right has capitalised due to a disaffected electorate has also been advanced in literature on the breakthrough of the FN (Marcus 1995; Shields 2007; Hainsworth 2000; Arnold 2000). It is argued that Le Pen's attacks on the established parties (the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR), the *Union pour la Démocratie Française* (UDF), the *Parti Socialiste* (PS) and the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF)) who he famously referred to as the "Gang of Four" (Hainsworth 2000: 9), appealed to a French electorate who had become dissatisfied with French politics. Hainsworth states that the FN played a populist outsider role, capitalising on the mainstream parties "inability to resolve key socioeconomic problems" (2000: 9). This was in reference to the economic crisis in France during the 1970s and 1980s which for many voters demonstrated a political reluctance to tackle these problems and represented a mainstream political failure. Indeed, this resonates with the sentiment which will be highlighted in chapter six, that elements of the British electorate believe the mainstream parties have failed. Therefore, the literature on disaffection will be an important area of analysis, and offer a significant comparison with the data produced in Nuneaton.

Fragmentation

In addition to testing the variables related to disillusionment and a disaffected electorate, the role of the fragmentation has also been highlighted in the literature. It

has been argued that the fragmentation of society has materialised in the collapse of traditional cleavages based on political, religious, economic and class lines (Copsey 2008; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2004; Eatwell 2003; Veugelers 1997). Eatwell (2003) in his study refers to this as 'the social breakdown thesis', relating to the collapse in traditional cleavages, which inevitably lead to an evident growth in insecurity and inefficacy. In response it is new actors, notably in this case the far right, who sought to step into the void. Indeed, Eatwell's argument is based on the theory that new actors respond better than old ones to the new challenges, and that in recent years it is the far right who now "offer an answer to those demands and needs created by post-industrialisation" (2003: 53-54). However, Eatwell (2003: 53) concludes that there is no evidence to suggest that the majority of the far right electorate are suffering due to the collapse of traditional social cleavages. The analysis of the weakening of the left-right cleavage and voter de-alignment in France was also offered by Veugelers. In contrast to Eatwell (2003), Veugelers in his research argues that the current success of the French far right "testifies to a weakening of the left-right cleavage" (1997: 45). Veugelers offers some interesting conclusions, notably that the support for the far right from the weakening social cleavages is more evident in the persistence phase not the breakthrough phase (1997: 45). Consequently, these arguments will continue and the collapse of these traditional cleavages and voter de-alignment is viewed by some scholars as an important factor. Testing this in chapter six will help to understand voter dealignment in Nuneaton.

So as demonstrated, analysis of the most important demand-side factors in the literature does show a correlation between these factors and the breakthrough of the far right, although not in all cases are the factors the same. Evidently, through the analysis of the literature on the demand-side, immigration, socioeconomics,

disaffection and fragmentation remain important factors within the literature and will be analysed in greater detail within this thesis.

Supply-side factors

In addition to the works which have analysed the role of demand-side factors there is a plethora of studies in the literature on the far right's success which have focused on the role of supply-side factors (Startin 2014; Mudde 2007; Givens 2005; Eatwell 2003; Renton 2003; Kitschelt 1995). This next section will therefore focus on the most significant supply-side factors highlighted by the literature which includes the role of the leader, the role of the party, the role of the media and finally the part political opportunity structures play in opening up political space for the far right.

The role of the leader

The first significant supply-side factor highlighted in the literature is the role of the leader. The role of the leader has often been seen as central to the success of any political party, be it the largest mainstream political party or those parties on the fringe attempting to enter the mainstream (Kane, Patapan and Hart 2009; Overy 2004; Bracher 1992). In response to the rise of the far right many theorists have analysed the role of leaders such as Hitler and Mussolini, and the part they played in the success of their movements which has often been ascribed to the role of the leaders. For example, there is research detailing the importance of Hitler's 'charismatic' leadership in Nazi Germany and the leadership cult that surrounded him (Overy 2004; Bracher 1992; Kershaw 1987). Indeed, this has given much credence in the literature to the charismatic leader thesis (Startin 2014; Hainsworth 2008; Eatwell 2006; Eatwell 2003). This does not mean that the theory on charismatic leadership is not

fraught with problems. In fact, Eatwell questions what actually constitutes a charismatic leader, and whether charisma really played a major part in explaining support for the far right (2006: 66). Moreover, it has been argued that there is little evidence to support the idea that leaders are important for the success of far right parties (Van der Pas, de Vries and Van der Brug 2011: 470).

The charismatic leader thesis maintains that the role of a media savvy leader, such as Jean-Marie Le Pen and Jörg Haider, is of central importance. Indeed, their ability to appeal directly to the electorate has been seen as important in the successful breakthrough of the far right. For example, Hainsworth argues that Le Pen and Haider "have been personally responsible for their party's share of the poll" (2008: 106). The argument in the literature is that these leaders have helped increase their share of the vote and institutionalised their parties in their respective countries by exploiting their charismatic personalities, keeping control of their respective parties and taking opportunities for advancement in the political realm (Hainsworth 2008: 107). This theory has become more prevalent in the literature, with the decline in the party and the role of a strong, media friendly leader becoming more significant. Indeed, this was evident in British politics during the 2010 general election with Conservative leader David Cameron regarded as a media savvy strong leader, yet former Labour leader Prime Minister Gordon Brown was viewed as not media savvy (BBC 2010).

It could be suggested that for the British far right between 1945 and 1999, there has been no leader capable of appealing to a wider electorate and preventing the far right from continually factionalising. Indeed, this is one of the main reasons it was argued the NF failed to move into the mainstream during the 1970s and the 1980s due to John Tyndall's leadership, notably his links to new-Nazis (Copsey 2006; Thurlow 1998). In fact Eatwell (1998) argued that the NF failed to gain real electoral success

and continually factionalised because of its failure to produce a charismatic leader who could inspire and appeal to a wider electorate.

It is this which leads us to the second model of charismatic leader theory, that it is not just the role of the strong charismatic leader to appeal to the electorate directly; rather it should be argued that the title of 'successful' leader should also be applied to leaders who hold the party together and lead them to success at elections. For example, Mudde highlights this in the literature, stating that "political parties are not just electoral vehicles that contest elections... they are also organisations that recruit and socialise political personnel, design and run election campaigns, and ultimately (try to) influence public policy" (2007: 263). In fact the organisation of the party and its resources are central if it is going to be electorally successful. This was indicated by Ware who argues that "a party requires an organisation (or organisations) to utilise these resources in an effective way" (1996: 93). Therefore, although it is evident that the former leader of the BNP, Nick Griffin, is not an archetypal 'charismatic' leader, he did lead an organisation which matched this criterion, as will be seen in chapter seven. Arguably, Griffin did not have the charismatic appeal of Le Pen or Haider, in that he is not media savvy and was often portrayed as a "brute in a suit" (Anon 2004b). However, Griffin does fit the mould of a 'successful' leader according to the second model because he did manage to hold a far right party together, and between 1999 and 2010 he modernised the BNP and transformed it into a party which appealed to sections of the British electorate. Griffin achieved this by ensuring stability and offering a programme which some voters evidently bought into (Ford and Goodwin 2010). This was a significant achievement for the British far right who historically have fragmented, and remained a minor fringe element with no significant electoral support. For example the party achieved more electorally than

both Moseley's BUF and the NF. The fact that the party has now fragmented and has moved back to the fringes of British politics does in effect demonstrate Griffin's early success as a leader, if not a charismatic one, in keeping the party united and presiding over the far right's most successful period in British politics (Startin 2014). The modernisation of the BNP, and a period of stability under Griffin, will form the basis of chapter seven.

The Party

The role of BNP leader Nick Griffin was important for the growth of the party from 2001 onwards. In the analysis of the British far right the growth of the party, which included a study of the BNP's increased legitimacy and election success, it is evident that the success cannot all be attached to the party leader. Therefore it is the role of the party and how this has been analysed in the literature which shall be looked at next. Several recent studies have focused on the BNP and how the party has transformed, including its ability to attract new members and activists (Goodwin 2011; Ford and Goodwin 2010; Rhodes 2009; Goodwin 2007; John *et al.* 2006). It is argued that the party strategy and the rise in political legitimacy were important factors in the breakthrough of the BNP. This is a point highlighted by Copsey who states that the role of political legitimacy is "a point often neglected" (2008: 186).

From 1999 onwards there was greater emphasis on the party gaining political legitimacy, evident in the BNP's modernisation programme. This transformation strategy mirrored the ideological and strategic formula used by the French FN, but they sought to create a uniquely British version of a 'nationalist-populist' party (Hainsworth 2008; Goodwin 2007; Copsey 2007). Hainsworth refers to this as the "ripple effect" (2008:31) whereby the FN provided a model for various far right

parties to use as a template. There is no argument that the BNP used this template to raise their profile in British politics. For example, they moderated their language, modernised their political agenda, and aimed to recruit more 'respectable' members as candidates for the party and 'normalise' the party's strategy (Copsey 2007: 61). Pointing to historical attempts at legitimisation by organisations such as the NF, Thurlow argues this was partly due to the positive effect of the Race Relations Act (1968), which forced the NF to tone down their language and "move from extremism to a more rationally presented expression of similar sentiments" (1998: 247). It is also evident from the literature that the need to moderate language in order to appeal to mainstream electorate and increase the party's legitimacy was realised by many in the BNP, and was no doubt important when Griffin became leader (Copsey 2008). Therefore, the importance of this supply-side factor and the way the party's attempts at legitimacy under the leadership of Nick Griffin need to be analysed in the context of the BNP success in Nuneaton.

The Media

A further supply-side factor which has more recently been raised in the literature is the role of the media. This variable has historically in Britain received little attention in the literature excepting Husbands (1983) study of the NF in the 1970s. The media often only warrants a brief mention rather than an in depth analysis. However, more contemporary studies have analysed the role of the media in greater depth (Startin 2014; Goodwin 2011b; Ellinas 2010; Wilks-Heeg 2008; John *et al.* 2006; Eatwell 2003). Eatwell analysed the media variable in his chapter on the mediatisation thesis. This focused on how the media pander to the far right, and how the media play an important role, if not directly, by highlighting issues relating to immigration and

asylum "through their agenda-setting function" (Eatwell 2003: 61). Renton also offered an analysis of the media, looking at both the local and national press and how they "fuelled hysteria" surrounding immigration and created the impression of "constant racial tension" (2003: 79). This is with reference to the media coverage of asylum seekers in the tabloid and local press. This assessment was shared by Wilks-Heeg who states that the BNP gained support, "as a direct result of the growing salience of issues associated with immigration since the late 1990s, particularly the growth of, frequently hysterical, tabloid reporting on issues concerning asylum seekers" (2008: 8). Wilks-Heeg also argues that, "media interest in the BNP prompted by its local electoral successes has enabled party representatives to air their views via the mainstream broadcasting media, providing the BNP with a voice previously denied to it in part by the 'no platform' policy of the National Union of Journalists" (Wilks-Heeg 2008: 8). Moreover, John *et al.* also conducted an analysis of the media and argued that the "media plainly exert a major influence on popular attitudes towards immigration and race" (2006: 22). They found a relationship between the BNP and immigration which demonstrated that when the issue of immigration peaked in the media, articles relating to BNP also peaked (John *et al.* 2006: 22). This finding strengthens the view that the media can add legitimacy to the BNP when the issue of immigration is discussed because the two, for some voters, become synonymous.

It has been argued that the language used by the media on issues such as immigration and asylum have mirrored the issues and discourse espoused by the far right (Startin 2014; Grayson 2014; Ford and Goodwin 2014; Ellinas 2010; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007; Mudde 2007; Eatwell 2003; Renton 2003). For example, Mudde states that the mass media can encourage support for the far right at the breakthrough stage by influencing the salience of issues, positive reporting of the

far right actors, and using the same language which is espoused by the far right parties (2007: 248-250). Mudde also notes that negative media coverage has also benefited the far right, and although the mainstream media have often labelled the far right as a lunatic fringe they still "provide them with a favourable forum" (2007: 251), evidence of which will be provided in chapter eight.

In addition to the mainstream media, the role of new technologies, such as the internet, has recently become a central factor for any political party that wants their message to reach the electorate. In fact, for the BNP, it has been one of their most important means of communication. This is clearly demonstrated in a study conducted in 2007 which showed that the BNP website had more than seven times as many visitors click on to their site than the Labour Party's, and almost three times as many as for the Conservative Party (Hope 2007). Indeed, Hainsworth states that the internet has enabled the far right parties to reach out to young adults, who are more active on the internet, and those active via this medium using blogs, chat rooms and highly visible internet sites, which is "a significant part of the pattern of extreme right communication, outreach and recruitment" (2008: 108).

Despite arguments about the role of the media this area of analysis is fraught with problems. Notably how do you measure the influence of the media and how many hits on the internet resulted in a vote for the BNP? The exact science may be hard to prove, but there is no doubt that media coverage, and not always positive media coverage, whether through television, newspapers or on the internet, has a significant impact and can be favourable to the far right. Certainly the banality of the language used by elements of the media, reporting on immigration and asylum, allowed the BNP ideas to thrive.

Political Opportunity?

Finally, another variable which has been prevalent in much of the literature is the role of political opportunity structures (POS) in the initial breakthrough of the far right (Startin 2014; Hainsworth 2008; Mudde 2007; Eatwell 2003). This approach focuses on factors external to the far right party, notably the extent to which the mainstream parties inadvertently help the far right, and how open political institutions are to the far right in the host countries. In relation to the mainstream parties this has often focused on the way the mainstream parties have been willing to go into coalition with far right parties. For example, this was evident in the early breakthrough of the FN in Dreux, and with the Austrian FPÖ and Italy's MSI both joining coalition governments (Mudde 2007).

In addition to gaining legitimacy through coalition with mainstream parties, there is also the argument relating to how open political institutions are to the far right. The literature has focused on the role of majoritarian and proportional representation (PR) electoral systems in particular. Indeed, the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system used in British general elections has been viewed as a major factor hindering any chance of a far right mainstream breakthrough. It has been argued that, in general, the first-past-the-post parliamentary system penalises minor parties and favours larger centre parties, such as the Labour Party and Conservative Party (John and Margetts 2009; Mudde 2007; Norris 2005; Eatwell 2000; Copsey 1996; Griffin 1996). There has also been a great deal in the literature relating to proportional systems and how these have benefited minor parties and the far right in particular. As Renton points out, elections run according to the rules of PR, for example the London and European elections, and the introduction of new boundary changes which affected local council elections in Britain all favour minor parties (2005: 25). Certainly, the

electoral success of BNP candidate Richard Barnbrook at the 2008 London Assembly Elections, and the two MEP's elected in 2009 European elections, are testament to this. London Assembly member Barnbrook was elected using the additional member system, which combines FPTP with a proportional system, with just 6.42 per cent of the vote, just above the electoral threshold for the assembly which is 5 per cent (London Elects 2008). Furthermore, some local council elections have multi-member wards and these are being conducted on a three-representatives-per-seat basis which has also favoured the BNP in some locations, as in some elections the BNP was often the third party.

Scholars have added weight to this theory, and suggest that in comparison the system of PR has been vital for the recent breakthrough of the far right across Western Europe (Shields 2007; Marcus 1995). The FN's success, for example, during the 1986 French legislative elections has been linked to President Mitterrand's Socialist government's decision to alter the system to PR in order to split the mainstream right. As a consequence of this change the FN had 35 members elected to the French Assembly in 1986**.** Although the Socialists reverted back to the old system for future elections it is argued that Mitterrand by changing the system allowed the far right to gain a foothold and further legitimised the FN (Shields 2007; Marcus 1995; Vaughn 1995).

Givens (2005) analysis of electoral systems and electoral thresholds likewise highlighted the significance of such factors. Although Givens found that in some countries it was more difficult for the far right to breakthrough, the findings did produce different results in Austria and Germany. For example, although the threshold in Austria is four per cent the FPÖ succeeded in breaking into the

mainstream. However, in Germany where the threshold is just one per cent higher, the far right have been unable to breakthrough (Givens 2005: 87-156).

Evidently, from the above review of the literature, supply-side factors such as POS, the media, the role of the leader and the party can help explain why the far right are successful or not. Therefore, analysis of both demand and supply-side factors combined will be significant in any understanding of far right success, and will be important for this thesis.

Local Supply and Demand

So far this chapter has focused on the most significant demand and supply-side factors analysed at a national level. This next section will now centre on the literature relating to the local success of the far right, and how the primary demand and supply factors have been applied to this area of research. The decision to include a separate section here was based on the fact that there have been a limited number of studies which focus on individual case studies where the BNP have achieved electoral success. This local focus permits the above theories generalised from national and European comparative research to be tested against more tangible political events. As this thesis aims to sit alongside these local case studies of the BNP's electoral breakthrough, it would be wise to first ascertain the findings of this available literature.

The success of the BNP in the first decade of the twenty-first century has heightened interest amongst academics and political commentators, several of which have conducted local case studies (Rhodes 2009; Wilks-Heeg 2008; Bowyer 2008; Goodwin 2007; John *et al.* 2006; Sykes 2005). For example, one case study which will offer an important comparison with this analysis of the BNP in Nuneaton and Bedworth is that completed by James Rhodes (2009). In his study *The Political*

Breakthrough of the BNP: The Case of Burnley, Rhodes analyses the breakthrough of the BNP in Burnley from 2001 onwards and assesses whether this offers 'a typical case' of a far right breakthrough. The analysis of factors presented as a result of this local research demonstrates a clear crossover between demand and supply side factors. Indeed, an examination of this literature demonstrates the importance of considering demand-side factors and supply-side factors in tandem. In Burnley, for example, such studies highlight the need to consider the role of demand-side factors, most notably immigration, socioeconomics and political disaffection, combined with supply-side factors including the media and political opportunity structures (Rhodes 2009; Wilks-Heeg 2008). Indeed, as the literature demonstrates, the effect of one set of variables cannot be truly analysed without the other set being considered.

Before considering these case studies, it is worth first highlighting what has been learnt from comparative local data. One study into of the success of the BNP at a local level was the report by John *et al.* which analysed both supply and demand-side factors (2006). The study made extensive use of ward data collected from one hundred and fifty eight wards in twenty six local authorities, where the BNP stood two or more candidates. The significance of this analysis is the extent to which it analysed a wide range of demand and supply-side factors affecting these wards. For example it analysed the socio-economic sources of BNP support which included social class, income and poverty, education, age, ethnic composition and the numbers of asylum seekers, as well as the role of the media and other political parties in influencing attitudes to immigration and race. The study also used survey data accessed from the 21st Report on British Social Attitudes (Mclaren and Johnson 2004) relating to the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment. The research produced some interesting results, notably the BNP do best in predominantly white areas, where

people are seeking an alternative to the mainstream parties, and that the BNP have gained support in many areas close to large Muslim communities (John *et al.* 2006: 28-29). This analysis was not focused on one case study; rather it was a general study of ward data. Nonetheless, the research findings will be important in the comparison with the data collected from wards this thesis will analyse.

A further analysis by Bowyer (2008) looked at data collected from all the wards that held local elections in May 2002 and May 2003. Bowyer's quantitative analysis was primarily aimed at demonstrating the key facts that influenced support for the BNP in these local elections using aggregate data matched to contextual data. In his study he tests dependent variables (support for the BNP amongst the white electorate) and independent variables (Ethnic composition; population density; average education; labour market conditions; housing market conditions; crime rate; political context) in order to establish a relationship. One interesting conclusion from his analysis is that the BNP is "more likely to contest elections and to win votes in districts with relatively large ethnic minority populations, especially those with relatively large Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities" (Bowyer 2008: 618). He also found that the BNP is more likely to succeed in economically deprived, urban areas, where housing is short and of poor quality, with house prices not rising or below the national average (Bowyer 2008: 19). The analyses carried out by Bowyer (2008) and John *et al.* (2006) are important in highlighting and assessing the most important variables that should be applied to study of a far right breakthrough. The following sections will now analyse in greater detail the literature which highlights specific demand and supply-side factors from a localised perspective.

Local Supply

This section will focus on the literature which identifies those supply-side factors that have been viewed as important within a local context. In order to do this it will focus on factors which include the role of the far right party themselves, the decline in local democracy, and the role of the media and mainstream parties in legitimising the far right.

One important supply-side factor which has gained credence in the recent literature is the role of the parties themselves. As demonstrated earlier, the role of the party was highlighted by Eatwell (2003) in his programmatic thesis. It has also become a significant factor within the literature on the local breakthrough of the BNP (Goodwin 2011; Wilks-Heeg 2008; Rhodes 2007; Goodwin 2007; John *et al.* 2006). The thesis holds that the actions of the parties themselves should be analysed, and that through their actions the far right have been able to capitalise by exploiting local issues. In addition, Copsey (2007) also offers a critical examination of the BNP's new ideological position. The main hypotheses here is that in order to explain the rise of the BNP, the party's actions must be incorporated in any study of the far right. This is a view shared by Goodwin who argues that any satisfactory analysis must include the BNP's environmental conditions as well as the BNP's role in mobilising support (2007: 243).

Examination of the BNP transformation demonstrates how the party focused on local issues affecting local people when fighting election campaigns. In many areas where the BNP have achieved a breakthrough they have been seen as the champions of local issues. It is argued that this was a major factor in the initial breakthrough stage of the BNP (Rhodes 2009; Wilks-Heeg 2008; Copsey 2008). The BNP successfully attached themselves to local issues which affected local

communities. For example, in Burnley the BNP have campaigned publicly on various local issues such as halting the closure of swimming pools, calling for a 20 mph speed limit on housing estates, and in Oldham by focusing on attacks on the white population (Rhodes 2009; Wilks-Heeg 2008; Renton 2003). Indeed, this electoral method is not new to the BNP and authors, such as Wilks-Heeg (2008) and Sivanandan (1994) indicate that, the success of the BNP on the Isle of Dogs in 1993 was primarily due to the successful use of Liberal Democrat tactics. This view was also shared by Copsey who stated that the BNP simply campaign on local grievances, and became the champions of local issues in the same way the Liberal Democrats had previously (Copsey 2008 54-55). As will be demonstrated, in chapters six and seven, this strategy contributed to the success of the BNP in the Nuneaton wards of Barpool and Camp Hill wards.

    As well as the role of the party, evidence gathered in Burnley suggests that the BNP's success was linked to the decline in local democracy (Rhodes 2009; Wilks-Heeg 2008; Sivanandan 1994). Since Sivanandan suggested that the 1993 BNP election victory in the Tower Hamlets Millwall ward could be attributed to voters feeling they have lost their voice in local government (1994: 64), this theory has effectively gained validity in the literature. It is argued mainstream political parties have become weaker at a local level, as a consequence (Rhodes 2009; Wilks-Heeg 2008; John *et al.* 2006). In the case of Burnley, Wilks-Heeg (2008) highlights the failure of the mainstream parties to counter the BNP's arguments, or mobilise effective election campaigns against them in certain wards. It has also been argued that disaffection with the Labour Party has often been compounded by the failure of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats to mount any credible challenge to the Labour Party in many areas such as Burnley and Stoke-on-Trent, effectively

enabling the BNP to act as the only credible opposition (Rhodes 2009; Wilks-Heeg 2008). Furthermore, Rhodes highlights the way the BNP have become the only credible opponents because a vote for the Conservative Party in Burnley, a traditional Labour heartland, has often been seen as a wasted vote and more importantly, for ex-Labour voters, it was seen as more acceptable to vote for the BNP rather than vote Tory (2009: 31). As far as the Liberal Democrats were concerned they often reached power-sharing agreements with the Labour party in order to keep out both the BNP and indeed the Conservative Party, which in effect left no credible opposition in the town (Rhodes 2009: 31). This in turn created a vacuum in Burnley from which the BNP were able to benefit.

A further factor is the politicisation of race, with some scholars arguing that this was a key factor in the breakthrough of the BNP in Burnley (Rhodes 2009; Copsey 2008; John *et al.* 2006). In the case of Burnley it has been argued that it was the role of the Independents led by former Labour councillor Harry Brooks during the 1990s that helped create an environment in which racial politics became the acceptable norm. This surrounded the apparent distribution of scarce resources in the town during which it was argued the ruling Labour party favoured the Asian minorities. With the collapse of the Independents in Burnley during early 2000s, the BNP were able to capitalise on what Rhodes (2009: 34) notes was a "rightward political shift". As will be seen, this banal use of language on issues such as immigration and asylum was an important political factor in Nuneaton leading up-to the 2008 local elections.

It has been argued that the media play a central role in politicising the race issue and this is clearly evident at both a local as well as a national level. According to the literature, the media have been very important in portraying immigration and

asylum in a negative manner and Islam in a provocative manner since the attacks of 11 September 2001 (Copsey 2008; John *et al.* 2006; Renton 2003). Indeed, John *et al.* (2006) argue that the media have been important in influencing voters' attitudes on race and immigration. However, as stated it is difficult to ascertain the amount of influence the media can have on the electorates' decision to vote for the far-right or how attitudes on race can be converted into a number of votes. Therefore, this area of analysis will be challenging to any researcher attempting to understand the issues. However, as will be demonstrated later in the media chapter, the media variable was significant in the level of legitimisation it gave to the BNP in Nuneaton.

Local Demand

Besides the arguments advanced in relation to supply-side factors, the role of the demand-side factors, most notably socioeconomics, have been prevalent in attempts to understand the success of the BNP at a local level. Eatwell offers an interpretation of these demand-side factors in his analysis of the social breakdown thesis and the economic interest thesis (2003). The above theory offers a template for researchers in the analysis of the local electoral success of the BNP. Indeed, many recent studies have analysed social and economic deprivation (Rhodes 2009; Bowyer 2008; John *et al.* 2006). For example, John *et al.* (2006) make extensive use of survey tests and one-off data in their attempt to demonstrate the socioeconomic sources of the BNP support. Their main area of study is focused on 5 particular themes; social class; income and poverty; education; age; ethnic composition and numbers of asylum seekers. One important finding from their study was that in the wards they analysed the poorer the ward the less chance the BNP had in achieving electoral success (John *et al.*: 2006; also see Rhodes 2009). However, it should be noted that many analysts

do argue that socioeconomic comparisons should not be overplayed. The reason for this is that many towns and wards experience similar social and economic problems yet they have not experienced a far right breakthrough (Rhodes 2009; Eatwell 1998). For example, in Coventry, which has a higher proportion of immigrants, a higher ethnic population and similar socioeconomic problems in many areas, the BNP have been unable to mount any serious challenge in local elections. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this analysis the socioeconomic background to the success of the BNP will be analysed in order to offer an important comparison with other areas where the BNP were also successful.

Further arguments, advanced in the literature on the local breakthrough of the far right, have focused on the significance of issue based politics, most notably immigration. For example, in a similar fashion to the FN, the BNP have utilised the growing anti-immigration theme, and have launched campaigns against increasing immigration and the effects immigration has on local resources. It could effectively be argued that they did manage to impact on the Conservative Party's 'issue ownership' of immigration, which the NF were unable to do successfully in the 1970s. Indeed, it has been argued in the literature that the NF failed to achieve issue ownership during the 1970s due to Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party (Mudde 2007; Husbands 1996; Shields 2007; Taylor 1982). However, the problem with issue ownership is that it does not always guarantee success for mainstream parties. This is apparent in the case of Chirac and his *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and Giscard's *Union pour la Démocratie* (UDF). The RPR and UDF adopted much of the immigration rhetoric of the FN, in a similar fashion to Thatcher in 1979, yet this had the opposite effect and only served to further legitimise Le Pen and the FN (Mudde 2007; Hainsworth 2000). Moreover, the analysis of immigration and the process of

legitimisation will be significant in understanding the success of the BNP. It will also demonstrate how important the legitimisation of the BNP and its ideas were in galvanising BNP support in Nuneaton.

As shown above, immigration is an important variable, which will be analysed in the context of local support for the BNP in Nuneaton. However, for the purpose of this research the issues of immigration and Islamophobia will be analysed in their own context and clearly differentiated. Indeed, the chapter on Islamophobia will demonstrate just how central rising anti-Muslim sentiment was in galvanising support for the BNP in 2008. There is a growth in the literature which has analysed the impact of Islamophobia as a single issue, an issue which has grown in importance since the attacks of Sept 11th in New York and the 7/7 bombings in London (Zuquete 2008; Davids 2009; Cesari 2009; Mahamdallie 2002). The analysis of the literature does offer some insight into the importance of Islamophobia amongst BNP supporters and the wider electorate (Goodwin and Evans 2012; Goodwin 2012a; Bunglawala 2006; John *et al.* 2006; McLaren and Johnson 2004). Indeed, the evidence produced in this thesis will show how the BNP have, since the early 2000s, aligned themselves with the growing anti-Islamic movement which has grown alongside rising Islamophobia. The issue of Islamophobia and the BNP's effective campaigns against what they argue is the "creeping Islamification of Britain" (cited in John *et al.* 2006: 10) have centred on attacking Islamic culture, specifically highlighting cultural differences. There is evidence in the literature that there has been a rapid growth in prejudice against Muslims in Europe and America since 9/11. For example, John *et al.* (2006) in their analysis found a connection between the number of ethnic Pakistani and Bangladeshi first and second generation immigrants, and support for the BNP in various wards. This was also highlighted in Bowyer's 2008 study. Furthermore, the

study by McLaren and Johnson (2004) tested the hypotheses that anti-Muslim sentiment is directly related to anti-immigrant views. McLaren and Johnson found that fifty one per cent of respondents stated that if more Muslims came to live in Britain they would start to lose their identity and twenty five per cent said they would be unhappy if a relative married a Muslim (2004: 183-184).

Conclusion

This chapter has identified the existing literature on the breakthrough of the far right. It examined the various explanations for the breakthrough of the far right at both a national and local level, in Europe and more importantly in the UK. It has detailed the most important variables and the main arguments put forward to understand the resurgence of the far right, highlighting the significance of demand and supply-side factors. Indeed, it is evident from the literature review that investigation considering both supply and demand-side factors produces more rigorous findings. The literature demonstrated that for the purpose of this research a combination of supply and demand-side factors will offer the best method in understanding the local success of the BNP in Nuneaton. This does not mean that one factor may be more important than another in the breakthrough stage. Through further analysis this work will seek to provide answers, highlight patterns favourable to the far right in the breakthrough phase, and support current theories on the far right.

It is apparent in many of the studies, such as Rhodes's (2009) study of the Burnley breakthrough, that a comparative analysis of ward data will only strengthen any analysis. Therefore this thesis will seek to position itself within the current literature and make a useful contribution to knowledge in this area. Due to the absence of in-depth research of ward data in Nuneaton this research will also provide

an understanding of the main factors that were important in Nuneaton that led to the BNP's success in 2008. In order to test the most important factors the demand-side factors which were analysed included socioeconomics, political disaffection and immigration, while on the supply-side it will include the role of the party itself, the role of the media, the role of the mainstream political parties at both a local and national level and POS. Finally in the course of this analysis a further significant factor, Islamophobia, was analysed. The analysis of these factors was central in understanding why the BNP experienced success in the local elections of 2008 in Nuneaton. In summary, this study analysed ward data and new survey data from the Camp Hill and Barpool areas of Nuneaton and the data collected was used to test demand and supply-side factors. The analysis of the empirical evidence produced in this study offered an original contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 2
Research Methodology

As outlined in the previous chapter the aim of this work is to seek an understanding of why people voted for the BNP in Nuneaton during the 2008 local elections. In order to meet this objective, this study will provide an analysis of ward data and new survey data from the case study location, and offer a localised perspective of the far right breakthrough in Nuneaton. The data will then be used to corroborate or contradict the existing literature currently explaining the BNP's early twenty-first century electoral success and offer a new perspective on the success of the far right.

Why Nuneaton?

This location was selected primarily because, on commencement of this study in 2008 the BNP had for the first time captured local council seats in the borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth. Two BNP councillors, Martyn Findley and Darren John Haywood were elected in the Barpool and Camp Hill wards respectively. The BNP had therefore broken through in a location which had historically never witnessed far right success. Nuneaton offers many similarities for comparison, demographically and geographically, with other locations which experienced BNP breakthrough. More importantly it also offers many differences which this work will highlight. This includes the level of poverty in the wards and the size of the minority ethnic population in the town. Given that no previous research has addressed the BNP's campaigning in Nuneaton, it was decided that this location was ripe for providing new data and a new perspective on this electoral success.

A case study approach

It is for the reasons stated above that a case study was conducted as part of a comparative methodology. The comparative approach is simply a method which enables the researcher to compare one case with another in order to develop a greater understanding of the similarities and differences. The reason for using the comparative approach as part of this case study does in itself raise the question, why? As indicated earlier, one of the main reasons for a comparative study is that it can help the researcher understand similarities and differences between one case and another, and therefore remains an important tool of analysis. Moreover, Hague and Harrop argue that "a comparative approach broadens our understanding of the political world, and giving potential for explanation and even prediction" (2004: 69). This view is also shared by Landman who notes that "scholars compare to provide context, make classifications, test hypotheses, and make predictions (2003: 40). More importantly, Hague and Harrop state that it "enables us to find out about the places we know least about" (2004: 69). Therefore, the decision to use the comparative methodology was taken as it would allow the findings from Nuneaton, which has not been the subject of in-depth research into far right support, to be compared. In fact the findings from similar case studies which have analysed the local success of the BNP were compared with the Nuneaton case study.

This does not mean that there are problems with the comparative method, as highlighted in the literature (Bara and Pennington 2009: Hague and Harrop 2004; Landman 2003; Lijphart 1971). For example, Bara states that "comparative analysis is always constrained by the number of cases with reliable available data" (2009: 61), while Lijphart argues that the principle problem facing the comparative method is that there are "many variables, [a] small number of cases" (1971: 685). These factors were

therefore taken into consideration when conducting this study, and only reliable outcomes were offered for comparison with only the most important variables focused on, and several cases used as part of the comparative study. Finally, it is worth noting that Lijphart argues that "given the inevitable scarcity of time, energy, and financial resources, the intensive comparative analysis of a few cases may be more promising than a more superficial statistical analysis of many cases" (1971: 685). Therefore the main focus of the research was on the case study location which was compared with a limited number of locations, such as Burnley and Stoke, where the BNP also experienced similar success at a local level.

The decision to use a case study approach was based on the idea that it would offer the researcher a method for the intense collection of data. It also enabled the researcher to use the data collected to test the variables and develop an understanding as to the reasons for the BNP's success by testing existing arguments in the literature as well as developing new arguments. There has been a large quantity of scholarly work produced relating to the case study approach (see for example Kelly 2012; Flyvbjerg 2006; Gerring 2004; Yin 1981; Lijphart 1971). Gerring states that a case study is "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" (2004: 342). This view is shared by Kelly who also highlights the advantages of the case study method stating that "they can generate or test hypotheses" and that "they allow us to gain detailed descriptions and understanding of a particular person, setting or event" (2012: 121). It is on Kelly's point that the case study approach was most fruitful in that it enabled this study to engage with Nuneaton voters and develop an understanding as to why they voted for the BNP in 2008.

There are of course other methods available to researchers, however as Flyvbjerg notes "the case study is a necessary and sufficient method for certain

important research tasks in the social sciences, and it is a method that holds up well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology" (2006: 242). This view was also shared by Lijphart who also stated that "the great advantage of the case study is that by focusing on a single case, that case can be intensively examined even when the research resources at the investigators disposal are relatively limited" (1971: 691). Indeed Nuneaton was extensively analysed and the data collected was used to test the main arguments for the success of the far right. It is also worth stating that in order to conduct this case study a mixed-method approach was taken in order to produce the data necessary to complete this research.

This chapter will now highlight the methods used to analyse the case study location, and how they were applied to test the variables highlighted in the chapter above (Socioeconomics, Immigration, Islamophobia, political opportunity structures, the role of the BNP, the media). In order to demonstrate the methods used to carry out this research, the following chapter will be divided into five sections. First, it will offer an overview of the methodological framework for this research, specifically showing why the mixed-method approach was taken. Second, it will focus on the analysis of the literature, secondary and primary sources, as well as statistical data which will be used to support the comparative analysis. It will then highlight the method of using questionnaires, and how the questionnaire was designed and distributed, offering a brief analysis of the questionnaire's efficacy. The next section focuses on interviews and focus groups, notably the use of semi-structured and group interviews in this study. Finally, this chapter will discuss the utility of using archival research, notably analysing the local and national newspapers. It will show how this

methodological framework was used to produce the data necessary to complete this thesis.

The Mixed-method approach

A mixed-method approach was determined to be the most suitable framework of research for this topic. This method was chosen because it maximises the data available, and produces a wide range of data collected from various sources, providing opportunities for comparison. It also provides the researcher with the best tools to investigate the subject from different angles, bringing together a range of views with the potential to generate new or different explanations. As Brewer and Hunter (1989) state, there is now "virtually no major problem-area that is studied exclusively within one method" (cited in Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998: 5). The benefits of a mixed-method approach was also highlighted by Creswell and Plano Clark who state that, "mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research" (2011: 13).

The main advantages of a mixed-method approach to this research are that it produces data and results for analysis, by combining a range of data sources and methods. It is also evident that analysing factors using one method stimulates further work, and enables the researcher to expand on the most important factors using other methods employed in the mixed-method approach. Indeed, "multimethod research offers the distinct advantage of quick, close coordination and comparison of different methods and their findings" (Brewer and Hunter 2005: 5). The combination of methods also offers testability and context into the research, and provides a wider range of data which could not be produced using just one method. Indeed, qualitative data can help clarify the meaning of the responses to the survey. The examination of

the literature also helped to narrow down the variables used in this research, which were tested in a broad sense via a questionnaire. This provided the materials to formulate more specific questions for the interviews and focus groups, which, in turn, helped pinpoint relevant data extracted from the archives.

Social scientists have analysed the role and importance of mixed-method approaches to research (Seale 2012; Creswell and Plano Clark 2011; Greene 2007). Creswell and Plano Clark argue that mixed-methods can "provide sound frameworks for collecting, analysing, mixing, interpreting and reporting quantitative and qualitative data to best address specific types of research purposes" (2011: 105). Greene also states that using more than one method provides "multiple ways of seeing and hearing" (Greene 2007: 20). This view is shared by Evans and King, who observe that the use of quantitative and qualitative research enables the researcher the chance to, "explain and understand social life" (2006: 125). In short, these scholars agree that the mixed-method approach is pragmatic, with the different methods providing an opportunity to investigate the same research questions from different perspectives. As Brewer and Hunter note,

> "this multimethod strategy is simple, but powerful. For if our various methods have weaknesses that are truly different, then their convergent findings can be accepted with far greater confidence than any single method's findings would warrant. Each new set of data increases our confidence that the research results reflect reality rather than methodological error" (2006: 5).

There are many arguments both for and against using mixed-methods, notably the differences between qualitative and quantitative methodological differences when conducting research and which is the most fruitful.[3] However, as Spicer states, "you should not assume that combined methods are inherently better than research based on

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[3] Refer to Spicer (2012: 479-490) who discusses the arguments for and against combining methods of research.

a single method in all circumstances, but combine qualitative and quantitative methods where this is appropriate to your research question" (2012: 490). It is on this final point that it was decided that a mixed-method approach would be used to produce the data in this case study. It enabled the researcher to test the existing research as well as look for new perspectives provided by the new data.

As part of the mixed-method approach applied in this study, a questionnaire, interviews, and archival research were used to gather data in order to test the most important variables. First a literature review was conducted in order to identify the test variables. The questionnaire was then used to collect data which would provide for quantifiable analysis of the variables. Interviews were used in order to capture the opinions and attitudes of Nuneaton voters and politicians. The interviews and focus groups were also used in order to expand on the data collected using the questionnaire, and provided qualitative data to test the variables. Statistical analysis was conducted as part of the review of the literature, as well as the analysis of both primary and secondary sources which were used to support this thesis. Finally, archival research was conducted to ascertain the data necessary for the examination of the media variable. The data produced using the research techniques above was used to test the variables important in the success of the far right. These are the methods that were utilised in this research, with the important addition of slightly more emphasis on utilising socio-economic data, along with a focus of an analysis of the media output for the final chapter.

The mixed-method approach used for this thesis enabled the study to examine the most important factors that have been significant in directing voter choices in Nuneaton. The mixed-method approach to research was also significant in producing data which highlights the social and political factors that helped galvanise BNP

support in 2008, and demonstrate that no single factor can be put forward to explain the success of the far right. It is evident that despite the scale of existing literature on the far right breakthrough there is still a lack of analysis accounting for local variations that affect support for the far right in Britain. Therefore, this analysis will investigate the variables that have been important in galvanising support for the far right in a particular area, and determine the factors which are potentially unique to Nuneaton. The next sections will now look at these methodological techniques in greater detail.

Academic Literature Review and Statistical Data analysis

Secondary sources

An analysis of secondary sources was central to the formulation of this thesis. Indeed, the first task of this project was assessing the existing academic work on the breakthrough of the far right in order to single out the most important demand and supply side explanations of this breakthrough.

One of the most important aspects of this research was testing the existing literature analysing far right breakthrough. Therefore the overriding criteria for selecting relevant variables led the researcher to concentrate on the academic consensus, specifically which should be tested in any explanation of far right breakthrough. The six variables chosen had thus been repeatedly tested, historically, comparatively and nationally, in order to seek an understanding. It is the case that some variables had been assessed more widely than others. For example immigration, socioeconomics, political opportunity structures (POS) and the role of the far right party are the principle variables in any analysis of the far right. However, more recently, studies have begun to analyse other variables in greater detail, including the

media and Islamophobia. As shown in the review of the literature, the national tradition variable was omitted. This was based on previous studies of the far right in Britain which have indicated a lack of national tradition of far right parties in Britain on a scale witnessed in countries such as Italy and France, and the lack of evidence to support the testing of this particular variable. What are left are the six most widely supported variables highlighted across the existing literature. It is these six issues that were tested in the Nuneaton case study, and which individually form the focus of the six substantive chapters of this thesis.

Published primary sources

The importance of the published primary material has also been highlighted in the literature in the previous chapter. For example, Creswell states that the literature in a research study is important because, "it provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study, as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other findings" (1994: 21). This view was also shared by May who observes that this data, "enable us to understand the dynamics of society – perhaps along race, class, age and gender lines – as well as charting trends within society" (2001: 73). Therefore, the research of both primary and secondary sources for this study was significant.

The significance of the analysis of primary and statistical sources is evident in the data it produced to support this study. For example, understanding the demographics and characteristics of the case study population was an essential element of the archival research and provided a comparison with other locations which have experienced BNP breakthrough. There is a considerable amount of information available on the demographic characteristics of the case study location.

This included information on the local population's age, gender, race, and socioeconomic background. These data were provided by state run organisations, and various agencies working on the local and national government behalf. For example, demographic data is provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which provides local and national data, including the census and local output data relating to a number of social areas, such as poverty, housing, education and crime. More specific local data was also provided by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and the Warwickshire Observatory[4]. This examination of the demographic data was important because it enabled the researcher to test the theory highlighted in the literature, which indicated that particular social and economic conditions must be present for the far right to succeed.

Primary published sources used to compliment this thesis were also provided by various anti-fascist organisations explaining BNP breakthrough, and the BNP themselves. The analysis of the BNP literature provided a large amount of material. This literature was collected during the course of this analysis, and was available from online archives which included BNP affiliated sites. Indeed, understanding the role of the party, its leader, the modernisation of the BNP and local BNP campaigns was important in this study. Examination of the BNP included the use of the main BNP website, which has a significant amount of online materials, Nuneaton councillor Martyn Findley's website and blog for Barpool, access to sites such as Spearhead, which was the main site of former leader John Tyndall, and through the BNP magazine *The Voice of Freedom,* of which copies have been resourced or are available online. Material was also produced by accessing archives which included online election materials and data on the BNP, through groups such as

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[4] Warwickshire Observatory provides information and intelligence about Warwickshire and its people. They are a centre of excellence in research, data collection and analysis, supporting evidence-based policy-making across the public sector in Warwickshire. They have conducted many localized studies which provide important data to support this research.

Electionleaflets.org, Searchlight, United Against Fascism, and Hope-Not-Hate. These sources were important in providing supporting evidence for arguments made in this thesis. Therefore extensive research was conducted throughout this study of online materials and printed material in order to test any argument made or to corroborate and compare the findings from this case study. Indeed it presented another dimension to the data produced in this study. This focused primarily on material relating to the breakthrough of the far right, but also on data which would strengthen the analysis of Nuneaton as part of the comparative analysis, and enable the testing of the main variables. The researcher also made use of organisations such as Zetoc, which is a monitoring and search service for global research publications, as well as organisations such as the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Institute for Race Relations (IRR) which provided valuable updates on research and publications beneficial to this study. The data collected were then analysed as part of the mixed-method approach and were used to support and strengthen the findings produced by the questionnaire and the interviews.

This does not mean that consideration should not be paid to the weaknesses of some sources. Indeed, all researchers should understand how statistics are constructed and for what purpose. This is necessary in order to avoid any assumptions about social life derived from the data. In fact, there is increasing concern amongst some social scientists over the government's control of official statistics. For example, one particular problem with the use of government statistics is the political manipulation of figures, evident in the production of crime figures, with only certain crimes being recorded, and others being excluded (see May 2001: 86). However, while consideration will be paid to potential problems, for the purpose of this research the

data were used to verify the quantitative and qualitative data produced by the other methods outlined below.

Questionnaires

One important element of the mixed-method approach was the construction, distribution and analysis of a questionnaire. The questionnaire represents one element of the mixed-method approach and was applied in order to test the variables. The data collected were used to develop an understanding of the BNP's success in Nuneaton, test the explanations in the existing literature, and strengthen the argument and conclusions drawn from the analysis of the qualitative data.

As highlighted, previous studies have used questionnaires as a method for collecting primary data, taking the form of small localised surveys or nationwide surveys. Social surveys as an analytical tool were important to this research. Indeed, questionnaires have become a tried and tested method for obtaining quantitative data from individuals, relating to their opinions and views on particular issues and themes. Questionnaires have been widely used by governments and businesses, in the form of the census and market research. They offer a technique which can be used to produce a significant amount of data from respondents. They are usually inexpensive to administer, and the data can be analysed efficiently, and relatively quickly, once questionnaires are returned. As Wilkinson and Birmingham state, questionnaires can provide an effective and cheap method for the collection of data in a "structured and manageable form" (2003: 7). This view is shared by Arksey and Knight who state that; "questionnaires can also be used as a quick and dirty way of getting a sense of the issues to be explained in interviews" (1999: 33). Therefore, the questionnaire was

selected due to its relative simplicity to construct, its cost effectiveness, and the abundance of data it provides.

The use of questionnaires is not without criticisms. For example, there are problems of deciding who should be included in the sample, limitations on the data collected, and that mail or self-completion surveys often have low response rates. Buckingham and Saunders have a contrasting view, stating that "questionnaires are quite limited in the kinds of information they can generate, and the weaknesses of a questionnaire survey can sometimes be complemented by the strengths of some other research techniques" (2004: 44). Taking these factors into account, a questionnaire was selected for the purpose of a mixed-method approach. The significance of the mixed-method approach was highlighted by Wilkinson and Birmingham who state that "a well-planned and well-executed questionnaire campaign can produce rich data in a format ready for analysis and simple interpretation" (2003: 8). Moreover, any negative aspects introduced into the analysis by this method are mitigated by the fact that other research techniques are used alongside the questionnaire as part of the mixed-method approach. Focus within the next section will look at the design and distribution of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire design

The main aim of the questionnaire (Appendix II) was to develop an understanding of why people vote for a particular party in a particular area. The design of the questionnaire, which included the selection of the questions, how they are written, their layout, piloting, and the distribution and return of the questionnaire, is important if it is to be considered an effective tool in the research process. This is a point argued by Wilkinson and Birmingham who state that "well-designed questionnaires can

allow relationships between the data to be identified" (2003: 39). The significance of questionnaire design was also indicated by May, who stated that "they must be turned into questions that respondents can understand and are able to answer", and that "having collected and analysed the data, the researcher is then in a position to decide whether the hypotheses have been confirmed or falsified and what this means for the theory" (2001: 91).

A further key factor is deciding on how the data collected from the questionnaire will be analysed. For the purpose of this study the data was analysed using the statistics software package, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The design of the questionnaire was imperative for this research, and offered the best method of producing inexpensive, quality data. Indeed, the questionnaire was designed with the purpose of providing data to test the variables highlighted in the literature. The aim of the questionnaire was to examine patterns that developed from the responses, and test relationships between the main variables. An online questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data for comparison as it was decided that this was the most practical and simplest way to collect and process the data.

In order to test the variables the questionnaire was designed drawing on the most important questions which had been used in previous questionnaires and replicated. It therefore drew upon the work completed in previous studies (Goodwin and Evans 2012; Ford and Goodwin 2010; Rhodes 2009; John *et al.* 2006; Mclaren and Johnson 2004). For example, particular questions relating to demographics, the social and economic background of respondents and voting history were included. It also sought to build on some of the ideas that were developing in this research and in the literature relating to fear and rising Islamophobia, and the questionnaire included a question specifically aimed at generating data that would test the argument that fear of

Muslims was an important driver of BNP support in Nuneaton. It also utilised the *Survey Question Bank* which provides a list of relevant and replicated questions, as well as access to data collected using government surveys.[5] The design of the questionnaire remained focused on simplicity which was important for understanding and ease of completion. The questionnaire was divided into three sections; *About you, About Your Vote,* and a final section called *Your View*. It was designed in this way in order to provide the opportunity to test some of the most important variables that were identified in the literature and it has been argued are necessary for any far right 'breakthrough' or local success.

The questionnaire also used a variety of methods and approaches to questioning. This included closed questions (simple yes or no, male or female), multiple choice questions (respondents will be given a choice of answers) and limited open-ended questions. The use of open-ended questions enabled respondents to express themselves freely, and provide the opportunity to respond to questions, and provide answers, which is not possible with closed questions. Oppenheim states that open-ended questions give people the chance to "say what they think and do so with greater richness and spontaneity" (1992: 81). This view was shared by May who observes that "open questions give respondents a greater freedom to answer the question because they answer in a way that suits their interpretation" (2001: 102). This spontaneity provided a response of unexpected richness for this work evident in the qualitative data produce from the final section *Your View*. The questionnaire also utilised the Likert scale (1932), which enabled the participant to respond using a scale

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[5] The *Survey Data Bank* is a single point of access to a wide range of secondary data including large-scale government surveys, qualitative studies and census data from 1971 to 2011. The *Survey Bank* also promotes data sharing to encourage the reuse of data, and provide expertise in developing best practice for research data management.

of one to five possible responses. These ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

When designing the questionnaire in this study, the length and the time it takes to complete the survey were also considered. Wilkinson and Birmingham state that "as a general rule of thumb, a questionnaire should take no more than about twenty minutes to complete" (2003: 16). This is due in part to the need to keep questionnaire respondents focused and engaged with the subject of the survey and therefore more inclined to complete it. The Nuneaton questionnaire was designed so that all of the questions would take between 10-15 minutes to answer online. This was proven and streamlined through the use of piloting. The questionnaire was piloted amongst colleagues from a range of disciplines and used a number of browsers in order to test its usability. Indeed, piloting the questionnaire was an important element of the design, offering the opportunity to correct mistakes and ambiguities in the questionnaire layout. Although most inaccuracies were identified, as will be indicated in chapter three, one minor correction to the questionnaire was not identified during the pilot, with the age of 36 being included in two age categories, 25-36 and 36-48. Piloting enabled the researcher to test the online questionnaire, which included the time it took to complete the questions. This enabled the survey to be altered accordingly, including the format of the questions and the order in which they should appear. It was important to focus on what this study wanted to examine, what data were required, and whether the target population of the questionnaire would inform this research. However, although the pilot was tested using a number of browsers, such as Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer, it soon became evident that some browsers did not work correctly when the questionnaire went live. This meant that

some users were unable to access the questionnaire. The exact number of potential respondents who experienced issues with their browsers is unknown.

Selecting a sample

Alongside designing the questionnaire, another important aspect was deciding on the sample. This was vital in producing data fundamental to the understanding of the BNP success in 2008. For instance, the sample was aimed at representing the target population. A good sample can help improve response rates and ensure the data will be valid. To ensure this many factors were considered, including the degree of accuracy, variation in population, levels of measurement and the extent to which sub-groups will be analysed (Blaikie 2000: 208). Therefore, the sampling method used was an important aspect of this research.

There are many types of probability sampling, and this technique was applied when deciding the sample. Indeed, Buckingham and Saunders argue that "you should consider using probability sampling wherever this is feasible" (2004: 124). One of the main reasons offered is that probability sampling is viewed as more likely to provide representativeness when compared with non-probability sampling (Seale 2012: 135). The types of probability sampling include, simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, and multi-stage cluster sampling. For the purpose of this research it was decided that the simple random sampling system would be used. This form of probability sampling was applied to a selection of registered electors taken from the full edited electoral register in Nuneaton, with all having the equal probability of inclusion in the sample, and a chance to receive a posted invitation to take part in the online questionnaire. This section of the local population was targeted because the aim is to understand voting patterns and why

people vote for particular parties. It is for this reason that the electoral register was used. Drawing a sample from the population of Nuneaton, looking at their characteristics, and making a generalisation from this sample about Nuneaton, was important if the questionnaire was going to produce the data required. Therefore, every one of voting age, representative of the population who were on the edited electoral register in Nuneaton, had an equal chance of being selected.

The size of the sample was also an important challenge for the researcher. Sampling size has been examined by scholars, such as Blaikie who argues that, "a common misunderstanding in sampling is that a sample must be some fixed proportion of the population, such as 10 per cent" while too small a sample "can produce inaccurate generalisations" (2000: 208-209). Considering this factor, it was decided to send invitations to as many potential voters as possible to increase the validity of the sample.

In order to inform potential participants of the online questionnaire, invitations were distributed in Nuneaton using the postal service (Appendix I). The questionnaire invitations were sent out to an equal number of electors (1500) in the eight wards in Nuneaton. The completed questionnaire was then published online using *Google Docs Coventry* (see Appendix II).[6] This also included a link which allowed participants to take part in a free prize draw, an incentive for participants, and it was hoped this would increase the number of respondents. The final number of invitations distributed was 12,000, which equates to around one in three of the electors on the edited electoral register. The sample was selected from members of the public who potentially would vote in 2012 and those who had voted in 2008. The sample was selected using the edited version of the electoral register, which consisted of over

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[6] The online survey was conducted using Google Docs which is a free Web-based application in which questionnaires, documents and spreadsheets can be created, edited and stored online.

31,000 names and addresses of residents in Nuneaton who were registered to vote. Then using a simple random sampling tool, potential voters were selected, with an equal number sent via the postal services, inviting participants to take part in the online survey, using a shortened link to the questionnaire. A copy of the invitation leaflet is reproduced in Appendix I, which invited electors to take part in the online questionnaire. It is worth noting here that the invitation did provide a telephone number for respondents of the invitation to call if they could not complete the online questionnaire and required a paper copy.

The Questionnaire data and Response

This section will highlight the questions used in the questionnaire, and the data it sought to collect. Due to the large amount of data produced by the questionnaire it was important to remain focused on what the thesis is attempting to find. This was necessary if the researcher is to avoid being 'swamped' by data, and in order to remain focused on developing an understanding of the results produced by the data.

The first section of the questionnaire, *About You*, was aimed primarily at collecting demographic data, which is an important starting point in any quantitative study. This enabled the researcher to gather participants' demographic data relating, for example, to gender, race, age, education, and employment status. The second section *About Your Vote* was designed in such a way that it provided the opportunity to collect rich data for this research project. It began by asking who the respondent voted for in 2008 and 2012, specifically why they voted for a particular party or local candidate. This included questions relating to socio-economics, law and order, immigration, variables relevant to testing the explanations in the literature. The final section, *Your View* offered respondents' the opportunity to provide a qualitative

response to why they voted for a particular party or candidate, which was not asked specifically in the questionnaire. This section provided some rich qualitative responses, which were important in the understanding of voting behaviour and attitudes in Nuneaton.

One important element when conducting any research using a questionnaire is the response rate. Considering the size of the sample selected, 12,000, and the fact that a prize draw was included in order to improve response rates, the overall response was low, with only 308 responses received. Reasons offered for the low response rate can be related to the exceptionally low turnout of around 20 per cent for the local elections, which may have had a detrimental effect on the questionnaire, and indicated the level of apathy at the time. A further explanation for the low response rate could be related to the use of an online questionnaire. For instance, many people are unwilling to fill out an online questionnaire due to fears they would not remain anonymous. Moreover, as stated earlier, in the immediate period following the distribution of the invitation, the researcher received queries from some respondents who found that their browser would not allow them to open the online questionnaire. This was not evident in the pilot when using the browsers Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer. Nevertheless, the questionnaire remains an important element of the methodological framework. The relatively low response rate, around 2.5 per cent, still offers important and comprehensive data for analysis and a 2 to 3 per cent response rate is not uncommon, considering the questionnaire was an unsolicited request amongst a randomised sample. More significant for this research was that analysis of the 308 responses enabled the researcher to collect demographic data and identified significant findings in relation to testing the variables, which will be highlighted in the following chapters.

In terms of who responded, the questionnaire did provide a representative sample. For example, the gender split of the sample was around 60 per cent male and 40 per cent female. As far as the ages of respondents were concerned, around 55 per cent of all respondents were between the ages 36 and 64 years old. As will be indicated in the following chapter, the age groups and gender of the participants does, according to the data provided by the Nuneaton and Bedworth District Profile (2009), generally reflect the age and gender of the population in Nuneaton (Refer to chapter 2, pp.139-141). Therefore, the sample should be considered reliable and representative of the population in Nuneaton.

Interviews and focus groups

As part of the mixed-method approach, interviews and focus groups were also used. Interviews are an important qualitative technique, and this has been highlighted in the literature. Henn, Weinstein and Foard (2006) argue that interviews help the researcher capture opinions and points of view, and that interviews help to substantiate and inform the research collected from books, journals, newspapers and other secondary and primary written materials. Punch also argues that interviews are an important tool for the researcher, stating that they are "a very good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is also one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others" (1998: 174-5). This view is also shared by Byrne who states that "qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire" (2012: 209).

As with the questionnaires, the interviews proved a core element of the research methodology. However, unlike questionnaires, interviews allowed interviewees to be more expressive, and as Wilkinson and Birmingham state, "participants often see interviews as opportunities to voice opinions and 'let off steam' about subjects" (2003: 63). This is a view shared by Bell who states that the interview can "yield rich material and put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses" (Bell 2005: 157). Indeed, the best way to find out why a person voted for a particular party is to ask them the question. The interview process enhanced the data collected for this research, and produced data which helped explain the recent success of the far right in Nuneaton. It also enabled the researcher to corroborate and build upon the questionnaire data.

Analysis of the literature indicates that generally there are four main types of interviews in social research. These are the structured interview, the semi-structured interview, the unstructured interview and the group interview. For the purpose of this research semi-structured interviews and group interviews were selected. For the semi-structured interview (one-to-one interviews) questions were standardised for consistency. The adopted approach allowed the interviewer freedom to further question the respondents in more detail. The group interviews (focus groups) were designed to encourage participants to discuss with one another particular subjects.

The benefits of one-to-one interviews and focus groups will now be discussed. First, regarding focus groups, scholars have highlighted the benefits of this interviewing technique. For example, May notes that focus groups allow for the researcher to explore group norms and dynamics on subjects they are analysing (May 2001: 121-126). Punch also shares this view and suggests that "well facilitated group interaction can assist in bringing to the surface aspects of a situation which might

otherwise not be exposed", and that "this makes group interviews an attractive data gathering option when research is trying to probe those aspects of people's behaviour" (1998: 177). This view is shared by Flick who states that, "participants are likely to express more and go further in their statements than in single interviews" (2011:118). Similarly this view is also shared by Wilkinson and Birmingham who argues that in focus groups the "discussion will be richer, deeper and more honest and incisive than any interview with a single participant could produce" (2003: 92). This does not mean the focus group does not have disadvantages. For example, unlike one-to-one interviews they do not provide in-depth and personal information and there can be participants who dominate discussion and do not allow other participants to participate fully. It was for this reason that two interview techniques were used to collect qualitative responses.

In relation to one-to-one interviews, like the focus groups, they were used to gather information on participants' opinions, attitudes and test relationships between variables. Scholars have highlighted why interviews are an important technique for research. For example, Arksey and Knight state that "interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been explicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings" (1999: 32). This view was shared by Gray, who also states that interviews allow the participants "an opportunity to reflect on events without having to commit themselves in writing, often because they feel the information may be confidential" (2004: 214). Therefore, interviews were an important tool in allowing responses to be clarified. As Arksey and Knight note "interviews are one method by which the human world may be explained, although it is the world of beliefs and meanings, not of actions, that is clarified by interview research", (1999: 15).

Analysis of this research technique highlights particular problems with interviews, notably the problem of its reliability. Indeed, when interviewing the researcher is relying on the participant to remember facts and memories from elections from several years before. There is also the problem that some voters may exaggerate particular issues. One way this was avoided was to highlight particular themes, language and responses which were similar, or in many cases the same when analysing transcripts. These responses offered the researcher data of greater value due to its replication. However, there is no guarantee on validity and reliability of research. This is where mixed-method approach applied in this study can help to eliminate these potential problems.

Taking potential problems into account, the data were produced through the use of one-to-one interviews with local politicians, community leaders, BNP members and activists, and voters in Nuneaton. The use of semi-structured interviews gave the interviewer the opportunity to question interviewees, but also enabled the interviewees the opportunity to share their views without any restrictions. The interviewees were encouraged to relate their own reasons for the success of the far right in Nuneaton, within an environment where they felt comfortable to express any views. This method also allowed the interviews to flow naturally, with the aim of achieving a true reflection of the interviewees' sentiments relating to the main variables. These were designed in such a way as not to deter recipients during the interviews from answering as truthfully as possible. The data collected through the one-to-one interviews was important in testing the explanations for the breakthrough of the BNP in Nuneaton.

One of the major problems of any study into the British far right is the problem of finding participants, who are at first willing to admit supporting the far

right, and second, willing to explain truthfully their reasons for giving electoral support to a far right party. This was one of the most difficult areas of this analysis. For example, encouraging BNP councillors, activists, members, and voters to participate, offered many challenges. First, BNP councillors proved the most reluctant to be interviewed. In fact, after several attempts to contact the councillors the idea that these interviews could be secured was abandoned. There is a reluctance of the councillors to talk to academics because of a perceived mistrust of the establishment, which Universities are more than often linked to. Although interviewing the two councillors at the heart of the BNP's 2008 electoral victory in Nuneaton would have been of considerable benefit, it is the views of electors that most needed to be captured in order to inform this thesis. Alongside other electors and activists of other parties, the study interviewed one former BNP activist, and several BNP members and voters (refer to Appendix I for full participant list).

Recruitment for the one-to-one interviews was important. Participants were invited to take part using the online documents attached to the questionnaire, including a link to an invitation to take part in one-to-one interviews and focus groups. Although this did not prove as fruitful as anticipated amongst BNP supporters, some Labour voters were recruited for the focus groups via this method. Potential voters were also contacted using local contacts in Nuneaton and through local community meetings. This proved more positive, with eight BNP voters, members and activists taking part. The two local Labour councillors, the local Member of Parliament, and one local community leader were approached directly, and also agreed to participate.

In addition to one-to-one interviews, this study benefited from the data produced by two focus groups. The first focus group included four participants which

included one BNP voter, two Labour Party voters, and one who voted Independent. The second focus group included three Labour party voters. The two focus groups were set up to discuss many of the points that were raised in the returned questionnaires, and expand on particular areas of analysis. They differed from the one-to-one interviews in that they enabled participants with different views to discuss the issues raised in this study, which was important in recall-aiding and in participants stimulating responses which may otherwise have been omitted in a one-to-one scenario.

Alongside identifying the most appropriate methods for this research, the study also paid attention to its ethical responsibilities. In particular, concerns regarding confidentiality and accessibility were considered. Ethical approval was gained from Coventry University in 2011. Prior to any interview taking place, informants were advised of the study's objectives, how the data would be used, that they were guaranteed anonymity, and they could withdraw at any time. This was set out clearly in the participant information sheet, which was also accompanied by an informed consent form. The form asked participants if they had read the participant information sheet, understood that the participation was voluntary and could withdraw at any time without reason, and that all information was treated in the strictest confidence. It also stated clearly that all data would be recorded, anonymised, transcribed, and then the recording destroyed.

Once the interviews and focus groups were completed they were transcribed in full. The transcripts were then analysed. The interview data was examined using a conventional content analysis.[7] The analysis began by reading all the qualitative data collected, key words and themes were then highlighted, and relationships between the

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[7] For further details relating to the conventional content analysis and thematic content analysis refer to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), and Seale (2012: 366-392).

data were established. This included a full examination of the key themes relating to the main variables this study was testing. This data was then analysed again indicating themes which were replicated in the qualitative responses. While analysing the transcripts it also became evident that other themes began to emerge. For example it became clear that there was a fear of Muslims and Islam in the responses from BNP supporters. These findings were very significant for this study and provided valuable data which highlighted the link between Islamophobia and support for the BNP in Nuneaton.

Through the use of interviews and focus groups it was possible to produce data which were used to test the importance of the variables in this study. The interviews and focus groups were used to demonstrate the link between particular variables and increasing BNP support in the area. Indeed, using the results gathered from the interviews and focus groups, the case will be made that immigration, Islamophobia and the media were of greater significant in explaining support for the BNP. The next section will now focus on archival research, and how this will be applied to this analysis.

Archival research

A final research technique applied to support this thesis was the analysis of the archival data. Archival research was required due to the integration of various materials and documents relating to this research. This included the analysis of textual material and digital texts. These resources were varied in their type and number, and were available from a range of sources. This includes a substantial amount of primary and secondary sources, which were accessed in the production of data for this study.

This next section will highlight the archival research conducted, and how important this technique was to this study.

There was a range of sources available, which were used to support this research. These sources included local newspapers available from online archives, archives available on microfilm, and national newspapers available online and collected in the course of this research. In order to utilise these sources of data the local newspaper archives were searched. These were accessed using the digital archives, available online and the local archives in Nuneaton central library, which are stored on microfilm.

As highlighted in the literature review, examination of previous studies demonstrates that some scholars support the view that tabloid hysteria surrounding immigration, asylum and Islamophobia had benefited the BNP (Goodwin 2011b; John *et al.* 2006; Eatwell 2003; Renton 2003). This is because as Goodwin notes, BNP voters "tend to read tabloid newspapers which are hostile toward immigration, namely the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *The Sun*. In 2009, nationally more than half of BNP voters read one of these newspapers (or the *Daily Star*), suggesting that xenophobic coverage is an important factor in understanding what drives support for the extreme right" (2011b: 107). Therefore, this study also tested the explanations in the literature, which shows the BNP voters read certain tabloids in order to demonstrate that this was also replicated in Nuneaton amongst BNP voters.

In order to carry out the analysis of the media, archival research was necessary. This included research of the local and national newspapers. These sources were used to provide data for analysis, relating to the salience of news stories which can help explain the growth in support for the BNP prior to the elections in Nuneaton in 2008. The main local newspapers were analysed first, utilising the archives based

in Nuneaton, and newspaper articles available online. Examples of the local newspapers that were used for this analysis include the *Heartland Evening News (*which became the *Nuneaton News* in 2009), as well as the *Coventry Telegraph.* Issues of the *Coventry Telegraph* are available online, between 2001 and 2012, whereas the *Heartland Evening News* (*Nuneaton News*) was available on microfilm at Nuneaton Central Library. The analysis of the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* was detailed, and included a key word search on 13 years of newspapers, printed daily, between 1999 and 2012. This period was chosen because in 1999 Nick Griffin became leader of the BNP and began his modernisation process, and 2012 witnessed the BNP vote collapse in the town. Focus then turns to news stories from the main national tabloid newspapers. The newspapers at a national level which were analysed included tabloids, *The Sun, Daily Mail, Daily Express* and *Daily Star.* These were to a large extent available through online digital archives. These were used to analyse the media and its effect on BNP support in Nuneaton. Deciding on which newspapers to analyse was based on those papers which previous analyses have indicated tended to be read by BNP voters (Goodwin 2011b). Moreover, the newspapers chosen are also amongst the top ten most read newspapers, according to the National Readership Survey conducted in 2013. However it is worth noting here that not all newspapers used as part of the discourse analysis in chapter eight were included on the questionnaire. Two newspapers which are in the top ten most read national newspapers, the Daily Express and the Daily Telegraph, were not included. Whilst not an exhaustive list of newspapers was used, those used do provide a snapshot of the most popular tabloids read by voters and further analysis of the interview data does suggest that the newspapers were amongst those which BNP

voters typically tend to read. Indeed the data produced and analysed in chapter eight does indicate that BNP voters tend to read the main tabloids.

Analysing the data produced for this study of the media involved both a content and discourse analysis of printed and written media sources. The content and discourse analysis were very important elements of the research conducted. According to Kolbe and Burnett a content analysis is "an observational research method that is used to systematically evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communication. These communications can also be analysed at many levels (image, word, roles, etc.), thereby creating a realm of research opportunities" (1991: 243). Many scholars have analysed and discussed the benefits of a content analysis. For instance, Krippendorff stated that a content analysis provides "aggregate accounts of inferences from large bodies of data that reveal trends, patterns and differences" (1989: 404) and that it "may also parallel other research techniques and check or shed light on the validity of either's findings" (1989: 406). This view was also shared by Elo and Kyngäs who argued that a "content analysis allows the researcher to test theoretical issues to enhance understanding of the data" (2008: 107). A further justification for the use of content analysis when examining the newspaper content has also been offered. For example a content analysis was chosen because as Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken note, it is "specifically appropriate and necessary for (arguably) the central work of communication scholars, in particular those who study mass communication: the analysis of messages" (2002: 587), a viewed also mirrored in the work of Krippendorff who states that "content analysis is indigenous to communication research and is potentially one of the most important techniques in the social sciences" (1989: 403). In fact Krippendorff notes that "content analysis allows researchers to establish their own context for inquiry, thus

opening the door to a rich repertoire of social-scientific constructs by which texts may become meaningful in ways that a culture may not be aware of" (1989: 404). However, there are challenges to content analysis which were considered. Elo and Kyngäs 2008 note that one challenge of content analysis is "the fact that it is very flexible and there is no simple, 'right' way of doing it" (2008: 113).[8] Nevertheless, with these limitations considered a content analysis was conducted as part of this study, and it remains a valuable tool when analysing newspaper content. This was highlighted by Seale and Tonkiss who state that content analysis is a clear and systematic way to study data for both analysis and interpretation, but more importantly it has a "high degree of validity reliability in terms of precise sampling, providing clear empirical evidence for research findings, and in allowing for replication and generalisation" (2012: 460).

The first element of the newspaper content analysis involved simply analysing the appearance of particular words or themes. This is referred to as a manifest content analysis and was focused primarily on the usage of particular words in the local newspapers (Tonkiss 2012; Hsieh and Shannon 2005: Downe-Wamboldt 1992). Tonkiss states that the "common starting point for analysis is to locate key categories, themes and terms" and that "identifying recurrent or significant themes can help you to manage the data and bring a more systematic order to the analytic process" (2012: 413). In order to analyse the written press the keywords or themes for this research were derived from the interview data and questionnaire data. The five reoccurring key words or themes were immigration, asylum, Islam, Muslim and terrorism, and this represented the coding scheme used to analyse the local newspapers. The main aim of the content analysis was to determine whether there was a rise or fall in the number of

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[8] For further examination of the limitations of content analysis, specifically commitment to be quantitative and replicability, refer to Krippendorff (1989).

stories in the local written newspapers and online news relating to the five key themes. In fact as the findings indicated in chapter eight, the number of stories increased dramatically following the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001.

Following the content analysis a detailed examination of the discourse was conducted. The use of discourse analysis in this study was also important. As Alvesson and Karreman note, "language (and language use) is increasingly being understood as the most important phenomenon, accessible for empirical investigation, in social and organisational research" (2000: 1126). There is of course debate on exactly what the word discourse means. However, as Starks and Trinidad state, "the objective of a discourse analysis is to understand what people are doing with their language in a given situation. Thus, the coding phase for a discourse analysis entails identifying themes and roles as signified through language use" (2007: 1376). Therefore the coding for chapter eight, which looked at the written press, was applied based on specific themes. This focused on specific stories relating to the five key themes. The aim of the discourse analysis was to demonstrate how the press reported on the five themes including the demonising of immigrants and coverage of the BNP in the local written press. Choosing the stories which reflected discourse in relation to the five themes was conducted by printing and analysing all stories written on the five themes in the local press and through a search of the national press reporting on these issues. What the analysis of the newspaper discourse demonstrated was evidence of systematic 'othering' and Islamophobia. A detailed examination of the newspaper discourse will be offered in chapter eight.

This data was also used to test the effects of the 'perceived' immigration problem, national perceptions relating to bogus asylum seekers, and rising

Islamophobia. It analysed both local and national press coverage during the first decade of the twenty first century, focusing primarily on the reporting of immigration and asylum. This work also benefited from BNP material and election data for the local area. As shown above, the role of the media was important. The production of the empirical data from the archival research enabled this research to test the variables, alongside the data produced by the other methods applied in this thesis. It is evident that no one data set provides all the necessary information, but rather data was used and applied to each individual variable, in a valid and justified method.

Summary

This chapter has set out the methodological framework that was followed in this research, and was essential to complete this research. It utilised the techniques outlined in this chapter including questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and archival research in order to produce the data required. It demonstrates how the data was collected and applied to test the explanations for the success of the BNP in 2008.

Through the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, this study seeks to shed new light on the theoretical arguments, and add to the existing knowledge that has sought to explain why the far right were attracting a wider support. This chapter has offered an overview of the questionnaire, why it was used, how it was designed, and how the data were collected. Analysis of this data in the subsequent chapters was used to strengthen and test the argument that a particular set of variables must be in place if the far right are to experience any level of electoral success. Testing the variables using the questionnaire, interview techniques and archival research, also allowed the data to be triangulated. On reflection, the most disappointing aspect of collecting the data, using the questionnaire and interview

techniques, was the low response rate and the reluctance of former BNP councillors to participate, although this is not surprising considering the level of questionnaire fatigue and apathy. However, this does not mean that these methods should not have been used to produce data, or that the data collected is any less valid. The data produced offered the researcher the opportunity to develop ideas and themes in the focus groups and interviews. It is these individual and group interviews that provided the richest primary data. Archival research and the literature analysis also complimented the other research techniques, and highlighted the arguments, tested the explanations, and demonstrated the relationship between variables. In fact it is possible to draw many positives from the data collected, as the following chapters demonstrate.

Applying the methodology set out in this chapter, enabled this study to highlight and test the main factors that were imperative in the success of the BNP in the Barpool and Camp Hill wards of Nuneaton in the 2008 local elections. It focused specifically on the variables, immigration, unemployment, political disaffection and corruption, fragmentation, the role of the BNP and its leader, the media, political opportunity structures, and the analysis of rising Islamophobia in order to understand further why the BNP succeeded in 2008. The Nuneaton data was put into context with the broader political environment, and through comparison of local studies that have been completed on BNP breakthrough. The findings from this test of the literature will be presented in the following chapters.

Chapter 3

Socioeconomics and the BNP in Nuneaton

As seen in the previous review of the literature, the link between socioeconomics and the rise of the far right continues to be viewed as an important explanation of success. Indeed, this was highlighted by Eatwell in his economic interest thesis which looked at the association between far right voting and economic interests (2003: 56). Scholars have also analysed the social and economic profile of BNP voters (Harrison and Bruter 2011; Ford and Goodwin 2010: Rhodes 2009; John *et al.* 2006). Ford and Goodwin (2010) argued in their study, that BNP supporters have a clear social profile: "they are predominantly middle-aged working-class men with few educational qualifications. Although they are concentrated in working-class jobs, BNP voters are not particularly poor – they are no more likely to live in government-provided housing, and are only slightly more likely to be unemployed" (2010: 3). Moreover, Harrison and Bruter argue that it is "socio-economic problems such as widespread unemployment, large scale deindustrialisation, inflationary pressures, a widening gap between rich and poor all seem to build up frustration and anxiety about what the future may hold, providing a fertile ground for parties of the extreme right" (2011: 13). This chapter will test these explanations using current theories in the literature and using the data available for Nuneaton. More significantly to this research, it will test the theory that specific socioeconomic factors can help provide 'fertile' ground for the far right. It will serve to test the first suggested demand-side explanation of the rise of the BNP, assessing whether evidence from Nuneaton supports the socioeconomic hypothesis advanced by the authors highlighted above.

In order to test these socioeconomic explanations, this chapter will concentrate on how voters ranked social and economic issues. Moreover, the social and economic

environment in which the BNP gained electoral success in 2008, and how the economic circumstances of voters influenced their decision to vote for a particular party will be examined. First, the chapter will analyse the social and economic data relating to Nuneaton. Second, it will examine unemployment and the effects of the economic downturn on voter choice. The focus will then turn to the link between social class and BNP support, analysing employment, housing and education. Finally, an analysis of whether BNP voters are more greatly represented by a particular age group within society is offered. Throughout this work the analysis will demonstrate that although most BNP voters in Nuneaton represent 'a particular social group', it does not offer any evidence for why they supported the far right, rather it demonstrates how socioeconomic factors in Nuneaton were beneficial to the BNP.

All together, the analysis undertaken within these four sections suggests that although the BNP voters do indeed belong to a 'particular' social group, belonging to this social group is not in itself an explanation for supporting this party. It is a case of socioeconomic factors providing a suitable and required environment for strong BNP support, but they are not a central catalyst persuading voters to vote in this manner. It is a case of socioeconomic factors in Nuneaton providing 'fertile ground' for the BNP to exploit, but, as it will be seen, the variables assessed in the following chapters of this thesis offer more immediate explanations for the BNP's 2008 success.

Deprivation, Poverty and Unemployment in Nuneaton

This section will offer an analysis of the social and economic data available for Nuneaton. Like many other parts of the country where the BNP have achieved 'success' or 'breakthrough', Nuneaton has particular problems related to deprivation, poverty and unemployment. For example, the levels of deprivation in several of the

wards in Nuneaton are amongst the highest in England, and it was within these socioeconomically deprived areas two BNP councillors were elected (specifically the wards of Barpool and Camp Hill).

Barpool and Camp Hill Wards

First it is important to offer an understanding of the case study location which will be tested. Nuneaton and Bedworth is one of five boroughs in the County of Warwickshire, which includes North Warwickshire, Rugby, Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon (Map 1.), and sits in the north of the county.

Map 1. The County of Warwickshire

Source: Warwickshire County Council (2009)

Despite its small geographic size, this borough has the second largest population in the county, resulting in a high population density of 15.3 persons per hectare, compared with the average in Warwickshire which is 2.6 persons per hectare (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council 2010). The borough is largely urban in

nature. The towns, due to their position at the centre of Warwickshire's coal fields, were historically vital to the county, and grew in size during the 18th and 19th Centuries as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, with new industries developing in the region. This included mining, a textile industry and munitions factories. This industrial background has similarities with the Burnley BNP case study, as highlighted by Rhodes (2009), which had a large textile and manufacturing industry. Moreover, like Burnley and many other former industrial towns, Nuneaton has seen these jobs diminish in the post-war de-industrialisation period, with local employment being replaced by service based jobs. In fact, Rhodes highlights that Burnley suffered from "acute socioeconomic deprivation" which resulted from the collapse of the town's manufacturing base (2009: 27-28). This was a key feature expressed by BNP voters in the town and offers an interesting comparison with Nuneaton, which has also seen the collapse of large scale industries. Although this does not explain why the BNP were successful in these locations by itself, it does help to explain, as seen below, the underlying causes of disillusionment and disaffection related to socioeconomic deprivation.

In addition to the county data, analysis will now focus specifically on the social and economic data for the two case study locations, Barpool (Map 2) and Camp Hill (Map 3). This will be fundamental when comparing the breakthrough in locations such as Burnley with the success of the BNP in Nuneaton. First it offers an overview of the Camp Hill location followed by the Barpool area. It will look specifically at the data produced using the Census, and the data relating to deprivation from Super Output Areas (SOA). SOAs are simply the reporting of small area statistics in specific geographical locations. The SOA analysis of deprivation looks at four variables which includes, the proportion of male unemployment, the proportion of overcrowded

households, the proportion with no car/van ownership, and the proportion that are considered to be in a low social class.

Camp Hill is one of the most deprived wards in Warwickshire and is located in the north of Nuneaton, sharing a border with Barpool, and according to the Census completed in 2011, the population of Camp Hill Ward was 7,321 (ONS 2011). According to the report completed for Warwickshire County Council, Camp Hill is ranked as the second most deprived Super Output Area (SOA) in Warwickshire, and amongst the worst 10% of the 32,482 SOAs in England (Warwick Observatory 2004). Moreover, analyses of the *Index of Multiple Deprivation* (IMD) shows that four of the five locations in Camp Hill ward are ranked within the top 30 per cent most deprived SOAs in England. In fact, the Village Centre in Camp Hill is ranked within the top 5 per cent nationally, and is the second most deprived SOA in Warwickshire (Warwick Observatory 2011a). The ward has a very poor level of housing, which includes estates that were originally built in the 1950s and 1960s. The area has experienced particular problems including poverty, high unemployment, low quality public housing, and the ward shows signs of neglect (Warwick Observatory 2011a). It was within this socioeconomically deprived area that the BNP councillor Darren John Haywood was elected to the local council. Haywood secured 36 per cent of the vote in the 2008 local elections and became the first BNP councillor to represent the ward of Camp Hill (Nuneaton and Bedworth 2010a).

Map 2. Camp Hill Ward, Nuneaton and Bedworth
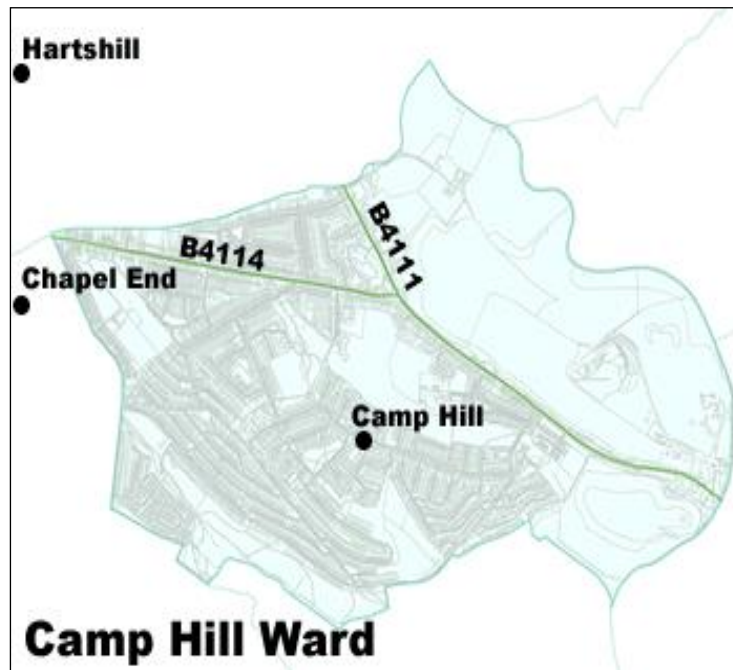
The second area that is the focus of this study is the ward of Barpool (Map 3). The Barpool ward is in the north of the borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth bordering Camp Hill. According to the Census completed in 2001, the population of Barpool Ward was 7,451 (ONS 2001). The analysis of the index of multiple deprivation data for Nuneaton and Bedworth indicates that in 2009 Barpool was ranked as the most deprived SOA in the County of Warwickshire. Barpool was also ranked at 1,087th out of the 32,482 SOAs in England, which placed it in the top 4 per cent of the most deprived SOAs nationally (Warwickshire Observatory 2007). It is clear from the data that Barpool, like Camp Hill, suffers from a lack of decent housing, and has also experienced particular problems including poverty and high unemployment. The ward also has a high proportion of elderly residents, who claim pension credits, and families who claim free school meals (Warwickshire Observatory 2007).

Map 3. Barpool Ward, Nuneaton and Bedworth
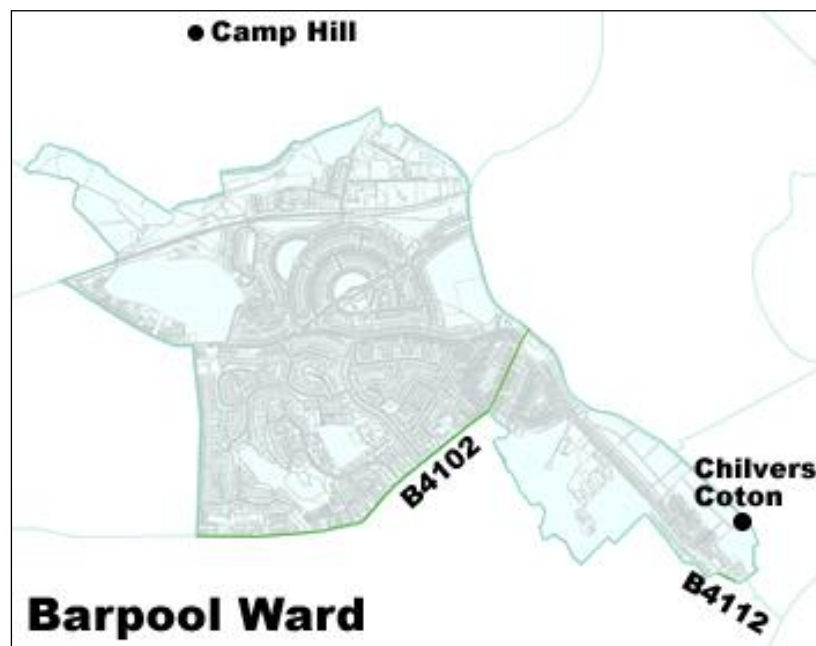
Furthermore, the IMD shows that 91.8 per cent of families in Barpool claim Child Tax Credit, which is in comparison considerably higher than the County figure of 74.2 per cent. The data also shows that in Barpool one in five children is considered to be living in poverty (Warwick Observatory 2011a). It was in these socioeconomic conditions that the BNP councillor, Martyn Findley, was elected to the local council after securing 34 per cent of the votes in the 2008 local elections (Nuneaton and Bedworth 2010a).

Evidently, in Camp Hill and Barpool there are particular problems relating to poverty and deprivation, and the analysis of deprivation is central to this research. Indeed, Barpool and Camp Hill offer many similarities and differences with other locations where the BNP was successful. For example, John *et al. (*2006) in their analysis found that when the income of a ward increases so does the BNP vote, and for this reason the correlation cannot be applied to the wards which they analysed.

They argued that that "overall, it seems, the poorer the ward the less likely the BNP are to do well" (John *et al.* 2006: 15). This view is shared by Rhodes who in his study of the BNP breakthrough in Burnley found that "while BNP support has been concentrated within some of the most deprived boroughs in England, within these districts it has been drawn from those living in the relatively more affluent wards" (2010: 82).

Contradicting this literature, the 'more affluent' hypothesis is not supported by the evidence collected by the current thesis. Clearly, the wards of Barpool and Camp Hill are not the most affluent wards in Nuneaton. Indeed, John *et al.'s* analysis suggesting that as the proportion of claimants in a ward goes down the BNP vote goes up, does not resonate with the situation in Nuneaton (2006: 15). For example, in Nuneaton, where the BNP succeeded in being elected in 2008, there is a high level of deprivation and poverty, compared to elsewhere in the borough. Barpool and Camp Hill are two of the poorest wards in Nuneaton. This is a view shared by one local Labour councillor who when questioned on the level of deprivation in the ward, and whether this was a factor in the BNP's success replied:

> Well I would say yes, and statistically I picked up on this when door knocking, the BNP votes were in the poorest voting districts. So, and I know just from speaking to ex-BNP supporters, they had nowhere else to go, they were in the most deprived streets, and I think those parts of Barpool and Camp Hill are where the BNP support was most concentrated (O2OI3 2012)[9].

This Nuneaton evidence does not mean that poverty and deprivation were not factors in Burnley. Indeed, Rhodes argues that the BNP in Burnley achieved a breakthrough against the backdrop of poverty, unemployment and deprivation and a feeling that Burnley had been "neglected by Labour" (2009: 29). It is also evident that, like

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[9] This is the code representing author's interviews. To view the list of interview participants in greater detail please refer to Appendix I.

Nuneaton, Burnley includes wards which are ranked amongst the most deprived in the country. For example, Rhodes in his analysis of Burnley highlighted that the town was rated the 37th most deprived district in the country, and that a quarter of the population reside in areas which are within the 10 per cent most deprived in the country (2009: 28). However, the studies by John *et al.* (2006) and Rhodes (2009: 30) demonstrate that although BNP support was concentrated in the poorest boroughs in England, like Nuneaton and Bedworth, it was the more affluent wards which surrounded these that attracted the greatest numbers of BNP voters. Therefore, in Nuneaton the case studies do not necessarily fit this 'typical' location model, due to the high levels of poverty and deprivation in the case study wards, but it does so far as BNP support appears to be the greatest in "economically deprived, urban areas" (Bowyer 2008: 617). Indeed, this analysis correlates with the evidence offered by Bowyer in that the BNP breakthrough occurred in locations which are urban and economically deprived.

Therefore, we can see by this brief analysis of the location, examining deprivation and poverty, that the BNP achieved success in one of the poorest boroughs in Warwickshire, but more importantly in the two of the most economically deprived wards. The next section will analyse socioeconomic factors in greater detail, beginning with an analysis of unemployment and economic decline.

Unemployment and the far right vote

Alongside deprivation and poverty, it is also important to analyse the attitudes towards unemployment and the effects of the economic downturn. Indeed, as the literature previously identified, unemployment and economics can play a role in creating conditions favourable to a far right breakthrough (Givens 2005; Golder 2003;

Jackman and Volpert 1996). Therefore, this next section will examine the local economy, unemployment, and the demise of the town's traditional industries.

Historically in Nuneaton many people were employed in Warwickshire's coal fields, textile industry and munitions factories. As with many former industrial towns it has suffered greatly due to de-industrialisation. Evidently, the collapse in industry in Nuneaton has followed a similar pattern to that experienced in Burnley due to de-industrialisation, with an increase in low-skilled jobs and low-income households. For example, Rhodes pointed to the collapse of industry in Burnley which led directly to a decline in manufacturing jobs and a rise in "low-paid, low skilled work within the service industries" (2009: 28). Rhodes also highlighted how by 2002 56 per cent of households in Burnley had gross earnings of less than £15,000, which when you compare with the national as a whole, 44.2 per cent, shows the increased level of those earning low wages (2009: 28). There is evidence to support the view that Nuneaton has also suffered similar economic and social upheaval which mirrors Burnley, evident in the numbers of unemployed, low paid, and low skilled workers. For example, in the area of Barpool North and Crescents 24.7 per cent of households' earnings were below £10,000, and in Camp Hill Village Centre locality 23.5 per cent of household earnings are below £10,000 (Warwick Observatory 2004). Indeed, the data show that in Nuneaton and Bedworth 12.3 per cent of households earned less than £10,000, which was higher than the County as a whole (Table 9).

Table 9: Low Income Households 2004			
	Households earning less than £32,000 %	Households earning less than £10,000 %	Households earning less than £5,000 %
Nuneaton and Bedworth	64.5	12.3	4.3
Warwickshire	59.3	11.1	4.1
			Source: Warwickshire County Council CACI Paycheck Data (2004)

Moreover, the analysis of the typical gross annual wage in the County of Warwickshire demonstrates that wages for residents of Nuneaton and Bedworth are amongst the lowest in the County, at £21,652, with Tamworth and Coventry being slightly lower (Table 10).

Table 10: Typical gross annual wage, full time workers, 2006		
	Residence	*Workplace*
North Warwickshire	£21,998	£23,560
Nuneaton and Bedworth	**£21,652**	**£19,908**
Rugby	£24,307	£22,510
Stratford-on-Avon	£28,130	£24,934
Warwick	£27,683	£25,180
Warwickshire	£25,099	£23,562
Hinckley and Bosworth	£22,060	£19,908
Coventry	£21,487	£25,167
Tamworth	£21,274	£23,400
South Staffordshire	£22,420	£22,099
England	£25,008	£24,948
Source: Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough (2008) (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), National Statistics)		

However, there are many areas where the BNP have stood, and there is an increased level of poverty and wage disparity, yet they have not succeeded in garnering increased electoral support. It will therefore be necessary to examine further in this section the impact of de-industrialisation, unemployment and the recession in rising support for the BNP, and whether there is any evidence of a causal relationship.

In addition to low skilled and low paid workers, there have been attempts by scholars to demonstrate a relationship specifically between unemployment and the success of far right parties across Europe. The evidence from Nuneaton supports this link. For example, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough had highest levels of claimants on job seekers allowance in the county, and in the Barpool and Camp Hill wards the percentage of the adult population claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) are both considerably higher than the County average (Warwick Observatory 2011a). In fact,

the percentage jumps dramatically for those living in both Camp Hill and Barpool. In 2009 Barpool North and Crescent, which is representative of the Ward, had the highest JSA claimant rate in the whole County, 11.9 per cent (Table 11). This is nearly three times higher than the national average. The data also demonstrates that the JSA claimant rate in Camp Hill was also higher than the average rate at 8.6 per cent (Table 11).

Table 11: Job Seekers Allowance Claimants 2009 (Average)	
UK	3.90%
Warwickshire	3.80%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	5.50%
Camp Hill	8.60%
Barpool North and Crescents	11.90%
	Source: Nomis (2009)/Warwick Observatory (2009)

Furthermore, the analysis of BNP supporters who responded to the questionnaire identifies that 30 per cent were unemployed (Table 12). However this should not be overstated, as 70 per cent were employed or stated other, and those who voted for the Green Party were also likely to be unemployed at 33 per cent (Table 12).

The importance of unemployment, as well as arguments that it is statistically insignificant, has been highlighted in the literature. For example, Goodwin states that the "working class and unemployed are more likely to vote for the party" (2011: 108), whereas Bowyer states that "neither the unemployment rate nor the percentage of the workforce employed in the manufacturing sector had a statistically significant effect on latent support for the BNP" (2008: 617).

Table 12: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [Your current employment status?]						
		Your current employment status?					
		Employed full-time	Employed part-time	Other	Student	Unemployed	Total
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	60 48%	15 12%	31 25%	6 5%	12 10%	124 100%
	Conservative	31 44%	9 13%	28 40%	0 0%	2 3%	70 100%
	Liberal Democrats	17 63%	3 11%	5 19%	0 0%	2 7%	27 100%
	BNP	15 45%	4 12%	4 12%	0 0%	10 30%	33 100%
	Green Party	1 17%	0 0%	3 50%	0 0%	2 33%	6 100%
	UKIP	4 80%	1 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%
	Independent	1 50%	0 0%	1 50%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
	Did not vote	14 36%	11 28%	3 8%	7 18%	4 10%	39 100%
	Other	1 50%	0 0%	1 50%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
Total		144 47%	43 14%	76 25%	13 4%	32 10%	308 100%
						Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012

Analysis of the data produced by the questionnaire and interviews does to some extent corroborate Goodwin's view. However, although the data shows that 30 per cent of BNP voters were unemployed, it was not the most important issue for BNP voters who responded to the questionnaire, and 57 per cent were either in full-time or part-time employment (Table 12). In comparison, 73 per cent of Labour voters either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 'The party will reduce unemployment', whereas only 50 per cent of BNP voters either strongly agreed or agreed (Table 13). Although it is worth noting that in comparison to BNP voters only 10 per cent of Labour voters stated they were unemployed. The view that unemployment was important for Labour voters was indicated by one respondent who when asked the question, what he believed was the most important issue facing Nuneaton, simply replied "unemployment" (FG2P1 2012). In support, another Labour voter in response to the same question also stated that "unemployment" was the most important issue facing the town (FG2P3 2012).

Table 13: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [The party will reduce unemployment]							
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	25 21%	48 40%	38 32%	7 6%	2 2%	120 100%
	Conservative	9 15%	18 29%	28 45%	6 10%	1 2%	62 100%
	Liberal Democrats	0 0%	8 31%	12 46%	5 19%	1 4%	26 100%
	BNP	9 28%	7 22%	14 44%	1 3%	1 3%	32 100%
	Green Party	0 0%	2 33%	4 67%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
	UKIP	1 25%	1 25%	2 50%	0 0%	0 0%	4 100%
	Independent	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
	Did not vote	2 15%	2 15%	4 31%	2 15%	3 23%	13 100%
	Other	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
Total		46 17%	86 32%	106 40%	21 8%	8 3%	267 100%
						Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012	

The analysis of unemployment demonstrates that this factor is indeed present, but it should not be overstated as BNP voters themselves prioritised other issues. It is within the context of the economic and social change that it appears to have had a greater effect.

It was also evident from respondents, that BNP supporters do not believe that the mainstream parties had the answer to economic woes. Rather the majority of BNP voters view themselves as victims of global economic changes rather than the beneficiaries. For example, one BNP voter and activist argued that the white British lower classes and the unemployed are being left out in the global economic race, and that the government no longer care, stating that:

Attitudes to the long term unemployed are wrong. I mean most people given the choice wouldn't be unemployed. They want to work; they do not do it through choice. It just seems like the government always attack them and want to sting you with something. It is like one thing after another. If you are on benefits or

unemployed, after one year or two years they are after you. Why don't they just bring the workhouse back, you know what I mean? They just seem to punish the wrong people (O2OI2 2012).

Although unemployment was not the priority for these informants, it was noted. Additionally as is shown in chapter four, unemployment comes more to the fore when it is linked with the issue of immigration. This link was examined in the review of the literature, and will be analysed in further detail, with particular reference to the analysis of the immigration variable in chapter four.

Additionally, the data show that particular areas in Nuneaton have been greatly affected by economic fragility, and the downturn caused by the recession. Indeed, many respondents highlight the economic problems faced by the town. For example, one Labour voter spoke about his view of the town, with reference to the downturn in 2008, stating that, "if you walk through Nuneaton town centre the amount of shops that are shutting down or shut, which includes big name companies, has clearly increased. There are now so many empty shops... There is clearly less money about. People just don't have the income to spend now" (FG2P3 2012). Although this voter was affected by the negative effects of the economy, they were not drawn to the BNP's argument. However, as noted in the literature (Bowyer 2008; John *et al.* 2006), there is a belief that the recession, deprivation and economic neglect of some locations left many people open to the BNP's message. Indeed, one Labour councillor related the success of the BNP and the collapse in the Labour Party support in Nuneaton to the economic downturn in 2008, stating that, "In 2008 people wanted to blame someone for the economic crisis, so they pointed the finger at Labour" (O2OI3 2012). This view was also aired by one BNP voter, who was scathing of the Labour Party, specifically the local council's economic policy. He stated that:

The Labour Party created nothing. They created cosmetic illusions of prosperity. They built a fountain, they prettied the town up with flowers, but it was the community who still had to pay for them. They spent money to look good… I mean it was not just a Labour thing. I have always found the local councils to be self-serving. They like the position, the authority, and they like somebody else to pay for it. They [local council] whinge about the government not giving them enough money so they can put council taxes up more. And if you look around it has just not worked, instead they just wasted our money (O2OI1 2012).

This BNP voter clearly demonstrates the lack of belief in the economic policies of the local council.

However, by analysing the questionnaire data it appears that for most BNP voters the economy was not high on the agenda. For example, when respondents were asked if they voted for a party because they can sort out the local economy, BNP supporters were less inclined to agree with this statement, with 41 per cent only agreeing or strongly agreeing (see Table 14).

Table 14: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [The party I voted for can sort out the local economy]							
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	20 17%	48 40%	47 39%	5 4%	1 1%	121 100%
	Conservative	14 23%	25 40%	20 32%	2 3%	1 2%	62 100%
	Liberal Democrats	1 4%	7 28%	14 56%	3 12%	0 0%	25 100%
	BNP	7 22%	6 19%	17 53%	1 3%	1 3%	32 100%
	Green Party	0 0%	3 50%	3 50%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
	UKIP	1 25%	2 50%	1 25%	0 0%	0 0%	4 100%
	Independent	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
	Did not vote	1 8%	2 15%	6 46%	1 8%	3 23%	13 100%
	Other	0 0%	1 50%	1 50%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
Total		44 16%	94 35%	111 42%	12 4%	6 2%	267 100%
Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012							

In fact, 59 per cent of respondents who voted for the BNP either ticked neutral disagree or strongly disagree. Moreover in response to a similar question, but related to the national economy, the response was comparable with 53 per cent ticking the neutral or disagree boxes (Table 15). Although, it is worth noting that there is a negative response to the Labour Party when the economy is mentioned or discussed, with one BNP supporter arguing that "Labour governments [and] nearly all Labour Councils seemed politically and financially corrupt and self-serving" (O2OI1 2012).

Table 15: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [The party I voted for can sort out the national economic crisis]							
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	23 19%	47 39%	40 33%	7 6%	4 3%	121 100%
	Conservative	17 27%	29 45%	13 20%	4 6%	1 2%	64 100%
	Liberal Democrats	1 4%	6 23%	14 54%	3 12%	2 8%	26 100%
	BNP	10 31%	5 16%	15 47%	1 3%	1 3%	32 100%
	Green Party	0 0%	2 33%	2 33%	2 33%	0 0%	6 100%
	UKIP	1 25%	2 50%	1 25%	0 0%	0 0%	4 100%
	Independent	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
	Did not vote	1 8%	2 15%	4 31%	3 23%	3 23%	13 100%
	Other	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
Total		53 20%	93 34%	93 34%	20 7%	11 4%	270 100%
Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012							

Therefore, it is evident from this analysis that although unemployment and the economy are important to voters, BNP voters did not rate unemployment or the economy high on their list of reasons why they voted for the party when compared with immigration and Islam, as will be demonstrated in chapters two and three. Moreover, the research has found no evidence of voters consciously identifying the recession of 2008 with the rise of the BNP. However, this does not mean that those

who voted for the BNP showed a lack of interest in unemployment or the economy. In fact 47 per cent of BNP voters who responded did believe the BNP would solve their economic problems. Rather, it is this section of the voting population who are at the sharp end of any dramatic social and economic upheaval, and they believe the mainstream parties have failed in their economic policy. Indeed, the evidence in this section points to the fact that for those who voted for the BNP, it is the loss of trust in the mainstream parties' economic policies which created a space for the BNP, rather than whether or not the BNP could resolve economic problems. This loss of trust in the mainstream parties will be analysed in greater detail in chapter five.

Class and the vote for the BNP

A further socioeconomic factor identified in the literature review was the connection between those who vote for the far right and their social class. John *et al. (*2006), in their examination of the link between social class and support for the BNP, found that the BNP typically appealed in areas with a high number of low-middle class voters. For example, they found that 54.5 per cent of BNP voters came from the lower middle class and skilled working class, and that the BNP received little or no support in locations with higher numbers of state beneficiaries and low-paid workers, and less well in areas which contained high numbers of middle class or upper class voters (John *et al.* 2006: 14). This view was shared by Rhodes, who in his research of Burnley found that BNP support was predominantly in areas which included higher levels of the lower middle classes, and less so in areas which had a larger number of poor workers and welfare beneficiaries (2006: 30). These views differ from the argument put forward in the literature by Goodwin and Evans (2012) who argue that BNP supporters "are the most proletarian, providing evidence that support for the

party is driven mainly by semi-skilled and unskilled workers, and citizens dependent on state benefits" (Goodwin and Evans 2012: 14). Although, the literature offers some contrasting results to those found in Nuneaton, they still provide relevant conclusions for comparison. For example, as indicated earlier, the BNP gained success, and had two councillors elected in the poorest wards in Nuneaton. Therefore, this next section will develop an understanding of the social class of the BNP supporters in Nuneaton by analysing local ward data, and the data produced by the questionnaire. This will look specifically at employment by occupation, housing, and education in Nuneaton in order to develop an understanding of the social class of BNP voters.

Employment

Employment has often been used as a tool to measure class. The examination of the evidence in Nuneaton does to a large extent corroborate the finding. In areas where the BNP garner support the electorate is less likely to come from a managerial or professional background, and are more likely to be from a semi-skilled or unskilled employment background. Indeed, John *et al.* in their study found that 45.5 per cent of BNP supporters they analysed were working class or people living at subsistence level, and 54.5 per cent were lower middle class or skilled working class, while no respondents declared themselves as managerial or professional (2006: 14). The analysis of the employment data does to a large extent corroborate these finding. For example, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough has the lowest number of workers employed in management roles or as senior officials in Warwickshire, at 11.9 per cent, which is considerably lower than the County average of 14.5 per cent. Moreover, the number of residents employed as process plant and machine operatives in the Borough in 2009 equated to 13.2 per cent, which remains high when compared

with the Warwickshire County average of 7 per cent (Warwickshire Observatory 2009). This has changed little since 2001 when the number employed as process and machine operatives stood at around 12.9 per cent (Table 16). However, the analysis of the borough level data does not show the true extent of employment roles, specifically the differences between borough wide average data and specific ward level data relating to Barpool and Camp Hill wards. According to the 2001 Census, the numbers of people in management or senior positions are considerably lower than the borough average in Barpool, and both wards have, in comparison with the national average, a higher than average number of unskilled workers (Table 16). The data also shows that in Barpool 18.3 per cent of people are employed in elementary occupations, which was statistically higher than the national average of 11.8 per cent (Table 16). However, what is interesting when analysing the data is that in Barpool and Camp Hill you have the highest number of workers in skilled trades' occupations; in fact both wards are above the national average.

Table 16: Barpool and Camp Hill Occupations of all people in employment, April 2001					
Variable	%	Barpool	Camp Hill	Nuneaton and Bedworth	England
Managers and senior officials	%	7.8	12.2	12.1	15.3
Professional occupations	%	4.7	7.1	8	11.2
Associate professional and technical occupations	%	8.7	8.9	10.9	13.8
Administrative and secretarial occupations	%	11.4	11.2	12.6	13.4
Skilled trades occupations	%	16.9	14.8	13.8	11.6
Personal service occupations	%	7.9	7.9	7.1	6.9
Sales and customer service occupations	%	7.8	8	7.6	7.7
Process; plant and machine operatives	%	16.6	15.9	12.9	8.4
Elementary occupations	%	18.3	14.1	15	11.8
				Source: ONS (2001)	

The analysis of the questionnaire data does offer some correlation with the class profile of BNP supporters and employment by occupation. Indeed, by looking at the data produced by the questionnaire, out of all respondents who said they voted for the BNP, not one respondent was employed in a professional or management role (Table 17). Those who voted for the BNP were to a large extent employed in the semi-skilled or unskilled job sectors, with 60 per cent either working in skilled manual, unskilled manual or service industries (Table 17). It was also evident that the largest group employed were those working in the skilled manual group, which equated to 27 per cent of all those employed. It is worth noting that the data relating to those who were retired or unemployed was not independent and therefore the data cannot be considered for comparison.

Table 17: Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections? [If you are employed what is your job type?									
	Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?								
If you are employed what is your job type?	Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrats	BNP	Green Party	UKIP	Independent	Did not vote	Total
Retired/Unemployed	38 (30.6%)	26 (37.1%)	7 (25.9%)	11 (33%)	4 (66.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	9 (23.1%)	96
Other	12 (9.7%)	3 (4.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (16.7%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	6 (12.8%)	24
Professional/Managerial	32 (25.8%)	20 (28.6%)	12 (44.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (60%)	1 (50%)	10 (25.6%)	78
Professional/Managerial, (Self-employed)	0 (0%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1
Professional/Managerial, (Service/retail/government)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.7%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2
Self-employed	2 (1.6%)	1 (1.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.6%)	4
Service (retail/government)	18 (14.5%)	9 (12.9%)	2 (7.4%)	6 (18%)	0 (0%0	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	9 (20.5%)	45
Skilled Manual	14 (11.3%)	8 (11.4%)	2 (7.4%)	9 (27%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (10.3%)	38
Skilled Manual, Service (e.g. retail/government)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1
Un-skilled manual	6 (4.8%)	2 (2.9%)	3 (11.1%)	5 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (5.1%)	18
Un-skilled Service (retail/government)	1 (0.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1
Total	124	70	27	33	6	5	2	39	308

Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012

Housing

As well as looking at employment in the understanding of the social profile and class of BNP supporters, it is also necessary to offer a brief analysis of housing in Nuneaton, particularly within the wards of Barpool and Camp Hill. Housing has been used as a tool to offer class analysis, be it through the house prices in a location, levels of home ownership, or the levels of social housing. The significance of housing was analysed by Bowyer who argued that "local housing market conditions also seem to have an important effect on the electoral strength of the BNP" (2008: 617). Therefore, the analysis of housing conditions in Nuneaton will be important to this research.

Analysis of the data for Barpool and Camp Hill indicates that there are poor levels of housing which includes a mixture of social and private housing, and estates that were built in the 1950s and 1960s. In a recent study of Camp Hill, it was stated that "the characteristics of this locality are dominated by those of the two large housing estates, with high proportions living in terraced houses, in social rented housing or in households with no car or van" (Warwick Observatory 2011a). The data also show that Nuneaton has a greater representation of low income families living in estate based social housing, with over 15 per cent living in socially rented accommodation, although 76.6 per cent of the population either owns their house outright or it is owned with a mortgage or loan (Warwick Observatory 2009).

Turning to the questionnaire data, analysis shows that only 58 per cent of self-declared BNP voters in Nuneaton own their own home, whereas, 63 per cent of Labour Party respondents and 83 per cent of Conservative Party supporters own their own home (Table 18). It is also evident from the data that although 58 per cent of BNP voters owned their own home, they were statistically more likely to live in social

housing, with 24 per cent of respondents declaring they live in social housing of one kind or another (Table 18). Again the evidence points to Nuneaton's BNP support coming from the lower social class rather than lower middle class as indicated by some scholars in the literature.

Table 18: Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections? [What is your current housing status?]							
		What is your current housing status?					
		Own your house/flat	Rented accommodation (private landlord)	Rented accommodation (social housing)	Living with parents	Other	Total
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	77	12	13	9	13	124
		62%	10%	10%	7%	10%	100%
	Conservative	58	1	8	2	1	70
		83%	1%	11%	3%	1%	100%
	Liberal Democrats	16	7	2	1	1	27
		59%	26%	7%	4%	4%	100%
	BNP	19	3	8	0	3	33
		58%	9%	24%	0%	9%	100%
	Green Party	4	1	1	0	0	6
		67%	17%	17%	0%	0%	100%
	UKIP	5	0	0	0	0	5
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
	Independent	1	1	0	0	0	2
		50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	100%
	Did not vote	14	8	3	14	0	39
		36%	21%	8%	36%	0%	100%
	Other	1	1	0	0	0	2
		50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Total		195	34	35	26	18	308
		63.3%	11.0%	11.4%	8.4%	5.8%	100.0%
					Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012		

A further area of analysis highlighted in the literature related to house prices and how they correlated with BNP support (Bowyer 2008). The examination of house prices in Nuneaton does produce some significant data for analysis. For example, it is evident that house prices in Nuneaton and Bedworth are amongst the lowest in Warwickshire, in fact nearly 50 per cent cheaper than the county average (Table 19). These results in Nuneaton are also comparable with the data collected in Burnley which contains housing with average prices well below the national average (Table 19).

Table 19: Average House Prices

District	Detached £	Semi-Detached £	Terraced £	Flat or Maisonette £	Overall Average £
North Warwickshire	275,949	159,851	128,303	130,990	172,948
Nuneaton and Bedworth	**209,660**	**129,987**	**107,843**	**105,735**	**134,675**
Rugby	277,743	166,874	139,400	118,866	182,692
Stratford on Avon	367,842	221,411	188,460	145,017	250,954
Warwick	347,174	208,558	190,689	163,218	225,263
Hinckley and Bosworth	241,362	150,808	129,211	104,595	169,414
Coventry	292,948	156,563	118,501	116,761	140,573
Tamworth	220,609	139,847	129,082	125,853	151,929
South Staffordshire	298,503	153,056	154,221	126,560	201,417
Birmingham	312,327	156,875	126,820	131,000	153,374

Source: Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (Land Registry)

However, Nuneaton differs from Burnley because it has not witnessed a collapse in the town's housing stock, and although some areas of Nuneaton have housing which is below average house prices, and high levels of social housing, it has not suffered a huge demise in its housing stock in a similar fashion to that experienced in Burnley. Rhodes stated that in Burnley over a quarter of properties were "deemed unfit for purpose" (2009:28). However, in Nuneaton although the house prices have not collapsed elements of Nuneaton's housing stock, notably elements of social housing and private rented accommodation, does fall below national standards, and it is on this point that the area of Camp Hill has many similarities to Burnley. For example, according to the report conducted by Nuneaton and Bedworth council which set out the borough's housing strategy, Camp Hill is a "poor physical environment (poor quality houses, public realm and built environment) were defining the characteristics of the area" (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council 2015:45). Indeed, according to the report, parts of Nuneaton have housing which does not meet the Decent Homes Standard set out by the government in 2004. Of course it is hard to produce evidence that

housing effects the levels of BNP support, indeed as Bowyer argued, neither the ward-level homeownership rate nor the percentage living in social housing effect levels of support for the far right (2008: 617). However, Bowyer does state that of all the housing factors it is the district's median house price which is negatively related to BNP support (2008: 617). Therefore, although housing cannot singularly determine why people vote for a particular party, the analysis of housing, when looking at the socioeconomics of a locality, can help the researcher to understand the 'fertile' environment in which the far right gain success.

Education and Far Right support in Nuneaton

Education is also an important factor in any analysis of social class. As highlighted in the review of the literature, BNP candidates were more likely to win votes in the wards where the electorate was educated to a lower level (Ford and Goodwin 2010; Bowyer 2008; John *et al.* 2006). For example, John *et al.* found that the BNP won more votes in the wards with a working age population who have fewer than 5 GCSEs or equivalent (2006: 15). These findings, that the BNP won more seats in wards with voters who had a low educational attainment, were also supported by Ford and Goodwin in their analysis, who stated that, "the party's support levels are higher in constituencies with low education levels" (2010: 3). Bowyer also argued that "in line with expectations, the percentage of a ward's population with high educational qualifications is negatively associated with support for the BNP" (2008: 617). Bowyer links this with the 'modernisation loser hypothesis', which predicts that those without a good standard of education do not have the skills to survive in the new global economy and therefore are more supportive of the far right (2008: 617).

It is evident from the data relating to levels of education in Nuneaton, that these are below both the regional and national average. For example, analysis of the data provided by Nomis shows that in Nuneaton only 22.4 per cent achieved NVQ4 and above, compared with the national average of 32.9 per cent (See table 21). It also shows that the number of people with no qualifications is 16 per cent, which is well above the national average of 10.6 per cent (Table 20). What these statistics do show us is that the level of higher education is low in Nuneaton, and it therefore supports the argument in the literature that the success of the BNP often occurs in areas with low levels of education.

Table 20: Nomis Labour Market Profile Nuneaton and Bedworth Qualifications (Jan 2011-Dec 2011)

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Source: Nomis/ONS 2011

Analysis of educational attainment within the borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth also reinforces the importance of education. For example the Camp Hill area is ranked 125th out of 32,482 SOAs (1 being the worst) when looking at deprivation linked to education, skills and training. This has statistically placed it within the bottom 0.5 per cent of all SOAs when analysing deprivation (Warwickshire Observatory 2011). Moreover, in Barpool ward the levels of education are also very low, with eleven of the fourteen SOAs in this locality among the 30 per cent most deprived nationally in terms of education, skills and training. The data also highlight that only 33.8 per cent

of pupils are achieving five or more grades A* to C at GCSE, compared to the County's average of 56.9 per cent.

The analysis of the education and training of the adult population in Nuneaton also offers some data for analysis. The number of adults who are educated to degree level or higher is less than half the County average, while 38.8 per cent have no qualifications, which is ten per cent higher than the County average (Warwick Observatory 2011a). Furthermore, analysis of the ward data also highlights that the number of adults without formal qualifications was higher than the county average. In the Barpool North and the Crescents area, over 50 per cent of the adult population do not have any formal qualifications (Warwick Observatory 2009).

What the analysis of the education level data demonstrates is that, in the wards where the BNP gained electoral success in 2008, the level of education attainment is lower according to the data provided by the Warwickshire Observatory (2011). In fact this mirrors the findings highlighted in the literature, and the questionnaire data also correlates with previous studies (Ford and Goodwin 2010; John *et al.* 2006). For example, the data shows that out of thirty three BNP voters who responded to the questionnaire, only two declared that they had a University Degree, whereas fifteen were educated to GCSE or below (Table 21). The analysis of the data also shows that respondents who supported the BNP were in the main educated to the level of college/A-level, 48 per cent, and that this group of voters had the largest percentage of respondents who had not completed school, at 12 per cent (Table 21).

Table 21: Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections? [What is your educational status?]							
		What is your educational status?					
		University/ Degree	College/ A-level	School/ GCSE	No schooling completed	Other	Total
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	34	38	40	2	10	124
		27%	31%	32%	2%	8%	100%
	Conservative	18	29	20	0	3	70
		26%	41%	29%	0%	4%	100%
	Liberal Democrats	12	9	5	0	1	27
		44%	33%	19%	0%	4%	100%
	BNP	2	16	10	4	1	33
		6%	48%	30%	12%	3%	100%
	Green Party	3	2	1	0	0	6
		50%	33%	17%	0%	0%	100%
	UKIP	1	2	2	0	0	5
		20%	40%	40%	0%	0%	100%
	Independent	1	0	1	0	0	2
		50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	100%
	Did not vote	8	15	11	1	4	39
		21%	38%	28%	3%	10%	100%
	Other	0	1	1	0	0	2
		0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	100%
Total		79	112	91	7	19	308
		26%	36%	30%	2%	6%	100%
					Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012		

This analysis of education, in regard to social class, appears to correlate with the literature, which highlights that BNP voters are comprised of members who, in comparison to the mainstream party voters, have relatively low educational levels, which is even more evident when the University/degree figures are considered. Therefore, what this analysis demonstrates is the link in Nuneaton between the levels of education, and the vote for the far right. Indeed, it should be argued that in reference to Nuneaton a lack of education, rather than housing or employment, is a more conclusive explanation.

This section has examined the most important factors relating to class, including employment, housing and education. The examination of the data in Nuneaton found that to a large extent that BNP voters are of a similar unskilled working class background in Barpool, challenging the school of thought highlighting lower-middle class BNP support found in some of the literature. Of course analysis of

workers in Camp Hill differs from Camp Hill in that 12.2 per cent are employed as managers and senior officials. Therefore, although this is a significant finding, this does in no way offer any real conclusive answers as to why they voted for the BNP. This is because many voters are of the same class and live in the same wards but do not vote for the far right. Many, for example, live in social housing and do not vote for the far right. Moreover, the analysis of housing shows that BNP voters are not just living in social housing but are also home owners, of course house prices in Barpool and Camp Hill do remain amongst the lowest in the borough. Education was also examined and the data shows that this appears to be one of the most important determinants, and can be viewed as an indicator as to where BNP support was the strongest. Essentially, this analysis of class demonstrates that there was an underlying environment providing fertile ground for BNP support, but it is the variables considered in the following chapters that prove more dynamic in persuading voters to switch their allegiance.

The BNP and Age

Completing this survey of socio-economic factors, this final section will now analyse whether voters of a particular age group were more susceptible to the BNP's argument in the 2008 election. As indicated in the literature review, studies have analysed how important age is in understanding who votes for far right parties. For example, John *et al. (*2006) in their analysis did find a correlation between age and support for the BNP. They found that in the wards they analysed, those with "high numbers of 45-69 year olds were more likely to show higher levels of BNP support", and those wards with a higher number of young people, the BNP were less likely to garner support (John *et al.* 2006: 16). The data produced from this analysis does

somewhat correlate with John *et al.'s* findings in that only 2 per cent of self-declared BNP voters were in the 18-24 age bracket (see Table 22). Moreover, Goodwin and Evans in their research also found that there are not many young BNP supporters, but rather most are aged between 46-65 years of age (2012: 14).

According to the Nuneaton and Bedworth District Profile (2009) population pyramid there is a swelling of the population between the ages of 39-49. This means that the majority of the voting population is within this age group. However, the analysis of the questionnaire data in Nuneaton shows that the largest group of BNP voters were in the younger age bracket 25-36, with 36 per cent declaring they had voted for the party (Table 22). The figure drops to around 27 per cent in the 36-48 age groups. Although it is worth noting that as mentioned in the methodology there is an element of error within the data collected. This was due to the age of 36 being included in two age categories. However it is not considered to be statistically significant and did not impact on the findings overall. With that in mind it is worth noting that the data produced in the analysis of Nuneaton does offer similarities when compared with the data from the literature, in that younger voters are less likely to vote BNP, 6 per cent of 18-24 year olds, whereas voters between the age of 25-48 were more likely to vote for the BNP, with 63 per cent of voters stating they voted for the party (Table 22).

Table 22: Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections? Which group best describes your age?							
		Which group best describes your age?					
		18-24	25-36	36-48	49-64	65+	Total
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	11	16	38	44	15	124
		9%	13%	31%	35%	12%	100%
	Conservative	1	4	19	24	22	70
		1%	6%	27%	34%	31%	100%
	Liberal Democrats	2	8	4	8	5	27
		7%	30%	15%	30%	19%	100%
	BNP	2	12	9	4	6	33
		6%	36%	27%	12%	18%	100%
	Green Party	0	2	0	4	0	6
		0%	33%	0%	67%	0%	100%
	UKIP	0	0	1	4	0	5
		0%	0%	20%	80%	0%	100%
	Independent	0	1	0	1	0	2
		0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	100%
	Did not vote	13	9	10	6	1	39
		33%	23%	26%	15%	3%	100%
	Other	1	0	0	1	0	2
		50%	0%	0%	50%	0%	100%
Total		30	52	81	96	49	308
		10%	17%	26%	31%	16%	100%
						Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012	

The problem with the data in relation to age is that the data is not statistically significant. It cannot offer any evidence as to why people from a particular age group may be drawn to the BNP. However, the data does help to provide an understanding of the demographic profile of BNP supporters Therefore, to summarise, the data does to some extent corroborate the theory that BNP voters are represented largely by particular age groups, however it does not explain why voters of a particular age group were more inclined to vote for the BNP in 2008.

Conclusion

This section has examined and tested the factors highlighted in the literature in relation to socioeconomics. It has demonstrated that the BNP achieved electoral success in the most deprived wards in Nuneaton. It has also shown that there is a loss

of trust in the mainstream parties when it comes to economic policy. It found that amongst BNP supporters the economy was consciously not the most important reason why they voted for the BNP, even if the economic problems affected this group the most.

With reference to class and the understanding the demographic profile of BNP supporters, this work has found evidence that those who voted for the BNP in Nuneaton do, to a large extent, represent a particular social profile. The data from the analysis of social class in Nuneaton shows that the BNP voters in this area were predominantly lower working class, and the level of poverty and deprivation in Camp Hill and Barpool is below what many authors have referred to in other locations.

Finally, this chapter analysed age and education. The analysis of age did not really offer any real correlation. However, of those who did reply it did show BNP voters were greatly represented by the 25-36 age group. More importantly, the analysis of education levels did offer, when compared with other case study locations, a correlation between the levels of education and support for the BNP in Nuneaton. The examination also corroborated the findings from previous analysis of far right success in Britain, that BNP supporters are more likely to have lower levels of formal education. For example, it found that the on average BNP voters are comprised of members who have relatively low educational levels with only 6 per cent stating they were educated to degree level. Although this is not conclusive due to the fact the level of college education was not clearly stated it does still provide a link in Nuneaton between the levels of education, and the vote for the far right. It could therefore be argued that the lack of education, rather than housing or employment, should be regarded as a more significant socioeconomic determinant of BNP support.

This said, what does need to be recognised is that these economic and social problems are faced by many people, and not all choose to vote for the far right. It is also evident that the economic outlook and opportunities for many of the areas where the BNP succeeded in 2008, have in fact got dramatically worse with the prolonged recession, yet the BNP vote did not increase, but rather the party vote collapsed in the local elections of 2012. Therefore socioeconomics appears to be an indirect or underlying variable providing fertile ground for BNP campaigning and analysis of these factors assists the profiling BNP voters, but it is limited in actually determining why people vote for this party.

Socioeconomic factors alone cannot offer an explanation as to why the BNP was successful in 2008, but they do promote the idea that the BNP took advantage of 'fertile ground'. As the following chapters demonstrate, it is when other factors, notably immigration, Islamophobia and disaffection combine that the BNP are able to take advantage of this 'fertile' ground. Indeed, as Eatwell notes, "demand factors are undoubtedly the necessary prior condition for extreme right success. But they are clearly not sufficient" (2003: 67).

Chapter 4
Immigration and the BNP in Nuneaton

The analysis of socioeconomic factors in the previous chapter highlighted its importance in producing fertile ground for the BNP in Nuneaton. This chapter analyses how the BNP took advantage of this fertile ground due to an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment. It argues that immigration, within this socioeconomic environment, acts as a catalyst linking various variables which were beneficial to the BNP.

The literature demonstrates that immigration and race are core issues for the far right and their supporters (Art 2011; Goodwin 2011; Rhodes 2009; Mudde 2007; John *et al.* 2006). For example, Goodwin indicated that over 90 per cent of BNP voters in his study were concerned with immigration (2011; 108). John *et al.* explained why immigration was a key factor in rising support for the BNP by offering a correlation between the growth of the immigrant community and BNP support (2006: 16-17). Goodwin shares this assessment noting, "hostility toward immigration and political dissatisfaction are particularly important drivers of BNP support" (2011: 115). These explanations highlighted in the literature will be tested against the immigration variable in Nuneaton.

The chapter will demonstrate that immigration was central in the success of the BNP in Nuneaton. It will show that immigration was important, but not as a single issue. Instead, it acted as a catalyst feeding into other variables, such as Islamophobia, socioeconomics and disaffection. First this chapter will focus on the ethnic demographics in Nuneaton and show that part of the electorate believes that immigrants do not mix. It will then demonstrate how significant the BNP were in highlighting the 'perceived' immigration problem, and how the BNP narrative was

expressed by respondents in Nuneaton. Following this, the chapter analyses the perceived problem with immigration and shows that it relates to the national rather than the local. Finally this chapter demonstrates that immigration is an important issue, but only when a link is established with other variables.

The ethnic-demographics in Nuneaton

This first section will begin by analysing the ethnic-demographics of Nuneaton. As mentioned, there have been many studies analysing the ethnic-demographics in order to understand the setting in which far right support increases (Goodwin 2011; Rhodes 2009; John *et al.* 2006). John *el al.* argued that the immigration population is important, notably the size of the Asian population, and "up to a certain percentage (around 7 per cent), electoral support for the BNP increases with the percentage of Asians in the local population" (2006: 16). Therefore, it will be necessary to first offer an analysis of the ethnic demographics of Nuneaton in comparison with other locations where the BNP was successful.

Demographically Nuneaton has a relatively small minority ethnic community representing around 7.7 per cent of the total population. The largest declared ethnic group are the Asian, or Asian British population, which represented around 4.9 per cent of the total population in Nuneaton and Bedworth in 2008, rising to over 5 per cent in 2011 (Table 23). Overall, the size of the resident minority ethnic population in total rose by nearly 3 percentage points between 2001 and 2011, to 7.7 per cent (Nuneaton and Bedworth Equality and Diversity Profile 2012). This includes migrant workers from Eastern Europe, mainly represented by a small Polish population (Table 23).

Table 23: Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough 2001-2011 Ethnicity		
Ethnicity	2001%	2011%
White British	93.5	88.9
White Irish	0.7	0.6
White Gipsy/Irish Traveller	0	0.1
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0.3	0.5
Mixed: White and Black African	0.1	0.1
Mixed: White and Asian	0.2	0.3
Asian: Indian	3.3	4.6
Asian: Pakistani	0.2	0.4
Asian: Bangladeshi	0.1	0.1
Asian: Chinese	0.1	0.2
Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British: African	0.1	0.4
Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British: Caribbean	0.2	0.3
Other Ethnic Group (Polish)	0	0.9
Other Ethnic Group (Nepalese - Includes Ghurkha)	0	0.2
Other Ethnic Group (European Mixed)	0	0.2
Other Ethnic Group (Other Western European)	0	0.2
Any other ethnic group	1.2	1.8
		Source: 2001-2011 Census, ONS

According to the 2001 census the white population in 2001 represented 95.1 per cent of the population, whereas 92.3 per cent of the population classed themselves as white, white Irish or white other in 2011 (Census 2001 and 2011). By comparison with other locations where the BNP broke through between 2001 and 2008, Nuneaton and Bedworth borough has a small minority ethnic population. For example, in Burnley the minority ethnic population account for 11.1 per cent of the town's population (Lancashire County Council 2011). Burnley has a sizeable proportion of the minority ethnic groups originating from South Asia, approximately 8.5 per cent, who are concentrated in the Daneshouse and Stoneyholme area of Burnley (Lancashire County Council 2011). However, analysis of the data in Burnley shows that in 2001 the South Asian minority ethnic population was approximately 7 per cent, which is in line with John *et al.'s* (2006) explanation that the BNP have typically been

successful in locations which have an Asian population of around 7 per cent (Burnley Task Force 2001: 2).

The explanation offered by John *et al.* argues that if the immigrant population in a community increases to around 7 per cent, so does support for the BNP, which offers some correlation with the data for Nuneaton. Indeed, there is an increase in the minority ethnic population in Nuneaton by over 2 per cent between 2001 and 2008. However, the percentage of south Asians in Nuneaton (4.9 per cent) is lower than in Burnley (8.5 per cent) and has not yet reached John *et al.'s* threshold.

Analysis of Nuneaton where the BNP achieved success in 2008 indicates that in these locations there is a relatively small minority ethnic population. In Barpool only 3.1 per cent of the population are considered 'non-white', and in Camp Hill only 1.4 per cent is non-white (Table 24). In fact, the largest minority ethnic populations in Nuneaton are in the Abbey and Web Brook wards. Abbey Ward has a minority ethnic population of 16 per cent, of which approximately 13 per cent are of South Asian origin, and Wem Brook has a non-white population of 12.6 per cent. The size of the minority ethnic population in Abbey Ward has changed little between 2001 and 2011, and it remains at approximately 16 per cent (Table 24). However, analysis of the data shows that the BNP were not able to mobilise enough support in the wards which contain the largest number of immigrants or minority ethnic groups. This corroborates the findings by John *el al,* who in their explanation for far right support argued that in the wards they sampled the BNP vote was slightly more likely to occur "in white wards with higher proportions of white electors" (2006: 16). What we can clearly see is that in the wards where the BNP achieved success in Nuneaton it did occur in 'white' wards (Table 24).

Table 24: Non-White Population Nuneaton and Bedworth 2001	
Wards	**% of Non-white**
Warwickshire	4.4
Nuneaton and Bedworth	4.9
Whitestone	3.1
Wem Brook	12.6
Weddington	2.5
Slough	3.4
St Nicholas	5.2
Poplar (Bedworth)	12.7
Kingswood	2
Heath	2.7
Galley Common	1.8
Exhall	5.3
Camp Hill	**1.4**
Bulkington	1
Bede	1.8
Barpool	**3.1**
Arbury	3.8
Attleborough	4.4
Abbey	**16.1**
	Source: 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics

As well as the size of the minority ethnic population, it is also important to examine the location. The analysis of the minority ethnic population does produce some correlation with the locations in Burnley where the BNP were successful. Rhodes examined the size and location of the South Asian population in Burnley in order to explain the success of the BNP, and found that in the wards where the BNP were successful, they contained a sizable South Asian population in the neighbouring wards (2009: 35-36). The BNP in Burnley achieved success in the wards that were predominantly white and border Daneshouse and Stoneyholme, which in 2001 had a large population of South Asians equating to 63.85 per cent of the total population (Burnley Task Force 2001).

Although there are some comparisons with the BNP success in Barpool, which borders Abbey ward in Nuneaton, there is one important statistical difference which relates to the size of the Asian population. Abbey ward has a South Asian community which is approximately 13 per cent, whereas in Burnley's Daneshouse and

Stoneyholme wards the population are in the majority, at 63.85 per cent. Although this is an evident difference, further analysis of the data supports a correlation between Nuneaton and Burnley, in that both experience 'segregation' in their communities. This was an issue highlighted by participants in this research, who made reference to the area around Edward Street in Nuneaton, and the Mosque which is located in the area. In fact, it was evident in many responses from BNP voters that the 'white' population in Nuneaton tend to avoid the area, with particular reference paid to the large Muslim population in the ward. The importance of this reference to the Islamic community in Nuneaton will be analysed further in the following chapter on rising Islamophobia, and the effect this had on BNP support.

Evidence collected by the interviews and focus groups identified a perception that communities do not mix, and that particular groups within Nuneaton's minority ethnic populations appear to live 'separate' lives to their white counterparts, but in a relatively close proximity. This sentiment was prevalent amongst those who voted for the BNP in Nuneaton. One BNP voter, who when discussing immigrants in his local community stated, "they don't mix… they tend to keep to themselves" (O2OI8 2013). This view was also shared by another BNP voter who argued that "particular groups in our society do stay in one group, whether they do that to protect themselves from particular attitudes from outside, or whether they do that because they don't want to mix, or they do want just a little corner in our society" (O2OI9 2013). The 'separate communities' narrative which exists in Nuneaton was highlighted by one interviewee who argued that communities do not mix; "I would not say they are completely integrated, because they are concentrated in a small area, but as far as I am aware there are no major issues between the coloured immigrant community or the white

community" (FG1P1 2012[10]). Moreover, another BNP supporter made particular

reference to the Edward Street area stating that:

> I know people in Nuneaton who use to live in Edward Street, and they now feel
> like outsiders in Edward Street. That hasn't happened by chance. That has
> happened because a group have decided that's where they want to live in
> Nuneaton. Gradually they purchased and got the economic means to do that and
> the local community have pushed out. And that's caused real issues in Nuneaton
> (O2OI9 2013).

This data suggests that the 'separate communities' narrative is prevalent amongst

BNP supporters, and mirrors arguments made by the BNP. The BNP referred to this

in their manifesto as *Social inclusion – One healthy nation*, arguing that:

> As nationalists we are committed to caring for and nurturing all sections of our
> national community. We also oppose the tendency of the other, non-nationalist,
> parties to set different sections of the community against each other over
> problems for which they themselves as politicians are largely responsible. The
> creation and maintenance of an undercurrent of national solidarity is one of the
> cornerstones of a true national democracy (BNP manifesto 2005).

Warwick Observatory (2009) found that a large number of residents in Nuneaton gave

negative responses when asked whether they believed people from different

backgrounds get on well together in their local area. This study recorded that the

Borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth has the lowest percentage of residents county

wide who agreed with this statement, at 74.1 per cent, yet the borough has got a lower

minority ethnic population than both Rugby and Warwick, (Warwick Observatory

2009). This suggests that in the borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth there is a section

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[10] To view the focus groups participants in more detail please refer to Appendix I

of the population who hold negative views towards people who are perceived as 'different' to them.

The question is what do these population statistics tell us about Nuneaton, and why were the BNP able to achieve success in 2008? There is no definitive answer to the question why, but the above evidence does help us develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between Nuneaton and Burnley's ethnic demographics, and test the environment in which attitudes and views towards immigrants have developed. Indeed, this section has offered an insight into the ethnic-demographics in Nuneaton. This included a brief analysis of the location, the size of minority ethnic groups and a comparison with areas which have experienced a similar breakthrough. It found that although the data for Nuneaton offers some correlation with explanations offered by scholars, the data does not fit the exact model in relation to the size of the minority ethnic population. However, analysis has demonstrated that BNP voters feel that immigration has not been beneficial, and in fact many referred to what they saw as 'segregation' within Nuneaton. Indeed, this offered an insight into the attitudes of some voters who believe that certain communities do not mix. These issues will be picked up again later in the study, when the analysis turns to Islamophobia and the role of the media.

The BNP and immigration

The next section will focus on respondents' views on immigration and immigration policy. It will also examine why some voters believe that the BNP is the only party that will act on what they perceive is a 'problem' with immigration. It is evident from the data collected that immigration was an important election issue. It acted as a significant catalyst, aiding the BNP in their rise from obscurity to success in locations

like Nuneaton. Therefore, it is important to focus on how the BNP made immigration a central tenet of their manifesto, and examine why some voters were drawn to the BNP's anti-immigration policies.

Immigration was at the heart of the BNP's manifesto, and is a core issue which the party fought on in 2008. For example, in the BNP manifesto for 2005 it states that the BNP's policy is:

> To ensure that we do not become a minority in our own homeland, and that the native British peoples of our islands retain their culture and identity, we call for an immediate halt to all further immigration, the immediate deportation of all bogus asylum seekers, all criminal entrants and illegal immigrants, and the introduction of a system of voluntary resettlement whereby those immigrants and their descendants who are legally here are afforded the opportunity to return to their lands of ethnic origin assisted by a generous financial incentives both for individuals and for the countries in question (BNP Manifesto 2005: 14).

It also states that, "Britain's very existence today is threatened by immigration. As a nation we must rebuild trust in the immigration system amongst the British electorate whilst simultaneously ensuring that National Security is maintained in this era of global terrorism" (BNP Manifesto 2005: 13).

It is evident from the BNP's manifesto that immigration was one of their flagship policies, and by talking tough they appealed to part of the electorate who wanted tighter immigration controls. Indeed, the message that the BNP will be tough on immigration resonated with many voters prior to the 2008 election, and it is evident that part of the electorate who felt that immigration was becoming a problem, would be receptive to the BNP's anti-immigrant message. For example, one BNP voter when asked if immigration was important in who he voted for simply replied, "Yes, there are too many immigrants" (O2OI13 2014), while another BNP voter attacked what he saw as a lack of action from the government, stating that, "I just

don't think that our government are coming down hard enough on immigrants, [They're] not doing enough for their own people" (O2OI6 2013).

An analysis of the case study's data demonstrates the level of anti-immigration sentiment. Indeed, immigration was considered an issue right across the political spectrum in 2008, and respondents from across all parties registered negative views towards immigration. For example, in response to a question asking if participants voted for a particular party because it was the toughest on immigration, over 40 per cent of all voters who participated strongly agreed or agreed. Analysis also shows that 59 per cent of Conservative voters and only 28 per cent of Labour voters strongly agreed or agreed. However, the results were, as expected, even higher for the BNP voters with 91 per cent of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement (Table 25).

Table 25: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [The party I voted for is the toughest on immigration]							
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	%	9%	19%	46%	17%	9%	122 100%
	Conservative	%	21%	38%	32%	6%	3%	63 100%
	Liberal Democrats	%	4%	19%	54%	8%	15%	26 100%
	BNP	%	63%	28%	9%	0%	0%	32 100%
	Green Party	%	33%	17%	33%	0%	17%	6 100%
	UKIP	%	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	4 100%
	Independent	%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	2 100%
	Did not vote	%	8%	0%	38%	15%	38%	13 100%
	Other	%	0%	0%	50%	0%	50%	2 100%
Total		Count	49	65	103	29	24	270
		%	18%	24%	38%	11%	9%	100.0%
							Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012

Therefore, the examination of the data produced by the questionnaire demonstrates that the issue of immigration was a major factor for part of the electorate who voted for the BNP, with the vast majority saying they voted for the party because they would be tough on immigration.

Analysis of the qualitative data also demonstrates that many voters felt that there was an immigration problem. The BNP clearly saw an opportunity to capitalise on growing public anti-immigration sentiment which had increased since 1999, and by 2008 was for many voters top of the political agenda. For example, most BNP voters shared this sentiment, with one, when asked why he voted for the BNP replying, "I voted for the BNP in 2008 because that's when I first thought there's too many immigrants in this country… they are taking all of our jobs, from local people, English people, I am just sick of it" (O2OI7 2013). This view was shared by another BNP voter who argued that "There are lots of Polish in nearby towns and [I] can see local services are stretched. [I've] Just had enough of it" (O2OI13 2014). Moreover, in response to the question whether immigration was the most important factor in why they voted for the BNP, a former BNP party activist replied in a forthright manner:

> Yes. That does not mean I am racist. It doesn't matter if you're black, Chinese, German or French, at the end of the day it don't matter. And because we are members of the EU we are all messed up. People can just come and go freely in this country. I would like to see immigration stopped (O2OI2 2012).

Continuing on this theme, another BNP supporter argued against immigration stating that:

> I don't think enough has been done to control immigration, I mean I am no fan of big brother, but I do think we do need some certain regulations and controls for the good of law… walking around and you feel like an outsider because it is full of Polish people drinking lager on the streets, I don't think that is particularly healthy for any country, you know. If that is locally acceptable in

Poland, great. But if you say a couple of ladies whatever are walking up the road are not going to be threatened by that kind of environment and that kind of behaviour when people, race or breed club together and standing talking in a foreign language, isolating themselves, it is threatening to certain vulnerable groups in society (O2OI9 2013).

However, not all respondents were so 'diplomatic' in their responses, as one respondent to the questionnaire stated, "The BNP once elected will kick out all non-English people and give the jobs back to the true white English people... we need to take the country back from the hordes of immigrants that have flooded in to this once great nation" (Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012).

It is evident from the data that all BNP voters interviewed offered negative responses towards immigrants. Although, it is worth noting that even though immigration was important to voters from other parties, it did not drive them to parties like the BNP, as one Labour voter stated, "even if I believe immigration should be tighter, I still believed Labour had the better policies, and I would not vote for the Tories if they were tighter on immigration" (FG2P3 2012).

What these interviewee responses, and the responses to the questionnaire, demonstrate is that BNP voters hold negative views of immigrants and immigration. It also shows that the BNP exploited the level of anti-immigrant sentiment, and were able to mobilise and attract support in a climate of fear and confusion which surrounded immigration, and indeed immigration policy over the last decade. It is also evident from the responses that there is a perception amongst many voters that the government is not doing enough to sort out the 'perceived' problem with immigration.

Immigration: the national not the local

In helping to explain the impact of immigration and immigration policy on the BNP's success, it is also worth investigating whether the issue relates to the local or to a greater extent the national? Research found that, for Nuneaton, voters do not view immigration as a local 'problem', but rather as a national one. This view was shared by Rhodes who stated that the BNP in Burnley were, "aided by a national arena in which race had become increasingly politicised, it was the BNP who would advance this 'racial' politics" (2009: 39). Moreover, respondents in one national study, recorded only 18 per cent viewing immigration as a problem in their own area, but 76 per cent viewing it as a national problem (Searchlight Educational Trust 2011). There has been a growing national campaign, often led by the media and some politicians, which views large scale immigration into Britain is a problem, and a belief that all the mainstream parties have failed to deal with the issue. This was highlighted by Goodwin who found that 90 per cent of BNP supporters analysed considered nationwide immigration to be the most important issue facing Britain, and "BNP voters focused almost exclusively on immigration" (2011: 108).

This sentiment, that immigration is a national problem, was shared by those who voted for the BNP in Nuneaton. Many BNP voters believed that the BNP were the only party willing to act in order to deal with the perceived immigration problem in the country. This is a view supported by one BNP voter in Nuneaton who also linked disaffection, socioeconomics and immigration, stating that:

> the government, I think in the last 15 years have not been strong enough to tackle immigration for fear of losing votes, and this is a simple fact… we had concerns nationally about immigration, and it is not a black and white thing because immigrants nowadays means there are just as many white immigrants as there are black. But there is a massive problem with immigration in this country and none of our governments, or none of our political parties have had

the backbone to stand up and say enough is enough; we may lose a few votes but let's draw the line. Let's say enough asylum, let's just cut it. I mean it is costing a fortune in taxation, a fortune in social housing and social services (FG1P1 2012).

This particular view that the mainstream parties have failed to deal with the perceived immigration problem was also shared by a former Nuneaton BNP party activist:

The figures they give out I just can't believe, you could add a million on; the figures are just not true. And it is the same as like when they arrest someone who ain't supposed to be here. They have got no identification on them and they let them go and make them report to the Police station once a week. And then they just disappear. It is like beyond belief. You know what I mean? (O2OI2 2012).

Moreover, another BNP voter responded by saying that "The BNP seemed like the only option, you know, they would stop them coming over, and breeding. I have my kids' future to think about. I was scared what would happen in this country" (O2OI4 2012). What can be seen from these voters is that there is a perception amongst BNP supporters that the mainstream parties have not acted to tighten immigration, and it does appear entrenched amongst those who voted for the BNP in Nuneaton, that the BNP were the only party who could deal with immigration. This was indicated by one BNP voter, who in reply to a question about how they viewed the mainstream parties' position on immigration, and whether they believed the BNP would act on immigration stated that, "It was a party that seemed to have some backbone that will make laws and not worry about votes if they got power. They would have created the changes needed to reduce or stop immigration from non-EU countries" (O2OI1 2012).

Further analysis also highlighted the loss of trust in the last Labour government's immigration policy. This resonated with part of the electorate who were former Labour supporters and Conservative supporters. For example, it has been

argued that many former Labour supporters switched to the BNP because for them there was simply no alternative. This was highlighted during an interview with a Labour councillor who acknowledged that many former Labour Party supporters had lost faith in the Labour Party, and their immigration policy by 2008, stating that, "I think it was significant for a lot of Labour supporters especially in white working class areas like Barpool. Yes I think it was significant... I think it was the national trumpet sounding. It was a national issue" (O2OI3 2012).

By examining the data it is evident that by 2008 there appeared to be a change in attitude and a total loss in faith in both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party when it came to immigration policy. Moreover, as will be demonstrated in the analysis of the data in Chapter six, which looks at the role of the mainstream parties, for many Labour voters the idea of voting for the Conservative Party was more abhorrent than voting for the BNP. There was evidently a high level of discontent aimed at immigration and the immigration policies of the mainstream parties.

Analysis of the data also highlights the broader national development of the immigration issue, such as increasing hostility towards multicultural policies, which also benefited the BNP in 2008. For example, Rhodes in his explanation suggests that in Burnley the BNP utilised a "sense of white resentment" which created "a feeling that it was the material and cultural interests of the whites that were becoming marginalised" (2009: 38-39). The 'sense of white resentment' was an issue which the BNP attached themselves to, and was an important policy in their 2005 Manifesto. Indeed, it states that the BNP will "abolish the 'positive discrimination' schemes that have made white Britons second-class citizens" (BNP Manifesto 2005). This 'sense of unfairness' resonates with the feelings and attitudes of some of those who voted for the BNP in Nuneaton, and evidently benefited the BNP in 2008. For example, one

BNP voter stated that, "if I was an Irish traveller or a Pakistani, I don't know exactly what it is mate, but if you are foreign or in a minority and we both committed the same crime, I would get done for it and they would get let off… it seems that racism only works one way" (O2OI2 2012). This sentiment was also shared by another BNP voter who, when discussing how white people are treated by the state, argued that "kids can't even get a house, but the immigrants get one straight away. And most have not worked" (O2OI4 2012). What this demonstrates is that a sense of white resentment developed, which increased the anti-immigrant sentiment amongst voters, to the benefit of the BNP. It is also evident from this section that immigration, in the context of BNP support in Nuneaton, appears to relate more to the national, 'the country', rather than the local. Indeed, most respondents do not refer to immigration in the local context, but rather the national. This of course does not mean there were not local grievances, as the next section will now demonstrate.

The next section will now test the explanation that BNP support was linked to racial tension caused by immigration at a local level. Scholars have tested the explanation that the BNP have often gained a small foothold where there is evidence of racial tension, and indeed race related violence (Rhodes 2009; Copsey 2008; Renton 2005; Renton 2003). For example, Rhodes's (2009) analysis highlighted the Burnley race riots of 2001 and how this was reported. He argues that "it is clear that the riots played an important part in the emergence of the BNP as a political force in the town. The events served to solidify already apparent divisions, ensuring that race remained at the forefront of the local political landscape" (Rhodes 2009: 37-38). Elsewhere, Renton also highlighted how the BNP benefited from an increase in racial tension and violence, stating that, "in Bradford, the BNP was able to trade on the legacy of the 2001 race riots" (2005: 40). Therefore, it is evident from previous

explanations that the BNP benefited from increased racial tension and violence. Focus will now turn to testing to what extent these explanations stand up in Nuneaton.

Initial analysis of Nuneaton found that there is no compelling evidence of racial tension between the minority ethnic community and the white community on a scale witnessed in other locations. In fact, Nuneaton, in comparison with many other towns, had never previously attracted the attention of the far right as a potential source of support, and has not experienced any rioting or racial tension that can be compared with Burnley, Oldham or Bradford. However, there is some historical evidence of racial tension in Nuneaton, and there have been minor incidences of violence. For example, one local resident stated "there has been little flare ups... but it is not an ongoing thing. It is the same anywhere. There is always trouble between areas in Nuneaton" (FG2P1 2012).

This view was shared by a local Labour councillor who when asked if he was aware of any racial tension in Nuneaton stated; "No. I don't think there is... There has been, some years ago there was some aggression, physical aggression in Edward Street, when there was a bail house, and the residents of the bail house and local Asians disagreed with each other" (O2OI3 2012). The incident referred to by many respondents took place in 2003, and it was reported in the press as racial violence. The incident was also referred to as racial violence and a riot by voters of all persuasions, and fed into the BNP narrative at the time. However, it appears that in Nuneaton it is the perception of racial tension which is greater than the actuality, and it is this that was fuelled by rumours and the press rather than any actual major race related violence.

For many respondents it is the fact that the two communities do not mix which proved to be more of an issue than any widespread racial violence or tension between

the communities. This issue will be analysed further in the next chapter on Islamophobia, and in chapter eight which looks at data relating to racial violence and tension, as reported in the national and local press. Finally, it is worth noting that the fact that they are often referred to by many participants as 'two communities' indicates the problem that exists for some members of the community.

What this section has shown is that voters in Nuneaton, who chose to vote for the BNP, indicate the importance of national issues relating to immigration, rather than local issues. Therefore, it should be argued that the national arena, in which immigration became politicised, was more important than the local, although both arenas evidently helped galvanise support for the BNP. The politicisation of race in the national arena will be analysed further in chapter six, which looks in greater detail at the role of the mainstream political parties.

This section has also touched on the idea that amongst the wider population in Nuneaton, not just the BNP voters, there are negative attitudes towards immigrants, particularly against immigrants from South Asia who are perceived as being unable to live within the white areas of Nuneaton, and choose to live separate lives. The idea that specific communities 'do not mix' and this benefited the BNP will be analysed further in the following chapter.

The BNP and the battle for resources

Focus within this section will be on the argument that the 'British should always come first'. This argument has often been attached to the battle for scarce resources such as jobs, benefits and housing. The idea that the British should always come first was a core element of the BNP's policy in their manifesto:

We will abolish the 'positive discrimination' schemes that have made white Britons second-class citizens. We will also clamp down on the flood of asylum

seekers', the vast majority of whom are either bogus or can find refuge much nearer their home countries. Britain is full up and the government of Britain has as its first responsibility the welfare, security and long-term preservation of the native people of Britain (BNP Manifesto 2005).

The idea also became a mainstream political issue in the 2000s with both Labour Party and Conservative Party politicians using language normally associated with the far right. For example, the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown, during his speech at the 2007 Labour Party annual conference, stated that he wanted "British jobs for British Workers" (Brown 2007), which mirrors a slogan used by the NF and BNP. In order to understand how this statement resonated with the public at the time, and how the BNP were able to tap into this argument, it was decided that a question would be added to the questionnaire asking if the respondent agreed with the statement that the British should come first when it comes to benefits, housing and jobs. The analysis of the data produced offers some interesting results with 41 per cent of all the respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement (Table 26). It is also evident that amongst Labour supporters this was an important factor with 45 per cent either agreeing or strongly agreeing, and only 36 per cent strongly disagreeing or disagreeing. Unsurprisingly, considering previous research into why people voted for the BNP (Goodwin 2011), 97 per cent of those who responded said they voted for the BNP because they either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (Table 26).

Table 26: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [I voted for the party because they support the idea that British people should be considered first when it comes to jobs, housing and benefits]								
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	**Total**
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	%	13%	24%	33%	14%	16%	121 100%
	Conservative	%	19%	17%	46%	14%	3%	63 100%
	Liberal Democrats	%	0%	12%	48%	24%	16%	25 100%
	BNP	%	67%	30%	3%	0%	0%	33 100%
	Green Party	%	33%	0%	50%	0%	17%	6 100%
	UKIP	%	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	4 100%
	Independent	%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	2 100%
	Did not vote	%	8%	0%	38%	15%	38%	13 100%
	Other	%	0%	0%	50%	0%	50%	2 100%
Total		Count	54	56	93	34	32	269
		%	20%	21%	35%	13%	12%	100%
								Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012

The sentiment that the British should come first when it comes to benefits, housing and jobs, resonated with many of the interviewee respondents. One BNP voter when asked the question if they believe British people should come first when it comes to jobs, benefits and housing stated, "Most definitely. English people should get priority for housing. And there are no jobs" (O2OI13 2014). Another BNP voter when asked the question linked immigration with the competition for scarce resources, stating that, "you have got to be blind not to realise there's an immigration problem, and rightly or wrongly there is a common perception that immigrants come into this country and take jobs and houses" (FG1P1 2012). It was also evident that for many BNP voters it was the link with increased immigration, benefits and a sense of unfairness that drove them towards the BNP. Indeed, a former BNP activist and voter stated that:

It was important in why I voted. Because if you have been here most of your life, regardless of whether your parents come from elsewhere. I mean I know a

couple of geezers whose dads came over from Jamaica, Jamaicans, black as the ace of spades, I mean I didn't grow up with them but I have seen them grow up in the same area like, and it is the same. Their dads have put money into the system, they have worked most of their lives, so they are British I suppose. They ain't just come over and claimed. I mean I can't go anywhere in the world and claim benefits, you know what I mean? So why should they? It don't work both ways if you are a minority you are better off. You know what I mean? You live here all your life, but you get nothing, but if you are a minority you get it all (O2OI2 2012).

All respondents who voted for the BNP also felt that they were losing out in the distribution of resources, be it jobs, housing or benefits. For example, one BNP voter in response to the question argued that, "It has become more important in the last few years I think. You know issues with lack of jobs" (O2OI9 2013). This sentiment was shared by another BNP voter:

100%... I think as I said it should be the same as Australia, you should only be allowed to come into this country if you have got a reasonable profession, and if you have got that profession you have a good salary and you can afford your own house. You shouldn't be given a house for people coming over, it's just sickening what is happening to this country, an absolute joke (O2OI7 2013).

This sense that British citizens were losing out to immigrants was in no way directed at one minority ethnic group, rather it was a catch-all view of the immigrant population. For example, as one BNP voter argued:

If you look within a mile radius of here, 2 post offices, 2 garages, 6 corner shops, and they are all owned by either Polish, Indian, Asian, and I know their money is going back into their countries. They may put it into our banks for a while but then they either send it back or take it back. So it is not being put back into our country. Whereas I have worked most of my life and put my money back whereas they don't and they are entitled to the same benefits as I am. It don't seem fair. It seems that nowadays people who are Asian or whatever, people just don't want to give them any s**t and they don't put up with

anything. Whereas if you are white British it seems like you are s**t on, you know what I mean? You ask questions about this, why do they (The Asians) get this and that, and then they just play the racist card... I would say yes. I think a lot of people are not racist as such. But from what goes on around them, the way they are treated and the law and everything, it seems like they lose out, I mean look at the Polish, why have they got all the car washes and garages? I was told it is because they had concessions off of the government. They seem to have hustled and we just don't, you know what I mean? And everyone I know thinks the same, and especially the older people (O2OI2 2012).

Again this is not based on any evidence that the immigration population has benefited in Nuneaton but rather a belief, a perception that this is the case. It appears that the perceived link between immigrants and benefits has been established in the minds of many voters, and particularly amongst those who voted for the BNP in 2008. Indeed, one self-declared BNP voter from 2008 supported the link in his response to the questionnaire:

The established major political parties are totally out of touch with genuine British non-immigrant people. Hard working families are penalised that benefits can be paid to illegals and immigrants who are only here for the benefits they get which are totally disproportionate to groups like pensioners (Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012).

Therefore we can see that the statement that the British should come first when it comes to benefits, housing and jobs resonated with many voters, especially those who voted for the BNP. The examination of the data has also shown how BNP voters believe that immigrants have benefited at the expense of British people. Although this is not based on factual evidence, rather an illusion of unfairness, it was reflected by BNP respondents who believe that the white majority British are suffering at the expense of immigrants.

Immigration as a single issue

As indicated above, no one variable, immigration included, can stand alone as an explanation for the BNP's success. An underlying socio-economic environment was identified as providing 'fertile ground', but it is other variables which combine to create the 'perfect storm'. For example, this chapter has so far shown that immigration acts as a catalyst for a range of issues, and appears to provide an explanation of the success of the BNP in Nuneaton. This is indicated in the link between immigration and the battle for scarce resources, and more importantly the link with unemployment.

There is a strong belief amongst those who supported the BNP that they are losing out on jobs, and are seeing their wages collapse due to the influx of new immigrants from the European Union. This sentiment was shared by one BNP voter who argued that the white working class are suffering due to immigration:

> They are being competed out of the jobs through salaries, and through education. I personally believe the standards of education have dropped since we have had immigration or since we have had a lot of immigration. Again I don't like to consider immigration as a race issue; I like to consider it purely as an immigration issue and it doesn't matter where people are from it is still immigration. And to make that clear I don't feel that I am racist at all in as much as the thought of people coming from other countries and using the resources we paid for bothers me (FG1P1 2012).

This argument that immigrants were taking the jobs of the host population was quite prevalent amongst BNP voters. Indeed, most were quite explicit and open about this, and it is evident that the BNP benefited from the link between unemployment and immigration. For example, one BNP voter stated that, "we need to reduce the number of immigrants and foreign workers" (Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012), and another

BNP voter, who offered a link between immigration and jobs, stating that, "I am against immigrants getting our jobs" (Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012). This view was also communicated by another BNP voter who during a focus group argued that; "who is to say that a lot of the youth today would have jobs without immigration? We don't know, you can't say that because if it has been a success, why do we still have 2.8 million people unemployed and that it was right? Would we have had success without it?" (FG1P1 2012). Additionally, this sentiment was shared by a BNP interviewee who argued that there were already too many immigrants, and in relation to jobs and employment, stated that;

> we have got a job market that's already struggling to support our lot and you are naturally letting a lot of other people to come in, it is gonna make the situation across the country a lot worse for a lot of people because ultimately there are only so many jobs and if there is more people fighting for less jobs there is gonna be a bigger burden on the state and it all ties into it (O2OI9 2013).

For these BNP respondents there is a clear link between immigration and employment, and indeed the level of unemployment. However, this is a view not just shared by BNP supporters. Indeed, this view is also evident amongst those who did not vote for the BNP, with both Labour and Conservative voters alike linking the issue of immigration with high unemployment and low wages. In fact, one Labour voter stated that:

> I think there is always going to be a worry about immigration from people of all parties because we are a developed country and people always want to come and work here. Better wages and a better life. So people always worry about their own jobs going to someone else... A lot of people look at it (immigration) and say when we are in the mess, a recession, without any jobs we need to halt the number of immigrants until the country is growing again. There is no point letting in people if it is not going to benefit us. Because you just get yourself in more debt because you get someone who comes over, gets a job which we could

do and the new have to go and sign on. So they are paying us not to work. I think it is why a lot of people think that immigrants are taking all of our jobs... the issue is Polish people come here to work for a good wage, but a British person cannot go and work in Poland for a better wage. I think that is why people are annoyed with it (FG2P3 2012).

It is also worth noting here that not all voters viewed immigration as a problem. For example, during one focus group one Labour supporter argued that immigration had been good for the economy, and in fact immigration had in itself created jobs and wealth, stating that:

The Asians have actually benefited the economy. I don't think anybody would say any different, I mean there was a big fuss in 1968 about immigration, but no-one would now argue that was a bad thing... It is perfectly plausible for governments to make an argument, and governments have, that immigration can be an economic benefit (FG1P4 2012).

As briefly highlighted here, and in the previous chapter, socioeconomics, unemployment and jobs were an issue, but only in so far as they are linked to immigration.

The previous chapter suggests that unemployment and jobs are important in explaining the rise of the BNP in Nuneaton. The above evidence suggests this issue becomes all the more pertinent when combined with negative perceptions of immigration. Further building this idea of interlocking variables, the chapter will now consider the issue of immigration combined with perceptions of limited access to public goods. For example, Rhodes demonstrated how the competition for resources became an important factor in the rightward political shift in Burnley, arguing that the outcome was "a growing sense of resentment visited upon the Asian population by many white residents" (2009: 34). Moreover, Eatwell argues that "socioeconomic

problems have a particular impact when immigrant groups, especially in a localised context, are seen as being in some ways treated more favourably, that 'they do more for them than us'" (2003: 57). Similar, local stories or 'rumour' surfaced in Nuneaton during the same period, although nothing on a scale witnessed in Burnley. These have often related specifically to local housing in the wards of Barpool and Camp Hill, and the perception was that this social housing had been allocated to the immigrant community in these locations. Rumours were in fact circulating prior to the election in 2008 in Barpool and Camp Hill, and one Labour councillor made reference to a rumour which spread, and was often shared with those who campaigned on the doorstep; "Oh you know those flats they are putting up, they are going to be full of Ghurkha's, or they are full of Poles... from what I can actually see about these flats, unless the Poles have changed their names to Williams, we know that it is not true" (O2OI3 2012). The councillor also noted that some respondents view immigrants as a drain on the local and the national resources stating that:

> There were a lot of perceptions to do with, you know where the country's wealth was going, and it was mainly into immigrants you know. Eastern Europeans, Poles, of which there is quite a few in Barpool. Um, those sort of things would be mentioned by people who you spoke to, and there were things to do with Muslims, there were things which to me were totally unreal, because even though there are a significant number of Muslim families in Nuneaton, they are not in Barpool at all (O2OI3 2012).

Finally, a brief analysis of the link between immigration and crime will be offered. As highlighted in the literature, increased crime has often been linked with immigration (Goodwin 2011; John *et al.* 2006). The literature also shows that law and order is important for voters, and also how they often link the two. For example, Mclaren and Johnson found in their study that there was also an increase in the

number of respondents who believed immigrants increased crime rates, with 25 per cent agreeing in 1995, increasing to 39 per cent in 2003 (2004: 173). The BNP also link immigration and crime, which is evident in their strongly worded Law and Order policy;

> It is a hard fact that, according to official figures, 15% of the UK's male prison population is black, despite black people accounting for only 2% of the total population. Victim-reported figures concerning the race of criminals give the lie to the leftist argument that this is due to discriminatory prosecution. It is an inescapable statistical fact that immigration into Britain increases the crime rate. Figures for unemployment, welfare dependency, educational failure, and other social pathologies tell a similar story for most other foreign ethnic groups. There is simply no escaping the fact that choosing to admit such persons into the country in significant numbers means choosing to become a poorer, more violent, more dependent and worse-educated society... The liberal consensus on immigration must be balanced by the interests of National Security. Recent arrests of cells of Islamic terrorists living in the country plotting mass murder in Britain illustrate the link between illegal immigration and terrorism. The link between illegal immigration and crime in our communities – including the ruthless exploitation of the immigrants themselves - is also well documented (BNP Manifesto 2005).

Crime and the fear of crime are evidently drivers in support for the BNP. For example, analysis of the data in Nuneaton demonstrates that BNP supporters voted for the party because they were viewed as tough on crime and anti-social behaviour. Analysis of the data in Table 26 shows that 66 per cent of BNP voters voted for the party because they are tough on crime. This is statistically the highest percentage who stated they voted for a party because they were tough on immigration. The data also show that BNP voters believed that the party would tackle anti-social behaviour in the

area with 72 per cent saying they voted for the party in 2008 because the party would

deal with the problem (Table 27).

Table 27: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [I voted for this party because they are tough on crime]		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	17%	30%	47%	6%	1%	100%
	Conservative	19%	44%	29%	6%	2%	100%
	Liberal Democrats	0%	38%	50%	4%	8%	100%
	BNP	41%	25%	28%	6%	0%	100%
	Green Party	0%	33%	67%	0%	0%	100%
	UKIP	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%	100%
	Independent	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
	Did not vote	8%	0%	62%	8%	23%	100%
	Other	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Total		48	84	115	15	7	269
		18%	31%	43%	6%	3%	100%
						Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012	

Table 28: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [The party I voted for will tackle anti-social behaviour in my area]

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	16%	35%	46%	2%	2%	100%
	Conservative	15%	46%	33%	5%	2%	100%
	Liberal Democrats	0%	38%	46%	8%	8%	100%
	BNP	41%	31%	22%	3%	3%	100%
	Green Party	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	100%
	UKIP	25%	0%	75%	0%	0%	100%
	Independent	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
	Did not vote	8%	0%	62%	8%	23%	100%
	Other	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Total		43	93	113	9	9	267
		16%	35%	42%	3%	3%	100%

Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012

It was evident from interviewees that law and order was important for BNP voters. Indeed, one BNP voter when asked if he voted for the BNP because they will be tough on law and order replied, "Yes I would say so. For me personally I think there is little or no punishment for what people do now. You know what I mean? Especially in prison. I mean I know they are locked up but, a telly for £1 a week, and they get let out in the sunshine, and 3 square meals, it is like they are not afraid" (O2OI2 2012). However, it is the link between immigration and crime which became most evident in some interviews. In fact, analysis of the qualitative data demonstrates that some BNP

voters linked immigration with crime. For example, one BNP voter argued that "crimes are done by immigrants as well, um, and I think any crime that a foreign national does, comes over and commits a crime, disrespecting this country should be deported straight away" (O2OI7 2013). This voter further shared his experience of crime in the area, and related it to a personal experience of a 'friend' stating that:

> I knew a friend... who got mugged by two Nigerian men, again not from this country, they looked Nigerian, again not from this country, and I just think again it's sickening, if you come over to this country you need to respect this country, respect the people, respect the laws and I just don't think that our government are coming down hard enough on immigrants, not doing enough for their own people (O2OI7 2013).

This view was shared by another voter who when asked the question, if he voted for the BNP because they were strong on law and order stated, "I did, but mainly because of what I see. This country is full of illegal immigrants breaking the law, committing crimes and getting away with it. Immigrants who commit crime should be deported, end of" (O2OI12 2014). However, not all BNP voters when discussing law and order linked it to immigration. For some voters it was because they believed the BNP could restore law and order, which they believe was non-existent. For example, one BNP voter argued that, "the kids can do what they want and the police do nothing. Too much political correctness" (O2OI4 2012). The data indicates that issues relating to law and order were important to BNP voters. However, the analysis of the data shows that like socioeconomics, crime is often linked to immigration, and this remains a factor for many respondents when discussing immigration generally.

The data produced in Nuneaton demonstrates the level of sentiment which links immigration with jobs, resources and crime. However, analysis of the data also demonstrates that there is no evidence to support the view that immigrants, or

immigrant communities, benefited in Nuneaton in the competition for scarce resources, or committed more crime, but rather it is the perception that immigrants have benefited and are criminals which has had the greatest effect.

Conclusion

This chapter has started to tease out the idea that any explanation of the BNP's electoral breakthrough in Nuneaton has to be multivariable in nature. It has concentrated on the hypotheses that immigration was an important catalyst, helping the BNP exploit the ripe socio-economic environment identified in the previous chapter. In terms of directly testing the literature, the evidence above suggests that although there was some correlation with explanations offered by scholars, the data does not fit the exact model in relation to the size of the minority ethnic population. However, the findings related to the BNP exploiting growing negative perceptions on immigration were very much supportive of the current literature.

This chapter has also indicated how immigration became an important electoral issue at both a national and local level, and it was also evident that those respondents who voted for the BNP have lost trust in the mainstream parties' ability to deal with what they view as an 'immigration problem'. It also demonstrated that at a local level, although there was some limited evidence of racial tension and violence, there was no evidence of racial bias based on the allocation of resources in comparison with locations like Burnley. It is the perception that this exists which is greater than the actuality. However, the analysis of the data demonstrated that it is national issues relating to immigration, rather than local issues, which were more important. The politicisation of race in the national arena, with particular reference to the mainstream parties, will be analysed further in chapter six.

Analysis has also shown that the statement that the British should come first when it comes to benefits, housing and jobs was important in why voters chose to support the BNP. The data indicated that 97 per cent of BNP voters agreed with this statement. Therefore it should be argued that this was an important factor driving BNP support in the town. These voters in particular, argued that the indigenous white majority British are suffering at the expense of immigrants. The message that the BNP would act to redress their grievance was one of the major reasons many supported the party.

Finally, although many scholars have analysed immigration as a single issue, it alone cannot explain why the BNP were successful in 2008. Indeed, although this analysis indicates that immigration was central, rather than being a single issue, immigration acted as the catalyst. Immigration was labelled as a problem, and in the 'fertile environment' it was then related to unemployment, allocation of resources and crime. The result in Nuneaton was that the BNP, with their brand of anti-immigrant politics, benefited to the extent that they had two BNP councillors elected.

Therefore, from the evidence offered in this chapter it should be argued that immigration was a prominent factor. It acted as a catalyst, and when associated with other factors, such as unemployment and resources, it was important in galvanising voters' attitudes and sentiments negatively towards immigration and immigrant communities. The following chapters will analyse these factors in greater detail, specifically the rise of Islamophobia, political opportunity structures and the role of the media.

Chapter 5

Islamophobia and the BNP in Nuneaton

Chapter four demonstrated that immigration was an important factor which acts as a catalyst, and directs voter choice. It is worthwhile taking this theme further, assessing the role of Islamophobia amongst those who vote for the BNP. Indeed, most BNP voters view Muslim immigrants in a more negative manner in comparison with non-Muslim immigrants, as indicated by one respondent in Nuneaton, who when asked if they view Muslim immigrants differently to other immigrants stated:

> I think so. Yes because they don't seem to respect our customs, and I understand they move to our country and they have their own, but they don't seem to take on any of our culture. I mean if you went to another country you have to embrace the culture to a certain point. I mean you have your own heritage like where you came from, I am not asking you to forget that, but they come over here they build Mosques, speak their own language, wear different clothes and they even have their own f***ing schools. I don't know; I am sure if you had an all-white, non-Muslim school it wouldn't be allowed (O2OI8 2013).

The literature suggests that the rise of Islamophobia since 2001 has been important in the success of the BNP (Goodwin 2011a; Biggs and Knauss 2011; Kundnani 2007; John *et al.* 2006). Thus, this chapter tests the explanations in the literature, that the BNP's success was in part driven by increasing Islamophobia. It will demonstrate that the rise of the BNP in Nuneaton corresponds with the rising fear of radical Islamism, and the 'perceived' threat it posed to many voters in 2008. In the course of this analysis it has become evident that Islamophobia has become a mainstream political and social issue, which the BNP sought to exploit.

Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon, as the Runnymede Trust noted in their report, the dread or dislike has existed in Western countries and their culture for

many centuries, and that more recently it "has become more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous" (1997: 1). At its extreme, this fear has been linked to Muslim conspiracy theories, such as Eurabia, which argues there is an imminent process of Islamisation taking place in Europe. Fekete notes that in Britain these were established and normalised during the 1980s and 1990s, and points specifically to the rise of anti-Arab racism in the press which developed during the oil shocks of the 1970s, the Iranian Embassy siege (1979-1981), The Rushdie Affair (1989) and the first Gulf War in 1991, and argues that "an explicit anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism was being constructed in the UK, particularly by papers like *The Sun* for some twenty years" (2012: 39). This developed alongside the New Right movement, and these conspiracies are now "held and circulated in Europe today across a broad political spectrum" (Fekete 2012: 30).

An increase in anti-Muslim sentiment post 9/11, as it will be demonstrated, was an important factor for the rise BNP in the first decade of the twenty-first Century. As with any concept there is widespread debate about its definition, and as Lorente states, "although the concept is increasingly widespread, it seems hard to define in practice just what Islamophobia is, as it is often put on a par with processes such as racism" (2010: 116). Therefore, it will be necessary to offer an understanding of the various definitions of this concept, before seeking an understanding of its relevance to voter choice in Nuneaton.

The Runnymede Trust (1997) described Islamophobia as a form of racism which was rooted in both the intolerance of Islam, that included the belief that Islam was monolithic, inferior to the West, it does not have any aims or values in common with other cultures, and Islam is a violent religion and is supportive of terrorism (1997: 5-12). This view was shared by Lorente who states that, "the term mainly

refers to instilled fear and/ or hostility towards Islam" (2010: 116). Moreover, the Berkeley Centre for Race and Gender also offer an understanding of the term. They state that:

> Islamophobia is a contrived fear or prejudice fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure. It is directed at a perceived or real Muslim threat through the maintenance and extension of existing disparities in economic, political, social and cultural relations, while rationalizing the necessity to deploy violence as a tool to achieve "civilizational rehab" of the target communities (Muslim or otherwise). Islamophobia reintroduces and reaffirms global racial structures through which resource distribution disparities are maintained and extended (Berkeley Centre for Race and Gender Nd.).

This of course does not mean that the term is not questioned and viewed as ambiguous. For example, scholars such as Zuquette (2008) have referred to the 'hysteria' surrounding the term, about its meaning and what does Islamophobia actually refer to. Moreover, authors such as Richardson (2012) and Kundnani (2007) highlighted competing terms, which includes 'anti-Muslim racism', 'intolerance against Muslims', 'anti-Muslim prejudice', 'anti-Muslim bigotry', 'hatred of Muslims', 'anti-Islamism' and 'anti-Muslimism'. However, it is not the aim of this research to dissect the various terms. It will focus on the main understanding of the term, Islamophobia, that it is simply a fear of, or hatred of Islam, Muslims or anything to do with Islamic culture. As Lorente notes, "when observing the discrepancies around any 'controversial' concept such as Islamophobia, the only thing which remains clear is that no matter what we call it, there are acts and attitudes against the Islamic and Muslim communities that reside in our close surroundings... which are specifically addressed to the Muslim population or what we consider as such" (2010: 126).

Therefore, this Chapter will examine several important factors relating to Islamophobia, developing an understanding of its impact on voters, and concludes that this was an important factor in the success of the BNP in Nuneaton. First, it will analyse the location thesis, specifically the size of the Muslim population bordering wards where the BNP were successful. It then analyses the widely held belief that Muslims self-segregate and do not mix with other communities. Focus will then turn to how the fear of Islam has resonated with some voters in Nuneaton. Finally, it demonstrates how important the shift in focus of the BNP was from a strictly racist ideology to anti-religious fanaticism in garnering support in the post-9/11 period. It will demonstrate that Islamophobia was important alongside other factors such as immigration and socioeconomics. It will show that Islamophobia like immigration was one of the most important factors for BNP supporters in Nuneaton, and it was important in galvanising BNP support in 2008. In fact, as this chapter will indicate, immigration and Islamophobia were often discussed in the same statement, which demonstrates how voters conflated the two.

Locational analysis

This first section will analyse further the demographic data in Nuneaton, and examine the locational profile of the Muslim community. This is important because a number of scholars have highlighted problems relating to segregation of particular communities, and demonstrated that the BNP were typically successful in areas with large Muslim communities (Biggs and Knauss 2011; Goodwin 2011; Bowyer 2008; John *et al.* 2006). Goodwin in his research found that there "was a strong and positive relationship between higher levels of BNP support and the presence of a large Muslim community of Bangladeshi or Pakistani heritage" (2011a: 3). This explanation for

higher levels of BNP support was also highlighted by John *et al.,* who in their analysis found that the BNP openly seeks to encourage and exploit anti-Muslim feeling, and that there is evidence that the BNP gains electoral support in areas with Muslim communities (2006: 16). Moreover, Bowyer found in his study that, "in England, it has been shown that whites who live in neighbourhoods with a relatively large black population tend to display more positive attitudes to immigrants and ethnic minorities, while residential proximity to Pakistanis and Bangladeshis is associated with more negative attitudes" (2008: 615). What these studies show is that Islamophobia was significant for BNP voters, and the BNP gave prominence to negative views of Muslims.

The findings that the BNP are attracting voters who are hostile to Muslims and live in areas which border large Muslim communities can be tested using a locational analysis of Nuneaton. By analysing the statistical data for the borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth it is evident that the Muslim population is not large in comparison with other hotbeds of BNP support. Burnley, for instance, has a much larger population practising Islam, and at the time of the BNP breakthrough the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population stood at approximately 7 per cent (Lancashire County Council 2011). In Nuneaton, the percentage of the population who declared their religion as Muslim was 2.3 per cent, which represents a significant increase since 2001, when the population was 1.6 per cent (ONS 2011). Moreover, nationwide the Muslim population is around 4.4 per cent, so in comparison with national statistics Nuneaton did not have a population any larger than the UK as a whole (ONS 2011). Although this is not as large as the population in Burnley, it shows that in Nuneaton there is a sizeable, and growing Muslim population, but more specifically a

geographically concentrated population. This next section looks at this concentration of the Muslim population in more detail.

It is evident from this analysis that Nuneaton does not have the higher population density of other breakthrough areas; however, the significance of the location of this Muslim population does have resonance with the literature. Some analysts have argued the presence of a concentrated Muslim community has a greater effect on levels of BNP support (Rhodes 2009; Bowyer 2008; John *et al.* 2006). In Burnley the Muslim population reside mainly in the Daneshouse with Stoneyholme ward, and represents around 60 per cent of the population in that ward (Rhodes 2009: 35; ONS 2001). By analysing the location of the Muslim population in Nuneaton it is evident that it is geographically concentrated in particular wards. The Muslim population in Nuneaton is primarily based in two particular locations within Abbey ward and Wem Brook ward, which border Barpool, and the only Mosque is based in Chilvers Coton, an area in the South-eastern corner of the Wem Brook (Warwick Observatory 2013). Abbey ward has seen its Muslim population increase from 11.86 per cent in 2001 to 14 per cent in 2011, and in Wem Brook the Muslim population has risen from 9.11 per cent in 2001 to approximately 12 per cent in 2011 (ONS 2011). Thus there are two factors at play identified in the literature: a growing and concentrated Muslim population. This was highlighted by one BNP voter who stated rather explicitly that the "Muslims are based in just one area, Edward Street. I mean if you just walk around Edward Street you can see it is just full of them, or Halal shops and f**king everything" (O2OI2 2012). Examination of the argument that the BNP benefited from the perception that the Muslim community self-segregate will be the focus in the next section.

The concentration of the Muslim population in certain areas of Nuneaton offers many similarities with the explanations in the literature which analysed the impact of segregated communities. For example, Biggs and Knauss found that BNP support has been highest in areas which have what appear to be segregated communities:

The BNP thrives where the non-white (particularly South Asian or Muslim) population is also highly segregated. Segregation means that people are less likely to have contact with non-whites beyond the immediate neighbourhood. It also creates a greater sense of cultural or even political threat. Whatever the mechanism, segregation aids the BNP (2011: 11).

Rhodes in his study also found that in Burnley the BNP were successful in wards bordering those which had a significant number of Muslims living in them (2009 35-36). This view was shared by Goodwin who also argued in his analysis that "support for the party stemmed from more ethnically homogenous 'threatened white enclaves', with the suggestion that BNP voters have less social contact with members of other ethnic groups" (2011b: 112). Analysis of the data in chapter four also demonstrated that the BNP support was more prevalent in wards with higher numbers of white voters. Indeed, as Bowyer noted:

While the BNP seems to receive the most support in districts with large ethnic minority (particularly Pakistani or Bangladeshi) populations, its strength seems to be concentrated in wards where white residents are less likely to encounter members of ethnic minority groups than other whites in their district; i.e., in white enclaves within ethnically diverse cities (Bowyer 2008: 617).

The data collected in Nuneaton suggests that BNP supporters are more hostile toward Muslims, but appear less concerned about other minority groups. As one BNP voter stated, when asked about immigrants and immigration: "there's differences...

immigrants and then Muslims... Islam, that's separate" (O2OI7 2013). Moreover, the view that in areas where white residents are less likely to encounter members of ethnic minority groups the BNP are typically stronger, was highlighted by the leader of the local council, Cllr. Dennis Harvey, who noted that in the wards in Nuneaton where the largest Muslim communities reside, the BNP have failed to gain success, stating that,

> In Camp Hill it is almost entirely white and working class and Barpool isn't far off, and in those areas where there is a Muslim community they are two of Labour's strongest wards I think. The BNP have not done well at all in those areas. So there may be the image that there is separateness but it doesn't come directly into those two wards (O2OI5 2012).

In fact, the lack of a Muslim population in one of the wards where the BNP were successful, was also noted by another local Labour councillor who stated that, "even though there are a significant number of Muslim families in Nuneaton, they are not in Barpool at all" (O2OI3 2012).

The findings in Nuneaton do to a large extent show that the BNP were able to exploit segregation. They garnered support in areas which have a majority white population, and border locations which have a large Muslim population, rather than other religious communities. For example, analysis of the size of the Muslim population in Barpool and Camp Hill offers a comparison with that of the neighbouring Abbey and Wem Brook wards. The data indicate that the number of Muslims living in Camp Hill is significantly lower and has a population of 0.2 per cent, while in the ward of Barpool the Muslim population was also significantly lower at 0.9 per cent (ONS 2011). Thus, in the areas where the BNP received its greatest support, the exposure of whites to Asian, black and other minority ethnic groups is limited. However, analysis of the data shows that in Abbey Ward the BNP in 2008 got

17.6 per cent of the vote, and in Wem Brook 24.9 per cent of the vote, which demonstrates that even in these ethnically 'diverse wards' the BNP were able to garner support, which does not correlate with the explanations that the BNP is less likely to receive support in less ethnically diverse wards (Nuneaton Borough Council 2008a; Table 2).

This section has shown that in Nuneaton, although it has a comparatively small Muslim population, there is evidence of a community segregated. The Muslim and white communities are not mixed across the town, and this has clearly created two communities in close proximity. It has also demonstrated that the idea that the BNP have garnered support in areas which have locational clusters representing particular communities does have some validity. For example, the BNP were successful in Barpool which borders those wards having the largest Muslim population. It appears that for residents of particular wards, predominantly white wards bordering these locational clusters, it is the perception of the size of the Muslim population, and the threat from this community which drove some voters towards the BNP. This perception was in no doubt utilised by the BNP, rather than the actual size of the population being significant in this particular case. Although this section provides an insight into the demographics of the population, it does not demonstrate why this may be significant in the increasing support for the BNP in 2008. It is only through analysis of the qualitative data that one can understand the sentiment and attitudes of voters towards the Muslim community. Focus will now turn to how BNP voters emphasized the view that the Muslim community is segregated, and choose not to mix.

Islamophobia: Suspicion and fear

The idea of divided communities has been fuelled by those who have important positions of influence. For example, politicians, the media (See chapter eight) and organisations such as, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), facilitated increased coverage of the issues post 9/11. This added to the shared moral panic[11] about Islamist terrorism, which was fuelled further by the media, and will be discussed further in chapter eight. Indeed, Tony Blair and the Labour Party were instrumental in supporting President Bush in the aftermath of 9/11. The political discourse in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, likewise added to the idea of separate communities. McGhee refers to this as "institutionalised Islamophobia" (2005: 99) which became more prominent in the wake of The Terrorism Act (2000) and the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (2001). Moreover, in the immediate period after 9/11 the then Home Secretary David Blunkett became embroiled in a race row relating to his proposal to introduce culture tests. Indeed, Blunkett wanted to introduce British citizenship laws which he believed would tackle the "problems of racial segregation" (Travis 2001). Moreover, David Blunkett made a speech in 2002, during which he stated that parts of Britain were already "swamped" with immigrants (Guardian 2002). Blunket's speech only served to play into the hands of the BNP, and legitimised their argument. The issue of segregation in communities was also raised by the former chair of the EHRC, Trevor Philips, who spoke of Britain "sleep walking" to segregation and attacked what he saw as the failure of multiculturalism (2005).

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[11] In reference to moral panic Cohen notes that "societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people" (2004: 1). For further details on moral panic also refer to Cohen (1972), Altheide (2009) and Odartey-Wellington (2009).

Evidently, the discourse surrounding segregation placed blame for this segregation firmly on the Muslim population, again fuelling anti-Muslim sentiment. However, there are scholars, such as Kundnani, who argued that segregation was the result of the interaction between industrial decline, 'white flight' and institutional racism and that, "after 2001, that history had been forgotten and its causality reversed so that it was 'Muslims' who were held responsible for refusing to mix, while 'multiculturalism' was blamed for allowing their self-segregation" (2007: 27). This next section will use the quantitative and qualitative data produced in Nuneaton to test whether voters adhere to the narrative that Muslims self-segregate. It will analyse how respondents voted for the BNP because of the fear of the other, and the view that the Muslim population are not willing to mix, which for some voters derived from their experience of these communities.

In the course of collecting and analysing the data for this research it became more evident that in explaining their 'fear' of Islam, or the 'other', BNP voters' sentiments were often attached to a lack of understanding or interaction. Indeed, most BNP respondents pointed the blame directly at the Muslim community. The reasons for these claims were more than often attached to the sentiment that the Muslim community just 'do not mix' with other members of the community, and more specifically, the Muslim community did not want to mix with the white local community. The analysis also found that amongst the BNP voters interviewed, there is a belief that the Muslim community do not mix with them because they viewed them as infidels. For example, one BNP voter stated that, "Muslim immigrants don't mix as much" (O2OI13 2014). This sentiment was also highlighted by a BNP voter and former activist, who when asked if he felt that there had been a failure to integrate with the Muslim community, responded:

> Yes definitely. They don't want to do they? It is part of their religion not to mix with us. We are f**king infidels ain't we? And I see it all the time. The way they look at us, and I find them very ignorant. The way they can speak English but don't in front of you. But that is just the world we live in… areas have been completely taken over by them [Muslims]. They are not like Jamaicans who come over, ok they have their own clubs and everything, but they use to mix with us (O2OI2 2012).

This view of the Islamic community in Nuneaton was also shared by the selection of BNP voters below. For instance, one BNP voter, who when asked about any issues or problems relating to the immigrant community in Nuneaton stated that, "there have not been problems like, but there will be. We have loads of Muslims and they are growing in size. [Nuneaton] will be like Birmingham or Leicester soon... They just don't live like us. They don't like us, you know? We are infidels. Makes me sick. It is us against them" (O2OI4 2012). This response highlighted how some BNP voters conflated immigrants with Muslims. This sentiment was also shared by another BNP voter who also argued the Muslims do not mix:

> The Asians and Muslims just keep to themselves... they don't mix mainly, and it is the Asians who seem to be the problem. They don't really mix. You know, black people wear the same cloths as us, speak English, but then you get the Muslims walking round with Burkas on, and you can only see their eyes and stuff. If you walked out in a balaclava you wouldn't last very long, and if you went into a shop you'd be in trouble... Yes that's how I feel it is like. I don't know whether I want to mix with them, I don't know. I don't know any of them really. The ones I have known speak their own language and keep themselves to themselves. You know they don't really mingle, they don't go out, they don't drink, they don't play football, they don't socialise, they don't join clubs, they have their own clubs (O2OI8 2013).

There are also examples highlighting that there are some in the white community who chose not to mix with the Muslim community, which was a point highlighted by

Kundnani (2007). For example, one BNP voter stated when asked if he interacted with the Muslim community in Nuneaton:

> I try to stay away from them to be honest with you. I haven't got time for them, and I believe there is too many of them around in Nuneaton, and especially all over the country. And after what happened recently with that soldier being killed, it proves by example that people like that, I am not saying all Muslims are like that, but the majority of them have the same feelings, and they should all be out of this f**king country (O2OI7 2013).

Indeed, one BNP voter when asked if he knows any Muslims in his neighbourhood replied "No. If they ended up living where I do, and every other house is a Muslim, I would probably think about moving out" (O2OI9 2013). In fact, many BNP voters shared the sentiment that they do not want to live in neighbourhoods where the Muslim community reside. Moreover, one BNP voter was asked if he interacted with the local Muslim community and he replied quite bluntly, "[I] Don't mix with them", and when asked if he thinks the Muslim community mix with the local white community, or even want to mix with them replied, "No, only if they have to through work, otherwise they don't want to" (O2OI13 2014). The view that the Muslim community are segregated and do not mix was not just restricted to BNP voters in Nuneaton. In fact, one Labour voter, when discussing immigration into Britain, argued that certain 'types' of immigrants are more acceptable than others:

> Certain groups are less willing or able to integrate in society and stuff. It is like you get large areas with Asian communities in and people think they are less likely to integrate into a community… I think people look at that and say if they don't integrate with everyone else and just live in their own area, and then what people hear from groups like the EDL or BNP sounds true, they think yes we can't live together (FG2P3 2012).

Analysis of the data in this section demonstrates that some voters in the white community do feel isolated and separated from the Muslim community. This has played into the hands of organisations like the BNP who have attacked multiculturalism, and propagated a narrative on Islamic segregation. Moreover, we can see that there is a feeling amongst BNP voters, that in particular it is the Muslim community that does not mix. One of the reasons for this is that many voters, and not just BNP supporters, view Muslims and Islam with suspicion and fear. There is no doubt that the language used by mainstream political actors fed into the growing hysteria, which the BNP were able to tap into, and only served to divide communities further. This segregation evidently benefited the BNP, who also used fear, particularly the fear of the other, to increase their support.

This study will now focus on the data produced in Nuneaton, in order to understand why some voters chose to vote for a party based on their fear of Islam the perceived threat people have derived from their experience of radical Islamism. So what drives this fear and dislike of Muslims, and how does it manifest itself amongst the voters? It has been argued that those who hold closed views of Islam view it as inferior, threatening, aggressive, and a religion engaged in a clash of civilisations (Runnymede Trust report 1997: 5). Indeed, Goodwin *et al.* notes that, the world of the far right offers a distinct set of narratives which emphasised the perceived threat from Islam, which includes the argument "that Britain will soon descend into a race war or a civil war as soon as City X or City Y becomes majority Muslim" (2012a: 3). This was also highlighted by Goodwin and Evans who found that BNP supporters "strongly disagree that Islam is not a threatening religion", and they "expressed high levels of anxiety over Muslims and the 'threat' from their religion, Islam" (2012: 18-19). It appears from previous studies that many BNP supporters are convinced that

Islam is posing a danger to the West, and Islamophobia is often expressed in a way highlighted by Kundnani, who states that "you say Islam and automatically somebody is thinking extremist or terrorist" (2002: 74). Indeed, Goodwin found that 70 per cent of BNP voters he sampled believe that, "even in its milder forms Islam poses a serious danger to Western civilisation" (2011b: 112). Therefore, it is necessary to test the explanations that the BNP supporters in Nuneaton also hold the view that Islam as a threat, and that this fear was important in their decision to vote for the BNP.

The BNP have sought to exploit the fear and the perceived threat from Islam. Indeed, BNP leader Nick Griffin was early in realising the potential in exploiting growing tensions between the white and Muslim Asian communities in parts of Britain. For example, in 1999 when Griffin began his programme of modernisation he sought to move away from biological racism. Griffin exploited new issues which formed the BNP's programme, and utilised cultural racism and cultural difference. For example, as early as 2000 the BNP leader stated that, "we believe not just that our people are different from others, but that such genuine diversity is worth preserving. It is not a matter of 'superiority' or 'inferiority'" (Griffin 2000). Moreover, we can see clearly in the BNP 2005 election manifesto that culture was becoming a central focus. It states that,

> The British National Party believes in genuine ethnic and cultural diversity and
> the right of ALL peoples to self-determination and that must include the
> indigenous peoples of these islands. The British peoples are embroiled in a long
> term cultural war being waged by a ruling regime, which has abandoned the
> concept of "Britain" in pursuit of globalisation. We are determined to win that
> cultural war, and to that end, we must take control of our national borders. We
> must also stop further attempts to enforce multi-culturalism on an increasingly
> sceptical and unwilling populace. The future of our culture is not up for debate -
> it is part of our individual and collective existence on this planet and we are
> under an obligation to pass on to generations yet unborn, the collected

knowledge, wisdom and lore, which we ourselves have inherited (BNP General
Election Manifesto 2005: 3)

There is also evidence that the BNP have utilised the politics of fear, fear of
Muslims and Islam, in order to garner electoral support. Indeed, Bunglawala argued
that the BNP have "energetically focused on promoting a new and more voter friendly
one-line answer to all problems: it's all the Muslims' fault" (2006). For example,
Griffin made a speech to his supporters on 19 January 2004 stating that, Islam was a
"wicked, vicious faith", and "Asian Muslims were turning Britain into a multiracial
hell as they tried to conquer the country" (Anon 2006b). In fact, excerpts from
Griffin's speech made all the national newspapers, and were documented in the BBC
Panorama programme *The Secret Agent* in 2004. It appears that this message has
resonated with some BNP voters. For example, one BNP voter spoke of falling birth
rates amongst the white population, the growing birth rate in the Islamic community,
and the Balkanisation of the UK, and stated that, "I really think the whole Enoch
Powell thing, you know the Rivers of Blood, I think that will still happen. I don't
know when, but in my lifetime or just after and I think it will happen" (O2OI1 2012).
These sentiments and attitudes will now be examined in greater detail.

The examination of the data shows just how much this has resonated with the
voters in Nuneaton. For example, in Nuneaton, those who chose to vote for the BNP
did display a fear of Islam, the religion, and view all Muslims as a threat. Indeed, one
BNP voter, when asked if he believed radical Islam was a threat stated forthrightly,
"Islam is a threat" (O2OI4 2012), while another BNP voter when asked the same
question replied, "definitely to me, to English nationals, the whole country. I just
think they are not safe" (O2OI7 2013). Moreover, another BNP respondent was more
specific regarding why he viewed Muslims and their religion as a threat, stating that,

"Islam spreads and the very nature of Islam forces it to spread and control" (O2OI1 2012). Clearly, Islam has been portrayed and is viewed by some voters as something alien to British culture, which has no doubt contributed to the rise in Islamophobia in Britain. This was indicated by BNP voters, with one highlighting his fear and hatred of Islam based on his own experiences with Muslims, stating that:

> I have known Muslims... I have had my hair cut by Muslims. And there are a lot of Hindu's around here. And I know for a fact the Muslims do not respect us. Because, if a girl has a short skirt on, and because they are non-Muslim, they are regarded as Infidel dogs. So it is nothing for them to rape them or shag them. That is just the way it seems to me anyway. They look at them differently to their own. They don't really want nothing to do with us. I mean there is one down the road, I go in his shop and he just drops his change in your hand, and I have been going there for years and he has always been like that with us. I don't go there anymore. I know another Muslim who used to cut my hair and I have reason to believe what he said to me. He said to me, I am Muslim and you are Christian, I could, you, your wife, your kids, I could rape them, kill all of you. I would get done by the law, but as long as I say my prayers to Allah it is not an offence. Because you're a f**king infidel. You know what I mean? And I have always believed that, I mean he was talking to me, and as far as I am aware he was telling me the truth. So as far as I am concerned they are all the same (O2OI2 2012).

This sentiment seemed to materialise in the responses of all BNP voters who took part in the interviews. Indeed, as this BNP voter stated when asked if he believed Islam is a threat:

> Well I have never had any trouble with them but they are always walking around speaking Arabic or whatever in an English country, and they could be saying anything about anybody, and the Burka's or stuff they wear there could be anyone underneath that. I know the French have banned them and I think we should go the same way. Like I said before, if you walk down the street with a balaclava you would get pulled over by the police. Some Muslim walking down

the street in a f**king Burka and that is just accepted... I am worried about it to be honest with you. If we keep going on the way we are and don't put our foot down, I mean I have watched programmes about Luton and Muslims protesting on the street saying they want Sharia Law and then you know you get people like the EDL doing demonstrations and they are just branded racist. I mean to a certain degree they might be but they are standing up for what they believe in, in this country and we don't want people coming into our country telling us what we can and can't do and what we can and can't say (O2OI8 2013).

This negative view of Islam was also shared by another BNP voter who stated that:

Certain factions of the Muslim community will use their religion as an excuse to do things that are unacceptable to British society. And particularly the area that upset me the most was the groups of young Muslim males who see, or aren't allowed to have much sexual contact prior to marriage with another Muslim. But they are allowed to take infidels, so in essence they see it as right to sow their oats, by hook or by crook with any young white females or whatever, whether they be old enough to consent or not (O2OI9 2013).

However, it was not just BNP supporters who expressed fear of Muslims and Islam. For example, during one focus group a self-declared Independent voter, when discussing people's perceptions of Muslims in Nuneaton and nationally, stated:

There is a feeling there that people didn't know who they could trust or who the enemy is, or who the terrorist is or where they are. People developed a fear of some people. This clearly did come into play when some people voted, because these people, who are immigrants, might be the people we are scared of and when you have an organisation like the BNP who are putting Britain and the British first, people naturally think this is a good idea. Basically it is naturally going to increase any comfort feeling. And so it is not surprising that the BNP, whether or not there is any substance there that they pushed their votes up... And should we be surprised the BNP got in, not really (FG1P2 2012).

It is clear that anti-Muslim sentiment is more evident in the responses of BNP respondents. In fact, 100 per cent of BNP respondents who took part in the interviews demonstrated a high level of Islamophobia. Indeed, the quotations selected above represent the feelings of many voters, but all BNP respondents expressed similar views on this topic.

It was also apparent from the data produced by the questionnaire that anti-Muslim sentiment was strongest amongst BNP voters. Although less colourful than the qualitative data above, the following statistic clearly points to Islamophobia being a key variable in the minds of BNP voters. The questionnaire recorded that 84 per cent of those who said they voted for the BNP in 2008, did so because of their stand against radical Islamism (see table 29). This offers an indication of the level of feeling towards Muslims amongst BNP voters, and produces data which correlates with the statistical data provided in the literature. For example, Goodwin in his analysis of survey data found that BNP voters were more likely to express anti-Muslim sentiment, and that 79 per cent stated that "even in its milder forms Islam poses a serious danger to Western civilisation" (2011a: 112). This sentiment was also evident in the explanation offered by Goodwin and Evans who found that over 88 per cent of BNP voters either disagreed or strongly disagreed that Islam does not pose a serious danger to Western civilisation, and that less than 1 per cent of their BNP sample would welcome a Mosque being built in their area (2012: 19). They also argue that BNP supporters were "deeply concerned about the issue of immigration, but also feel deeply uncomfortable about the perceived threat from Islam, and by extension the presence of its religious institutions at the local level. In short, large majorities in our sample appear absolutely convinced that Islam is threatening Western civilisation" (Goodwin and Evans 2012: 19).

Table 29: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [I voted for the party because of their stand against radical Islam]							
		I voted for the party because of their stand against radical Islam					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	6%	8%	47%	14%	25%	100%
	Conservative	16%	10%	57%	8%	10%	100%
	Liberal Democrats	4%	0%	58%	12%	27%	100%
	BNP	71%	13%	16%	0%	0%	100%
	Green Party	17%	17%	50%	0%	17%	100%
	UKIP	0%	75%	0%	0%	25%	100%
	Independent	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
	Did not vote	8%	0%	31%	23%	38%	100%
	Other	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Total		42	24	123	28	50	267
		16%	9%	46%	10%	19%	100%
						Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012	

What this section has shown is that there is overwhelming evidence of intense Islamophobia, and it was the prevailing view amongst BNP voters. This demonstrates that Islam was, and still is to many a threat, which has developed into a fear of all Muslims. It has also shown that this fear, for some, is based not just on the illusion created by the media and politicians, but also relates for some to direct experiences. Moreover, this section demonstrated that the BNP have tapped into this fear, and they were a major beneficiary in terms of gaining electoral support in 2008. Indeed, analysis of the data produced in Nuneaton demonstrates that voters do hold negative views of Muslims which correlates with the explanations highlighted in the literature. Clearly voters hold negative views of Islam, and evidently these sentiments had increased post-9/11, as the next section will demonstrate.

9/11, Islamism, and the BNP

This final section will focus on some of the main issues raised in more detail, notably whether the effects of 9/11, and its aftermath, fuelled support for the BNP in Nuneaton. It will do this by highlighting what is argued in the literature, the role of the BNP in attaching itself to perceived 'war' against radical Islamism, and finally a brief look at media coverage of the 9/11 and the subsequent 'War on Terror'.

The analysis of the literature highlights evidence of heightened Islamophobia, which included a rise in negative stereotyping of Muslims, with examples of intolerance in the media, from politicians and government institutions, which evidently filtered into the wider community in the UK (Bowyer 2008; McGhee 2005; Richardson 2004). Indeed, Richardson states that, "at times of international conflict and fear there is a tendency in the media and in political speeches, and in everyday conversations up and down the land to dehumanise and demonise the enemy" (Richardson 2004: 15). Richardson also highlighted the enhanced belief that, "Islamism is the New Bolshevism" and "the enemy was not an individual human being... nor the strands within Islam known as Islamism, but the whole of Islam" (Richardson 2004: 17). This view was also shared by Alexander who states that, "in the post-9/11 climate, the links being made between Muslim terrorists, British Muslim suicide bombers, Muslim 'hate clerics' and the 'rioting' Muslim communities of Bradford, Oldham and Burnley are increasingly becoming 'seamless and almost incontrovertible'" (cited in McGhee 2005: 99). Moreover, the post-9/11 hysteria provided an opportunity for the BNP to garner support. For example, Bowyer argues that "the BNP also embarked on a propaganda campaign, which intensified after September 11" (Bowyer 2008: 612). Furthermore, analysis of the BNP shows how the party attached itself to the issue and anxieties surrounding Islam, and offered

themselves as the defenders of the British way of life (Goodwin 2011b; Copsey 2008; John *et al.* 2006; McGhee 2005). It is argued that the BNP utilised 9/11 to fuel wider Islamophobia in Britain, and actively sought to exploit the growing unpopularity of the Muslim community in the post-9/11 period. For example, John *et al.* state that the BNP success in the 2000s can be linked to the fact that the party was "able to capitalise upon 'Islamophobia' and that the strategy of exploiting the role of Muslims in terrorist attacks, such as 7 July London bombings", and that "the strategy of exploiting the role of Muslims in terrorist attacks, may very well have a particularly strong effect at the local level" (2006: 16-17). Moreover, Rhodes in his analysis of multiculturalism and the subcultural politics of the BNP states that, in the "aftermath of the 2001 riots, 9/11, and the onset of the 'War on Terror' saw Muslims, both here and abroad, become a target of fear, suspicion, and hostility, portrayed as a potentially threatening and disloyal group", and the 7/7 bombings "marked an intensification in political, media, and public suspicion of the broader Muslim community" (2011: 67).

It is suggested that in the immediate years following 9/11 the BNP's embrace of Islamophobia had an effect on their level of electoral support. For example, electorally the BNP gained in elections year-on-year following 9/11, and from 2001 to 2008 the BNP vote in local elections increased from no seats in 2001, to three in 2002, then increasing to 55 by 2008 (Table 30). In fact, the BNP had since 2000 seen their votes in the local elections increase dramatically from 3,022 votes to 292,911 in 2007 (Table 30).

Source: Tetteh 2009

Although there were no seats in 2005 it is worth noting that only 18 councils were contested, and the BNP did still achieve 11 per cent of the total vote (Tetteh 2009: 5). The BNP also experienced a dramatic increase in their support at the general elections, rising from 0.2 per cent (47,129) of the total vote in 2001, to 0.7 per cent in 2005 (192,746), and rising again in 2010 to 1.9 per cent (563,743) of the total vote (See Table 5).

There are no explanations which link rising BNP electoral support directly with increased Islamophobia and terrorist attacks, although the data above does offer some correlation. BNP support rose dramatically in the period between 2001 and 2009, which is in line with heightened Islamophobia. If we analyse the rise in local councillors against specific terrorist attacks by radical Islamists it does indicate that from 9/11 onwards the BNP vote increased as did the number of local councillors (see Table 31). Although there is no direct correlation between voting within this period and individual BNP victories, these attacks did contribute, but not as a precise identification of 'terrorism for votes'.

Table 31: Local election seats won/Major Terror attacks 2000 to 2008

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As indicated earlier in the chapter, there was a shift from the racial threat espoused by the National Front in the 1970s and the BNP in the 1980s and 1990s, to a cultural threat from 2001 onwards, which led the BNP to direct its attacks on the Islamic community. It was also evident through the analysis of location, that the BNP in the post 9/11 environment have exploited anxiety over settled Muslim communities. For example, the BNP focused its election resources on areas with large Muslim populations in parts of the North of England, London, and in the Midlands (see Appendix IV – Election leaflets; The truth About Islam/The Londoner). Indeed, Goodwin notes that, "within hours of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the party launched a 'campaign against Islam' and quickly developed leaflets which

featured quotations from the Koran and warned voters that Britain was being turned into an Islamic republic" (2011b: 68). The strategy of the BNP was to exploit the growth in anti-Muslim sentiment in the wake of 9/11, and in particular target locations in Britain which have concentrated Muslim communities. Goodwin's explanation that the BNP changed direction, and focused their attacks on Islam and Muslims, will now be tested by analysing the data in Nuneaton. It will also briefly look at what the BNP did to exploit the anxiety post 9/11.

It is evident that the former BNP leader Nick Griffin realised that the increase in Islamophobia, post 9/11 and 7/7, could be utilised. In fact, from the early 2000s Griffin sought to make political capital out of the increasing climate of Islamophobia, and attacking Islam, multiculturalism, and the segregation of the Islamic community was at the forefront of BNP campaigns. This also included the BNP joining forces with extreme elements from the Sikh and Hindu communities in an anti-Islamic campaign. The campaign claimed that Islam was a threat to all non-Muslims and involved the distribution of CDs and leaflets and included a joint statement from the BNP, Sikhs and Hindus, with Griffin arguing that "Islam is the biggest threat Britain has ever faced" (cited in Harris 2001). Griffin also argued that the multiracial dream had 'died', and argued this related specifically to the Muslim communities:

> In white working-class estates on the edges of Muslim areas all over the country the liberal fantasy of multi-racial harmony is dead and gone forever… the only question is how long its putrid corpse will bring hatred, violence and death to innocent people of all colours before we are in a position to give it a decent burial (cited in Rhodes 2011).

As demonstrated earlier, electoral support for the BNP increased dramatically in the post-9/11 period. But just how much did 9/11 resonate with voters in Nuneaton? The analysis of the data produced by this research shows there was a rise in anti-Muslim,

and anti-Islam sentiment, especially amongst BNP voters, and in the post-9/11 period all Muslims were viewed with suspicion by part of the electorate. Indeed, this was noted by Kundnani in the literature, who argued that, "all Muslims in Britain have come to be perceived as potential terrorists and have had to explain themselves to the rest of the country, as if what happened on 9/11 was somehow their doing" (2007: 31).

Analysis of the data also shows that 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks by radical Islamists increased negativity of all Muslims, especially amongst BNP voters. For example, when asked whether the terrorist attacks of 9/11, 7/7, and the general war on terror were influential in their decision to vote for a party or candidate, one BNP voter seemed very assured of their position replying; "I would say so. I started following the BNP after 9/11… I was scared what would happen in this country" (O2OI4 2012). Another BNP voter who was asked the same question replied, "I think a lot of people think about it, but in 20 years there will be double or quadruple the amount of them because that is just the way it is" (O2OI2 2012). Moreover, one BNP voter highlighted a familiar story which has plagued the press for years, and stated that "you have Islamic guys who have been linked to terrorism and you can't get rid of them" (O2OI1 2012). Furthermore, one BNP supporter was asked how the events of 9/11 and terrorism impacted on why they supported the BNP and they replied:

> Definitely, yes definitely. I have got two kids and you hear about all these terrorist plots being foiled and stuff, in this country and America. You know at the end of the day my priority is my family and their well-being. And you hear all the time about people in Mosques in London preaching hate. And then you have the soldiers coming back from Afghanistan and you get Islamic groups protesting about British Soldiers killing Muslims and it just makes me sick mate. But coming back to that swaying my vote a lot of these people walking around [Muslims] you don't know who they are, most of them have got the

same name, they are all called Mohammed. When I use to work in a phone shop you got people come in and one of them would bring their ID and it is has got his name on it, Mohammed Ali or whatever, and then his brother comes in and he has got the same f**king name. How can you keep tabs on them? (O2OI8 2013).

It is worth noting that for some in Nuneaton it was what followed the attacks of 9/11 rather than the terrorist act itself. For example, one Muslim leader in Nuneaton stated that "the increase of Islamophobia related issues started, I do feel, ever since the Iraq War, where Labour enforced the War on Terror" (O2OI6 2013).

It appears from this brief analysis that when asked, BNP voters agree fear of Islam and Muslims was important, but it is linked to other views, often relating to size of the immigrant population, segregation or the War on Terror which followed 9/11 which was more important. The question which remains is where and how were these views shaped and developed? As this analysis has shown the BNP were important in getting their anti-Muslim message across, but it was also the case that the media, (mainly the tabloid press), were instrumental in legitimising the message of the BNP.

As indicated above, it has been argued that the rise of Islamophobia was in part fuelled by the media (Eatwell 2011; Copsey and Macklin 2011; Kundnani 2007). Indeed, Copsey and Macklin state that "there is no doubt that some mass circulation papers have set agendas which have made not just terrorism but Islam a major issue" (2011: 238). This view was also shared by McGhee, who notes that:

> The reporting of the 9/11 attacks is crucial for understanding the context in which anti-Islamic feelings have been stirred up in non-Muslim countries. On the day of the attacks on New York and Washington, the culprits were very soon identified as being Muslims; thus a connection between Islam and terrorism was fused as reporters and politicians across the world began to report and comment on the attacks as being Islamic in origin (McGhee 2005: 103).

Evidently politicians, former and current, helped fuel Islamophobia in the media. For example, in 2001 Baroness Thatcher, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, was accused of racism after an article she wrote was published widely in the press stating that, "the people who brought down those towers were Muslims and Muslims must stand up and say that is not the way of Islam" and that she "had not heard enough condemnation from Muslim priests" (Thatcher cited in BBC News 2001). Moreover, Thatcher in an article, *Advice to a Superpower* in the *New York Times* (2002), which was widely published in the British press at the time, stated that "Islamic extremism today, like Bolshevism in the past, is an armed doctrine. It is an aggressive ideology promoted by fanatical, well-armed devotees. And, like Communism, it requires an all-embracing long-term strategy to defeat it". As these few examples demonstrate, the media has been complicit in fuelling Islamophobia, and it helped legitimise the anti-Islamic message being utilised by the BNP in the post-9/11 period. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight, which looks specifically at the role the media played in increasing Islamophobia.

What this section has demonstrated is that the BNP have made political progress by utilising the rising fear and hysteria which followed the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror. This did resonate with BNP voters in Nuneaton. The analysis has also demonstrated briefly how the media have been important in legitimising the same message which the BNP attached itself to. Moreover, through the analysis of the data produced, it is shown that there is a correlation between BNP support and increasing Islamophobia in the post-9/11 period. The attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror, when combined with the language of fear espoused by politicians and the media, clearly proved beneficial in legitimising the ideas and discourse of the BNP. Indeed, BNP voters demonstrated an increased level of anxiety

towards Muslims, and many stated that their support was linked to 9/11, 7/7, and the fear of terror.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the BNP's success cannot really be understood or analysed without examining the effects of Islamophobia. It found that the BNP were able to attract voters by highlighting the segregation which exists in the town, and amplified the division specifically between the 'Muslim' and 'white' community. The analysis found that voters of all persuasions held the belief that the Muslim community do not, and are not willing to mix with their 'white' neighbours. This has also clearly played into the hands of those who have utilised fear and difference to garner support. The analysis also highlighted the impact of fear, a fear which was no doubt amplified by the media in the wake of the 9/11 attacks to the benefit of the BNP.

This chapter also found that, as with immigration, national issues were more important than local. For example, national issues such as 9/11, 7/7 and the War on Terror evidently played out at a local level, and this proved pivotal for the BNP in garnering support. Further evidence of this will be provided in chapter eight. This research also demonstrates that it should be analysed as an important factor alongside variables, such as immigration and socioeconomics. Indeed, as this analysis has shown, the anti-Muslim campaigns clearly resonated with voters, and fed into the fear of Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia was an important part of the jigsaw which galvanised support for the BNP, and conflates with a number of variables tested in this research.

This chapter has shown that in Nuneaton, although it has a comparatively small Muslim population, there is a geographical concentration of the Muslim

population in certain parts of the borough, and there is evidence of divided communities. It has also demonstrates that in comparison with other locations where the BNP were successful, such as Burnley, the geographical concentration of the Muslim population can help explain why the BNP were successful in Nuneaton, typically that it was in predominantly white wards bordering these locational clusters. This chapter also highlights that some voters in the white community feel isolated and separated from the Muslim community, which in the climate of fear, which existed in 2008, played into the hands of the BNP who propagated a narrative on Islamic segregation.

The chapter also examined the view that BNP supporters view Muslims and Islam with suspicion and fear. This was evidently fuelled by moral panic in the wake of terrorist attacks. It demonstrated that the language being used by mainstream political actors fed into the growing hysteria and the BNP made political headway out of this. Indeed, it should be argued that Islam and Muslims are viewed in an extremely negative manner by BNP voters, and is the prevailing. Islam was seen as a threat and this developed in the first decade of the twenty-first Century into a fear of all Muslims and their religion. The BNP tapped into this fear early on, and was the main beneficiary in terms of gaining electoral support in 2008 as the data demonstrate.

Finally, this chapter has shown that the BNP made political progress by utilising the rising fear and hysteria following the terror attacks and threats in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and it does show a correlation between BNP support and increasing Islamophobia in the post-9/11 period. The attack of 9/11, the War on Terror, and the language of fear espoused by politicians and the media, were beneficial to the BNP, and legitimised their ideas and discourse. This case study

suggests that Islamophobia and the discourse generated by the subsequent War on Terror should be regarded as a key variable. It should be analysed as a key independent factor, and not like the majority of the literature which often analysed Islamophobia within the context of the immigration variable, even if the two are inextricably linked.

Chapter 6

A competition for votes

The emphasis of this chapter is on the role of political opportunity structures (POS), and how important disaffection and disillusionment were, on the success of the BNP in Nuneaton. As highlighted in the literature review, the role of POS has been analysed by researchers as an explanation for far right breakthrough (Startin 2014; Hainsworth 2008; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2007; Eatwell 2003). POS theory focuses on factors external to the far right party, which, according to Eatwell, stress the "extent to which the actions and programmes of mainstream parties help or hinder insurgents" and whether "there is the question of the degree of 'openness' of political institutions to insurgent parties" (2003: 58). POS factors were also identified by Rydgren, who in his analysis focused on the decreased trust in the mainstream parties, the increased salience of an alternative party, the politicisation of new issues, the convergence of the mainstream parties, the relative openness of a political system, and the presence of coalitions between the mainstream parties (2007: 476-477).

Examination of the literature has also demonstrated that BNP voters are exceptionally distrustful of political institutions in general, and are extremely hostile towards mainstream politicians. Indeed, many voters shared the sentiment that 'all parties are the same', and academics have sought to understand the importance of disaffection and disillusionment on voting behaviour, and whether this materialises in support for the far right (Harrison and Bruter 2011; Goodwin 2011a; Rydgren 2005). For example, Harrison and Bruter found in their analysis that, "citizens who may not usually vote for the extreme right might consider the choice if they are disillusioned with the state of politics and effectively feel disenfranchised from the existing political system" (2011:15). Moreover, Goodwin argues that BNP voters are

"extremely dissatisfied with the government and main parties", and further states that "they are extremely negative about the performance of the government and the three main parties" (2011a: 113). This chapter investigates the explanation that decreased trust is important through the analysis of disaffection and disillusionment.

In terms of the structure of this chapter, first it analyses whether political convergence opened up a political space for the BNP in Nuneaton in 2008. It will demonstrate that although convergence was important, it was only when it was conflated with disaffection and disillusionment that this became more important in opening a political space for the BNP. Second, examination of how disaffection and disillusionment impacted on voting behaviour was made, which shows how the BNP benefited as some voters switched allegiance. Focus will then turn to the role of the mainstream parties, notably their lack of local campaigning and the decline in local politics. It will provide evidence which highlights that the mainstream parties did become complacent, and for some voters in 2008 they failed to offer a credible choice. Finally, this chapter analyses the electoral system and voter turnout and argue that this had a limited impact on the BNP's success in 2008. Analysis in this chapter will show that although POS factors were significant, and contributed to the BNP success in Nuneaton, some factors can better help explain far right breakthrough, while others are of little importance. As the analysis of the data will show, the effects of convergence, disaffection, distrust and disillusionment were of greater significance for the BNP in 2008.

The politics of convergence

This first section will now offer an analysis of convergence. Convergence occurs when parties reposition themselves in the centre ground of the political spectrum, and act as catch-all parties. This has been significant in explaining declining support for the mainstream parties to the benefit of minor parties like the BNP. Many authors have analysed the role of convergence in providing an ideological space for the far right (Hainsworth 2008; Kitschelt 1995; Rydgren 2005). For example, Hainsworth states that "political opportunities can arise when mainstream parties are seen to converge politically, ideologically, programmatically and via policy sharing, thereby opening up a political space for other parties" (2008: 130). In addition, Rydgren highlights one outcome of this convergence, stating that, "the real or perceived convergence between the mainstream parties in the political space has caused a feeling that there is no real difference between the mainstream right and left political parties" (2005: 422). Indeed, several accounts have suggested that there was no ideological divide, similar to that which existed in Britain during the 1970s, the 1980s and early 1990s (Goodwin 2011a; Ford 2010; Cruddas *et al.* 2005; Green 2007). Moreover, some scholars have argued that voters find it difficult to differentiate between the mainstream parties' policies. Indeed, Green states that, "fewer and fewer people recognise a difference between the Conservatives and Labour" (2007: 631). This view is corroborated by Ford who notes that half of the respondents who took part in his analysis believe the mainstream parties offer no real choice, and their policies "are all the same" (2010: 159). Therefore, this analysis tests the argument and explanations in the literature that the mainstream parties in Britain have converged, and this has helped facilitate the breakthrough of the far right in Nuneaton.

First, it is important to focus on the argument that the parties have converged on policy. The argument is that the Labour Party and the Conservatives have both moved closer to the centre ground, with both parties seeking to attract voters with similar economic and social policies. This included policies relating to benefits, immigration, the economy and Europe. Lee points to New Labour's positioning on the idea of the citizen being the "bearer of responsibilities" which was evident in their policies when in government which included, the Welfare to Work programme and benefit sanctions for those who refused to take up work or training (2013: 255). This view was also shared by Bevir who argued that "New Labour seems to be as keen as the Conservatives to deal with this dilemma by modifying the range and conditions of welfare payments" (2000: 292). In fact, the Labour Party under Tony Blair shifted considerably to the right especially on issues of the economy, and Lee argues that, "embracement of the market economy is the most definitive feature of New Labour's move to the centre" (2013: 255). There is also evidence that there was a shift on immigration and asylum. Indeed, Wring notes that the Labour Party adopted many policies on asylum, which were similar to the Conservative Party, and espoused an "authoritarian rhetoric" on asylum (2001: 920). For example, former Conservative leader Michael Howard put immigration and asylum at the heart of his general election campaign in 2005, and the Labour Party, who were traditionally seen as more tolerant of immigration and asylum, began to sound like Conservative politicians when discussing the issue. Indeed, as previously mentioned, former Prime Minster Gordon Brown argued for "British jobs for British workers" (Brown 2007), and politicians, such as Labour MP Margaret Hodge, argued that traditional Labour voters are angry because, "They can't get a home for their children, they see black and ethnic minority communities moving in and they are angry" (cited in *The Telegraph* 2006).

This was in part aimed at appeasing those leading the 'white backlash' who felt that the Labour government at the time had failed to tackle immigration, and was important because the Labour Party were losing support, in areas where they had traditionally attracted white working class support. This of course is not the first time mainstream parties have attempted to appease those who bought into the politics of white backlash. For example, Rhodes points to early mainstream attempts to garner support using white backlash, highlighting the speech from Enoch Powell, and Thatcherism in the 1980s, and states that in more recent times "mainstream politicians have also become increasingly willing to articulate the sentiments of backlash politics" (Rhodes 2010a: 82). There is evidence that the mainstream parties were indeed converging on policy, and were to a large extent using and legitimising the language of the BNP. The outcome of this convergence was not that it closed the space for the BNP, but rather it fed into the narrative that the parties are all the same, and opened a political space in the first decade of the twenty-first Century. This will now be examined in greater detail.

Evidently the BNP gained success in Nuneaton when the Labour Party and Conservative Party were both offering policies nationally which had a 'catch all' ideological appeal. Indeed, Wilks-Heeg argued that because of convergence the BNP has "benefited from the tendency for British politics to have become dominated by a 'crowded centre', particularly since the construction of 'New Labour' from the mid-1990s" (2008: 9). In the analysis of convergence and its effect on the elections in Nuneaton, it became evident that voters no longer saw a difference between the mainstream parties. Analysis of the data produced in Nuneaton demonstrates that BNP voters stated they could not differentiate between the mainstream parties', which correlates with the explanation in the literature. For example, examination of the

interview responses demonstrates that BNP voters have a negative view of the mainstream parties, and the view that they are 'all the same' resonates with these voters.

We can also see that this sentiment was shared by all the BNP respondents who participated in this study, as the below responses demonstrate:

> There was no choice. I would rather vote for the Raving Looney Party rather than any of them like. Anything rather than the Conservatives or Labour. How many people don't vote now mate? And it is not just because they can't be bothered, it's because what they get to vote for. They are all the same (O2OI2 2012).

> They are just the same, all out for what they can get (O2OI4 2012).

> You get sick of people, the same faces, same policies (FG1P1 2012).

> There is no f**king difference between them. They all say they will sort out stuff but they never do anything when they get in power (O2OI8 2013).

> No there is not much difference between the parties (O2OI9 2013).

> Twenty years ago Labour were working class, Conservative were for posh people, and you didn't really hear from the Lib Dems, the BNP, I not even sure how long they have been around. But definitely Labour and Conservatives there was two sides to that, you had your working class and your well off people, now I would say there isn't much difference between the parties (O2OI7 2013).

It is evident from the sample of responses above that mainstream party convergence has opened up a political space for organisations like the BNP because some voters, who are receptive to the message of the BNP, clearly view all parties as the same.

This section has examined the evidence and demonstrated how the mainstream parties converged on specific policies, and how BNP voters who participated in this

study felt alienated. It has shown that a negative view arises from the perception that the mainstream parties are identical. This contributed to the sentiment that parties are 'all the same', and fuelled political dissatisfaction and disillusionment. In 2008 this sentiment benefited the BNP, who portrayed themselves as a new party, and the only option if you want to vote against the mainstream parties. This will be analysed further in the next chapter which looks in detail at the role of the BNP.

Convergence has undoubtedly left some voters feeling disillusioned with the mainstream parties. However, it does not show why they chose to vote for the BNP. Indeed, all parties campaigned hard on policies, such as immigration, which is the BNP's principle policy, so why did some voters choose the BNP? Indeed, as Rydgren argues, "the convergence of mainstream parties in political space is of minor direct importance for explaining the emergence of RRP [Radical right parties] parties" (2007: 498). Analysis in the next section will show how convergence, when combined with other factors, such as disaffection and disillusionment with politics in general, fuelled support for the BNP. Indeed, it is only when this convergence is occurring alongside other factors that the far right are able to exploit the space provided.

Disaffected and disillusioned – Decreased trust in mainstream parties

This next section looks at the growth in disaffection and disillusionment, and demonstrates how this resonates with the voters in Nuneaton. It will do this by focusing on several factors, including the effects of disillusionment and mistrust regarding the integrity of the mainstream politicians, highlighting how voters have lost faith in the mainstream parties' ability to deal with the perceived immigration problem, the rise in protest politics, and the mainstream parties' failure to challenge the status quo.

First, this section will look at the impact of mistrust and disaffection felt by large swathes of the electorate in Nuneaton. By analysing responses of voters in Nuneaton there is evidence of a disillusioned electorate who feel unrepresented by the mainstream parties, and as one BNP supporter stated, "They are all useless" (O2OI13 2014). Indeed, analysis of the responses below from BNP voters demonstrates the level of disillusionment and disaffection felt. For example, one BNP voter stated that "the working class have been let down by all governments. They pretend to help us but then just help the rich... I think they have all lost touch" (O2OI4 2012). Another voter also highlighted the level of disillusionment with politics and stated; "I have not got a massive amount of faith with what goes on in politics" (O2OI9 2013). This view was shared by another BNP voter who stated that the mainstream politicians,

> Are all just going to get up there and lie to us… never trust anyone because everything they said, at previous elections when they try and gather up votes and everything they do, it never happens. So I would never trust a politician... all politicians are f***ing liars anyway, you know what I mean... Never trust a politician, whatever they say they are going to do, it never happens and I am hoping that what the BNP say they can do. But you need more people to vote for the BNP, because this country is going to s**t (O2OI7 2013).

Moreover, we can also see from the participant's response below how this sentiment resonates with those who voted for the BNP:

> I have voted for the BNP. Obviously, I felt disillusioned with the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Party. I also think that at a local as well as a national level government is corrupt. In fact I think the local Labour government in Nuneaton is corrupt and politically self-serving. In the 20 years I have lived in Nuneaton I have never seen anything change in my mind, things just get worse... Councils just don't take responsibility for anything. Rates have gone up, Warwick blames Nuneaton and Nuneaton blames Warwick. All I ever hear from Nuneaton borough Council is that it is the County Council's fault and

all we hear from the County Council is it's up to the local council... I grew up in a time, when during my late teens councillors were elected to serve the people. Now my attitudes have changed. We are now just a group of people here to serve the council (FG1P1 2012).

It was also evident from the qualitative responses to the questionnaire that BNP voters were disillusioned with the mainstream political parties, as these responses below illustrate:

They are all the same. I am sick of the mainstream parties and what they say liars (Qualitative responses Questionnaire 2012).

Seems like the white working class men are not represented. All parties are virtually the same and not to be trusted… every politician simply lies to us. I feel pretty sad having to vote for a liar (Qualitative responses Questionnaire 2012).

Waste of time to vote, they all lie to you tell you one thing and do another. I vote for a vote of no confidence (Qualitative responses Questionnaire 2012).

What these responses demonstrate is that disillusionment with politics is not directed at one particular party but rather all the mainstream parties, and that it appears to be a recurring theme for BNP voters when discussing the mainstream parties. It was also evident when speaking to local politicians that there was a rise in anti-political sentiment. Indeed, elements of the electorate had completely lost their trust in politicians and were disillusioned, and one local Labour councillor noted that this was evident on the doorsteps in Nuneaton during the election campaign in 2008, and stated that:

Having spoken to people on the doorsteps in Barpool... people we considered our core vote, certainly on the left of it frayed away, and of course some of

those people have gone to the BNP. And those people often say things like, 'oh there is no difference between the mainstream parties', and they feel let down by the Labour Party and that they have forgotten their interests and doesn't really have anything to offer them... they definitely, and the feelings persist I think to a greater extent, think that the Labour Party doesn't stand for them or represent them anymore (O2OI3 2012).

This response from the local Labour Party councillor shows that on the ground, during the 2008 election campaign, there was an increased level of disillusionment amongst voters, and many former Labour voters.

We can see from the above responses that voters clearly feel disillusioned with the mainstream parties. Besides the sense of alienation caused by convergence, there are additional factors which appear to have fuelled the growth of this disaffection. There are many examples of mainstream corruption which fuelled the growth in disaffection and disillusionment including the Cash for Honours scandal which broke in 2006 (Jones and Steele 2006), and in May 2008 the High Court finally agreed to release details of MPs' expenses claims (BBC News 2008). Indeed, it could be safely assumed that this fed into the belief that the mainstream parties are just out to line their own pockets. This is corroborated by the fact that the BNP used many of these scandals to their own advantage, and this is highlighted in their 'Punish the Pigs' leafleting campaign (Appendix IV; Leaflet c.). In fact, it has been argued that the BNP made political gain out of corruption and distrust in politicians. For example, a *Sunday Express* poll found that "minor parties, including the far-right BNP, are the main beneficiaries of public disgust with the political establishment" (2009). The effects these scandals had on some voters in Nuneaton will be shown below.

The evidence that these scandals, alongside BNP campaigns against corruption, were important in increasing disillusionment and can be seen in the data

produced in Nuneaton. For example, there was an increased level of anger and dissatisfaction felt by part of the electorate aimed specifically at the corruption, which became synonymous with some mainstream politicians, as one BNP voter stated, "Politicians are all on the take" (O2OI13 2014). As the responses below demonstrate, BNP voters expressed anger, and high levels of mistrust when asked about the impact of corruption in national politics:

> It is frustrating, they are in a position of power and what it shows is that basically, and I am not saying all of them, they are corrupt. They use the taxpayer's money to get their f**king swimming pool cleaned out or some new bushes in their garden or porn channels on their TV (O2OI8 2013).

> I don't trust any of them. They are all on the take... to be honest I haven't liked them for years, and the corruption just summed it all up for me (O2OI4 2013).

Examination of the data also shows that for some respondents all these corruption scandals served to do was entrench the idea that all the mainstream parties are corrupt and self-serving. For example, one BNP voter was asked whether corruption affected their voting choice, replied angrily, "It is all bulls**t mate. They got away with it. It didn't affect my choice of vote as I already knew they were a waste of time. In my eyes they committed a crime and got let off with it" (O2OI2 2012). The level of mistrust and anger with the mainstream politicians were not just restricted to BNP voters, especially in the wake of the expenses scandal. Many participants also shared similar views with BNP voters, even if at no point they considered voting BNP. For example, we can see some of the responses below to questions relating to the expenses scandal:

> It did make me think about who I was voting for. But to be honest there was no one else I would vote for. They were all guilty, from all parties (FG2P3 2012).

> The whole country was appalled. All MPs from all parties were guilty. They were corrupt... To be honest I don't really listen much to politicians. Most of the stuff I see is what I read in the newspaper or on the internet. And it tends to be just scandals that make the papers. You only really hear about stuff that is going wrong (FG2P1 2012).

> The expenses scandal did not help. It did politicians at whatever level no good at all (FG1P4 2012).

Given, these views across voters for all parties, this limits the issues that pushed voters into the arms of the BNP; however, it did increase the level of distrust which left some voters feeling they had no other option. The data show that BNP voters were particularly scathing of corruption, and it tended to be with politicians at a national level, rather than the local level which indicates that corruption was not detected at a local level. As highlighted by the leader of Nuneaton council, Dennis Harvey, who was asked if there was ever any evidence of corruption in local government which may have affected the 2008 election and replied; "I am council leader so I would say no... But no there wasn't, no. And there have never been any cases" (O2OI5 2013). However, disillusionment with political corruption was especially important to BNP voters, and even though there is no evidence of corruption at a local level, similar to that which was experienced in Burnley during the BNP's breakthrough (See Rhodes 2009: 33-34), BNP voters still punished the local candidates because of the national instance of corruption. Indeed, as the analysis of the local press indicates in chapter eight, there was no evidence of any local scandals or corruption in the period leading up to 2008.

One further factor which has arguably fuelled disaffection and disillusionment with the mainstream parties, and enabled parties like the BNP to breakthrough, is

immigration. This relates specifically to the perceived failure to deal with immigration competently, an issue which has increased disaffection, and led to decreased trust in politicians, and increased salience of alternative parties. Analysis of the literature does indicate that the issue of immigration is linked to disillusion and disaffection. For example, Goodwin found that there has been a considerable increase in "the number of citizens who do not associate any of the main parties with the best policies on immigration" (2011a: 66). Moreover, Ignazi states that the "post-industrial extreme right are the by-product of a dissatisfaction for government policies on issues such as immigration" (2003: 217). This view is shared by Hainsworth who states that "the extreme right's success reflects a popular disillusionment with mainstream and traditional elites, institutions and practices and their capacity to 'deliver the goods'" (2008: 129). The goods in this case are the government's failure to deal with the perceived immigration problem.

As detailed in chapter four, immigration remains a core issue which acts as a catalyst. Indeed, evidence shows that it is related directly to rising disillusionment and disaffection. The analysis of the qualitative data demonstrates that BNP voters did demonstrate a high level of mistrust and disillusionment with government policy on immigration. For example, examination of the responses from BNP voters in Nuneaton highlights this, with one voter stating that, "no one else listens and no-one else wants to sort out immigration. They all talk about it but do f**k all" (O2OI4 2012). This sentiment was also shared by another BNP voter, who when asked about the policies of the mainstream parties on immigration, replied, "for years politicians have stood there and blatantly lied, and I don't even f**king follow politics. They blatantly lie and then stand there and ask you to vote for them" (O2OI2 2012). One voter also argued that the mainstream parties have lost touch with the ordinary voters

when it comes to immigration policy, stating that; "the Labour party, when they removed control over EU immigration, predicted 10000 immigrants coming into the UK, and it ended up with a million Polish workers. It puts a burden on affordable housing and whatever, and there are all sorts of problems with that" (O2OI9 2013). It is worth noting here that this particular respondent blames the Labour party for the increase in Polish workers, not Britain's membership of the European Union. Another voter also took a similar view, but placed blame on the Conservatives, and when asked who he voted for before the BNP replied:

> [I] voted Conservative sometimes when I thought they might do something about immigration…I don't think the mainstream parties have done anything really. I think the Conservatives were saying they were going to cut down on immigration when they came into the government before the last election but since they have got in they have not done a lot (O2OI8 2013).

Therefore, the perceived incompetence of the mainstream parties on immigration has had the effect of increasing voter dissatisfaction with mainstream parties, as shown in the chapter on immigration and asylum, with both the Labour Party, and to some extent the Conservatives Party, being viewed as unable to deal with the 'problem'. Evidently immigration and the politicisation of race were factors when analysed within the context of growing disillusionment and disaffection, and issue salience has materialised in increasing BNP support leading up-to the 2008 elections. However, it appears that it is the mainstream parties' failure to deliver on their policy promises that has a negative effect on voters, rather than the BNP having ownership of immigration.

This suggests that the mainstream parties' attempts did not have the desired effect of strangling the BNP, and only served to politicise the issue of race and immigration further. It is in response to this that the BNP attempted to gain issue

ownership of immigration, on the basis that they are the only party who will do something about it. Issue ownership is important because immigration attracts votes in an environment where immigration tops many lists of voter concerns. Historically, it was the Conservative Party who sought to gain ownership of immigration. However, it appears that the Conservative Party were no longer seen as the party who would control immigration. This is reflected in the data provided by *Ipsos-Mori*, which shows that rather than having issue ownership, the Conservative Party has seen a sharp drop in support relating to immigration, with a drop from 50 per cent in 1978 to 19 per cent in 2001 in the number of voters who believed they had the best policies on immigration, although this had risen to 28 per cent by 2010 (Goodwin 2011a: 65-66). In fact, many argue that the Tories, when in power, did not actually control immigration in the way promised, but rather as Karapin states, "as soon as the Tories got into power, they immediately softened on the immigration issue" (cited in Ignazi 2003: 211). Analysis of the statistics highlights why immigration became an important election issue, for all parties. Immigration increased by 95% between 1991 and 2014, a period when both the Conservatives and the Labour Party were in power, rising from 329,000 in 1991 to 641,000 in 2014 (Hawkins 2015: 6). It is also worth highlighting the total net migration for the period 2001 to 2011 which according to the ONS is now estimated to have been 2.53 million (Hawkins 2015: 7). This again feeds into the sentiment that although the mainstream parties talk tough on immigration no party has really acted upon it, further raising voter valence of the issue.

When there is consensus on immigration, amongst the mainstream parties, then the focus of attention for voters is directed on whether these parties can actually deliver. Analysis of the data collected in Nuneaton and highlighted in chapter four, demonstrates that for BNP voters the mainstream parties did not deliver. Indeed, this

corroborates the explanation offered by Ford that "over 8 in 10 respondents agree that there is a big difference between what parties promise and what they deliver, and more than 7 in 10 agree that parties are more interested in winning votes than in representing their constituents or governing effectively" (2010: 159). The issue of immigration specifically combined with disillusionment can therefore be regarded as an important factor in explaining the 2008 breakthrough.

Moving on to the third theme in this section, as indicated in the literature, some scholars have focused on how disaffection and disillusionment acts as a spark for a wider protest vote (Harrison and Bruter 2011; Goodwin 2011b; Rydgren 2005). For example, Harrison and Bruter argued that "voters may express discontentment with the existing system by casting a protest vote to send a warning to the incumbent government" (2011:15). Moreover, as Rydgren notes, convergence can lead to a feeling that the parties are the same, and fuelled widening distrust in politics, and created, "an audience receptive to parties ready to mobilise protest votes" (2005: 423). It is therefore well worth exploring the notion that the vote for the BNP in 2008 was a protest vote.

When analysing the data produced in Nuneaton there is overwhelming evidence that BNP supporters voted for the party as a protest against all the mainstream parties. In fact, over 90 per cent of BNP voters stated their vote was a protest against the mainstream parties (Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012). This is to some extent corroborated by the leader of the council, Dennis Harvey, who when asked if he thought it was a protest vote in Nuneaton stated, "I think it was a growing protest vote amongst working class people" (O2OI5 2013).

However, Goodwin argues that the support for the BNP is not "simply a by-product of protest politics" (2011a: 101). Indeed, it could be argued that voters must

be receptive to the policies, or some of them, which the BNP were championing. There is some evidence to support this. For example, one BNP voter when asked if he was protesting replied simply that "I have been protesting for years. The BNP was not just a protest for me [in 2008], I voted because they were standing" (O2OI4 2012). Evidently this voter had some ideological affiliation with the BNP, and the evidence from the qualitative data tends to corroborate the view that these voters were receptive to the ideas of the far right, especially in relation to immigration. However, this does not mean that there was not an element of protest in the vote. This view is shared by Harrison and Bruter who note that, "casting a protest vote in favour of a mainstream opposition party in order to send the incumbent government a message of dissatisfaction is undoubtedly different from voting for an extreme right party because of an ideological association with that party" (Harrison and Bruter 2011:16). Therefore, consideration will now be given to the element within these specific social groups who were offering a protest vote, and returned to their historical party of choice. For example, in the analysis of the questionnaire data collected we can see that of the 33 respondents who voted for the BNP in 2008, 10 voted for the Labour Party in 2012, and 5 did not vote at all in the election of 2012 (Table 32). Further research into these voters helps to develop an understanding as to whether this was a protest vote for some voters, or whether there was an evident ideological association with the BNP.

Table 32: Who did you vote for in 2012? (BNP Voters 2008)	
	Who did you vote for in the 2012 local elections?
BNP	10
Labour	10
Did not vote	5
Independent	6
Green Party	1
Conservative	0
Liberal Democrats	0
Other	1
	Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012

The more likely explanation is that the form of protest which took place in Nuneaton related specifically to the rising disillusionment with politics and politicians of all mainstream parties, and the vote for the BNP was for some a protest against those residing within the 'Westminster bubble'. One of the reasons the BNP became a party of protest for some in Nuneaton was the lack of choice, as will be highlighted in the next section.

In conclusion, this section has demonstrated that there was widespread dissatisfaction and distrust with the mainstream parties, offering some understanding of the causes of disillusionment, and an understanding of why some voters may use the elections as the opportunity to make a protest vote. Evidently, the idea that the parties are all the same, the effects of scandal after scandal, and the level of distrust there is in politicians, have all fed into an already disillusioned electorate. It was the BNP who benefited from this disillusion and disaffection in 2008.

Mainstream Party Complacency

This section will focus on what will be referred to as 'mainstream party complacency'. It will use the evidence produced in this study to show that this was

central in enabling the BNP to breakthrough in Nuneaton, and also test the argument that they did not offer alternative or credible opposition. It will also examine whether there was reluctance amongst an element of the electorate to vote for the 'other' mainstream parties, such as the Liberal Democrats. This analysis will also highlight the fact that it was not that the Labour Party believed they could not win the seats, but rather that they had become complacent and somewhat aloof in the belief that these were 'safe' Labour seats. Therefore, the focus will be on the Labour Party campaign in 2008, or lack of campaigning, at a time when the BNP appeared to be everywhere in the town.

First it is worth noting that at a national level in Britain all the mainstream political parties have suffered due to a decline in membership (Keen 2015: Ware 1996). In fact Ware states that "Britain provides a spectacular case of collapse of party membership" (1996: 87). Recent analysis shows that membership of the three main political parties now stands at an historic low of 1 per cent, down from approximately 4.8 per cent in 1953 (Keen 2015: 1). However, in contrast to the declining support for the mainstream parties it is worth noting that support in the form of membership has risen for minor parties such as the Scottish National Party, the United Kingdom Independence Party and the Green Party. Of course the reasons for declining support for the mainstream parties are complex, but evidently there is a belief that the mainstream parties no longer attract the levels of support they once had, and this has filtered through to the parties at a local level who struggle to attract activists and credible candidates. Analysis of this will be offered in the following sections.[12]

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[12] For further analysis of supporters, members and activists refer to Ware (1996: 63-92).

The failure of the mainstream parties, especially at a local level, has been highlighted as an important factor by academics analysing the state of local parties, and the decline in local politics. For example, Wilks-Heeg notes, "the weakness of the main parties locally is a major factor in the growth of the far-right" and that "the most significant BNP gains have been made in areas where the third largest party has effectively collapsed and, in several cases, the decay of the second largest party is also far advanced" (2008: 16-17). This view was also shared by Rhodes, who argued that the mainstream opposition, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, were traditionally weak and did not make any inroads in parts of Burnley during the 2002 local elections, with the Conservatives only contesting 9 out of 45 seats and the Liberal Democrats only putting up 16 candidates, and it is this weakness which contributed to the rise in the BNP in Burnley (2009: 30).

These local studies offer an important comparison with Nuneaton. For instance, the areas where the BNP gained success the Labour campaign was, it could be argued, not credible, and there was a lack of an alternative and minimal campaigning by the mainstream opposition parties including the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat parties. This is important because, in order to secure votes and achieve success in elections the BNP has to compete with other parties. However, what is evident in Nuneaton is that in some wards the mainstream parties in opposition failed to offer any real competition to the BNP. This was apparent in the level of campaigning, the selection of candidates, and the level of ignorance of the BNP threat held by the incumbents.

For some of the incumbents it related more to a lack of resources and impending defeat, which spread throughout the Labour Party in Nuneaton from 2008 onwards, and a failure to accept or understand the threat from the BNP. Indeed, the

leader of the council Cllr. Dennis Harvey offered his view of the defeat in 2008, arguing that during the election the Labour Party was,

> A diminishing number of people and to some extent we still are. But during the active Labour government the numbers fell. And we have always worked together across the borough. We have tried to work not just ward specific. But by 2008 our number of active members had fallen or they got older and were not replaced by younger people. So the number of active troops on the ground was limited. So what we could do was quite limited. And I don't think we necessarily saw a big threat coming from the BNP because of the long history of good race relations in the borough. We have never had bad race relations, but we didn't see it coming here (O2OI5 2013).

The argument, that the local parties did not run credible campaigns in some wards, was highlighted by the local Conservative Nuneaton MP Marcus Jones who stated that; "by 2008 things had got worse... they were entrenched in those wards holding on to what they had got, but there was very little Labour action on the ground" (O2OI10 2013). This is a view also shared by voters with one BNP voter stating:

> The only person I saw in town was the BNP, so if you haven't got Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat coming into the town it shows they don't care... if I have only seen the BNP it shows that they are trying harder to change something in my view (O2OI7 2013).

This was also corroborated by one local Labour councillor who stated that the demise of the Labour Party prior to 2008 was important. He argued that it was "a reflection of the fact that the Labour Party is not active, or as active as it should be locally. I mean my philosophy is that if you are active it attracts young members and you have an active party who can be self-sustaining with its own local candidates and so on" (O2OI3 2013). The problem for the mainstream political parties is that as Keen notes, "disaffiliation is particularly prevalent among the young" (2015: 11). In fact young

voters are now less likely to identify with a political party, with only 66 per cent of people aged 23-32 identifying with a political party in 2012 compared to 85 per cent of 24-33 year olds in 1983 (Keen 2015: 11-12).

It is argued that in some locations where the BNP were successful, they were viewed as the only credible opposition, and it has also been argued that the mainstream parties failed to act as competent opposition parties in some areas. For example, Rhodes in his study of the BNP in Burnley highlighted the problem of disaffection and noted that "disaffection with Labour has been compounded by the failure of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats to challenge the status quo" (2009: 30). Indeed, as many analyses have shown, the BNP in its early breakthrough stage attracted a large number of voters from the Conservative Party, not just the Labour Party (John *et al.* 2006; Copsey 2005). Moreover, like Burnley, many former Labour voters in Nuneaton, who voted for the BNP, were reluctant to vote for the Conservatives. Similarly, like voters in Burnley, many Nuneaton voters had memories of the Thatcher era, or they were from families who resented Thatcher's governments, and they were reluctant to vote Conservative (See Rhodes 2009: 31). Therefore, some voters voted for the BNP because they felt there was a lack of choice, credible opposition and an evident reluctance to vote for the Conservative Party.

The evidence produced in Nuneaton shows that some BNP voters did point to the lack of any credible candidate, candidates who were not local, or candidates standing from other mainstream parties they would never consider voting for. Indeed, when analysing the data it is clear that some Labour supporters could understand why certain voters, who previously backed Labour, would vote for BNP rather than for the Conservative Party. For example, one Labour voter in response to the question, 'why

did voters switch in large numbers to the BNP and not another party', replied; "the way I have been bought up. I suppose if I was rich maybe I would vote Tory because then they would represent me... the Tories just look after themselves; they don't really care about the poor... a lot of people were just fed up with Labour and just didn't want to vote Tory, so they voted BNP as a protest vote" (FG2P1 2012). This view was shared by another Labour voting participant who stated that; "Labour were in power and the Tories were blaming Labour, attacking immigration too, and a lot of people believed this, and Tories were hoping they would get the vote. But rather than voting Tory people just voted for the BNP" (FG2P3 2012). This sentiment was indicated by one Labour councillor who highlighted the presence of the BNP during the 2008 campaign, and the fact that people would rather vote for the BNP than the Tories in some areas:

> My observations are that in 2008 the BNP seemed to be all over the place… 2008 was a watershed where we were losing the votes, and to some extent people in Camp Hill and Barpool realised that voting Conservative was no good and some Conservatives voted for the BNP as well in order to be able to get rid of the Labour candidate (O2OI5 2013).

This view that former Labour voters would not choose to vote for the Conservative Party, and vice versa was also highlighted by another Labour voter, who sought to explain why they believed some voters who they knew were voting BNP stated: "There was a great disillusionment with the Labour Party... there always is with the government in power. And I think a lot of white working class voters thought they were not going to vote Tory" (FG1P3 2012). Indeed, the idea that some voters would never vote for the Conservative Party is not a new one, and in fact Skelton argues that in some locations "voting Tory has become countercultural" (2013: 2). The idea that voting Tory is 'countercultural' was also highlighted in a recent study, which indicated that 39 per cent of Northern voters who took part would never vote

Conservative (YouGov 2013). Moreover, in a similar study 42 per cent of voters nationwide stated they would never vote for the Conservative Party (IPPR/YouGov 2011). What the above analysis demonstrates is that some voters did not and would not vote for particular parties, so Labour voters would never vote Conservative and vice versa.

Table 33: Nuneaton Local Election Candidates/Turnout (2008-2012)						
Ward	2008 Local election No. of Candidates	Party standing 2008	Turnout 2008 (BNP % of vote)	2012 Local election No. of Candidates	Party standing 2012	Turnout 2012 (BNP/Ind % of vote)
Abbey	4	BNP Green Party Conservative Party Labour Party	41.61% (17.60%)	4	BNP Green Party Conservative Party Labour Party	26.47% (6.10%)
Arbury	4	BNP Liberal Democrats Conservative Party Labour Party	39.32% (18.10%)	BNP Did not stand	N/A	28.15% (0%)
Attleborough	3	BNP Conservative Party Labour Party	34.85% (16.70%)	3	BNP Conservative Party Labour Party	24.28% (8.30%)
Barpool	3	BNP Conservative Party Labour Party	37.07% (34.20%)	4	BNP Independent Conservative Party Labour Party	25.73% (27.70%)
Camp Hill	4	BNP Socialist Alternative Conservative Party Labour Party	38.29% (36.10%)	4	BNP Trade Unionists Conservative Party Labour Party	22.02% (8.40%)
Galley Common	3	BNP Conservative Party Labour Party	33.46% (21.40%)	BNP Did not stand	N/A	20.93% (0%)
Kingswood	3	BNP Conservative Party Labour Party	38.69% (25.20%)	BNP Did not stand	N/A	23.84% (0%)
Wem Brook	3	BNP Conservative Party Labour Party	43.43% (24.90%)	BNP Did not stand	N/A	26.67% (0%)
					Source: Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council 2008-2012	

This 'countercultural' outlook puts the emphasis on third parties. The Liberal Democrats proved not to be a popular choice. Indeed, the leader of the council, Cllr. Dennis Harvey, when asked whether there was any other option or any other candidates, replied, "No. I mean I don't remember if there was a Liberal candidate, but the Liberals were never a big issue here in the 30 years since I have been a councillor" (O2OI5 2013). For instance, the Liberal Democrats only put forward one candidate out of a possible eight wards in Nuneaton (Nuneaton and Bedworth

Borough Council 2008). This somewhat corroborates the argument that the BNP "does better in elections where fewer parties stand" (John *et al.* 2006: 24). For example, if we look at the parties who stood in the wards in 2008 the evidence to suggest that the options were limited (Table 33, p.222).

In Barpool the BNP stood against just two candidates, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party candidates, and in Camp Hill there were four candidates from the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, and a Socialist Alternative candidate (Table 33). In both these cases no Liberal candidate stood in these elections, and it could be argued the Conservatives only ever put forward candidates in these wards as a token opposition, but never with the intention of actually campaigning to win. In fact, during an interview with the local MP Marcus Jones, he was asked if the campaign in Barpool was only a limited one and replied; "Well it was, but it is because of the fact that all political parties put their resources where they will be most effective" (O2OI10 2013).

Complacency and electoral arrogance were also at the heart of the Labour Party's 2008 campaign. After years of success at a local level in most wards, Labour believed they could rely on their supporters to turn out and vote for them whether they campaigned or not. Indeed, this was a point argued by one voter who stated that the Labour Party "treated Labour Party voters with contempt. I would say it was more than losing touch. I think they just put a big tick against Nuneaton and put no money or resources into it, and ignored the fact that Bill Olner [MP for Nuneaton 1992-2010] was a joke" (O2OI11 2013). There was also a sense in Nuneaton that the Labour Party hold on certain council seats, particularly those seats which had always been Labour strongholds, were not under threat, and this was reflected in the very low contact rates in 2008. This is indicated by one local Labour councillor, who stated that:

It was obviously a bad day for Labour in Nuneaton in 2008, and across the country. But I think it depends on the individual whether they saw it coming or not. I mean the voter contact rates for Barpool were around, well less than 5%, which you cannot contemplate winning an election with, I wouldn't anyway. You know I would expect 40% and I would be thinking that is not really enough, but I mean at the time that was the level, and it is much better than that now. So that was a problem. I think that, you know, the issue persists. We don't talk to our supporters enough, you know people who would consider voting for us and I think that is one of the major differences the Labour Party has changed between 2008 and 2012 (O2OI3 2012).

The view that the Labour Party forgot about street campaigning was not just evident in Nuneaton. For example, in 2006 in Barking, Labour MP Margaret Hodge claimed that residents in her area were voting for the BNP because, "the Labour Party hasn't talked to these people. This is a traditional Labour area but they are not use to engaging with us because all we do is put leaflets through doors. Part of the reason they switch to the BNP is they feel no one else is listening to them" (The Telegraph 2006). Similarly, the lack of campaigning was highlighted by one former Labour Party voter in Nuneaton who argued that the Labour Party "didn't flyer, they expected to win, didn't bother to talk to us. The Conservatives did, and I remember Marcus coming round and knocking on my door. And the BNP made the most of campaigning... they targeted Nuneaton" (O2OI11 2014).

The Labour Party had become complacent in Nuneaton, and Labour strongholds, such as Barpool and Camp Hill, were viewed as 'safe' seats. Indeed, the Labour Party had been in control of the council from 1973 to 2008. This sentiment was evident during an interview with the leader of the council, Cllr Harvey, who stated that, "when I was first elected in 1973 I got 75 per cent of the vote. You didn't really need to campaign, the idea that anybody other than Labour could win in Camp Hill was just unthinkable" (O2OI5 2013). It was also clear from the interviews with

the local Labour councillors that they believed the local Labour Party election campaign had failed, and they did not mobilise in such a way as to counter the threat coming from the BNP in 2008. One local councillor indicated what he believed were the reasons for the Labour Party's defeat in 2008, arguing that the campaign was quite limited in 2008, and the Labour party lost direction. He stated that:

> One of the first things we did, or we tried to do, was support the local councillors in the 2008 election. The first thing I did was to run a leaflet distribution campaign in Barpool to support the local candidate. Basically from where I stand that was the only campaigning that took place, was the leaflet distribution I organised from scratch because there were no road walks organised... as far as I know that was the only campaigning which the Labour Party did in Barpool... there was no real knockout on the day. No other campaigns involving door knocking or leaflet drops of that sort. For all sorts of reason you know. I mean the candidate was very grateful that we had come in and helped because that was the only thing that actually occurred in Labour Party terms in 2008... I think it was the case, we lost it yes. I mean subsequent events like by-elections, where there has been BNP candidates standing demonstrate this. I mean it has been a case of getting out there and talking to people and winning these people back (O2OI3 2012).

Interviews with BNP voters also substantiate the view that the Labour Party forgot about street campaigning in 2008. When voters were asked if they remembered the local mainstream party campaigns in 2008 all shared similar experiences, and gave similar responses. One BNP voter when asked if he remembered the local Labour campaign replied; "No I think they were very complacent at the time and were not particularly driven. As I said they have an opportunity to deal with things at a local level but they just didn't" (O2OI9 2013). This view was shared by another BNP supporter who highlighted the lack of campaigning by the Labour Party and the BNP's effort, stating that; "I got a BNP leaflet through the door, and everything what

I feel needed to be done they were saying, which is probably what swayed me towards them. We did see them [the BNP] going around the town centre", and when asked about the Labour Party campaign in the town replied, "I didn't see them [the Labour Party] in the town centre or nothing like that, so it was just the BNP one I saw in town" (O2OI7 2013). Moreover, another BNP voter when asked the same question also spoke of a similar experience; "I never saw my Labour councillor. I never got any leaflets. I saw the BNP bloke though, he use to come round and spoke to me, he was from round here, not like the others" (O2OI4 2012). The lack of Labour interaction, and BNP action in 2008 was also highlighted by another BNP voter, who when asked whether he had any contact or literature from the mainstream parties simply replied, "No not really, nothing" (O2OI8 2013), and when asked if he had ever met his local Labour councillor stated bluntly, "No never" (O2OI8 2013). This view was also supported by another voter who recalled the BNP campaign in 2008, and remembered the BNP campaign well, and when asked about how he heard about the BNP replied; "leaflets come through door, and posters, and stuff like that" (O2OI8 2013). However, what is interesting is that when asked if he knew or met the local BNP candidate in 2008 he replied, "Yes he lives local" (O2OI8 2013), with another BNP voter providing a similar response to the same question, stating "I met the local councillor Findley" (O2OI13 2014). This was important because getting local candidates standing was an important tactic for the BNP in many areas, and was part of their campaign to become a legitimate force in British politics.

What this section has demonstrated is that the Labour Party's lacklustre campaign in 2008 and the lack of choice were important factors. Indeed, the two wards where the BNP won have traditionally been Labour strongholds, with little support historically for the Conservative Party, and it did not necessarily appear to be

a location in which the BNP would breakthrough. However, as this section has shown, there was evidence that the mainstream parties did not fight a credible campaign and there was a lack of choice. This when coupled with the idea that voting for the Conservative Party was 'countercultural' enabled the BNP to get their message across without any real opposition in 2008. Evidently, this fed into the growing disillusionment of the mainstream parties. The mainstream parties failed to take the BNP threat seriously, and as Wilks-Heeg notes, the BNP, like other smaller parties, were "filling the vacuum created by the decline of the main parties locally" (2008: 18).

The role of the electoral system

This final section of this chapter will focus on whether the electoral system benefited the BNP in 2008. Although some voters have turned to the BNP and other minor parties, the system in Britain has often been seen as a major stumbling block. The arguments in the literature relating to how open political institutions are to a far right party have focused on the role of majoritarian and proportional representation (PR) electoral systems. Some scholars have argued that in comparison to plurality systems, the PR systems have been important in the recent breakthrough of the far right across Western Europe (Shields 2007; Givens 2006; Ignazi 2003; Marcus 1995; Vaughn 1995). According to one school of thought, the system is irrelevant. For example, Eatwell notes, "it is possible to find countries where there has been 'space' for extremist parties, where there has been a proportional electoral system etc., but where there has been minimal extremist voting" (2003: 59). There is clearly some debate in the literature relating to how important the electoral systems are. Focus will now turn to its importance in British elections.

Previous explanations in the literature that have analysed the far right in Britain, have viewed the FPTP system in Britain as a major factor hindering any chance of a far right mainstream breakthrough, because normally it penalises minor parties and favours larger parties such as the Labour Party and Conservative Party, but is blind towards the ideological position of parties (Mudde 2007; Norris 2005; Ignazi 2003; Eatwell 2000; Griffin 1996; Copsey 1996). Indeed, Ignazi, in his explanation for the British Far Right's historical failure, stated that in Britain "an institutional feature such as the majoritarian first-past-the-post electoral system, penalising the growth of new and extreme parties, plays a crucial role" (2003: 186). The position is supported by the fact that successful BNP candidates have been largely elected in UK elections based on non-traditional ballots (John and Margetts 2009; Renton 2005). For example, Renton argues that in Britain, elections run on the basis of proportional systems, like the London and European elections, favour minor parties (2005: 25). There is some evidence to support this with the BNP's electoral success in the 2008 London Assembly Elections which employs the additional member PR system, and two MEP's elected in the 2009 European elections which uses the *d'Hondt* PR system. However, under the system of FPTP, even though the BNP received half a million votes during the 2010 general election, they failed to gain any representation in the British Parliament. Although it is evident the electoral system has been important in restricting the far right in British general elections, in many cases it has been helpful in opening political space up for the far right at a local and national electoral level.

The local elections in Nuneaton were conducted using the system of FPTP, and the BNP were able to get two councillors elected. As a result, it could be argued that at a local level the system of FPTP did not hinder breakthrough. It could also be

argued that the system did in fact hinder the BNP to some extent in 2008 by limiting representation and forming a stronger representation on the council. For example, if PR system was used in 2008, the BNP would have had even more councillors elected when they achieved an average of around 25 per cent of the vote across the town (Table 2). The analysis of the system and its effects on election results in Nuneaton, demonstrates the system cannot really help explain why the BNP had two councillors elected. The analysis of the electoral system does not offer any conclusive findings, and it should therefore be considered that in this case study the electoral system was not important, even if it played a role in enabling the BNP to gain local representation.

As well as the political system itself many analysts have studied the mainstream parties' willingness to go into coalition with far right parties which can directly legitimise the far right through coalitions. This was evident across Europe with the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the Italian Social Movement (MSI) both joining coalition governments, and was important in the breakthrough of the *Front National* in Dreux in the early 1980s (Shields 2007: Eatwell 2000; Marcus 1995: Vaughn 1995). However, in Britain there has been no process of legitimisation of the BNP through coalitions, although according to some reports the BNP did make an offer of an electoral pact with UKIP in the 2009 European elections, which was rejected by UKIP leader Nigel Farage (BBC News 2008). Moreover, at a local level there was no evidence of the BNP councillors working in any sort of Labour or Conservative coalition on the local council when it came to voting on any policy, which meant that the BNP candidates were starved of any further legitimacy.

In relation to the electoral system and the coalition effect, there is little evidence to demonstrate that it affected the electoral success of the BNP in Nuneaton.

However, the analysis of the system does not offer any understanding of electoral turnout, and its effect of far right party success. A brief analysis of electoral turnout as a factor in understanding the electoral success of the BNP will now be offered. There is some limited evidence that low turnout benefits small parties like the BNP, because if they can mobilise sufficient support in particular areas which have low turnout, they have a greater chance of success. For example, the BNP in Nuneaton achieved success at ward level when turnout was below or around 40 per cent. However, the issue with turnout is that it does not always guarantee success, therefore cannot really offer a model which can be replicated. For example, in 2012 the turnout for the local elections was significantly lower, in fact turnout in the borough was 28.19 per cent, and in Barpool it was 25.73 per cent and Camp Hill 20.02 per cent, and the BNP did not return any councillors in Nuneaton (Table 32). These findings correlate with those highlighted by John *et al.,* who found that in the wards analysed in their study "there was no relationship between a low level of turnout and the BNP in elections across all wards" (2006: 24). Therefore, even though the BNP benefited in 2008 when turnout was low, the view that turnout cannot explain successes in Nuneaton is somewhat corroborated and turnout is not relevant in this case study.

This brief analysis of the electoral system demonstrates that it can and does play a limited role, especially at the breakthrough stage, for any new party. Indeed, this can be seen in the success of the BNP at the 2009 European elections and the elections to the London Assembly. However, at a local level the electoral system played little or no part in the success in 2008, or failure of 2012, of the BNP. As demonstrated, the BNP had two councillors elected in Nuneaton under the FPTP system, which typically hinders the far right in Britain. In fact, if PR was used in 2008 the BNP would have increased their representation locally. Finally, turnout was

analysed which indicated that although turnout was low it cannot really provide an explanation for the success of the BNP in 2008. However, it was beneficial in 2008 because it enabled the BNP to gain representation by mobilising enough support in the case study wards when turnout was low. For the record, there are three explanations offered at a national level, but these do not have any relevance at a local level. Evidently, as this analysis has highlighted, it is other factors which were important in driving BNP support in 2008.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that, as with the other factors analysed in previous chapters, political opportunity structures, disaffection and disillusion can and do impact on the level of support for the far right. For example, convergence fuelled the sense that the parties are 'all the same' and this fed into the rising disaffection felt by part of the electorate. Convergence fed into the growing disillusionment and mistrust in the mainstream political parties to the benefit of the BNP in Nuneaton. This was seen in the growing belief that the mainstream parties are not competent when it comes to dealing with issues relating to immigration, and the anger which developed in the aftermath of the expenses scandal. The analysis of the mainstream political parties role in Nuneaton also demonstrated that the Labour Party was complacent in 2008. This was very important for the BNP in winning the competition for votes in 2008. This chapter has also shown that the mainstream parties did not do enough during their campaign to counter the message coming from the BNP. Clearly what the BNP had to say resonated with some voters who were disaffected and disillusioned with the mainstream parties.

Finally, what the Nuneaton case study also demonstrates is the limited impact of turnout as an explanation for the BNP's breakthrough. Likewise, the nature of the electoral system is not to be of high significance. The BNP won two seats in Nuneaton despite, not because of, the first-past-the-post system. Rather it was the widespread disaffection and disillusionment with the mainstream parties which opened up a political space, and when combined with the low turnout in Nuneaton it benefited the BNP in 2008. It is worth noting that POS alone cannot explain themselves why the BNP were successful in 2008, but as Rydgren notes, "they contribute a great deal to such an explanation" (2005: 418). The next chapter will focus on another important explanation in the literature which highlights the role of the BNP. It will examine how the BNP took an active role in increasing their credibility in order to fill the political space which opened up in the first decade of the twenty-first Century. The following chapter will examine the role of the BNP in filling the void created by the disaffection and disillusionment with the mainstream parties.

Chapter 7

The Role of the BNP in Nuneaton

Successes for far-right political parties have often been associated with astute party organisation and leadership. The BNP's 2008 breakthrough proves to be no exception. The subject of this chapter is role of the BNP at a national and local level. It will analyse how the BNP sought to successfully manage its image in order to exploit the political space that opened up. This will include an analysis of the period when Nick Griffin became leader of the BNP in 1999 and sought to sanitise the party, putting distance between the BNP and memories of the NF.

In order to show how the BNP took advantage of the political space that opened up, this chapter will examine the BNP modernisation programme which increased the party's appeal to some voters, and the role of the leader in transforming the party into some semblance of an electable party. First, this chapter will demonstrate how the BNP modernised in the early 2000s by adopting the French *Front National* (FN) master frame, directing its appeal towards a more mainstream electorate, focusing specifically on the white working class. It will also analyse the role of leadership on the success of the BNP in 2008 and show that the then BNP leader Nick Griffin was important for the party through his implementation of his modernisation programme. It will then show how the BNP focused on local campaigning by attaching itself to local issues, and how important this was for the BNP in Nuneaton. Finally, it will demonstrate how the party was able to take advantage of a range of conditions through modernising, such as attaching itself to immigration and Islamophobia, when combined with a particular set of circumstances and events led to increased (but limited) legitimacy and voter appeal. This will be important because although a space opened up in the first decade of the twenty-first

Century, the BNP had to make the party respectable in the eyes of the electorate in order to exploit these conditions.

It is worth noting that the transformation of the BNP's electoral fortunes coincided with the election of a new leader, Nick Griffin. Griffin, who had been a prominent figure in the far right since the 1970s, was elected leader of the BNP in September 1999. He replaced John Tyndall, when growing levels of discontent left Tyndall's position as leader untenable (Wheen 1999). One reason for this was that Tyndall was a man who did not believe the party should change its core values and ideology for electoral success. For example, Tyndall, five years after losing his leadership position, was still arguing that, "the BNP should, so long as it is legally permissible, exclude Jews from membership, and in any event should not appoint Jews to positions in the party nor select them as candidates for elections" (Spearhead 2004). This shows how Tyndall remained true to his anti-Semitic beliefs which had hindered the electoral success of the party while he remained leader.

Griffin, unlike Tyndall, believed that his own leadership style and vision could propel the party into the dizzy heights of election success, which had not been witnessed since the party's only victory in Tower Hamlets in 1993. Indeed, Copsey notes that, "Griffin's objective was to transform the internal culture of the British National Party – to 'modernise' it and 'normalise' it as a legitimate political party" (2008: 100). Griffin on becoming leader set the party on a course of modernisation, aimed at making the party more electable and respectable. In 2001 Griffin stated that the party has changed, and "if you're interested in confrontation and violence, don't bother us" (Anon. 2001). Moreover, writing in the BNP magazine *Identity* in 2002, Griffin stated that through modernisation, "the BNP has genuinely changed enormously over the last few years, and our victories... are partly the reward for those

changes". Griffin was central in moderating the BNP's more extreme policies, while at the same time focusing on community politics and increasing the legitimacy of the party. How important the BNP modernisation programme was for their success in Nuneaton is the question this chapter will seek to answer.

The 'transformation' of the BNP

The relative success of the BNP between 2001 and 2008 suggests that the BNP were successful as a consequence of copying modernisation programmes that had proved beneficial for far right parties electorally elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, the BNP's modernisation closely followed the tactical changes employed by the French *Front National* (FN) in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Rydgren notes that, "emerging parties and social movements try to make use of master frames and strategies already out there, which they try to modify in ways to fit the specific political and cultural context in which the adopter is embedded" (2007: 476). This master framework adopted by the FN combined ethno-nationalism, cultural racism and anti-establishment populism. Similar approaches were adopted by the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and Vlams Blok in Belgium. As part of the master frame, far right parties who adopted it move away from overt anti-Semitism and biological racism, whilst the call for the revolutionary overthrow of democracy was abandoned. This master frame was very successful for the likes of the FN and FPÖ, and it is evident that the FN master frame has become central for far right parties who wish to become electable and more mainstream. Parties who adopt this strategy have managed in the main to become more respectable and electable, and this was the case for the BNP after 1999, as the next section will demonstrate.

There is evidence that the BNP adopted the FN strategy and this can be seen in their modernisation programme. The party adopted the ideological and strategic formula used by the French FN, developing it into a uniquely British version of a 'nationalist-populist' party. Copsey argues that "Griffin's ideas took their immediate inspiration not from domestic fore-runners but from the recent examples set by more successful 'national-populist' parties in continental Europe – in particular, the French National Front", and in order to further the quest for legitimacy "Griffin simply lifted elements from both the political style and organisational features of the *Front National*" (2008: 123). For example, as highlighted in the earlier immigration chapter, the BNP transformed its policy on immigration. It no longer advocates forced repatriation and directs its attacks towards cultures it views as posing a threat to British identity, a tactic that bares many similarities to the FN.

Similarly, Griffin also changed the language used by the BNP as part of this modernisation programme. Griffin used discourse that had proved successful for other far right leaders, most notably Le Pen in France. The key message, in this respect, was portraying an ongoing 'assault' on British culture that needed to be repelled, and was evident in the 2005 manifesto (refer to the exert from the BNP manifesto, pp.181-182). The analysis has shown so far that the BNP utilised elements of the FN template to raise their profile in British politics. They toned down their language, modernised their political agenda, and aimed to recruit more 'respectable' members as candidates for the party. The BNP through modernisation also wanted to appeal to more mainstream voters. They hoped that by professionalising their campaign and acting more responsibly this could be achieved, and to an extent it was. Ford and Goodwin's study noted that; "The party has professionalised its campaigns, urging activists to become better dressed and jettison extremist rhetoric" (2010: 5).

The plan for the modernising process was set out by Nick Griffin in the *Patriot* magazine in the spring of 1999. Here Griffin sought to create the image of a responsible party. In this article Griffin (1999) stated that modernisation can "be summed up in two words: responsibility and professionalism". The BNP also sought to tone down its overtly racist and fascist language. From 1999 onwards Griffin moderated the party's ideology, transforming the public discourse on race and immigration. The party under Griffin 'avoided' anti-Semitism, racism and no longer openly puts forward the policy calls for forced repatriation. As shown in the chapters on immigration and Islamophobia, the BNP placed increasing importance on cultural difference, and this was viewed as a more acceptable target. The aim of the BNP was to normalise the party, demonstrated in the manifesto of 2005, which included a raft of policy proposals on identity, freedom, democracy and the economy. In fact, the BNP in their manifesto were attempting to show they were not a single issue party, as it states in their manifesto:

> This is the largest and most comprehensive election manifesto the British National Party has compiled. It clearly illustrates that we are neither a single issue party, nor an ephemeral protest group. The BNP is serious about winning our nation back and this manifesto sets out our plan to achieve this goal (BNP Manifesto 2005: 4).

The BNP went in search of the winning formula that would allow it to gain electoral success similar to that experienced by the FN in the 1980s. One of Griffin's first tasks was to make the party more appealing by removing some of the old Neo-Nazi baggage which affected the party's legitimacy. This included an attempt to differentiate the party from the old, tired established mainstream parties who were viewed by BNP voters as 'all the same'. The BNP sought to position themselves between the mainstream parties, and those groups who were traditionally opposed to

democracy, and retracted their call for revolutionary overthrow. As Goodwin notes, "The earlier revolutionary critique of liberal democracy has similarly been toned down in favour of anti-establishment (but not overtly anti-democratic) populism" (2010: 39). Indeed, the BNP 2005 Manifesto was entitled *Rebuilding Britain's Democracy* (2005), and it states that the party will keep to their "commitment to parliamentary democracy" (BNP Manifesto 2005: 38). Griffin also sought within the manifesto to make the party more appealing to the electorate by emphasizing its defence of democracy, alongside its desire to protect the identity, freedom and culture of British voters. In fact, Griffin stated on the BNP website's opening message that, "the BNP is a patriotic, democratic alternative to the old parties that have wrecked our great country" (Griffin n.d.). This demonstrates how the BNP offered themselves as the defenders of democracy, arguing that they were the only party "to rebuild the basis of democracy in Britain" (BNP Manifesto 2005: 17). It was also noted in the manifesto that the BNP were the only party "defending democracy against creeping totalitarianism", and they alone could "strengthen and extend genuine democracy" (2005: 9). The objective was to appear anti-establishment rather than anti-democratic, with some success.

The BNP transformed its policies and offered a more populist appeal. It also sought to specifically appeal directly to disaffected voters, with policies aimed at taking advantage of growing disillusionment. Following the example of other European far right modernising parties, the BNP policies address anti-party sentiment, socio-economic policy, law and order and the defence of culture (BNP Manifesto 2005). This was beneficial to the BNP as they sought to gain legitimacy. Indeed, Ford and Goodwin state that, "the BNP's efforts to 'modernise' and offer a more moderate and democratic ideology are winning over a small but fast growing band of new

recruits" (2010: 19). There is some evidence showing that this was successful. For example, the electoral success of the BNP in the 2000s is testament to this. Moreover, as demonstrated in the chapters discussing Islamophobia and immigration, the BNP's new image appealed to an electorate who were receptive to their message.

Evidence of the BNP's new popular appeal can be seen in how they attempted to attract disaffected voters, or those who were disillusioned with the mainstream parties. For example, alongside the 'Punish the Pigs' campaign (See chapter six), the BNP also attacked what they labelled as the 'old gang parties', mirroring the successful campaign led by the FN with reference to Le Pen's attack on 'the Gang of Four' in France (Shields 2007). The aim was to appeal to disaffected voters who would not normally associate with any far right party. There are examples of the BNP seeking to widen its appeal, such as the targeting of lorry drivers who were protesting against rising fuel prices, and supporting those who were fighting for rural interests (Eatwell 2004: 70). Another example can be seen in the production of election leaflets tailored for specific communities. For example, in a leaflet produced for the BNP in Broxbourne, the candidates stood on the basis that they would prevent 5600 homes being built in Hertfordshire's green belt (Appendix IV; Leaflet f.)

Showing the effects of modernisation on voting, beyond pointing to the electoral victories themselves is problematic. Most voters were not aware of this 'modernisation' programme, rather it was a process which enabled the BNP to sanitise their message, and legitimised the party in the eyes of some voters. Yet, the evidence from Nuneaton does show that this new message permeated the electoral outlook of voters. For example, one BNP voter was asked if he was aware of the BNP's history and its fascist roots replied that he, "did not care about the past", and that he was "not aware of the BNP's history and only began following the party

recently... I didn't know anything about them really" (O2OI4 2012). When asked if he was aware of the BNP's history and links amongst its leadership to the National Front he stated; "Well I know that they had links, but that was in the past wasn't it. And they don't want to kick everyone out now do they" (O2OI4 2012). A similar response was also provided by another BNP voter who when asked the same question replied, "Yes, but that was in the past" (O2OI12 2014). What this demonstrates is that amongst some BNP voters there is a disconnect between the past radical views of the BNP, and the party of the 2000s. One community leader underpins this view of disconnection by stating that, "they' voted for the BNP without realising what it stood for" (O2OI6 2013).

Another important aspect of the modernisation programme was the BNP's attempt to transform its image, which included making the party more appealing in the media, seeking that the party be portrayed in a less negative manner. However, the mainstream media remained hostile towards the BNP due to their historical links with fascism and neo-Nazism, therefore not giving them a platform on which to stand. For example, tabloid newspapers like *The Sun* newspaper were openly hostile to the BNP. In 2004 *The Sun* printed a front page headline "Bloody Nasty People", attacking the BNP, and referring to the party as "a collection of evil, hate-filled moronic thugs ... wicked men ... criminals who should be locked up" (Smith 2004: 1). However, it should be noted that *The Sun* newspaper was also complicit, publishing material which legitimised the discourse of the BNP, and encouraged the prejudices of those who chose to vote for the party. Further evidence of this will be provided in the final chapter which focuses on the written media.

Although the press did not give positive coverage to the BNP this did not stop the party from finding other channels to get their message across. For example, the

BNP utilised new media, such as the internet, using their website, Facebook and twitter to enhance their message and appeal to a wider audience. The BNP website became a central tool for the party as they sought to improve their image, and communicate to voters who may not otherwise have access to their message. For example, in 2007 the BNP website was the most visited of any political party in the UK (Telegraph 2007). Indeed, one Nuneaton BNP voter who was asked if they used the website prior to voting in 2008 replied; "I only started in 2008 because that's when I was at working age, so it has only become important to myself because I am working, and I can see more now what the country is like" (O2OI7 2013). However, one BNP voter stated that although they use the site, it is not often; "they [BNP] are in the news a bit when there is any election going on, but ain't been on their website for a while really" (O2OI8 2013). Therefore, it proves difficult to understand just how important the new media resources were for the BNP voters in Nuneaton in 2008, mostly due to the lack of evidence linking support for the party with the rise in use amongst voters of new media sources.

Finally, this section will offer an analysis of leadership. The literature suggests that the role of the leader is important in the recent success of the far right, especially at the breakthrough stage (Startin 2014; Eatwell 2006; Overy 2004; Billig 1978). An analysis of the survey data collected in Nuneaton does show that amongst of those BNP voters there was support for former BNP leader Nick Griffin, with over 60 percent stating they voted for the party with the best leader (See table 34, p.241).

Table 34: Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? [The party I voted for had the best leader]

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?	Labour	31	24	52	11	2	120
		25.8%	20.0%	43.3%	9.2%	1.7%	100.0%
	Conservative	18	25	16	2	2	63
		28.6%	39.7%	25.4%	3.2%	3.2%	100.0%
	Liberal Democrats	5	5	10	3	2	25
		20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	12.0%	8.0%	100.0%
	BNP	16	2	12	1	1	32
		50.0%	6.3%	37.5%	3.1%	3.1%	100.0%
	Green Party	0	2	3	0	1	6
		.0%	33.3%	50.0%	.0%	16.7%	100.0%
	UKIP	1	0	3	0	0	4
		25.0%	.0%	75.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Independent	0	0	1	1	0	2
		.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Did not vote	2	2	5	2	2	13
		15.4%	15.4%	38.5%	15.4%	15.4%	100.0%
	Other	0	0	2	0	0	2
		.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		73	60	104	20	10	267
		27.3%	22.5%	39.0%	7.5%	3.7%	100.0%
						Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012	

However, many of these voters were already disaffected with the mainstream parties and their leaders; therefore they evidently believed the BNP leader was better in comparison. This does not mean the BNP leader was unimportant, as suggested in some of the literature, he was central in the modernisation of the party.

This view is to a large extent corroborated through an analysis of the Nuneaton interview data. The interviews conducted amongst BNP supporters suggest that these individuals concentrated more on the leadership qualities of the local candidate, rather than Griffin's abilities. Indeed, analysis demonstrates that some voters in Nuneaton were not convinced by Griffin's leadership and saw him as a hindrance to further progression. One voter when asked if Griffin was important in their decision to vote for the BNP replied:

If it had of been somebody else without the history in the National Front it may have been done better... I think someone else may have had a better chance without Nick Griffin's background... I think Griffin was to blame. He never clearly defined the role of the party or got away from the stigma of I am a racist.

He should of been more clear in his statement that the BNP manifesto is not a racist manifesto, this is a manifesto about Britain (O2OI1 2012).

Another BNP voter who was asked the same question was adamant that it was more to do with what the party stood for rather than the leader; "It was what the party stood for... Nick Griffin is just the face of BNP... it is the whole party" (O2OI7 2013).

Although there is little evidence to support the view that Griffin was important in attracting voters to the BNP, there is little doubt that his role in modernising the BNP was central in its relative electoral success. It can be argued that his internal leadership, organisation, direction, and attempts at sanitising the BNP brand demonstrated his leadership role. As shown in the review of the literature Griffin did not have the charismatic appeal, however he does fit the mould of a 'successful' leader because he did manage to hold a far right party together, changed the image of the party and increased its appeal amongst sections of the British electorate. Griffin was able to do this by ensuring stability, and offering a programme which some voters supported (Mudde 2007). Griffin was clearly more appealing to those who voted for the BNP than the other mainstream party leaders; therefore, they were more inclined to refer to him as a good leader in comparison with the mainstream party leaders, who were all espousing the same message. Therefore, analysis of the leader is not conclusive, and to some extent corroborates the work conducted by van der Pas, de Vries and Van der Brug who in their study of Dutch far right leader Geert Wilders, argued that there is "little support for the leadership effects hypothesis" (2011: 470).

Adopting the master frame and modernising the BNP was beneficial to the BNP candidates in Nuneaton. It enabled the BNP to take advantage of an opening in the political space in 2008, and they benefited from their modernisation programme during a period when the mainstream parties were seeing their support decline. They

achieved relative success in places like Nuneaton because they were able to conceal parts of their ideology, transform the party's image, and to a large extent transform the party from its fascist past. The aim of modernisation was therefore part of a wider plan to make the BNP more acceptable to the voting public, enabling them to take advantage once the opportunity arose.

Local candidates fighting for local issues

The importance of local campaigning for the BNP is evident when analysing the data. The party attached itself to local issues, putting greater emphasis on community-based activism and recruitment of local people to the party. This is not the first time the BNP have utilised community politics as was highlighted in the review of the literature (Copsey 2008; Eatwell 2004; Sivanandan 1994). For example, the BNP's only success in the 1990s in Tower Hamlets was an early indication for many in the party hierarchy of what could be achieved electorally if the party changed their tactics. This included the likes of Tony Lecomber, Michael Newland and Eddy Butler who became prominent figures in the modernisation programme. In fact, Butler had masterminded the BNP's only success prior to Griffin becoming leader in 1993 using the tactics of 'community based politics'. Eatwell notes that the BNP found local elections "provided a cheaper and democratic route forward" (2004: 70). How this tactic developed can be seen in the way the BNP focused on local issues since 2000 when fighting election campaigns.

In the breakthrough locations of Burnley, Stoke and Barking and Dagenham, the party focused on local issues. For example, in Burnley the BNP campaigned publicly on various local issues, such as halting the closure of swimming pools, calling for a 20 mph speed limit on housing estates and focusing on attacks on the white population in

parts of Oldham (see Rhodes 2009; Wilks-Heeg 2008; Renton 2003). Whereas in Barking and Dagenham, as well as utilising local community politics, they also claimed that locally Labour councils were giving Africans grants of up to £50,000 to buy houses under a scheme known as 'Africans for Essex' (Trilling 2010). There was evidence of community based politics in Nuneaton and the next section will focus on the BNP's community based politics in more detail.

The BNP made use of community politics, which Eatwell refers to as "BNP community politics in action" (2004: 72). Eatwell also noted that in locations like Burnley we can see an example of "how local hard work, combined with 'community politics', which sought especially to exploit a sense of white resentment about alleged preferential treatment of ethnic minorities, could bring results" (2004: 72). Rhodes also highlighted the tactics of the BNP, noting that in Burnley the BNP copied the campaign led by Harry Brooks and the Independents that "provided a blueprint on which the BNP could base its campaign" (2009: 11). The tactics used in Burnley bore many similarities with the tactics used during the BNP's success in Tower Hamlets in 1993. Essentially, the BNP copied the model used by the Liberal Democrats, which included a 'bottom up' policy of local electioneering, giving local activists much autonomy to fight on local issues rather than national issues like the other two mainstream parties. The Liberal Democrats introduced a local policy which was called the 'sons and daughters' scheme. The scheme gave priority in housing to the sons and daughters of local residents who were predominantly white which gave the impression that the Liberal Democrats favoured white residents. According to Copsey, the actions of the Liberal Democrats made "racism politically respectable" (2008: 55). This was because the party had, at a local level, manipulated race as a political issue for their own electoral success. The BNP were able to utilise this form

of electioneering, and put themselves forward as the party fighting for local people. In legitimising the race issue, the Liberal Democrats indirectly helped legitimised the BNP's campaign of 'rights for Whites' in 1993. The BNP successfully integrated the Liberal Democratic form of political campaigning during 1993, and applied it on a national scale after Griffin became leader in 1999. At a local level it was important that the BNP sanitised its image and message. As indicated by Copsey, two principles defined the BNP process of modernisation which was vital for the local breakthrough, respectability and professionalism; respectability gained through vetting candidates and moderating the language of the BNP, and was aimed at ending "the culture of careless extremism" and secondly the principle of professionalism, directed at attracting more respectable candidates (2007: 68). This view was shared by Goodwin who argued that the leadership of the BNP has, "sought to improve the respectability of the party's rank and file activist base, criticizing the tendency to recruit only 'closet Nazis' and instead stressing the need to recruit 'sensible and good quality types'" (Goodwin 2010: 39).

Evidence of a BNP attempt to recruit more responsible and respectable candidates was highlighted by Rhodes who stated that, as well as the BNP attaching itself to local issues, "the party also chose candidates that were rooted in the local community in an attempt to gain a greater degree of legitimacy" (2009: 41). This related specifically to tactics and organisation at a local level and included sustainable community support, local electioneering and doorstep canvassing. Indeed, these tried and trusted methods had by 2008 been successful for the BNP at a local level and did have a positive effect on the BNP in the first decade of the twenty-first century. For example, there was a dramatic increase in representation at a local level, with thousands of voters electing BNP councillors and the party normalising its affairs in

the eyes of part of the electorate. The programme of respectability and professionalism worked for the BNP in many locations. They had over fifty local councillors elected, and the party's membership rose from the hundreds in 1999 to approximately 12,600 at its peak in 2009 (Keen 2015: 6). Its effect in Nuneaton will now be examined on the basis of the data collected.

A major aspect of these localised campaigns was the BNP's attempt to attract local, respectable candidates, without the 'extremist baggage'. It was also important to recruit candidates who were rooted in the local community. This was highlighted in the literature, with Rhodes in his study of Burnley stating, "a quarter of the BNP voters interviewed professed to know personally the BNP councillors they had supported" (2009: 42). Nuneaton bares many similarities to Burnley in that the BNP was "adept at attracting supporters as a result of the ingenuity and commitment of its local activists", and that by focusing on local issues it "has been able to portray itself as representing the interests of the white community" (Rhodes 2009: 40). This suggests that the BNP planned to improve and expand its activist base by appealing to a more moderate, local recruit. It also evidently benefited the BNP in places like Nuneaton, and mirrors the BNP policy in other locations. For example, the candidates in Nuneaton were not associated with the far right, or linked to any extremist party of the past, which had often been the case. All of the BNP candidates who stood in the 2008 local elections were local people, who had grown up, lived and worked in the local areas. As one local Labour councillor stated:

> I think Alwyn Deacon [prospective BNP councillor and local party leader in 2008], I am sure you have heard of him... he is a Nuneaton guy and he use to be a member of the Labour Party and his dad was a Labour Mayor. So they do have a network of acquaintances and so on, spread throughout the town from being active in politics over generations. They have made use of these contacts and they have been used effectively (O2OI3 2013).

Therefore, one important element in the process of normalisation relates to the use of local activism, and employing local candidates who have no known history or links with fascists.

The use of local activism and local candidates was important in the success of Martyn Findley and Darren John Haywood who were elected in Barpool Ward and Camp Hill. Findley was elected in an area where he is well known, and for many voters he was a 'respectable' member of that community and this was clearly beneficial. For example, nearly all the interviewees knew Findley personally, saw him as a respectable person, have met him or have heard about him locally, and this is why they supported the BNP. Findley works locally and is a well-known local driving instructor with many links to that local community. Therefore, the fact that where Findley stood and won as a councillor he has local roots in the community, and was 'respectable', were evidently important in his success. The work of Findley in the local community, and the respect he had locally, was highlighted by the local Conservative MP Marcus Jones, who stated that, "in terms of a ward councillor dealing with the bread and butter stuff, broken street lights and anti-social behaviour or dog fouling I think he was quite good at that" (O2OI10 2013). This was also noted by Cllr Dennis Harvey who stated that "Martyn Findley was the most active when he got elected, but never really pushed his BNP views" (O2OI5 2013). In fact, one way Findley focused on local issues was through his online blog. Findley made use of the internet to get his message across, using the blog to offer his support for local people and local issues, which included saving a local park, promoting a neighbourhood watch scheme and issues relating to wheelie bin collections. Prime examples of this localised politics in action were evident in his "Save Tommy Rec Playground" (2009) campaign, and in his blog entitled "Streetlight switch off is a recipe for fear" (2010)

Findley attacked the County Council on their plans to switch off street lights in the borough in order to save money. In addition, the BNP employed new techniques in places like Nuneaton, which included leaflets designed for a more working class electorate targeting issues which are relevant to particular local areas and social classes (See Appendix IV: Leaflet a.). For example, the leaflet focused on the changing demographic in London and was aimed particularly at those areas in London which border the large Muslim communities in parts of East London, such as Barking.

So we can see that as part of the modernisation process the BNP targeted local elections and campaigned hard using local candidates fighting for local issues, utilising community based activism. This proved to be beneficial to BNP candidates in 2008, particularly in Barpool and Camp Hill due in part to the failure of the mainstream parties to take this BNP campaign sufficiently seriously. Modernisation of the BNP also benefited the party because candidates were vetted and trained as part of the programme of introducing respectability and professionalism in the party. The last section in this chapter will now offer an analysis of how the BNP modernisation also benefited from limited legitimisation.

Legitimising the BNP

This final section will demonstrate how the BNP were able to take advantage of a range of issues, such as immigration and Islamophobia, which offered increased legitimacy and voter appeal. This was significant as widening support is not just linked to factors such as immigration, Islamophobia and the actions of other parties, but also the ability of the BNP to take advantage of these conditions to increase their legitimacy. Indeed, they were able to use their limited legitimacy to increase votes and support in Nuneaton as will now be demonstrated.

Nick Griffin's decision to modernise the BNP coincided with a series of social, economic and political challenges, which offered the party a degree of legitimacy. For instance, there were challenges to British identity, an influx of political and economic asylum seekers, the mass immigration of new EU citizens, notably of Polish descent, the rise of Islamophobia in response to growing Islamism, and the economic recession. It was through these dynamics that, according to Goodwin, the BNP "began stressing the 'threats' which immigrants and minority ethnic groups pose to British culture, values and ways of life" (2011: 67). This marked a dramatic change in the party's discourse, which previously espoused crude racial nationalist language and enabled the party to gain legitimacy and limited ownership of the issue of immigration. For example, as demonstrated in the previous chapters on immigration and Islamophobia, the BNP were able to tap into growing disillusionment with increasing immigration, and fear associated with Islamophobia. Indeed, Copsey states that both the Labour Party and the Conservative Party "took on and pandered to the electorate's fears over asylum and immigration", and the BNP "associated itself with themes that were increasingly considered 'legitimate' and 'normal" (2008: 147). In fact, Burnett argues that the Labour government was important "in fostering hostilities and legitimising the far right's agenda" (2011: 11).

Examination of the immigration variable in chapter four also demonstrated that voters do not trust the mainstream parties when it comes to immigration and asylum policy, and the politicisation of race has clearly been a strong determinant in support for the far right. For example, it indicated that the BNP were able to capitalise on niches in the electoral arena, and the mainstream parties' position on crucial issues, notably immigration or rising Islamophobia. It was also evident that Islamophobia and the language of race were apparent across all mainstream parties, and in the decade

following 2001 this benefited the BNP. Indeed, Zuquete argued that the far right benefited because it has "co-opted issues that a large number of mainstream politicians, both on the mainstream Right and Left, find it hard to disagree with, if not fully support" (2008: 332). This included women's rights, attacks on the encroachment of Sharia Law and Sharia Courts, as well as attaching itself to animal rights issues with regards to the serving of Halal meat in schools. By attaching itself to these issues, alongside modernisation, the BNP were able to further legitimise their discourse.

What this final section has shown is that the acquisition of legitimacy, both through the actions of the mainstream parties and the sanitising of their message, was important for the BNP in their success at a local level. The modernisation of the BNP's discourse, and the introduction of 'normal' policies, did provide the party with an element of legitimacy for some voters. This element of legitimacy was a factor in 2008, and people did view the BNP as a legitimate party of protest.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the BNP managed to secure an air of respectability for some voters, and this granted them the opportunity to garner support at a local level. The BNP were able to conceal parts of their ideology, transform the party's image, and to distance the party from its fascist past. The analysis has also shown that the BNP reached the dizzy heights of electoral success by copying the French FN strategy (Master frame) and creating a very British version of a nationalist populist party. Moreover, the analysis of local election campaigns demonstrates that the BNP adopted similar tactics used in Millwall in 1993, and those used by the Independents in Burnley in 2002. It has also shown that many BNP supporters in 2008 no longer

associate the BNP with fascism or neo-Nazism and this was indicated in their responses.

The local BNP candidates in Nuneaton were able to take advantage of an opening in the political space, and achieved success by concealing and transforming parts of their ideology, as well as the party's image. The party became more 'acceptable' to part of the electorate and they took advantage of this limited legitimacy, appealing to an electorate concerned with issues such as immigration and Islamophobia. It is also evident that Griffin, during the mid-2000s, succeeded in his attempt to 'normalise' the party. It has shown how the BNP targeted local elections, and campaigned hard using local 'respectable' candidates who fought on local issues, and utilised community based activism. This proved to be beneficial to BNP candidates in 2008, particularly in Barpool and Camp Hill due in part to the failure of the mainstream parties to take this BNP campaign sufficiently seriously.

Modernisation alone cannot explain support for the BNP in Nuneaton. However, it can help understand how the BNP took advantage of crises and conditions because of modernisation and how the party acquired, for some, limited legitimacy. The final chapter will focus on the role of the media in the success of the BNP in Nuneaton. This chapter will be important in showing how in particular the printed press provided the BNP with a positive forum for their discourse.

Chapter 8

The Media

Two key questions arise when scrutinising the role of the British media in any far right electoral breakthrough. How important were the local and national media in the far right's electoral success, and how do you measure the influence of the media? This chapter sheds light on these questions and adds to the literature which examines the role of the media in the success of the far right. The role of the media has often been analysed in the context of other variables, including immigration and asylum. However, the aim of this chapter is to analyse the media as an independent variable, in order to demonstrate how important it was in the success of the BNP in Nuneaton in 2008.

First, in terms of chapter structure, focus will be on an analysis of the local press, specifically concentrating on a story and newspaper content analysis of the *Heartland Evening News* (which became the *Nuneaton News* in 2009) and the *Coventry Telegraph*. Second, it will examine specific stories in the national tabloids, which include tabloids such as *The Sun,* the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express,* and analyses the content of these stories and responses from interviewees. Analysis of the local and national press will show that the media reporting, specifically relating to Muslims and immigration, was situated in a moral panic over Islamist terrorist attacks, particularly in the wake of the 9/11 and 7/7 terror attack. Throughout, this chapter will show how important the media were in constructing legitimacy for the BNP in the years leading up-to their success in Nuneaton in 2008. It will show this by demonstrating the media's legitimisation of the BNP's language and policies in the press, and the relationship between the party and the media. It also investigates the press and highlights the media's role in agenda setting, with particular reference

attached to the analysis of five themes, immigration, Islamophobia, asylum, Islam and Muslims. These five themes were chosen following analysis of the qualitative data, which highlighted their frequency as the five most important issues for BNP voters. This chapter will demonstrate how salience of issues in the news media, such as the visibility and prominence of issues relating to the five themes, has contributed to support for BNP.

The Role of the Media

The literature review for this thesis revealed that historically in the analysis of the far right, compared to other variables offered as explanations for their electoral breakthrough, the media has received little attention (Refer to chapter one, pp.52-54). Boomgaarden and Vliegenhart state, "the literature largely ignored an important factor that accounts for dynamics in public opinion towards and electoral support for anti-immigrant populist parties, which is the mass media" (2007: 405). This chapter will therefore add to the explanations which have scrutinised the role of the media in the success of far right parties and argue that the role of the media should always be analysed as an important factor.

First, it is worth noting that analysis of the role of the media is fraught with difficulties, with one of the main problems being how to measure its influence. As Mudde notes, it is very hard to test empirically the exact influence of the media on the success of the far right (2007: 252). This view is also shared by Eatwell who notes that "there are major methodological problems involved in assessing the media effects" (2003: 62). However, what is clear is that the media can and does play an important role in legitimising groups like the BNP through salience of issues and policies. For example, Schain in his analysis of the FN in France during the 1980s

argued that, the media was important in the breakthrough stage through legitimisation, and that "legitimacy has not simply emerged. It has been constructed" (1987: 230). This related to how the press courted Le Pen and gave him access to various media channels. This view is to a large extent supported by Mudde who argues that "the media can encourage (or obstruct) electoral breakthrough by influencing which issues gain salience, and providing positive (including neutral) reporting on populist radical right actors can help them gain electoral breakthrough" (2007: 254). This, indeed, is what happened to a limited extent in Nuneaton prior to the 2008 electoral success.

There is literature on the media and its influence on voting patterns. For example, DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007) in their analysis looked at whether media bias affects political beliefs and changes voting behaviour. They found that Fox News convinced 3 to 8 percent of its viewers to vote Republican (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007: 32). Looking at the media bias and its influence on voting behaviour, they concluded that "the media can have a sizeable political impact" (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007: 32). Boomgaarden and Vliegenhart (2007) also found that the media can have a positive impact on the level of support for the far right. They argued that "the prominence of immigration issues in national newspapers has a significant and positive impact: The more news media reported about immigration-related topics, the higher the aggregate share of vote intention for anti-immigrant parties" (Boomgaarden and Vliegenhart 2007: 404). They tested the salience of general news on immigration and economic news in relation to immigration, and found a "significant positive influence of news on vote intention for anti-immigrant parties" (Boomgaarden and Vliegenhart 2007: 413).

The BNP's relationship with the media will now be discussed. Historically, the media had been seen as the enemy of the far right, and hostile to any 'new' far

right party. Indeed, the far right have viewed the media as the enemy, and extremists have always viewed the media as part of a Jewish conspiracy. In fact, Griffin (1997) wrote a pamphlet called *Who are the Mind Benders,* during which he outlined the myth that Jews control the media, and that there was a Jewish conspiracy to brainwash the British public. In the pamphlet Griffin states that: "The mass media in Britain today have managed to implant into many people's minds the idea that it is 'anti-Semitic' even to acknowledge that members of the Jewish community play a large part in controlling our news" (Anon. n.d.). This shows how the far right have traditionally viewed the media, as unsympathetic and the enemy of nationalism.

Although the media has been unsympathetic to the far right it is clear that parts of the media have legitimised the discourse, issues and policies associated with them. Moreover, there is evidence that the far right have benefited from the common political wisdom that says any publicity is good publicity. It could be argued that the BNP did in fact benefit from bad publicity. For example, the racial hatred trial in 2006 of BNP leader Griffin and his former youth organiser Mark Collett served as an "unprecedented recruiting sergeant" (Wainwright 2006). In fact, Griffin stated after his acquittal that, "this case has brought us more donations than ever before, including one of £20,000, the biggest in our history. We've never had such good publicity before" (cited in Wainwright 2006). The trial, which Griffin argued was in defence of free speech, related to addresses made by both Collett and Griffin in the run-up to the local and European elections of 2004, and was aired in the BBC programme *The Secret Agent* (BBC Panorama 2004). Griffin used this case and the media frenzy surrounding it to air his own views, stating:

> Millions of people in this country will be able to hold their heads higher and walk a little taller tonight. I was speaking the truth to an audience of decent working people in West Yorkshire who in some cases are facing terrible

problems; including the grooming of their children by racist paedophiles from part of the Muslim community…We don't hate anyone from the ethnic minority, or blame asylum seekers for seeking a better future for their kids. We blame the government for putting their people above our people - for turning our once decent, stable country into a multicultural mess which looks increasingly like a future Bosnia (Griffin 2006).

Alongside the trial coverage, the BNP also attempted to use wider media attention to their advantage. Griffin appeared on respectable news programmes such as Newsnight (Jeremy Paxman interview 2002), and BBC Radio Four's *Today* programme in 2005, during which Griffin explained why the BNP was using an image from the London bombings for their election campaign. As indicated earlier, historically the media had followed a 'no platform' policy which had denied the far right in Britain oxygen which could fuel the flames of legitimacy. However, the media had by allowing the BNP limited access, provided the party and Griffin the opportunity to 'normalise' the party in the eyes of some voters.

The BNP also benefited further by what Copsey argues was, "a series of sensationalist media campaigns directed against asylum-seekers, and heightened by post '9/11' anti-Islamic insecurities" (2008: 146). This view is shared by Mudde who notes that the media can "provide them [far right] with a highly favourable forum" (2007: 251). This point will be returned to later in this chapter.

The local press also offered the BNP an element of legitimacy. For example, in an interview given to the media in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 election success for the BNP in Nuneaton, the then West Midland organiser Alwyn Deacon used the media to thank voters who voted for the party, stating, "the BNP is the fastest growing political party in Britain because we are the only party to stand up for the British people" (cited in Birch 2008). Therefore, in the aftermath of the BNP's

election success the press gave the BNP a platform to celebrate their victory. This demonstrates that the media can and does provide a 'favourable forum' for the far right, and will therefore be important in this analysis of Nuneaton.

It is important for this analysis to note that constant media coverage also creates issue salience which has also been beneficial to the BNP. This was fundamental for the BNP because at a time when the press was reporting widely and negatively on immigration, the BNP offered themselves as the only party who would act on immigration (see above chapters four and five for more detail on immigration and the BNP). Of course using the media to your advantage is not a new concept, and was one important aspect of Jean-Marie Le Pen's success in France during the 1980s. Indeed, Grayson argues that Le Pen's use of the media in the 1980s "gave him the opportunity to introduce into political discourse far-right ideas which were previously kept out of the media" (2014). This is a view shared by Wolfreys who argued that, "access to the media played a crucial role in the FN strategy" (2009). However, the BNP unlike the *Front National* (FN) did not benefit by having direct access to the media because the media remained hostile to the BNP. Rather it is the salience of issues which includes immigration and asylum that have benefited the BNP (Copsey and Macklin 2011: 84-85). It is evident that sections of the media, particularly tabloid newspapers, discuss issues and use discourse which resembles that used by parties like the BNP. It is this which clearly can encourage electoral breakthrough by influencing the issues which gain salience and benefits far right parties.

Researching the Press in Nuneaton

For this analysis particular attention has been paid to those newspapers which respondents to the questionnaire stated they read on a regular basis, with particular

reference paid to the newspapers read by BNP voters. In regards to the local press it was decided that for this analysis the period between 1999 and 2012 would be analysed. This period was chosen as it represents the period when Nick Griffin became leader of the BNP in 1999, through to the defeat of the BNP in the Nuneaton local elections of 2012. The aim was to demonstrate whether there was an increase in negative reporting and salience of particular issues in the press, which coincided with rising support for the BNP. The decision to analyse these specific newspapers was also based on the data produced by the questionnaire data (Table 35), and through interviews with respondents.

Table 35: Readership of Newspapers based on who the respondent voted for in 2008 (Respondents could choose more than one national or local newspaper)

Which National or local newspaper do you read on a regular basis	Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrats	BNP	Green Party	UKIP	Did not vote	Total
The Sun	36	16	3	20	0	5	2	82
The Mirror	19	2	2	4	0	1	0	28
The Daily Mail	24	25	7	4	0	5	4	69
The Daily Star	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
The Times	7	9	1	1	1	0	1	20
The Guardian	12	1	3	0	0	0	1	17
Independent	12	1	3	1	2	1	2	22
Heartland Evening News /Nuneaton news	37	20	13	8	1	2	3	81
Nuneaton Tribune	43	23	8	5	1	1	5	89
Coventry Evening Standard	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	10
Coventry Telegraph	13	8	2	6	1	1	1	29

Source: Nuneaton Questionnaire 2012

For example, Table 35 shows that overwhelmingly BNP supporters stated they read at a national level *The Sun* newspaper, while locally around 50 percent also read a local newspaper which includes the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* and the *Coventry Telegraph*. The press was selected as part of this analysis because it offered an opportunity to add to the current literature relating to the media variable, and test whether there is a link between the success of far right parties through legitimisation

of their policies and discourse. Therefore, understanding the link between the far right success and the media will be central in this analysis.

The media played a role, and understanding that role will be measured in this chapter. It is worth stating that the aim here is not to show who framed the argument, or whether it is the readers buying particular newspapers because they represent their views, or the newspapers are influencing the views of their readers. However, with that in mind, an analysis of these newspapers will offer an insight into the influences of the printed press, through their reporting of issues which mirrored those championed by the far right BNP.

The Local Press

The role of the media in legitimising the BNP's messages was very apparent in evidence mined from archival work on the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* and Coventry Telegraph. This section will focus on a story and newspaper content analysis, focusing on the local press between 1999 and 2012. This relates to stories and content that includes key words and themes relating to immigration, asylum, Islam, Muslims and terrorism. First it will offer a story analysis, looking specifically at the reporting of the five themes in the local press. These were selected in order to demonstrate the discourse relating to these five themes, and how this developed in the years leading up-to to the success of the BNP in 2008. It will then analyse the newspaper content in greater detail, focusing on a sample of the stories. Then it will show that the reporting transformed in the period between 2008 and 2012, with greater focus on local issues, and less focus on national headlines. Analysis of the story and content of these local papers will show that the local media did, to a large extent, legitimise and sanitise the argument and discourse put forward by the BNP prior to the 2008 local election.

The first element of this local newspaper analysis shows clearly how the media reported immigration, asylum, Islam, Muslims and terrorism. For example, there is a dramatic rise in coverage of these issues in the period between 1999 and 2006 (Table 36). As highlighted in the methodology chapter, the analysis of the local press included an in depth search of every daily newspaper on microfilm in the archives of Nuneaton Central Library. It also included an online analysis of the local media using a digital key word search. It is evident from the sources that the local papers reported stories which reflected those that were prominent at a national level. For example, the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* carried many stories concerning uncontrolled immigration and asylum, as well as terrorism in the immediate post-9/11 and 7/7 period. In fact, there is a rise in immigration stories from just seven in 1999 to nineteen stories by 2006. More evident is the increase in featured stories relating to terrorism, which rise dramatically between 1999 and 2006 (Table 36). Even taking into account the attacks of 7/7 and 9/11, the reporting on terrorism in a local newspaper represents a high proportion of stories reported.

Table 36: *Heartland Evening News/Nuneaton News* (16th Jan 2009)					
Key Word/Theme (Total Number of stories)					
Year	Immigration	Asylum	Islam	Muslim	Terrorist
1999	7	0	0	1	6
2000	7	14	5	1	5
2001	8	13	1	8	75 (72 Post 9/11)
2002	9	23	5	6	56
2003	11	20	2	7	66
2004	13	16	10	22	90
2005	16	15	15	27	108 (7/7 Terror attack)
2006	19	7	10	32	79
2007	5	2	0	1	8
2008	8	1	1	4	2
2009	0	0	0	1	2
2010	3	1	0	2	0
2011	5	1	0	0	0
2012	3 (Only 1 prior to 2012 local election)	0	0	0	0
		Source: *Heartland Evening News/Nuneaton News* 1999-2012			

Table 36 indicates that stories relating to terrorism increased from just six in 1999 to 75 in 2001, and following the terrorist attack of 7/7 in 2005 it increased to 108 reports. The rise in stories relating to the five themes is evident between 1999 and 2006. For example, asylum rose from zero stories in 1999 to fifteen by 2005, and stories relating to Muslims rose even more dramatically from one in 1999 to 32 by 2006 (Table 36). Moreover, the increase in the levels of reporting on these issues reflects the increase in support for the BNP in the town and the demise of the Labour Party. In fact, reporting increases dramatically prior to the success of the BNP in Nuneaton, although it does begin to decrease from 2007 after the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* completely transformed the papers format, giving greater priority to local stories, and appeared to be less aggressive in its discourse in relation to the five themes. Indeed, analysis of reporting in 2012 shows that there was only 1 story relating to the theme immigration in the period January to May 2012 (Table 36). What this demonstrates is that reporting of the five themes increased dramatically up-to 2007, and this to large extent laid down foundations for the BNP to build support in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The fact that the paper changed the level of reporting on the five themes did not influence the increase in support in 2008. The outcome of this was that through the presses agenda-setting function, notably their discourse and salience of issues, the BNP's message became sanitised and accepted as legitimate for an ever increasing number of voters.

So far this section has focused its attention on the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)*. Additionally the *Coventry Telegraph* was analysed using the online version of the paper. This decision was made in order to analyse another medium from which people are informed of the news. What this examination found was that the *Coventry Telegraph* followed a very similar pattern when comparing story

analysis. For example, the number of stories relating to immigration increased from just 6 in 2001 to 47 in 2008 (See Table 37). Moreover the number of stories relating to terrorism remained high between 2001 and 2012. This shows that like the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News),* the *Coventry Telegraph* was sharing a discourse similar to that espoused by the BNP, which could only contribute to the party's increased legitimacy.

Table 37: Story analysis *Coventry Telegraph* 2001-2012 (Online)					
Key Word/Theme (Total Number of stories)					
Year	Immigration	Asylum	Islam	Muslim	Terrorist
2001	6	11	7	18	86
2002	9	11	1	13	34
2003	21	34	9	41	27
2004	27	29	9	41	44
2005	12	21	8	36	43
2006	52	41	15	45	33
2007	54	34	15	43	25
2008	47	25	18	24	30
2009	61	34	23	34	39
2010	88	39	26	33	33
2011	81	45	15	34	28
2012	56	18	8	18	28
				Source: *Coventry Telegraph* Online 2014	

However, the *Coventry Telegraph* differs from the story analysis of the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News),* in that it continued to publish stories relating to the five themes in greater number. Moreover, in the case of immigration the number of reports continued to rise in number up until 2010 (Table 37). Nonetheless, this data also shows that there was a correlation between the number of stories locally relating to the five themes, and the rise of the BNP in Nuneaton.

It is also worth highlighting that the negative portrayal of immigrants and asylum seekers in the local press, and the national Labour Party's failure to deal with these perceived problems, also coincided with the demise of the Labour Party in the town as seen in chapter six. Also evident from this analysis is that members of the local Labour Party in Nuneaton appeared oblivious to the increase in negative

reporting of the themes. Indeed, the rise in negative reporting contradicts what was stated by one local Labour councillor, who when asked about reporting in the local press on these issues stated that "there was nothing in the local press" (O2OI3 2012). This view was also shared by the local Labour leader, Dennis Harvey, who when asked if any local media stories impacted on voter choice stated:

> Not what I can think of. To be fair to the media here they are quite fair. And I have for many years written a column in the newspaper, which I know many council leaders I worked for did not get that opportunity. So I have always had direct contact with people. And it was offered to me by one newspaper and then another. But I have always found them quite fair (O2OI5 2013).

Therefore, there appears to be a disparity between what was being printed in the local press at the time, and what the local politicians believe was being printed. As shown in table 36 and 37, stories relating to the 5 themes increased dramatically between 1999 and 2007. Of course this does not offer a detailed analysis of the content of these stories, and this will be looked at in the next section.

Local Newspaper Stories

This next section will now offer an analysis of the newspaper content specifically relating to the five themes. It is not unknown for the local press to influence and fuel issues at a local level. For example, Eatwell highlighted the role of the local media, which he argues is more apolitical and tends to report in a neutral way. He draws attention to how the local press in Oldham reported race related events in 2001 which "fitted the BNP's agenda" (Eatwell 2003: 61) by giving considerable coverage to racially motivated attacks on whites, no-go areas for whites in Oldham, and the attack on a 76 year old war veteran. There is some evidence that this was also the case in the local Nuneaton press. For example, the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)*

reported on the BNP in both a neutral and positive manner, with headlines such as 'BNP man will fight for seat' (Birch 2007b: 3) and 'Son aiming for father's old seat' (Birch 2007: 1), which led with the story that the son of a former Labour Mayor of Nuneaton, Bill Deacon, was now running for local office, for the BNP. This story conceals the sharp discontinuity between the father's politics and those of his son. Moreover, the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* in the month before the local elections of 2008 led with the front page headline 'Deacon's Dozen', which publicised all of the local BNP candidates standing in Nuneaton (Birch 2008: 1). The story was great publicity for the BNP. It offered the BNP organiser for Nuneaton Alwyn Deacon, the opportunity to put the party's electoral message in a positive manner. Deacon in reference to the BNP candidates stated, "they are from all walks of life; a cross section which ranges from the self-employed to professional people and housewives" (Birch 2008:1). Stories like those above create an air of respectability and legitimacy for the BNP.

Copsey (2008) highlighted how important the local press can be in increasing legitimacy and credibility, with particular reference to the reporting of 2001 disturbances in Oldham as reported in the *Oldham Chronicle,* which he argued fuelled racial tension. Copsey argued that "by accentuating Asian-on-white attacks, the Chronicle's reporters had helped set the agenda that was singularly edifying for the extreme right" (2008: 128). Moreover, Renton argues that a series of actions taken by the police were central in this process. This included the claim by Chief Superintendent Hewitt that there was an increase in attacks on whites by Asians, a story which was publicised by the *Oldham Chronicle*, highlighting that of the 572 racial incidents reported in Oldham sixty per cent of the victims were white (Renton

2003: 78-79). It is evident when analysing the local Nuneaton press that particular stories, similarly to the *Oldham Chronicle*, did play into the hands of the local BNP.

There are several key stories which benefited the BNP in Nuneaton. For instance, in July 2004 trouble flared at a hostel in Nuneaton, in the Edward Street area which is home to a large Muslim population. This story was reported in the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News),* who led with the front page headline 'Violence erupts' (Cooke 2004: 1). The article stated that the violence was race related, and that "violence erupted in a Nuneaton street as gangs of white and Asian youths clashed" (Cooke 2004: 1). There is some evidence that this story did exactly what the BNP hoped it would, because it was reported in a way that suggested the motive for the violence was racial, and it was mentioned and referred to as racial violence by voters of all persuasion which fed into the BNP's agenda. For example, one BNP voter in response to the question do they remember any racial tension in the town replied; "Well I read the local papers. I do remember there was some trouble around Edward Street, whites and Asian gangs fighting. Does not surprise me really been building up for years. They don't like us and we don't like them" (O2OI4 2012). It was not just BNP voters who recalled this story. Indeed one former Labour voter stated when asked the same question replied:

> I do remember they had some problems at the Hostel [Edward Street] which was pretty nasty; it was racially motivated, but also a lot to do with young men who didn't have a lot to do. A lot of things were not reported in the media, they didn't want to escalate it, and it probably would have. But there is a Mosque in that area and I don't know who started what (O2OI11 2013).

The fact that the story proved to be factually incorrect and not racially motivated, and was reported so in a later edition of the *Heartland Evening News,* appears to be a detail lost on some voters. In fact, the violence erupted in relation to the placing of a

bail hostel in Edward Street, and trouble between residents of the hostel and members of the local community. It is evident that stories like these did have a lasting impact on some voters.

There were also key stories in the local press which highlighted the fear of terrorism and can be linked to the moral panic that had existed in the press and that espoused by politicians in the wake of terror attacks. These had developed in the post-9/11 period, and increased the fear of attack for residents in Nuneaton. For example, the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* in September 2004 led with the headlines 'fighting terrorists' (Harrison 2004a: 1) and 'Mock terror on streets' (Harrison 2004: 1). The story 'Mock terror on streets' related to a mock terrorist attack exercise which included a mock biological and nuclear attack. The aim of the exercise in Nuneaton, according to one local reporter, was to "ensure communities are protected" (Harrison 2004: 1). This of course only added to the growing fear and paranoia that had developed in the post-9/11 period. Also adding to this fear was the local Labour MP Bill Olner, who published a piece in the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News),* titled 'Terrorists won't change our way of life' (Olner 2007). As indicated in the chapter on Islamophobia, the BNP were also highlighting terrorism and the threat to the British way of life.

In addition to extensive reporting on terrorism issues, the local press also highlighted a link between race, asylum and crime when reporting criminal acts in the town. For example, in April 2002 the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* led with a front-page headline 'Turk faces rape charges' (Anon. 2002: 1). It also followed up this story with the front page headline 'Asylum seeker on rape charge' (Anon. 2002a: 1). The story focused on the Turkish man's asylum status, and the crime he was charged with. What is interesting is that there was nothing else reported on the

trial in the press and it appears the case never went to trial. There were also many other stories which linked immigration and asylum with particular criminal activities. For example, in 2004 the paper ran with the headlines 'Immigrant jailed' (Anon. 2004: 2), 'Albanians remanded' in 2006 (Anon. 2005: 1-3), and in 2008 'Immigrant stole trainers' (Anon. 2008a: 5). Negative stories linked to immigration, asylum and crime were not just highlighted in the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News),* the *Coventry Telegraph* also carried negative stories which linked crime to immigrants and asylum seekers. One headline read, 'Illegal immigrants jailed for 500K credit card scam' (Anon. 2008) and another story linking crime and immigration led with the headline, 'Police swoop on criminal underworld - A huge swoop involving police and immigration officers was launched in Coventry yesterday' (Anon. 2006a). From the analysis of these reports in the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* and the *Coventry Telegraph,* it is evident that asylum and immigration were more than often linked to crime. The obvious point needs to be made here. The fact that the accused was an immigrant was rarely pertinent to the case or story. Most crime in the town was committed by white males, yet these were not referred to as, white, British citizens. The outcome of this reporting was that it added to the BNP's propaganda message which linked immigration and crime. Indeed, BNP leader Nick Griffin linked crime and immigration, attacking Pakistani immigrants and blaming them for certain crimes, stating, "you can't possibly separate the hard drugs trade from the question of Islam and particularly Pakistani immigration. Any working class area of Britain - in a multiracial area - the hard drugs problem is related to Islam and Pakistan" (Newsnight 2008). The growing fashion for journalists to highlight their subject's immigration status helped make the BNP's propaganda more legitimate.

Analysis of the local press also demonstrates that as well as linking asylum, immigration and crime, there were also many negative stories relating to immigration in general, in the *Coventry Telegraph* and the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)*. For example, the *Coventry Telegraph* in 2002 reported on immigration with the headline, 'Illegal immigrants keep rolling in' reporting that, "more illegal immigrants arrived in Nuneaton and Bedworth in May than in the two previous months" (Anon. 2002). These reports were common in this period. In 2006 the *Heartland Evening News* reported on the influx of migrants from Eastern Europe with the headlines 'UK facing east Europe crime wave' (Anon. 2006: 2). In fact the *Heartland Evening News* printed many negative stories relating to immigration, such as 'Immigration purge', a story which highlighted the then MP for North Warwickshire Bill Olner's support for the government's tougher stance on immigration (Merriman 2008: 3), 'Illegal immigrants caught' (Anon. 2000: 3), and a front page headline which stated, 'Three men arrested – Suspected illegal immigrants held after town centre chase' (Harrison 2003: 1). What these stories demonstrate is that at a local level the press were using discourse which the BNP propaganda machine had been campaigning on, further sanitising the discourse of the far right party in Nuneaton.

This section has shown that the number of stories in the local press relating to the five key words, immigration, asylum, terrorism, Islam and Muslim, increased in the period between 2001 and 2007. Although they decreased in the year prior to the BNP's success in 2008, the local media did have a tendency in the years leading up to 2008 to report on the five key words in a negative manner. Moreover, this section has highlighted some of the newspaper reports published in the local press and the impact these have had on some voters in the town. As demonstrated, some voters referred

specifically to stories printed in the local newspapers, notably the violence at the Hostel in Edward Street. The survey of the local newspapers found that although it is impossible to measure the influence directly, the analysis does go some way in explaining how the local press sanitised and legitimised the BNP in the town. Basically the BNP's message for some was no longer 'unacceptable' or seen as extremist.

The National Hysteria

This section will now focus on the role of national newspapers in validating the BNP and their discourse, and examine the impact of the national printed press on voters in Nuneaton. Specific reference will be made to the main tabloids read by respondents who completed the questionnaire, and responses from interviewees. Archival research revealed a large number of relevant stories in these target papers, *The Sun, Daily Mail* and *Daily Express,* which relate specifically to the key words. It will demonstrate that the reporting was positioned in a moral panic constructed around the fear of immigrants, Muslims and terrorism. It was this moral panic which benefited the BNP in 2008.

When analysing the data produced by the questionnaire it showed that over half of BNP voters who responded said they read *The Sun or Daily Mail* (Table 35). Analysis of the qualitative data shows that BNP interviewee respondents stated they read the tabloid newspapers, and also shows that there were many stories mentioned by respondents. When asked whether the press or media influenced their vote, some respondents highlighted particular stories relating to anti-white racism, immigration, asylum and terrorism, with BNP voters, referring to particular press stories. These more than often highlighted the impact of fear and hysteria, led by parts of the

national tabloid press. For example, one BNP voter when asked if he could think of specific examples referred to the story in Leicester about China Pigs:

> It was all in the papers and everything. It was about some woman who had a pig in her window. She basically collected China pigs. And she put it in the window; maybe on purpose I don't know that. But she was told by the police to remove the pot pig that had been in the window for years and years, she had collected them but because it had been offensive to the Islamic community, which had built up around her, which was a lot of Ugandan Muslims, and she refused to remove them she was taken to court. She was charged with some aggravated charge or something or other and she was fined. She was forced to remove the pigs. I mean she had lived there for years, she wasn't a young woman and the Islamic community had actually come after her. But instead of saying hey it was not a problem and accepting her for what she was, they ignored that and she was prosecuted. But they won't prosecute Islamic extremists for burning poppies and spitting on soldiers or dead soldiers coffins (O2OI1 2012).

The story of the China Pigs first appeared in *The Independent* (Garner 1998) and appears to have been a media story, like many others, which have become engrained in the minds of some BNP voters (for example the *Three Little Pigs Story deemed offensive to Muslims,* Register 2008). Stories like these appeared alongside BNP headlines highlighting attacks on British culture and way of life, and reappeared and regurgitated in the growing anti-Muslim atmosphere, post 9/11. Indeed, evidence that elements of the press fuelled the fear of Islam was highlighted by the BNP voter above, who recalled a scare story in *The Sun* newspaper. He stated that:

> Islam spreads, and the very nature of Islam forces it to spread and control. I always remember about that time I came home on leave and I was thinking, no, no it won't happen in this country and, um, the headlines in *The Sun* newspaper were, the local Islamic Community had burnt down some Sikh or non-Islamic picture houses in Bradford. This was because they were showing films which

were showing women's legs and things like that, you know Indian dancing and Bollywood movies, that type of thing, and they burnt it down (O2OI1 2012)

Not all respondents agreed with this view, but many highlighted what they believed was the media's role in legitimising these views. For example, one local councillor responded by saying that "it was all to do with Muslims, you know the sort of media 'scaremongering'. It was very prevalent in the press at that time" (O2OI3 2012). This view was shared by one local Muslim community leader who stated that:

> The media, no matter what party it is, the media's perception is we have to sell... part of the media perception is about going out and selling the best stories they can, what people are going to buy into. And people love the fights, the disagreements, the arguments, and that's what's quite interesting and quite sexy isn't it. And people will buy it and hear that and the media have always played a part, always. So when it comes to voting, if it's the BNP, they will put something in there, like Muslim men oppress their women and the media jumps at it, and the next thing you know votes go to the BNP (O2OI6 2013).

It is important to understand how this fear has been fuelled by the media. It is the alleged, or for some actual, cultural difference between Islam and the West which has grown in the last few decades. This has been evident in the mainstream press since the late 1980s. For example, the former *Daily Telegraph* editor Charles Moore stated in an article in *The Spectator* (1991) that "Britain is basically English speaking, Christian and white, and if one starts to think it might become basically Urdu speaking and Muslim and Brown one gets frightened", while authors Bernard Lewis (1990) and Samuel Huntington (1993) sought to place the gulf between the Western World and Islam world, which has often been referred to as the 'clash of civilisations'.

The 'clash of civilisations' took on even more reverence in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 as many politicians, authors and the media, sort to justify their Islamophobia, and Kundnani states that "the 'clash of civilisations' takes the Islamic tradition to be inherently violent. It assumes that for the majority of Muslims over the centuries to the present day politics is simply the mechanical and repetitive expression of an underlying abstraction called 'Islam', pre-programmed for violence, fanaticism and despotism" (2008: 41). Indeed, there is a plethora of evidence in the press and in the political language of the last decade, that demonstrates that by 2008 Islamophobic sentiment had become the staple diet for many with stories in the tabloids such as "Ham Sarnie Muslims sue jail for 2M" (*Daily Star* 2007). Moreover, many the tabloid reports linked the words 'Muslim' and 'terrorism' in their headlines. For example, the *Express* newspaper headline relating to a 2008 terrorism trial stated that "Muslim terrorists wanted to inflict 'heavy casualties'" (Garnham 2008), and *The Sun* newspaper printed a story on 4 October 2007 with the headline, "4,000 are UK terror suspects: The number of suspected Muslim terrorists in the UK has multiplied nearly four times in seven months, security chiefs have been told". Once again there is evidence of a link being established in the mainstream press between 'Muslim' and 'terrorist'. In fact, Kundnani argues that this had become the case since the early 2000s, stating that, "anti-Islamic feeling is becoming increasingly acceptable across society, especially under the guise of the 'war on terrorism' and anti-Muslim elements in all communities have found renewed confidence in the wake of Bush's 'You are either with us or against us' rhetoric" (2002: 74).

There are examples of newspaper headlines which used fear and the negative portrayal of immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims. For example, the *Daily Express* in 2007 published a front page story with the headline 'Let illegal migrants

roam our streets' (Whitehead 2007: 1) and in July 2005 led with a front-page headline which read 'Bombers are all sponging asylum seekers' (Anon. 2005b: 1). What the headline provides is evidence of a link between asylum, terrorism, Islam, and the abuse of the benefits system. Indeed, the leader of the council, Dennis Harvey, summed this up when discussing the rise in anti-Muslim sentiment stating, "the BNP were giving a very easy answer, backed up by certain newspapers, like *The Sun* and *Daily Express* and so on… I believe that newspapers like *The Sun* and *Daily Express* will be believed by people" (O2OI5 2013).

It can be argued that tabloid headlines fuelled anti-Muslim sentiment. As the next article demonstrates, Islamophobia was widespread in the press at the time. For example, *The Sun* newspaper in February 2008 published a story which led with the headline 'What a Burkha' (Pascoe-Watson 2008: 1). It related to comments made by the Archbishop of Canterbury that Sharia law in Britain would be inevitable and stated that the "Archbishop wants Muslim Law in UK" (Pascoe-Watson 2008: 1). This article was published at a time when the BNP was clearly portraying itself as the only party who could deal with the 'Muslim' problem, and fed into the fear of Islam which developed in the wake of recent terrorist attacks, race riots and rising Islamophobia in the tabloid press. Indeed, one BNP voter referred specifically to the introduction of Sharia law stating that:

> Our government have introduced, or allowed the Muslim community to introduce a small part of Sharia Law. Now how can we have a parallel legal system? Even though at the moment it is small, when they grow the Islamic community are going to want more. How can we have a parallel legal system for one religion and a legal system for another? When by statute our system is a Church of England society how can we allow this other parallel legal system? (O2OI 2013).

Many within the right wing national press, through their reporting of the five themes, helped legitimise the BNP's message. This was demonstrated to a large extent in the chapter on Islamophobia which showed how the press sanitised and legitimised the BNP's anti-Muslim message. One such newspaper story was written by former BBC presenter Robert Kilroy-Silk (2004) who in an article for the *Sunday Express* headed, 'We owe Arabs nothing' and that Arabs are just "suicide bombers, limb-amputators, women-repressors". In his article, Kilroy-Silk offered a link between Arabs, terrorism, asylum and benefits stating that, "we have thousands of asylum seekers from Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries living happily in this country on social security" (Kilroy-Silk 2004). The story caused a great deal of controversy, and was widely discussed in the mainstream media in the wake of 9/11, at a time when Islam and terrorism were high up on the political agenda. However, the main tabloid newspapers reported Kilroy-Silk positively in the wake of the article, with the *Mail Online* referring to it as a "Simple Mistake" (Anon. 2004a). Another protagonist who is known for her writing on Islamist terrorism is Melanie Phillips. In fact, she wrote a prominent article in the *Daily Mail* in 2005 entitled 'The lethal moral madness'. In the article she states that "London must no longer be Europe's terror factory – the 'Londonistan' in which terrorists wanted in other countries are allowed to walk freely in our streets" (Phillips 2005). Evidently, like the local press, the language used in this article was becoming more prevalent in the years following 9/11 and 7/7. Moreover, politicians were espousing similar sentiments in the press. For example, Boris Johnson writing for *The Telegraph* discussed issues relating to Britishness in the wake of 7/7. In his article he argued that "Imams will have to change their tune, and it is no use the Muslim Council of Great Britain endlessly saying that 'the problem is not Islam', when it is

blindingly obvious that in far too many Mosques you can find sermons of hate, and literature glorifying 9/11 and vilifying Jews" (Johnson 2005).

The headlines and stories, like those mentioned above, fed into the fear which developed in the wake of the terrorist attacks (Refer to examples of fear that developed post-9/11 in chapter four). Indeed, interviewees were asked if the media coverage of immigration and Islamic terrorism were important, and they were forthright in their response, "yes definitely" (FG2P1 2012). In fact, one Labour voter stated, "Yes... I just read the headlines like most people. I don't look too much into it and some of what I see disgusts me. So the media are important" (FG2P2 2012). This was a view shared by one Labour voter who took part in the focus group and argued that "there is conflation of being a Muslim and being a terrorist. Again going back to the media the two things are always talked about together. And again it is very easy to point a finger and blame them, blame the other rather than looking at ourselves, or any other part of politics or community" (FG1P3 2012). This sentiment fed into the narrative formed and promoted by the BNP in their political campaigns, linking Muslims and terrorism in a manner which suggested you cannot have one without the other, and proved beneficial when appealing to an element of voters in Nuneaton.

There is evidence to support the view that the media were central in increasing the belief that all Muslims are terrorists or supporters of terrorism, which in turn fitted in with the BNP's narrative. For example, the BNP campaign in the wake of the 2004 Madrid bombings highlighted that the "BNP was right on the terrorism threat from Islamists" (BNP News 2004). Furthermore, newspapers such as *The Express* (online) ran stories with headlines such as, 'It's time for Muslims to denounce extremists' (Forsyth 2008) and 'Muslim terrorists wanted to inflict heavy casualties' (Garnham 2007). Forsyth in his article stated, "we non-Muslims are informed of bookshops rife

with hate material but never purged by the Muslims themselves; of Mosques where preachers speak only of hate against the rest of us but never cleansed; of social clubs where the young are indoctrinated and brainwashed on a diet of loathing of the non-jihad world but never closed down" (Forsyth 2008). These stories fed into the hysteria and fear which had been developing since 9/11. Indeed, as shown in the chapter on Islamophobia, it was evident that the media have fuelled its rise, a view shared by Bunglawala who states that "the BNP has not exactly been hindered in its anti-Muslim campaign by our tabloid papers with their regular diet of hysterical stories claiming that our national culture is under threat from minorities" (2006: 4). Evidently, the press were pandering to the BNP's claims, and as Copsey argues, "where previously the BNP had been largely ignored or else denounced as fascist thugs, now it was becoming increasingly 'normalised' under the glare of media publicity" (Copsey 2008: 133).

The examination of the data also demonstrates that it was not just reporting of terrorist attacks which fed into the anti-Muslim hysteria. In fact, as well as stories relating to terrorism there were also media stories prior to 9/11 which appeared to resurface continually and were linked to anti-white racism in the post-9/11 period. One story which made national headlines and was a spark leading up-to the riots in Oldham in 2001, was the attack on D-Day veteran Walter Chamberlain. This was fuelled by the BNP in Oldham who campaigned against anti-white racism, and the fear that parts of Britain were becoming no-go areas for whites, as well as BNP supporters openly organising boycotts of Asian owned shops (Harris 2001a). This story first broke in the local press but soon made national headlines. The result of this was that the BNP exploited this story, with Nick Griffin arguing that Oldham contained no-go areas for whites. In fact, this sentiment was evident in the response

given by BNP activist Mick Treacy who was standing for Oldham East in 2001; "If you are in the wrong place at the wrong time, you are going to get beaten up… I have no qualms against Asians or people of any colour. It's a matter of the country losing its identity" (cited in Vasagar *et al.* 2001). It once again increased the fear that Asian gangs were roaming around attacking whites, and was beneficial to the BNP's propaganda machine. In fact, the BNP would utilise this when they stood for election in Oldham, and was no doubt beneficial in their rising support in the area.

The media and immigration

The analysis demonstrates that as the stories about Islam were making press headlines there was growing paranoia about immigration. Many respondents referred to specific newspaper stories about immigration when discussing terrorism issues and the media influence on their view. For example, one focus group participant when asked about the importance of the media in the success of the BNP in Nuneaton stated:

> The media have been important. You see a lot of these stories in *The Sun* or the Daily mail. There are a lot of stories about a hate filled Muslim Cleric and he has got a £2000 a month house on benefits. And everyone else is thinking I haven't got a job, and he is inciting hatred and he is getting benefits and his rent paid by the government (FG2P3 2012)

The reporting of immigration in the national press was also beneficial to the BNP in Nuneaton. This view was shared by one voter, who knew many people who had switched to the BNP. When asked why she thought people had done so, she stated that there was "a general feeling of economic distress in those areas were white working class people were feeling distressed. I mean the biggest problem was the media. I mean anybody who reads the *Mail* knows that their headlines are constantly

talking about millions of immigrants coming in, immigrants taking our jobs and raping our women" (O2OI11 2013). The analysis of the data also demonstrates that some respondents felt that fear drove voters towards the BNP in Nuneaton, and it was the media who were the driving force in increasing that fear. This was reflected in the response from one BNP voter, who referred to the media when discussing what he viewed as a problem with immigration, and specifically illegal immigration:

> I have heard in the media and stuff that they are clamping down on people and you see on the news they have stopped so many people coming on the back of lorries and stuff, yet figures rise and rise and rise, by what I see with the amount immigrants who are taking our jobs. I mean a lot of labour is done by Polish people and that's just ridiculous (O2OI7 2013).

There have of course been a plethora of stories published in the tabloid press. For example, *The Daily Mail* published a story in 2007 entitled 'Amnesty for up to 165,000 asylum seekers' (Slack 2007: 1), while *The Sun* (Anon. 2005c: 1) published a front page story entitled 'Lawless Britain', which included a section highlighting that Britain had one million illegal immigrants. Moreover, the press also played a part in creating the view that the then Labour government had lost control of immigration. It can be argued that the attacks on Labour's immigration policy, and the fact that the BNP were making headway in relation to issue ownership of immigration, was important in galvanising BNP support prior to 2008. This is evident because media attacks on the Labour government would be beneficial to a far right party like the BNP who campaign on the central issue of immigration. Evidence of the media attack on Labour is highlighted in the press in the years prior to 2008. For example, in October 2007 *The Sun* newspaper led with the headline 'Migrants? Labour haven't a Clue!' (Anon. 2007a: 1). The story focused on increasing immigrant numbers into the UK and argued that the Labour Party had lost control of immigration. A similar story

was published in the *Daily Express* with the headline 'Immigrants: Now Brown wants more' (Whitehead and Hall 2008), which attacked the then Labour Party's leader Gordon Brown on Labour's immigration policy.

Analysis of the data shows that some respondents saw the media as the biggest proponent of fear and hysteria. Indeed, data collected for this research shows indicates that the press did drive some voters to support the BNP. For example, one respondent when asked where he came to his conclusions on immigration and why he supported the BNP replied:

> Well I suppose it is out of the newspapers, but I don't buy them I just read them. I mean I read about people like Abu Hamza, you know he is a convicted criminal? He was locked up over here, and wanted in other countries, and we can't extradite him cos of his human rights, you know he is a criminal, promoting terrorism, standing up for fundamentalists who want to kill innocent people over here? Then you know he shouldn't have any f**king human rights (O2OI8 2013).

This view was also shared by another interviewee who voted for the BNP, when asked the same question, stating:

> Yes… lots of stories in *The Sun*, about immigrants coming over... there was a Polish man who come over 5-6 years ago and he married an English woman but hasn't been in employment for the last four years so he has just been taking the benefits from the government, um, and I think that's just a load of crap… we shouldn't just let anyone in (O2OI7 2013)

The effect of the national media also highlights how the tabloid press linked crime to immigration, which mirrored the reporting in the local newspapers. The effect of this was evident during one interview, in which a BNP supporter directly linked crime and immigration, stating;

> Obviously there are parts of Nuneaton that are bad like Camp Hill, I mean it goes for anywhere in the country though so, and again you read a lot in the newspapers that say 20-40% of these crimes are done by immigrants as well, um, and I think any crime that a foreign national does, comes over and commits a crime, disrespecting this country should be deported straight away (O2OI7 2013).

These views mirror stories published by the tabloids in the period before 2008. For example, a story was published in *The Express* with the headline 'Immigrants bring more crime' (Whitehead 2008: 1), and also one particular story in *The Sun* highlighted a murder committed by asylum seekers (Anon. 2005a: 1). The link was also highlighted by one Labour Party supporter who took part in the focus group, who when asked if the media was important, and whether the BNP used it to legitimise their views on immigration stated:

> Of course they did. This was clearly evident in their views towards immigration and is very much a BNP point of view. And again people tend to believe what they hear in the newspapers and the stories are not always right. Um, and certainly the BNP tapped into this. For example, the newspapers say that this crime relates to a certain race, or this guy was an asylum seeker, or this guy went to a Pakistani training school. People react to that (FG1P1 2012)

What we can see is that the national press did, and still does impact on voters views, and could be argued that it acts as an 'agenda setting' tool which benefited the BNP.

Finally, it is worth noting that the view that the BNP gained from media coverage was not just shared by analysts and respondents alike. BNP politicians also highlighted the role of the media in enhancing their cause. For example, the former deputy chairman of the BNP, Simon Darby, noted in 2003 that the media coverage of asylum was one of the most significant drivers of BNP support early on. Speaking in

The Guardian, Darby linked growing support and the success of the BNP directly to *The Sun, Daily Mail and Daily Express*, who were openly attacking asylum and immigration vociferously. In response to the question of legitimacy he stated "Oh yeah, totally. It has legitimised us. We are mainstream now", and when asked what the issues were on the doorstep Darby replied,

> Oh, the asylum issue… Definitely. They have been very badly affected by these asylum seekers and they don't like it at all… There's that old saying that you need quite a bit of luck in politics. Well we've had quite a bit of luck in that newspapers have become obsessed with the asylum issue. I have not been able to believe the *Daily Express*. Issue after issue, day after day, asylum this, asylum that. So we now have the luxury of banging on people's doors with the mainstream issue of the day (Darby cited in Addley 2003).

This view was also shared by Nick Griffin who stated in 2003 that "one could today be forgiven for thinking that the editors of five of Britain's national daily papers – *The Star, The Times, Daily Mail, Daily Express and Daily Telegraph* – had all suddenly become BNP converts" (cited in Copsey and Macklin 2011: 85). Although these statements were made in 2003, there is no evidence to suggest that over the next few years the BNP leadership has changed its opinions about how the tabloid press has contributed to furthering its cause. The influence of the national media was also demonstrated in the chapter on immigration, which highlighted the speech by the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, during which he stated famously that he wanted "British jobs for British Workers" (Brown 2007). This story made all the major newspapers and was broadcast repeatedly on the news, and validated the BNP argument, and it was widely reported the party had previously used this slogan in the BNP's campaigns. In fact, the BNP made use of the slogan in the aftermath of the speech, as was seen on the BNP Truth Truck, which was used in the campaign of

2008 and 2009 (see Appendix VI), and BNP leafleting campaigns (Appendix IV: Leaflet g. and h.).

From this analysis of the tabloid press it is evident that the media did help legitimise the discourse and policies of the BNP. Evidently, not all BNP voters read the tabloids covered in this analysis, however, those who took part and stated they did read the tabloids were influenced by the newspapers reporting on the five themes. They recalled newspaper stories and some voters referenced them when justifying their vote. Therefore, it can be concluded from the analysis of the national press that the tabloids were influential because they did, through salience of issues and their discourse, sanitise the BNP's message in the eyes of some voters. The analysis of the national press offers an interesting insight into media reporting of the five themes.

Conclusion

What this chapter has shown is that although the media may not directly legitimise the far right through positive reporting, they helped create a negative view of issues relating to immigration and asylum more salient to the public, which benefited the BNP in 2008. It has shown that the newspapers at both a local and national level have made scapegoats of immigrants and asylum seekers, and to a large extent fuelled rising anti-Muslim sentiment which benefited the BNP in Nuneaton. The press in particular, provided legitimacy for BNP arguments. Moreover, by focusing on particular issues the press did, in the case of some newspapers, unintentionally open up a political space for the BNP, and steered some fearful voters into their arms. These findings correlate with the conclusion offered by Copsey and Macklin who state that, "there can be little doubt that media reproduction of stereotypical bias

towards certain ethnic minority groups, in particular through print journalism, has legitimised the BNP message" (2011: 99).

The findings in this chapter also show that elements of the media used moral panic surrounding fear of immigrants, Muslims and terrorism which benefited the BNP in places like Nuneaton in 2008. As analysis of the local press indicated, stories relating to the five themes increased dramatically prior to the success in Nuneaton, and at a national level moral panics relating to immigration and terrorism were the staple diet of the mainstream newspapers. Indeed, it demonstrated how tabloids fuelled anti-Muslim sentiment, and this increased hysteria and fear of all things Muslim in the post-9/11 period.

Like previous studies of the media impact, it has not been possible to 'measure' influence however this analysis has shown that the press through the salience of issues and discourse, in relation to the five themes, has impacted on voter choice. This was evident through the analysis of the qualitative data, which highlighted that particular newspapers and stories indicated that voters' views were swayed and in some circumstances confirmed. But there is clearly a correlation between media hostility to immigrants, asylum seekers, and the rise of Islamophobia within the press, even if it is difficult to establish causation.

Finally, it is also worth noting that although there has been a great deal of coverage on the main themes, notably immigration and asylum, in the press at both a local and national level as demonstrated in this chapter, it has not been to the benefit of the BNP in the long term. In fact, issue ownership was never really established due to the reality that the media never really endorsed the BNP or its leadership in the way that some parts of the media have now endorsed issue ownership to the United Kingdom Independence Party, and its current leader Nigel Farage. Although the BNP

benefited from the convergence of views expressed in the media, and this evidently assisted breakthrough in 2008, only 'ownership' of immigration can lead to consolidated electoral support over a longer period.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to conduct a localised case study of early twenty-first century British National Party (BNP) electoral success, helping to test the credibility of the existing academic literature on far right breakthrough. In this respect, the research identified and analysed the key reasons behind the success of the BNP in the 2008 local elections in Nuneaton. Data produced by focus groups, interviews and a questionnaire captured opinions of voters, politicians and community representatives as to the reasons for this 2008 victory. These opinions were supplemented by archival work, revealing socioeconomic data and media influences.

The findings of this Nuneaton case study support the existing literature to the extent that the main variables identified from the literature review all had a significant impact on this particular election. In this respect, the Nuneaton research suggests that any explanation of early twenty-first century BNP electoral breakthrough should be multivariable in nature. Yet, the Nuneaton case study produced more nuanced findings. Particular variables were more significant than others. Immigration, for example, stands out as the most prominent factor of influence. In addition, the role of the media, the press in particular, was of great significance. The media was important in sanitising and legitimising negative stereotypes of immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims. This case study also suggests that Islamophobia should be placed high up in any hierarchy of explanatory factors. Indeed, Islamophobia was an important part of the jigsaw and conflates with a number of variables tested in this thesis. In sum, the findings of this research suggest that the cause of the BNP's 2008 Nuneaton victory is multi-variant, but immigration and Islamophobia are the most significant drivers. Islamophobia should be given more emphasis than is often the case in the existing

academic literature on recent far right breakthrough, whereby socioeconomics was only important when conflated with immigration and Islamophobia.

Chapter three tested the main social and economic explanatory factors highlighted in the existing academic literature. Socioeconomics was a key influence galvanising support for the BNP in Nuneaton. BNP campaigners took advantage of 'fertile ground' related to social and economic problems in the town. Yet, the research undertaken suggests that this particular variable was only an indirect or underlying variable in explaining the BNP's victory. Socioeconomic analysis certainly assisted profiling BNP voters, but it was limited in its actual determination of why people vote for this party, and therefore cannot alone offer an explanation as to why the BNP were successful in 2008. This study therefore suggests that it is only when other factors, notably immigration, Islamophobia and disaffection combine with social and economic issues that the BNP were able to take advantage of this 'fertile ground'.

Analysis in this chapter found that the BNP achieved electoral success in two of the most deprived wards in Nuneaton. In this respect, this thesis differs from research findings from other locations which argued that the deprivation hypothesis could not be applied. This study found that in Barpool and Camp Hill there are particular problems including poverty, high unemployment, low quality public housing, and the ward shows signs of neglect. Yet, amongst BNP supporters the economy was consciously not the most important reason why they voted for the party they did. These socioeconomic factors only come to the fore when linked with immigration issues. In Nuneaton, despite the relevance of the deprivation hypothesis, socioeconomics are only relevant in a multivariate context.

Chapter three also analysed age and education in the case study location. It found that age did not really offer any real correlation; however, the analysis of

education indicated that there was some correlation between the level of education and support for the BNP. The largest group of BNP voters comprise members of the electorate who have relatively low educational levels. This correlates with the findings from previous analysis of far right success in Britain, showing that the BNP won more votes in the wards with a working age population, who have fewer than 5 GCSEs or equivalent (John *et al.* 2006: 15). The analysis of the data indicated that the wards where the BNP were successful, and had councillors elected, are in the bottom 0.5 per cent when looking at deprivation linked to education, skills and training. This shows that education was a significant socioeconomic determinant, and can be viewed as an indicator as to where BNP support was the strongest, although it cannot alone explain the BNP's success.

The examination of immigration in chapter four demonstrates the significance of this variable. Indeed, immigration stands as the most prominent factor in the 2008 case study. Immigration was central in explaining the BNP breakthrough, but again rather than being a single issue, immigration acted as the catalyst in the 'fertile environment' of multiple explanations which existed in the first decade of the twenty-first Century.

In Nuneaton, the BNP exploited growing negative perceptions of immigrants, a phenomenon very much evident in the previous literature. Immigration became an important electoral issue at both a national and local level, and BNP voters suggested they had lost trust in the mainstream parties' ability to deal with what they view as an 'immigration problem'. The analysis of the data also demonstrated that immigration was a 'national issue', rather than being local in origin. This study suggests that the politicisation of race in the national arena filtered down to the local arena. The study found only limited evidence of racial tension and violence. It was more the perception

of racial tension that exists which is greater than the actuality which had an impact on electoral behaviour.

The research also indicated that BNP voters, in particular, thought that the indigenous white majority British were suffering at the expense of immigrants. The BNP's message that the party would act to redress this suffering was one argument BNP voters particularly responded to. This thesis highlighted how a sense of white resentment developed, which increased the anti-immigrant sentiment amongst voters, and immigration was linked with other factors such as, Islamophobia, socioeconomics, and the media. The result was that the BNP in Nuneaton were successful in 2008 with their brand of anti-immigrant politics.

Chapter five found that the BNP's success cannot really be understood or analysed without examining the effects of Islamophobia. Previous literature has suggested that the impact of Islamophobia should not be overstated. However the findings of this research indicate the opposite. Islamophobia is an equally important factor and should be analysed as part of a multivariate analysis of recent far right breakthrough.

The BNP were able to attract voters by highlighting the segregation which they believe exists in Nuneaton, and amplified the division specifically between the 'Muslim' and 'white' community. It found that voters of all persuasions held the belief that the Muslim community do not, and are not willing to mix with their 'white' neighbours, and this benefited the BNP, who utilised fear of the 'other' to attract wider support. The analysis of Islamophobia in this thesis also demonstrated that some voters in the white community felt isolated and separated from the Muslim community. In 2008 this benefited the BNP who propagated a narrative on Islamic segregation. The findings show that in comparison with other locations where the

BNP were successful, such as Burnley, the geographical concentration of the Muslim population can help explain why the BNP were successful, and can be applied in Nuneaton. The BNP in 2008 were successful in predominantly white wards that bordered these locational clusters of the Muslim community.

The examination of Islamophobia in this thesis also highlighted the impact of fear, a fear which was no doubt amplified by the media in the wake of major Islamist terrorist attacks. As with immigration, national security issues were more important than any local threat. The major terrorist events including 9/11, 7/7, and the subsequent 'War on Terror', were pivotal for the BNP in 2008. The BNP made political progress by utilising the rising fear and scaremongering, following the terror attacks and threats from Islamist groups. The data highlighted a correlation between increasing Islamophobia in the post-9/11 period, rising media and political anti-Muslim rhetoric, and the BNP breakthrough in 2008. Anti-Muslim campaigns resonated with BNP voters, and fed into the fear of Islamist terrorism and Islam in general. Indeed, examination of the interview data indicated that BNP supporters view Muslims and Islam with suspicion and fear. The thesis also observed that the language and scaremongering fuelled this fear. Islam and Muslims were viewed in an extremely negative manner, and in the first decade of the twenty-first Century the BNP tapped into this fear.

The findings in chapter six indicated the significance of political opportunity structures (POS) in the BNP's success in Nuneaton. The research findings on this variable broadly support the position found in the previous literature. The thesis found that factors within POS contributed to the explanation for the BNP's success. Again, however these alone cannot explain why the BNP were successful in Nuneaton.

Political opportunity structures (POS), disaffection and disillusion can have an impact on the level of support for the far right and this was evident in Nuneaton. For instance, convergence fuelled the sense that the parties are 'all the same', and this increased disaffection, disillusionment and mistrust of the mainstream political parties. The chapter also highlighted how BNP voters believe that the mainstream parties are not competent when it comes to dealing with issues relating to immigration and corruption.

Chapter six further demonstrated that the Labour Party was complacent in 2008, and this was important for the BNP in winning the competition for votes in Nuneaton. This was a significant factor, showing that the mainstream parties did not do enough during their campaign to counter the message coming from the BNP. This thesis has also shown that the established political parties failed to respond to the BNP's electoral challenge. This was apparent in the level of campaigning, the selection of candidates, and the level of ignorance held by the incumbents of the BNP's threat in 2008. As indicated in the chapter, these findings validate the explanation offered in the literature by Rhodes (2009 30-31) and Wilks-Heeg (2008: 18), who both highlighted the demise of local politics, and the failure of the mainstream parties to act as credible opposition.

The thesis also tested the impact of low turnout, and the nature of the electoral system as an explanation for the BNP's breakthrough. However, the nature of the system in the 2008 election was found to be irrelevant, and the findings from this study suggest that the BNP won two seats in Nuneaton despite, not because of, the first-past-the-post system. Concerning turnout, the findings indicate that this was of limited relevance in the success of the BNP in 2008. In fact, this thesis has shown that the turnout in 2012 was over 10 per cent lower than in 2008.

Chapter seven was concerned with the modernisation of the BNP and its role in their success in 2008. Examination found that, again, modernisation independently cannot explain the breakthrough for the BNP in Nuneaton, but it can help understand how the BNP took advantage of the political environment by becoming, at least publicly, more moderate and offering a broad popular appeal. The BNP managed to secure an air of respectability for some voters. The BNP concealed parts of their ideology and normalised the party's image, and in this respect the BNP copied elements of the French *Front National* strategy and created a very British version of a nationalist party with popular appeal.

Further analysis in chapter seven draws attention to how the local BNP candidates in Nuneaton were able to take advantage of an opening in the political space by becoming more 'acceptable' to parts of the electorate. They took advantage of 'limited' legitimacy in an environment where elements of the electorate were concerned with issues such as immigration and Islamophobia. It has also shown that Nick Griffin, during the mid-2000s, succeeded in his attempt to 'normalise' the party, and the policy of targeting local elections, and campaigning using local 'respectable' candidates was beneficial. As this thesis has demonstrated, the BNP in Nuneaton were successful in that their candidate in Barpool, Martyn Findley, has local roots in the community, and is a 'respectable', well-known local driving instructor, with many links to that local community. Indeed, like Rhodes (2009), this study has highlighted the importance for the BNP in fighting campaigns on local issues, and utilising community based activism. The case study, in this respect, very much supports what has been written previously on the modernisation of the BNP.

Finally in chapter eight attention focused on analysing the role of the media at both a national and local level, and the significance of the media in the success of the

BNP in Nuneaton. What this chapter showed is that, although the media may not directly legitimise the far right through positive reporting, they were complicit, if not purposely, in fuelling BNP support. They were engaged (directly and indirectly) in the cultivation of a negative view of immigrants and asylum seekers. The press also increased the salience of these issues amongst the wider public, as well as significantly influencing anti-Muslim sentiment. Indeed, it demonstrated how the reporting of newspapers, at a local and national level, made scapegoats of immigrants and asylum seekers, and were also central in constructing a link between anti-Muslim sentiment and immigration.

Archival research of the *Heartland Evening News (Nuneaton News)* demonstrated that between 1999 and 2001 reporting of the five key words, immigration, asylum, terrorism, Islam, Muslim increased dramatically. This included many negative stories relating to immigrants and asylum seekers, as well as some stories relating to the BNP prior to their success which could be construed as neutral or indeed positive. Therefore, the press provided legitimacy for BNP arguments, and in the case of some newspapers, they unintentionally opened up a 'narrow' political space for the BNP. Indeed, the analysis of the qualitative data highlighted that particular tabloid newspapers 'influenced' voters, and in some circumstances confirmed their views. This was evident in the tabloid newspaper headlines highlighted in this thesis, which demonstrated how the press used fear and the negative portrayal of immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims. This does compare with the explanations in the literature that media reporting has legitimised the BNP message (Copsey and Macklin 2011: 99; Copsey 2008: 133; Eatwell 2003; 61).

There is evidently a correlation between media hostility to immigrants, asylum seekers, the rise of Islamophobia, and the BNP success in the first decade of the

twenty-first Century, even if it is difficult to establish causation. It is the difficulty in establishing causation that has often meant the media have only warranted a brief mention in the literature. However, as this thesis has shown, any study of the far right breakthrough should test this explanation, and its importance.

Although the BNP benefited in 2008 from anti-immigrant sentiment, rising Islamophobia, a disenchanted electorate, and the media's negative coverage of these issues, it has not been to the benefit of the BNP in the long term. One reason highlighted is in relation to issue ownership of immigration; in fact issue ownership was never really established by the BNP or its leadership. For instance, the media never endorsed ownership of the immigration issue for the BNP, like they have for the Conservative party, or in a similar way they have now endorsed issue ownership to the United Kingdom Independence Party, and its current leader Nigel Farage. Moreover, in Nuneaton, as in many other locations where they experienced a breakthrough, such as Burnley and Stoke, they failed to build on their 'limited' legitimacy and their election successes once in local government. There were of course many reasons for this failure in Nuneaton, including the resignation of BNP councillor Darren John Haywood in Camp Hill, who resigned within six months after failing to attend any council meetings, and BNP infighting which led to Martyn Findley leaving the BNP and becoming an Independent in 2011. The BNP councillors failed to embed themselves in the council and develop any kind of working relationship with other councillors. Moreover, the Labour Party was able to re-engage with some supporters who switched to the BNP, and the BNP imploded nationally which became evident in growing internal tensions, infighting, corruption and a 'failure' to campaign in a similar manner witnessed in 2008. If the BNP's 2006 success of 33 local election victories was the BNP's 'finest hour' (Copsey 2008: 80),

then the 2008 success in Nuneaton represented the 'intermission' of a party which saw its support collapse from 2010 onwards. In fact the BNP have now retreated back into the abyss, with the final sign of the demise of the party the removal of Griffin, who after standing down as leader and handing over the role to Adam Walker, was expelled from the party on the 1st October 2014.

Finally, it is evident that some scholars have referred to those who support the far right as 'angry white men' (Goodwin 2011). This research has found that although some BNP voters were evidently angry in their responses, this anger was based on fear. Rather than angry white men, they were 'fearful' white men. There is a fear amongst those who were questioned for this research; a fear for their jobs, a fear for their way of life, a fear for their children, a fear for their community, and a fear that things are moving and changing so fast that they are losing out in the global economic race. It has also been shown in this study that the BNP benefited from moral panic over Islamic terrorism. There was evidence of this fear in the wake of Islamist terrorist attacks, which was amplified by the media and politicians alike. The effect of this was that some voters in Nuneaton viewed Muslims and Islam with suspicion and fear, and this fear was important in their voting behaviour. It is clear that it was the far right, notably in Nuneaton the BNP in 2008, who tapped into these fears and attracted a large enough proportion of the electorate to achieve electoral success.

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Appendix I

Please find below the details of interviewees and focus group participants. FG1 refers to participants who took part in the first focus group. This included four participants who are numbered one to four accordingly, followed by the year. FG2 refers to participants who took part in focus group two and these are numbered one to three accordingly, followed by the year. The one-to-one interviews will be referred to as O2O. The code will begin O2O, followed by the interview number and the year they were interview. For example, O2OI1 2012 refers to the one-to-one interview with interviewee 1, which took part in 2012.

Participant list

Focus group 1 Participant 1 BNP voter – FG1P1 2012

Focus group 1 Participant 2 Labour – Independent voter – FG1P2 2012

Focus group 1 Participant 3 Labour voter – FG1P3 2012

Focus group 1 Participant 4 Labour voter – FG1P4 2012

Focus group 2 Participant 1 Labour voter – FG2P1 2012

Focus group 2 Participant 2 Labour voter – FG2P2 2012

Focus group 2 Participant 3 Labour/Independent voter – FG2P3 2012

One-to-one BNP Voter Interviewee 1 – O2OI1 2012

One-to-one BNP Voter/Member/Activist Interviewee 2 – O2OI2 2012

One-to-one Local Labour Councillor Interviewee 3– O2OI3 2012

One-to-one BNP Voter interviewee 4 – O2OI4 2012

One-to-one Local Labour Councillor (Leader) Interviewee 5 – O2OI5 2013

One-to-one Local Muslim Community Leader Interviewee 6 – O2OI6 2013

One-to-one BNP voter Interviewee 7 – O2OI7 2013

One-to-one BNP voter Interviewee 8 – O2OI8 2013

One-to-one BNP voter Interviewee 9 – O2OI9 2013

One-to-one Local MP Interviewee 10 – O2OI10 2013

One-to-one Labour/Conservative voter Interviewee 11 – O2OI11 2014

One-to-one BNP voter Interviewee 12 – O2OI12 2014

One-to-one Conservative voter Interviewee 13 – O2OI13 2014

Appendix II - Online Questionnaire invitation leaflet

Questionnaire Prize Draw
Win a Tablet PC Android 7" Apad

Simply complete the questionnaire and then fill in your details using the link to the competition

Everyone who completes the questionnaire will then be given the opportunity to win a Tablet PC Android 7" Apad (example features: NATPC M009S 7" 2GB Google Android Tablet PC. 2.2 Android Tablet works with Flash 10.1; Wi-Fi, Touchscreen, Epad, Apad, Android Market, YouTube, Kindle & Facebook App).

The closing date for entries is the 30th May 2012. If the advertised prize is no longer available at the time of awarding the prize we will substitute a prize of equal value. A cash prize to the equivalent value will also be offered. The winner must be aged 18 years over. There will be 1 winner.

For further information, on the project, how your answers will be used and the full prize draw terms and conditions, please use the link below:

http://goo.gl/20gtv

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Coventry University

Coventry University

Please take part in a Coventry University Voting Behaviour Questionnaire And Free Prize Draw

Voting Behaviour and community opinions in Nuneaton (2008-2012)

Dear Voter

My name is John Grima and I am a research student at Coventry University. I am conducting a survey about voting patterns and behaviour during the local elections in Nuneaton in 2008 and 2012 and I would be grateful if you could help me.

Why should you take part?

- you have been specially selected to represent the views of the Nuneaton electorate
- Help us to better understand why people vote for a particular party in your area
- Your personal opinions will be of great value and highly appreciated
- Everyone who completes the questionnaire will have the opportunity to enter a free prize draw to win a Tablet PC Android
- All responses will be completely anonymous

Please find below a link to the questionnaire which should take no longer than 5 minutes to complete online:

http://goo.gl/qRRJW

Simply enter the link into your web browser and complete the online questionnaire. Once the questionnaire is completed you will be given the opportunity to enter the free prize draw (see overleaf – closing date 30th May)

If you would prefer a posted questionnaire please call me on the number below or alternatively email me your address. This will be sent to you free of charge with a return postage paid envelope

10202   We look forward to your response

Appendix III - Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Voting Behaviour, community opinions and political party support in Nuneaton (2008-2012)

My name is John Grima and I am a PhD student at Coventry University carrying out research in order to develop a better understanding of why people vote for a particular party in your area. It would greatly help my research if you could complete the questionnaire below, which should take no longer than 5 minutes to finish.

If you wish to participate in the free prize draw you will be taken to a separate page when the questionnaire is submitted.

ANY ANSWERS YOU GIVE WILL BE STRICTLY ANONYMOUS.

About You

Are you male or female?

☐ Male

☐ Female

Which group best describes your age?

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-36

☐ 36-48

☐ 49-64

☐ 65+

What is your educational status?

☐ University/Degree

☐ College/ A-level

☐ School/ GCSE

☐ No schooling completed

☐ Other

Your current employment status?

☐ Employed full-time

☐ Employed part-time

☐ Unemployed

☐ Student

☐ Other

type?

☐ Professional/Managerial

☐ Skilled Manual

☐ Un-skilled manual

☐ Service (e.g. retail/government)

☐ Self-employed

☐ Other

What is your current housing status?

☐ Own your house/flat

☐ Rented accommodation (private landlord)

☐ Rented accommodation (social housing)

☐ Living with parents

☐ Other

Which national or local newspaper do you read regularly? (Tick more than one if necessary)

☐ The Sun

☐ The Mirror

☐ The Daily Mail

☐ The Daily Star

☐ The Times

☐ The Guardian

☐ Independent

☐ Nuneaton News

☐ Nuneaton Tribune

☐ Coventry Evening Standard

☐ Coventry Telegraph

Do you use any of the following to access the news on a regular basis? (Tick more than one if necessary)

☐ Web page/Online

☐ Twitter

☐ Facebook

If you use any of the above online sources to access the news regularly please can you provide an example.

About Your Vote

Who did you vote for in the 2008 local elections?

- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Liberal Democrats
- ☐ BNP
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ UKIP
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Did not vote
- ☐ Other

Who did you vote for in the 2012 local elections?

- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Liberal Democrats
- ☐ BNP
- ☐ Green Party
- ☐ UKIP
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Did not vote
- ☐ Other

Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2008? (Please also include any responses here if you voted in the 2009 local by-election in Camp Hill or Arbury and Stockingford)

Please read all the following statements and tick the circle that best describes your decision or circumstance. If you did not vote in 2008 please leave this section blank.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

	Agree	Agree	neutral	Disagree	Disagree
I was protesting against Labour	○	○	○	○	○
I was protesting against the Conservatives	○	○	○	○	○
I was protesting against the Liberal Democrats	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for had the best leader	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for had the best policies for Nuneaton	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for stands for people like me and defends my values	○	○	○	○	○
The other parties have lost touch with people like me	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for the candidate because of the hard work he/she has done in my area	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for can sort out the local economy	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for can sort out the national economic crisis	○	○	○	○	○
The party will reduce unemployment	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for this party because they will protect the NHS	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for will improve education in my area	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for this party because they are tough on crime	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for will tackle anti-social behaviour in my area	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for is the toughest on immigration	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for the party because they support the idea that British people should be considered first when it comes to jobs, housing and benefits	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for the party because of their stand against radical Islam	○	○	○	○	○

Why did you vote for a particular party or candidate during the local elections in your town in 2012?

Please read all the following statements and tick the circle that best describes your decision or circumstance. If you did not vote in 2012 please leave this section blank.

John Grima 328

	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree
I always vote for the same party	○	○	○	○	○
I was protesting against Labour	○	○	○	○	○
I was protesting against the Conservatives	○	○	○	○	○
I was protesting against the Liberal Democrats	○	○	○	○	○
I was voting against the coalition	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for had the best leader	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for had the best policies for Nuneaton	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for stands for people like me and defends my values	○	○	○	○	○
The other parties have lost touch with people like me	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for the candidate because of the hard work he/she has done in my area	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for can sort out the local economy	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for can sort out the national economic crisis	○	○	○	○	○
The party will reduce unemployment	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for this party because they will protect the NHS	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for will improve education in my area	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for this party because they are tough on crime	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for will tackle anti-social behaviour in my area	○	○	○	○	○
The party I voted for is the toughest on immigration	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for the party because they support the idea that British people should be considered first when it comes to jobs, housing and benefits	○	○	○	○	○
I voted for the party because of their stand against radical Islam	○	○	○	○	○

Who did you vote for in the 2010 General Election?

☐ Liberal Democrat

☐ BNP

☐ Green Party

☐ UKIP

☐ Independent

☐ Did not vote

☐ Other

Your View

Is there anything more you wish to tell us about why you voted for a party or candidate that we have not asked?

Questionnaire Authentication

Please enter the 5 digit number found on the front bottom left hand side of the leaflet.

This number cannot be used to identify you. It is only used to prevent people submitting more than one questionnaire.

Submit

Powered by Google Docs

Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Additional Terms

Appendix IV - BNP Leaflets

a.

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Appendix IV - BNP Leaflets

b.

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c.

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Source: BNP (2009)

d.

(BNP May 2008)

e.

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Source: Islamophobia-watch.com (2005)

f.

g.

h.

Appendix V - Local newspaper stories

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2003

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Appendix VI - National Newspapers stories

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Source: The Daily Mail (2009)

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Appendix VII – Ethics Approval

REGISTRY RESEARCH UNIT

ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK FORM

(Review feedback should be completed within 10 working days)

Feedback on re-submitted form and accompanying documents.

Name of applicant: ...John Grima................................... **Faculty/School/Department:** ...ISSS, BES.......................

Research project title: Voting Behaviour, Community Opinions and BNP electoral support in Nuneaton

Comments by the reviewer

1. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal: This is much improved from the previous version. It details clearly the research aims and objectives and outlines all of the proposed research methods. It now addresses more fully the ethical issues raised by the research.
2. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form: All of the Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms are very well put together, again, a great improvement. There are a few extremely minor points – points of clarity – which need addressing, but otherwise much better.
3. Recommendation: (Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant will be required to resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer). ☐ Approved - no conditions attached ✓ Approved with minor conditions (no need to resubmit) **1) For each of the PISs** In the final section 'benefits to participants' one of the sentences reads : 'However by taking part in the interviews the researcher will hope to develop an understanding of why people choose to vote for a particular party in a particular area'. This is minor, but please could you adjust the beginning of this sentence as it reads as though the researcher is taking part in the interviews. Please could you just make this a little clearer, for example by saying 'However by taking part in the interviews you will be helping the researcher to develop an understanding of why people choose to vote for a particular party in a particular area'. Also a typographical error, the final sentence makes reference to the 'result' of the study – I think this should be the 'results' (?). **2) For the PIS - PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP (POLITICIANS/COMMUNITY LEADERS)** In the section entitled 'the voluntary nature of participation' please could you make explicit that they are free to withdraw their data *up until the research is published*. **3) For the consent form for Politicians** Regarding point 5 on the form. I know that you have made the fact that they will not be anonymous clear in the PIS for politicians, but it would be safe to include in the consent form explicit reference to the fact that quotes will either be direct (i.e. participants are named) /may be attributable. So, it could read something like 'I agree to be recorded and *for direct quotes/ quotes which may be attributable to me* to be used as part of the research project'.

There are no conditions for the Ethics form, questionnaire or interview/focus group topic guide.

[ ]   Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)

[ ]   Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary

[ ]   Further advice/notes - please use other side if necessary

Name of reviewer: Hannah Lambie ....

Signature: Hannah Lambie ....

Date: 30.03.2011 ....