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THE FAR RIGHT IN THE UK:
THE BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY

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THE FAR RIGHT IN THE UK: THE BNP IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Examining the development of the British

Nation Party within the context of UK and

continental far right politics

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THE FAR RIGHT IN THE UK: THE BNP IN COMPARATIVE

PERSPECTIVE

This thesis examines through the means of a comparative perspective, factors which have allowed the British National Party to enjoy recent electoral success at the local level under the leadership of party chairman Nick Griffin. Such electoral successes have arisen despite the seemingly relative obscurity of the party at the turn of the century. A number of different aspects are examined in order to achieve this aim. The history of the far right in the UK is examined to establish whether the BNP have changed their stance in comparison to previous far right movements. The BNP are also investigated comparatively with other West European parties who have enjoyed national success, as a means of discovering whether the party are similar to their far right neighbours and why they have not enjoyed similar national success. The press coverage of the BNP is examined at a local and national level, using content analysis and the LexisNexis database. The thesis looks at the role played by the BNP in local elections and the decline of participation in political activity, to establish if there is a link between these two factors. Finally a case study is taken of Calderdale in West Yorkshire, to establish directly if any of the above factors can be directly applied to BNP electoral success in this district. The research discovers that there are opportunities for the BNP to establish a connection with the electorate in local politics which are not necessarily available at times of general election.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1:1 Introduction

The emergence of the British National Party (BNP) onto the political scene has seemingly been one of the most intriguing and emotive events in British politics of the past decade. From a position of relative obscurity compared to established mainstream parties at the turn of the twenty-first century, the party are now being seen as a growing political force, particularly following success at the local elections. Indeed the phenomenon of far right success has occurred throughout Western Europe, notably in landmark successes for the Front National (FN) in France and the Freiheits Partei Osterreich (FPO) in Austria, whilst far right success has also been prevalent in countries such as Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. Subsequently, in the recent years, far right parties were arguably enjoying their most successful period in politics.

In contrast, Britain has always been regarded as somewhat the exception to the rule with regard to national electoral success for far right parties, in comparison with Western Europe. Indeed, previously, the far right have only enjoyed what can be classed as sporadic local successes in Britain, with no strong movement being established to mount a challenge at the polls in a general election (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi 2003; Carter, 2005).

However, since the appointment of Griffin as party chairman, the profile of the BNP has begun to rise, whereby following initial success in the Lancashire area in 2002, the party have moved on to become a strong force across England at local elections. Consequently, the party are seemingly provoking great debate amongst the mainstream parties, media and academics alike over their potential impact and subsequently the best methods in which to deal with their growing presence (Renton, 2000; Copsey, 2004; Fieschi, 2004; Sykes, 2005).

Indeed, there is no doubting that the subject of the far right is an emotive issue amongst the British electorate, however, given the relatively recent emergence of the BNP, relatively little academic literature investigates their effect with regard to the local level of British politics. Thus, whilst conclusions have been made with regard to the failure of the British far right in comparison with Western European countries, this thesis examines why the BNP have risen from their relative obscurity on the British political map.

Therefore, the primary aim of this thesis is to examine the effect that the BNP have made under the leadership of Nick Griffin in a comparative perspective. By doing this, the research intends to understand which factors are influencing the ability of the BNP to enjoy electoral success in the UK local elections. The research aims to determine whether the BNP's effect is the result of a change in the party itself, or as a consequence of the leadership of Griffin. The

thesis aims to analyse the change in ideology of the BNP, from previous far right movements in Britain. Moreover, the thesis aims to establish that if there has been a change in ideology of the BNP, whether this change has brought it into line with the other far right European parties who have been successful at both national and local levels. In addition to examining the image of the BNP, the thesis will analyse the campaigning tactics now used at local elections by the party, in order to see if there has been a change in campaign tactic under Griffin's leadership in local wards, in terms of the methods used by the party and the voters that the party aim to attract.

Furthermore, to examine the effect of the BNP, it is necessary to analyse other factors which may have affected the impact that the party have made at the local level. One such factor to be investigated in order to meet this aim is the role played by the mainstream parties at both a national and local level and, whether their actions have consequences for the far right to attract new support.

Additionally, this research will attempt to answer questions relating to campaigning at the local level in terms of the level of importance that parties place on campaigning at local elections, understanding how they organise their electoral campaigns. This will include an examination as whether the local party committees are still strong, or whether they merely follow a structure set in place by the national party. Such research into the effect of the BNP at the local level will

also aim to examine the local state of democracy, in order to determine whether there is a difference between elections at the national and local level in terms of voter turnout and voters attitudes to local politics, and whether the BNP are benefiting from any difference.

The role of the local press is also examined to establish whether the press coverage by local newspapers could also have an influence on party performance at the local elections. This could be particularly relevant if research on local parties shows that there has been a decline in active campaigning. Furthermore, the BNP have appeared to enjoy an increase in their media profile; consequently, the thesis will investigate the press coverage of the BNP. The study of press coverage will aim to examine the debate that the giving the BNP the oxygen of publicity will only be beneficial for the party, which in turn allows for them to make an impact at the local level (Fieschi, 2004).

Therefore, in order to meet these aims, the thesis focuses on a number of areas relevant in allowing the questions posed to be answered conclusively. Chapter One of this study is the introduction to the thesis, establishing the areas of study which are to be examined. Chapter Two is the Literature Review of the thesis, examining the definition of a far right party and exploring key themes regarding far right study. Chapter Three will focus on the history of the far right in Britain, from Oswald Mosley in the 1930s up to the present day. Chapter Four studies the BNP in comparative perspective with

other Western European far right parties, Chapter Five will focus on press coverage of the BNP, through both a national and local perspective. Additionally, Chapter Six will examine the campaigning of the BNP and their performance at the local level. Finally Chapter Seven will focus on the West Yorkshire region of Calderdale, examining the impact of the BNP in that area, using a mix of qualitative and quantitative data.

1.2 The history of the far right in Britain

In Chapter Three, the history of the far right in Britain is examined, with a view to understanding how British far right movements have evolved. A study of the history of the far right will enable us to make a conclusion as to the ideological direction which previous far right groups have taken, thus allowing for observations to be made regarding why British far right movements have previously failed to make an impact at a national or local level. Moreover, the examination of the far right history will establish whether the far right have hitherto made impacts at the local level, therefore providing an example for the BNP on how to succeed at the local level. Chapter Three will also chart the progress made of the BNP following its formation by John Tyndall, through the 1980s to the election of Nick Griffin as party chairman in 1999 and the subsequent progress of the party under his leadership. Additionally, Chapter Three will examine the background of Nick Griffin, as this thesis will examine the idea that the change in direction of the BNP under his leadership has been one

of the key reasons for the increasing impact of the BNP at the local level in Britain. Such an examination will show the change in style and beliefs which Griffin appears to have made in order to succeed as leader of the BNP.

Finally, an examination of the history of the BNP will encompass two further aspects which have been put forward as factors in previously preventing the far right from making any impact on the British political scene, namely the response of the mainstream parties, and the work of anti fascist groups, notably at election times (Eatwell, 2000; Renton, 2003; Copsey, 2004). Studying the history of the mainstream parties will analyse whether there has been a change in policy with regards to their attitudes towards the far right, or indeed, their ideological viewpoint on issues such as immigration and asylum.

1.3 The BNP in comparative perspective

Chapter Four of this thesis will be a comparative analysis, carried out in order to understand how the BNP fits alongside other Western European far right parties across a number of wide ranging issues, such as manifestos, image of the party, leadership and response to the far right by the mainstream parties. Comparative studies have previously been used with regard to the far right in determining why the British far right have not made the same impact as their Western European counterparts (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005). The major factor for the inclusion of a chapter of this nature is

due to the success of the far right in Western Europe, whereby it is claimed that the style and image of these parties have had an influence on the manner in which Griffin has attempted to modernise and professionalize the BNP (Copsey, 2004). Hence, this Chapter will examine how far the BNP has come in its attempts to bring itself into line with other Western European parties.

Firstly, Chapter Four will examine the ideology of the party in terms of examining their policy at elections, in a bid to investigate whether the BNP are pursuing similar policies to their European counterparts. Hence, content analysis of manifestoes explicitly demonstrates these policies through charting the most recent manifestoes of the political parties.

Secondly the image of the party and its leader is examined in the respective countries, to determine how the parties are seemingly viewed in their own countries. Far right leaders in Western Europe have been seen to be more charismatic and moderate over recent years, leading to their success at the polls (Roxburgh, 2002; Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003; Carter, 2005). Therefore, the chapter will analyse whether the image of the BNP and Griffin is regarded in the same light.

Furthermore, the party leadership of Griffin will be analysed comparatively in order to establish whether the BNP are still viewed as

being more extreme and poorly led than their far right neighbours. Previous far right literature has asserted that far right parties require strong leadership as a consequence of the factions that can appear in far right parties. Thus, Chapter Four examines if the leadership of Griffin has been successful as the leadership qualities of fellow far right party leaders.

1.4 National and local press coverage of the BNP

Chapter Five of the thesis investigates the press coverage of the BNP. This chapter will follow on from the discussion in Chapter Four regarding how the BNP are viewed in terms of their image to voters. The Chapter will also look at the impact that the BNP have made in the press, notably at the time of local elections. Additionally, Chapter Five will be focusing on the media coverage of the BNP at both the national and local level, thus bringing in uniqueness through an analysis of the reporting of the national and local level press.

Subsequently, such an analysis allows for observations to be made regarding the amount of coverage the party are receiving and whether the coverage of the party displays any particular correlations in reporting. The coverage will also demonstrate whether there is a difference of the coverage which the party receives depending on the level of election, be it national, European or local. Hence, this could provide answers to why the party are seemingly having a potential effect at the local level. Moreover, the examination of national press

is carried out using the statistical Lexus Nexus package. The package allows the researcher statistically to establish the number of newspaper articles which have reported on the BNP through a keyword search, thus providing an accurate measure of the amount of press coverage received by the BNP (Deacon, 2007; Baimbridge and Anderson, 2008).

In addition to the national press coverage of the BNP, the local press coverage of the party is examined in the month leading up to the 2006 local elections in two newspapers, the *Halifax Courier* newspaper and the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus,* both situated in West Yorkshire*.* The examination will take the form of a codebook (Espindola, 2005), and investigates the type of political coverage received in the run up to the election with regards to the type of story which is covered and whether there is a particular positive or negative aspect to the article. This allows for a greater understanding of the attitudes of the local media to local politics in particular.

1.5 BNP campaigning at the local level

Subsequently, the focus of Chapter Six will turn to the campaigning of the BNP, at the local level.   This chapter examines local specific factors which have allowed for the party to have an effect at the local level. The chapter will investigate the campaigning of the BNP and the state of politics at the local level, examining areas of strong BNP support such as Barking and Dagenham. Consequently, the coverage of both the national and local level will therefore allow for any potential

contrast to be shown between the impact of the BNP at the national and local level. Chapter Six will also focus on the roles of the mainstream at a local level. Moreover, this chapter will also investigate the link between the BNP and UKIP, and any potential effect that they may have on each others electoral success. The role of UKIP at the national and local level is discussed as a consequence of its ideological standing on the right wing.

1.6 The BNP in Calderdale

Consequently, having made an analysis of the campaigning of the BNP at the local and national level, Chapter Seven will use a case study of the Calderdale area to apply the conclusions made from the study. This area has been chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, Calderdale is a diverse area with regard to the make-up of different social groups in the district (Census, 2001). Secondly, the Calderdale region is situated close to areas which saw riots in the summer of 2001, notably in areas of Oldham and Bradford. Thirdly, the BNP has had a presence in the town for a significant number of years, following the success of Adrian Marsden in the Mixenden by-election of 2003, the first victory for the party outside Lancashire (Copsey, 2004). Therefore these factors provide an opportunity for a study to be made of the impact that the BNP has made in this area.

This will take place by using a mixture of quantitative data from election results and socio-economic data provided by the 2001

Census. Socio-economic data taken from the 2001 census is used in order to examine previous academic notions regarding far right support, and whether there is any correlation with regard to wards in which the BNP choose to put forward candidates, thus allowing for conclusions to be drawn regarding the relationship between these variables and BNP support in Calderdale. A number of socio-economic variables will be studied, amongst them ethnicity, social groups, income, and unemployment and education. Subsequently, this will help to investigate whether there are any trends relating to BNP support and the aforementioned variables.

Quantitative data in the form of election results allow for the progress of the BNP to be charted in the area, furthermore they allow for a comparison of the BNP performance in relation to the other mainstream parties. This establishes whether the party has had an impact on their respective electoral performances, thus examining whether the rise of the BNP has been at the expense of any other political party.

The qualitative data in Chapter Seven are taken in the form of semi-structured interviews with the local leaders of the mainstream parties at the time of the 2006 local elections. The interviews will focus on the viewpoint of the party leaders on the state of local democracy, the strength of their own party at the local level and their views on the BNP presence in Calderdale. This unique approach in evaluating the

impact of the BNP will allow us to understand the mainstream parties' attitudes to the emergence of the BNP, and whether they see them as being a threat to their own party's chances of success in the area.

1.7 Methodology

In order to achieve these aims, a variety of analytical methods will be used to establish the findings. In Chapter Three, a historical analysis will be used to show the development of the far right in Britain. To achieve this, quantitative data in the form of election results will be used to act as a monitor of the BNP's electoral success. Furthermore, a more detailed analysis of the backgrounds of key far right figures in Britain such as Nick Griffin will act as a useful reference to future work in the thesis regarding the personality and image of the BNP. The chapter will also examine more innovative methods used by the far right such as the BNP website which has been chosen to demonstrate areas of development for the BNP that were previously unavailable to far right parties.

In Chapter Four, the method of comparative analysis used will be the Most Different System, whereby similarities will be looked for in policy areas between the BNP and West European parties. This method has been chosen due to the literature which suggests that the BNP cannot be classed in the same grouping as these parties, due to their more extremist nature (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005). Using such a comparative method therefore will determine whether

the party are beginning to develop into a seemingly more moderate far right party-type.

Subsequently, the differences between these parties and the BNP allow a comparative analysis to determine whether the attempts made by Griffin to modernise the party has brought them into line with other West European far right parties, by displaying any similarities in policy, structure of party, leadership and image.

To examine policy, this chapter uses manifestos taken from national elections and interpreted for a content analysis. The manifestos were those at the national level for the most recent elections in which the party fielded candidates, namely the 2008 general elections for the FPO and the 2007 national elections for the DF FN and VB and also the 2005 general election for the BNP. By using such a method, it explicitly demonstrates whether the BNP are competing at elections using similar policies to European far right parties who have been previously regarded in academic literature as being more moderate.

To measure the press coverage of the BNP, the LexisNexis package is used in Chapter Five. This package performs a key word search of digital newspaper archives and provides 'hits' which display the number of occasions the key words are mentioned. One such methodological consequence of using Lexis-Nexis is the potential of a key word search to provide false 'hits' in the search. For example,

searching for 'BNP' provided the possibility of including results for the bank BNP Paribas and the Bangladeshi National Party. Subsequently these 'hits' were eliminated from the results (Baimbridge and Anderson, 2008). Moreover, key word searching can be viewed as being a more appropriate source for examining groups and particular people and places as opposed to themes (Deacon, 2007; Baimbridge and Anderson, 2008). Consequently, this chapter focuses more on the BNP themselves being featured in the national press, as opposed to a concept such as the far right, which may not mention the BNP directly. Furthermore, the LexisNexis database allows the coverage to be broken down into monthly coverage, thus enabling coverage to be examined around periods of elections or any particular events which may affect the level of reporting of the BNP (Deacon 2007; Baimbridge and Anderson, 2008).

This chapter will also use a codebook analysis method to assess local politics coverage. The codebook used to measure the coverage was that designed by Espindola, from studying press coverage in Latin American elections (Espindola, 2002; 2005). Such a method of content analysis has been further used in other research of election coverage (Patterson, 1993; Negrine, 1998). The orientation of the article was decided by studying the language used in the article. If it was deemed that there was three times the coverage in an article of one particular orientation, then that was the general orientation of the article. Additionally, the codebook was also used to examine whether

the articles referred to the image of the candidates involved in the campaign, their personality and behaviour, the programmes of the party, their policies for local government, or the campaign itself. The major subjects in the articles also permitted understanding of which issues the newspapers' thought were important in the campaign. By using a content analysis of this literature, the research will demonstrate how much local coverage the BNP receives in comparison with their mainstream rivals, alongside the amount of coverage that local politics receives during an election campaign.

In Chapter Six, a number of analytical methods will be used to measure the development of the BNP at the local level. This chapter will provide analysis of BNP election results, in order to observe whether the party have benefited from the failure of local mainstream parties to put forward candidates to stand against them in elections. The BNP's local election successes in Barking in 2006 will be used to examine this idea, as the party's victories in Barking were the best results a far right group in one particular election, leading the BNP to become the official opposition on Barking and Dagenham Council.

Additionally, this chapter aims to be innovative in its research by providing a content analysis of BNP literature aimed for the party members. This literature consists of a booklet to act as a guide for canvassing, containing the standards and campaigning methods expected of a prospective candidate. This will provide a unique

perspective on far right campaigning as it examines the guidelines set out by the BNP for its members to follow, with regard to presenting the image of the party to the electorate.

Subsequently, to examine whether these guidelines are having any effect at local level campaigning, secondary sources such as claims made by anti-fascist groups and newspapers will provide a balance to the BNP literature. By using these sources, it provides perspective into just how much of a change there has been in the campaigning strategies of the far right in Britain, or whether there is still a focus on what are perceived as traditional far right issues, such as immigration.

Moreover, this thesis uses a case study to examine BNP support at the local level and the possible effects that this has on local democracy. The Calderdale region in West Yorkshire will provide an insight into BNP performance in a region yet to be studied in detail in any academic work. Calderdale is not viewed as a particularly 'traditional' far right area, in that it is not an urban area with a large group of working class voters. Whereas previous research has focused on areas such as Barking and Dagenham and Burnley (Renton 2004; Goodwin, 2007), this study will be the first of its kind examining BNP support in this area. To demonstrate this point further, socio-economic data of the area will look for any patterns in social status and voting.

To demonstrate the development of the party, electoral data will be used to show how the party have risen to a position of prominence. Furthermore, focusing on particular wards of BNP support in Calderdale allows for a tracking of the development of the party in the area, in terms of the level of support, that the party have received. Furthermore, by producing data regarding the performances of the political parties in BNP wards over the past decade, this can also enable conclusions to be drawn regarding the effect that the BNP can have on the mainstream parties.

However, Calderdale is also an innovative case study in that the research will also attempt to answer the question as to why support for the party appeared to dip in the area following the 2007 local elections, after its constant increases in previous years. In an attempt to answer this, aspects of national issues will be examined, in terms of using opinion polls to determine what key issues at local elections were. Moreover, the role of the BNP councillors in the area will be examined, thus taking in both national and local issues to examine a decline in voter support across the region.

A number of semi-structured interviews with local mainstream leaders will provide an opportunity for the interviewees to give their own opinions on how the view local politics in Calderdale. The semi-structured nature allows flexibility for the councillors to express their

views without being tied down to a particular line of questioning. Additionally, since the rise of the BNP at the local level, there has been an absence of literature which examines the way in which the mainstream parties view the growth of the BNP. Indeed, it would appear that there has been reluctance on the part of politicians at any level to speak about the development of the far right. Therefore, this thesis is original in conducting qualitative research whereby the mainstream leaders in Calderdale talk about the rise and the BNP and the problems faced in their campaigning.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Prior to developing the intended research on the BNP, a review of the literature was carried out focusing on a number of aspects relevant to the literature on the far right. Firstly, the review examined issues of terminology within the field on the far right, notably with regard to defining the far right. Secondly, the literature addresses what constitutes a far right party whilst understanding any potential issues and indeed difficulties academics have faced in labelling far right parties as such. Additionally, the review also focuses on explanations for the local and national electoral success achieved by far right parties in Western Europe, particularly in terms of policy areas that have proved popular with voters.

This review also studies comparative analyses by authors such as Kitschelt (1995), Hainsworth (2000) and Ignazi (2003) in order to discuss the reasons why the British far right have not proved to be as successful as their Western European counterparts, thus examining issues of leadership and organisation and the role of mainstream parties. Subsequently, the broader theme of nationalism and identity is also examined in order to help understand better key issues surrounding the far right in Britain in terms of a political culture in the country. Consequently, existing academic work is reviewed in order to understand the potential support in Britain for a far right party through both policy and political issues and issues of nationalism and identity.

Finally, literature on the French far right party the Front National is reviewed, as a consequence of the links that have been made between the BNP and the FN (Goodwin, 2007). Academic literature has recently noted that the BNP has attempted to model themselves on the FN in a bid to modernise the party and seemingly appear more moderate, subsequently, this notion is examined alongside literature regarding the success of the Front National, in order to examine whether the BNP have made changes to their party based on the example of the FN (Goodwin, 2007).

2.2 Defining the far right

Defining the far right has always been a source of debate; indeed academic literature can still carry a number of terms for the far right, including extreme right and radical right (Kitschelt, 1995; Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2000; Roxburgh, 2002; Carter, 2005). Indeed, such a definition can prove to be problematic, as Ignazi noted that "no specific organizational feature characterizes the far right parties" (2003:30).

The literature would suggest however, that there has perhaps been an evolution or modernisation of the far right parties in Western Europe, indeed the policies of the far right are now said to have some overlap with mainstream parties (Linz 1980; (Ignazi, 2000, Carter, 2005). Roberts (1994:180) argues that "due to links with extreme and mainstream right, it is impossible to draw a boundary line between the

main and extremist parties". Far right parties have been seen to take a more centrist position and modify their ideological stance in order to appeal to a wider range of voters (De Lange, 2007). Such is the change in stance taken and the changes in political climate, the far right family have been described as a post-industrial extreme right, due to the secularization of society in Western Europe, and a loosening of traditional loyalties from voters (Ignazi 2003). Whereas in the 1980s, far right groups were profiled as having demographic characteristics amongst the support which are predominately male, working class and marginal self employed (Husbands 1983), Ignazi (2003) argues that such social classes between working class and bourgeoisie are no longer as "radically defined" and therefore have led to different types of far right party, namely the traditional and post-industrial party. Carter (2005) rejects Ignazi's party typology, arguing that the post-industrial far right does not account for xenophobia, a leading principle for the far right family.

The evolution of the far right has seen parties move to create a disassociation from any concept of fascism (Ignazi, 2000; Roxburgh, 2002; Carter, 2005; Mudde 2007). Furthermore, calling these parties radicalist has been described as being too extreme for the parties as it suggests links to violent means such as terrorism (Ignazi, 2003). However, any traces of fascism to the current far right family have been associated more with the BNP, as opposed to other West European far right parties (Ignazi, 2000; Copsey, 2004; Carter, 2005).

Carter argues that the BNP could fall into the category of Neo-Nazi parties, that being radically xenophobic, adhering to classical racism, and rejecting the outright existing democratic system (2005:51). This is in comparison to other parties such as the FN, and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO), who fall into a category of being Authoritarian-xenophobic parties, who are culturist, demanding reform of the democratic system, less democracy and more state control. It would appear therefore, that the BNP are seen as being more extreme in comparison with other far right parties in Western Europe, as a consequence of their xenophobic and racist stances still prevalent in the party (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005).

Consequently, it appears that there are key issues which emerge when defining a party as far right. Such issues include nationalism, xenophobia, racism, some element of anti-democracy and a wish for a strong state (Mudde, 1995; Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005). Carter (2005) argues therefore that right-wing extremism is defined by what are termed two "anti-constitutional and anti-democratic elements", namely a rejection of the fundamental value procedures and institutions of democratic constitutional state and a rejection of the principle of fundamental human equality. Furthermore it must still be noted that despite the possible softening of beliefs, the far right still have values which are vastly different from the mainstream parties (Ignazi, 2003). Certainly it appears that far right parties can differ in their values and subsequently, issues of neo-

Nazism and fascism can be seen purely as a sub-value of the far right phenomenon (Ignazi, 2003).

2.3 Explanations of far right success

Far right success has been accounted as a result of the individual fortunes of the party, as opposed to a particular phenomenon occurring across Europe, indeed the far right parties have been said to have been "masters of their own success" (Carter, 2005:13). However, the rise of far right parties, notably at the turn of the 21st Century suggest that they took advantage of particular circumstances in their own respective countries which led to their successes.

Kitschelt (1995) examines the evolution of the far right parties in Europe, noting that;

"The success is contingent upon the strategic choices of the moderate conservative parties as well as the ability of the extreme-right leaders to find the electoral "winning formula" to assemble a significant voter constituency. The conditions for the rise of extreme-rightist parties become favourable if moderately left and right parties converge towards the median voter" (1995:vii).

Kitschelt's theoretical framework argues that economics also plays an important role in the far right's appeal to new voters. To win the support of groups such as small businessmen, the far right parties

look to tone down their racism in order for more success, therefore blue collar workers, petit bourgeois and lower salaried employees are more likely to vote for the extreme right.

Moreover, Kitschelt looks to concentrate on dispelling what he sees as rather stereotyped hypotheses regarding the far right in Europe. These hypotheses include the notion that the far right in Europe is a single-issue racist movement against the levels of immigration. Hence, Kitschelt argues that whilst the issue of immigration may be a catalyst for extremist right parties, "the issue must be embedded in a broader right-authoritarian agenda" in order to be successful in the long term (Kitschelt, 1995:3). Additionally, Kitschelt's theoretical framework examines the comparisons between the contemporary extreme right and the 'old' European right, arguing that whilst the new and old extreme right may share values such as the importance of citizenship and the maintaining of law and order, there are few similarities between the two. Indeed, "where contemporary parties build on the legacy of the interwar extreme right, they typically fail to attract significant electorates" (1995:3). Notably Kitschelt states that the contemporary extreme right is strong in countries where fascism remained weak in the interwar period, although this claim is debatable in Germany and Italy, two countries where such fascism was strong in the interwar period, the far right are enjoying an upsurge in support, notably with the success of the Lega Nord in Italy. Kitschelt argues that the contemporary extreme right accept parliamentary democracy,

advocate the free market, finding that it is necessary to combine free market messages with xenophobic messages contrasting with the authoritarian anti-capitalist messages of the European fascist right of the interwar period. He highlights the work of Mayer (1989:249) who stated that "there is no link at a municipal level between the number of immigrants and Front National voters." Thus, according to Kitschelt (1995) it is the endorsement of free-market capitalism combining with state authority which was the appeal of the FN.

However this explanation has seemingly attracted some criticism in other academic works, particularly with regard to the far right's rise in popularity (Eatwell, 2000; Copsey, 2004; Eatwell, 2008). Copsey (2004) argues that if Kitschelt's framework is correct, then support for the Front National should have fallen away in the 1990s when Le Pen moved away from economic neo-liberalism and instead focused on the issues of unity and identity. Copsey (2004:162) adds that "post materialist values are considered to be stronger in Germany and the Netherlands than in France, yet in Germany and the Netherlands the performance of extreme-right parties has been less robust."

Furthermore, Eatwell (2000) counters the arguments put forward by Kitschelt (1995) by arguing that it is politics that dictates the way in which people vote rather than socio-economic factors. As evidence for this, the BNP's local election victory in Millwall, no free-market appeal was used in order to attract voters; instead the main focus of

the campaign was immigration. Therefore, Eatwell (2000) argues that there firstly has to be a loss in faith of the major political parties for voters to look at alternative parties. Secondly the electorate need to believe that a vote for the extreme right will have an effect on the political mainstream.

2.4 The British far right in comparative perspective

Far right literature featuring the British far right has seemingly focused on the various groups in a comparative perspective (Hainsworth, 2000; Mudde, 2000; Roxburgh, 2002; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005; Mudde 2007; Eatwell 2008). Consequently, the prevailing aspect of British coverage focuses on why the British far right have performed less successfully than their European counterparts.

Ignazi (2003) highlights how the Conservatives under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher prevented the far right from making gains in Britain through tough immigration policies, observing that this was the principle reason why John Tyndall's attempt to persuade Conservative voters to vote for the BNP failed. Eatwell (2000) also focuses on the role of the mainstream parties in Britain to understand why the far right have not made an impact, by assessing the organization and policy areas of the Labour and Conservative parties, arguing that the major parties are well organized at both a local and a national level. This is in contrast to the extreme right groups in Britain, whose poor organization and factionalism have made them unable to mount strong

campaigns at elections "unless they can bus activists in for single by-elections" (Eatwell; 2000:180).

However, whilst the role of the mainstream parties in Britain have been seen to have prevented a strong far right showing at elections, the literature also suggests that the failure of the far right in Britain is as much the fault of the numerous movements themselves. Ignazi (2003) argues that the BNP links with Nazism has been a major factor in their inability to attract the centre right voters in Britain. Ignazi cites the work of Roger Griffin (2000) who stated that the British far right's links to Nazism was the end game for the parties in attracting new voters. Moreover, Roxburgh (2002) notes that whilst leader Nick Griffin attempts to present the BNP in a moderate light, his own history suggests strong links with the extreme elements of the NF. Roxburgh uses newspaper articles to support his claims, highlighting an article by Jackie Ashley in *The Guardian* (2002:224) which states;

"The NF was more unashamedly neo-Nazi, with its shaven heads and bovver boots. Its strategy, like the Hitler followers of the bierkeller era, was pubs and streets first, votes later. The BNP is a little cleverer. It tries to present a respectable, scrubbed face. It talks, as does the French national front, about crime and fear and the kids' future" (*Guardian*, 1 May 2002).

Indeed, Roxburgh highlights the issue of leadership of the far right parties in Europe, nothing that "the BNP also lacks what all the successful European far right parties have- a charismatic leader" (2002:243). Roxburgh also notes that Le Pen, Haider and Fortuyn were also men who had independently built up a personal wealth which therefore enabled them to secure links with the media, comparing this with Nick Griffin, who hasn't the wealth of other leaders and has therefore not been able to establish such a successful public relations campaign for the BNP.

Additionally, Eatwell (2000), like Roxburgh and Ignazi, notes that the leadership of John Tyndall and his links to Nazism provided a platform for opposition parties to highlights links between the BNP and Nazism, meaning that despite the NF being the major British post-war extreme right group, by the mid 90s "the NF was little more than a dwindling band of activists."(2000:172) Hence, the membership of the FN has never been more than 3000, with the majority of these "young working class toughs" (2000:173).

Furthermore, another concept drawing on why the British far right movements have failed to make electoral successes draws on the notion of a political culture in Britain preventing the far right form making an impact (Eatwell, 2000; Ignazi, 2003). Ignazi (2003) highlights the solidity of the traditional right in the UK, alongside the management of the economic crises. Allied to this a national pride and

a constitutional tradition has prevented a far right movement from gaining momentum. Eatwell studies the idea that the extreme right have not made any impact in Britain due to a 'civic culture' which exists. The notion of a civic culture has been put forward by Benewick (1969) and Almond and Verba (1963). A 'civic culture' implies that Britain is a country "whose democratic institutions are held in high esteem, possessing a unique blend of modernity and tradition" (Eatwell 2000:179). The sense of modernity and tradition implies that the British electorate would therefore reject radical groups such as the far right. However, this is tempered by the notion that a 'civic culture' in Britain leaves too many key questions unanswered with regard to nationalism and identity in Britain, and makes too many assumptions that successive governments have dealt well with the far right in Britain.

Finally, with regard to the electoral system in Britain, there is literature noting how the first past the post electoral system in Britain does not give smaller parties such as those on the far right a chance to gain any foothold into Parliament (Kitschelt, 1995; Ignazi. 2003; Carter, 2005). The consequence of such a system means that a protest vote for the far right would make less of an impact in the British system of voting than it does in a system of proportional representation. Furthermore, Fysh and Wolfreys (2003) note that the protests which took place in the lead up to the second round of French presidential elections demonstrated that the votes for Le Pen were not to support

him for president, but because he was viewed as the only viable alternative to the mainstream parties, which had been discredited by the time of the 2002 elections. Subsequently, there is doubt that the far right in Britain could benefit from such a similar protest vote due to the constraints on smaller parties in the British electoral system.

2.5 The far right potential in Britain

Whilst academic literature has seemingly sought to demonstrate why the far right in Britain have not been as successful as other Western European far right parties, there is however existing academic literature which can demonstrate that the far right do indeed have a potential to make an impact electorally in the UK (Eatwell, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Renton, 2003; Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005; John et al, 2006).

When examining how this situation has arisen whereby voters are now prepared to vote for the far right, the academic literature appears to suggest that one of the principal reasons for the potential increase of the far right vote in Britain is due to the actions of the mainstream parties. Whereas, Eatwell (2000) noted that local campaigning in tandem with the role played by leaders such as Thatcher, had previously given the Conservatives a strong sense of nationalism yet never in an overtly racist way, there is an acknowledgement that allegiance to mainstream parties is in decline, noting the weak leadership of the Conservatives by John Major and William Hague as

factors which could lead to an increase of support for the far right. Moreover splits in the Conservative Party, allied with a strong far right leadership could offer the BNP an opportunity to make an impact on British politics. To support these claims, an ICM poll from the *Daily Express* in 1995 is cited which said that nine per cent of respondents would vote for a Le Pen style FN and another 17 per cent said they would seriously consider doing so, leading Eatwell to argue that there is evidence supporting the notion that charismatic leaders appeal to the less politically interested groups. Additionally, Eatwell (2000) cites Nordlinger (1967:17) who argued that "there has been a major strand in working-class opinion which has sought strong leadership." This argument is supported in the work of Roxburgh (2002) who observed the FN conferences where Le Pen often captivated his audiences with his speeches playing on the insecurities of the French people.

Additionally, Copsey's (2004) examination of the responses of Labour and the Conservatives to both the BNP and issues such as asylum suggests that the Labour and Conservative parties need to establish a reconnection with dissatisfied voters. Indeed Copsey notes that the BNP have been able to profit from what he sees as the Conservatives and Labour moving to the centre on the issues such as asylum and immigration which led to the BNP being able to exploit disenchanted voters, an idea which points to the suggestion put forward by Kitschelt (1995) and Carter (2005) of far right parties gaining support when mainstream parties converge to the centre ground. Moreover there is

criticism of the Labour government who are regarded as having given the BNP legitimacy through means such as David Blunkett's comments regarding asylum seekers "swamping" British schools (BBC, 2002). Furthermore, Copsey (2004) argues that the Conservatives took up the issue of immigration and asylum following pressure from right-wing tabloids, and according to Copsey, at local level, "Tory election literature imitated that of the BNP" (2004:147). There further appears to be a lack of door-step contact with voters by the Labour and Conservative parties. At the 2001 general election, 14 per cent of voters were canvassed by the mainstream parties compared to 24 per cent in 1997, thus providing a potential for the BNP to connect with a dissatisfied electorate (Worcester and Mortimore, 2001:166).

Ignazi (2003) highlights the work of Husbands (1983) who stated that NF support was conductive where "rapid economic expansion has come to a halt or areas which are in the process of de-industrializing" (1983:83). Initial examination of the BNP support would suggest this to still be the case, with party support particularly strong in such areas, for example Burnley, Barking and Dagenham and Stoke-on-Trent, areas which have experienced de-industrialization.

Renton's (2004) study of the BNP's success from 1999-2003 looks at the local council seats that the BNP won in order to explain their growing appeal. Consequently, Renton noted that it is the middle-

class areas of Burnley where the BNP enjoyed support, thus supporting his claims that it is a fear of immigrants and asylum seekers moving in to these areas that prompt a vote for the BNP, in addition to supporting Kitschelt's (1995) claims earlier in this chapter regarding the petit bourgeoisie supporting the far right parties. This suggest an evolution in the British far right as it is no longer the traditional view of urban working class males supporting the far right, indeed the BNP are now in a position to attract a wider-ranging support.

2.6 The FN influence on the BNP

Finally, having established that there is potential for the far right to benefit from the actions of the mainstream parties, the review now looks at the influence which the Front National has had on the BNP. This influence is examined for a number of reasons, namely that the FN can be held up as a good example of demonstrating how a far right party can gain momentum once they are part of the political system (Marcus, 1995; Hainsworth, 2000; Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). Additionally, the meeting of Nick Griffin and Jean-Marie Le Pen in October 2004 in Cheshire suggested that the leaders were planning a potential alliance between the two parties, notably at a European level (BBC, 2004). Finally recent academic work has noted the influence that the Front National have had on the BNP with Griffin looking to emulate the Front National's "intensive campaigns" and "ideological changes" (Goodwin 2007:245). Indeed for Griffin, the development of

the Front National has been said to have provided a blueprint for the BNP (Goodwin: 2007:246-247).

Roxburgh (2002) notes the subtle changes made by Le Pen towards the end of the 1980s. This, he argues was due to the recruitment of centre right politicians such as Bruno Mégret, the establishment of satellite organisations and circles and the acknowledgement of successful Socialist policies. These actions led to the FN becoming the party most popular with the working class, with 30 per cent of workers and 25 per cent of the unemployed voting for the party. It is these actions taken by Le Pen which leads Roxburgh to talk of a 'left-wing Lepenism' in France (2002:85). Thus, these actions appear to support Kitschelt's (1995) theory that the contemporary extreme right cannot rely on just a xenophobic policy to attract new voters, instead there needs to be some economic policies to attract potential support from small businessmen and blue collar workers (Kitschelt, 1995).

Hainsworth (2000) discusses how the Front National haven't been original in their policies regarding immigration, but have rather taken issues which have been courted by the mainstream political parties, reworking them to give a 'national-populist' edge, that is bringing policies in line with the extreme right traditions of the past (2000:26). Hainsworth also cites the work of Perrineau (1997) who argues that the policies of the FN, particularly regarding immigration and national preference can gain between one fifth and one third of respondents to

opinion polls thus showing that they retain the xenophobic edge to the party, whilst also appearing to be considered as more mainstream.

Moreover, Fysh and Wolfreys (2003) was the first major work to be released following the success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the 2002 presidential elections. Fysh and Wolfreys (2003) point to Le Pen's success at the 2002 elections by highlighting the shortcomings in the mainstream parties in what they call 'the collapse of official politics.' As evidence of this, they note the crises which faced Chirac and his RPR party in the build up to the elections and also, the failings of Lionel Jospin and the Socialists, by highlighting the marked reduction in campaigning by the Socialists in the lead-up to the elections. Indeed they suggest that the assumption from the Socialists they would win through to the second round only led to more discontented voters (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003).

2.7 Conclusion

Previous academic literature placing the BNP in a comparative perspective with European far right parties has portrayed the party as a classically racist movement with links to neo-Nazism (Eatwell, 2000; Roxburgh, 2002; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005; Mudde 2007). Indeed, comparative approaches have argued that it is this extremist image which has made the BNP the exception to far right success in Western Europe (Eatwell, 2000; Roxburgh, 2002; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005; Mudde 2007). In contrast, parties such as the FPO in Austria and the

FN in France have managed to portray a more moderate image, through charismatic leadership, moderate policies and a professional organisation (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Luther, 2004; Carter, 2005). It is this moderate image and professional organisation evident in other West European far right parties that have been purposely used by Nick Griffin as a blueprint for the future development of the BNP (Goodwin, 2007).

The literature has also suggested an evolving far right electorate across Western Europe. Far right parties in the UK have traditionally gained support from working class areas which have experienced de-industrialisation and unemployment (Husbands, 1983, 2000; Sykes, 2005). Yet this chapter has established that that there has arguably been a loosening of class loyalties, with the boundaries between working class and middle class no longer so clearly defined (Ignazi, 2003). Such a loosening of class boundaries can be attributed to a growing secularization in society (Ignazi, 2003; De Lange, 2007).

Furthermore, it would appear there the far right have opportunities to appeal to a greater electorate as a consequence of the action of the mainstream parties. As Kitschelt (1995) and Carter (2005) have noted, if there is a move by mainstream parties towards the centre, this opens up opportunities for far right parties to gain support from those voters on both sides of the political spectrum. Previous literature relating to the BNP argues that this has been seen in the UK, due to

the convergence of the Conservative and Labour parties towards the centre on issues such as immigration and asylum (Copsey, 2004). Subsequently, this could provide the BNP with an opportunity to win support from voters who are disenchanted at such a convergence from the mainstream.

The literature review in this chapter also demonstrates that the actions of a far right party, as opposed to their policies, can provide a base for electoral success in Britain. The literature has noted how previous BNP successes in local elections have come about due to effective community-based politics (Eatwell, 2000; Copsey, 2004; Renton, 2004). Community politics has played an important role in recent far right successes, suggesting that voter engagement and identity is as strong and necessary as ever in British politics (Eatwell, 2000; Copsey, 2004). As Renton (2004) noted, the BNP can look to target support from middle class supporters through such means. By gaining a common identity with middle class voters, the BNP have the opportunity to develop their support base.

This chapter establishes an argument that a key factor to far right success is that of strong and authoritative leadership. This form of leadership is important to far right success. Indeed, the evidence presented in this chapter relating to strong leadership can be linked the idea of the deferential voter, in that working class opinion has traditionally sought strong leadership (Nordlinger, 1967). Moreover

strong leadership is arguably needed due to the modern structure of the far right. The review noted that far right parties will have satellite circles and various groups and movement under the banner of the party, as is particularly the case in France (Hainsworth, 2000; Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003; Goodwin, 2007). For these satellite groups to operate effectively and with united aims, strong leadership is a key to the success. In Britain, the idea of strong leadership is particularly relevant with regard to the authority of the mainstream party leaders. Strong leadership by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s was deemed to be a contributory factor in the failure of the far right to increase their vote share (Eatwell, 2000; Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005). Subsequent leadership of the Conservative Party has since been accused of not being as strong (Eatwell, 2000; Copsey, 2004; Mudde, 2007). If the leadership of the mainstream parties is perceived to be weak, then authoritative leadership from a far right leader may attract support from voters who are disillusioned with the mainstream parties.

Aligned to authoritative leadership is the idea of a charismatic leader. This chapter has shown that charismatic far right leadership is important in order for the far right to appeal to sections of the electorate who may otherwise be disinterested in politics. Furthermore, charismatic leadership is not only a means of establishing a link with the electorate, but establishing links with the media. The literature suggests that the ability to influence the media can be of great benefit to far right parties, particularly with regard to displaying a new image of the party (Griffin, 2000; Roxburgh, 2002).

As the literature review demonstrated, Griffin had not been able to establish the links with the media in the UK, as Haider, Le Pen and Fortuyn had managed to do in their respective countries (Roxburgh, 2000; Carter, 2005; Mudde, 2007).

Whilst xenophobia remains a key element to the far right's ideology, there have been clear attempts by far right parties in Europe to appeal to a wider electorate (Hainworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005; De Lange, 2005). As Kitschelt (1995) argued, policy issues on areas such as free-market capitalism are a factor to electoral success in Western Europe. Furthermore, academics have noted policy changes from Le Pen which were deemed to be more in keeping with the Socialists, in order to win the support of blue-collar workers (Kitschelt, 1995; Perrineau, 1997). This suggests that far right parties cannot merely rely on xenophobic policies; in order to win new support, parties must demonstrate that they can offer substantial policy issues in other areas. Moreover, there has seemingly been a shift from far right parties in terms of relation to the state. Successful far right parties in Western Europe no longer reject the authority of the state, but instead will look for some form of reform of the existing democratic system (Carter, 2005). Far right parties will now look to distance themselves from accusations of extremism. It is this change in ideology that leads academics to reject labelling the modern far right parties as radical (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005).

The review of the literature has highlighted poor organisation within the far right parties in the UK as one of the major obstacles to their development. The literature has pointed towards the attempts of Nick Griffin to bring his party into line with other far right parties in Western Europe, in terms of ideological changes and the changes in the structure of the party (Copsey, 2004; Goodwin, 2007). Professional organisation has been seen to be vital in countries such as Austria, Denmark and France in transforming the far right image into an electable party, both through the way the party is run and who stands for the party. In addition to portraying an electable image, a more professional organisation allows for the far right to exploit any political opportunities afforded to them. The success of the FN in the 2002 Presidential Elections was built upon the ability of the party to organise and carry out intensive and effective electioneering, following the failure of the Socialists to do the same (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). It is clear from the comparative literature that historically, far right movements in the UK have struggled with regard to portraying a professional image, not only due to links with Nazism but the failings of the party to mount effective campaigns at elections (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005; Mudde, 2007).

The literature has also demonstrated that it is not simply the positioning of the BNP that prevents electoral success; seemingly, there are also what could be termed classically 'British' factors behind the electoral failure of the BNP, such as the notion of a 'civic culture'

and indeed the British electoral system at the national level (Eatwell, 2000; 2008; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005; Mudde 2008). Yet again, it would be unwise to accept these as totally prohibitive barriers to far right success which could not be overcome by the BNP. However, it appears that one of the key issues to come out of the review of the literature is whether the BNP have the means and ability within the party to exploit these opportunities presented to them and to overcome the barriers to success.

Therefore, to benefit from the loosening of class boundaries and voter ties, Griffin and the BNP must be seen as more charismatic and indeed more moderate and professional, moving away from links with Nazism to a more populist appeal amongst the voters. If the party were to develop such a populist image, particularly amongst a disillusioned electorate and media, then the successes enjoyed by their West European far right neighbours could be enjoyed in the UK.

Chapter 3: The history of the far right in Britain

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two of this thesis argued how academic studies on the British far right have often focused on the failure of the various movements to gain any success at the national or local level (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Copsey, 2004; Carter, 2005). Indeed, Table 3.1 shows how, in British general elections, the vote share for a far right party is yet to pass 2 per cent. The biggest growth of the far right occurred in the 1970s, with the National Front fielding an increasing number of candidates throughout the country. This culminated in the 1979 general election when the NF put forward 303 candidates for election. However, despite this record number of candidates standing for election, the party only polled a total of 191,719 votes, which resulted in all candidates losing their deposits. In 2010, the BNP broke through the one per cent barrier for a far right party, gaining 1.9 per cent of the vote.

Table 3.1 The far right electoral performance in general elections

(1959-2005)

Year	Party	Candidates	Total Votes	Vote Share (%)	Average Votes per candidate
1959	UM	1	2,821	0.00	2,821
1964	LEL	3	1,046	0.00	349
1966	UM	4	4,075	0.00	1019
1970	NF	10	11,449	0.1	1145
1974	NF	54	76,885	0.1	1424
1974	NF	90	113,843	0.4	1265
1979	NF	303	191,719	0.6	633
1983	NF	60	27,065	0.1	452
	BNP	53	14,621	0.0	276
1987	BNP	2	553	0.0	277
1992	NF	14	4,816	0.1	344
	BNP	13	7,631	0.1	587
1997	NF	14	2,716	0.1	194
	BNP	13	35,832	0.1	640
2001	BNP	33	47,129	0.2	1428
	NF	5	2,484	0.0	497
2005	BNP	119	192,746	0.7	1620
	NF	13	8029	0.0	618
2010	BNP	338	563,743	1.9	1668
	NF	17	10,784	0.0	634

Notes: UM = Union Movement LEL= League of Empire Loyalists
BNP= British National Party NF = National Front
Sources: Parliament UK 2009; BBC 2010

This chapter studies the history of the far right in Britain, to understand how it has evolved, and to establish initial observations about the reasoning behind the far right's apparent failure to make a breakthrough at the national level in Britain. Hence, the chapter takes a chronological viewpoint of the far right in Britain, firstly beginning with Oswald Mosley in the 1930s, through to post-war groups in the 1950s and 1960s. The chapter also examines the limited successes for the National Front in the 1970s and the subsequent failure of this party.

Moreover, the history of the BNP is covered, from the first general election fought by John Tyndall in 1983, through to the controversies surrounding the releasing of the BNP membership list, to track the progress made by what is, currently, the major far right movement in Britain. The chapter examines the background of Nick Griffin, establishing how his stance from hard-liner to a, seemingly, more 'moderate' leader has occurred, including a study of the controversies that have dogged his time leading the BNP. Aspects of modernisation and professionalism are also studied with a view to examining as to whether the BNP have made steps in advancing a programme of modernisation and professionalism, in a bid to attract a greater number of voters.

Finally, the chapter looks at the reaction to the BNP, from both the mainstream parties and anti-fascist groups; such an examination as

this is done in order to establish the role they have played with regard to the effect of the BNP at both the local and national level.

3.2 The far-right 1930-1939

The far right in Great Britain in the 1930s was largely centred on the actions of Oswald Mosley, a politician who had represented both sides of the House in Parliament. Mosley was a Conservative MP for Harrow between 1918 and 1922, before a disagreement over policy issues, with regard to Ireland subsequently led him to joining the Labour Party in 1924, thus representing the party as MP for Smethwick. Indeed, Mosley was seen as a rising star in the Labour Party, before a disagreement with Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald over his social plan for reconstruction, led to his departure from the party. Thus, following his departure from the Labour Party, Mosley set up the New Party, with support from other disillusioned Labour politicians. Despite optimism from Mosley and his colleagues, the New Party suffered from a very poor showing in elections, with no candidates returned. Consequently, the disappointing showing from the New Party led to the creation of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in October 1932 (Thurlow, 1998).

The BUF's primary focus was on the increasing unemployment at the time, and thus aimed to attract the support of the unemployed workers in industrial towns, yet the party failed to achieve this aim (Thurlow, 1998). Nevertheless, in spite of these initial setbacks, Mosley

received financial support from businessmen such as Lord Rothermere of the *Daily Mail.* The support of Lord Rothermere was particularly key to the BUF, as it afforded the party free publicity, consequently leading to an increase in membership figures (Thurlow, 1998). Additionally, Mosley was also keenly aware of the power of spectacle. This could be seen in the form of extravagant rallies and the production of films to form part of his campaigning strategy.

However, the financial support which funded such propaganda was to drain from the party following their links to violence, notably the violence carried out by the Blackshirts, a group originally created to act as Mosley's security at BUF meetings. Such a problem had always been an issue with Mosley's parties (Thurlow, 1998). Mosley's rallies were often interrupted by fighting amongst BUF supporters and left-wing supporters. Such violence was particularly severe at a BUF meeting at Olympia, when the Blackshirts clashed with anti-fascist protesters and the police (Thurlow, 1998). Subsequently, Lord Rothermere withdrew his support for the BUF, no longer supporting a movement which "was increasingly to believe in dictatorship, anti-Semitism and the corporate state" (Thurlow, 1998:72). Such a loss in support could not be underestimated; indeed Thurlow (1998:72) noted that "it was the loss of Lord Rothermere's support and the free publicity in the Daily Mail that contributed most to the decline of the BUF."

However, despite this withdrawal of support, Mosley and the BUF were to continue the policy of anti-Semitism and violence. This led to the break-up of the party; as such violent outbreaks only served to deter members from joining and, thus, prevented the party from becoming a force in British politics. The ineffectiveness of the BUF was highlighted at the 1935 general election, where the BUF did not field a candidate, leading to the suggestion that they had no resources to organise a national campaign (Thurlow, 1998:76). Instead the campaign of violence continued, notably at Cable Street in the East End of London, following an attempted march by Mosley through an area with a prominent Jewish community, leading to clashes with anti-fascist campaigners. Consequently, by the outbreak of World War Two, Mosley had been banned from any broadcasting by the BBC. Mosley and fellow BUF members were interned after the outbreak of the war under government Defence Regulations.

3.3 Post-war far right in Britain

The post-war period in British far right politics can be defined as a period which witnessed a number of short-lived groups. Their failure to mount a political challenge was the result of the increasing factions which were to dominate the British far right for the following 40 years. In the immediate post-war period, the first far right group to be launched was the Union Movement, a group which was run in a similar style to that of the BUF, in that old street politics were used by the group, and similar violence and harassment against anti-fascists and

Jews were committed (Eatwell, 1995). This group was run by supporters of Oswald Mosley, who was in exile waiting for what he believed was an economic crisis to occur which would return him into the forefront of politics (Thurlow, 1998). This appeared to demonstrate how the styles of far right movements in Britain were in contrast to similar movements at the time across Western Europe, notably in France in the 1950s, with the rise in popularity of Pierre Poujade (Davies, 1999). Poujade's UDCA party (Union pour la Dèfense des Commerçants et Artisans) was formed as a response to perceived corruption amongst politicians, and aimed to defend the right of workers against the state and played strongly on the themes of solidarity and patriotism. Yet there was also an undeniable sense of anti-Semitism in the rhetoric of Poujade (Davies, 1999). In 1956 the UDCA won 2.6 millions votes, leading to the election of fifty-seven members to the National Assembly. Amongst these members elected was future Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen.

In Britain, the 1950s were to witness a change in focus for far right groups, with the arrival of West Indian immigrants, with the far right groups seemingly moving away from the anti-Semitism which had dominated pre-war movements. In the period of the 1950s-1970s a number of far right groups were to form, thus demonstrating the fractious nature of the far right. One such group formed in the late 1950s, was the League of Empire Loyalists, which contested the 1964 general election. Led by A.K Chesterton, its focus centred on

nationalism and race and has been seen to be less extreme than other far right groups in post-war Britain. Indeed the group has been described as "Colonel Blimpish reactionary Conservatives rather than fascists" (Eatwell, 1992:177).

Furthermore, the British National Party was formed by Arnold Leese. The 'old' BNP. as opposed to its current form, had clear links to National Socialism in Germany, with Tyndall's admiration for National Socialism in clear evidence, including having uniforms for its members. This group, however, had no support and a very weak membership largely due to Tyndall's open support for Hitler (Thurlow, 1998; Copsey, 2004). The open mix of Nazi sympathisers and Conservative racists led to policy and, consequently, power struggles amongst key figures in the far right, including Colin Jordan and Martin Webster (Thurlow, 1998). In response to the BNP, Jordan formed the National Socialist Movement in 1962. Tyndall's extremism even led to a prison sentence after being found guilty of forming a paramilitary organisation under Section 2 of the Public Order Act. Subsequently, the Greater Britain Movement was founded, though membership again was seriously weak, leading Tyndall to abandon his policy of open neo-Nazism (Copsey, 2004).

As a consequence, it appeared that by the late 1960s, the far right in Britain was suffering from in-fighting and a lack of direction regarding policy and its place on the political spectrum in terms of how extreme it wished to be. However, in 1968, immigration was to come to the

forefront of British politics, following the "rivers of blood" speech in which Enoch Powell predicted rising levels of racial violence in Britain (Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005). The impact of Powell's comments at the time was such that it received sympathy within the wider Conservative support, however, whilst the NF enjoyed an increase in recruitment, they were not able to capitalise on Powell's speech, notably due to factionalism and a clash in the leadership between more moderate and hard-line members (Sykes, 2005).

Moreover, the National Front appeared to be making a move away the violence which had been a main tactic of previous far right groups. Instead, the NF realised that, following the support for Powell's rivers of blood speech, there was an opportunity to enjoy electoral success (Eatwell, 1992:177). Indeed, early election results for the NF appeared to look promising, notably when the party scored 16 per cent of the vote in the 1973 West Bromwich by-election, with the party also boasting a membership of 14,000. However, subsequent election results were to be disappointing, as a consequence of further divisions in the leadership. Despite promising showings in the 1976 local elections in areas such as Leicester, the NF recorded dismal results in the 1979 general elections (Eatwell, 1992).

The subsequent failure of the NF was attributed to a number of factors, including the inability of the party to rid itself of the links to fascism and anti-Semitism, alongside campaigns of repatriation and

immigration and the failure to attract a figure such as Enoch Powell (Eatwell, 1992:177). Hence, whilst Powell broke away with the Conservatives in 1974 over Britain's membership of the EU, the extreme nature of the NF meant he was not to join the party. Consequently, it has been argued that the lack of a seemingly more moderate and respectable figurehead, cost the party severely (Eatwell, 1992).

Subsequently, John Tyndall was to leave the NF and form the British National Party. This party were still quite openly anti-Semitic and leader orientated, similar to the NF. The NF were to again witness a change in policy and behaviour, resulting in their activism through the means of marches and links with football hooliganism, as more militant members took over the leadership (Sykes, 2005).

3.4 The BNP in the 1980s

The performance of the far right in the 1970s did, however, demonstrate that there was a potential support for the far right which tended to come from areas suffering from economic downturn with self employed workers. Additionally, these areas were seen to be on the periphery of areas where large numbers of ethnic minorities were living (Husbands, 1983:182). Therefore, the newly formed BNP were able to head into their first general election, confident of being able to attract support, which was reflected in the party fielding a record

number of candidates; 53, in addition to the 60 candidates fielded by the NF.

The 1983 general election was to be the first test for Tyndall's BNP, competing for the far right vote with the NF. These parties were locked in a battle to win the support of the far right voters. Whilst the NF remained strong in the capital, the BNP were beginning to win the support in the major cities in Britain. This was due to the party structure which the BNP was putting into place, where local organisations were being established to canvass for support, notably in areas which had experienced unemployment, particularly due to a decline in traditional industry. The 1983 general election also presented the BNP with a party political broadcast on prime time television, thus providing the best opportunity for the party to appeal to a great number of potential voters nationwide.

Furthermore, the actions of the mainstream parties also gave the far right grounds for optimism in the 1983 election. Labour's position at the 1983 general election was seemingly weak, giving rise to a possibility that the far right could be able to capitalise on those voters disillusioned with the party. Indeed, its position was further weakened when the party released their manifesto, described by Gerald Kaufman as the "longest suicide note in history" (BBC, 2005). The manifesto was deemed to have policies unpopular with the public, including nuclear disarmament and the abolition of the House of

Lords, particularly given the timing of the election, coming only a year after the Falklands War (Butler and Kavanagh, 1983; BBC, 2005).

The Conservatives also faced possible problems at the election, as rising unemployment during their first term in office threatened to allow the far right to establish themselves in communities where there was a clear dismay for the mainstream parties. The issue of immigration had also stayed high on the agenda. Since Powell's speech in 1974, the Conservatives had been linked with immigration issues, a situation further exacerbated by Margaret Thatcher who had also made speeches regarding the issue of immigration since becoming leader of the Tories, using provocative terms such as immigrants 'swamping' the country (Copsey, 2004:67). Thus, it appeared that, whilst the Conservatives were winning support over the immigration issue, they were also allowing the possibility of the far right being legitimised in their actions.

Yet, despite these initial grounds for optimism, the election result tells a clear story. The BNP managed to win just 0.58 per cent of the vote from its 54 candidates, the National Front faring little better with 1.04 per cent from its 60 candidates. There are arguably, a number of reasons for this performance. Firstly, looking at the party itself, the electioneering by the BNP was unorganised and poor. The party broadcast featuring Tyndall was uninspiring. The party manifesto was also still too extreme for many voters to vote for the BNP. The lack of

organisation and harmony in the far right, which had continually dogged the various parties, continued to do so. Consequently, the fall out from the 1983 general election was seen four years later, when the BNP fielded just two candidates by 1987, as the continuing factions amongst the far right occurred throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s (Parliament UK, 2009)

3.5 The BNP in the 1990s

Following a similarly disappointing showing at the 1992 general election, the BNP's biggest success in the 1990s came in the local election in Tower Hamlets in 1993, where candidate, Derek Beacon, enjoyed an unexpected success based on a 'Rights for Whites' campaign in the area (Smith, 2009).   The party were said to benefit from the actions of the ruling Liberal Democrat council, following a controversial policy brought in which "favoured white residents and pushed migrant workers further down the housing priority list" (Smith, 2009). Such a move arguably allowed the BNP to push forward their 'Rights for Whites' campaign with more justification (Copsey, 2004). Moreover, the methods of campaigning by the BNP were also the first signs of changing style of the party. The party attempted to portray a more respectable image in its bid to win the support of the local electorate by such measures as organising peaceful marches by local residents and emphasising local roots and the community (Smith, 2009).

However, this initial success in Tower Hamlets was not to be built upon, with the party losing the seat at the subsequent local election. The blame for this was attributed, once more, to the extremist links within the party, most notably with regard to Combat 18. Members of the BNP, notably young working class males, were attracted to Combat 18, with the group claiming to have recruited three quarters of London activists, thus reducing the BNP membership to as low as 700 (Copsey, 2004:67).

Indeed, much of the negativity surrounding the image of the BNP in the 1990s linked to the positioning between themselves and the Combat 18 group. The group, originally established as providing a means of security for the BNP, carried out violence on extreme levels and were linked with Nazi music and football hooliganism, including the rioting which took place during the Republic of Ireland versus England game in Dublin in 1995 (Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005). Combat 18's extremist behaviour was displayed in its anti-Semitic views, and a desire for a white revolution; indeed, such extreme views saw the group fall out with the BNP leadership, which led to leaders of the BNP becoming victims of physical attacks by members of Combat 18 (Sykes, 2005:130).

By the end of the 1990s, there were splits in the group which led to splinter groups. Blood and Honour and the National Socialist Movement were formed, appearing to suggest the end of Combat 18

activities. However, the riots which were to break out in Oldham in 2001 were claimed to be as a result of activity by the group in the town (Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005).

Significantly for the BNP, 1999 saw Nick Griffin elected as party chairman, replacing Tyndall. Since Griffin's appointment as BNP chairman in September 1999, the profile of the BNP has risen considerably, with the party making gains in local elections, firstly across northern England and, now, nationwide. Griffin has attempted to bring the BNP into line with the other far right parties in Western Europe, whereas previously they had been seen to be a more extreme and classically racist party (Carter 2005). In the past, the party had been seen displaying a deeply fascist ideology and "barely hidden allegiance to biological racism and Jewish conspiracy" under the leadership of John Tyndall (Copsey, 2004:98).

3.6 Nick Griffin

Whilst Griffin has been linked with the turnaround with regards to the change in image of the BNP, such a moderate and professional image have not, hitherto, been associated with the party chairman. Indeed, Griffin has been dogged by controversies and claims of extremism throughout his political career.

Griffin attended Downing College, Cambridge, where he studied history and law, graduating with a second class degree alongside his achievements as a boxing blue *(Times, 2009)*. However, in the early

stages of his political career, Griffin was seen somewhat as a hardliner and a more extreme member of the NF and BNP, with his early writings calling not so much for populism as a means of winning support, but rather a focus on other issues such as a call for a more direct involvement in Holocaust denial (Copsey, 2004)

Griffin left the BNP to form the International Third Position, which was to be a defence of nations, races and cultures, seeing it threatened by "internationalism and enforced multiculturalism and multiracialism", vowing also to protect England and Englishness (Sykes, 2005:27). However the ITP has been accused of merely being a "racist agenda aimed at Jews, blacks and immigrants" (*Times*, 2009). Furthermore Griffin courted controversy by going on a fund raising trip to Libya, and arranging a meeting with Colonel Gadaffi (*Times*, 2009)

Griffin was to return to the BNP in 1995, yet his anti-Semitic attacks appeared to continue unabated. Griffin was criticised for his numerous Holocaust denials, alongside the publication of an article entitled 'Who are the mind-benders?' where he attacked what he called the "undemocratic and dangerous concentration of Jewish influence in the British mass media" (Copsey 2004:70). Such was the nature of Griffin's hard-line views, that in May 1998 he was convicted for incitement to racial hatred and received a nine month sentence suspended for two years (Copsey, 2004).

Subsequently, Griffin appeared to change his stance on extremism, in an attempt to display a more moderate image, a move which was made for a number of possible reasons related to his own personal circumstances and the position of the far right itself. Firstly, it has been argued that Griffin had to change from his image as a hardliner to that of a more moderate member of the BNP, as a consequence of his conviction for incitement to racial hatred (Copsey, 2004). Therefore, it became imperative, that if he was to further his political career in the BNP, he would have to present a more moderate image to avoid any further charges being made against him, otherwise risking a prison sentence, and, thus, ending any aspirations of being a leader of a far right party which could establish themselves at the polls.

Secondly, Griffin, was liaising with less extreme BNP activists such as Steve and Sharron Edwards and Eddy Butler, who were advising a change of policy to a more community-based campaigning, as the most viable way to win the support of new members. Indeed Griffin hoped to be "a beacon of hope to disillusioned mainstream voters" and thus realised that the only way to do this would be through a more professional and moderate BNP (Copsey, 2004:101).

Thirdly, events in Western Europe, particularly in France, demonstrated to Griffin that a moderate professional far right party was the most successful means of achieving electoral success for the

far right. The rise of the Front National through the 1980s and 1990s had already begun to have an impact on Griffin. Jean Marie Le Pen had similarly attempted to moderate his extreme image to portray himself as an anti-sleaze candidate. This resulted in his success in the first round of voting at the Presidential election as many voters saw him as the only viable alternative to the mainstream (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). Indeed, such was the impact of Le Pen on Griffin, that the two leaders met up in northern England in 2004 for a far right summit, amid controversy and protests by anti-fascist groups (BBC, 2004a).

Hence, the influence of the Front National began to be witnessed in many of the BNP activities, in terms of policy issues and other events, notably in the establishing of an annual Red White and Blue festival, an event for BNP members and their families, similar in style to an event held by their French counterparts.

Subsequently, Griffin's leadership challenge to John Tyndall can be seen as a battle between two styles of far right leadership, the bombastic style of Tyndall compared to Griffin's new attempts of leadership based on populism and moderation. As Griffin was to prove successful in his attempts to become party chairman in September, BNP member John Bean noted that John Tyndall was the BNP's "greatest asset and its greatest drawback. His persistence, rock-like reliability and leadership had kept the movement going, but

with almost imperceptible growth since its 1982 foundation" (Copsey, 2004:74).

Whilst Griffin set about his plans for a more professional and moderate BNP, the beginning of his reign had seen the BNP perform very badly in the 1999 European elections, with links to extremism making press headlines, notably a *Mirror* headline linking London nail bomber David Copeland to the BNP (Copsey, 2004). Hence, Griffin set about attempting to change the extremist image of BNP candidates by bringing in more professional candidates who did not have any such extreme backgrounds, namely Michael Newland, who was BNP candidate for the London mayoral elections in 2000 (Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005). However, the schism which appeared to have dogged previous far right movements in Britain seemed to be about to end the leadership of Griffin, when leading activists such as Newland and Sharron and Steve Edwards became unhappy with Griffin's leadership, viewing Griffin's leadership style as that of being too similar to Tyndall. Subsequent poor results in May 2000 led to further criticisms of Griffin's ability to gain support amongst party activists (Copsey, 2004). Consequently, Newlands and Edwards did not mount a leadership challenge, but instead, formed the Freedom Party, thus leading to further schism in the far right. However, Griffin was said to benefit from keeping hardliner support in the BNP, because many activists regarded the Freedom Party as not being hard-line enough in their policies (Copsey, 2004).

Indeed, as the party began to enjoy local election success, they were soon to be embroiled in another controversy which saw the party on the front pages of the national newspapers for further negative reasons. The party was exposed in a BBC *Panorama* documentary, which led to Griffin, Tyndall and activist Mark Collett facing race-hate charges. In the BBC programme, reporter, Jason Gwynne, went undercover with the BNP for six months in which a number of party members were exposed proclaiming extremist views and confessing to race hate crimes (*Times*, 2004). Griffin himself was filmed expressing anti-Islamic sentiments at a series of BNP meeting in Yorkshire, stating at one such meeting; "You've got to stand up and do something for the British National Party because otherwise they, (Muslims), will do for someone in your family. That is the truth", whilst also referring to Islam as a "wicked, vicious faith" (BBC, 2004b).

Following the airing of this programme, Griffin, along with John Tyndall and the head of the Youth-wing BNP Mark Collett, were charged on a number of race hate charges, of which they were acquitted following two trials at Leeds Crown Court, with Judge Norman Jones QC declaring that;

"We live in a democratic society which jealously protects the rights of its citizens to freedom of expression, to free speech. That does not mean it is limited to speaking only the acceptable, popular or politically

correct things. It extends to the unpopular, to those which many people may find unacceptable, unpalatable and sensitive." (Naughton, 2007)

Thus, Griffin left court proudly declaring that; "Something's just happened to show Tony Blair and the government toadies in the BBC that they can take our taxes, but they cannot take our hearts, they cannot take our tongues and they cannot take our freedom," (Naughton, 2007). Hence, Griffin had successfully held off challenges and controversies to his leadership and began setting into place his plans for a moderate and professional BNP.

3.7 The 2001 riots and local election successes

However, it can be argued that far right parties benefit from mobilising support following a particular event or incident (Carter, 2005). This is the case for the BNP, with the riots which took place in the summer of 2001 in a number of northern towns and cities providing the catalyst for the party's upturn in fortunes. Trouble flared firstly in the Lancashire town of Oldham, as a consequence of simmering tension between local Asian and white youths. The tension between the two groups had been caused due to a number of short-term and long-term factors. The long-term factors had seen Oldham become highly segregated, with predominantly Asian areas in Glodwick and Westwood being viewed as no go areas for white residents of Oldham. Similarly, the white areas of Oldham were deemed as no go areas to

Asian residents due to concerns regarding violence. Consequently, the Ritchie Report, commissioned to investigate the reasons behind the riots in Oldham, noted "there are few opportunities for young people across the communal boundaries to mix within Oldham. Except where people have significant contact in the workplace this is the case for adults too." (Ritchie, 2001:9). Moreover, rumours and counter rumours abounded that certain groups were receiving more money from the councils, with one such rumour that the Council were providing money for Mosques to be built in the Glodwick area (Ritchie, 2001). Subsequently, such claims and counter claims were adding to the effect on relations already strained by an apparent segregation of ethnic groups in the Oldham, and such relations were to be damaged even further by series of events in early 2001.

Firstly, the NF proposed a planned march through the town at the end of March, though this plan was never submitted. Two months later, a group of fifty NF supporters arrived in Oldham with the intention to march through the town, however, they were prevented by police from marching into Oldham and were escorted back to the M6 (Ritchie, 2001). The following week, a number of NF supporters delivered leaflets around the Holts and Fitton Hills estates in Oldham, leading to an arrest and another escort out of Oldham. This tension was compounded following trouble which broke out after a football match in the town between Oldham Athletic and Stoke City, in which a number

of racist incidents occurred between local Bangladeshi youths and Stoke City supporters (Ritchie, 2001).

Moreover, there was criticism levelled at both the local newspaper, the *Oldham Chronicle*, and at The Chief Superintendent of Oldham Police, Eric Hewitt, for their role in causing tension between ethnic groups (Copsey, 2004). Hewitt raised his concerns over the rising levels of attacks on white men by gangs of Asians, an issue which was to be taken up by the *Chronicle*, thus acting as a catalyst to the already existing tension in the town. Indeed, the effect of such journalism led to the claim that "it is hard not to overdo the significance of the Chronicle's reporting. It spread the mentality of white victimhood and redefined racism as 'anti-white racism'" (Copsey, 2004:128).

Subsequently, at the 2001 general election, Griffin stood as a candidate in the Oldham West constituency, polling 5,091 votes, giving him an impressive 16.4 per cent of the vote. Such was the role of the BNP in creating the ethnic tension in Oldham, that the Richie report concluded that;

"It is clear that the British National Party, and other racist organisations such as the National Front and Combat 18, have exploited these divisions and, by countless misrepresentations and the extensive use of the term 'Muslim' in a derogatory sense as code for Asian, have exacerbated problems, whilst generally keeping just within the law.

The BNP have exacerbated problems and, undoubtedly, by distribution of crude leaflets and other activity, done much to stir up tensions" (Ritchie, 2001:10).

More northern towns were to witness riots across the summer of 2001, notably in Burnley and Bradford. Similarities in the long term causes of the riots in Burnley and Oldham were apparent, both being former industrial towns affected by the collapse of the local industries. Allied to this was an apparent segregation in the towns amongst ethnic groups on which the BNP attempted to capitalise (Copsey, 2004). These electoral successes were to extend throughout other areas of Yorkshire, such as Calderdale and into the rest of the country, with a notable success for the party coming in the 2006 local elections, when twelve seats were won in Barking and Dagenham, propelling the party into the official opposition in the Council (BBC, 2006).

The professional approach adopted by Griffin was reflected in electioneering carried out by the party at local elections, with specific campaign issues and strategies being adapted to meet the needs of the particular area Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005). This was certainly seen to be the case in Millwall, where the door to door campaigning by the party in the district did much to dispel the previous image of extremism in the BNP (Sykes, 2005). Indeed, more examples of area specific campaigning were in evidence during the 2003 local elections. In Stoke-on-Trent, BNP campaigners focused on the issue of asylum seekers, whilst in Calderdale, the campaigners focused on local

issues, complete with different leaflets for different areas of the Mixenden ward (Copsey, 2004). Furthermore, in Heckmondwike in West Yorkshire, it appeared that the middle class areas of the town were being targeted by the BNP, with a focus on law and order, as opposed to the issues of immigration or asylum seekers (Sykes, 2005). The targeting of middle class areas was not unique to West Yorkshire, with more middle class areas of Burnley in Lancashire also canvassed by the party. Another such area canvassed by the BNP was Broxbourne in Hertfordshire, traditionally a Conservative area, with few ethnic minorities or social problems on which the BNP could capitalise.

Hence, it also appeared that the BNP were now selecting wards where they believed they could establish themselves in the community, such wards were often areas where working class districts have been abandoned by the mainstream parties (Copsey, 2004, 137). The BNP enjoyed its first successes in northern towns and cities which had experienced a downturn in industry such as Burnley, Oldham and Bradford. However, the party had now grown to an extent that they were able to target both major cities such as London, Birmingham and Manchester, alongside smaller towns nationwide, rather than focusing on one or two major areas. Moreover, the party was also beginning to target the rural vote, moving away from traditional far right areas of support in urban areas (Goodwin, 2008).

However, extremist viewpoints were still prevalent within the party, indeed following the terrorists attacks on September 11th, the BNP launched what was described by EU monitors as a "highly explicit Islamophobic campaign" (Roxburgh, 2002:234) demonstrating that, whilst there may be an appearance of modernisation and professionalism, there was still a racist core to the party's campaigning in many areas.

3.8 The BNP membership and voters

In November 2008, a list containing the names of the BNP membership was leaked to the press and was released onto the internet. The list caused controversy in the British press as it revealed that included in the members of the BNP, were doctors, vicars, a police officer and a national radio DJ. The leaking of the list provoked anger amongst many of the BNP members, who became concerned that the publication could lead to members being subject to attacks (BBC, 2008a). Following this leaking, two former members of the BNP were arrested in connection with providing the leak (BBC, 2008a).

However, another aspect of the publication of the BNP membership is that it was arguably not necessarily bad publicity for the party. Showing that many of the members have respectable professions help to promote the party as less extreme, moving the party away from the image of extremism which had prevented any breakthrough, therefore

potentially encouraging more voters to join up if they perceived this to be the case.

An analysis of the BNP membership by the *Times* (November, 2008) allows us to draw some conclusions about the party support. The BNP is predominantly an English party, with seemingly little support in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Where there are pockets of members in Scotland and Wales, these tend to be in cities such as Glasgow and Swansea. The BNP is particularly strong in the West and East Midlands, as well as in areas where the party first made a breakthrough at the local level, namely in areas of Lancashire and West Yorkshire (*Times*, 2008). Unsurprisingly, given their local election successes in Barking and Dagenham, membership is also higher in that area.

3.9 Media Outlets for the BNP

Campaigning strategies from the party have been professionalised to an extent and the same can be said for its media outlets. Since his election as party chairman in 1999, Griffin has presided to improve the media communications for the party, establishing Media Monitoring Unit with Griffin's aim to prevent the media from using terms such as fascist and Nazi when reporting the Party (Copsey, 2004:107). Furthermore, the influence of the FN and Le Pen was clear in Griffin's rebranding of the BNP's magazine and other literature, with the

changing of the *Spearhead* newspaper to *Freedom*, seemingly in a bid to make the party appear less extreme (Copsey, 2004).

Moreover, the BNP has attempted to present a more moderate image through their other media outlets, drawing on language more associated with aspects of multiculturalism (Atton, 2006). One such area where this has been in evidence is through the BNP website, to such an extent that its website was found to be the most visited political website amongst internet users in September 2007, with 59 per cent of these visitors coming from the more affluent social groups (Hope, 2007). Indeed, this website is as professionally run as the mainstream parties, with facilities online such as BNP-TV, which provides reports from journalists for visitors to watch, and other modern internet techniques such as online shopping and various audio and video links providing stories about the party and its activists (Atton, 2006; John et al, 2006). In its website, the BNP portray themselves as a movement who are trying to protect a white culture which they claim to be under threat from other cultures in Britain (Atton, 2006). Furthermore, the website also provides what it calls 'Meet the Real BNP' where it has profiles of party members describing why they joined the BNP, demonstrating the continuation of the notion throughout the website that the white person is the 'victim' from ethnic minorities (Atton, 2006). The BNP website does not allow non-members to post comments; in fact, the party line appears to be quite strongly enforced. Atton (2006) attributes this to the possible

unrest amongst BNP activists with the leadership of Griffin, this attribution can be supported by the internal disagreements within the party which saw activists in the north of England move away to form their own far right group (BBC, 2007). The lack of opportunity to debate and leave comment on the website could, seemingly. also be in place to prevent opponents of the party from leaving anti-BNP comments. The website, however, does encourage local activism and campaigning by providing leaflets for BNP members to download and distribute in their local areas. Furthermore, the website also offers some form of cyber-activism, in the form of their perceived bias against them by the BBC, where visitors to the website are encouraged to highlight such cases of bias (Atton, 2006).

3.10 The anti-fascist campaign

Whilst this chapter has so far examined how, historically, the far right's inability to mount a serious campaign in Britain has been due to their own shortcomings as a movement, a study of the history of the far right Britain must take into account the high profile role played by the number of anti-fascist groups, indeed as Britain has been said to have an anti-fascist tradition dating back to the 1930s (Renton, 2001:170).

In the 1970s, in response to the rise of the National Front and their electoral successes, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was founded by Peter Hain, Ernie Roberts and Paul Holborow. Between 1977 and 1979, the Anti-Nazi League sold 750,000 badges and distributed nine

million leaflets (Renton, 2001). Additionally, an initiative alongside the ANL was Rock Against Racism (RAR), set up in response to comments made by Eric Clapton supporting Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech (Renton, 1996). The actions of ANL and RAR have been viewed as a successful means of combating the far right threat with Renton arguing that if the "RAR and the ANL both intend to turn back the growth of the NF, they achieved the goal they set themselves" (Renton 2001:179).

This anti-fascist tradition has appeared to remain in Britain with, currently, a number of anti-fascist organizations still campaigning at election times. The anti-fascist groups have had notable differences of opinion; this was particularly visible in 2005 when Searchlight and Unite Against Fascism (UAF) clashed over differences of opinion about the running of their national campaign, thus leading to Searchlight members resigning from the UAF steering committee (Searchlight, 2005).

Searchlight aims to campaign in areas where the BNP is expected to perform strongly, often in conjunction with the Labour Party and the unions, with campaigning taking a number of forms, including extensive leafleting and days of action. Searchlight will often distribute area specific literature in the form of leaflets and newspapers, warning of the perceived threat of the BNP and aim to expose any extreme past of BNP members (Searchlight, 2006). Such days of action have

included a mass distribution of anti-fascist literature and also have often involved setting up stands in towns and cities to speak to local voters (Unison, 2008). Two such areas which have witnessed such a day of action are Calderdale and Bradford. In Calderdale, extensive campaigns comprising a combination of Labour activists, anti-fascist campaigners and union members have been run in the ward of Illingworth and Mixenden, a ward with a strong BNP vote, which campaigners claimed has proved successful in preventing BNP members winning all seats in the ward (Unison, 2008). Similarly in Bradford, local union members and anti-fascist campaigners have used Yorkshire Day as a means of spreading the anti-fascist message (Unison, 2007). Furthermore, singer Billy Bragg embarked on a nationwide tour to promote the anti-fascist message in areas where the BNP were expected to perform well, notably in London, the North West and Yorkshire (Evans, 2006).

3.11 Mainstream parties

Moreover, within the context of the reaction to BNP, there is also the issue of how the mainstream parties deal with the possible threat of the party at local elections, an issue that has led to accusations of mainstream parties helping the BNP's cause at local elections through their words and actions (Copsey, 2004). Thus, whereas the actions of the mainstream parties have, hitherto, been seen as a key factor behind the far right's ability to win support, as was arguably the case

in the 1980s, now, mainstream politicians are potentially giving the BNP publicity through their actions.

In 2002, David Blunkett notably caused a controversy when he spoke of asylum seekers 'swamping' British schools. This comment was particularly emotive with regard to echoing the sentiment from Margaret Thatcher's remarks on immigration in the early 1980s (BBC, 2002; Copsey, 2004). Blunkett faced criticism from Labour members including Diane Abbott and Roy Hattersley, who led calls for Blunkett to apologise for his terminology. However, Blunkett defended his actions and gained support from Downing Street over his comments (BBC, 2002).

At the 2006 local elections, employment minister Margaret Hodge attracted criticism for her remarks with regard to the BNP. Hodge remarked that there was a possibility of 8 out of 10 white families voting for the BNP in her constituency of Barking and Dagenham, due to their anger with a growing number of asylum seekers in the area (BBC, 2006). The BNP won 12 seats at the subsequent local election and Hodge's comments provoked anger amongst her fellow Labour Party members, who called for disciplinary action to be taken against her. Labour candidates in the area accused Hodge of giving the BNP the limelight, raising the profile of the BNP and justifying their claims on asylum and immigration (BBC, 2006). This opinion was shared by Richard Barnbrook, the BNP's London organizer for the

2006 local elections who thanked Hodge for giving the BNP 'a million pounds worth of free publicity' (BBC, 2006). Hodge also faced criticism from other MPs such as Alan Johnson and John Cruddas over what they perceived to be her giving the limelight to the BNP.

Furthermore, the Conservative Party has been criticised for fuelling the debate on immigration and playing into the BNP's hands through opinions expressed in the media (UAF, 2006). The shadow minister for community cohesion, Sayeeda Warsi was particularly criticised by the group Operation Black Vote for suggesting that immigration was 'out of control' in the UK, and that the Conservatives must listen to the BNP voters (Woolf and Brady, 2007).

This was not the first time that Conservative Party members had faced such criticism for remarks made with regard to the BNP. In 2006, Unite Against Fascism called on David Cameron to discipline Norman Tebbit after he was accused of legitimizing the BNP by describing them not as a far right party, but, in fact, as a left wing party in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* (UAF, 2006). Further controversy was made when the father of BNP leader Nick Griffin, Edgar Griffin was exposed as being the vice-president for Iain Duncan-Smith's campaign in Wales (Britten, 2001). Following this revelation, Edgar Griffin was expelled from the party. Furthermore, William Hague had been accused of helping legitimise the BNP campaign when he accused Labour of 'turning Britain into a foreign land' (Copsey, 2004:130).

Additionally, Conservative MP, John Townend, accused the government of turning Britain into a 'mongrel race' (Copsey, 2004:130).

The effects, therefore, of these comments and actions can be, perhaps, perceived as having played into the hands of the BNP. However, it can be argued that to ignore the BNP altogether and form a kind of *cordon sanitaire*, as has been the case in other West European countries, would also potentially increase the BNP vote, as voters feel that their voice is not being heard (Goodwin, 2008). Copsey (2004), argues that where race is politicised, then BNP success should not be surprising. Indeed, social studies into the BNP and anti-fascist campaigners have suggested that mainstream politicians should be talking about race and asylum in a way to inform the voters about the issues of immigration in order to prevent the BNP's myths about immigration from becoming regarded as fact (John et al, 2006).

3.12 Conclusion

The investigation into the history of the far right in the UK was carried out in order to establish any apparent reasoning behind the failure of any far right movement to achieve any reasonable level of success and the national level. Having carried out this investigation, it appears that a number of themes emerge when examining this history. Firstly, far right movements in Britain appeared to have been dogged by

internal fall outs and disagreements amongst leading members, thus preventing a stable organisation from forming to represent the British far right. Moreover, the party's links with Nazism through members such as John Tyndall had discouraged voters, particularly those from the Conservative Party from supporting a far right movement. The chapter also argues that a strong Conservative Party in the 1980s played a major role in preventing the BNP and the NF from winning support, due to their strong stance on issues of immigration and nationalist tendencies.

Yet the examination of the BNP under Nick Griffin suggest that the party learnt from the failures of previous far right movements and were taking active steps to present their party in a more moderate light. Whilst it is apparent that there are links with extremism in the backgrounds of leading members including Griffin himself, at the start of the century, the BNP were ready to attempt to exploit the issues of immigration and asylum alongside any perceptible weakness in the mainstream parties to push for electoral success across the country. Indeed, there appeared to be divisions in the mainstream parties with regard to the best way of dealing with the rise of the BNP across the UK. Consequently, the BNP were beginning to target voters from all social backgrounds having shed their links to violence and Nazism. Certainly, the BNP under Nick Griffin seemed to be the best placed far movement in recent history to perform strongly in British local elections.

Chapter Four: The BNP in comparative perspective

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Two of this thesis noted how academic literature had focused on the role of the British far right, in comparison with other European far right parties, and put forward the idea of comparing the BNP alongside West European far right parties, as a means of establishing whether Nick Griffin has managed to bring the BNP into line with his European counterparts. This chapter, therefore, aims to examine the BNP in a thematically organised comparative perspective, with other far right West European parties. Firstly, the structure of the parties is examined, in order to establish how similar they are to their counterparts, in terms of the way they choose to organise themselves. Secondly, the policies and organisation of the BNP will be examined, to ascertain if there is any degree of uniformity in the far right parties across Western Europe, or whether the BNP take an individualistic stance on certain policy areas. The chapter then examines why the BNP has not enjoyed the same levels of success as other West European parties, discussing the leadership and image of the parties and the reaction of the mainstream parties to the far right threat.

4.2 Methodology

For the purposes of this chapter, the far right parties in Western Europe have been purposefully selected, whilst not considering the far right in Eastern Europe. This is not to say that the far right in Eastern Europe have not enjoyed the same levels of success as their Western counterparts, indeed, far right parties in Eastern Europe were said to have benefited from the collapse of communism and a rise in ultra nationalist feelings and movements (Merkl and Weinberg, 2003; Carter, 2005). However, Western Europe has witnessed a rise in popularity of the far right over the past twenty years (Hainsworth, 2000). Whilst previous radical movements in a number of European countries had experienced brief popularity, the sustained electoral success of far right parties in Western Europe at the turn of the century, was the first time they had enjoyed such a record in elections (Hainsworth, 2000). Furthermore, surveys conducted on behalf of the European Union (EU) highlighted a surge in racist and xenophobic attitudes, thus demonstrating the potential of far right support (Merkl and Weinberg, 2003). Western Europe has also witnessed a growth in immigration and asylum seekers since the 1980s, which has had implications for European economics and culture (Hainsworth, 2000:1).

Additionally, the EU has taken on an ever increasing and widening role in Europe, reducing the political power of individual countries, a move which has led to a fear over a loss of identity amongst citizens;

consequently, far right parties are succeeding in attracting voters who have a dislike or distrust of the EU (Ivasflaten, 2008). Furthermore, distrust for politicians in Western Europe has also been apparent as a result of a number of political scandals and corruption across the continent. Again, these grievances with mainstream politicians could provide the far right with an opportunity to increase their own support (Abedi, 2002; Ivasflaten, 2008).

Therefore, for the purposes of this chapter, the parties under consideration will be the principal far right parties in Western Europe, namely the Freiheits Partei Österreich (FPO) in Austria, Vlaams Belang (formerly Vlaams Blok) (VB) in Belgium, the Dansk Folkeparti (DF) in Denmark and the Front National (FN) in France, in addition to the BNP

The VB, FPO, DF and FN are all established far right parties in their respective countries and have been extensively recognised as West European far right parties (Hainsworth, 2000; Carter, 2005; Kitschelt, 2007). Furthermore, the literature review carried out, acknowledged that issues such as xenophobia, racism and desire for a strong state are seen as a common trait for far right parties. However when placing the BNP in the far right grouping, the party is seen as being more radical and classically racist, as a consequence of their links with Neo-Nazism (Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005). This is in contrast to the DF, FN, VB and FPO, who, whilst displaying the classic

traits of a far right party, do not adhere to such classic racism and a demand for less democracy (Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005).

4.3 The general elections under Nick Griffin

Whilst Chapter 3 acknowledged how the far right have failed to enjoy electoral success at the national level, the comparative perspective allows for an examination to determine the factors which have contributed to these failings, particularly under Griffin's leadership. The 2001 general election was the first election following Griffin's appointment as party chairman, with the party fielding 33 candidates polling 44,129 votes at an average of 1428 per candidate. This figure was boosted by the strong performance of Griffin himself in the Oldham and Saddleworth constituency, where he polled 16.4 per cent of the vote. This appeared to show some promises to the party for potential far right support at a general election. Therefore, the 2005 general election provided the BNP with a chance to field 119 candidates, the highest number for the party, so far, in a general election, with the party ready "to fight an aggressive campaign in its heartlands" (Kavanagh and Butler 2005:50). Seemingly, this appeared to give the BNP its greatest chance to break through the 1 per cent mark at a general election. Nevertheless, despite this, the party won just 0.7 per cent of the vote nationally, at the time continuing the failure of the British far right to gain more than 1 per cent of the vote and, thus, on the surface, appearing to show the failure of

Griffin's party to have the ability to make any more impact at the national level than previous far right parties.

At the 2009 European elections, the BNP had two candidates elected for the European Parliament, with Nick Griffin elected for the North West and Andrew Brons for Yorkshire and Humber, with the party gaining over 6 per cent of the vote nationwide. Consequently, the success of the two BNP candidates allowed for a rise in the party profile (BBC, 2009). The European Parliament pays £175,800 a year per British MEP, thus allowing Griffin and Brons the potential to employ party aides, such as media and communications officers, researchers and campaign officers (BBC, 2009). The success of Brons and Griffin arguably provided optimism for the party going into the 2010 general election, that it could win its first seat in a general election.

The party subsequently won 522,977 votes, at 1.9 per cent of the vote nationally. However, despite breaking through the 1 per cent barrier for the first time at an election, the election can be arguably regarded as somewhat a failure for the BNP and, indeed, questions the future of Griffin's leadership. In Barking, where the BNP polled 16.4 per cent, hopes were high amongst BNP members of producing a serious challenge to Margaret Hodge, the incumbent Labour MP. Yet, despite this, Griffin only polled 6620 votes and was beaten into 3rd place by Conservative candidate Simon Marcus (Whitehead, 2010).

Further disappointment was to come in Stoke, where, again, BNP expectations had been high of a strong support, notably due to the decision by the Labour hierarchy to nominate candidate Tristram Hunt, much to the chagrin of local Labour supporters, thus raising the possibility of voters turning to the BNP as a protest against Hunt (Stratton, 2010). Stoke on Trent was an area where local council results had previously produced strong support for the BNP. Again, despite these hopes, BNP candidate Simon Darby polled 2502 votes, coming in 4th behind Hunt and the Liberal Democrat and Conservative candidates. Similar stories were witnessed across other areas which had witnessed strong BNP support in previous elections, such as Burnley, Dewsbury and Keighley all saw their support fall.

4.4 European far right parties under examination

Austria

The Freedom Party of Austria has played a major role in Austrian politics in the past ten years (FPO). The FPO's move to the far right was triggered by the appointment of charismatic leader, Jorg Haider, to the party leadership in 1986, with Haider's populist protest, anti-EU and immigration tendencies coming to the fore. Through a combination of aggressive campaigning and the flamboyancy of Haider's leadership, support for the FPO began to grow amongst young men and blue collar workers throughout the 1990s (Luther, 2003). The electoral successes of the FPO continued to build and, in the 1999 legislative election, the party stunned the political world by

winning 27 per cent of the vote, giving it 52 seats in the Austrian parliament (Luther, 2003). In 2000, the party entered into a coalition with the People's Party led by Wolfgang Schüssel, causing outrage amongst EU leaders. (Luther, 2003: 192)

However, the period of incumbency appeared to dramatically affect the position and strategy of the FPO. Haider was not able to enjoy the same success which, previously, had been based on a negative campaign criticizing the government (Luther, 2003). Following Haider's resignation as leader and his subsequent departure from the party, the FPO was beset by internal disputes which saw its performance dramatically reduced, although the party was still part of the government coalition. Subsequently, this was to end, following the results of the 2006 legislative election in Austria, when its share of the vote fell to 11 per cent giving it only 21 seats.

However, despite the apparent split in the far right in Austria, both the FPO and the BZO-Liste, Jorg Haider enjoyed considerable success. The FPO, under the leadership of Heinz Christian Strache, won 34 seats in 2008 with Haider's party winning 21 seats (electionresources.org, 2008). This resurgence of the far right vote prompted calls from members of both parties for the FPO and BZO to unite into one far right party. The two parties were seen to appeal to differing voters, with the FPO gaining a following amongst working class voters in urban areas AND with the BZO appearing to gain

support amongst more middle class and rural voters. Yet, shortly after the elections, Haider was killed in a car crash, prompting further possibility that the two parties could unite, as Haider himself was seen as the main obstacle to stop this from occurring (Hashash, 2008). In December 2009, the FPO and BZO announced that they would form a nationalist union and campaign jointly in the 2012 national elections (EU Times, 2009).

Belgium

The major far right party in Belgium is Vlaams Belang (formerly Vlaams Blok). Vlaams Blok was founded in 1977 with the aim of defending Flemish interests and to fight for the creation of an independent Flanders (Roxburgh 2002). Since the 1980s, the party has witnessed a steady increase in support throughout the Flanders region of Belgium.

The party has a particular stronghold in the city of Antwerp, which has a high immigrant population. They had been prevented from making increasing gains due to a pledge for a *cordon sanitaire* from the other parties, which means they avoided having any dealings or alliances with Vlaams Belang. However, this policy has fractured in recent years, leading to an upturn in fortunes for the party (Mudde, 2007). Vlaams Belang has been seen to take a hard-line stance, calling for the repatriation of all non-EU foreigners (Roxburgh, 2002; Mudde, 2007).

The party has prominent members such as MP Felip Dewinter, who's style is style to Jorg Haider through his confident oratory skills and respectable image (Roxburgh, 2002; Mudde, 2007). The party has gained momentum by polling well in the city of Antwerp and has then built upon this success across the country, which has led to them winning 17 of the 150 seats in the Belgian Chamber of Representatives following the 2007 general elections (electionresources.org, 2007a). In the 2010 election, the party won 7.76 per cent of the vote, giving the party 12 seats (European Parliament, 2009). The party won 2 seats in the European Parliament, following their 9.85 per cent vote share in the 2009 elections.

Denmark

The emergence of the far right party in Denmark, the Dansk Folkeparti (DF), allows us to include them in our study of far right parties at the national level. The DF has seen its national performance consistently increase under the leadership of Pia Kjaersgaard, a politician who is seen to be level headed and respectable, in contrast to other far right leaders (Roxburgh, 2002; Carter, 2005). The party has enjoyed increasing success in the past four national elections and won 25 out of 175 seats in the 2007 elections for the Danish Parliament (electionresources.org, 2007b). In the 2009 European elections, the party won 15.3 per cent of the vote, giving the party two members in the European Parliament. Despite their strong representation in the

Danish Parliament, the party was not part of any coalition, yet carried enough strength for the mainstream parties to try and earn its support for policy implementations, thus allowing the party to develop a powerful voice in the Parliament (Rydgren, 2004). This can be seen in the tough laws on immigration and asylum that were adopted by the centre right coalition, in order to maintain the support from the DF, which led to criticism from fellow countries in Scandinavia over the stringent nature of such policies (Roxburgh, 2002).

France

The Front National (FN) is one of the oldest far right parties in Europe, having been formed in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen. Le Pen remains its controversial leader who has survived scandal and in-fighting to remain leader. The split in the party in 1999 with former deputy Bruno Mégrét, who subsequently formed the Mouvement National Républicain, led commentators to predict the end for the FN (Hainsworth, 2000). Yet in 2002, Le Pen caused a shock by defeating Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin, to win through to the second round of the presidential election to face Jacques Chirac. The party had consistently polled well in the national and local elections since the early 1980s, and has benefited from mainstream deals and in fighting to win support from both working and middle class voters (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). In 2007, Le Pen finished fourth in the first round of voting for the presidential election, with the party suffering similarly disappointing results in the legislative elections, failing to win a single

seat. The party won 6.3 per cent of the vote in the 2009 European elections (European Parliament, 2009b). Le Pen's daughter, Marine Le Pen is expected to succeed her father as leader of the FN in 2011 (Lichfield, 2010).

4.5 The party structure

An examination of the party structures of these far right parties highlights particular areas which allow us to help define the characteristics of the far right in Western Europe. Certainly, it can be argued that these parties can be said to have evidence of mass party structures (Ignazi, 2003) where the key element of a mass party structure in the far right parties, is namely, that these are membership parties with strong vertical organisational bias, with the parties exclusively funded through membership and collateral activities (Espindola, 2002).

Hence, a key aspect for the far right parties appears to be the network of branches that are often geographically spread throughout the country. It is also clear, however, that there is a leadership structure to the parties, which sees the senior leaders controlling the party structure with a high level of authority. Indeed, such a structure may be considered optimal, given the factions which can occur in the far left and the far right. For example, the Front National place particular importance on the role of branches and local organisations to encourage membership. These events can include dinners and

parties, which can provide the party with a chance to encourage new members and allow for fund-raising opportunities for the parties (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). Similarly, Vlaams Belang have encouraged the development of a party branch system to encourage party unity, (though the party executive assumes a tight control), with the party council being responsible for the election of local leaders and the nomination of candidates (Mudde, 2007).

Thus, whilst the far right parties may contain elements of a mass-party structure, there have also been attempts by them to move to a more electoral-professional model of party (Luther, 2003). In the electoral professional model, the central role is played, not by bureaucracy and the members, but by professionals. Here, the stress is more on the personality and leadership of the party. This was witnessed in Austria when Haider attempted to change the structure of the FPO, partly in an attempt to strengthen his own leadership (Luther, 2003).

Yet Griffin has also attempted to bring the party into line with the other far right parties, by organising a network of regional branches to improve the organisation of the party nationwide (Copsey 2004:106). The BNP are similar to the other far right parties in terms of the structure of their party, in that there is a clear structure with a national chairman, deputy chairman, national officers of the party and regional party organisers. The Council acts as a forum for the party's leadership to discuss vital issues to set the party agenda. However, the leadership pyramid seen in the BNP can be said to mirror other far

right parties, in that such a structure is in place, so that the national officers or regional organisers cannot hinder the chairman's ability to make the final decision on all matters.

4.6 Policy

The issue of party policy is now examined with a view to discussing whether the BNP is in line with their West European neighbours, in terms of their policy pledges at election times, given that the BNP have previously been viewed as having policies deemed as being more extreme than other far right parties (Kitschelt 1995; Ignazi, 2000; Eatwell, 2000; Carter, 2005). Previously they had been seen to be a more extreme and classically racist party displaying a deeply fascist ideology and "barely hidden allegiance to biological racism and Jewish conspiracy"(Copsey,2004:98).

Table 4.1 The policies of the far right parties in Western Europe

Party	Immigration	Education	Europe	Crime	Finance	Environment	Transport	Foreign Policy
BNP UK	Border Controls at all ports. No immigration from East Europe or Middle East.	Emphasis on culture and values. Abolish Education Authorities. Eliminate 'nonsense' subjects. National Service restored.	Withdrawal from the EU.	Introduction of corporal punishment for petty criminals and capital punishment for serious crimes.	Abolition of income tax to be replaced by consumption tax based on income spent. Tariffs on foreign manufactured goods.	End development on Green Belt land. Maintain high taxes on petrol.	Ban out of town retail parks. Promote public transport. Abolish road fund tax.	Reverse 'Islamification' in Europe. Aid developing world by resettling immigrants back in their homeland. Withdraw from NATO
Front National France	More benefits for French families over immigrants. Establish more border controls. Pull out of Schengen agreement and EU policy on asylum.	Bring back values to school. Government must take main role in maintaining high standards in school.	No to EU constitution. Re-negotiate a Europe of sovereign states based on common interests and hold a referendum in France.	Recruit 5000 more magistrates. More prisons to be created and police. Immigrants who commit offences to be expelled from country.	Re-establish the Franc. Introduce quotas for imports in particular sectors.	Research into the effects of GM crops. Encouraging education into recycling. No VAT for non-GM products.	Ban cars from major town and city centres. Improve security on public transport. Tax for foreign lorries to enter France.	Defend francophone countries. Aid developing world by resettling immigrants back in their homeland. Withdraw from NATO.

Freedom Party Austria	Restore border controls.	State run education for all. Improve the training to teachers.	No to Turkey's entry into the EU. No intrusion of EU policy in Europe.	No to death penalty. Tougher on crimes such as sexual assaults. Introduce compensation for victims.	Promotion of free market economy. Limit the power of the banks. Reform of the stock exchange.	Maintain land to grow crops and maintain pure water supplies. Eco-taxes to reduce pollution.		Co-operation with other German language states.
Vlaams Belang Belgium	Repeal of anti-racism and anti-discrimination law. Deport all immigrants who fail to integrate.	Preserve the current education system.	Reform of the EU. No to Turkey's entry into the EU. Closer links with the Netherlands.	Law of self-defence.	Flat tax to be created to exempt low income families from taxation. Pension system to be reformed.			Reverse the Islamification in Europe. Independence for Flanders.

Folkeparti Denmak	Oppose Islamification of Denmark. Favour the cultural assimilation of immigrants.		Oppose Turkey's entry into the EU.	Stricter punishment for serious crimes such as rape and assault. Abolish blasphemy clause.	Maintain the Danish Krone. Support free trade policy.	Support market based agricultural policy.		Support of war on terrorism. Grants for research into terrorism. Support for Israel.

Sources: BNP, 2005; FN, 2007; VB, 2007; DF, 2007; FPO, 2008

From the summary of key policy areas for the far right parties presented in Table 4.1, three principal aspects are now examined in greater detail.

4.6.1 Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Immigration remains the focus of the far right's electoral platform, being central to party policy (Carter, 2005). Indeed, whilst parties are developing policies in all areas, immigration remains the "issue par excellence" (Hainsworth, 2000:4). It is unsurprising that immigration plays a major role for all the parties, as it has long been viewed as one of the main traits of the far right party family (Hainsworth, 2000; Mudde, 2000). However the parties generally do not base their policies on some form of biological racism, but, rather, through the alleged effects of immigrants on the culture and social welfare of the citizens of that particular country (Hainsworth, 2000; Carter 2005; Mudde 2007). Consequently, all the parties considered in this chapter have tougher policies concerning immigration, with border controls being a common policy for most.

Thus, whilst immigration is one of the cornerstones of the far right platform, it can perhaps be distinguished from a classic racism, of which the far right in Western Europe are particularly keen to avoid (Carter, 2005; Mudde, 2007; Eatwell, 2008). Hence, it would appear that the BNP and their fellow far right parties, now wish to avoid the

accusation of racism, as can be noted by the way in which they carefully discuss the policy of repatriation. However, whilst the manifestos are, perhaps, more cautiously worded, policy on immigration remains strong, particularly amongst parties such as the BNP who wish to end immigration from Eastern Europe, and Vlaams Belang who seek to deport immigrants who fail to 'integrate'. It also appears that there is a growing anti-Islamic sentiment in the parties, with the notion of 'Islamification' being raised which has notably been used since the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. The far right appear to believe that they are able to use this anti-Islam feeling as a means of playing on the fear of electors and, therefore, increasing their appeal to sections of the electorate (Roxburgh, 2002). This is particularly strong in the case of the DF, who wish to oppose what they see as an 'Islamification' of Denmark.

In contrast, far right policy with regard to Europe, highlights a difference of opinion with regard to the role of the EU. Whilst the BNP are, in fact, the only party to press for the withdrawal from the EU, the other far right parties in this study do not advocate withdrawal from the EU, but, instead, either wish to reform the EU, or for countries to have a stronger say on what the EU controls. However, the rejection of Turkey's entry into the EU also appears to be a common feature amongst the parties. Therefore, in general, whilst the far right parties are keen to defend their country's position and independence, they recognise the potential benefits of being a member of the EU.

4.6.2 Crime

Crime and personal security is another area on which far right parties have traditionally campaigned heavily (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003, Rydgren, 2004). The manifestos display that the parties of the far right look to be tougher on crime, with the proposal of stricter sentences for serious crimes and increases in the number of police officers. However, they also develop a link between crime and immigration in manifestos, such as that of the FN, who threaten to expel any immigrants who are found guilty of committing crimes, echoing the campaign used by Le Pen in the 2002 presidential elections. The BNP appear to be in line with their European counterparts in proposing tougher sentences in the form of corporal punishment for minor crimes and capital punishment for more serious crimes. Indeed, tougher sentences for serious crimes appear to be another common feature of the far right manifestos.

4.6.3 Tradition

The analysis of the manifestoes also reveals that traditional values appear to be a key to far right policy. The far right parties are keen to protect the status of the family, which can be seen in the financial benefits offered to families. Other institutions, such as the church, are promoted by the far right in France and in Denmark. Moreover, the parties use the notion of tradition and democratic values in a bid to explain their plans. They reject the idea of multi-culturalism, which

can be seen in the policies with regard to the revoking of the anti-discrimination laws; this being the case in Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. Whilst the BNP do not place an emphasis on issues such as religion and church, the notion of tradition can be interpreted into a number of their policies, notably with regard to the banning of out of town retail parks in favour of the local shopkeeper and teaching with an emphasis on culture and values in schools.

In conclusion, it can be argued that there are many similarities between the BNP and other far right parties in Western Europe, in terms of the policy being put forward in manifestos. Far right success in Western European countries has been based on the ability to present itself as a credible alternative to the mainstream and, one key aspect to this, is providing a wide-ranging policy on a number of policy areas. This study of manifestos demonstrates that the parties are clearly presenting themselves in a more moderate light in a bid to attract voters. Consequently, the far right parties are focusing on policy areas which perhaps would not have previously been covered, namely in areas such as environment whereby, the BNP, FPO, DF and FN all refer to implementing measures in a bid to protect the environment

Whilst doubts may remain about how much the far right parties have, in reality, moderated their policies, on the surface, they are looking to present themselves as a real alternative and more than single issue

parties. Whereas far right parties traditionally had policies of xenophobia, racism and anti-democracy, and called for stringent measures on immigration, these have been adapted to attempt to display a degree of moderation (Mudde 1995; Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003; Carter, 2005). This is seemingly linked to the notion that, if a far right party attempts to display themselves as moving towards the centre right political space, then there is a greater possibility that more of the electorate may support the party, as has been witnessed in Austria and France (Kitschelt, 1995; Carter, 2005).

4.7 Examining the lack of success for the BNP at the national level

Section 4.2 of this chapter has displayed that the BNP has not performed successfully under the leadership of Griffin at a general election. To understand why there has been this occurrence, factors regarding the role of the mainstream parties, image and leadership are now compared to examine if there are any factors contributing to the BNPs lack of success in general elections.

4.7.2 Role of the mainstream

Across Western Europe, a particular feature, with regard to the relationship between the centre right and far right, has been that of a *cordon sanitaire*. This means that there has never been any attempt to make any political deals with the far right, in order to boost their

respective party's standing at the expense of another throughout Europe (Carter, 2005). However, the *cordon sanitaire* which has traditionally been set in place across Europe, has been broken by political parties. This was the case in France, where the mainstream right parties were hit by internal factions and, in an attempt to prevent voters from slipping away, deals were made with the far right, in a bid to prevent the Socialists from taking a number of seats at the local level (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). However, this allowed the FN to develop as a party, and to enhance their claims as a legitimate political force in the country. Moreover, in Belgium, the mainstream centre-right parties have been strong to maintain the *cordon sanitaire*, yet there is some suggestion that less formal links exist between the far right and the mainstream (Coffe et al, 2007). However, questions remain about how effective the *cordon sanitaire* has been in preventing far right gains in Belgium as the VB continue to make increasing gains in all levels of elections (Coffe et al, 2007; De Lange, 2007).

With regard to the West European countries studied, where the far right have performed well at a national level, centre-right parties have also been seen to take a tougher stance on issues of immigration and asylum. However, the crucial difference in the adoption of these tougher policies has been that they have often been implemented following the success of a far right party at an election (Roxburgh, 2002). This is particularly the case in Denmark and France, where

tougher policies on immigration and crime have been adopted, thus leading to the far right parties accusing their centre-right rivals of merely copying their policies (Roxburgh, 2002). An example of this was in Demark in 2002, where the centre right coalition brought out a series of tough proposals with regard to immigration in the country. These policies included tougher policies such as a halving in welfare benefits for asylum seekers and the law which stated that no Dane was allowed to bring in a spouse from outside the EU, if the Dane or the spouse is under the age of 24 (Roxburgh, 2002). These policies attracted criticism from leading groups and politicians across Europe, who viewed the policies as being too strict (Roxburgh, 2002).

In France, the 2007 Presidential election campaign and the image of Nicolas Sarkozy, perhaps reflected a feeling amongst the centre-right to take a tough stance on immigration and nationalist issues (Marthaler, 2008). The centre-right were arguably aware of the threat of Le Pen, following his success in the first round of voting at the 2002 Presidential election and how he had profited from the issues of immigration and insecurity in particular. Furthermore, the personal image of Sarkozy himself echoed that of Thatcher as a no-nonsense politician, who would be tough on such issues (Boulangé and Wolfreys, 2007). For example, during the riots of 2005, Sarkozy gained a 'tough-cop' image, following his swift reaction to the riots in the *banlieues* across France. Following the rioting in Paris, Sarkozy chose to visit the scene personally and labelled the rioters as *racaille*

(rabble) and talked of using a *karcher* (power-hose) to deal with the rioters (*Economist*, 2007). Additionally, Sarkozy, in his spell as Interior Minister, was tough on crime and illegal immigrants, which would have appealed to those voters who perhaps voted for Le Pen at the 2002 presidential elections. Sarkozy's subsequent success aligned to Le Pen's poor showing in the polls, could, therefore, suggest that Sarkozy's bid to regain the right had worked against Le Pen (Marthaler, 2008).

In Britain, with regard to the mainstream parties, there is an argument that the Conservative Party has contributed to the far right's lack of success in Britain, as "the ideology of the Conservative Party has served to defuse the far right appeals." (Eatwell, 1998;186)

Indeed, Conservative Party ideology has traditionally been seen to be right of the political spectrum, playing on traditional far right themes such as immigration and nationalism (Eatwell, 2000). In the 1970s, the Conservatives had right wing groups such as the Monday Club, which were seen as being more extreme right than the official party policy (Eatwell, 2000; Sykes, 2005). The issue of immigration had reached the British political agenda since the small sporadic electoral successes of the far right in local elections in the 1970s and the 'rivers of blood' speech made by Enoch Powell in 1968, as discussed in Chapter 2.3. The small advances of the British far right in the 1970s, were said to have led to a strong anti-immigrant manifesto from the

Conservatives, in reaction to the far right (Eatwell, 1998). Therefore, the Conservatives notably under Thatcher, were seen as taking a hard-line stance on issues such as immigration and law and order, both through the means of speeches made to the media and in their election manifestos, thus denying the far right any opportunity to profit from immigration (Hainsworth, 2000).

Furthermore, in the 1980s, nationalism was also to be a key theme for the party during the 1983 general election campaign, largely due to the war with Argentina in the Falklands. The Conservatives also continued the notion of nationalism in their 1983 general election manifesto, vowing to maintain institutions such as the House of Lords. Hence, a strong sense of nationalism and traditionalism was seen to increase support amongst the working classes (Butler and Kavanagh, 1983).

Indeed, race and immigration issues were to return to the forefront of British politics at the turn of the new century, when William Hague made asylum one of the Conservative Party's major issues at the 2000 local elections. This right wing stance on immigration and asylum has carried on through the leadership of Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard to such an extent that the literature of the Conservatives at local elections on the issues of asylum and immigration has been accused of mirroring that of the BNP (Copsey, 2004:147). In 2005, the Conservative manifesto, again, had a strong

focus on issues such as immigration and crime, areas earlier identified to being key policy areas for the far right. The manifesto made a pledge for controlled immigration in Britain, including policies such as surveillance at ports and a limit on the number of asylum seekers decided by Parliament (Conservatives, 2005). This manifesto also emphasised the need for discipline and a tougher attitude on crime.

In terms of their electoral campaigning, the Conservative Party was said to have failed to move away from their traditional strengths of crime and immigration (Butler and Kavanagh, 2005). The party was arguably divided in its use of the immigration issue, with suggestions that Howard wished they had used the theme more at the end of the campaign as opposed to MPs such as David Cameron, who felt that the issue took away the spotlight from other Conservative policies (Butler and Kavanagh, 2005:186)

The 2010 general election, as in 2005, saw immigration play a major role in campaigning from the Conservatives. As in 2005 the Conservatives focused efforts on immigration, with the party manifesto stating "Immigration is too high and needs to be reduced. We do not need to attract people to do jobs that could be carried out by British citizens, given the right training and support" (Groves and Hazelton, 2010). Again the rhetoric used by David Cameron showed the Conservative Party as being tough on immigration "Immigration in this country has been too high for too long and that's why we have a very

clear approach to cut it and cut it quite substantially" (*Northern Echo*, 2010).

Therefore, where the British case differs from its West European counterparts is that the Conservatives have maintained a tradition of being strong on traditional far right issues involving nationalism and immigration, thus preventing the far right from claiming space on the right of the political spectrum. This is important as "the conditions for the rise of extreme-rightist parties become favourable if moderately left and right parties converge towards the median voter" (Kitschelt, 1995:vii). This differs from the FN, VB, FPO and DF who appear to have been able to dominate debate on immigration in their respective countries and, therefore, gain the political space they desired, prompting claims from the far right parties that their policies were merely being copied by the mainstream. The far right in Western Europe, seemingly, had a perceived sense of political legitimacy, which the BNP has not been afforded.

4.7.3 Leadership

In addition to examining the policies of the far right parties in Europe, the question of leadership is also a factor that has been taken into consideration by academics (Ignazi, 2000; Carter, 2005). Leadership qualities are arguably more important in parties of the far right than of the mainstream, due to the nature of the make up of the far right parties in terms of their organisation and structure, namely because

far right parties are often "prone to factionalism and infighting" (Carter, 2005:65). Far right leaders therefore, need to curb any possible infighting and attempt to lead a united party. Another aspect of far right leadership, regards the question of image and respectability of the leaders. If the far right parties are seen to be closer to the centre-right, then this can increase their chances of electoral success (Carter, 2005). One such way this can be achieved is if the leader of the party is seen as being a more respectable and moderate politician (Ignazi, 2000; Carter, 2005). Furthermore, a far right leader must have some element of dynamism and personality in order to create a public profile for the party (Carter, 2005). Moreover, the leadership must be capable of exploiting opportunities with which they are presented (Kitschelt, 1995).

Dominant leadership has been in evidence in France, where the FN has faced accusations of simply being a one man party (Charlot, 1986), although this argument has been refuted in other works (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). However, Le Pen has also had to overcome serious splits in his party, notably in 1999 when a major disagreement amongst party leaders led to FN deputy leader Bruno Mégret forming a breakaway Mouvement National Républicain (MNR). This was a particularly brutal split in the party, with many members deserting the FN in favour of Mégret's party (Hainsworth, 2000; Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). Arguably, it was the leadership of Le Pen which had been the catalyst of such splits in the party, with Le Pen's often erratic and

bombastic behaviour causing concerns amongst FN members (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). In particular, Le Pen had been suspended from standing in the European elections, following an attack on a Socialist candidate, leading him to nominate his wife at the head of the party list, as opposed to Mégret (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). Moreover, with Le Pen being 71 years of age, there was concern over his appeal to voters, with Mégret seemingly seen to be the leading candidate to take over the FN leadership (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). There also appeared to be ideological differences regarding the future of the party. The Mégretistes were keen for the FN to establish a less extreme position in an attempt to come more in line with the centre-right parties (Hainsworth and Mitchell, 2000). However, Le Pen saw off the challenge of Mégret after a long legal battle and any signs of Le Pen and the FN returning to the background of French politics were shaken in April 2002, when Le Pen rocked the political landscape by winning through to the second round of the French Presidential elections at the expense of Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin, thus maintaining Le Pen's place at the forefront of French far right politics (Fysh and Wolfreys. 2003). Le Pen's success was largely based on his skills as a politician and ability as a public speaker (Marcus, 1995). Le Pen was quick to portray himself very much as the alternative to the system, drawing heavily on the notion that the mainstream candidates were very much the same (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). Indeed, Le Pen had appeared to have toned down his image in the build up to the first round of voting of the 2002 Presidential election,

preferring, instead, to present himself as the wise father figure of French politics (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). Le Pen continued to portray this toned down image in subsequent elections. Indeed, Marine Le Pen, who is widely expected to win the FN leadership in January 2011, is seen to be keen to present the FN as a more moderate party (Lichfield, 2010).

A similar situation occurred in Austria, when Jorg Haider faced opposition after he took control of the FPO from the liberals in the party, who did not agree with his moving of the party towards the far right (Luther, 2003). Additionally, Haider faced criticism from those who were unhappy about the promotion of young newcomers and professionals into the party (Luther, 2003). However, Haider successfully maintained a strong leadership, by continually having those closest to him in the key roles in the party, meaning that party advancement was dependent on Haider himself (Morrow, 2000:49). Consequently, this led to a strong internal discipline in the party, allowing no room for any disenchantment or challenges to the leadership, as rivals were forced out to the margins (Morrow, 2000:49). The personality of Haider has also been argued as the greatest appeal of the FPO (Morrow, 2000). Haider successfully built up a strong anti-establishment stance and portrayed himself as the honest man and the outsider, showing him to be ever image conscious. Moreover, Haider was successful as he enjoyed something which other far right leaders had previously failed to enjoy,

namely positive media coverage. Art (2004) notes that Haider received twice as much coverage as any other politician in the national Austrian newspaper, *Krone Zeitung*, when he was only polling 3 per cent in the polls, approximating to free advertising. This was important to Haider, as it gave him the opportunity to attract new voters across the nation (Morrow, 2000; Art 2004). Such was the influence of Haider's personality and leadership that he returned to the forefront of Austrian politics at the 2008 general election, with his new BZO party. The popularity of Haider was further demonstrated in the numbers that turned out for his funeral in the town of Klagenfurt. A ceremonial funeral was afforded to Haider, with the funeral being broadcast on television, with an estimated 25,000 people attending in the capital, Vienna, to watch the funeral on large TV screens (CNN, 2008).

Further examples of strong leadership have been in evidence in the other parties. The Danish Folkspareti has been run with minimal factionalism or in-fighting under the leadership of Pia Kjaersgaard (Carter, 2005). Kjaersgaard has proved to be responsive to the needs of the electorate and has displayed "considerable political acumen" (Carter, 2005:91) Where Kjaersgaard perhaps differs to the leadership style of Fortuyn, Haider and Le Pen, is in what has been described as her "apparent-level headedness" that appeals to voters (Roxburgh, 2002:213). Kjaersgaard's style displays a good degree of political acumen in her leadership, an aspect which is more likely to appeal to the electorate, as it displays a more moderate image to her

far right party (Carter, 2005). This political acumen and skilful leadership has also been seen to be in evidence by Fillip Dewinter. Dewinter was credited with making the party structure become more efficient and also for having a unifying effect on the party, with dissent becoming minimal amongst members (Carter, 2005).

Much of the rise of the BNP has been put down to the leadership of Griffin who has attempted to modernise the party, which was seen as out of touch and too extreme under Tyndall (Copsey, 2004). Griffin has faced party discontent on two notable cases; firstly, when newly appointed as leader of the BNP, he faced a division amongst party members between hardliners, and those more moderate members, over policy and strategy in the party (Carter, 2005). More recently, there appears to have been the first serious challenge to the leadership of Griffin with a party split emerging, which has seen dozens of local organisers form their own separate right wing party calling themselves The Real BNP. These members have become disillusioned with the manner in which Griffin has been ruling the party, notably in the Yorkshire region (BBC, 2007). However, Griffin was strong to discipline dissenters in the party, displaying the strong leadership skills that has been in evidence amongst fellow far right leaders, who have also received challenges and in-fighting in their respective parties, such as Le Pen, and Haider (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003; Luther, 2003). However, the 2010 general election campaigning was dominated by elements of factionalism within the party which saw

Nick Griffin accusing members of his party of a plot to kill him and which saw publicity director Mark Collett arrested (Gabatt and Taylor, 2010).

Furthermore, in comparison to his European counterparts, and as noted in Chapter 2.6, Griffin has struggled with regard to his image amongst the British electorate, facing accusations of being a holocaust denier and also accusations with regard to his extreme past, including being a "Strasserite Nazi" (Copsey, 2004:110). Griffin has been caught on a BBC *Panorama* documentary expressing racist views, which led to two court cases where he was accused on two counts of using words or behaviour likely to stir up racial hatred, in speeches filmed in West Yorkshire in 2004 (BBC, 2004). The public image of Griffin therefore, is quite far removed from the 'respectability' image associated with leaders such as Kjaersgaard and Haider.

4.7.4 Party image

Linked into the question of leadership image, is that of the party image. The far right parties in Western Europe are, arguably, now seen as being legitimate parties due to steps taken to present themselves as more moderate. Notably, they have been able to attract politicians who have been with the mainstream parties, particularly the centre right, in a bid to enhance their image and legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate. Examples of this include the FN in the 1980s, who were able to attract politicians from the centre-

right, amongst them Bruno Mégret. Whilst in Austria, young politicians saw their career chances enhanced by moving to the FPO whereby its respectability increased and, in turn, led to them becoming a highly organised and wealthy political party (Art, 2004). Haider was also conscious of the image of his party and specifically brought in female candidates in order to present the party as a party for all Austrians. Non-party professional experts were brought in to establish areas such as communications and also in a bid to train-up existing functionaries. However, the parachuting in of these professionals brought about great dissatisfaction amongst the long-standing members of the party, who feared a change in party ideology in a bid to attract the electorate (Luther 2003:209).

Yet the BNP have struggled to present a similar image. Whilst Griffin has portrayed himself as a more moderate leader and, indeed, has been able to attract candidates with professional backgrounds, such as Michael Newland, who stood as London Mayoral candidate in 1999, the party are still dogged by accusations of violence and extremism in some candidates' backgrounds (Copsey, 2004). This poses problems for the party, as Griffin has acknowledged, whereby the public "will never support a party which has about it anything which gives credibility to the inevitable media smear of Nazi" (Copsey, 2004:110)

The 2010 general election highlighted the lack of professionalism amongst the party particularly with regard to their campaigning. The BNP website, considered by the party to be a key element in their campaigning, was closed by website manager Simon Bennett, accusing Griffin of being "pathetic, desperate and incompetent" (Hamilton, 2010). A subsequent message from Griffin was put on the website, but with nothing else on the site. The party's cause was further hindered by footage of Bob Bailey, candidate for Romford, brawling with Asian youths whilst out canvassing, which featured across the national media days before the election (BBC, 2010b).

Furthermore, there have been questions raised with regard to the performance of BNP councillors when in office, since the BNP have experienced problems at the local level (Unison, 2008). The poor record of BNP councillors could, arguably, play a part in the future possibility of success at the national level as voters may deem that the BNP do not have the ability to produce effective and competent candidates to represent them (Copsey, 2004). Indeed, these problems had been seen with other far right parties in Europe, such as the FPO, where the party took on board anyone who was willing to stand as a candidate in its early years. Consequently, this led to problems for the party, as the sometimes controversial backgrounds of the candidates were often exposed (Luther, 2003). This appears to be the problem for the BNP and their bid to obtain the credibility as a serious alternative to the mainstream.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter set out to establish the position of the BNP at the national level with regard to two specific aims, firstly with a view to understanding how Griffin attempted to bring his party into line with those of other West European parties. The subsequent comparison reveals a number of key ideas. Firstly, that Griffin has made an effort to modernise and professionalise his party, to make it similar in style and structure to other West European far right parties. The policies of the BNP suggest that the party campaigns on similar issues to other Western far right parties, although there are areas where the BNP could be perceived as still having an element of being more extreme.

Secondly, it would appear that, whilst Griffin has made these efforts to present a more moderate image for his party, the failings at general elections point towards a party unable to shed an image of racism, a party lacking political legitimacy and faced with a strong centre-right who dominate the agenda on traditional far right issues, such as crime and immigration. Furthermore, Griffin has not been able to match the leadership skills of other far right leaders in Western Europe, in terms of displaying political acumen and skilful leadership of his party. With regard to the BNP at the local level, it, therefore, suggests that there must be local level specific factors which are allowing the party to win seats in local elections. These factors will be subsequently investigated in the next chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Five: Press coverage of the BNP at the 2006 local elections

5.1 Introduction

The role of the written media has come under close scrutiny when academics examine the rise of the far right in the Western Europe with debate centring on the press' role in relation to the increasing support of the far right (Roxburgh, 2002; John et al, 2006). This chapter examines how the BNP have had a potential effect on the coverage from the written press, and whether the press have actually aided this effect, through the way in which the BNP were reported and in terms of the amount and style of coverage that they received. The focus of this chapter is on the written press, thereby specifically omitting other forms of the media, notably local radio and local television. These forms are omitted due to the time-consuming manner and resources that providing suitable evidence would take (Moy et al, 2004; Druckman, 2005).

The chapter has chosen to examine press coverage as the BNP could have profited more from press coverage as opposed to traditional campaigning methods, due to the power of the press to give them exposure (Baimbridge and Anderson, 2008). Moreover, the written press has been chosen as newspapers are more partisan in their coverage compared to television and radio which are bound by issues of impartiality in their broadcasting, for instance, political advertising is not allowed on radio or television but is allowed in the British press

(Curtice, 1999; Mughan, 2000). Britain can be seen as good place to test newspapers due to their partisanship and their high readership, particularly in relation to other West European countries (Brynin and Newton, 2003). Furthermore, the partisanship of British newspapers is significant, in that they will not always follow specific traditional links as was seen at the 1997 British general election when the *Sun* switched its support from Conservative to Labour (Butler and Kavanagh, 1997). This partisan de-alignment by the national press therefore allows us to explore the question of just how much influence the press could hold over the voters at a time of an election.

Additionally, following Nick Griffin's appointment as BNP chairman in 2001 and his attempts to establish the BNP as a more moderate and respectable political party, there has been a focus on the way the party now interacts with the media. Griffin is widely seen as being media-savvy, placing particular importance on the way that the party is seen through the eyes of the press (Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005). The BNP now has a Media Monitoring Unit, which assesses all press reports regarding the BNP and then makes a response to these stories through the form of letters to the editor, or through a response from Griffin himself (StoptheBNP, 2007).

As press coverage of the BNP in the national and the local press could take a number of different forms, a number of aspects are examined in this chapter. Firstly the press coverage of the party itself is examined, studying how the members and policies of the far right party are

presented. Secondly, the reporting on issues such as asylum and immigration is studied, in order to establish whether this form of coverage is merely presenting an opportunity for the BNP to gain further support. Thirdly, the way in which the mainstream parties have reacted to the growing impact of the BNP through the press is considered, which examines the argument that all publicity for the BNP is good publicity Fieschi (2004). Finally, the 2006 UK local elections are studied in more detail, using both national and local press coverage, such as the use of opinion polls by the press, the number of the articles on the BNP itself, and the type of coverage which the party received in the local press.

5.2 The influence of the press at election times

One possible factor as to why the press carry influence at election time is that the loyalty to mainstream parties appears to be in decline, which as a consequence is leading to declining numbers in party membership (Kavanagh, 1995; Seyd and Whitely, 1994; 2002). Indeed, the interviews conducted by the researcher with local party leaders in Calderdale prior to the 2006 elections (see appendix) highlighted a struggle to campaign in all the wards in the region due to a lack of party activists, with candidates often having to rely on their family and friends to help with any direct campaigning, rather than party members and activists. Consequently, a reduction in party campaigning could be seen to reduce the profile of both the party and election itself. The role of the press, it could therefore be argued, is significant as it provides parties with a good way of getting across their

message to the most people possible, and it will also provide many voters with their only access to the election debate, allowing them to identify with a particular party. No amount of campaigning can compare with the millions of people who will read the newspapers, suggesting that the coverage of the press is vital to a successful election campaign (Patterson, 1993; Kavanagh, 1995; Mughan, 2000).

Moreover, local authorities have taken to advertising in the local press to encourage voters to turnout in higher numbers at a local election. This could perhaps be seen as an attempt to combat the nationalisation of the local elections and to re-establish the role of politics at the local level amongst the electorate. However, research has suggested that in areas where the local authorities attempted to increase voter turnout at elections through adverts in the local press, there was no significant increase in the voter turnout (Electoral Commission, 2008).

The 1992 British general election was significant with regard to press coverage given to the political parties in the days leading up to voting. The strong anti-Labour stance taken by the *Sun* in particular led the paper to exclaim, following the outcome of the results, that "It was the Sun wot won it." The tabloid editors were seen as "heroes" by those in the Conservative camp for their fierce and often personal attacks on Labour leader Neil Kinnock and other leading Labour figures (Kavanagh, 1995:185). The importance of the *Sun* attacks on the Labour Party was such that it was exposing many working class

voters, who would perhaps traditionally vote Labour, to a paper which was coming out strongly in support of the Conservatives (Kavanagh, 1995; Linton, 1995).

At the 1997 British general election, the press were not seen to exert as much influence on its outcome (Scammell and Harrop, 1997; Curtice, 1999). In this election, the *Sun*, which had been supportive of the Conservatives in 1992, switched support to New Labour, alongside other tabloids such as the *Star*. In particular, the *Sun* had become increasingly critical of John Major and the numerous scandals which affected the party at the time, leading to the decision to support Labour, following a meeting between Rupert Murdoch and Tony Blair (Wring, 2005:3).

Additionally, broadsheet papers such as the *Times* even refused to back the Conservatives, instead advising its supporters to vote for Euro-sceptic MPs (Butler and Kavanagh, 1997). However, despite these switches in support from major newspapers, the impact of the press on influencing the result is less clear, with the general feeling amongst academics being that the heavy Conservative defeat was down to the weaknesses of their party organisation and leadership, with the newspapers just reinforcing the views of the general public (Scammell and Harrop, 1997; Curtice, 1999; Mughan, 2000; Street, 2001).

With regard to the local elections, the local press has been accused of taking such a national angle in its coverage to an extent that it could

be accused of a nationalisation in its reporting, with little regard given to consequences for the local authorities. Reporting has now become centred on the implications for the political parties and any future general elections (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997). Consequently, this could lead to long term effects on role that local authorities play. If the local elections were to solely become a yardstick for the popularity of the government, then this could lead to a break up of local politics, and less interaction between the community and the political parties. If political campaigning is reduced further at the local level, this could potentially open up more opportunities for a party which campaign at grassroots, such as the BNP, and enable them to garner support.

This could be as a consequence of the lack of contact with the mainstream parties and the electorate, as voters may be prepared to vote for the BNP if they are seen to be taking an active role in the community, best representing their voice at the local level.

5.3 The ability of the press to affect the electorate

It would, however, appear that caution must be exercised in making judgements about the ability of the press to potentially have an effect on the electorate. As far as political coverage is concerned, the reasons behind choosing a newspaper cannot be simply attributed to the coverage the newspaper gives to politics. Likewise, it would appear certainly more reasonable to assume that readers were more likely to buy the newspapers that fit with their own political views, as opposed to those of a contrasting style (Brynin and Newton, 2003).

Subsequently, it would be unwise to assume that newspapers are holding an influence over their readers; indeed the argument can be that the newspapers, increasingly concerned about maintaining their circulation levels, are more likely to try and align their coverage into what they feel their readers will want to read (Curtice and Semetko, 1994). There is certainly some sense therefore, that the newspapers are merely "preaching to the converted" (Mughan, 2000:245, Street, 2001).

This leads to another important notion of the views of the voters themselves. It would be unreasonable to assume that the voters are going to believe and be influenced by the politics coverage in the press and cannot be treated as "mindless dupes" (Nineham, 1996). Indeed, there appears to be a growing scepticism amongst the readers with regard to the coverage of politics in the press, particularly with regard to coverage in the tabloids (Street, 2001).

5.4 The style of political coverage in the written press

The coverage of local and national elections by the press has evolved over time, whereby a major factor for the change in reporting styles has been the emergence of the power of television, particularly with twenty-four hour news channels, which are now able to be first with reporting on the campaign. The written press is consequently unable to compete with television in the real time reporting of election campaigning, leading them to change to a more analytical style (Harrop, 1986; Patterson, 1993). Whereas previously, newspapers

would report on the campaign merely by printing the speeches and actions of the party leaders, they now appear more willing to run a more detailed analysis of the elections, with the use of pollsters and political experts (Patterson, 1993; Kavanagh, 1995; Negrine, 1998). Moreover, these detailed critiques of the election campaign has given rise to a suggestion that the press are now reporting campaigns with a negative, almost distrusting style, with the written press being "responsible for alienation, cynicism, distrust, political withdrawal and apathy" (Norris, 2000:4)

Consequently, the written press is looking for new angles on which to report the election. One such style therefore, has been to move away from issues of the election and to focus more on the personality of the candidates involved in the election. This would include looking at personality issues, sound bites from the candidates, and the behaviour and personal lives of the candidates (Postman, 1987; Dahlgren, 1995; Mughan, 2000).

Additionally, there would appear to be a struggle for space in both the local and national press to cover politics in as much detail as previously possible (Brynin and Newton, 2003). Politics coverage now has to fight for space alongside other articles in many newspapers and as a consequence, coverage is not as extensive as it was formerly. This has been seen to occur in the tabloids and in the local press, which has witnessed a growth of lifestyle articles, which are more light-hearted stories and tend to focus more on celebrity and showbiz

rather then politics. Seemingly there is a case to argue at both local and national level that the growth of lifestyle stories has come about as readers are no longer seen to be interested in politics and would rather be reading lifestyle items in the press (Franklin and Murphy, 1998). Thus due to the high competition in the British press, editors are forced to go with what they believe will sell the most newspapers and invariably this could possibly mean less politics (Franklin and Murphy, 1998). Additionally, at the local level the resources available to the newspapers are in decline, leading editors to take into account the need for advertising in the papers, which can take up space previously allocated to news stories (Franklin and Murphy 1998; Negrine, 1998).

Therefore it would appear that press reporting at election times has seemingly evolved, in terms of the style of coverage. Newspapers are under pressure to make their coverage as interesting and innovative as they can, due to a high competition from other forms of media. However, despite this, the written press still has an important role to play in the coverage of elections. Political parties still rely on the support from the written press. The apparent reduction in traditional campaigning leads to a suggestion that the written press represents the best chances for the parties to get their opinions and policies across to a large audience.

5.5 Press coverage of the BNP

The national press has previously been seen to take a strong stance against the far right, notably throughout the 1970s and the 1980s with the press taking a stand against the National Front (Eatwell, 2000; John et al, 2006). However, it would appear that despite these attempts by the BNP to present the party in a more moderate way, negative coverage and the conduct of its members still dominates its press coverage *(Mirror*, 2003). Paradoxically, there are concerns that the exposure given to the BNP by the national press is not justified, and is only serving to give the BNP free publicity. This can be seen in the way the media cover the issues of asylum and immigration and indeed the manner in which the mainstream parties have responded to the threat of the far right success at election times (Copsey 2004; Fieschi, 2004; Eatwell, 2005)

Moreover, in the build up to the 2006 local elections, columnists in the *Daily Mail* such as Richard Littlejohn sympathised with voters who were prepared to vote for the BNP (Littlejohn, 2006), whilst Sir Andrew Green, chairman of Migration Watch UK, wrote that the BNP were being supported in Barking not due to their policies but due to their frustrations with the Labour government (Green*,* 2006). Whilst these columnists were not advocating voting for the BNP, there was an attempt to understand the frustrations of some voters, and trying to establish why the BNP no longer only attracted 'extremists' to the party. Thus it would appear that whilst the reporting of the party itself

is still heavily negative, critical articles of the mainstream parties coupled with reporting by the press on other issues such as immigration and asylum appear to demonstrate understanding from the written press as to why voters are turning to the BNP at election times.

5.5.1 The press reporting of asylum and immigration

The media's reporting of asylum and immigration issues has been criticised in that it has given parties of the far right an opportunity to establish themselves as a household name in British politics (Eatwell 2006:212). In recent years, the national press has been accused by anti-fascist groups and academics alike of exaggerating and sensationalising the issues of immigration and asylum, which could be to the benefit of the BNP (Roxburgh, 2002; Renton, 2003; Fieschi, 2004; Copsey, 2004, Eatwell, 2006).

This accusation is based on the notion that the BNP are given further scope to develop their immigration policies, as they can point to the media coverage as a means of justifying such policies. There is also an accusation that the press coverage of immigration is giving rise to a sense of 'Islamophobia', which only serves to heighten existing racial tensions in communities (Eatwell, 2005). Additionally, whilst the sensationalist headlines and language regarding immigration and asylum have traditionally been associated with the tabloids, there is evidence to suggest that the striking headline warnings about the

threat of mass immigration are no longer confined to the tabloids, but are also in evidence across the range of national press (*Daily Telegraph*, 2006; *Times,* 2006).

5.5.2 The response from the mainstream parties to the BNP

Another impact resulting from the press coverage of immigration and asylum is that the major parties feel increasingly obliged to address these issues. A MORI poll in 2005 showed that immigration had become the major election issue for readers of the *Express,* the *Sun* and the *Mail* (Eatwell, 2005). Yet it would seem that the mainstream parties are uncertain about how to deal with the growing importance of the immigration issue and the presence of the BNP. The British general election of 2005 particularly showed this to be the case when Michael Howard and the Conservative Party received criticism from the *Guardian* newspaper over the party's stance on immigration during their election campaign. Media opinion was split as to whether Howard was correct to publicly take on the challenge of the BNP, or whether he was just giving them undue publicity (Tempest, 2004a&b). Kavanagh and Butler (2005:76) note how Peter Hain called the Conservative's immigration stance at the 2005 election "scurrilous, ugly, right-wing tactics." However, they also acknowledge that whilst immigration was the main theme of just one Conservative press conference during the 2005 election campaign, immigration was the issue which caused most consternation amongst its own party members and the press (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005:76-77).

The Labour Party addressed the issue of asylum, again causing much debate amongst party members as to how to deal with the issue of immigration and the BNP. In the Labour Party, Margaret Hodge notably received press coverage for her comments regarding the potential BNP vote in her constituency of Barking (Dodd and Wintour, 2006).

5.6 The national press coverage of the BNP at the 2006 local elections

5.6.1 Methodology

All major national daily newspapers are examined for their number of articles about the BNP with the exception of the *Financial Times*, which is regarded as a predominantly business and financial newspaper (Baimbridge and Anderson, 2008).

The papers are divided into two groupings firstly whether they are tabloid or broadsheet, secondly whether they can be deemed as being on the left or right wing regarding their perceived political bias. The categorising between tabloid and broadsheets is based on an assumption that broadsheet newspapers will be more likely to report on issues of current affairs than tabloids, are they are regarded as being more upmarket and serious.

With regard to dividing the newspapers into a left-right grouping, this is done so as the newspapers could be argued to be reporting on the BNP with different agendas. The right wing press may report on the BNP with a view to how they affect the Conservative vote. Furthermore, the left wing press could be said to be reporting from a viewpoint that they have a "moral duty to expose the image of respectability that the BNP have sought to develop in recent years" (Baimbridge and Anderson, 2008:7). In this study therefore, the *Independent*, *Guardian* and *Mirror* are categorised as left wing, with the *Sun*, *Mail*, *Express*, *Telegraph* and *Times* categorised as right wing

In 2003, the BNP were four years into the leadership of Griffin, whose plans to increase the national awareness for the party were beginning to have some effect on the national media, with coverage for the party beginning to appear consistently around the time of the May election. Table 5.1 shows that at this time they were beginning to gain coverage in the broadsheet newspapers, notably in the *Independent* and the *Guardian,* alongside high levels of reporting in the *Mirror, Mail* and *Express*. Coverage of the BNP appears to be less in the *Star* and *Sun*, which is not perhaps surprising given the nature of the newspapers, but also in the *Telegraph*, which only totals 27 articles between January and July 2003.

Table 5.1 Press coverage of the BNP at the 2003 Local elections

Date	Express	Guardian	Independent	Daily Mail	Mirror	Star	Sun	Telegraph	Times
Jan-03	9	9	9	5	14	4	10	6	14
Feb-03	1	6	11	3	2	5	2	6	8
Mar-03	1	3	4	5	1	1	1	0	0
Apr-03	13	15	14	19	3	2	4	5	5
May-03	21	20	23	18	18	7	16	8	16
Jun-03	1	5	2	0	7	1	1	1	3
Jul-03	3	5	1	1	4	2	2	1	2
Total	49	64	64	51	49	22	36	27	48
Average	7	9.1	9.1	7.2	7	3.4	5.1	3.8	6.8

Source: LexisNexis

The national coverage of the party increased the following year when the local and European elections took place in June 2004 (Table 5.2). In the month before the elections the BNP received considerable coverage in some newspapers, such as the *Guardian* and *Independent*, yet received little coverage in many of the other national newspapers, either the tabloids (*Express, Mail, Mirror, Sun, Star*) or the broadsheets (*Guardian, Independent, Telegraph, Times*). However, the average number of monthly articles increases for all newspapers compared with the averages from 2003.

Table 5.2 Press coverage of the BNP at the 2004 Local elections

Date	Express	Guardian	Independent	Daily Mail	Mirror	Star	Sun	Telegraph	Times
Jan-04	3	7	2	0	4	3	2	0	1
Feb-04	8	13	6	3	26	3	5	9	12
Mar-04	7	10	7	10	18	4	14	3	11
Apr-04	10	16	22	11	21	6	15	5	8
May-04	9	27	23	11	18	6	7	7	12
Jun-04	3	49	38	20	17	4	3	12	22
Jul-04	13	15	12	11	14	10	18	10	11
Total	53	137	110	66	118	36	64	46	77
Average	7.5	19.5	15.7	9.4	16.8	5.1	9.1	6.5	11

Source: LexisNexis

By 2006, the BNP were receiving significantly higher coverage from all newspapers, suggesting an increase in awareness of the party nationally, with the results suggesting that the party was beginning to establish a higher profile in the national press (Table 5.3). Whereas in 2003, the average monthly number of articles featuring the BNP did not get into double figures for any paper, in 2006, just two newspapers, the *Express* and the *Star* did not reach double figures in their average monthly coverage of the party.

Table 5.3 Press coverage of the BNP at the 2006 local elections

Date	Express	Guardian	Independent	Daily Mail	Mirror	Star	Sun	Telegraph	Times
Jan-06	5	16	9	3	5	5	6	5	11
Feb-06	10	19	14	12	10	6	9	14	10
Mar-06	1	8	7	6	1	1	3	2	2
Apr-06	23	40	33	32	23	17	30	35	23
May-06	17	39	31	27	17	14	25	29	25
Jun-06	5	19	9	4	5	0	2	1	7
Jul-06	1	13	5	7	1	0	1	2	5
Total	62	154	108	91	62	43	76	88	83
Average	8.8	22	15.4	13	8.8	6.1	10.8	12.5	11.8

Source: LexisNexis

By examining the number of articles that the BNP received in 2003 and 2006, it is clear that the BNP are starting to have an effect on local elections. The results in Table 5.4 demonstrate just how much the coverage of the BNP has increased across the national written press, from 410 hits in 2003 to 767 hits in 2006. The results also reveals that the increase in national press coverage of the BNP has not been confined to any particular area of the press, be it left or right wing, or tabloid or broadsheet. Every newspaper has an increase in coverage of the party, with notable increases in the broadsheets, particularly the Guardian and Telegraph. It would appear, therefore, that regardless of the agenda that the newspaper may have when reporting the BNP, the party are viewed as being more newsworthy and thus, offers a suggestion that their growing presence at local elections is contributing to this increase in coverage.

Table 5.4 Average number of BNP article reporting in the national press, 2003-2006

Paper	2003	2006
Express	49	62
Guardian	64	154
Independent	64	108
Mail	51	91
Mirror	49	62
Star	22	43
Sun	36	76
Telegraph	27	88
Times	48	83
Total	410	767

Source: LexisNexis

To further demonstrate the difference in reporting between tabloid and broadsheet reporting, coverage of the BNP from January to June 2006 is charted, to show the differences in the coverage given to the BNP. To obtain these results demonstrated in Figure 5.1 below, the results were weighted by forming an average monthly number of articles for tabloid and broadsheet. The graph confirms how the average coverage from the broadsheet newspapers is higher than that of the tabloids throughout this period.

Figure 5.1 Broadsheet and tabloid coverage of the BNP, January to June 2006
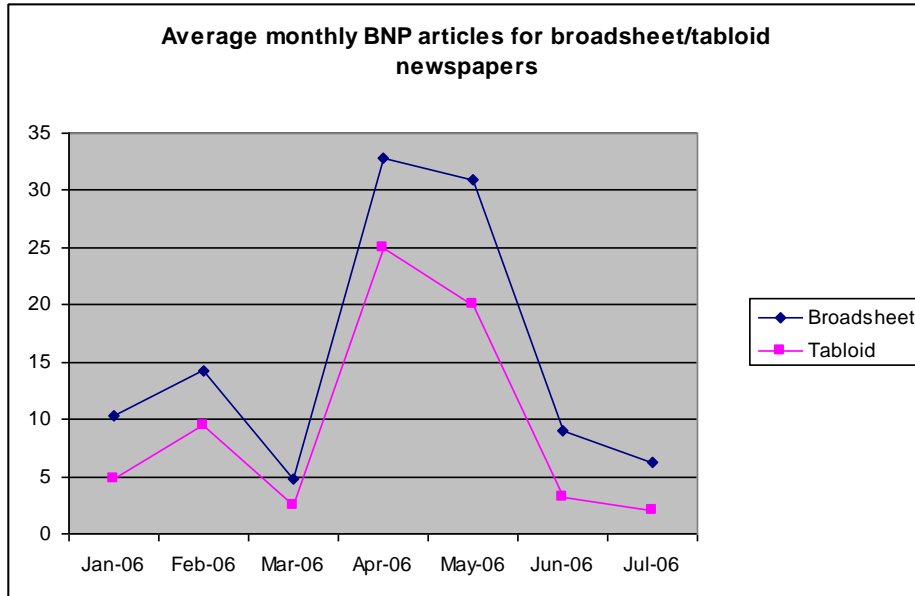
Source: LexisNexis

The tabloid press have in the past been accused of misleading and often overplaying the potential threat of the BNP and also of the asylum and immigration situation (Eatwell, 1995). Yet it is perhaps not surprising that the broadsheets cover the BNP more than the tabloids. Possible explanations for this occurrence include the notion that the broadsheets tend to cover the elections and politics in general in a lot more detail than the tabloids. The tabloid press will often focus on the 'lifestyle issues' and even where election coverage is concerned, coverage is often given over to issues of personality as opposed to policy. The broadsheets, in contrast, are more likely to focus on policy

issues as much as campaign issues in their coverage (Franklin and Murphy, 1998). Furthermore, it is equally as important to note that on average, broadsheet papers are more likely to have a greater number of articles in the paper than any tabloid; subsequently the broadsheet may have more articles than the tabloid on any topic.

The same test was carried out between the papers deemed left wing and right wing, again weighted in order to provide an average monthly number of articles to compare political orientation of coverage. The coverage of the BNP has traditionally been linked more to right-wing newspapers, due to the views of these newspapers with regards to issues such as asylum and immigration (Eatwell, 2000). Figure 5.2 indicates that is the left wing newspapers which on average covered the BNP more times around the time of the 2006 local elections. Nevertheless, the left-wing newspapers appear to focus more on the BNP, particularly in the months of April and May. This adds weight to the argument that the left-wing newspapers are seemingly the newspapers which are apparently more concerned about the threat of the BNP at the local elections and are more determined to highlight this threat (*Guardian* 2006). The left-wing newspapers are also more likely to be sympathetic towards issues of immigration and asylum, which in turn leads to the tougher stance against the far right.

Figure 5.2 Coverage of the BNP by left/right orientation newspapers, January to June 2006
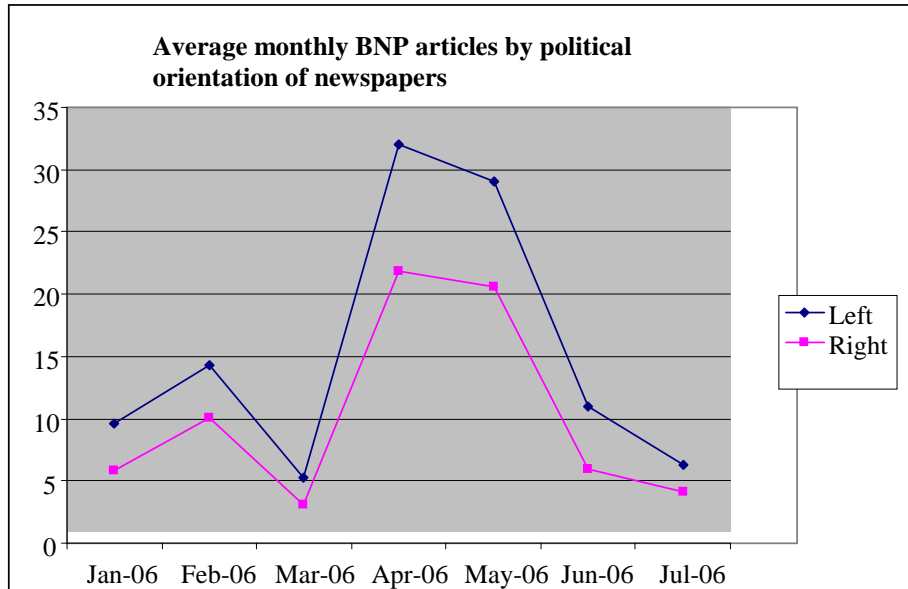
Source: LexisNexis

These findings demonstrate just how much the coverage of the BNP increased from March to April. There was an even sharper fall in articles in the aftermath of the election, in the months of June and July. This suggests that the BNP appeared to receive more coverage in the build up to the election, as opposed to the aftermath of the election. One such explanation for this occurrence is that, despite the BNP recording their best results in the 2006 local elections, the number of councillors they had nationwide was still a small number (53); therefore the impact that they make following the election results can be minimal. A sign of the BNP's electoral appeal can be seen by the coverage that the party received in the month following the

election, which drops sharply again, only reaching double figures in the *Guardian*. Indeed, coverage of the BNP between elections is nominal.

It is, therefore, the campaign that appears to attract the most press coverage for the BNP, indeed the BNP, received the publicity they were craving in the 2006 election campaign following the John et al (2006) report, which examined the potential support for the BNP in the local elections and also set out to examine where the party were making gains, alongside the strategies they were using to attract potential voters (John et al, 2006). This publicity came just under two weeks before the election began, giving the BNP an opportunity to gain extensive coverage in both the broadsheets and the tabloids, something which it is unlikely that they would previously have had otherwise (Jenkins, 2006).

Moreover, studies have suggested that the BNP seemingly tend to focus on campaigning which is much more local, often focusing on contentious issues, and stirring up feelings amongst the electorate, as opposed to a strategic national campaign (John et al, 2006). The newspapers may therefore merely be reporting on BNP campaigns in isolated cases and not at a national level like the mainstream parties.

5.7 Local press coverage of the BNP

In addition to the national press coverage of the BNP, an analysis of the local press is now considered. Local newspapers have often led campaigns urging readers to reject far right parties. An example of this was in Barking in 2006, where the local written press led a strong campaign against the party. This type of campaign has been replicated across the country, where the BNP have attempted to gain a foothold (Copsey, 2004).

However, local newspapers have also been accused of unwittingly carrying out campaigning for the BNP, much in the same way it can be argued national newspapers have done (Copsey 2004). For example, the local written press' coverage of the perceived BNP presence in a town or district is often disproportionate in terms of the actual BNP presence. Often the party may receive detailed coverage on its intention to field candidates when in fact only one or two candidates are being put forward. Thus Copsey (2004) notes the *Oldham Chronicle*'s reporting of Asian groups' attacks on whites which inadvertently played into the hands of the BNP. It was the *Chronicle's* reporting on the attacks alongside stories of extra funding for Asian communities which provided the BNP with an opportunity to increase its presence in the town, with Copsey noting that it was "hard not to overdo the significance of the *Chronicle*'s reporting" (2004:148).

The BNP is, therefore, generally unable to campaign in a positive manner through the local media. However, there appears to be a trend throughout the country, whereby BNP members and supporters will write in to local newspapers, either backing the party and its policies or criticising the local councillors (StoptheBNP, 2007). The *Stop the BNP* (2007) campaign group highlighted the concerns of a local councillor that the addresses of the supposedly concerned residents were not actual addresses. The local press therefore, provides a clear opportunity for BNP supporters and campaigners to get their opinions noted, which may not be possible on other media forms such as television and radio.

5.7.1 Examining the local press coverage of the 2006 local elections

An examination of two local newspapers in West Yorkshire allows us to develop more of an understanding about the way in which local politics is reported. The newspapers examined in this study are the *Halifax Courier* (circulation 26,000), which serves the Calderdale region and the *Telegraph and Argus* (circulation 44,000), which is the local newspaper for Bradford (Press Gazette, 2010). The BNP has enjoyed electoral successes in Bradford and Halifax since 2002, with the party enjoying its first success outside Lancashire with the victory of Adrian Marsden in the Mixenden by-election in 2003. The electoral support for the BNP in Bradford at the local level seemingly began to grow at about the same time as it did in Calderdale, with the party

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taking advantage of the racial tension and the riots which occurred in July 2001 (Copsey 2004). The party fielded six candidates in the 2003 local elections and whilst they did not return any candidates to Bradford council, their strong performances suggested that they would pose a real threat to the mainstream parties in future elections. The growing presence of the BNP in Bradford was confirmed a year later when four councillors were elected representing the wards of Bradford South, Queensbury, Keighley West and Wibsey. In 2006 the BNP won a seat in the Queensbury ward, along with polling well in a number of other wards. A study of these wards based on data from the 2001 census highlights similarities with wards in Calderdale where the BNP have enjoyed success. The similarities are in terms of a lack of employment and a higher number of people receiving benefits. (Census 2001)

5.7.2 Methodology of analysis

The newspapers featured were both analysed over a period of one month, from 7th April 2006 to 9th May 2006. This was done to allow an examination of the progression and the nature of the press coverage in the period leading up to the election on May 4th, and the reaction in the aftermath of the results. The newspapers are published from Monday to Saturday every week and every day of publication was examined.

5.7.3 Analysis of the local press in West Yorkshire

Firstly, the weekly amount of politics coverage in the month leading up to the election and its immediate aftermath was examined (Table 5.5). This revealed that in the month leading up to the election on the 4th May, there is a lack of coverage covering political articles of any type. When referring to politics, all aspects related to politicians such as their personal lives, political parties and policy at both a national or local level was considered as political coverage. Indeed, the only in depth coverage the elections received was following their outcome on the 6th May when three to four pages in both papers were devoted to looking at what happened and the fortunes for all the parties (*Telegraph and Argus*, 2006b). In the days before the election, whereas the *Telegraph and Argus* published a list of candidates standing for election, there was no such equivalent in the *Halifax Courier*, with it common to find no mention of the election or indeed any political stories in the *Courier* only a fortnight prior to elections.

In general, politics is kept off the front page in both local newspapers. The *Telegraph and Argus* featured politics on the front page just twice, with politics on the front page of the *Halifax Courier* just three times in the period of analysis. Moreover, the stories that do make the front page are associated with the image of councillors, focusing on the private life of a local councillor and the theft of anti-BNP papers being linked to a local BNP councillor (*Halifax Courier*, 2006a&b).

Table 5.5 Weekly breakdown of articles relating to politics 7 April-9 May 2006

Dates	*Halifax Courier*	*Telegraph and Argus*	Total
7-14th April	7	7	14
15th-22nd April	5	8	13
23-30th April	3	11	14
1st-9th May	17	16	33
Total	32	42	74
Weekly average	8	10.5	18.5

Source: Own analysis

Where there is coverage of politics, it appears that it is the image of the candidates standing which appears to receive the greater coverage. In total, 55.2 per cent of coverage across both the *Courier* and the *Telegraph and Argus* concerns image, as opposed to programme or campaign. Mughan (2000) discussed that the election coverage has evolved to an extent that the image of the candidate plays a more important role in each national election, and this appears to now be the case at local level. Hence it appears to be the suitability of the candidate as a person to be a politician, rather than their policies, which is more important to the press.

Table 5.6 Principal themes of reporting in the local press 7 April-

9 May 2006

	Image	Campaign	Programmes
Halifax Courier	15 (55.6%)	10 (37%)	2 (7.4%)
Telegraph and Argus	22 (52.3%)	5 (11.9%)	15 (35.7%)
Total	37 (55.2%)	15 (22.3%)	17 (25.3%)

Source: Own analysis

The content analysis carried out demonstrated that where there is coverage of the BNP, this too is predominantly concerned with the image of the candidates (Table 5.7). The local press therefore are arguably following the trend which we have seen from the national press in Britain, in which coverage of the BNP has tended to focus on the backgrounds of the candidates and members of the party. The *Courier* also focused more on the lack of suitability of candidates to be councillors, such as highlighting the court appearances of candidates and BNP members (*Halifax Courier* 2006c).

Table 5.7 Principal themes of reporting of the BNP in the local press   7 April- 9 May 2006

BNP	Image	Campaign	Programmes
Halifax Courier	6	1	1
Telegraph and Argus	9	1	1

Source: Own analysis

5.7.4 Local press coverage of the BNP

The *Telegraph and Argus* has often been at the forefront of campaigning against the BNP and this proves to be the case in the build-up to the 2006 local elections. The BNP is the party received the most negative coverage out of all the political parties standing in the area (see Table 5.8).   In particular, the newspaper concentrated on the campaign group Stop the BNP, who were targeting Bradford as an area to prevent the BNP vote (Evans, 2006:). It carried photos of their rallies and concerts in the city in the build up to the election and included interviews with the leading figures of the campaign. The *Telegraph and Argus* also printed messages from key figures in the local community, such as local religious and community leaders, including the Archbishop of York, whilst the mainstream parties also put forward a united message against the BNP (*Telegraph and Argus* 2006:a). In the week building up to the election, editorials and articles by journalists again took a similar theme to the previous articles criticising the BNP.

The *Halifax Courier* had eight articles focusing on the BNP, all of which were negative in orientation. Like the *Telegraph and Argus*, the *Courier* featured some of this coverage on the front page, notably highlighting the theft of anti-BNP leaflets (*Halifax Courier* 2006a).

Table 5.8 Party coverage in the *Telegraph& Argus* [1] 7 April- 9 May 2006

	Conservative	Labour	Lib Dem	BNP	Green	All parties
Negative coverage	3	10	0	11	0	3
Positive coverage	3	0	0	0	1	0

Source: Own analysis

Table 5.9 Party coverage in the *Halifax Courier* 7 April- 9 May 2006

	Conservative	Labour	Lib Dem	BNP	Green	All
Negative Coverage	6	10	1	8	0	0
Positive Coverage	2	1	1	0	0	0

Source: Own analysis

However, it is important to note that other political parties also received negative coverage in both papers. The Labour Party received more negative press than the BNP in the *Halifax Courier* and a similar level of criticism in the *Telegraph and Argus* which focused on the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, who was under fire due to a

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[1] At the 2006 local elections, Bradford Council was led by the Conservative, whilst in Calderdale there was no overall control of the Council.

released criminal re-offending in Bradford (*Telegraph and Argus,* 2006b) resulting in a campaign calling for change to these policies. Negative coverage of the Conservative Party was centred on sleaze allegations involving local councillors in Bradford, alongside the reporting of the case which also dominated Conservative coverage in Calderdale, of two Conservative councillors caught up in a scandal involving postal votes (*Telegraph and Argus* 2006c). The negative coverage of all the parties therefore shows that this is not something confined simply to the BNP.

A further way of measuring any effect of the press coverage in relation to the BNP is to examine the results of the May 2006 local elections. Table 5.10 below shows the total number of councillors represents the number each party had following the 2006 elections, with the number in brackets representing the gains or losses in councillors from the 2004 elections. The candidate success rate represents the number of candidates elected from the total number of candidates which stood for the party in the two areas. The total votes for 2006 is the combined total for each party in the two regions with the share of votes being calculated from the total number of ballot papers returned.

Indeed it appears that the coverage, or lack of coverage, given to a particular party does not appear to have much an effect on the performance of the parties at the local elections. The performances of the Labour Party in Bradford and Calderdale appear to support this

observation whereby the BNP received criticism from both the *Halifax Courier* and the *Telegraph and Argus*, yet their performance in the 2006 local elections in Calderdale and Bradford saw them gain councillors, likewise the Liberal Democrats received minimal coverage, yet they too also suffered no losses in Bradford or Calderdale following the election.

Table 5.10 Party coverage in the local press and election results

Party/Location	Total councillors after 2006 election	Candidate success rate at 2006 election	Total votes 2006	Share of votes	Press articles for each party	Negative Articles
Conservative Bradford	33 (-1)	35.4%	42,635	31.4%	6	3
Labour Bradford	37 (+5)	46.8%	43,347	31.9%	10	10
Lib Dems Bradford	14 (0)	12.9%	25, 048	17.9%	3	0
BNP Bradford	2 (-1)	6.25%	18,212	13.4%	11	11
Conservative Calderdale	20 (-1)	35.2%	15,675	29.7%	8	6
Labour Calderdale	10 (+1)	22.2%	12,779	24.2%	11	10
Lib Dems Calderdale	10 (+1)	22.2%	13,661	25.9%	2	1
BNP Calderdale	2 (-1)	12.5%	5,162	9.8%	8	8

The results show that there does not appear to be any strong correlation between negative coverage and electoral performance. The BNP lost a seat in both Calderdale and Bradford, although it cannot be solely put down to the negative press coverage of the BNP. For example, other factors such as local campaigning by the mainstream parties have to be taken into account, whilst there could also be some dissatisfaction with the performance of the BNP councillors in those wards, leading to reluctance to vote for the party. Additionally, although the BNP did not make any gains in the number of seats, it is notable that they managed to win a seat in Queensbury in Bradford, an area where they had not previously won a seat, thus suggesting that the *Telegraph and Argus'* negative coverage of the BNP did not deter new voters for the party.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter set out to establish press coverage of the BNP at both and national and local level. In taking a unique method of analysis using the LexisNexis package, the chapter has demonstrated the rise of the BNP in the national press. This rise has not been restricted to one particular grouping but has been witnessed across all forms of press, regardless of tabloid or broadsheet, or left/right orientation. Whilst coverage of the BNP has been predominantly negative, it appeared that national editors viewed the rise of the BNP as newsworthy and interesting to their readership. The consequence of such a rise in coverage for the BNP between 2004 and 2006 however,

is that it raises questions regarding the oxygen of publicity that can be said to have provided the BNP. As the BNP only had 53 councillors in 2006, it suggests that the amount of coverage for the party was perhaps not entirely justifiable. Yet the rise in coverage that the party received does lead to a suggestion that the BNP were beginning to capitalise on any publicity through either opportunism or through a more organised structure, such as their Media Monitoring Unit. Such methods were leading to the party getting their name in the paper more frequently. Indeed the increase in coverage can be put down to an awareness from the public that the BNP were beginning to win support nationwide, the coverage that the party received in the national press as a consequence of the publishing of the John et al (2006) report demonstrates the public's growing awareness of the presence of the BNP.

Furthermore, a content analysis of press coverage at the local level raises an issue which is that of lethargy with regard to elections. The lack of coverage given over to local elections would appear to suggest that coverage of politics is not deemed as being of importance for readers and therefore suggests that local politics is not viewed as important to the electorate. These findings therefore raise questions about the BNP at the local level, in terms of why they are raising their profile in the media in the build up to local elections. It also highlights an issue regarding the way in which local elections are now viewed by

the electorate. These issues will be investigated in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Certainly, the study of BNP coverage in the *Courier* and *Telegraph and Argus* shows signs of the newspapers wishing to lead a campaign to prevent voters from turning to the far right. However, any negative coverage for the BNP is seemingly matched by equally negative coverage for the mainstream parties, raising further questions about the way in which local politics and politicians are viewed by the electorate.

Chapter Six: BNP campaigning at the local level

6.1 Introduction

The comparative perspective in Chapter Four established that there have been failings from the BNP at the national level, particularly with regard to factors concerning the negative image of the BNP and leader Nick Griffin and the role played by the mainstream parties in preventing the far right dominating debate on immigration. Yet, whilst the BNP are yet to have displayed any significant effect on the general elections in Britain, the changed at the local level, where the party have enjoyed periods of success, notably in Dagenham and Barking, where the 12 seats won in 2006 saw the party become the official opposition on Barking council. Following the 2010 local elections, the party had 24 local councillors across England which is still a relatively small number, in comparison with other minor parties such as the Green Party, who had 126 seats.

This chapter examines the BNP at the local level, where the party have enjoyed electoral successes in direct comparison to their performance at the national level. The chapter will look to establish why the BNP have been able to enjoy such electoral success by focusing on a number of aspects, such as the state of local democracy, the activism of the mainstream parties at the local level and the campaigning and activism of the BNP at the local level.

6.2 The BNP at the local level

The far right's first seat at the local level occurred when the British Union of Fascists won one council seat in the 1930s; however, that proved to be the only success for the far right until the 1970s. In the 1960s National Front and BNP candidates stood around London, but had little electoral success, however, in the 1970s, increasing support for the National Front saw candidates being put forward in metropolitan areas. In 1973, the NF contested 68 wards, polling particularly well in the towns of Blackburn and Leicester, and averaging 15 per cent in contested wards, subsequently, a year later, the number of candidates contesting seats had risen to 164, concentrating mainly in the West Midlands and West Yorkshire (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997).

However, by 1983, the fractious nature of the British far right saw the NF unable to build on increasing support, leading to the party contesting less than one tenth of 1 per cent of wards (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997; Copsey, 2004). Subsequently, it wasn't until 1993 that the far right were to make an impression at the local elections, when the BNP won a seat in the Tower Hamlets ward, taking advantage of racial tensions in the area, (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997; Smith, 2009). This success proved to be short-lived, with Labour recapturing the seat in 1994 without any far right challenge, consequently, in 1995, just 25 candidates contested seats, "none

came anywhere close to being elected" (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997:180).

Yet the rise in BNP candidates between 2000 and 2007 following the appointment of Griffin, suggested that the BNP were having an effect in local politics. From 17 candidates standing in 2000, the party had grown to 744 candidates in 2007, with 292,911 votes (UAF, 2007). The BNP were to rise from its primary electoral successes in the North West, in 2002 and 2003, where the party was able to build on small pockets of support which had existed under the leadership of John Tyndall, to a party who were able to field candidates and win seats across Britain (Copsey, 2004). In 2006, the party fielded a total of 363 candidates across 78 councils and won 222,389 votes nationwide, with 33 councillors being elected (UAF, 2007). Whilst the number of BNP candidates was to increase to over 50, the number was to fall slightly in 2008 and 2009. In 2010, the party had 27 councillors defeated across the country, leaving them with 24 councillors. In Barking and Dagenham, the party lost all 12 seats which it had won in 2006 (BBC, 2010b).[2]

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[2] The exact number of BNP councillors who contested seats is not known, due to splits in the party, whereby some former BNP candidates stood as independents (Norris, 2010).

6. 3 The BNP's campaigning methods

There are signs BNP campaigning has become more modernised and sophisticated, following Nick Griffin's appointment as party chairman in 1999. The party are now particularly keen to present itself as a respectable political party, even urging supporters to refer to the party as the British National Party as opposed to the BNP, due to what they perceive as negative connotations of BNP in the national press. Furthermore, the party advises all members to be smartly dressed, allowing for no "unshaven scruffs or skinhead haircuts" (BNP, 2008:2).

In particular, its approach to local campaigning has been claimed to be based on more modern canvassing tactics previously used by the Liberal Democrats; whereby the party now seeks to establish itself as playing a major role in local community politics, immersing into the life of the local community, in order to work with the voters to find out what issues are important, in a bid to establish a "local legitimacy" (Copsey, 2004:137; John et al, 2006). They have done this by establishing a "helping hands" leaflet and "grumble" sheets, which they distribute before the start of campaigning, in order to understand the issues that concern local residents (BNP, 2008:3). Another way in which the party attempts to become active in local politics, is by joining local groups and committees. Indeed, the BNP leadership encourages prospective councillors to become community project leaders (BNP, 2008). The party also proposes local BNP groups hold days of action during the local campaign, such as "clean up days", where the local

neighbourhood is cleaned up of litter, in order to present the party in a positive light (BNP, 2008:3). This type of publicity has proved to be successful for the party, with Steve Smith in Burnley highlighting his local charitable work as a major focus of his successful campaign in 2002 (Copsey, 2004).

In 2008, the party further developed its canvassing techniques by establishing a direct mailing campaign, something which had been unprecedented for a far right party in Britain (BNP, 2008). Additionally, the BNP website provides specific instructions on how to canvass, which includes identifying interested voters and inviting them to attend social events to follow up their interest, encouraging candidates to leave calling cards with voters and to also promote the sale of the party newspaper, *Freedom* (BNP, 2008).

Furthermore, the party are also careful to avoid canvassing on households with members of ethnic minorities. Instead, they will identify potential voters from initial canvassing and will return to canvass interested voters in order to maximise their vote share (Copsey, 2004). They will then bring in activists from outside the area to help with the campaigning in those particular wards in order to have as great an impact as possible.

Moreover, traditionally it was thought that the BNP was attracting votes, notably from "young men through effective grassroots

campaigning" (Vision21, 2004:23). However, the BNP are seeking to win votes from all ages of voters, making them likely to win support from the elderly as well as younger voters, as elderly voters are worried by what they perceive as a decline in society and concerned that their area has changed due to the change in ethnic demographics, two issues on which the BNP campaign strongly (Goodwin, 2008).

Thus, it appears that the BNP leadership wish to have their candidates take an interest and active role in local politics and local issues. Indeed, whilst national issues are seen to be predominant in the press at local elections, local issues have traditionally been important. Miller (1988) found that 56 per cent of respondents claimed to be influenced in local elections more by local, than national issues. There is also a suggestion that the actions and image of the local politician themselves matters more to residents in the local elections (Miller, 1988).

The party maintain links former far right groups in Britain by looking to target particular seats that they believe will give them electoral successes (Copsey, 2004; John et al, 2006). Such an example of this can be witnessed in Burnley, where the BNP were said to have targeted the town in order to take advantage of the running of Burnley council by Independent councillors to further their own successes (Copsey, 2004). In terms of which voters the party are targeting with

regard to previous party allegiance, it has been claimed that the aim is to target Labour voters who have become disillusioned with Labour (Copsey, 2004). The BNP are less likely to campaign in safe seat wards, instead they seek to move into volatile wards, where perhaps there is less party competition, in order to maximise their vote-share (John et al, 2006). Whilst the party perhaps aims to target voters who have normally voted for Labour, there is a long held convention that they attract support from all the mainstream parties (Vision21, 2004; John et al, 2006). It would appear therefore, that the BNP are wining voters from across the mainstream parties and not just the Labour Party. Indeed, whilst the party generally stands in urban areas where the Labour Party have traditionally been strongly supported, this can arguably be linked to the profile of potential far right support more than the current state of the Labour Party (Eatwell, 2006; John et al, 2006).

6. 4 Activism in local politics

In addition to the BNP attempting to professionalize and bring an image of respectability to its campaigning, the state of politics at the local level can potentially provide a platform for the BNP to make electoral gains. Indeed, the very nature of the local election in Britain has appeared to undergo an evolution in terms of partisanship and voter alignment, in terms of the support for the mainstream parties. Such an evolution has witnessed a "weakening of voter ties" in Britain (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997:85). Therefore, fewer voters are now identifying themselves with the major political parties, thus leading to

the possibility of minor parties such as the BNP, winning a greater share of votes. Furthermore, the local elections have also become an opportunity for the electorate to express such a freedom from previous party ties, prompting the possibility that some voters may therefore vote for a party in a local election which they would not normally consider a vote for in a general election (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997).

Hence, local elections can benefit the minor political parties, as they can often provide opportunities for movements away from national trends. Specific issues relevant to one particular ward thus become the dominant theme of a campaign, with national issues playing no major role in deciding the electoral outcome, indeed "the ability of national level influences to explain local electoral outcomes had declined markedly" (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997:168).

Moreover, the lack of local political activism can appear to be a contributory factor to the success of the BNP at the local level. A Joseph Rowntree report (2005) examined local politics in Harrogate and Burnley and found that local politics, (that being the number of people involved in campaigning and running the local political parties), is effectively kept alive by just 100 people in each district. Hence, there is a strong case that local democracy could cease to be viable due to the decline of the mass party membership (Panebianco, 1988).

Furthermore, the image of local councillors in Britain has been described by Wilson and Game (2006) as not being a particularly positive one, particularly on television, where programmes such as *Coronation Street* have often depicted councillors in a negative and even corrupt manner. They further describe the incentives for being a councillor as 'meagre'. This has potential consequences for local democracy, as it means that local councillors tend to be retired or part-time workers, as full-time workers and younger voters cannot afford to give their time over to council duties for such low remuneration levels (Wilson and Game, 2006). In 2009, local councillors in Bradford were paid a basic amount of £12,759 plus expenses for items such as laptops and travel expenses (Winrow, 2009). Higher ranking councillors were earning between 30 and 50 thousand pounds a year (Winrow, 2009).

Additionally, British electoral turnout at the local level is the lowest in Western Europe (Joseph Rowntree, 2005; Wilson and Game, 2006). Indeed it was noted that in 2003, more people voted on the reality television show *Big Brother* than in the local elections (Hinscliff, 2003). This is of particular significance when considering far right support, since evidence in other countries, notably France has suggested that a low turnout has often been seen as a possible factor in allowing far right gains (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). The notion that a low turnout can profit the far right has been one which has been used by anti-

fascist campaigns and mainstream parties in a bid to raise the turnout levels at local elections (Husbands, 2000).

6.4.1 The mainstream parties at the local level

The decline in local democracy has affected the mainstream parties with both the Conservative and Labour Parties suffering a drop in membership numbers. The Labour Party membership hit a peak of 405,200 in 1997 at the time of Tony Blair's general election success, but had fallen to 198,026 ten years later (Kirkup and Prince, 2008). The Labour MP, John Cruddas, has called for the party to reconnect with the electorate, and rebuild at grassroots level (Kirkup and Prince, 2008). Similarly, the Conservative Party have seen a decline in membership figures, estimated at 290,000 in 2008, down from an estimated 750,000 under John Major's Premiership in the early 1990s (Kirkup and Prince, 2008). These figures suggest that there are reduced resources in terms of both finance and party workers available to the mainstream parties, which could severely effect campaigning at the local level. Subsequently, this provides the BNP with an opportunity to move into areas where the mainstream parties perhaps do not have a strong association due to the aforementioned lack of resources and that allows them to build a connection, and consequently, an electoral support.

6.4.2 Party competition at the local level

Therefore, having noted how there is seemingly a decline in activism and membership at the local level, the effect that it has on the possible BNP vote can be demonstrated in examining an area where the BNP performed well, to understand whether there was a lack of party competition which could lead to such successes.

Barking and Dagenham has been selected, due to the election results in 2006 where the party became the official opposition after having 12 councillors successfully elected. Barking and Dagenham is an area of East London that has witnessed a decline in its traditional industries, of fishing and car manufacturing, which has led to the area becoming one of the 50 most deprived areas in Britain (Goodwin, 2008). The area suffers from low levels of educational qualifications and has the lowest average income level in the capital (London Councils, 2008). Barking and Dagenham has also seen a strong rise in the number of immigrants into the area.

The success of the BNP in 2006 in Barking and Dagenham was a landmark election result for the party regarding the number of candidates who stood for election and the number of candidates who were elected. Only one candidate who stood for the BNP was not elected in the area, which appeared to demonstrate the increasing popularity and standing of the party in the local area. When examining

the results in more detail, the decline of participation in party activity appears to be in evidence.

Indeed, there can be a suggestion that the BNP benefited from the decision from major parties not to field candidates in a number of wards. In Barking and Dagenham there are parties who did not stand candidates at all in a number of wards, notably the Liberal Democrats, who did not stand in four wards, whilst the Conservatives did not stand in two wards (See Table 6.1). There are perhaps two possible explanations for the occurrence. Firstly it may be argued that, due to the reduction in members and activists for the mainstream parties, the parties did not have the resources in terms of finance or manpower to field a candidate in that area. Secondly, linked to the first explanation is the fact that the parties may have felt that they did not have any chance of winning that particular seat; therefore that party may not have chosen to put forward a candidate in order to concentrate on wards where they feel there is a better chance of winning.

Table 6.1 Mainstream parties' non-presence in the Barking and Dagenham 2006 local elections

Ward with elected BNP councillors	Non-competing parties
Alibon	Lib Dem
Eastbury	Conservative
Goresbrook	Lib Dem
Mayesbrook	Lib Dem
Parsloes	
Valence	Conservative, Lib Dem
Village	

Source: Barking and Dagenham Council, 2006

However, one possible effect of parties such as the Liberal Democrats not standing at the local level regards that of the protest vote. If voters wish to make a protest vote against a party in government, then there is more chance that they will turn to a minor party in order to register their protest vote. It has been argued that voters are perhaps more likely to register a protest vote for a minor party such as the BNP at the local level, than at the national level, as such a vote will not effect the national government, yet can serve as a wake-up call to the mainstream parties (Carter, 2005).

These arguments display greater credence when examining the 2010 local elections in Barking, when the BNP lost all their seats in the district (BBC, 2010c). Whilst in 2006, the mainstream parties did not field candidates in many of the wards where the BNP stood, in 2010 there were candidates from the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Labour standing in every ward, thereby providing stronger competition to the BNP in all wards and perhaps illustrating the need from the mainstream parties to take on the BNP to prevent further election successes (Barking Council, 2010).

6.4.3 The BNP and UKIP

Additionally, another aspect which needs to be taken into consideration with regard to the performance of the BNP in the local elections was the role of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). In recent years, UKIP have been said to have "stolen the thunder away from the BNP" (Margetts et al, 2004:4) subsequently taking 2.2 per cent of the votes nationwide at the 2005 general election. In the 2010 election the party put forward 572 candidates, gaining 920,334 votes, with 3.1 per cent of the vote share.

Although UKIP has not been regarded as far right in the same sense as the BNP, there are some similarities in the policies and the rhetoric of the two parties. Chapter Two described the far right as being xenophobic, and desiring a strong state. It can be argued that whilst the anti-European Union stance taken by the party certainly displays

some xenophobic elements, there is no element of an anti-democratic stance taken by the party. Therefore, people would perhaps be more likely to vote for UKIP as opposed to the BNP, as the party are seen to be less extreme in terms of their image and their policies (Margetts et al, 2004).

However, there is also evidence to suggest that voters who vote for either the UKIP or BNP will have sympathies for the other party. This has been displayed in the 2004 European elections where Margetts et al (2004:4) found that 87 per cent of UKIP voters may vote BNP in future elections and likewise 91.3 per cent of BNP voters may vote UKIP. Consequently, voters may possibly see them as similar, despite efforts by the parties themselves to distinguish themselves from each other (Margetts et al, 2004).

Indeed, it can be argued that the BNP see UKIP as a potential threat to their vote share by their bid to form an electoral pact with UKIP at the 2009 European elections. The BNP had wished to put into place a pact which would see the BNP fight the election in the North of England, whilst UKIP would campaign in the South of England (BBC, 2008). The BNP were keen for this pact in order not to split the anti-federalist vote. However, UKIP leader Nigel Farage rejected any proposal of an electoral pact by stating that, under no circumstances would there be a deal between the two parties, with Farage

suggesting that people who vote UKIP would not be interested in voting for the BNP (BBC, 2008b).

6. 5 The BNP and the local by-elections

Additionally, one further aspect of local elections which can provide the BNP with an opportunity to make further gains, is through local by-elections. By-elections at the local level can be called for a number of reasons, notably due to the death or resignation of a councillor, moreover, by-elections can be held due to a councillor's non-attendance at meetings. Timing of by-elections can be dependant on the wishes of the local authority. Indeed, local authorities are permitted to delay by-elections until the following May if a councillor leaves office after September (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997:172)

The very nature of by-elections have been viewed as being unique political events, which have been too idiosyncratic to be worthy of serious study by academic political scientists (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997:175). Additionally, local by-elections results can be the result of one or more influencing factors arising from both a national, and indeed, local perspective, notably the national mood, the timing of the election, and the role of the media (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997).

However, local by-elections are still looked upon with importance as they can be "closely observed gauges of the nation's political temperature" (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997:189). Consequently, this

has seen the importance of by-elections increase and has, thus, led to campaigning in such by-elections to be more intensive and widespread in comparison with campaigning at regular elections.

Historically, by-elections can be seen as providing an opportunity for a minor party to increase both their support and publicity, as was seen with the Liberal Democrats in the 1980s, where the party "established themselves as major players in local government by-elections" (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997:180). Indeed, the BNP benefited from a by-election success in Tower Hamlets in 1993, a success which consequently "renewed public interest in the role of such parties….within the British political system" (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997:183). Furthermore, by-elections have been the catalyst for BNP success in regions of England, with the by-election success for Adrian Marsden in the Mixenden ward in Calderdale providing the BNP with a foothold in Yorkshire (Copsey, 2004). The nature of the by-election for that reason, can possibly allow the BNP to achieve strong results, notably in areas where they have previously not polled well, or indeed even stood candidates.

Therefore, to fully demonstrate the very nature of how a by-election can provide the BNP with an opportunity to make an electoral gain which perhaps would not be so possible in the standard local elections, we examine two by-elections where the party have been able to successfully have a councillor elected; namely the wards of Mill

Hill in Darwen, Lancashire in 2002, and Swanley St Mary's in Sevenoaks, Kent in 2008. These two wards have been selected as they represent BNP successes in two differing areas of the country and also in different years, as a result allowing an analysis of the BNP campaign in the two areas and to allow us to understand the impact of the party in the local area. Therefore, such an analysis can lead us to draw some preliminary conclusions from the two by-election results.

Firstly, the first comparison to be made between the two wards reveals the nature in which the BNP have previously come from a seemingly unnoticeable position, in relation to previous years. In both cases, the BNP had previously not fielded a candidate in the particular ward, yet, despite this, their respective candidates were still able to win the ward. In Mill Hill, the Liberal Democrats, who had occupied the seat and Labour, both witnessed a sharp fall in their vote share. Furthermore, Swanley St Mary's had been seen as a traditional Labour enclave in Sevenoaks, yet the Labour vote share dropped by 21.7 per cent with the Liberal Democrats not putting forward a candidate, reflecting a similar occurrence, as discussed earlier with reference to the 2006 local elections in Barking and Dagenham. Moreover, in the previous election in the ward in 2007, UKIP had fielded a candidate, something which they did not repeat in the 2008 by-election and had gained 19.8 per cent of the vote. Indeed, the fact that a lack of UKIP and Liberal Democrat candidate meant that the BNP could win possible protest

votes, as they could position themselves as the only alternative to the two mainstream parties.

Table 6.2 Mill Hall by-election result, 2002

Party	Score	Vote share percentage (+/- from previous election)
BNP	578	32.1 (+32.1)
Labour	562	31.2 (-16.3)
Conservative	154	8.6 (8.6)
Lib Dem	505	28.1 (-24.4)

Source: Yonwin, 2004

Table 6.3 Swanley St Mary's by-election result, 2008

Party	Score	Vote share percentage (+/- from previous election)
BNP	408	41.3 (+41.3)
Labour	332	33.6 (-21.7)
Conservative	247	25 (+0.1)

Source: Sevenoaks council, 2008

Secondly, both by-election results are a reflection of the levels of campaigning put into the wards by the BNP. In both cases, the BNP carried out an extensive campaigning by bringing in activists from outside the area to aid carrying out canvassing. Additionally, the Swanley St Mary's campaign was run by Eddy Butler, the National Campaigns Officer for the BNP. Such was the intensity of the BNP campaign, that, in Swanley St Mary's, a Labour Deputy Leader of the council noted how the BNP had up to 40 people canvassing the area every day, as the Labour Party did not do enough to win the support of the area through their canvassing *(Dartford Times*, 2009).

Moreover, the campaigning had similarities in terms of the BNP focusing on a major issue relevant to that particular ward, in an attempt to provoke the feeling of fear amongst voters. In the Mill Hall ward, the campaign centred around the proposed building of an immigrant hostel in the area, alongside calls to end alleged preferential funding for Asian areas in the town (Copsey, 2004, Eatwell, 2006). Such policies were the result of doorstep campaigning in order to find out local grievances (Eatwell, 2006). Similarly, in Swanley St Mary's, BNP campaigning focused on the recent number of job losses in the local area, with over 700 jobs lost at Glaxo Smith Kline and a paper mill in nearby Dartford (*Dartford Times*, 2009). The BNP linked such closures to its campaign for British jobs for British workers, playing on the fears of local residents worried about further

job losses, (*Dartford Times*, 2009). It, therefore, appears that both campaigns appeared to have strong immigration themes and played on fears of voters running through the campaign and canvassing. Furthermore, the BNP was successful, despite a strong anti-fascist campaign being mobilised at both by-elections. In Blackburn, a strong anti-fascist campaign was mounted by a combination of trade unions, the local press, mainstream parties and anti-fascist groups, with the local newspaper carrying a message from Tony Blair urging voters not to vote for the BNP (Copsey, 2004).

6.6 Immigration, 'Islamification' and fear

Of further relevance to allowing an understanding of the growth of the BNP at the local level, is the question of immigration, which still remains the major issue of the far right "par excellence" (Hainsworth, 2000:4). Immigration continues to be dominant in BNP campaigning, as the party appears to play on fears of residents in towns and indeed, urban areas by such tactics as warning of areas becoming inhabited by immigrants and asylum seekers and ethnic minorities receiving more benefits and money from the local councils (Goodwin, 2008).

Such attitudes were underlined in a 2009 study by the Department for Communities and Local Government, which highlighted growing discontent on housing estates in areas of Birmingham, Milton Keynes, Thetford, Runcorn and Widnes (NCF, 2009). In this report, concerns by white residents were raised with regard to availability of housing, in

that there appeared to be a common belief that refugees can be found houses more easily than white working class people (NCF, 2009).

The BNP have been accused of playing on such fears of voters about immigration in order to make their own advances (Copsey, 2004). One such area where this occurred was in Oldham where the BNP took advantage of growing tensions in the town between white and Asian residents. In 2001, the party were said to have run a highly innovative campaign in the area, focusing on the reports in the *Oldham Chronicle* of white victims of crimes led by Asians gangs (Copsey, 2004). The party also played heavily on the notion that the local council and government were prioritising funding and support for Asian communities over white communities (Copsey, 2004). Other examples of such a policy were in evidence in Birmingham at the 2006 elections, where the party used the local elections to make a "referendum on Islam" (Herbert and Dugan, 2006). Leaflets depicting the London bus blown up in the 7/7 London bombings alongside pictures of Muslims protesting against the Danish cartoons underneath a slogan "enough is enough" were distributed across the city (Herbert and Dugan, 2006). The BNP again attempted to play on fears of white voters by suggesting that Birmingham could become an Islamic city under sharia law within 20 years (Herbert and Dugan, 2006).

The BNP also faced allegations from anti-fascist group Searchlight. Further claims made by the BNP included that a library would be

turned into a mosque in Sandwell and that Africans were being given £50,000 to buy property in the Essex area, with such claims made in locally specific leaflets (Lowles, 2006). Opposition parties have made complaints against the claims of the BNP, with anti-fascist campaigners arguing that the failure for action being taken against the BNP for making these allegations has led to the lies becoming seen as facts in the communities (Lowles, 2006**).**

Yet it can be argued that is not necessarily areas where high numbers of ethnic minorities live, where the BNP enjoy electoral success, but rather in areas where they can play on the immigration and fears of ethnic minorities. Burnley is a market town in Lancashire with a population of approximately 88,500. Whilst the town was once a thriving industrial area, the decline of the textile industry has had a negative impact on the town. Manufacturing in the town had fallen drastically, throughout the 20th century, and has led to social deprivation in the town (Goodwin, 2008). In Burnley, the majority of Muslims live in the Daneshouse ward, therefore one possible explanation for strong BNP support could be based on building on fears and tensions amongst white voters in neighbouring wards. Evidence of this came in the BNP's 2002 election campaign which suggested that residents of the Daneshouse ward were receiving more benefits and grants than other wards in Burnley (Copsey, 2004).

More recently, the BNP have been accused of attempting to capitalise on a number of wildcat strikes by workers protesting about the employment of foreign workers, perceived to be taking the jobs of foreign workers (Sawer, 2009). The wildcat strikes spread around the country, with strikes taking place at oil refineries and at Sellafield nuclear plant and were notable for the threat which they posed to the level of Britain's energy supplies (Sawer, 2009). The BNP reportedly took advantage of these strikes by canvassing at the picket lines in attempt to show solidarity with the workers, calling on members to assist the strikers, despite trade unions reportedly concerned at the party attempting to hijack the strikes for their own political gain (Sawer, 2009). Indeed the BNP website was, at the time, dominated by the slogan "British jobs for British workers, when we say it, we mean it", with the party identifying itself as the only political party who maintained support for the striking workers (Sawer, 2009).

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter sought to demonstrate the factors as to why the BNP have enjoyed electoral success at the local level. It would appear that the BNP encounter a different political environment to that at general elections, both in terms of voters' attitudes and the participation in politics at local elections. Therefore, the cumulative effect of these trends in participation and turnout appear to paint a picture of a decline in participation in local politics.

Moreover, it suggests that there are serious failings and a general lethargy which could allow a well run local campaign by the BNP to gain a foothold and, indeed, enjoy possible electoral success. Indeed, the BNP's campaigning in recent years has appeared to place the candidate into the heart of the community, as a means of establishing personal contact with voters, who may not receive contact from mainstream parties. It is a combination of the decline in participation and the BNP's community campaigning which has arguably provided the party with electoral gains in the past ten years. Such a combination is allowing the BNP to move into areas where they traditionally not have been expected to poll well. Moreover, the opportunities provide by local by-elections arguably provides a platform for the BNP to win support, either through extensive campaigning from the party, or through the means of a protest vote.

However, the chapter illustrates that the BNP cannot be seen to be moving into the centre right in terms of their campaign themes. Key far right issues of immigration and asylum remain dominant in the campaigning. Indeed, there is evidence to argue that the BNP are looking to play on fears of white residents who may be concerned by issues of race relationships and immigration. Chapter Seven will examine if any of these factors are in evidence in Calderdale.

Chapter Seven: The BNP in Calderdale

7.1 Introduction

The research in this thesis has established thus far, that key themes have appeared to emerge when examining the BNP, namely that the party has become a more professional and organized party under the leadership of Nick Griffin. Indeed, whilst the party is yet to make a breakthrough in national elections, an apparent decline in participation in local politics, allied to a more professional approach from the BNP at the local level has increased its ability to make gains, and that issues of immigration, particularly with regards to the idea of an 'Islamophobia' and playing on fears of residents are prevalent in BNP local campaigning (Eatwell, 2006). Therefore, this chapter applies these themes to the district of Calderdale in West Yorkshire. The district of Calderdale has witnessed the presence of the BNP on the local council since 2003. The chapter aims to establish whether any of the arguments arising from the previous chapter's work studying possible causes of BNP success can be applicable to the performance of the party in Calderdale.

7.2 Methodology

The chapter uses a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data in order to establish contributions to the BNP performance in Calderdale. Socio-economic data is taken from the 2001 census is used in order to examine whether there is any correlation in the types of wards in which the BNP choose to put forward candidates, thus allowing for

conclusions to be drawn regarding the relationship between these variables and BNP support in Calderdale[3]. A number of socio-economic variables will be studied, amongst them ethnicity, social groups and unemployment. Additionally, the ward boundaries of Calderdale are shown in order to determine whether the geographic location of BNP targeted wards can offer any explanation as to a reason why certain wards may be targeted by the party. Furthermore, campaign expenditure data from the 2010 local election is used to understand how the BNP will campaign in Calderdale. With regard to the ward data, it must be noted that from 2004, boundary changes were brought into Calderdale, which saw the wards of Illingworth and Mixenden merge into one ward, and the creation of a Town ward, effectively replacing the ward of St John's, thus explaining the gaps in the data for these wards. Consequently, in 2004 all fifty-one council seats were up for election, with seats available for each ward. In 2001, 2005 and 2009, council elections did not take place in the Calderdale area.

The qualitative data is taken in the form of semi-structured interviews carried out with the local leaders of the mainstream parties at the time of the 2006 local elections. The local leaders of the mainstream parties in Calderdale were chosen for interviews as they were deemed to be the best placed to discuss issues affecting their party at the local

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[3] . This data was obtained in the form of ward profiles from the office of the Chief Executive at Calderdale Council on the 20th April 2006.

level. The interview questions focused on the state of local politics in the region. The full transcript of the interview schedule is found in the appendix. The interviews conducted with the councillors guaranteed their anonymity; consequently the Labour councillor will be referred to as Councillor A, the Liberal Democrat councillor as Councillor B, and the Conservative councillor as Councillor C. The interviews took place before the 2006 local elections, in person with Councillors A and B and a telephone interview with Councillor C. A request for an interview with the leader of the BNP in Calderdale was turned down.

Furthermore, in examining the performance of the BNP in Calderdale, quantitative data is used in the form of the local election results in Calderdale from 1999 until 2010, as this includes all elections where BNP candidates have stood under the leadership of Nick Griffin. This is used to firstly allow the opportunity to mark out any rise and decline in popularity of the BNP in Calderdale since the appointment of Griffin as party chairman in 1999, secondly it allows for an examination of the BNP performance in relation to the other mainstream parties, so to establish whether the BNP have had an effect on their respective electoral performances.

7.3 Introduction to the region of Calderdale

The area of Calderdale is situated in West Yorkshire, to the west of major cities Leeds and Bradford and to the north east of Manchester, covering an area of 140 square miles with a population of

approximately 201,100, a figure which is expected to rise by 10,000 over the next five years, due to a predicted rapid growth of the 65+ age range. (Calderdale Council, 2010). Calderdale comprises a mix of residential areas and countryside. The major town serving Calderdale is Halifax, with other towns in the region including Elland, Todmorden, Hebden Bridge, Sowerby Bridge and Brighouse. The Council is the sixth largest metropolitan area in terms of land area, yet the seventh smallest area in terms of population (Calderdale Council, 2010).

Figure 7.1 Map of Calderdale
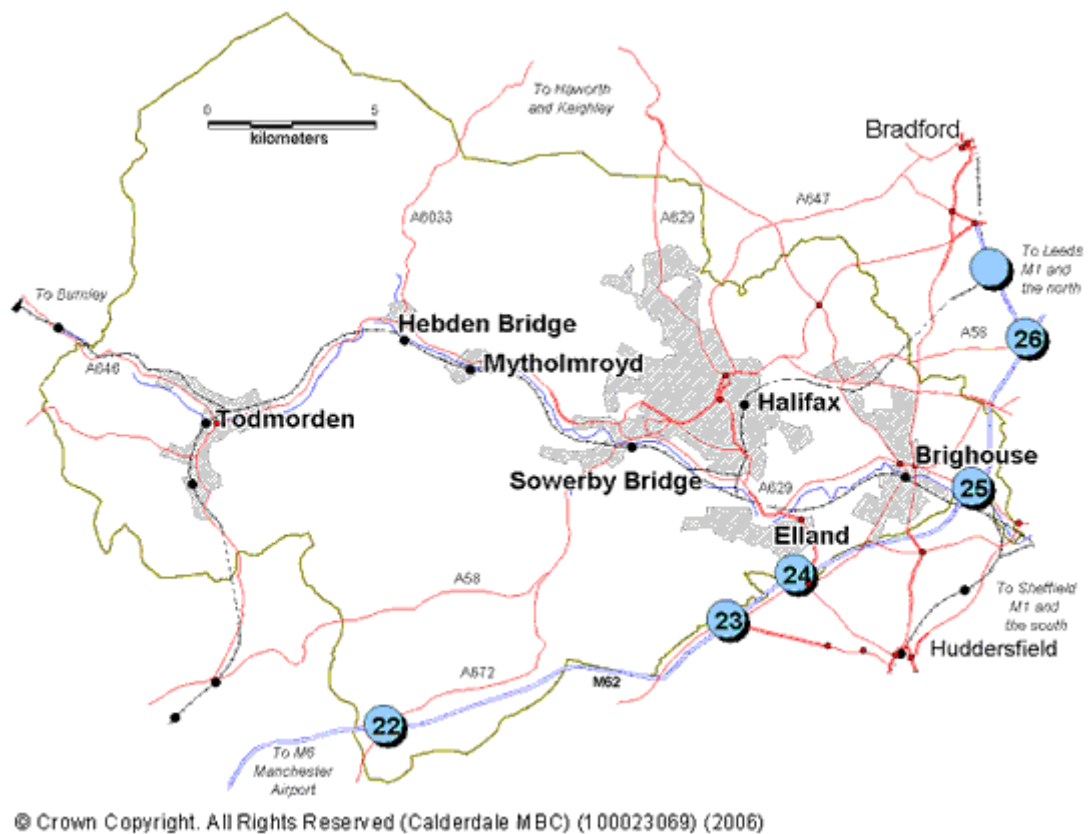
Source: Calderdale Council, 2010b

Calderdale is the most prosperous of the West Yorkshire metropolitan areas and ranks at 100th out of the 354 districts in England in terms of prosperity (Calderdale Council, 2010c). Subsequently, 20.3 per cent of its workers were classed in Social groups A/B, that being professionals and middle managers, predominantly due to pockets of new housing developments in rural and semi-rural areas which benefit from good communications, allowing easy commuting to the major cities of Leeds and Manchester (Calderdale Council, 2010c).

However, such is the socio-economic contrast, is that Calderdale has pockets of deprivation, in wards such as Illingworth and Mixenden, Ovenden and Park. Furthermore, Calderdale has rural areas which do not enjoy good communication and thus experience higher levels of deprivation. The findings from the 2001 census revealed that 18.9 per cent of adults in Calderdale are semi and unskilled workers, with a further 16.4 per cent either unemployed or on benefits (Census, 2001).

7. 4 The BNP in Calderdale

The rise of the profile of the BNP in Calderdale seemingly mirrors the national rise of the party under the leadership of Nick Griffin. Table 7.1 displays the BNP's electoral performances in Calderdale since 1999. In 1999, the BNP polled just 59 votes in the Mixenden ward thus reflecting the relatively weak position of the party across Britain. The following year showed no sign of an increase in the fortune of the party, as only one candidate was fielded in the Todmorden ward, gaining 86 votes.

Yet as Griffin put into place his plans for modernisation of the party, Calderdale began to witness an increasingly higher profile of the BNP as a consequence of the riots in the northern towns of Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, towns all in close proximity to the Calderdale area. Chapter Three noted that these riots played a major contribution to putting the BNP under Griffin's leadership into the national spotlight for the first time (Copsey, 2004).

The first elections following the 2001 riots were the 2002 local elections, with the party failing to put forward any candidates in Calderdale. However in 2003, Calderdale was to witness the first BNP success outside of Lancashire, with the success of BNP candidate Adrian Marsden at the January 2003 Mixenden by-election. Marsden's victory was based on the campaigning of the BNP supporters with Copsey (2004) noting that "teams of canvassers

tirelessly worked the streets and distributed no less than seven leaflets", adding that "it was the party's most sophisticated local by-election campaign in its history" (2004:144). This was highlighted in the different styles of the leaflets delivered to residents. Marsden delivered different leaflets designed at winning the votes in the council estates and also the middle class voters on the edge of the Mixenden ward and was particularly keen to be seen as taking a real interest in local issues (Copsey 2004:144). In addition to what can

be described as the traditional far right policy issues on which the party canvassed, such as asylum and crime, local issues such as the raising of council tax were also high on the agenda for the BNP (Copsey 2004).

This seemingly more sophisticated and professional campaign continued following the Mixenden by-election was adopted by more candidates standing in the region. In addition to this, from 2003 onwards the BNP have adopted community politics which academic studies have previously attributed to the Liberal Democrats, which is building a platform in local politics by engaging in surveys and meetings with local voters to find out their concerns (Copsey, 2004; John et al, 2006). Indeed, the 2003 local elections later that year saw the party establish a presence in Calderdale, when they fielded candidates in nine wards, averaging 738.6 votes per candidate (Calderdale Council, 2003).

In 2004, the BNP put forward 14 candidates in 8 wards, and were successful in having two candidates elected in the Illingworth and Mixenden wards (Calderdale Council, 2004). Consequently, by the 2006 local elections, the campaigning by the BNP was beginning to establish a major presence in local politics in Calderdale. The party kept its seat in the Illingworth and Mixenden ward following the re-election of David Wallace.

Therefore, the growing strength of the BNP in Calderdale saw increasing representation in 2006, standing in 8 wards and again enjoying success in Illingworth and Mixenden. This subsequently led to the strongest representation from the party at the 2007 local elections, standing in 13 of the 17 wards in the district. This was perhaps the strongest sign yet that the BNP was becoming a major influence on local politics in Calderdale. However, the overall average vote for the party dipped, perhaps as a consequence of the increased number of candidates, although the party was not successful in any of the wards. Furthermore, the party was unsuccessful in the Illingworth and Mixenden by-election held earlier in the year. Indeed the number of votes for the party appeared to drop in most wards

In 2008, the number of candidates fielded by the party stood at nine. Furthermore, the number of votes appeared to be falling again in the wards, although notably this was not case in Illingworth and Mixenden where the BNP candidate was successfully elected. In the 2010 local

elections, the number of candidates standing for the BNP had fallen to

six, with none of the candidates successful in being elected with the

BNP remaining with one councillo

Table 7.1 The BNP electoral performance in Calderdale, 1999-2010

Ward	1999	2000	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007	2008	2010
Brighouse							361		
Calder									
Elland									
Greetland and Stainland							251	229	
Hipperholme and Lightcliffe									
Illingworth and Mixenden					1314, 1206,1186	1075	974	1323	1226
Illingworth	103			896					
Mixenden	59			700, 801, 679					
Luddendenfoot					700	570	426	316	398
Northowram and Shelf				1119	1007	830	515	322	521

Ovenden	86			618	938, 900, 894	796,795	691	564	727
Park									
Rastrick							278		
Ryburn							256		
Skircoat					582		317		
Sowerby Bridge				711, 600	714		539	357	
St Johns	216			480					
Todmorden	78	103				647	424	408	
Town		59		782	1095, 1041, 1023	748	537	403	678
Warley					854	496	336	433	550
Total	542	162		7386	13454	5957	5905	4355	4100
Average	108.4	81		738.6	896.9	661.8	454.2	483.8	683

7.5 Socio-economic statistics and BNP support

An examination of the socio-economic figures for the Calderdale region is now made, with regard to establishing as to whether we can determine if there is any correlation between BNP support and the socio-economic data for the 17 wards. An academic study of the BNP with regard to socio-economic statistics has previously been carried out, notably in the John et al's (2006) report, thus allowing for preliminary conclusions to be made with regard to BNP support. An analysis of socio-economic data allows for far right support to be studied in another means, given that "most surveys, especially those in the UK, have small numbers of respondents who say they vote for far-right parties" (John et al, 2006:13).

The 17 wards have been divided up into BNP wards and non-BNP wards in order to aid us to draw conclusions with regard to allowing us to make these observations based on dividing up the wards where the BNP have fielded the most candidates between 1999 and 2010. These wards are Illingworth and Mixenden, Luddendenfoot, Northowram and Shelf, Ovenden, Sowerby Bridge, Todmorden and Town. The socio-economic results will give indications as to particular areas where the BNP may stand. However, whilst the limited numbers of wards available to study means that the results cannot allow us to draw any strong conclusions with regard to socio-economic conditions which favour the BNP, the diverse social groupings in the Calderdale region will allow for preliminary conclusions to be made.

Subsequently, it will provide scope for further study on a greater scale with regard to correlations between BNP support and the socio-economic conditions.

Social class and its relationship to BNP support was studied in John et al (2006) on the appeal of the BNP. This study concluded that it is not so much the poorest level of social class (E) that are more likely to vote for the BNP, but conversely what they termed as the lower middle classes, (that is C1 and C2) who form the base of the BNP support (John et al, 2006). Consequently, the report found that the BNP did not perform as well in areas where Group E had the highest group of workers, but instead in groups C1 and C2. If John et al's (2006) argument is applied to the Calderdale region; the BNP could enjoy a greater potential support due to a higher number of workers in the C1 profile.

Table 7.2 Social Profile of Calderdale in the 2001 Census

A/B Professional and middle managers	20.3%
C1 Other non-manual workers	28.1%
C2 Skilled manual workers	16.3%
D Semi and unskilled workers	18.9%
E Unemployed/ On Benefit	16.4%

Source: Census, 2001

Therefore, when examining social status in Calderdale, there given the conclusions of the established literature with regards to BNP support, BNP support would be expected to concentrate on wards with the social groups C1 and C2 (Copsey, 2004; Carter, 2005; John et al, 2006, Borisyuk et al, 2007). However, the Calderdale results also show that the BNP are not necessarily avoiding areas where there is a relatively high percentage of social group A/B compared to other wards, including those where the BNP did not stand. This can particularly be seen to be the case in Northowram and Shelf where the percentage of people in the social group A/B is 25.1%, which stands as one of the highest in the Calderdale region.

Table 7.3 Social Groups in BNP wards in Calderdale

Ward	A/B	C1	C2	D	E
Illingworth and Mixenden	13.8	24.7	19.7	24.2	17.7
Luddendenfoot	23.9	30.6	16	14.4	15.1
Northowram and Shelf	25.1	32.2	15.8	12.4	14.5
Ovenden	10.8	23	18.9	29.3	18
Todmorden	18.6	27.9	17.4	20.4	15.6
Town	13.5	24.8	18.3	22.4	21
Sowerby Bridge	16.1	28.6	17.3	21.5	16.5
Average	17.40	27.40	17.63	20.66	16.91

Source: Census, 2001

Table 7.4 Social Groups in BNP and non-BNP wards in Calderdale

Ward	A/B	C1	C2	D	E
Brighouse	21.9	28.6	13.7	18.4	17.4
Calder	27.4	29.8	15	13.4	14.3
Elland	16.7	27.1	18	21	17.2
Greetland and Stainland	26.8	29.2	16.2	16.5	11.3
Hipperholme and Lightcliffe	27.8	32.5	12.8	13.5	13.9
Park	11.1	21.9	15.7	28	23.4
Rastrick	22.3	29.4	15.9	17.4	15
Ryburn	27.7	27.5	15.8	14.3	14.6
Skircoat	30.7	32.1	12.1	11.8	13.2
Warley	15.7	30.4	18.2	19.1	16.6
Average	22.81	28.85	15.34	17.34	15.69

Source: Census, 2001

As Adrian Marsden's campaigning in Mixenden demonstrated, the BNP delivered a campaign aimed at both the working and middle class residents. Therefore, it can be said that the BNP are arguably

now prepared to adopt different strategies depending on the type of ward in which they are standing. This means that perceived wealthier wards will not be necessarily be ignored by the party, and there is no definite focus on where the party will field candidates, based on class status of the residents. The party does not appear to be making efforts to solely target the poorest areas of Calderdale and there are signs that the party can win votes from across the spectrum of social status.

7.5.1 Qualifications in Calderdale

Following the examination of social status, the potential link between qualifications and BNP support is now examined. Chapter Two of this thesis noted how previous academic literature on the far right in Britain demonstrated that the support for movements were traditionally young working class males who do not have high levels of education (Husbands, 1983; Eatwell, 2000; Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005). These voters may look to the far right as a means of getting their voice heard, due to a feeling of being disenfranchised from mainstream politics (Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005). However, in contrast to this, Chapter Two also presented literature that argued social classes are no longer so clearly defined; therefore the far right will be just as able to draw support from more educated voters (Kitschelt, 1995; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005).

Consequently, by examining the relationship between BNP support and qualifications in Calderdale, we can see if there are wards with

less qualified voters where the BNP appear to perform better than in wards with more qualified voters. It also provides an initial insight into the examination of the question as to whether the support of the BNP in Calderdale can demonstrate whether the boundaries in class are less radically defined, thus in turn leading to an increase in far right support.

Table 7.5 No Qualifications in BNP Wards in Calderdale

Ward	No Qualifications
Illingworth and Mixenden	39.8
Luddendenfoot	25.3
Northowram and Shelf	25
Ovenden	41.8
Sowerby Bridge	32.6
Todmorden	30.7
Town	37.2
Average	33.2

Source: Census, 2001

Table 7.6 No Qualifications in non-BNP wards in Calderdale

Ward	No Qualifications
Brighouse	29.9
Calder	23.2
Elland	33.7
Greetland and Stainland	23.6
Hipperholme and Lightcliffe	24.8
Park	46.4
Rastrick	29.6
Ryburn	26.2
Skircoat	21.8
Warley	33.5
Average	29.3

Source: Census, 2001

Table 7.5 demonstrates that there are wards in Calderdale where the BNP enjoy their highest support that are also amongst the highest in the area with regard to no qualifications. In Illingworth and Mixenden and Ovenden, two wards where the BNP record their best results, residents with no qualifications stand at 39.8 per cent and 41.8 per cent respectively. Other wards such as Town register a similarly high number of residents without qualifications in the region. At first

glance, these results seemingly suggest that there is still what could be termed a 'traditional' far right support still evident in Calderdale, that being working class, unskilled workers.

However, no clear pattern emerges with regard to the BNP specifically attracting voters with no qualifications. Tables 7.5 and 7.6 reveal that the averages for BNP and non-BNP wards are not too dissimilar, with the BNP regularly standing in areas such as Northowram and Shelf and Luddendenfoot, which have relatively low levels of residents with no qualifications. Certainly, it would appear that the BNP in Calderdale will not simply target a traditional voter type, they look to gain support across a broader social spectrum.

7.5.2 Unemployment in Calderdale

Whilst Calderdale was traditionally an industrial area, the manufacturing and banking sectors are the largest employers in the area with regard to number of employees, with the largest private group of employers in the region being HBOS (Calderdale Council, 2010). Indeed, the large number of employees at HBOS has potentially a number of consequences for the area. In 2009, the region came under the spotlight due to the banking crisis which affected HBOS, with threats of thousands of jobs at risk at the company headquarters in Halifax, which the possibility of potentially large unemployment in the area (*Yorkshire Evening Post,* 2009; *Halifax Courier*, 2009). With regard to the issue of the BNP support in the

local area, such a large number of job losses could potentially provide the party with an opportunity to win support, as unemployed voters may turn to the BNP as a means of registering their disapproval for the mainstream parties, who they may feel have contributed to the financial crisis. Yet Tables 7.7 and 7.8 subsequently examine if there has been a possible link between BNP support and unemployment in the Calderdale area taken from the last Census. It finds that there is no particular correlation between unemployment and wards where the BNP have stood. The highest rate of unemployment in a Calderdale ward was 16.7 per cent in the Park ward. This area houses the largest Asian area in the district and has never seen a BNP candidate stand. Indeed, there is little difference between the average rate of unemployment in BNP and non-BNP wards. Thus, it tends to suggest that it not possible to simply explain BNP presence through socio-economic factors. There may be other factors such as an opportunistic attempt from the party to win support in a particular ward or even simply that the party may have supporters who live in a ward and therefore stand as councillor. Certainly, the party do not appear to following to any particular social trend in the wards where they field candidates. It would remain unclear therefore, whether the BNP would benefit from any increase in these figures as a result of the redundancies facing local workers in the banking industry.

Table 7.7 Unemployment in BNP wards in Calderdale

Ward	Unemployed
Illingworth and Mixenden	7.8
Luddendenfoot	4.1
Northowram and Shelf	2.7
Ovenden	8.6
Todmorden	6.1
Town	7.6
Sowerby Bridge	5.2
Average	5.99

Source: Census, 2001

Table 7.8 Unemployment in non-BNP wards in Calderdale

Ward	Unemployed
Brighouse	3.8
Calder	4.8
Elland	4.3
Greetland and Stainland	3.3
Hipperholme and Lightcliffe	2.8
Park	16.7
Rastrick	4.2
Ryburn	3.8
Skircoat	3.7
Warley	5
Average	5.24

Source: Census, 2001

7.6 The BNP performance in Calderdale

It would appear therefore, that BNP success in Calderdale cannot be simply attributed to certain socio-economic conditions. Subsequently, BNP performances are now examined with a view to establishing the area of the region where they stood and any potential effect that they have had on the other mainstream parties in the region. In order to establish the areas in Calderdale where the BNP perform strongest, Table 7.9 displays average number of votes per BNP candidate in each ward where a BNP candidate has stood from 1999 to 2010. The results show that the core BNP support in the area is particularly strong in Illingworth and Mixenden, Town, and Ovenden. These wards have traditionally seen the Labour Party enjoying electoral success. These initial findings are not particularly surprising, given that previous academic studies have suggested that the BNP will generally perform better in areas where the Labour Party are strong, due to both parties potentially appealing to the same voters, notably young working class voters (Copsey, 2004; John et al, 2006; Goodwin, 2008). However, the results also suggest that the BNP perform strongly in the ward of Northowram and Shelf, which traditionally returns Conservative councillors. Subsequently, this suggests that the BNP are not necessarily only a challenge to the Labour Party in traditional working class wards, but can pose an electoral challenge to other mainstream parties in what can be described as more middle class wards as well (John et al, 2006).

**Table 7.9 Average votes per BNP candidate, 1999-2010**

Ward	Average votes per candidate
Illingworth and Mixenden	1179.6
Town	804.1
Northowram and Shelf	758.6
Ovenden	698
Sowerby Bridge	584.2
Warley	529.75
Luddendenfoot	503
Skircoat	449.5
Brighouse	361
St Johns	348
Todmorden	328.6
Rastrick	278
Ryburn	256
Greetland and Stainland	240

Source: Own analysis

Having established that the major support for the party appears to be in Illingworth and Mixenden, the rise of the BNP and the effect they may have had on the mainstream vote is explored, by comparing the support for parties in the ward, firstly as Mixenden between 2000 and 2003 and then when the ward merged with Illingworth, to become Illingworth and Mixenden in 2004 (Figure 7.2).

The BNP has become a major presence in the wards of Mixenden and Illingworth and Mixenden following their by-election success in 2003. Prior to the 2003 result, there had been little or no presence in Mixenden. Yet the election and by-elections in the ward in 2003 saw the party's support match that of the Labour support, which saw their first councillor elected.

Figure 7.2 Average votes per candidate in Mixenden/Illingworth and Mixenden 1999-2010
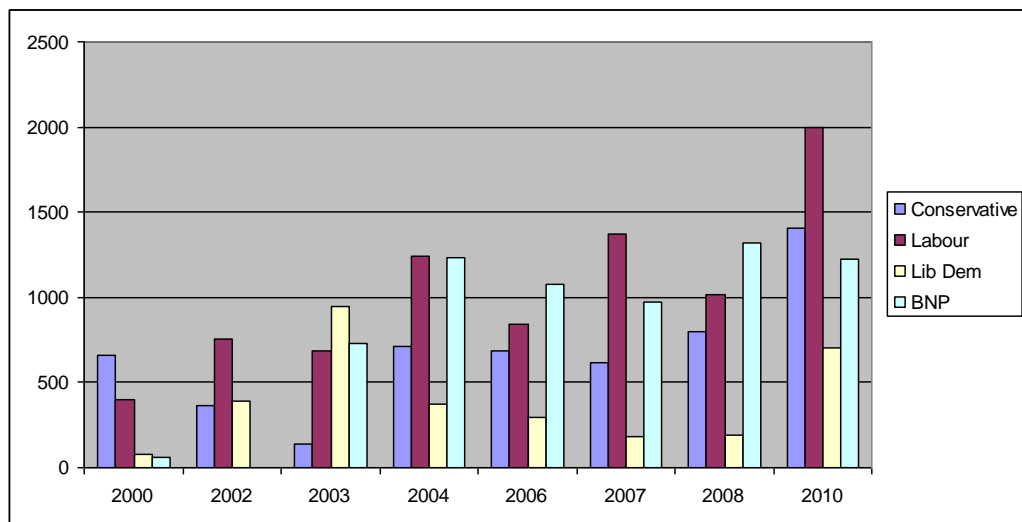
Source: Calderdale Council, 2000-2010

It would appear that once the party had gained this presence in the ward, the merging of the ward with Illingworth did not stop BNP support. Indeed, Figure 7.2 shows the BNP maintaining strong electoral performances in the ward. Furthermore, it would appear that between 2004 and 2008, it is the Liberal Democrat support which drops heavily whilst the BNP support remains strong. The performance of the BNP in Illingworth and Mixenden demonstrates that whilst the BNP vote may traditionally have consequences for the Labour vote, due to similarities in the social profiles of the target electorate, the BNP vote actually affects the vote for all mainstream parties.

7.7 Political participation in Calderdale

In Chapter Six, a fall in activism in local politics was put forward as an effect as to why the BNP has had the possibility to enjoy electoral success at the local level. Interviews with the local mainstream party leaders brought up a number of key themes regarding issues at local level, namely that of the response to the BNP, a decline in membership and the campaigning at the local level. These issues are discussed below.

7.7.1 The response to the BNP

Firstly, the interviews established that in Calderdale, the party most concerned with tackling the rise of the BNP is the Labour Party. This is not surprising, as Table 7.2 showed that the BNP is performing

strongest in wards with Labour politicians. When asked whether the BNP directly affected his/her own party, Councillor A replied;

"Well I think that it certainly has because there are three BNP councillors, two of whom are up for election. Both are standing in Wards where there are sitting Labour councillors and in that one has two Labour councillors, one with BNP, one with two BNP and one with Labour. So the BNP probably are our priorities anyway as we would be looking to get a larger presence in wards we have already got sitting councillors."

The Conservative and Liberal Democrats did not see the BNP as such a major threat to their vote-share, mainly due to this factor of the BNP targeting seats in Labour councillor wards. The Liberal Democrats in particular did not consider the BNP as a threat to their targeted wards in Calderdale mainly as they appear to be targeting different areas of Calderdale, Councillor B saying;

"I don't believe that the BNP are targeting any of the seats that we are. There is some evidence of BNP activity but they seem to be focussing very much on North Halifax and we are not."

7.7.2 Membership decline

Furthermore, the previous chapter noted how the national figures of membership for the mainstream parties have fallen, subsequently

leading to a decline in activism throughout the country (Seyd and Whiteley, 1994; 2002). It would appear that Calderdale has experienced these problems, with all party leaders commenting that there is greater difficulty in attracting members to help in activism. Moreover, getting prospective members to commit to joining the parties appears to be harder to do, thus leading to voters who may be prepared to help around the day of election time, but who will not make any long term commitment to local politics. Councillors cannot be sure of a number of volunteers, but rather the number of campaigners depend on the particular circumstances, such as if one ward is being targeted for a day of campaigning.

Councillor A;

"I can't give you exact figures but there has been a decline in party membership…I haven't really got much idea. I know that when we have all targeted one Ward for leaflets we can get about 25 to 30 people out leafleting at any one time but probably more than that as they tend to stay in their own areas."

Councillor B;

"The party around here has been pretty static for the last few years. It goes up and down. It is at a reasonable level at the moment… It is certainly more much difficult to get volunteers than it used to be. You have to be much more forceful in going out and finding them. But what we have often found is that people are very willing to help us to

deliver leaflets, to canvass but will not join the party. People seem to think that is a really big step."

Councillor C;

"It's really very difficult to say. We have got people who only come and help us on election days and people who run their cars for us on election day."

Therefore, as a result of the lack of members in each local group, the mainstream parties were not able to have a branch for each ward, as would be ideal for them due to a lack of numbers. Many branches have to combine to double up in wards or possibly cover even more of the wards in Calderdale. Furthermore, activists appear to cross over into other electoral boundaries in order to help out with activities such as leafleting. The Liberal Democrats had six branches covering both single and multiple wards, whilst the Conservatives and Labour Party had around 12 branches covering the Calderdale region. The doubling up of wards does not necessarily lead to a weakness in campaigning in the eyes of the councillors, conversely the councillors interviews cite examples where a doubling up of branches has been perceived to have been just as successful as an individual branch would've been. However, Councillor A sounds a note of caution with regard to whether the doubling up of branches could have long term success.

Councillor A;

"Well some combined branches have worked very well. Two failing branches do not make one successful branch, that is fairly clear. It can work well but the experience is patchy."

7.7.3 Campaigning methods

Chapter Six noted the BNP's strategy of targeting areas and wards where they believed they would be most successful. The interviews argue that the practice of targeting local wards is something which the mainstream parties will also carry out as a consequence of falling numbers of activist at local elections. Therefore, some seats contested may not be campaigned as vigorously as other more winnable seats. All interviewees admitted to having particular seats where they will campaign more vigorously than in other areas. Subsequently, it would appear that the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats in Calderdale have areas in which they believe best represents the chance to win seats on the local council.

Councillor A;

"We have targeted specific Wards and that should be the Labour Party's strategy everywhere but some areas are more instant but no we have had to target bearing in mind results and the fact that we have some key seats and we want to hold them."

Councillor B;

"*We can't campaign in every Ward at the moment. We are gradually moving out into different Wards. I think that we have got a realistic chance of gaining the target seats but it depends what happens to the Labour vote but yes we do have target Wards and those are the ones that get the financial resources and the other Wards don't... we concentrate our resources where we think we can win.*"

Therefore, if mainstream parties are not campaigning in all wards, then it allows an opportunity for the BNP to establish their presence in wards without great competition. Thus, it can be argued that in Calderdale, there is potential for the BNP to make a connection with the electorate in the wards where mainstream parties may not campaign as strongly. This situation was seen in Barking, as displayed in Chapter Six, when the BNP moved into a position as official opposition on the council in 2006 as a consequence of a lack of competition from mainstream parties in some wards.

7.8 Local campaign expenditure
The campaign expenditure published by all political parties at the 2010 general election highlighted the problems that the BNP face in mounting a strong campaign on a national level.

Table 7.10 Campaign expenditure at the 2010 general election

Party	Campaign Expenditure (pounds)
BNP	29,460
Conservative Party	16,682,874
English Democrats	35,792
Green Party	325,425
Labour Party	8,009,483
Liberal Democrats	4,787,595
UKIP	732,790

Source: Electoral Commission, 2010.

Table 7.10 reveals the BNP's inability to compete with the mainstream parties with regard to campaign expenditure. The Conservative Party spent over 16 million pounds on their campaign expenditure, whilst the Labour Party spent over 8 million, and the Liberal Democrats spent just under 5 million pounds. It is not surprising to see that the BNP cannot compete with the mainstream parties in terms of how much they spend, given the size of the BNP in comparison with these parties.

However, what is perhaps somewhat more surprising is that the BNP spend less than other parties who can be regarded as minor parties in the UK political system. The Green Party and UKIP spend £325,425 and £732,780 respectively, whilst the BNP spend even less than the English Democrats, a party similar in ideology to UKIP. Therefore, these figures can suggest that the party face issues in being able to perform effectively on the national level due to a lack of funding, which in turn can prevent the party from running an effective election campaign. Campaigning, it appears, will seemingly depend more on the local efforts of members, as opposed to any strong national campaigning organisation run by the party.

Yet at the local level, we can see that in 2010, this scenario is not necessarily repeated across local wards in Calderdale. The figures regarding local campaign expenditure in the 2010 local elections in Illingworth and Mixenden show that in individual cases, the BNP can match the mainstream parties in terms of campaign expenditure. Table 7.11 reveals that the BNP spent the second highest amount in terms of campaigning expenses in the ward, a higher amount than the Conservative and Liberal Democrat candidates.

Table 7.11 Campaign expenditure in the Illingworth and Mixenden 2010 local election.

Candidate	Party	Expenditure (pounds)
Richard Mulhall	BNP	750.00
Andrew Tagg	Conservative	661.47
Sean Loftus	Independent	85.39
Daniel Sutherland	Labour	859.88
Philip Walters	Liberal Democrats	0.0

Source: Calderdale Council, 2010d

Table 7.11 suggests the emphasis that the BNP put into campaigning in wards that they believe are winnable. The BNP have traditionally polled well in Illingworth and Mixenden and these campaign expenditure figures suggest that the party look to maintain support, through attempting to run a more effective campaign in the ward.

What is further revealing in Table 7.11 is that the Liberal Democrats did not spend any money in their campaign expenditure for the ward. Already in 7.7.3 of this chapter, the interview with Councillor B suggested that the Liberal Democrats will only put resources into wards that are winnable for them and this is highlighted by the Liberal

Democrat candidate not spending any money on the campaign, a sign that the party believe that they have no chance of success in the ward. Such a campaign decision reflects the differences between mainstream campaigning at local and national elections; at the local elections, mainstream parties simply no longer have the resources to carry out effective electioneering across all wards. One possible effect of this therefore, is that the BNP have less competition in campaigning in the area, giving them more chance of winning support in the ward as they will not be in direct competition with the Liberal Democrats in campaigning.

The Labour Party's expenditure of £859.58 appears to demonstrate unsurprisingly that they view Illingworth and Mixenden as a winnable ward. Furthermore, with regard to the BNP, it can be argued that the party need to spend that amount on campaign expenditure in order to campaign against the BNP. The interview with Councillor A noted that the Labour Party were wary of the BNP threat in Calderdale and were taking steps to combat their rise through carrying out stronger campaigns in BNP wards. Subsequently, the campaign expenditure in this ward displays evidence that the BNP are being taken as a serious threat to Labour in the local elections in Calderdale. This campaign expenditure data demonstrates that the mainstream parties need to be prepared to put into place effective campaigning to counter the effect of the BNP in local wards, as the BNP will be prepared to run costlier campaigns if they believe they have a chance of winning the seats.

7.9 By-elections in Calderdale

In Chapter 6.5, the role played by by-elections was argued to have potentially aided parties such as the BNP particularly with regard to establishing footholds in areas where previously they had not been able to do so, as the by-elections provide smaller parties to focus greater resources onto an election and also provides an opportunity for voters to register their disapproval with the government (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997). Therefore, examining the by-elections in Calderdale can allow us to establish whether such a situation has occurred in the region whereby the by-elections have aided the BNP to make an impact which would possibly not occurred in a standard election.

The first by-election contested by the BNP was the January 2003 Mixenden by-election, which saw BNP candidate Adrian Marsden win the seat from Labour. As mentioned earlier in 7.3, this proved somewhat as a shock as the BNP had previously little presence in the Calderdale area. Marsden won the seat narrowly from both Labour and the Liberal Democrat candidate, with the Labour vote arguably split due to the presence of former Labour candidate Redmond Mellett standing as an Independent candidate. Furthermore, the timing of the by-election allowed Marsden to focus on national issues, such as the death of police officer Stephen Oaks following an anti-terrorism raid in January 2003, in addition to the campaigning methods and targeting of

certain areas as discussed in 7.3 of this Chapter (*Yorkshire Post*, 2003).

Table 7.12 Mixenden ward by-election, January 2003

Candidate	Party	Votes
Baines, Stephen	Conservative	214
Higgins, Michael Donald	Labour	641
Marsden, Adrian Paul	BNP	**679 elected**
Mellett, Redmond	Independent	142
Pearson, Stephen John	Lib Dem	651

Source: Calderdale Council, 2003a

Subsequently, in October 2003 another by-election was announced following the death of Liberal Democrat councillor Stephen Pearson. Again the BNP put up another strong showing, polling over 800 votes, however the BNP candidate Heath Clegg was beaten into second place by Jennifer Pearson, wife of the late councillor and following a strong campaign by both the Liberal Democrats and anti-fascist group Searchlight, who's presence in the area arose following Marsden's success earlier in the year (*Halifax Courier*, 2003).

Table 7.13 Mixenden ward by-election, October 2003

Candidate	Party	Votes
Clegg, Heath	BNP	801
Coll, Daniel Alan	Independent	474
Loftus, Sean Vincent	Labour	56
Pearson, Jennifer	Lib Dem	**1210 elected**

Source: Calderdale Council, 2003

Furthermore, in Illingworth and Mixenden four years later, the party were still performing strongly, here the BNP were edged out in a by-election caused by the resignation of BNP councillor David Wallace who had been sacked by the BNP for agreeing to planning applications on green belt land in the ward (*Halifax Courier*, 2007). Subsequently the Labour councillor Judith Gannon beat the BNP candidate Thomas Bates by 1104 votes to 1034.

Table 7.14 Illingworth and Mixenden ward by-election, 2007

Candidate	Party	Votes
Bates, Thomas	BNP	1034
Elder, Michael Murray	Lib Dem	150
Gannon, Judith Mary	Labour	**1104 elected**
Hardy, John Cecil David	Conservative	525
Loftus, Sean Vincent	Independent	68

Source: Calderdale council, 2007a

The by-election results show that the nature of a local council by-election provided the BNP with an opportunity to gain a foothold into the Calderdale area with the January 2003 by-election victory in Mixenden for Adrian Marsden. This was evident in the extensive campaigning carried out by the BNP, which may have not been possible if other seats were being contested in a normal round of elections. The party were consequently able to use this success as a springboard in both the subsequent by-election in October, where a strong showing was again put up by the party and in the 2004 local elections. Indeed, the platform provided has led to the BNP constantly polling well in the ward since 2003, as seen in Figure 7.2.

7.10 The fall in BNP support

So far in this chapter, the performance of the BNP has been examined with a regard to understanding how they made an impact in Calderdale, and the reasons behind the party gaining such a presence. However, after seemingly enjoying a rise in results across the Calderdale region, the average vote per candidate appears to fall from 2007 onwards. Thus, this study aims to put forward a number of factors that can be put forward with regard to understanding why the BNP appeared to suffer a drop in votes.

7.11 National issues at the local elections

Firstly, one such notion for this occurrence could be that the decline of the BNP vote in Calderdale in 2007 and 2008 was as a result of national issues and changes in attitude towards key far right policy areas such as race, immigration and crime. Therefore, to examine this notion MORI political monitor polls, taken at the time of the local elections in 2006 and 2008 are used to ascertain the issues which were deemed to be important to voters. The question asked to voters "what is the most important issue facing Britain today."

Table 7.15 MORI opinion poll, May 2006

Issue	Percentage
Race relationships	19
NHS	18
Crime, law and order	11

Source: MORI 2006

The MORI polls demonstrate that the issues of race and crime, law and order, remain high, indeed in 2006, race relationships was deemed to be the most important issue to voters, with the NHS and crime, law and order second and third respectively. Therefore, we can see that the issues of race and crime are seen as important issues for the British electorate. These issues have been traditional policies for the far right and somewhat reflect the strongest ever showing by the BNP at the 2006 local elections.

However, in 2008, the number of BNP candidates in Calderdale was to drop further, and the fall in candidates standing combined with a fall in the number of votes per candidate. Table 7.16 demonstrates that this is not necessarily as a consequence of the issues of crime and

race not being important with the electorate, indeed the issues remain as important as in previous years.

Table 7.16 MORI opinion poll, May 2008

Issue	Percentage
Crime, law and order	25
Economy	16
Race relationships	15

Source: MORI 2008

Consequently, the effect of this, is that issues of crime, law and order and race relationships have been seen to be the main issues and policies that the far right will campaign on, therefore raising the possibility that if the public perceive these issues to be the most important issues facing Britain, then the far right can possibly benefit from such feelings from the voters. However, it can be said that as there is no perceived national change in voters' feelings regarding the issues of crime and race, therefore, there are perhaps other factors which cause the drop in BNP support in the Calderdale area as opposed to the issues facing the British electorate at election time.

7.12 The performance of BNP councillors

Therefore, whilst issues such as race and crime are still important to the British electorate between 2006 and 2008, local issues are examined to establish the drop in BNP support in Calderdale, firstly by looking at the issue of incumbency in the region. Indeed, the BNP's record as councillors at the local level has been much criticised by fellow councillors and anti-fascist groups, notably for their failure to attend meetings and to follow up residents' problems thoroughly (Searchlight, 2006). In Calderdale, the BNP have come under criticism from other councillors, the media and anti-fascist groups over their poor record as councillors in a number of cases (*Halifax Courier*, 2006a). Geoffrey Wallace was accused of only working 14.5 hours in his role of councillor for Illingworth and Mixenden between October 2005 and February 2006 (Searchlight, 2006). Furthermore, in the first six months of 2006, fellow Calderdale councillor Adrian Marsden had only attended three council meetings (StoptheBNP, 2006).

Moreover, the conduct of BNP councillors was called into question on a number of issues. Firstly, Richard Mulhall, the BNP leader in Calderdale was found guilty of a £3000 benefit fraud (*Halifax Courier*, 2006e). However, despite this conviction, Mulhall refused to resign his role as a councillor in the Illingworth and Mixenden ward although he was to lose his seat in the May 2007 local elections. The background of other BNP councillors has also been exposed, with Mixenden

councillor Adrian Marsden having a number of criminal convictions and links with Combat 18, alongside facing accusations of stealing anti-fascist campaign material (*Halifax Courier*, 2006a). Finally, a third councillor, Geoffrey Wallace was sacked by the party over disagreements with regard to party issues, over applications to build on green belt land (*Halifax Courier*, 2007). The consequences of this, is that voters may be reluctant to vote for the BNP as they view their councillors of not being trustworthy or indeed that they are not being represented well by their councillors.

Subsequently, this suggests that voters may be turning away from the BNP as a consequence of the councillors' poor record. However we can see that in Illingworth and Mixenden, despite the criticism of the councillors' performance support for the BNP has remained strong, with the election of the BNP candidate in the 2008 local elections. Firstly, this leads to the argument that the people voting for the BNP are perhaps not interested as much in the performance of the councillor at local level but they are more interested in registering their vote arguably as a protest vote or to register their dissatisfaction with the mainstream parties. Certainly it appears that these people feel that voting for the BNP is perhaps the best way of getting their voice heard.

Secondly, as shown in Chapter Five, regarding the media in the Calderdale area, media coverage has also tended focused on the

private lives of local councillors, with mainstream councillors being embroiled in sleaze scandals amongst other reports (*Halifax Courier*, 2006d). Subsequently, there is an argument which can suggest that voters may be inclined to feel that there is no difference between the behaviour of the BNP councillors and that of the mainstream parties' councillors.

Therefore, the drop in support for the BNP could be argued to be as a consequence of the party fielding its highest ever number of candidates in the region and thus suffering from what could be seen as a saturation point, with the party unable to sustain the standing of thirteen candidates in the region. With a high number of candidates, the BNP would also suffer from the problem facing the mainstream parties, in that they do not have the relevant number of activists to run substantial campaigns in all wards, thus reducing its impact from previous years when a smaller number of wards were targeted.

7.13 Conclusion

The chapter took a case study region of Calderdale to demonstrate whether the factors examined in Chapter 6 could be actively applied to an area of BNP success in order to demonstrate their value in understanding why the party have performed well in local elections.

The research has shown that there were issues with regard to the activism in politics in the area. The mainstream parties appeared to

have problems in effectively campaigning across the area, consequently providing the BNP with an opportunity to establish a connection with the electorate in wards where the voters may feel neglected by the mainstream parties. Moreover, the election of Adrian Marsden in Mixenden in 2003, and the subsequent success and strong support for the party in the Illingworth and Mixenden ward argues that BNP campaigning methods were more sophisticated and they were able to build upon a core support in the district. The expenses figures from the 2010 local election in Illingworth and Mixenden gives credence to the argument that the BNP are putting a lot of effort in campaigning in these wards where they believe they can win seats and maintain good support. The support for the BNP appears to remain loyal over a number of years, as despite apparent failings from BNP councillors, the party poll consistently well in the Illingworth and Mixenden ward. This illustrates an argument that the performance of the councillor is not necessarily important to BNP voters.

The research suggests an evolving profile of the far right, who are no longer confined to winning votes from young working class males. Indeed the election results in wards with strong BNP support such as Northowram and Shelf and Illingworth and Mixenden highlight an ability of the BNP to win support at the expense of all major political parties. Indeed, it would appear that the BNP are not afraid to put forward candidates in wards which are perceived to be perhaps more

middle class, as there is no apparent argument to state that support for the party is restricted to working class voters. The BNP will not merely look to win support in wards that are perceived to be the poorest in the district; support for the party can come from all social groups.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

At the outset of this research, the major aim of the thesis was to focus on the development of the BNP under the leadership of Nick Griffin in a comparative perspective, to understand why the party had established a presence in local elections nationwide. Such a perspective was chosen as it had been established through the study of the existing academic literature on the far right in Britain that the BNP had not enjoyed success at the national level on the same scale as its West European counterparts (Eatwell, 2000; Copsey, 2004; Carter, 2005).

Subsequently, it would appear that a number of major themes emerge from the research which can lead to a greater understanding as to why the BNP has performed more strongly in local elections than in general elections. There appear to be both national and locally specific factors which have contributed to the success of the BNP at the local level under the leadership of Nick Griffin. There are for example clear elements in local politics which provide the BNP with opportunities for electoral success that they would not normally receive at a general election, notably with regard to the ability of the party to campaign, levels of party competition and the lack of activism from the mainstream parties.

The first overlying theme to come out of the thesis is the manner in which the BNP have made steps to present themselves in a more moderate and respectable light. This factor appears key to the party having an effect at the local level, in making the party more appealing to the British electorate.

8.2 Leadership and Image

By using a historical perspective in observing the past performances of the far right in the UK, the thesis demonstrated an overriding problem for far right groups in Britain which is that of in-fighting and factions within the party. Throughout the post-war period, far right movements have suffered from these occurrences and indeed, it appears that the BNP are no different to previous groups. However, during their development between 2001 and 2010, Griffin appeared to successfully defend any challenges to the party and splits in the leadership. The historical perspective leads to a conclusion that there is no surprise that the BNP have been able to develop in terms of number of candidates put forward whilst there has been a period of reasonable stability in the far right.

It would appear that the BNP's electoral success in recent years has suggested an evolution in image of the far right in the Britain whereby the party can no longer be simply viewed as merely attracting young working class male voters. The research has highlighted that the BNP are able to win support from all social groups and this is reflected in

the areas where the BNP will stand. These are no longer simply urban inner city areas but can include more perceived middle class areas. The BNP are seemingly more opportunistic in putting forward candidates, in areas where they would not normally expect to win seats, particularly in local by-elections as their candidates can often perform well.

Moreover, a stable leadership can be seen to play a role in allowing the BNP to make gains in local elections in Britain developing and building on their early local election successes, whereas historically groups such as the NF failed to build on positive results due to the political in-fighting and a lack of a strong leadership. In addition to his leadership skills in terms of uniting the party, Griffin's style in comparison with John Tyndall can also be said to have brought the party forward. Whilst Chapter Four discussed that Griffin still lacks the charisma of other far right leaders in Europe, he is certainly the most dynamic leader of a far right movement in Britain. Chapter Four demonstrated how it is apparent that one of the factors leading to the BNP presenting itself in a more moderate light is the success of far right West European parties in the twenty-first century. These parties have been characterised by charismatic and strong leadership, combined with a seemingly more moderate image to the voter, thus presenting voters with a credible alternative to the mainstream (Hainsworth, 2000; Mudde, 2000; Roxburgh, 2002; Ignazi, 2003; Carter, 2005). Indeed, by using a content analysis of manifestoes and

then using a comparative perspective to analyse them, it can be seen that there are now similarities in the policies that the BNP and the West-European counterparts present at elections.

Such a change of image, allowing the BNP to enjoy local election success, is seen in the display of respectability from the party through the behaviour of local candidates. The innovative content analysis of BNP campaigning guides can lead to the suggestion that the BNP have polled well at the local level by seemingly adopting a strategy to place its candidates into the heart of the community life, be it through the organisation of local action days, serving on school committees or other local groups. Subsequently, this thesis proposes that one of the major reasons for the BNP successes at the local level is due to this campaigning methods used by the party, which has seen BNP councillors and activists attempt to play a greater role in the community life. This has been a crucial change in policy from previous far right movements. It appears that the BNP are trying to bring a personal aspect to local politics, perhaps deflecting from the reputation that the party may have.

However, the campaigning carried out by the BNP can still be seen as racist in its nature, with the accusation of 'Islamophobia' still very prevalent, notably in election material at the 2006 local elections and campaigning carried out by activists (Eatwell, 2006; Herbert and Dugan, 2006). This thesis has established through the means of an

original content analysis of far right manifestos, that despite a more wide-ranging number of policies in their manifestos, it appears that immigration remains at the heart of them. Therefore, whilst the BNP have displayed more moderate methods of campaigning at the local level, there is still a clear underbelly of extremism in the party, which could still prove to be an obstacle to its attempts of electoral success at both a local and a national level. Moreover, the comparative method used in Chapter Four demonstrated that whilst members of far right parties in Western Europe can be said to have more 'moderate' images amongst the electorate, members of the BNP are still exploited for their BNP links. Indeed, the codebook analysis in Chapter Five provided evidence of the local press looking to highlight any extreme pasts of BNP members. Certainly, there is an argument that the BNP's electoral rise has profited from issues of race dominating British politics in the past ten years This can be seen notably in the manner in which the party can be said to have exploited the riots across northern towns and cities in 2001.

8.3 The state of local politics

Yet whilst the BNP can be seen to be portraying a more moderate image in order to win support, it can be argued that a major factor in the effect of the BNP can be put down to the decline of the mass membership party which in turn has led to a decline in participation in local politics. Such a decline has arguably allowed for an opportunity

for a well organised local movement to establish a support in local communities, regardless of ideology.

Chapters Six and Seven demonstrate that the BNP have seemingly benefited from the state of politics at the local level, through profiting from a decline in activism in local politics, a demise which is not yet as apparent at the national level. Indeed, the study demonstrates that the mainstream parties have witnessed a fall in membership numbers, which has been most felt at the local level, such that the ability to raise candidates and campaign effectively has been affected. Subsequently, in many cases the BNP have benefited from mainstream parties being unable to field candidates in wards with BNP candidates, instead focusing candidates and resources where they feel there is a better opportunity to win. Consequently, the BNP have put candidates forward who will often be seen as the only alternative to the current incumbent due to the lack of competition. As Chapter Six highlighted, this was particularly the case in the 2006 local elections in Barking and Dagenham, where Conservative and Liberal Democrats councillors did not stand in competition against the Labour and BNP candidates.

Additionally, the interviews conducted with the Calderdale councillors in Chapter Seven highlighted the difficulties that local members face in running effective campaigning. The semi-structured interviews provided a frank acknowledgement of the stark issues that face the

councillors when making decisions regarding conducting electoral campaigns. The interviews established how local councillors often need to rely on the help of family and friends in order to leaflet areas and that whilst door-to-door campaigning was a desirable means of campaigning, the lack of numbers in local associations meant that this simply was not possible. Moreover, the number of branches which the mainstream parties have in Calderdale does not equate to the number of candidates standing in the region, thus leading to branches having to pool resources, by focusing on areas where they believe they will poll the most strongly. Consequently, the BNP are able to have an effect at the local election through a strategy of targeting specific wards, where they believe that their vote share will be maximised as a result of the inability of mainstream parties to canvass particular wards.

Furthermore, the interviews provided an innovative insight into the reaction of the mainstream parties to the presence of the BNP at the local level. It appears that the BNP are perceived as a direct threat to the mainstream parties if they are in direct competition in a particular area. The interviews established that there is a need for mainstream parties at the local level to take the development of the far right seriously, as results in Calderdale have shown how the BNP can establish a foothold in local wards and then build on the breakthrough. An example of this was demonstrated with the quantitative analysis in Chapter Seven regarding the support of the BNP in Illingworth and

Mixenden, whereby the BNP have maintained a consistently strong core support, despite controversies surrounding their councillors.

8.4 Press coverage of the BNP

The conclusions drawn from the research in Chapters Six and Seven regarding local politics suggest that the media now play a more important role than ever in informing voters at elections times, due to a lack of campaigning by political parties at local elections. Consequently, the local media potentially possess a greater importance in the ability to influence voters at the local level, as its reporting of local politics may be the only exposure to politics for many voters.

Using the LexisNexis system explicitly demonstrated the rise in coverage of the BNP in the national media. Whereas previous work focused on the right wing tabloids' role in raising the profile of the BNP due to headlines regarding immigration (Eatwell, 2000), the LexisNexis system analysis ably demonstrated that the both left and right wing papers will now report on the BNP. Indeed, the left wing broadsheets tend to cover the party more, as a means of raising awareness of the party's development and growing threat. Naturally, this again provides the question as to whether this coverage is disproportionate to the number of councillors the party have elected.

The press coverage of the BNP has shown that local elections provide the party with an opportunity that would not necessarily come its way at a general election, as they appear to benefit from increasing coverage from all national newspapers The subsequent issue arising from this coverage is the question of whether the BNP was being awarded the oxygen of publicity that they did not deserve, due to the small number of councillors that had been elected. Consequently, the BNP are seemingly viewed as being newsworthy and headline making, in comparison to other minor parties such as the Green Party.

As illustrated in Chapter Five, at the local level, it appears that the BNP are receiving predominantly negative coverage, although attempts have been made by activists to promote the party through the letters section in local newspapers.   However, by using a codebook analysis, it allowed for a detailed analysis of press coverage building up to local elections.

The study of press coverage in Calderdale and Bradford saw little evidence of BNP activists being able to demonstrate their support for the party in the Halifax Courier or the Telegraph and Argus respectively which appeared to take strong stances against the BNP. This research therefore does not support any assertion that the local press could inadvertently play a role in building the profile of the BNP, as was argued with the reporting of the Oldham Chronicle (Copsey, 2004; Sykes, 2005).

Hence, at first examination it appeared that the local media were conducting campaigns against the BNP. However, after further study in this thesis, it can also be argued that despite such negative reporting of the BNP, this does not appear to have a negative impact on their electoral performances. Indeed, negative coverage of the other mainstream parties illustrates that the BNP are not alone in receiving negative coverage in the local press. By using a codebook analysis, the research also highlights a key issue in local politics regarding the idea of political apathy in the local media. The lack of coverage for all parties, not only the BNP was of a surprise and provides questions for future research as to why the local press do not appear to cover local politics in any detail.

8.5 The role of the mainstream parties

In examining the BNP through a comparative perspective, it has also enabled us to note the change in attitude from the mainstream parties towards the BNP and issues of immigration and asylum. The historical analysis of the BNP has demonstrated that strong action with regards to a far right threat is the key to preventing a development of a far right party. Whilst in the 1980s, the Conservative Party in particular were seen to take a strong stance on such issues, it now appears that the mainstream parties are somewhat afraid of tackling the BNP for fear of giving the party the oxygen of publicity. Consequently, the increase in publicity and electoral support appears

to have created a dilemma amongst mainstream parties regarding the way to deal with the presence of the BNP. It would appear therefore, that there are contrasting views as to whether to speak out against the BNP or not, as witnessed in the controversy regarding comments made by MPs David Blunkett and Michael Howard in recent years.

However, in examining the rise of the BNP in local elections, this thesis argues that immigration and race relationships remain important issues for the British electorate. Consequently, it appears that mainstream politicians do have a duty to address these issues, particularly in the areas where the BNP may be standing. Indeed, it can be suggested that it would be naïve of the mainstream politicians to avoid the issue of immigration in areas where the BNP are standing, as it will be on the agenda for local residents, either as a direct result of the BNP's campaigning or as a concern of voters.

8.6 Future research of the BNP

Following the conclusions made in this thesis, this has given rise to scope for further research about the BNP in a number of different areas, in a bid to discover more about the party under the chairmanship of Griffin.

Firstly, with regard to Chapter Seven, it must be noted that a request was made for an interview with the BNP local leader in Calderdale but this request was subsequently turned down. My intention had been to

pose the same set of questions to the BNP leader as used in the semi-structured interviews with the other party leaders, in order to establish whether the BNP adopted a similar style of campaigning as to that of the mainstream parties in terms of numbers of activists and strategies used in campaigning.

However, the refusal of this interview perhaps demonstrated the position of the BNP at the time of the 2006 local elections, in that whilst they attempted to portray a more community based style of campaigning and a more moderate image, there was still some unease amongst party members to be interviewed, arguably as a consequence of activists suspicious of possible exposés. However, recent academic studies have managed to gain access to BNP members for academic research (Goodwin, 2008) that perhaps demonstrate openness amongst the party to participate in academic research.

Subsequently, future research could be conducted at the local level examining the role of the BNP in connection with the electorate. Such an investigation could provide valuable evidence of the reasons behind the BNP's popularity amongst local voters, through qualitative data with BNP members and local candidates, discovering their beliefs as to why they are making an impact at the local level and the reasons why voters were attracted to the party. This research could examine a

number of locations across the country to establish whether there is a certain structure to BNP campaigning and activism.

The thesis also highlighted the debate over the performance of the BNP, observing the role of the elected BNP councillors, with the suggestion that a number of BNP councillors have not performed well in the role. This was countered with the argument that the performance record of BNP councillors may not be deemed as important to those who vote for the party, notably if the vote for the BNP is a protest vote against the mainstream. Hence, future studies could take a detailed look at the performance debate surrounding the party, in order to establish whether the record of the BNP is preventing future success and whether with the growing professionalization of the BNP, the performance of the councillors have improved.

Indeed, such questions are certainly more pertinent given the success of Griffin and Brons at the 2009 European elections. Hence, this can be seen to be playing a key role into whether the BNP establish a lasting role on the British political scene, as performance will provide a key test for the party with regard to attracting the mainstream voters to the far right. It can be therefore be argued that BNP successes in the future and thus their subsequent growth could be dependent on the ability to attract a more moderate and mainstream class and calibre of candidate to the party.

Chapter Five of this thesis examined the media coverage of the BNP at both the national and local level. National coverage of the BNP was examined using LexisNexis, which is unique to research on the far right. Such a method of examining the press coverage of the BNP has been further developed in Baimbridge and Anderson (2008), where a number of aspects with regard to causes for national coverage of the BNP was examined, such as the build up to elections, the riots of 2001, and other external factors such as the success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the 2002 French Presidential elections. The paper also made an observation in terms of the differences in tabloid reporting between left and right wing newspapers and tabloids and broadsheets. Therefore, future study could centre on other aspects of reporting from the media such as coverage on immigration and asylum stories, in order to establish whether the rise of the BNP can be in any way linked to the increase in reporting. Moreover, the negative coverage of the BNP could prompt a study of the media to be made in comparative analysis with the written media in other western European countries to discover, if the negative reporting of the far right is a European-wide trait or one unique to Britain.

Appendix

Interview with Councillor A, 23rd April 2006 -

How was the Labour Party campaign organised in Calderdale?

The traditional organisation is through the Local Government committee which used to known as the District Labour Party. We have for the last two or three years also set up a campaign committee as well and I think that was for the all out elections in 2004 which should take on a lot of responsibility in theory delegated to Branch level but now it tends to be more co-ordinated across Calderdale because simply the Branch tends to be smaller and less, fewer and fewer have really the capacity for the campaign themselves.

Some parties base their campaign on personal contact with other people, such as door to door and leafleting. Whilst other parties rely on getting their message through the media is there one method that the Labour Party tends to use?

I would say that it is balanced but we still do focus a lot on personal contact and tend to have a campaign that would have regular newsletters throughout the year because we think that year round contact is important. We still can do door to door canvassing but that tends now to supplement telephone voter I D and again it's the number of people that you can contact and people are available so we

do supplement that with door to door canvassing. I would have said that the media profile has been less significant but I think it is still there. The main thing is the local newspaper and I think that we have profiling in terms of various press releases which are complimented by newsletters so it should be them all fitting together.

Does the party try to target specific Wards in the election or is it just campaigning in every Ward?

We have targeted specific Wards and that_should be the Labour Party's strategy everywhere but some areas are more instant but no we have had to target bearing in mind results and the fact that we have some key seats and we want to hold them. We have also been influenced by the presence of the British National Party.

Has that affected the party's campaign?

Well I think that it certainly has because there are three BNP councillors, two of whom are up for election. Both are standing in Wards where there are sitting Labour councillors and in that one has two Labour councillors, one with BNP, one with two BNP and one with Labour. So probably are our priorities anyway as we would be looking to get a larger presence in wards we have already got sitting councillors. They, the BNP seem also to be targeting the ward that I represent Ovenden as well. So those three wards are the wards that

have already selected themselves anyway but I certainly think that gives an added input all round and we do target to get key wards because then you can have much more impact than spreading yourself too thinly.

Would you know approximately how many local volunteers you can get to help in the campaign work?

I haven't really got much idea. I know that when we have all targeted one ward for leaflets we can get about 25 to 30 people out leafleting at any one time but probably more than that as they tend to stay in their own areas.

Is it a problem finding them?

It is and I think it is for all parties because of a reducing an aging profile, I think.

Has there been a decline in party membership in Calderdale?

There has in Halifax but I don't know whether it is the same in Calderdale valley but it tends to settle at a particular level. I can't give you exact figures but there has been a decline in party membership.

Has the party tried to address this problem of falling membership?

I think that in some ways the campaigning strategies have helped because they have got more people involved certainly around the general election and particularly when selecting the M.P. and getting people involved. Unfortunately the selections tend to be rather bloody and unpleasant and turn off more people than it attracts. We certainly have had recruitment campaigns. I wouldn't have said that we have sustained ones. One thing that tends to work is that if people try to get one or two people they know to join. One thing that has been used in other areas is targeting people through community action by targeting people who are active in the community to join the Labour Party.

How many branches are there working across Calderdale?

Right, I've done a quick bit of arithmetic. There are seventeen wards. There won't be as many as seventeen because some of those are combined, so let's say about twelve.

Has that had an effect on campaigning over recent years, if branches have had to combine?

Well some combined branches have worked very well. I mean the Town and Skircoat ward where we have a high level membership in Skircoat but no realistic chance of getting councillors there but we have got two councillors in Town ward. They have combined and that seems to have worked well. I think that is because we had one fairly strong Ward there anyway. Two failing branches do not make one successful branch, that it fairly clear. It can work well but the experience is patchy.

What happens to the party after the election? Are there steps to capitalise on the successes at the election to attract more new members?

Certainly that is the theory but I don't know that we have ever been as effective at that as we should have been. Of course, an election is a good focus to get people involved and I think that the presence of the BNP has got people very motivated and it has been very negative in a lot of ways but I think that one thing that is positive a lot of people have got very excited because they want to stop the BNP. Again I think that we could probably have capitalised upon it more than we have. Certainly what we have seen is that if we can get out into a ward just after election and try and get those people who have been

actively involved in the Party. It certainly is a strategy but I think that one of the downsides is that people are generally just tired and washed out.

How long have you been a member?

I have been active since I was sixteen, which a number of years ago. Over 30 years. I have been consistently a member since 1981. Over 25 years.

How long have you been a Councillor?

Since 1990.

Interview with Councillor B, 30th April 2006

How was the Liberal Democrat Party campaign organised?

It is organised on a ward by ward basis and, of course, we have a central organisation which has developed a manifesto and has decided upon which seats are to be targeted, but within each ward it is largely up to the party members and councillors who live in each ward to organise and run the campaign.

Do the local campaign decisions get made locally or do you get advice from the national level?

We get loads of advice. We get suggestions and artwork we can use but at the end of the day we do our own artwork and we have people in each branch but two or three people across Calderdale area who are very good at designing leaflets and artwork which is what you want. Probably about six of us now and we tend to share ideas across the Borough.

Whilst some parties base their campaigns contact with the people such as canvassing door to door and leafleting and other parties rely on getting their message through the media is there one of these specific attempts that the party seems to rely on?

We do an awful lot of door to door work. We do a lot of leaflets and we don't just do them at election time, we do them at other times as well to let people know what's going on. We do canvass but it is between leafleting. I used to think our wards are quite big but my partner's fighting one in Leeds which are twice the size. The average Calderdale electorate is about 8,500 and the Leeds' electorate about 16,500.

Has the party targeted specific wards in the area or do you campaign in every ward?

We can't campaign in every ward at the moment. We are gradually moving out into different Wards. This year we are targeting two or three more seats than we did a couple of years ago in the last election. I think that we have got a realistic chance of gaining the target seats but it depends what happens to the Labour vote but yes we do have target wards and those are the ones that get the financial resources and the other wards don't. So if any candidate in a non-target ward wants to spend their own money then that's fine. If we can help them out we will but on the whole we concentrate our resources where we think we can win. Unfortunately that is becoming a larger number each year. Finally two years ago we broke out of just having seats in Calder valley constituency and we actually got seats in Halifax as well and we are hoping to increase that number this year.

Has the BNP presence affected the party's campaign?

I don't think so because I don't believe that the BNP are targeting any of the seats that we are. There is some evidence of BNP activity but they seem to be focussing very much on North Halifax and we are not. We simply don't have the resources to do it this year, next year perhaps- we'll see.

Has the party being doing anything to reach the electorate through the local media?

We keep on eye on the local website and we respond stuff that comes down. We sometimes initiate information to the public that way. We use the local papers. We respond to invitations for local radio if they have but to be honest local radio isn't a big feature at least it probably is in some of the ethnic minority communities but it is not for the majority an issue. People do not listen very much. In any event, local radio never seems to regard local policies so they have been very poor.

How many volunteers do you have working in the campaign?

It's really very difficult to say. We have got people who are leafleting, we have people who stuff envelopes, people who canvass.

Are you finding it more difficult in recent years to get volunteers or are you still able to rely on them?

It is certainly more much difficult to get volunteers than it used to be. You have to be much more forceful in going out and finding them. Sometimes people just volunteer and during this election campaign people have volunteered out of the blue to put up posters or deliver leaflets. But what we have often found is that people are very willing to help us to deliver leaflets, to canvass but will not join the party. People seem to think that is a really big step.

Has there been a decline in party membership?

The party around here has been pretty static for the last few years. It goes up and down. It is at a reasonable level at the moment. I am pretty confident that at the moment it is slightly increasing. At the "all out" elections two years ago we recruited an awful lot more people into the party because anyone wanted to stand for the Council had to join the Party. You can't stand for the Council if you're not in the party. So as we put up 51 people that increased the membership of the party and most of them have stayed.

How many branches are there working across Calderdale?

There are probably about six branches but some are much more than one ward. There are three single wards, a double ward and two others which are multiple wards.

Does that effect the campaigning that can be done if they are multiple wards?

No not really because we don't stick rigidly to boundaries people will cross over. Sometimes someone will have an action day here and people will help and then there will an action day somewhere else and people will go there. It is important that the ward is the electoral unit and therefore we have to make sure that the right leaflets go to the right wards.

What happens within the party after the election, are there steps to capitalise their success?

We have a post mortem whether we have been successful or not. We look to find things that we have done well and things that we have not done so well. And immediately we ask who is going to fight the Ward next year and of course if we have a particularly success we naturally make it very widely known.

How long have you been a member of the Party?

42 years.

How long have you been a councillor in Calderdale?

In Calderdale – I think that this is my 20th year. I had a period of 12 years then I had a period of 10 years off, for good behaviour, and I think I'm now in my 8th. I got back on the Council in 1998 and when I step down I will have done 21 years.

Interview with councillor C, 1ˢᵗ May 2006

Some parties base their campaign on personal contact with other people, such as door to door and leafleting. Whilst other parties rely on getting their message through the media is there one method that the Conservative Party tends to use?

We still try and base our campaigning on door to door contact, though nowadays this is not always possible. Leafleting is the most productive means given the resources we have available. It is the local party members who form the campaign. We may get some guidance from Central Office but ultimately we are responsible for running the local campaign.

Has the BNP presence affected the party's campaign?

From a personal experience, I haven't had any dealings with the BNP as they do not have a presence in my ward. They tend to have a strong support in the Illingworth and Mixenden ward.

How many volunteers do you have working in the campaign?

It is difficult to put a precise number on that. We have got people who only come and help us on election days and people who run their cars for us on election day. I would say that I always try to add it up on election but there are a lot of people.

Are you finding it more difficult in recent years to get volunteers or are you still able to rely on them?

I think it is generally the same people year in year out who volunteer. Certainly it is becoming more difficult to attract people to give up time, like I said, some will help out for a day but not many can give up a lot of time.

Has there been a decline in party membership?

I believe there has been a fall but this is reflected nationally and for all three major parties.

How many branches are there working across Calderdale?

We don't have branches in every ward; I would say about 12 branches. This doesn't mean wards will be ignored; we will still make sure we have some form of contact with every ward.

What happens within the party after the election, are there steps to capitalise their success?

We will of course examine the results, look to see where we have done well or not, if we poll well in a particular ward, we will then look to maintain that support the following year.

How long have you been a member of the party?

For over 30 years now, I have actively been involved with the Conservative party, I have been involved with Calderdale council for 20 years.

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