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THE POPULIST BEAUTY AND THE FASCIST BEAST?

Comparing the support bases of UKIP and the BNP

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1. Introduction

The UK is widely regarded as a case of failure for the extreme/radical/populist right (for simplicity, the label “extreme right” will be used). This assessment is mostly based on the performance of the British National Party which, after a few years of apparent momentum has slipped back into near obscurity. After the historical achievement of having two MEPs elected in 2009, hopes in the party were high in the run-up to the 2010 elections. In the event, the party did record its best-ever overall General Election performance, but the results were nowhere near the expectations. Also in local elections the BNP lost momentum in the late 00s, after appearing to have gained some footholds in local councils a few years earlier. The peak came in 2007 when the party had circa 60 councillors. The subsequent decline was quick, and after the local elections in 2013 there were two BNP councillors left (Guardian, 4 May 2013).

It is, perhaps, somewhat curious that a party that has never been represented in parliament, and not been able to permanently established itself as a national, or even regional, political force, has received considerable attention in the scholarly literature. It can of course be argued that cases of failure are at least as important as success cases in the comparative analysis of party families. Against this it can be said that a fairly large part of the literature on the BNP, while often very informative about the single case, offers limited comparative insight. The focus on the BNP is all the more curious against the background of the relative lack of attention devoted to the UK Independence Party. This is easily illustrated by a quick check on Google Scholar – the entry “British National Party” produces a total of over 5,000 hits, compared to 1,200 hits for “UK Independence Party”. Broken down into individual years, as reported in Table 1, the BNP dominance is consistent over time. There is a tendency for UKIP to narrow the gap somewhat in recent years, but the ratio of BNP hits over UKIP hits is never below 3.

Table 1. Google Scholar hits for “British National Party” and “UK Independence Party”, year by year and in total.

	BNP	UKIP	difference	BNP/UKIP ratio
2013	326	108	218	3.0
2012	610	151	459	4.0
2011	627	121	506	5.2
2010	551	101	450	5.5
2009	427	108	319	4.0
2008	322	102	220	3.2
2007	317	94	223	3.4
1990--2006	1,690	365	1,325	4.6
sum	4,870	1,150	3,720	4.2

Comment: The counts reported in the table are based on the party names in full, entered within quotation marks. Without quotation marks, the total count is circa 1.2 million for BNP, and 226,000 for UKIP. The added totals do not quite correspond with the total numbers without year specifications, which are 5,190 for BNP and 1,200 for UKIP. The UKIP/BNP ratios are based on absolute numbers of hits.

This discrepancy is not intuitive. For one thing, UKIP is bigger than BNP in terms of electoral support. This is illustrated in Table 2, which reports the two parties' respective results in EU and General elections from 1999 onwards. The gap between BNP and UKIP narrowed continuously between 2001 and 2010, as seen in the final column in Table 2, but this is in part explained by the fact that the number of candidates fielded by BNP in General Elections grew. The BNP has never so far reached the one million mark in a Britain-wide election, while UKIP have obtained over 2.5 million votes in 2004 as well as 2009. Although not included in the table, UKIP also did significantly better than BNP in the local elections of 2013, and there is not much to suggest that the UKIP lead over the BNP will continue to narrow in the EU election set for June 2014.

Table 2. Results for the British National Party and the UK Independence Party in EU and General elections, 1999-2010.

	BNP			UKIP			UKIP-BNP ratio
	votes	%	seats	votes	%	seats	
1999 EU	102,647	1.1	0	696,057	7.0	3	6.8
2001 GE	47,129	0.2	0	390,575	1.5	0	8.3
2004 EU	808,200	3.9	0	2,650,768	16.1	12	3.3
2005 GE	192,746	0.7	0	605,973	2.2	0	3.1
2009 EU	943,598	6.2	2	2,498,226	16.5	13	2.6
2010 GE	564,331	1.9	0	919,546	3.1	0	1.6

Comment: The UKIP/BNP ratios are based on the respective absolute numbers of votes.

One reason for the discrepancy in scholarly attention is that UKIP is usually not treated as an extreme right party. Cas Mudde, in his seminal volume from 2007, does not include UKIP in what he labels the Populist Radical Right (PRR) family – he does not even mention the party in his discussion of possible borderline cases. The reason, although this is not discussed regarding UKIP specifically, is that Mudde does not consider the party to meet all his key ideological PRR criteria of nativism, authoritarianism and populism. It is not specified what UKIP is lacking to be classified as PRR, but it seems plausible that it is not deemed to be (sufficiently) nativist and authoritarian. Interestingly, however, Mudde does refer to the small Veritas party, formed in 2005 by UKIP defector Robert Kilroy-Silk, as PRR (Mudde 2007:284). Also BNP is argued to meet the Populist Radical Right definition (Mudde 2007:49; 208).

In many cases the BNP is more or less by default treated as the extreme right party of interest in the UK, while references to UKIP are brief, to the extent that they appear at all (e.g. Wodak et al. eds. 2013; Hainsworth 2008; Davies with Jackson eds. 2008; Carter 2005). Pippa Norris (2005) does give UKIP the label “radical right” alongside, among others, BNP (2005:7), but devotes more considerably attention to the latter party. Roger Griffin, on the other hand, argues that UKIP cannot be classified as in the same “neo-populist” category as BNP and others. He does so, however, after a fairly extensive discussion, where he notes that the party has made manifesto statements about immigration which “would not be out of place” in continental neo-populist parties (Griffin 2007:246). The conclusion, however, is “to leave UKIP to one side” due to its single-issue anti-EU nature (Griffin 2007:246). Similarly,

John and Margetts treat UKIP as a “non-extreme right” (2009:497) reference point to the BNP.

In some ways it is difficult to see why UKIP is so often treated this way. It has become increasingly questionable to dismiss it as a single-issue anti-EU party. In the 2010 General Election it produced a 7,700-word manifesto covering a wide range of policy areas. Of course EU criticism, with the ultimate aim of an exit, is a key priority. In addition, however, the party wants to reduce the size of the public sector, increase the use of nuclear power, reinforce law and order, strengthen the military defence, etc. Not least important, UKIP advocates a drastic cut in immigration (UKIP 2010). In many ways the party’s policies resemble what Herbert Kitschelt (1997) referred to as a radical right “winning formula”, with a combination of right-wing economics, authoritarianism and immigration criticism. It is also possible to, in opposition to the author himself, find support for Mudde’s three PRR criteria: UKIP is against immigration (nativist), it wants to strengthen law and order (authoritarian) and it attacks the political establishment, domestically as well as in the EU (populist).

The argument here is not that UKIP can straightforwardly be equated with BNP. They have completely different origins, and serious scholarly work does not label UKIP as “fascist”, which quite frequently is the case with BNP (e.g. Goodwin 2011; Copsey 2008). Their respective patterns of international co-operation are also different. In the European parliament, UKIP has joined the Europe for Freedom and Democracy group (EFD), together with parties such as the True Finns, Danish People’s Party, Lega Nord, the Slovak National Party, Greek LAOS and Lithuanian Order and Justice party. These are usually regarded as members of the extreme right party family, but as comparatively “mild” varieties thereof. The EFD group also contains parties not usually regarded as extreme right, such as the Dutch protestant SGP and Philippe de Villiers’ Mouvement pour la France.

Before the 2009 EU election, BNP participated in plans to form a different group called Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty (ITS), which would have included parties such as the French Front National, Belgian/Flemish Vlaams Belang, Austrian Freedom Party, Hungarian Jobbik and Bulgarian Ataka. A group with this name and roughly the same parties had briefly been in existence in 2007, but disbanded following internal disagreements. In the 2009 EU elections, the prospective parties did not get enough seats to form a party group, and they now sit as non-attached in the EU parliament. The participation of BNP in the attempts to form the ITS group reinforces its classification as more extreme than UKIP. Still, even if the two parties can be separated into different sub-groups of the – quite diverse – extreme right party family, it does not follow that at most one of them can belong to this family. This is also the approach of Harrison and Bruter (2011), who include both parties in an analysis of the European extreme right. UKIP, they argue, is “de facto competing within the territory of extreme right electoral politics” (2011:215).

The purpose of this paper is to compare the electoral profile of BNP and UKIP. The point of departure will be what research has shown about extreme right parties, and the purpose is to investigate the extent to which the two parties fit a general extreme right template.

2. The extreme right party family, UKIP and the BNP

The first coherent attempts at a theoretical model seeking to explain the growth of extreme right parties was provided by the two German, North-America based, scholars; Hans-Georg Betz and Herbert Kitschelt. Their point of departure was the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy. In the wake of this transition followed new social structures which cut across traditional class cleavages. Betz (1994) focused on a new underclass, social groups

that were particularly vulnerable to the economic changes. A new demand for advanced technological and cultural skills in the labour market, while traditional labour qualities lost competitiveness. Cultural codes, and ability to adapt to new a constant stream of technological advances, became more important than muscle, physical endurance and mechanical skills. Particularly vulnerable to these changes were those who, directly or indirectly, were dependent on the old labour-intensive industries. These “losers of modernization” felt left behind, in terms of job security but also in terms of social status, and their response was to turn to the extreme right.

Kitschelt had a similar point of departure, but his theory was also in important ways different to that of Betz. While Betz identified a new underclass, whose support for the extreme right was driven by resentment and a feeling of being left behind, Kitschelt spoke of new constituency which had developed new preferences, based on work experiences. Those whose work experience largely consisted of the manipulation of objects and spreadsheets were particularly susceptible to the extreme right appeal. More specifically, extreme right parties could be expected to attract votes primarily from those employed in the privately owned technology sector (Kitschelt with McGann 1997). A key difference is that resentment is important for Betz, but Kitschelt’s focus on new preferences is more rationalistic (Rydgren 2002). More elaborated theoretical contributions have since appeared (e.g Rydgren 2002; 2006; Norris 2005; Ignazi 2003; Eatwell 2003), but the two early contributions by Betz and Kitschelt are still highly influential. They also provide us with a foundation for the study of the extreme right vote.

Beginning with socio-demographic characteristics, these have been aptly summarised by Givens (2005, ch. 3). The most clear-cut features of the extreme right vote is that it is predominantly male (Mudde 2007:111-118). Extreme right voters also tend to be young, working or lower middle class and employed in the private sector. The unemployed also tend to be overrepresented, but the micro-level relationship between unemployment and extreme right voting is not straightforwardly replicated at the macro level – high levels of unemployment in a country or region do not necessarily translate into high levels of extreme right voting (Knigge 1998; Givens 2005, ch. 4). The dataset we are using does not have a variable which measures whether respondents are unemployed. Instead we will use a question about respondents’ fears for their personal economy, as it can be argued that fears and perceptions are as important as actual unemployment.

Extreme right voters tend to have comparatively low levels of education, and they are religious to a lesser extent than the electorate as a whole. This, somewhat stereotypical, summary largely fits with the theories of Betz as well as Kitschelt. Betz’ “losers of modernisation”, as well as Kitschelt’s manipulators of spreadsheets and objects are currently or previously employed in the private sector, and predominantly male. The educational characteristics fit the Betz model better – Kitschelt’s theory actually allows for extreme right voters to be quite highly educated. According to this perspective is it the content rather than level of an educational qualification that is important – voters with a university degree in, e.g., engineering are just as likely to vote extreme right as those with less advanced technical qualifications. We will, however, look at the impact of educational level together with the other mentioned socio-demographic variables.

Moving on to attitudinal factors, some are almost too obvious to mention. For one thing, extreme right voters are against immigration. This is not to say that they necessarily hold outright racist views (Rydgren 2008); nor that extreme right voting has a direct correlation with levels of immigration, or the number of immigrants, in a country or region (Chapin 1997). Since we will be using individual-level data, however, macro-level factors will not be

analysed. Extreme right voters are also unhappy with the political establishment, although this should not be equated to outright anti-democratic attitudes. Nor does the anti-establishment views mean that the extreme right vote is an empty protest vote. This tended to be the view in earlier research (e.g. Ignazi & Ysmal 1992), but has been convincingly quashed by more recent work – extreme right voters are as rational as other voters and put their votes where they have the best chance of making a difference (Lubbers et al.; 2002; van der Brug et al 2005).

Other reasons to vote extreme right parties are EU criticism, and law and order policies, which will also be tested. When it comes to the economy, the situation is less clear-cut. Kitschelt's theory has been subject to much debate because of his assumption that that a right-wing, or neo-liberal, economic outlook is a key part of extreme right parties' "winning formula" (1997:vii). This has later been challenged by many scholars (e.g. Mudde 2007, ch. 5), who argue that the empirical development since Kitschelt's book was published strongly suggests that welfare chauvinism has become more important in the extreme right message, as well as the motivations to vote extreme right. Kitschelt (2007) has defended his position, and he is right in the sense that extreme right voters are by no means socialists, according to any reasonably stringent definition – but everything suggests that they prioritise maintained welfare arrangements above tax cuts, and that they are pragmatic about whether the welfare is private or public. Extreme right parties have been able to attract voters who are unhappy about the tax burden, but also voters who are concerned about welfare delivery, although the tendency has been that the former was a more important factor in the 1980s and 90s, while the latter has become more important since 2000. The impact of attitudes on economics will be included in the analysis, but without any firm expectations about the results.

A third set of variables is to do with the personal characteristics of extreme right voters. Findings by Wilcox et al (2003) suggest that extreme right parties tend to perform better in countries with low levels of social capital. Again there is a problem of levels of analysis here – aggregate-level relationships do not necessarily translate to the individual level. Still, the reference to social capital can also be linked to Betz' theoretical perspective – the "losers of modernisation" he depicts can be expected to have low levels of social capital. This has been put to the test by Rydgren (2009), who looks at comparative evidence from a number of variables about trust in other people, friendships, activity in voluntary associations, etc. His findings do not support any crude generalisations of extreme right voters as isolated and socially inept, but the exact results vary according to the indicators used, and also across different countries. Despite the ambiguities, social capital is a factor that cannot be overlooked, and will be included in the following analysis.

The final group of factors will be media consumption. It is well-known that extreme right parties often complain about unfavourable media treatment. Research evidence, however, indicates that levels of support for an extreme right party are not primarily affected by the reporting about the party itself, but rather the exposure and treatment of the party's prioritised issues. Thus, an extreme right party will benefit if the media report on its key issues in a way that fits that party's frame. This applies even if the party itself is ignored, or given negative coverage. An obvious example is immigration – it plays into the hands of an extreme right party if the media frequently report immigration as a problem, such as immigrant crime or difficulties with integration (Walgrave & de Swert 2004). In a similar vein, media outlets that frequently provide negative reports about the EU can be expected to benefit an EU critical party, which of course both BNP and UKIP are. We will, therefore, test the impact of reading different newspapers with varying perspectives on immigration and the EU.

The two parties at the focus of attention will be subject to three comparisons. First, BNP and UKIP will be compared with each other. Second, they will be compared with the literature-derived extreme right template, outlined above. Third, they will be compared to the three main parties in Britain, i.e. the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats, in order to check the extent to which BNP and UKIP are distinctive in the British party system.

3. Data and methods

The data used will be the 2010 Campaign Internet Panel Survey (CIPS) of the British Election Study. This has the advantage that it provides large numbers of respondents who are sympathisers for BNP as well as UKIP. It does, however, have the disadvantage that some of the variables discussed above do not appear in the most straightforward form. Also, since it is an internet survey, it suffers from under-representation of certain social groups which in our case may be of particular interest, given the social composition of extreme right party support. However, it has been found that the Internet-based YouGov surveys used for the BES do compare quite well with the face-to-face survey, and the CIPS provides with a range of weight variables. For all following analyses, we have used data from the pre-campaign wave of the panel (which is the only one asking feeling thermometer score questions about UKIP and BNP), using the standard weight variable for the full sample.

The dependent variable is not voting or vote intention, but an 11-degree scale feeling thermometer, where low numbers mean that the respondent strongly dislikes the party, and high number that s/he strongly likes the party. This provides us with a more nuanced analysis than the crude either-or vote variable. The dependent variable will be presented more in detail in the next section.

We will first look at each set of factors separately, with the focus on bivariate relationships. The independent variables will then be put together into a concluding multivariate analysis. First, however, we will focus on the dependent variable, to see how BNP and UKIP scores compare with those of other parties, how their supporters view each other as well as the other parties, but also how they are viewed by the established parties.

4. BNP and UKIP in the popularity stakes.

As our dependent variable, we use the following question asked during the pre-campaign wave about each of the national parties, including UKIP and BNP: “On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means strongly dislike and 10 means strongly like, how do you feel about party x?” In a first step, reported in Table 3, we compare the basic descriptive statistics of the resulting feeling thermometer scores for our two parties of interest, as well as the main political parties in Britain. It is evident that the BNP is by far the least liked political party in Britain. Its average thermometer score is a mere 1.77; about half of the second lowest score, that of UKIP. The latter party is still less liked than Labour and the Conservatives, with the Liberal Democrats being the most popular (or perhaps rather least disliked) party in Britain.

Standard deviations show how opinion is most polarized about the two major parties, which has to do with the strong opinions, in opposite directions, among their numerous respective party identifiers. Opinions are most homogenous when it comes to the Liberal Democrats, with UKIP and the BNP in between. Interestingly, we find that while almost as many respondents do voice an opinion about the BNP as about the major parties, the N for UKIP is considerably smaller, indicating a substantial number of don't knows or refused answers. In

other words: the BNP is not only much more disliked than UKIP – it also elicits more responses than the latter.

Table 3. Party feeling thermometer scores, descriptive statistics

<i>Feeling thermometer score</i>	N	Mean	Standard deviation
BNP	15,857	1.77	2.60
UKIP	13,956	3.39	2.79
<i>Conservative</i>	16,058	4.43	2.99
<i>Labour</i>	16,129	4.00	3.03
<i>LibDem</i>	15,557	5.11	2.29

Comment: Ns, means and standard deviations are all based on respondents who answered the feeling thermometer score question, excluding refusals and don't knows.

How, then, do our two outsider parties fit into the broader British party system? Are they regarded as untouchables by the supporters and -- if yes – is this the case to the same extent across the board? Table 4 reports how feeling thermometer scores for the five parties we looked at in Table 3 vary by ultimate party choice in the 2010 General Election. Unsurprisingly, the voters of each party rate their own party very highly. This enthusiasm for the own voting choice is about as high for UKIP and BNP voters as it is for Conservatives. In fact, it is higher than for Labour and the LibDems. The latter case, the only “self-score” below 7, could be explained by the fact that the LibDems tend to attract disproportionate numbers of tactical votes.

Moving on to the substantively more interesting question about the evaluations of parties not voted for, BNP as well as UKIP voters are, unsurprisingly, no big fans of the more established parties, but the emerging pattern is not one of uniquely low scores. The lowest score for any of the three major parties, 1.70, is the feelings of Conservative voters about the Labour Party. UKIP voters are also not fond of the Labour Party, with an average score of 1.99. Labour is the least favourite party also among BNP voters, but with the higher score of 2.38. Importantly, however, there is a unique, almost completely symmetric, bilateral relationship between BNP and UKIP. BNP voters give their highest score to UKIP, BNP gets its highest score from UKIP voters and UKIP gets its highest score from BNP voters. The only deviation from this near-perfect symmetry is that UKIP voters like the Conservative Party more than they like BNP. Still, while the BNP score of 3.69 from UKIP voters is not exactly high on an 11-point scale, it is significantly higher than BNP gets from anywhere else – the second highest BNP score is 2.15 from Conservative voters. BNP voters, in turn, give UKIP an average score of 5.79 – the highest across party lines in the whole matrix.

Table 4. Feelings towards parties, by party, vote in 2010

	Average feeling thermometer scores (standard deviation)				
<i>Party voted for</i>	BNP	UKIP	Conservative	Labour	LibDem
<i>BNP</i> (<i>n</i> =130)	7.30 (2.48)	5.79 (2.61)	3.65 (2.74)	2.38 (2.70)	3.43 (2.36)
<i>UKIP</i> (<i>n</i> =509)	3.69 (2.98)	7.27 (2.25)	4.29 (2.38)	1.99 (2.25)	3.96 (2.20)
<i>Conservative</i> (<i>n</i> =4,098)	2.15 (2.67)	4.33 (2.67)	7.33 (1.84)	1.70 (1.97)	4.42 (2.03)
<i>Labour</i> (<i>n</i> =3,146)	1.21 (2.22)	2.44 (2.36)	2.23 (2.15)	7.09 (2.06)	4.90 (2.03)
<i>LibDem</i> (<i>n</i> =3,383)	1.14 (2.10)	2.56 (2.49)	3.47 (2.38)	4.31 (2.43)	6.68 (2.01)

This marked difference can also be further illustrated by comparing patterns of outright rejection of the BNP across the British electorate. Overall, nearly 60% of respondents choose the minimum score of 0 when asked to rate the BNP. The BNP is most disliked by Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters, almost 70% of whom give BNP a 0. This number drops below 50% for Conservative voters and to a mere 25% among UKIP voters. Clearly, there is a left-right divide in how the BNP is viewed across the electorate, and this may hint at some systematic relationship between UKIP and BNP support. More robust evidence for such a relationship emerges when correlating feeling thermometer scores for the above five parties, as reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlations between party feeling thermometer scores

	UKIP	Conservatives	Labour	LibDem
BNP	.522*	.173*	-.199*	-.139*
UKIP		.336*	-.318*	-.091*
Conservatives			-.529*	-.065*
Labour				.209*

* Correlation significant at .001

The correlation of over .5 between attitudes towards UKIP and the BNP is by far the strongest positive cross-party relationship that can be found in the British data. The only equally strong correlation is the negative one between Labour and the Conservatives. While the latter illustrates the core party-political cleavage in UK politics, the former may hint at the existence of a right wing party family that incorporates both UKIP and the BNP. Also, we again see the left-right pattern in evaluations of both UKIP and the BNP. While attitudes towards the Conservatives are positively (if weakly) correlated with both UKIP and BNP scores, attitudes towards both Labour and the Liberal Democrats correlate negatively (and again weakly) with those towards UKIP and the BNP. And the weakest correlations are with

the Liberal Democrats, the most centrist party in the system, again emphasising the left-right patterns that seems to underlie cross-partisan evaluations.

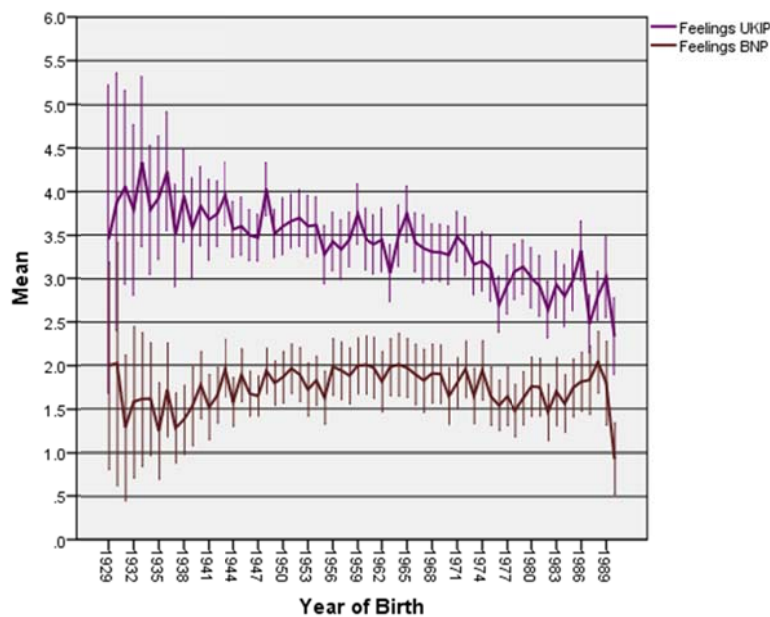
5. The impact of socio-demographic factors on feelings towards UKIP and BNP

The findings in the previous section show, quite clearly, that the BNP is by far the more disliked of our two parties of interest. In the remainder of the paper, however, we are primarily interested in comparing patterns of variation in attitudes towards UKIP and the BNP, in order to see whether it can be argued that they both belong to, or indeed constitute an extreme right wing party family in Britain. We begin by investigating how socio-demographic factors like gender, age, education, income and class correlate with attitudes towards each party, whether this is in accordance with theoretical expectations about support for extreme right wing parties, and whether these pattern indicate more similarities or differences between UKIP and the BNP.

Beginning with gender, both parties are more popular among male than female respondents, but the bivariate relationship is much stronger for BNP than UKIP. Average BNP feeling thermometer scores are .26 higher among men than among women (1.90 and 1.64, respectively). Independent samples tests show these means to be significantly different at the .01 level. The difference in attitudes towards UKIP is much smaller at .10 (the mean is 3.44 for men and 3.34 for women), and this difference is only just significant at .05 level.

In terms of age, our findings do not support the expectation that extreme right parties are more popular among younger voters. As Figure 1 shows, the popularity of UKIP seems to decline in linear fashion with decreasing age, while no obvious relationship exists between age and attitudes towards the BNP. Indeed, the continuous age variable is negatively, if weakly, correlated with the feeling thermometer scores of both parties – significantly so in case of UKIP, with a correlation coefficient of $-.108$ (significant at .01 level), while negligibly so for the BNP (correlation coefficient of $-.006$, not significant).

Figure 1. Bivariate relationship between age and feelings towards UKIP and BNP



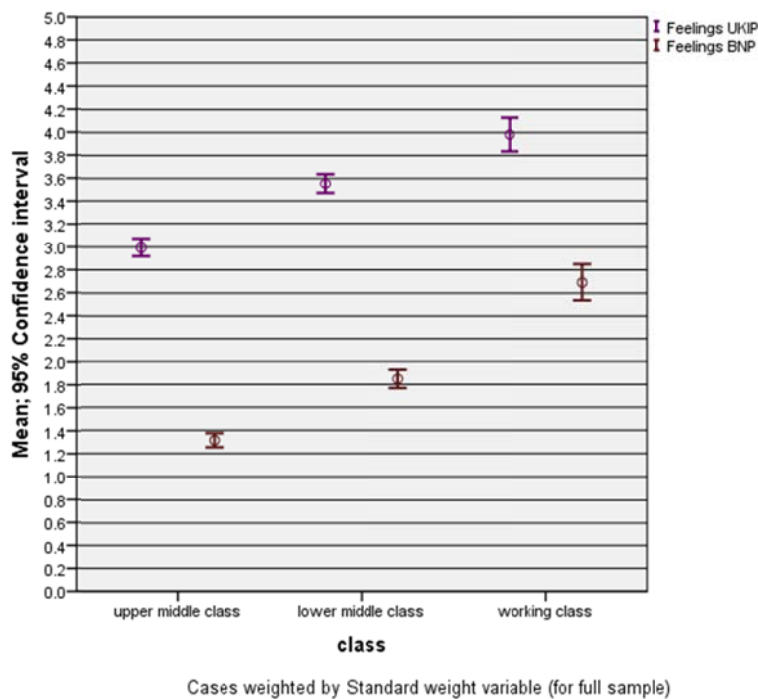
Cases weighted by Standard weight variable (for full sample)

Error bars: 95% CI

There is, however, support for our expectations regarding education. Both parties are significantly more popular among the less educated. If we create a simple dummy variable that distinguishes between having a university degree or not, both parties' mean thermometer score declines by a full point among university educated respondents. For UKIP, it drops from 3.72 to 2.67, for the BNP from 2.07 to 1.09. The differences between the respective means are comfortably significant in both parties.

As with education, class is a strong predictor of attitudes towards both parties, although the class effect somewhat stronger on attitudes towards the BNP than UKIP. As can be seen from Figure 2 below, the appreciation of both parties increases in linear fashion with decreasing class. Working class respondents rate UKIP exactly one point higher than upper middle class respondents (4.00 and 3.00, respectively), while the difference between both groups rating of the BNP is even more pronounced (2.63 and 1.31, respectively). All differences between means across the three class groups are significant at .the 01 level.

Figure 2. Bivariate relationship between class and feelings towards UKIP and BNP



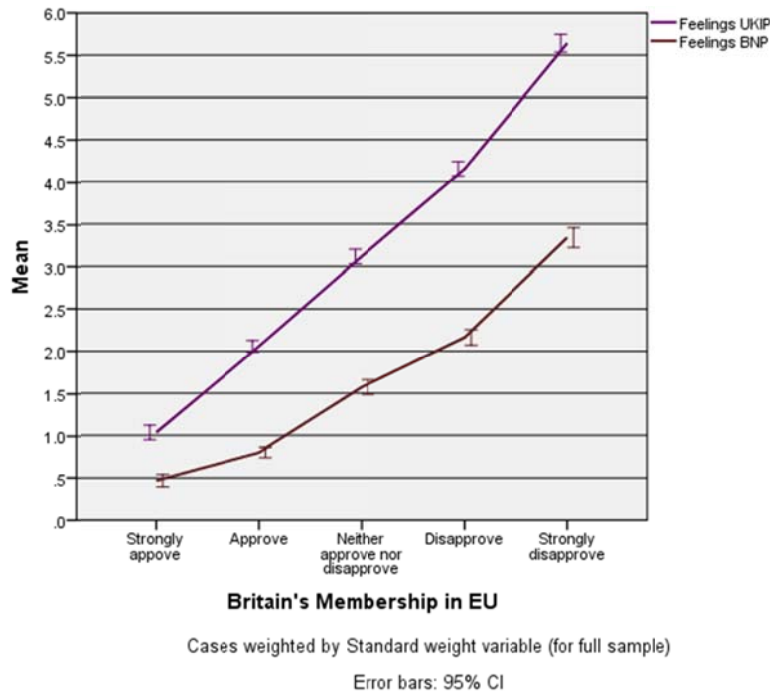
5. The impact of political attitudes on feelings towards UKIP and BNP

The analysis of socio-demographic factors suggested more similarities than differences in terms of the impact on sympathies and antipathies towards UKIP and the BNP. We now move on to the impact of political attitudes, or opinions. If the literature is right to brand the UKIP's as almost a single issue, anti-EU party, and mostly ignore them in discussions of which parties constitute the extreme right in Europe, we would expect to see some marked differences in how political attitudes correlate with sentiments towards these two parties.

Yet, when we look at Figures 3-5, which report how feelings towards BNP and UKIP varies by attitudes towards the EU, towards immigration, and more general economic left right stance (based on a question about tax and spend versus economic self dependency), we observe similarities. For the most part, the lines in the figures are parallel, following very similar paths. True, the impact of EU attitudes on opinion about UKIP is stronger than on opinion about the BNP (correlation for the former is .548, for the latter .369), but the

tendency is the same. Moving from strongly approving Britain’s EU membership to strongly disapproving, the mean UKIP thermometer score rises from a mere 1.0 to 5.5 while that for the BNP increases from 0.5 to almost 3.5.

Figure 3. Bivariate relationship; EU attitudes and feelings towards UKIP and BNP



While Figure 3 shows how Euroscepticism drives support for both parties, Figure 4 assesses the impact of immigration stances. A slight problem here is that while the BES questionnaire offers a clear and well structured question that asks whether a respondent (strongly) approves or disapproves of Britain’s UK membership, no equally good immigration item is available in our dataset. Instead, we had to construct an eight-point scale from a question that asked respondents to indicate how well each of eight different words describe their feelings about immigration. We decided to add the four positive items (happy, hopeful, confident, proud) and then to subtract the four negative items (angry, disgusted, uneasy, afraid). This results in a scale ranging from +4 to -4 where +4 means that a respondent ticked all four positive words to describe his or her feelings, while a -4 means he or she ticked all four negative items.

Figure 4. Bivariate relationship; immigration attitudes and feelings towards UKIP and BNP

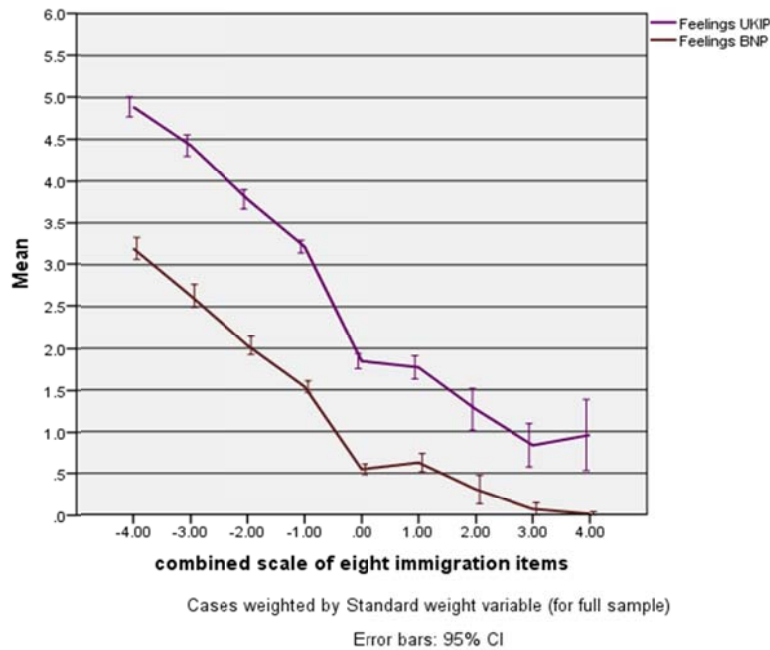
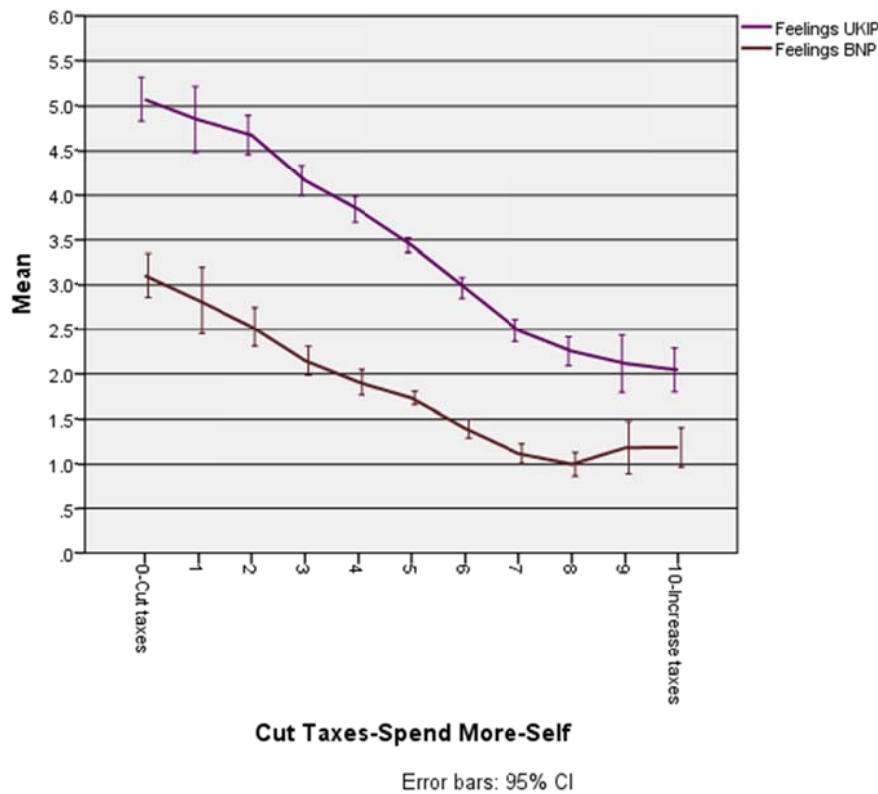


Figure 4 shows a clear and quite linear relationship between this constructed scale and thermometer scores for both parties, with lines moving even more closely and in parallel than was the case with the EU question. If we move from one end of the scale to the other, i.e. from extremely negative to extremely positive feelings about immigration, the score for UKIP decreases from 5.0 to less than 1.0, while the BNP score collapses all the way from over 3.0 to 0.0. Despite the slightly problematical proxy variable for immigration attitudes (it is, after all, conceivably possible to be angry or disgusted about immigration for diametrically opposite reasons) the relationship meets our expectations for both parties. This, also, suggests that our proxy variable for immigration attitudes works as intended.

Finally, Figure 5 shows the impact of self-placements on an 11-point scale measuring self placements on a left-right economic scale, where low numbers indicate that respondents prefer lower taxes, while high numbers mean that they prefer higher taxes and more government spending. The relationship is clear-cut for both parties, albeit slightly stronger for UKIP; the more right-wing in economic terms, the more positive to UKIP and BNP. The lines move in parallel more or less throughout the scale from economic right wing to left wing stance. Both parties' thermometer scores are highest among those who prioritise tax cuts.

Figure 5. Bivariate relationship; left-right economic outlook and feelings towards UKIP and BNP



However, we should be careful not to treat this as a clear-cut test of Kitschelt’s hypothesis about neoliberalism as part of the winning formula. Especially in case of the BNP, we know that only very few respondents have any kind of positive attitude towards them. So for the most part, what Figure 5 shows is how the rejection of BNP (and UKIP) is strongest at the left-wing extreme of the ideological space. This may partly reflect what we have seen earlier, namely that Conservative sympathisers (who are more likely to be located at the “cut taxes” end of the scale) are much more sanguine about both these parties than are Labour and Liberal Democrat voters (who are more likely to populate the “increase taxes and spending” end of the scale).

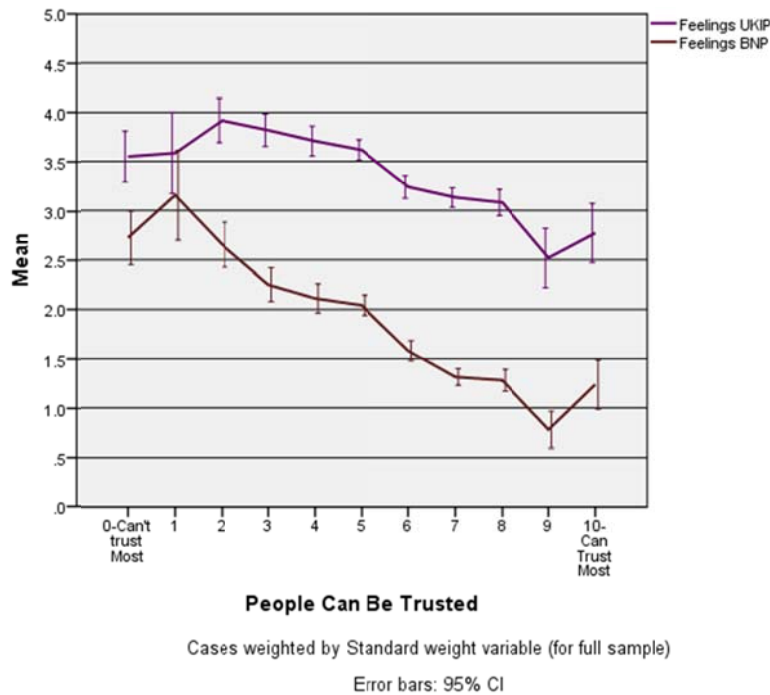
6. Social Capital

So far, the findings from our bivariate analysis are largely in line with expectations. Perhaps, the patterns reported for the respective parties are somewhat more similar than expected. Feelings about both UKIP and the BNP are more positive among males, the less educated, the lower classes, those who disapprove of EU membership, those who feel negative about immigration and those of a more right-wing economic outlook. In almost all cases, effects seemed slightly stronger for UKIP than for the BNP, which may have to do with the generally more negative attitudes towards the BNP which simply leave less room for variation and, perhaps hence, less room for explanation.

This pattern does not continue when we look at social trust. With this we aim to test the hypothesis about extreme right support recruiting from the “losers of modernization”, those most disaffected and disassociated from the political, economic and social life around them. Figure 6 shows how appreciation of the BNP is highest among those with little or no trust in people, while the party is widely disliked among those with high levels of interpersonal trust.

The same cannot be said about UKIP, or at least not to the same extent. Also, correlations between thermometer scores and the 11-point interpersonal trust scale show that the relationship is almost twice as strong for the BNP (with a correlation of $-.175$ compared to $-.100$ for UKIP). The relationship is also negative for UKIP, and significant, but it substantively weak. In other words, attitudes towards the BNP are in line with the “loser” hypothesis, while this cannot be said to be the case for UKIP.

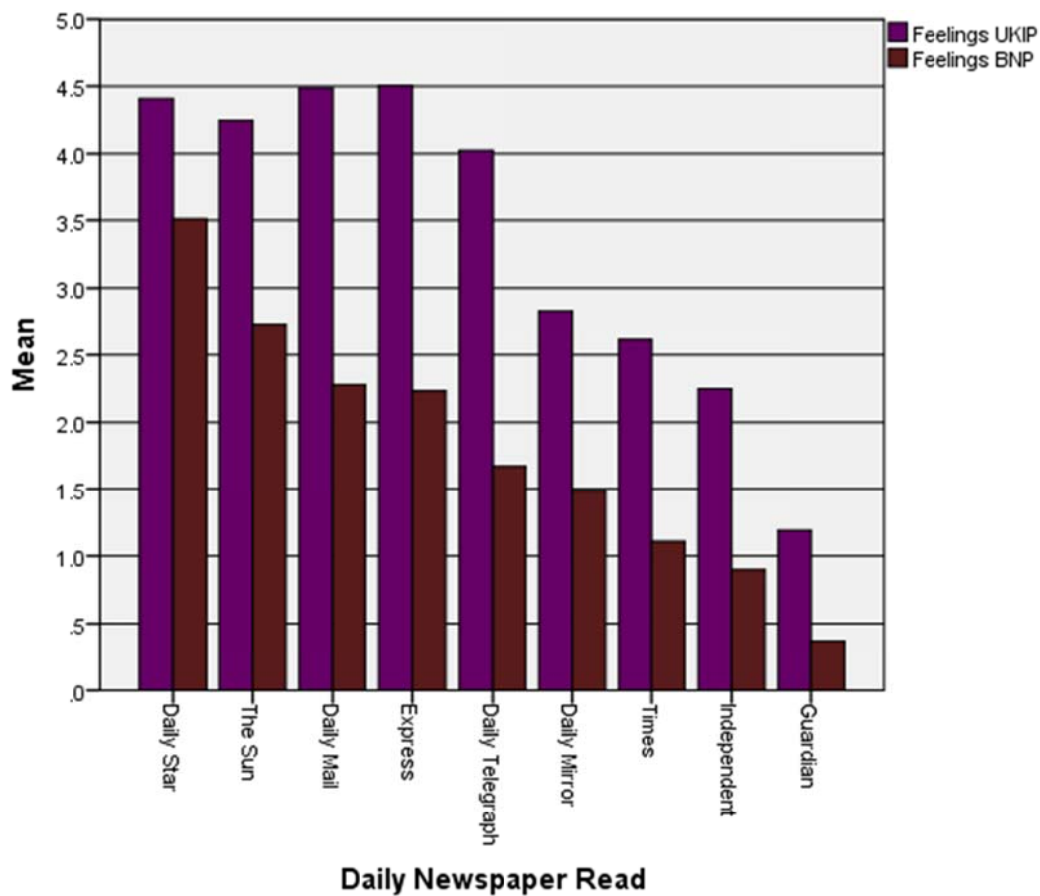
Figure 6. Bivariate relationship between social trust and feelings towards UKIP and BNP



7. Media consumption

Perhaps the most pronounced difference between the parties emerges when we look at how newspaper readership affects thermometer scores. In Figure 7, we compare average thermometer scores for UKIP among the readers of nine different daily newspapers. The papers are ordered here by their readers attitudes towards the BNP, with Daily Star readers most positive and Guardian readers most negative. For the BNP, we find that readers of “red tops” view the party most favourably, while UKIP is almost equally appreciated by readers of red tops, the Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph. Mail, Telegraph and Express are the papers whose readers have the clearest preference for UKIP over the BNP, while readers of the Guardian, Mirror and Times seem the least prone to differentiate between the two. The rejection of both parties by readers of the Times could be regarded as slightly surprising, given this newspaper’s negative stance on the EU. Without extensive content analysis of newspaper, which is not available for the 2010 campaign, this question cannot be answered, and we are left to speculate. One such speculation could be that the Times is a traditional, small state and fiscally conservative newspaper which, while not exactly in love with the EU, puts less emphasis on anti-EU stories than perhaps the Daily Mail and the Telegraph do.

Figure 7. Bivariate relationship between newspaper readership and feelings towards UKIP and BNP



Cases weighted by Standard weight variable (for full sample)

8. Multivariate analysis

A more robust test of how these characteristics and opinions inform attitudes towards these two parties, and how much the explanatory power of these variables differs across these parties, can only be accomplished via multivariate analysis. The findings in this section are based on a multiple OLS regression. The dependent variable is the same 11-scale feeling thermometer scores about UKIP and BNP, as used throughout the paper. The independents are the socio-demographic, attitudinal, social capital and media variables used in the previous sections. In addition, however, we also control for personal financial circumstances and expectations, employment sector and religion. The first and third columns in Table 6 report these models trying to explain feelings towards UKIP and BNP. As can be seen, there are considerable similarities between the respective impacts of the independent variables on how positively or negatively respondents felt about each party.

Table 6: OLS regression: explaining attitudes towards UKIP and BNP

	Feelings UKIP (Betas)	Feelings UKIP (Betas)	Feelings BNP (Betas)	Feelings BNP (Betas)
Constant	-.196	-.131	-.076	-.032
Age	-.047***	-.015	-.098***	-.079***
Gender (male=1; female=2)	-.037***	-.017*	-.065***	-.051***
Education	-.041***	-.011	-.092***	-.076***
Income	-.003	-.002	-.011	-.006
Class	-.014	.002	-.047***	-.043***
Private Sector	.041	.022	.046*	.031
Public Sector	.019	.008	.017	.013
Personal finances (retrospective)	-.009	-.006	-.010	-.005
Personal finances (prospective)	-.015	-.014	-.003	.002
Tax v. Spend self-placement	-.079***	-.064***	-.045***	-.014
Approval of British EU membership	-.464***	-.386***	-.227***	-.048***
8-item immigration scale	-.117***	-.062***	-.172***	-.122***
Trust in people	.022**	.048***	-.072***	-.085***
Satisfaction with Democracy	-.014	.001	-.053***	-.042***
Attention to politics	.043***	.043***	-.001	-.018*
Religion	-.003	-.004	.002	.004
Daily Mail reader	.068***	.057***	.034***	.006
Guardian reader	-.044***	-.042***	-.007	.012
Daily Star reader	.017*	.004	.038***	.033***
Telegraph reader	.034***	.037***	-.008	-.021**
Sun reader	.013	.004	.031***	.022***
Feelings UKIP				.405***
Feelings BNP		.325***		
R²	.38	.46	.22	.33
N	12,434	12,370	13,453	12,370

Socio-demographic factors are stronger predictors of attitudes towards BNP than UKIP, but they tend to pull mostly in the same direction. Indeed, when controlling for other factors, age

does have the originally hypothesised effect, which we did not see in the bivariate analysis – younger respondents have more positive opinions about both parties. Men are more inclined towards both parties, as are the less educated, while class and sector employment only matter for attitudes towards the BNP. The impact of left-right economic attitude, evaluation of the EU membership and feelings about immigration are all stronger for UKIP, most notably so in case of attitudes towards the EU. Political and social disaffection explains more of how one views the BNP. For UKIP, the effect of social capital is actually the reverse. Those with more interpersonal trust and higher attention to politics think more positively about UKIP. This is another case where the bivariate finding does not survive the multivariate analysis. Satisfaction with democracy has no significant impact on feelings towards UKIP, but in comparison to BNP it is notable that the effect is not negative. In terms of newspaper readership, Daily Mail and Telegraph readers like UKIP better; Guardian readers like UKIP considerably less than the average, and readers of the Daily Star, the Sun and the Daily Mail are more positive than others to the BNP.

Overall, the UKIP model has stronger explanatory power, with an R square that is almost twice as big as that for the BNP model. Still, we do see meaningful patterns for both parties. Attitudes regarding EU and immigration are clearly the most powerful independent variables for both parties, but several other variables are also significant. Essentially, the analysis suggests that both UKIP and BNP can get into the extreme right costume, although it fits BNP somewhat better. We will return to this in the concluding section.

In a final step, we wanted to test more explicitly the idea that both parties constitute an extreme right wing party family in the UK. For this purpose, we included thermometer scores of the other party as an independent variable. Hence, in column 2 the model explaining attitudes towards UKIP includes a measure of appreciation of the BNP, while in column 4 we include UKIP attitudes to explain opinions about the BNP. This tests whether preferences towards one party can help explain what respondents make of the other party, irrespective of their socio-demographic background and other political opinions. And indeed we find that inclusion of this additional variable not only boosts R square considerably, but also provides one of the strongest explanatory factors in the respective models. Indeed, opinions about UKIP emerge as the strongest predictor of feelings towards the BNP, outweighing even immigration attitudes, while in the UKIP model disapproval of EU membership remains the strongest single factor, but closely followed by what the respondents thinks of the BNP.

9. Conclusion

The evidence presented in this paper is not without ambiguities. We have reported much similarity between the two parties, but there are also notable differences. It seems quite clear that BNP fits the model of an extreme right party better than UKIP. This is especially true in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and political disaffection, but in addition BNP seems to fit the notion of extreme right voters as socially alienated. In terms of attitudes, negative feelings about immigration have a positive impact on feelings towards both parties, but the effect is somewhat stronger for BNP. The only ways in which the BNP does not fit the extreme right stereotype are the lack of a significant impact of the self-perceived personal economic situation, and religion.

With UKIP the picture is somewhat less clear-cut. As with BNP, there is no impact of personal economy or religion, but in addition class and sector employment have no effect. There is a negative impact of education, but it is weaker than it is for BNP and it does not remain with control for feelings towards BNP. The impact of trust in people is positive rather

than negative, there is no significant impact of satisfaction with democracy and there is a positive impact of attention to politics. UKIP supporters, in other words, are better integrated not only socially, but also politically. Of the differences between the parties, two are particularly notable. First, that while support for BNP is linked to political disinterest and disaffection, this is not the case with UKIP. Second, that while BNP supporters seem to have low levels of social capital, the opposite is the case with UKIP supporters.

These are interesting and important differences, but they should not overshadow the similarities. Clearly, immigration is an issue for both parties. The effect is stronger in BNP, but it is significant also in UKIP. EU criticism, conversely, has a stronger impact on feelings towards UKIP, but is significant also in BNP. Thus, while attitudes towards EU membership are a dominant explanatory factor, UKIP is not simply a single issue party. There is a broader set of ideological and sociological explanations that emerges from our analysis, and it points towards at least some similarity between BNP and UKIP. Not least notable is the two parties' relations with each other, which go beyond the mere similarity of the respondents' background. On the official level, of course, there is no love lost between UKIP and BNP. As shown above, however, the majority of the British electorate in 2010 saw a close connection between the two parties. Attitudes towards them co-vary, which has to be understood from two perspectives, or perhaps rather as a two-tailed hypothesis. On the one hand, it hints at the possibility that supporters of one party appreciate the other and perhaps even see it as a viable electoral alternative. On the other hand, the vast majority of the British public rejects both parties. They reject the BNP more than UKIP, but dislike for UKIP is strongest among those who are also most inclined to ostracise the BNP.

The remaining question is how to weigh the reported differences and similarities against each other, and how this affects our understanding of both parties. As is well known, the respective public reputations of the two studied parties are markedly different. The BNP is, outside itself, widely regarded as extreme, while UKIP has a reputation as more moderate. This is supported by the data presented here – BNP quite clearly comes across as further away from the mainstream than UKIP. Still, our analysis shows that UKIP also has many similarities, not only with BNP, but also with what we know about other European extreme right parties. Thus, the observed differences between our two parties are not of such a magnitude that they warrant separation into different party families. Rather, BNP and UKIP fit rather neatly into separate subgroups of the same, extreme right, party family. The former in a more radical subgroup, and the latter in a more moderate ditto. This is also consistent with the two parties' respective patterns of alignments in the EU parliament. Europe matters, after all.

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