Thatcher's Children, Blair's Babies,

political socialisation and trickle-down value-change:

An age, period and cohort analysis[1]

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Abstract (120 words)

To what extent are new generations 'Thatcherite'? Using British Social Attitudes data for 1985-2012 and applying age-period-cohort (APC) analysis and generalized additive models (GAMs) this paper investigates whether Thatcher's Children hold more right-authoritarian political values compared to other political generations. We further examine the extent to which the generation that came of age under New Labour – Blair's Babies – share these values. Our findings for generation effects indicate that this political generation is even more right-authoritarian, including with respect to attitudes to redistribution, welfare and crime. We support this view through evidence of cohort effects. Our results show the legacy of Thatcherism for left-right and libertarian-authoritarian values is to be found in its long-term shaping of public opinion through political socialisation.

As early as January 1979, Stuart Hall, who coined the term 'Thatcherism', wrote: "No one seriously concerned with political strategies in the current situation can now afford to ignore the 'swing to the Right'" . That year, as was later shown[2], marked the high point of the British electorate's rightward movement – and the 'sea-change' (as Jim Callaghan called it) in public opinion that was marked by election of the Thatcher government. For many, Thatcher's 'authoritarian populism' captured the nation's anxious mood in the economic crisis of the mid-to-late 1970s, in the aftermath of the upswing in industrial militancy and the cultural radicalism of the 'permissive society' of the 1960s and early 1970s.[3] The Left was divided in Britain and unable to exploit the social liberalism of the previous decade to articulate a relevant progressive political discourse. Thatcher was still in office when Ivor Crewe[4] posed the question of whether the British electorate had 'become Thatcherite'. Subsequent studies analysed Thatcher's Children and the extent to which this generation was more right-wing relative to predecessors, finding mixed evidence.[5]

In this paper we aim to examine the question of political generations by analysing the extent to which a political context marked by a right-authoritarian zeitgeist influenced the values of new cohorts. While this wider theoretical question is applicable to other comparative contexts such as the U.S. under Reagan and the rise of the Moral Majority, in this paper we draw on British data since the prolonged period of Conservative rule in

[2] Bartle, Dellepiane-Avellaneda, and Stimson 2011.

[3] Hay 1996.

[4] Crewe 1988.

[5] See for e.g. Russell, Johnston and Pattie 1992; Heath and Park 1997; Tilley 2002.

Britain between 1979 and 1997 provides an excellent test case for examining the theory of political generations and formative experiences. Normally we would expect younger generations to be more leftist and liberal than older generations. Therefore the protracted period with the Conservative Party in office allows us to test whether younger cohorts coming of age in this political context came to adopt political attitudes in line with this party's at a greater rate than would be expected given their young age. Further, our investigation builds on this traditional question by also examining whether the generation that came of age under New Labour, 'Blair's Babies', can be better identified as 'Thatcher's Grand-children', in reinforcing the rightward shift in social values that had occurred under the previous generation. We postulate a 'trickle-down'[6] theory of social change: during the first phase of Conservative government (normative neoliberalism) there was deeper ideological contestation, while in the following phase (normalised neoliberalism) even political opponents and rival partisans had internalised its market precepts as 'the rules of the game'. The 1980s were marked by a concentrated political shift towards neo-liberal market economies across many Western democracies.[7] The rise of the New Right signalled a rightward shift in opinion in the US, UK and other Anglo-American democracies in the 1980s. As such we seek to gauge whether those who came of age under

[6] The term 'trickle-down' has been employed in popular political commentary/critiques, particularly of President Reagan's administration and other laissez-fair capitalist economies. The concept originated in the U.S.; Democratic presidential candidate, William Bryan referred to the idea in a speech in 1896 where he compared promoting economic prosperity via either 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' strategies (Sowell 2012).

[7] Braedley and Luxton 2010; Duménil and Lévy 2011; Kotz 2015.

Thatcher, and subsequent Prime Ministers are more politically conservative than those coming of age in the earlier period in which such values were more contested. In short, the question addressed in this paper is: To what extent did the generations coming of age in the protracted period of Conservative government come to exhibit more conservative values? What were the differences between the generation coming of age in the first phase (during Thatcher's time in office) relative to the second phase (after she left office, during the time of New Labour)? We theorise that 'Thatcher's Children' may be less Thatcherite than 'Blair's Babies' as Thatcherite values became entrenched across society – as signalled also by New Labour's emergence – during the period *after* Thatcher left office.[8]

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. We first discuss theories of generational replacement and value change and develop our hypotheses. We then discuss the data and methods used in this study of attitudinal change in Britain: specifically, a newly combined longitudinal dataset built from repeated cross-sectional sweeps of the British Social Attitudes survey for the period from 1985 to 2012.[9] These are used to identify and isolate the different effects of age, period and cohort on social values. We next present our results concerning the degree to which those generations socialised during and after the time of Thatcher differ in their attitudes to redistribution, welfare and authority. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings for our understanding of the Thatcher years and their legacy, also reflecting on their wider

[8] Hay 2004.

[9] See Jennings, Gray, Hay and Farrall 2015.

significance for the study of the evolution of social and political attitudes and long-term processes of socialisation.

Political Generations

Generational theories share the idea that values are formed early on, influenced by the specific historical and political contexts within which each new cohort of citizens is socialised, and remain stable throughout the life-course, so that aggregate value change occurs as older cohorts with certain value-sets die and are replaced by younger cohorts with different values.[10] One such type of account is modernization theory.[11] However, while modernization theory allows for some short-term shifts in values, the global trajectory remains one where social liberalism becomes incerasingly more widespread at the aggregate level.[12] In contrast, political generations theory takes a historicised perspective that emphasises the importance of political events and experiences taking place during the impressionable "formative years" for the differentiation of cohorts.[13] According to this line of thinking, it is not so much affluence and security in childhood that shapes the values and political commitments of new cohorts, but rather the political experiences and historical events occuring during one's young adulthood. Various studies have shown that diverse political contexts can produce generations with distinct value-sets and patterns of

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[10] Mannheim 1928; Erikson and Stoker 2011.

[11] Inglehart 1977; Inglehart 1990.

[12] Inglehart 1977; Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005.

[13] Mannheim 1928.

behaviour.[14] Critical historical moments such as the world-wide student protests of 1968 or the fall of the Berlin Wall, a prolonged period over which the same party holds power, and other types of major external events during a cohort's coming of age are understood to explain why socialisation in diverse political contexts creates distinct 'political generations'. While members of a given political generation are divided by social cleavages such as gender and class (Mannheim calls called these 'generation units') nonetheless, as a generation, they are understood to share values and the conceptions of the world because they emerged from the same temporal/spatial location. Mannheim[15] thus likens generations to social classes arising from distinct positions in the economic or material realm.[16] Supporting this, studies of macro-level preferences have shown how publics react thermostatically against the government of the day.[17] Others argue that parties in government are able to shape the preferences of the electorate,[18] which would be consistent with the effect of socialisation on political values during certain periods.

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[14] Tilley 2002; Grasso 2011; Bartels and Jackman 2014; Grasso 2014; Neundorf and Niemi 2014; Tilley and Evans 2014; Grasso 2016.

[15] Mannheim 1928.

[16] While inter- and not intra- generational differences are the focus of this article of course generations are also heterogeneous within. Mannheim (1928) recognises this through the concept of 'generation units'. It is thus important to control, as we do in this paper, for a wide variety of factors that could result in inter-generational differences that are not necessarily linked to political socialisation, that is, historical experiences.

[17] Erikson, Mackuen and Stimson 2002; Bartle, Dellepiane-Avellaneda, and Stimson 2011.

[18] Dunleavy and Ward 1981; Curtice and Fisher 2003.

'Thatcher's Children'

Gamble[19] characterises Thatcherism as a marriage of 'the free economy and the strong state' – a flexible synthesis, in other words, of market liberalisation (support for a smaller state, deregulation of financial markets, privatisation of public owned industries and assets, the sale of council houses) and social conservatism with a strengthened law and order agenda (Clause 28, extending police powers, facing down trade unions as 'the enemy within', a tougher rhetorical stance on sentencing, Cold War rearmament). In this conception, Thatcherism sought to establish a hegemonic project involving "ideology, economics and politics, a politics of support and a politics of power"[20]. Hall[21] saw 'Thatcherism' as more than simply "the corresponding political bedfellow of a period of capitalist recession" but as a dramatic rupture from the politics of the social-democratic post-war consensus. Gilroy and Simm[22] pointed out how the main innovation with respect to 'law and order' during the Thatcher governments was to politicise and present the repressive institutions of the state as necessary instruments in the fight against certain 'subversive' elements in society and winning the support for this from large sections, if not the majority, of the British public. The politicisation of 'law and order' was a crucial break brought forth by the Thatcher governments and the appeal of populism was understood as a key reason for why almost a third of trade unionists voted for the Conservatives in May

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[19] Gamble 1988.

[20] Gamble 1988, 223.

[21] Hall 1979.

[22] Gilroy and Simm 1985.

1979.[23] Thatcher's emphasis upon the politics of confrontation and the pitting of different social sectors against each other to garner social support was most commonly associated with the Miners' Strike in 1981, and the reaction to the inner-city riots. In many ways, the Thatcher governments of this period were quite distinctive and presented themselves as breaking from the post-war consensus. The Conservatives were in office continuously for 18 years between 1979 and 1997 (under Margaret Thatcher until 1990, and then under John Major), the longest unbroken period of rule by one party in the UK since 1830. These factors combined would suggest a strong impact on the values of young people coming of age in this political context.

Early research on the impact of Thatcherism on British public attitudes begun by looking at straightforward over time change. Studies such as the one by Crewe[24] had looked at whether the electorate had become more focused on self-reliance and showed decreasing enthusiasm for this idea. The turning point in the research on the attitudinal impact of Thatcherism came with Russell et al.'s[25] study which was pioneering in that it was the first to study 'Thatcher's Children' and examine generational effects. They showed that while ageing did show a tendency to increase Conservative identification, the formative experiences of electoral generations resulted in persistent cohort differences. Russell et al.[26] concluded that socialization during Thatcher's term in office meant that first-

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[23] Hobsbawm 1979.

[24] Crewe 1989.

[25] Russell, Johnston and Pattie 1992.

[26] Russell, Johnston and Pattie 1992.

time electors in the 1979 and 1987 elections were more Conservative than would have been expected given their young age. By examining socialisation effects, this study showed that the verdict was still out on whether Thatcherism had an influence on the electorate's values.

Later, Heath and Park[27] showed some signs of a Thatcherite shift finding evidence that the 1980s generation was more materialistic than previous generations. Examining cohort differences in British Election Study data, Tilley[28] showed that the trend to move away from the Conservatives amongst younger cohorts was reversed in the 1980s and 1990s. Later, Tilley and Heath[29] showed how Thatcher was able to arrest the decline in feelings of national pride and the trend towards more liberal young generations.[30] Tilley and Evans[31] recently showed how the generations coming of age in periods of Conservative ascendancy (the 1930s, 1950s and 1980s) were all more likely to support this party.

It was not until the late 1990s that aggregate studies of public opinion begun to show a Thatcherite shift, supporting the idea of a process of underlying generational replacement at play. Curtice and Jowell[32] provide evidence that between 1985 and 1996 fewer people agreed that government should provide healthcare, pensions, control prices, help industry grow, help poor families send their children to university, provide shelter for

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[27] Heath and Park 1997.

[28] Tilley 2002.

[29] Tilley and Heath 2007.

[30] Tilley 2005.

[31] Tilley and Evans 2014.

[32] Curtice and Jowell 1997.

the poor, reduce inequality, provide jobs or help the unemployed. Evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey showed that the proportion of the electorate agreeing that 'governments ought to redistribute income' had fallen over time, from 45 percent in 1987 to 36 percent in 2009, while the proportion saying 'government ought to spend more on benefits' fell from 55 percent in 1987 to 27 percent in 2009.[33]

'Thatcher's Grand-Children' ?

Since Major did not set out to openly challenge Thatcher's policies, we expect that the socialisation experiences of young people coming of age during his time in office should not have differed substantially from those coming of age under Thatcher's governments. The emergence of New Labour under Tony Blair, signalled that while internally divided, Labour had also moved closer to the Thatcher agenda primarily as a result of an ideological move dictated by the party leadership.[34] Particularly from the inception of New Labour in 1994, all three main parties were converging on a recognisably Thatcher-influenced 'middle ground', so that the primacy of the market became the accepted wisdom[35] and Thatcherite polices were consolidated by Blair.[36] Since New Labour has been widely come to be understood as 'Thatcherism by another name'[37] and its

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[33] Curtice 2010.

[34] Evans and Tilley 2012.

[35] Heffernan 2000.

[36] Curtice and Fisher 2003; Curtice 2009.

[37] Hay 1996; Coates 2005; Shaw 2008; Faucher-King and Le Gales 2010.

values even less contested than was previously the case while she was in office, we test the proposition that the values of the generation coming of age between 1997 and 2010 will be even more right-wing and authoritarian than those of previous generations. Based on the discussion above, we test the following two hypotheses:

> H_1: *The cohort that came of age between 1979 and 1996 will be more right-wing and more authoritarian than cohorts that came of age prior to this prolonged period of Conservative rule.*

> H_2: *The cohort that came of age under New Labour between 1997 and 2010 will be more right-wing and more authoritarian than cohorts that came of age before them.*

Data and Methods

The analysis in this paper relies on British Social Attitudes survey data for the period between 1985 and 2012. These are repeated cross-sectional surveys where respondents were asked the same attitudinal and other questions at different points in time. The dataset was constructed specifically for the purposes of this type of analysis.[38] It thus provides rich individual-level data on social attitudes and political values relevant to Thatcherism as well as all the necessary control variables over a sufficiently long time span to separate age, period and cohort effects.

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[38] Jennings, Gray, Hay and Farrall 2015.

Dependent Variables

While most studies on the generation politically socialised under Thatcher have examined partisanship or just a few available indicators of left-right and libertarian-authoritarian values, in this study we examine nine different indicators of right-authoritarian values side-by-side. In each case the survey item has been recoded so that a value of 1 indicates agreement with the Thatcherite position and a value of 0 indicates disagreement.[39] This allows direct comparison across indicators and means that in the results an increasing trend suggests greater agreement with the Thatcherite stance in the same way across all indicators. The variables tap into both left-right economic and libertarian-authoritarian social values. More specifically, the following nine dependent variables are analysed in this study:

1. *What do you think about the income gap between the rich and the poor in the UK today? 1 'About right' or 'Too small'; 0 'Too large'*

2. *Government should redistribute from the better off to the less well off.*
   1 Disagree/Strongly Disagree; 0 Neither, Agree/Strongly Agree

3. *Government should spend more money on the poor even if it leads to higher taxes.*
   1 Disagree/Strongly Disagree; 0 Neither, Agree/Strongly Agree

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[39] While we run logistic models on dummy dependent variables for the age-period-cohort models, where it was possible, we also ran the models as ordered logistic regression on the full scale as robustness checks.

4. *Opinions differ about the level of benefits for the unemployed. Which of these best reflects your opinion? 1 Benefits are too high and discourage people from finding jobs; 0 Other response categories (i.e. Benefits are too low and cause hardship; Neither; Both cause hardship; Some people benefit, some people suffer; About right; Other)*

5. *Unemployed could find a job if they wanted to. 1 Agree/Strongly Agree; 0 Neither, Disagree/Strongly Disagree*

6. *People should learn to stand on their own feet. 1 Agree/Strongly Agree; 0 Neither, Disagree/Strongly Disagree*

7. *The death penalty is appropriate for some crimes. 1 Agree/Strongly Agree; 0 Neither, Disagree/Strongly Disagree*

8. *People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences. 1 Agree/Strongly Agree; 0 Neither, Disagree/Strongly Disagree*

9. *Schools should teach children to obey authority. 1 Agree/Strongly Agree; 0 Neither, Disagree/Strongly Disagree*

APC Modelling Strategy

Generational theories, such as those discussed earlier, tend to argue that the context of one's socialisation is the most important factor for understanding differences in values

relative to ageing or period effects. However, research on cohort effects needs to address the potentially confounding influences of age and period effects when estimating the models. Age effects suggest that values change with social ageing and indeed research has found that older people tend to be more conservative than younger people. Moreover, certain periods signal a rightward shift for all individuals in society, such as for example was expected of the period of Thatcher's ascendancy in Britain. As such, in order to identify cohort effects we will need to control also for both age and period, or year of survey, in our models. This is issue is known as the age-period-cohort 'identification problem' in the literature. It emerges since the three effects are in a linear relationship with each other. As soon as we know two values we simultaneously know the third:

Year of Birth = Year - Age

In order to 'identify' the model and capture net effects it is necessary to apply certain restrictions. This methodological hurdle has meant that a rich statistical literature has emerged over the years presenting methods to 'solve' the 'identification problem' (see for example the special symposium of 2014 in *Electoral Studies* for recent advances in political science.)[40] In this paper, we follow the method presented in Grasso[41] which consists in applying generalised additive models (GAMs) to plot the identified, smoothed cohort effect and as well as testing for intergenerational differences with constrained age-period-cohort models and post-estimation Wald tests. Since the data employed are from a

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[40] Neundorf and Niemi 2014.

[41] Grasso 2014.

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single country we do not need to apply generalised additive mixed models (GAMMs) in this context but can safely rely on non-hierarchical generalized additive models (GAMs), using the continuous year of birth variable for plotting the smoothed cohort effect to overcome the identification problem. Moreover, to test for cohort differences we apply Wald tests after estimating age-period-cohort regression models with a categorised cohort variable reflecting the theoretical distinctions based on the historical period of socialisation.

The GAMs allow us to plot the nonlinear smoothed cohort effect since year of birth is estimated as smoothly changing. There are different smoothing functions which could be applied; smoothing splines are used here and the software package selected the smoothing parameter by generalized cross-validation. This allows us to plot the non-parametric smoothed curve for the effect of year of birth.[42] The utility of the application of the GAMs is that it permits us to visually check whether cohort effects are what we would expect based on the categorised generations variable from the APC models. Arriving at the same results with two different methods applying different types of restrictions give us greater confidence in our results. This combined method for dealing with the identification problem is particularly appropriate here as it has been developed specifically for research questions examining political generations with repeated cross-sectional attitudinal data typical in political science.[43] GAMs are particularly useful for examining the non-linear components of generational effects. Other approaches such as the intrinsic estimator (IE)

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[42] Tilley 2001; Tilley 2002; Tilley 2003; Neundorf 2010; Grasso 2011; Grasso 2014; Shorrocks 2016.

[43] Grasso 2014.

and hierarchical APC (HAPC) models developed in demography and epidemiology are not employed here since they are less suited to the current type of data structure and research questions.[44] Simulation studies have shown these methods run the risk of incorrectly attributing trends in one of age, period and cohort to the other two terms.[45] Moreover, Luo[46] shows that IE relies on arbitrary and unjustified constraints. On the other hand, the combined technique with constrained age-period-cohort models and GAMs applied in this paper allows us to clearly test our hypotheses by applying the theoretically-derived cohort groupings as well as checking the results for robustness.

Given that we are interested in cohort differences, year of birth is the main independent variable. This ranges from 1910 to 1990. The idea of a 'Thatcher effect' implies that those generations socialised during the period of her ascendancy will be particularly right-authoritarian. The key period of socialisation will largely depend on the mechanism implied in theory.[47] Given that here we are examining the formation of political attitudes as a result of the ascendancy of a party in government we would expect that socialisation should occur during the mid-teens to the mid-to late 20s. We use the method presented in Grasso[48] to assign individuals to different political generations based on the historical phase in which they have spent the majority of their formative years. As such, we

[44] Yang and Land 2006; Yang and Land 2008; Yang et al. 2008.

[45] Bell and Jones 2014a; Bell and Jones 2014b.

[46] Luo 2013.

[47] Inglehart 1977; Inglehart 1990; Bartels and Jackman 2014.

[48] Grasso 2014.

define Thatcher's Children as those born between 1959 and 1976 and coming of age in the protracted period of Conservative rule between 1979 and 1996 (we include1997 in the following period). Thatcher's Children and the other political generations analysed in this study are presented in **Table 1**.

This method of categorising generations has the advantage that it places emphasis on the historical period of a generation's socialisation. The years of birth of the political generations are then derived from this information. We include the categorised political generations variable in the age-period-cohort models in order to (1) cross-check the robustness of the results from the GAMs and (2) use Wald tests to test for cohort differences. In the GAMs we use the continuous year of birth variable to derive the smoothed cohort effects. Other than year of birth/cohort we also include age and period to identify the age-period-cohort models. The description of variables henceforth applies to both the GAMs and the age-period-cohort models. Age is coded as a three-level factor: (1) under 34 years; (2) 35-59 year; (3) over 60 years. Year of survey is included as a continuous variable. To test for robustness of the cohort effects, we ran the age-period-cohort models with a number of alternative possible configurations of age and period.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Other Variables

We control for gender as well as education level, marital status, employment status, household income, whether the respondent attended private school, home ownership, union membership and Conservative party identification. In each case we use the most detailed

measures available in the over-time longitudinal file.[49] Descriptive statistics for all these variables are presented in **Table 2**.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Other than generation, younger age and also higher education levels tend to be linked to greater liberalism.[50] Younger cohorts are more likely to be highly educated and as such more liberal than older cohorts. The expansion of education is one of the processes mentioned by modernization theorists as leading to greater liberalism amongst younger cohorts and therefore society as a whole through inter-generational replacement. As such controlling for education and also student status should allow us to capture the generational differences resulting from socialisation as opposed to the fact that younger cohorts have other sorts of characteristics which should tendentially make them more socially liberal.[51] While modernization theory implies that the shift from materialist to post-materialist values is one that occurs primarily due to cohort replacement over time, in this way we can also control for some compositional changes.

Controls for marital status (three categories: married, previously married and single/never married) and employment status (seven categories: full time employment, part time employment, unemployed/waiting for work, retired, student, taking care of the home and other employment situation) are included to account for aspects of social ageing and structural position. They also deal with the issue that married people tend to be more

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[49] Jennings, Gray, Hay and Farrall 2015.

[50] Evans and De Graaf 1996.

[51] Grasso 2013; Grasso and Giugni 2016.

conservative but that younger generations are less likely to settle into conventional family

arrangements than previous generations. Moreover, since some of the items pertain to

unemployed benefits, controlling for whether someone is seeking work is necessary.

Students and women are also generally more liberal groups whereas those retired from

employment tend to be more conservative, and as such including gender and employment

status in the models are helpful controls.

Class is an important variable for understanding social differences in political

values. Traditionally, the middle classes have tended to associate with, in Britain, the

Conservative Party, whereas the working classes have tended to support Labour. This

picture has become more complex with class dealignment and the waning relevance of

values concerning inequality and redistribution in political discourse, which traditionally

translated class divisions into party choice.[52] In any case, we would expect individuals in

the middle class to be generally more likely to hold right-wing economic values,[53] though

the picture for authoritarianism is less clear. We also include three additional measures of

privilege and social staus – household income (low, mid, high), whether the respondent

attended private school, and home ownership – since more privileged individuals are more

likely to defend inequality for obvious reasons and this might be reflected in the

composition of different cohorts. We also include controls for union membership and

Conservative party identification to deal with compositional differences between cohorts.

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[52] Evans and Tilley 2012.

[53] Dunleavy's sectoral cleavage suggests public vs private sector are likely to distinguish the middle classes in their politcal values

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Analysis

First we estimate age-period-cohort models with our categorised cohort variable (as presented in Table 1). Next, in order to formally test whether certain political generations are more Thatcherite than others, we ran Wald tests .While the age-period-cohort logistic regression models presented in **Table 3** allow us to see whether differences between each cohort included in the model and the reference category ('Wilson/Callaghan's Children') are significant, Wald tests allow us to test for coefficient differences between the cohort categories included in the model. The results for the Wald tests are presented in **Table 4**.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Turning first quickly to the controls, they generally exhibit the expected effects but contrary to this gender does not have a consistent effect either on economic or social values. As expected, married individuals are more conservative than both previously married and single individuals. The same is true of individuals in full time employment relative to all the other employment categories. As expected, individuals in the higher income categories are more Thatcherite with respect to redistribution, inequality, benefits and attitudes towards the unemployed. However, they are also less authoritarian than those with low incomes. Having a private education makes one more Thatcherite with respect to redistribution and inequality. However, it also makes one less likely to agree with the negative sentiments about benefits and the unemployed as well as making one less authoritarian. As expected, home ownership tends to predict Thatcherism as (unsurprisingly) does party identification whereas union membership decreases the

likelihood that one will agree with Thatcherite values. Class is an interesting variable. Relative to the middle class, all lower classes are less likely to agree that the income gap is too small or about right. The working class is more likely relative to the middle class to agree that government should redistribute. However, there are no class differences for the survey item that suggests a trade-off between redistribution and taxation. Interestingly, all three items on benefits and all three items on authoritarianism show that all other classes are more likely to agree with the Thatcherite tendency than the higher middle class, controlling for all the other variables in the models, supporting the populist story-line.

Turning to the age-period-cohort results, first it should be noted that there are some small age effects with the middle aged group more likely than the younger age group to support redistribution in the face of higher taxes, to express more positive views of the unemployed and to disagree that the death penalty is appropriate for some crimes. Those in the oldest age group are less likely to agree with the Thatcherite position on redistribution than the youngest age group but are more likely to think poorly of benefit seekers and to want children to be taught to obey authority. The effects for year of survey show that with the exception of the inequality item there are significant period effects with increasing support for the Thatcherite position in all cases bar support for the death penalty. This in itself suggests that, slowly, over 20 or more years, the electorate was indeed becoming more Thatcherite, particularly with respect to negative attitudes towards the benefits system, the unemployed, benefit recipients and the welfare system more generally.

The coefficients for political generations in the age-period-cohort models presented in **Table 3** in conjunction with the results from the Wald tests presented in **Table 4** show

that across eight of nine indicators, Thatcher's Children are more right-wing and

authoritarian than the generation preceding them: i.e. Wilson/Callaghan's Children. This

provides support to our first hypothesis (H_1). Blair's Babies are also more right-wing and

authoritarian than this political generation, confirming that Thatcherite values were

reproduced under New Labour, have strengthened and become embedded in the generation

coming of age after Thatcher's time in office. This is consistent with H_2. Thatcher's

Children and Blair's Babies are even more right-wing economically than the generation that

came of age before the Post-War Consensus. Blair's Babies in particular are almost as

negative about benefits and the welfare system as the generation that came of age before it

was created. They also are about as authoritarian as the oldest generations, showing that the

trend toward modernization and greater social liberalism was at least slowed down in

Britain under the Thatcher governments.

As explained in the data and methods section, in order to provide robustness tests

for the results from the age-period-cohort models, next we examine the visual results from

the generalized additive models (GAMs). In particular, we examine the plots of the

smoothed cohort effect from the full model (not shown) with all the same controls included

just as in the age-period-cohort models. These plots are as presented in **Figures 1-9**.[54]

The patterns are striking and consistent. Across all nine indicators, there is an

upward swing in right-authoritarian values from around the start of the political generation

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[54] The smoothed term is always highly significant. As standard, we judge the significance through the edf

value. A value greater than 1 suggests significance and that the smoothing should be applied.

(i.e. those born in 1959) at least up into the end of it (i.e. those born in 1976), and in several

cases lasting well beyond. This suggests Thatcherite values were growing in strength

among the cohort who became political adults during the Thatcher years. With the

exception of two out of nine figures one can see an upswing over the years of birth of

Thatcher's Children, thus reversing a trend towards greater support for redistribution and

social egalitarianism observed for previous political generations (i.e. the cohorts born

before 1959). This provides clear support for the theoretical expectation of a 'Thatcher

effect' (H_1). It is especially noticeable that the curve bends upwards and commences the

increasing trend precisely at the end of the 1950s (i.e. the years of birth of the oldest of

Thatcher's Children).

INSERT FIGURES 1-9 ABOUT HERE

While the curve over the years of birth of Thatcher's Children does not always rise

back to the levels of the Pre- and Early Consensus generations, there is clearly a tendency

towards greater conservatism that starts with Thatcher's Children (i.e. those born during the

period 1959 to 1978) across all nine indicators. With respect to the political generation born

between 1977 and 1990, i.e. Blair's Babies (or Thatcher's Grand-Children), we find that in

some cases the upward trend continues, for example on the income gap between rich and

poor (Figure 1), that benefits are too high (Figure 4) and that the death penalty is

appropriate for some crimes (Figure 7). In other cases, however, there is a counter-tendency

and it looks like the trend might level off or even reverse, such as for whether people who

break the law should be given stiffer sentences (Figure 9), although the confidence intervals

are typically too wide to be able to know for sure at the time of writing. More years of data

are needed to clarify trends in social values amongst the youngest members of this new political generation. Regardless, with respect to attitudes on redistribution (Figures 1-3) the curve ends at a higher point than its level over the years of birth of the Pre- and Early Consensus Generations providing evidence that Blair's Babies are a distinctly right-wing cohort in their economic values, consistent with our second hypothesis (H_2). Moreover, with respect to authoritarian values, Thatcher's Children exhibit a clear slowing down and reversal of the modernization tendency towards greater social liberalism, consistent with H_1. In particular, with respect to support for inequality, redistribution, and particularly redistribution versus taxation, but also attitudes to the unemployed/benefits, Thatcher's Children and Blair's Babies are more right-wing than any of the three older generations. This provides considerable support for our theoretical expectations.

We thus find mixed support for each hypothesis. With respect to the first hypothesis, the results confirm that Thatcher's Children are indeed more right-wing and authoritarian than the generation preceding them, the more liberal Wilson/Callaghan's Children. This is true when we examine eight out of nine attitudinal variables capturing different dimensions of Thatcherite beliefs. Thatcher's period in office reversed the generational trend in social values. With respect to the second hypothesis, we find evidence that Blair's Babies are, indeed, also more right-wing and authoritarian than Wilson/ Callaghan's Children. They are also more economically right-wing than both the Pre- and Early Consensus Generations, but not more socially authoritarian than either. Overall then, Blair's Babies, stand out as the most economically right-wing generation; they are also more authoritarian than Thatcher's Children. Our models thus show that the generation

coming of age in the aftermath of the Cold War, once Thatcher had left office, stands out as the most economically conservative, net of both period and age effects. Overall, the results provide some support for the idea of a political generation of 'Thatcher's Children', in the fact that with this cohort we see a reversal of the trend towards greater social liberalism and support for redistribution. These results also suggest that rendering Thatcherite values uncontentious (under Blair) was more significant for ensuring their long-term endurance.

To test whether it was Labour party identifiers in particular who moved to the right under Blair,[55] we included an interaction effect of Labour party identification with Blair's Babies. This interaction effect was significant for the three redistribution and inequality indicators as well as for the three welfare items. However, this was not the case for the three authoritarian values indicators. These results therefore show that it was in the particular the generation coming of age under New Labour and identifying with this party that moved to the right. This further strengthens the conclusion that Blair achieved more than Thatcher had done in terms of cementing her principles in British society and that in particular this was achieved through Labour supporters themselves embracing more right-wing positions as these became mainstream and uncontested in society.[56] Additionally, we also ran a series of interaction tests with various socio-demographic and regional variables which showed that the generational differences were generally consistent across groups.[57]

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[55] Curtice and Fisher 2003.

[56] Curtice and Fisher 2003.

[57] We tested interaction effects with class and union membership across models but could not find any systematic patterns and our overall results are robust to these additional analyses. There was limited evidence

Conclusions

The results presented in this paper offer strong evidence of cohort effects. We have shown that generations coming of age under sustained periods of Conservative government absorb these values, offsetting the tendency towards social liberalism which is normally characteristic of youth. More specifically, since we examined British data we showed that the generation that came of political age during Thatcher and Major's time in office is a particularly conservative generation, deserving of the epithet 'Thatcher's Children'. But we have not just found more evidence of 'Thatcher's Children' – we have also discovered her 'Grand-children' in 'Blair's Babies'.

We analysed indicators of Thatcherite values across three dimensions: redistribution and inequality, benefits and unemployment, punishment and authority and found that this generation – born between 1959 and 1976 – reversed the cohort trend towards greater support for redistribution and more social liberalism. This pattern is largely continued in the

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for the survey items 'Government should spend more money to help poor' and 'Benefits too high and discourage job search' that the generation gap was smaller amongst individuals in unskilled manual occupations relative to individuals in the highest professional class. Similarly, being a union member amongst Blair's Babies narrowed the gap in values with the Wilson-Callaghan generation. The only items for which there was variation across regions were those on unemployment and benefits: 'Benefits too high and discourage job search', 'Unemployed could find a job if they wanted' and 'People should learn to stand on their own two feet' with all other regions being more right-wing than Scotland, but results for generation effects remained unchanged. Testing further with interaction effects between region and generation showed that this regional gap was narrower for younger cohorts.

subsequent generation of Thatcher's Grand-Children, supporting the idea that Thatcherite values were reproduced, not challenged, under New Labour. Our analyses showed that Blair's Babies are even more right-authoritarian. It seems that the trend towards ever-greater social liberalism was halted and even reversed, supporting the idea that Thatcherism has served fundamentally to change British social attitudes in an enduring way. The timing of the upward trend in the GAM smoothed cohort effect plots coincide precisely with the years of birth of Thatcher's Children. This occurs at precisely the same time across all indicators. By disentangling age-period-cohort effects through new statistical techniques and the analysis of a long time series of attitudinal data we have shown that Thatcher's crusade was not a failure but rather a success both with respect to the promotion and consolidation of economic but also social values. Thatcher's moral crusade was extremely successful both in terms of changing the values of the new generation coming of age at that time, but also in terms of influencing society to such an extent that New Labour came to accept these as the setting the ideational parameters of political completion.

How these trends in social values unfold will also be enlightening, and only time will tell whether fragmentation of the British party system, fallout from the economic crisis and the era of austerity will influence these trajectories. While our data are British these results may also have relevance for countries who have experienced protracted periods of conservative rule and where the New Right was popular, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.[58] It is likely that comparable political environments will have had similarly formative impacts on newer political generations. There are implications

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[58] Duménil and Lévy 2011; Swarts 2013; Kotz 2015.

for modernization theory as well in terms of what sorts of events might provide counter-tendencies to the inexorable logic of greater tolerance and social liberalism.

Most importantly, this paper shows that particularly significant events such as the protracted rule of one party followed by a centrist shift towards that parties position from the opposition are important "formative experiences" for new generations. Moreover, we have also shown that such changes can have spill-over effects through the reproduction of certain values when subsequent governments or parties in power do not challenge the values that formed that generation. This trickle-down theory of social change can explain why Thatcherite attitudes are more prevalent still in 'Blair's Babies' or 'Thatcher's Grand-Children'. This is a clear sign that Thatcher changed the course of British politics and social attitudes. Her values (or the values that have come to be associated with her name) permeate British society today as subsequent governments have not challenged her ideology. For better or worse, it seems that we still live in 'Thatcher's Britain'.

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Figures 1-9: Smoothed Cohort Effects from Generalized Additive Models (GAMs)

Redistribution and inequality	Benefits and unemployment	Punishment and authority

Figure 1
Income gap in society is 'too small' or 'about right'
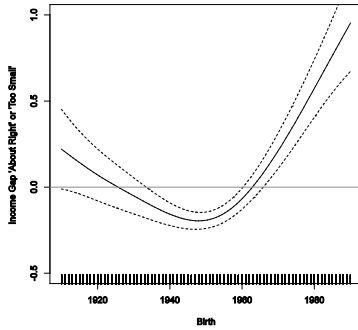

Figure 4
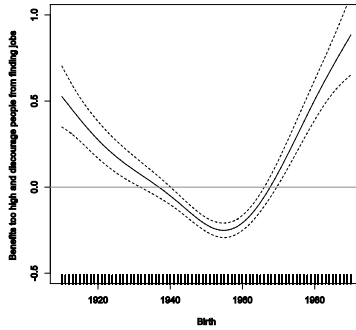**Benefits too high and discourage job search**

Figure 7
Death penalty is appropriate for certain crimes

Figure 2
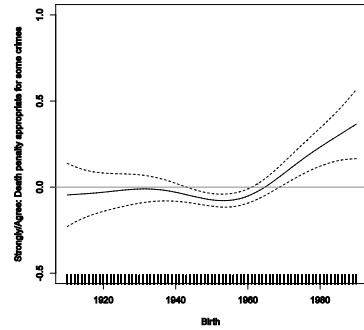**Disagree/Strongly D. Government should redistribute**
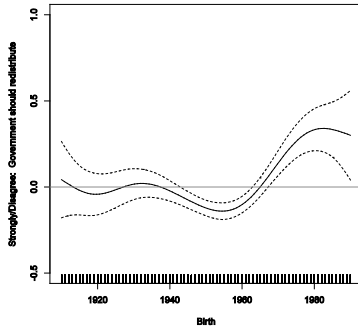

Figure 5
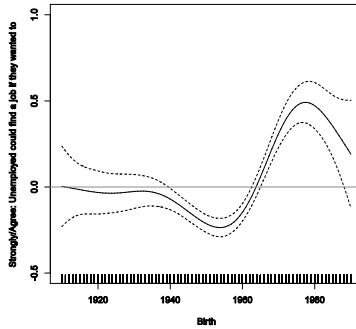**Unemployed could find a job if they wanted**

Figure 8
Stiffer sentences for breaking the law
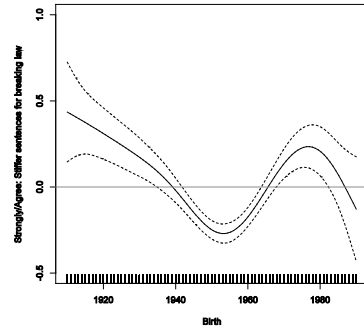
Figure 3
Disagree/ Strongly D. Government should spend more to help poor
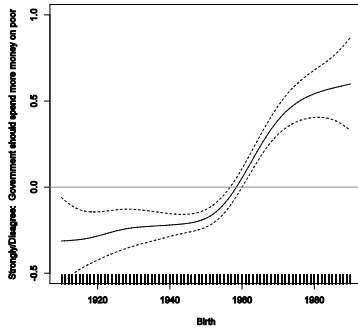
Figure 6
People should learn to stand on their own two feet
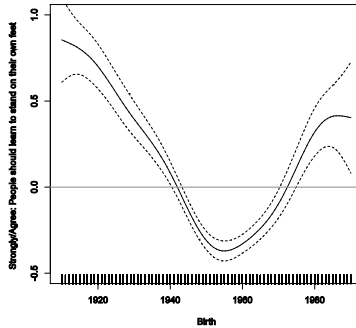
Figure 9
Children should be taught to obey authority
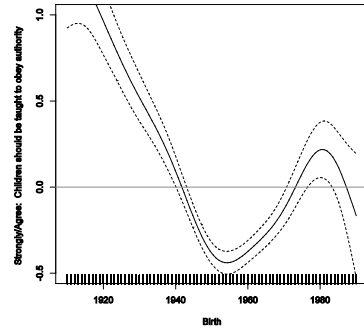
Table 1: Political Generations

	Pre-Consensus Generation	Early Consensus Generation	Wilson/ Callaghan's Children*	Thatcher's Children**	Blair's Babies***
Formative period	1930-1944 (14 years)	1945-1964 (18 years)	1965-1978 (13 years)	1979-1996 (18 years)	1997-2010 (13 years)
Years of birth	1910-1924	1925-1944	1945-1958	1959-1976	1977-1990
Total N (%)	8,435 (9.61%)	23,181 (26.41%)	21,653 (24.67%)	27,527 (31.36%)	6,980 (7.95%)

Notes: *This period includes the Conservative Heath Government of 1970-74; **This period also includes Major's period in office between 1990 and 1997; ***This period includes Blair and Brown in government.

Table 2: Variable descriptive statistics

	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Dependent variables				
(1) Income gaps too small or about right	0.17	0.37	0	1
(2) Disagree/Strongly D. Government should redistribute	0.33	0.47	0	1
(3) Disagree/Strongly D. Government should spend more on poor	0.27	0.45	0	1
(4) Benefits too high and discourage job search	0.46	0.50	0	1
(5) Unemployed could find job if they wanted to	0.59	0.49	0	1
(6) People should learn to stand on their own two feet	0.42	0.49	0	1
(7) Death penalty is appropriate for certain crimes	0.62	0.49	0	1
(8) Stiffer sentences for breaking the law	0.81	0.40	0	1
(9) Children should be taught to obey authority	0.84	0.36	0	1
Independent variables/controls				
Political Generations	2.94	1.09	1	5
Age Groups	2.01	0.73	1	3
Year of Survey	1997.60	8.07	1985	2012
Gender (Male)	0.46	0.50	0	1
Education 19 Years+	0.17	0.37	0	1
Marital Status	1.71	1.09	1	4
Employment Status	2.97	2.15	1	7
Household Income	1.86	0.71	1	3
Attended Private School	0.11	0.32	0	1
Owns House	0.69	0.46	0	1
Union Member	0.24	0.43	0	1
Conservative Party Identification	0.32	0.47	0	1

Table 3: Age-Period-Cohort Models: Right-Authoritarian Values

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Income gap in society is too small or about right	Disagree/ Strongly D. Government should redistribute	Disagree/ Strongly D. Government should spend more to help poor	Benefits too high and discourage job search	Unemployed could find a job if they wanted	People should learn to stand on their own two feet	Death penalty is appropriate for certain crimes	Stiffer sentences for breaking the law	Children should be taught to obey authority
Political Generations (ref.: Wilson/Callaghan's Children)									
Pre-Consensus Generation	0.30***	0.13*	0.03	0.52***	0.24***	0.87***	0.10	0.55***	1.20***
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.10)
Early Consensus Generation	0.14**	0.14***	0.04	0.24***	0.17***	0.44***	0.09*	0.27***	0.56***
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Thatcher's Children	0.27***	0.09**	0.35***	0.15***	0.19***	0.11**	0.06	0.19***	0.13***
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Blair's Babies	0.72***	0.32***	0.47***	0.64***	0.34***	0.50***	0.17**	0.21**	0.41***
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Age Groups (ref.: Under 34 Years)									
35-59 Years	0.08	-0.05	-0.19***	-0.02	-0.21***	-0.06	-0.07*	-0.10*	0.09*
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Over 60 Years	0.03	-0.17**	-0.30***	0.20***	-0.07	0.25***	-0.10	-0.04	0.18*
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Year of Survey	0.00	0.02***	0.04***	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***	-0.02***	0.04***	0.01***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Gender (Male)	0.15***	-0.13***	0.01	-0.21***	-0.16***	-0.03	0.33***	-0.16***	0.14***
	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Education 19 Years+	-0.15**	-0.28***	-0.12***	-0.40***	-0.49***	-0.48***	-0.89***	-0.81***	-0.50***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Marital Status (ref.: Married)									
Previously Married	0.13**	-0.03	-0.08*	-0.07**	-0.04	-0.09**	-0.18***	-0.25***	-0.20***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Single (Never Married)	0.05	-0.04	-0.08*	-0.31***	-0.15***	-0.18***	-0.42***	-0.46***	-0.35***
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Employment Status (ref.: Employed FT)									
Employed PT	-0.05	-0.03	-0.03	-0.10**	-0.18***	-0.17***	-0.16***	-0.18***	-0.12**
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Unemployed/Waiting for Work	0.18*	-0.16**	-0.48***	-1.04***	-0.93***	-0.92***	-0.26***	-0.47***	-0.29***
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Education	-0.34	-0.17	-0.41**	-0.45***	-0.47***	-0.36**	-0.63***	-0.74***	-0.62***

	(0.23)	(0.13)	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Retired	0.09	0.05	-0.19***	-0.21***	-0.41***	-0.26***	-0.17***	-0.12*	-0.05
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Looking after Home	0.22***	-0.10*	-0.34***	-0.40***	-0.53***	-0.42***	-0.11**	-0.19***	-0.14**
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Other Employment Situation	-0.08	-0.21***	-0.62***	-0.77***	-0.67***	-0.79***	-0.03	-0.13*	-0.03
	(0.08)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Household Income (ref.: Low)									
Mid	0.12**	0.30***	0.26***	0.22***	0.16***	0.14***	-0.18***	-0.17***	-0.18***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
High	0.68***	0.71***	0.32***	0.28***	0.36***	0.16***	-0.35***	-0.38***	-0.33***
	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Attended Private School	0.16***	0.11***	-0.05	-0.11***	-0.11**	-0.20***	-0.30***	-0.38***	-0.07
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Owns House	-0.02	0.30***	0.26***	0.25***	-0.02	0.15***	-0.11***	0.01	0.17***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Union Member	-0.28***	-0.19***	-0.09**	-0.19***	-0.29***	-0.18***	-0.10***	-0.06*	-0.21***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Social Class (ref. Class I)									
Class II	-0.20**	0.14**	-0.05	0.14**	0.15**	0.16**	0.11*	0.22***	-0.04
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Class IIIM	-0.29***	0.03	-0.01	0.23***	0.30***	0.35***	0.42***	0.62***	0.31***
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Class III NM	-0.38***	-0.09	-0.02	0.26***	0.51***	0.52***	0.76***	0.82***	0.41***
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Class IV	-0.20*	-0.26***	-0.06	0.20***	0.45***	0.48***	0.61***	0.81***	0.32***
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Class V	-0.00	-0.30***	-0.14	0.17**	0.49***	0.56***	0.72***	0.75***	0.32***
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.09)
Conservative Party Identification	0.93***	1.12***	0.84***	0.86***	0.63***	0.80***	0.60***	0.71***	0.78***
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Constant	-9.02	-46.50***	-89.69***	-131.83***	-149.17***	-148.89***	48.78***	-71.78***	-24.82***
	(5.16)	(3.87)	(4.80)	(3.65)	(4.34)	(4.48)	(3.92)	(4.65)	(5.09)
N	33848	48399	39029	48817	39052	39036	46613	46651	46596
Pseudo R^2	0.054	0.089	0.069	0.095	0.072	0.093	0.083	0.085	0.068
Log lik.	-14775.56	-28119.20	-21080.37	-30145.42	-24963.98	-23846.78	-28395.55	-21595.10	-18872.24

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4: Wald Tests for Intergenerational Differences from the Age-Period-Cohort Models

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Income gap in society is too small or about right	Disagree/ Strongly D. Government should redistribute	Disagree/ Strongly D. Government should spend more to help poor	Benefits too high and discourage job search	Unemployed could find a job if they wanted	People should learn to stand on their own two feet	Death penalty is appropriate for certain crimes	Stiffer sentences for breaking the law	Children should be taught to obey authority
Pre-Consensus Generation= Early Consensus Generation	**	ns	ns	***	ns	***	ns	***	***
Pre-Consensus Generation = Thatcher's Children	ns	ns	***	***	ns	***	ns	***	***
Early Consensus Generation= Thatcher's Children	ns	ns	***	ns	ns	***	ns	ns	***
Thatcher's Children = Blair's Babies	***	***	ns	***	**	***	**	ns	***
Pre-Consensus Generation = Blair's Babies	**	ns	***	ns	ns	***	ns	*	***
Early Consensus Generation= Blair's Babies	***	*	***	***	*	ns	ns	ns	ns

A significant result implies cohort differences between each given pair in the rows for each of the dependent variables in the columns. See coefficients in Table 3 for direction of effects.
$^{*}p < 0.05, ^{**}p < 0.01, ^{***}p < 0.001$