

**APATHY, ALIENATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE:
THE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF BRITISH MILLENNIALS**

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Abstract

Conventional wisdom holds that today's young people, often known as 'the Millennials', are a politically alienated generation. Their hostility towards political parties, association with protest movements, and low electoral turnout are all said to indicate their alienation from the processes and institutions of Western democracy. This conventional wisdom stands, however, on shaky ground. Previous research has given too little attention to the definition and measurement of political alienation, and has barely explored its causal relationship with political participation. The use of methods capable of exploring the generational distinctiveness of the Millennials has been limited, as have efforts to outline why the Millennials should be conceptualised as a distinct political generation in the first place, and what is gained from doing so.

Focussing on the case of Britain, this study explores the extent to which the Millennials are a distinct political generation in terms of political participation, political apathy, and political alienation, and considers how their conceptualisation as a distinct generation improves our understanding of their political characteristics. Furthermore, it tests the theory that their alienation from, rather than their apathy towards, formal politics can explain their distinct political behaviour. Through critiquing and developing conceptualisations of the Millennials as a political generation, and of political apathy, alienation and participation, this thesis challenges the conventional wisdom. The Millennials are a distinct generation in terms of their political participation, apathy and alienation – but they are distinct for their lack of participation, their unusually high levels of apathy towards formal politics, and their unusually low levels of

alienation from it. The Millennials have the potential to be the most politically apathetic, and least politically alienated, generation to have entered the British electorate since World War Two.

In addition, this research also shows that while generational differences are significant and often substantial, they make only a limited contribution to explaining variation in political apathy, alienation and participation. This research argues, therefore, that future studies into and policy responses to the political behaviour of young people must recognise their distinct levels of political apathy. At the same time, however, the focus on political generations should not be so intense as to obscure the role of more influential causes of differences in political participation.

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Chapter One: Introduction

I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly... [they] are reckless beyond words

Hesiod, 8th Century BC

Anybody with a passing familiarity of recent public discourse about the political engagement of the young in Western democracies could be forgiven for thinking that the above quote comes from a newspaper editorial or politician's speech. In fact, these are the words of the Greek poet Hesiod, writing in the 8th century BC about his concern for the future of Greek society once it was left in the hands of what he perceived to be the 'reckless youth'. In the context of the political engagement of young people, this is becoming an increasingly common sentiment among politicians, journalists and academics in countries such as the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK) and many other European Union (EU) democracies. The apparent disconnection of the generation of young people who entered Western electorates around the turn of the millennium – the Millennials – from the institutional processes of Western democracy, and particularly elections, has many worrying about the future of those same societies.

The main concern relates not to what the Millennials' lack of political engagement means for Western democracy today, but to what it will mean when these young people grow up and today's more active older generations have passed away. The fear is that the Millennials' lack of engagement may be the result of a cohort effect i.e., it may reflect a habit formed during their early years of political socialisation which will stick with them throughout their adult

lives. Consequently, a growing number of scholars, politicians, governments, charities and think tanks suggest that Western democracy could be heading for a crisis of legitimacy.

Alongside this somewhat bleak outlook, however, a more optimistic picture has developed regarding the other ways in which the Millennials participate in politics. As technological and social evolution has dramatically altered the ways in which citizens can engage with and participate in politics, scholars have taken more of an interest in 'informal political participation' i.e., political activity outside of the formal, institutionalised arena of democracy. Many studies have suggested that the Millennials' lack of participation in formal politics is not matched by similarly low levels of activity outside that arena. Some have argued that the Millennials have a particular propensity towards what Norris (2001) identifies as 'cause-oriented politics' i.e., issue-specific activity in which the citizen engages to directly influence a political actor, regardless of whether that actor is a politician, political party, corporation or media outlet. Rather than simply viewing the Millennials as an unusually unengaged political generation, therefore, this line of thinking suggests that they are in the vanguard of a transformation in the way Western citizens affect politics in their daily lives.

This multi-faceted picture of the Millennials has produced a paradox, however: if they are sufficiently interested in political issues to participate in cause-oriented activity, why are they so reluctant to engage with those same issues through formal political processes, such as elections? The attempts to resolve this paradox have intertwined the issue of the Millennials' unique political

participation with the question of whether political apathy or political alienation best describes why young people have always been found to be less engaged with and active in politics than their elders. In the case of the Millennials, the question is whether their unusually low levels of formal political participation (even when compared with previous generations at the same age) result from an unusually low interest in politics on their part, or from an unusually profound sense of alienation from the political system.

It is against this background that this study of the political participation, apathy and alienation of the Millennials is set. Through an interrogation of literature relating to the political participation, apathy and alienation of young people in Western democracies, detailed analyses of the participatory characteristics of the Millennials and of the effects of political apathy and alienation on them, and the utilisation of under-used methods for identifying cohort effects in political attributes, this thesis offers the most detailed and robust answer to these questions to date. Focussing on Britain as an illustrative example of Western democracies more broadly, the study addresses three fundamental issues which lie at the heart of the common characterisation of the Millennials as being at the vanguard of a transformation in political participation and the unanswered questions about why that might be. First, the thesis considers how and why the Millennials might be considered to be a distinct political generation, and examines what is gained from conceptualising them in this way. It also examines the participatory characteristics of British Millennials, and assesses the extent to which the picture of a generation unusually inactive in formal politics while being unusually active outside of the formal arena is accurate. Second, the thesis develops original definitions, conceptualisations

and measurements of political apathy and alienation, and uses them to provide a robust test of the competing theories that political apathy or political alienation provides the best explanation for the distinct participatory characteristics of the Millennials. Third, the thesis explores potential causes of the unusually apathetic/alienated nature of the Millennials, in the form of consequences of Western social evolution.

1.1 The Study of the Millennials' Political Participation

In 2002, Matt Henn and his colleagues published a seminal study of British Millennials' political participation following the unusually low turnout young people entering the British electorate in the 1997 and 2001 general elections. Prior to 1997, the turnout of the under 25s was always above 60% and usually not far off the electorate average. In 1997, however, only 54% of under 25s voted compared with 71% overall; in 2001, this figure fell to 40% (House of Commons Library 2013). Henn et al. (2002) examined whether or not the unusually low turnout of the under 25s in the elections around the turn of the millennium could be explained by the fact that they were 'a generation apart' i.e., a distinct political generation, who had developed a habit of low electoral participation relative to their predecessors. Henn et al.'s was among the first of many such studies which marked a turning point in academic research on young people's political engagement, and which concluded that the Millennials were indeed 'a generation apart'.

One of the features of this turning point was the increased attention paid to cohort effects. Prior to the late 1990s, the majority of studies of young people's political participation explained their lower levels of activity in terms of the

political life cycle i.e., the idea that young people were less active in politics because their current life circumstances – such as not yet being married, not having a job or children, and not yet being invested in a community – inhibited political engagement. The assumption was that people became more active as they aged and as their circumstances changed and facilitated an interest in political issues. Following the unusually limited engagement with elections of the Millennials, however, there was a greater focus on cohort effects and the idea of political generations first outlined by Karl Mannheim (1928; [1928]1944) i.e., on the potential for the Millennials to have been socialised in an environment which ultimately led them to exhibit even lower levels of political engagement than had been seen among previous young generations.

There were also methodological changes in the field which saw a greater use of qualitative and mixed method approaches to counter what some had suggested was a damaging dominance of quantitative methods. Several studies argued that over-reliance on quantitative approaches was producing inaccurate impressions of the Millennials as an unusually apathetic generation, and that qualitative methods were needed to study how the Millennials themselves perceived their engagement with politics (e.g., Marsh et al. 2007; Henn et al. 2002). The result was a richer, more detailed and varied characterisation of the Millennials as political agents.

These methodological changes were accompanied by conceptual developments, particularly in relation to what was meant by ‘political participation’. Prior to the late 1990s, most studies assumed a definition of political participation which focussed almost entirely on formal and electoral

political activity. At the turn of the century, many scholars began to argue that the ways in which modern citizens conceptualise ‘politics’, the opportunities open to them to participate in politics, and the extent to which they were prepared to influence political decisions, had all changed as a result of social evolution – particularly the growth of education, the Internet and social media. Consequently, studies of the Millennials’ political behaviour began to adopt a much broader conception of ‘political participation’, which often resulted in more detailed characterisations than those based on their lack of activity in the formal political arena.

1.2 The Political Alienation of the Millennials and the Birth of the Conventional Wisdom

After the 1990s many studies followed Henn et al.’s (2002) example and integrated these developments into their research, and produced a much richer understanding of the Millennials as a distinct political generation than was developed about previous cohorts in earlier studies. These academic developments led to the characterisation of the Millennials as a politically interested and engaged generation which was leading the way in embracing new forms of political participation which took advantage of societal and technological evolution. At the same time, however, they exhibited an unprecedented reluctance to participate in the formal and institutional processes of democracy through which the issues they cared about could be influenced. The attempts to reconcile the Millennials’ interest in political issues with their reluctance to participate in formal politics led to the theory – rapidly embraced by the majority of scholars in the field – that they were also distinct

from previous generations for their alienation from politics. Studies at the vanguard of this theoretical development such as Marsh et al. (2007) and Henn et al. (2005) argued that “far from being politically apathetic...[the Millennials] are...highly articulate about the political issues that affect their lives” (Marsh et al. 2007, p.122), and that, therefore, at the heart of their “disenchantment with Westminster politics...[must be] a strong sense of political alienation rather than political apathy” (Henn et al. 2005, p.574).

Alongside the suggestion that while the Millennials were unusually inactive in formal politics they were also unusually active in informal political activity, the theory of the Millennials as a politically alienated generation rapidly spread beyond academia and into public discourse. There is now an entrenched conventional wisdom which dictates that young people in Western democracies are not uninterested in politics or inactive when it comes to promoting their political agendas; instead, they are a politically engaged and active generation of citizens who feel a profound disconnection from the processes, institutions and actors of formal politics.

Moreover, challenging the conventional wisdom has become somewhat controversial because of the normative dimension that has become interwoven with it. The suggestion that the young are politically alienated has become associated with positive normative connotations because of its implication that their lack of participation is the fault of the political elite or the political system. The suggestion that they are not alienated and that a lack of motivation (i.e., political apathy) explains their lack of participation, on the other hand, implies a negative normative view because it has become associated with an

image of the Millennials as lazy citizens unwilling to live up to their civic duty and participate in the governance of their community. Moreover, suggesting that young people are politically apathetic is also seen as a way of letting the political elite off the hook. As the academics Mark Evans, Gerry Stoker and Max Halupka illustrate in their discussion of the political alienation of Australian young people, “[n]egative stereotyping of younger generations as apathetic, apolitical and disengaged is mad, bad and dangerous...politicians accuse younger voters of apathy to divert attention from their own behaviour” (Evans et al. 2015).

These two processes – the development of a characterisation of the Millennials as a distinct generation with an unprecedented reluctance to engage in formal politics alongside an unprecedented embrace of informal politics, and the attachment of normative implications of them as victims of elite failure to the explanation for this behaviour (i.e., their political alienation) – have resulted in the well-entrenched conventional wisdom regarding the political engagement of young people in Western democracies. The appeal of this conventional wisdom is apparent from its popular profile in the media, in government policy, and in the campaigns and speeches of political parties and politicians.

The extent to which this appeal has seen the conventional wisdom spread throughout popular public discourse was clearly illustrated in Britain as the 2015 general election approached. The journalists Suzanne Moore and Sophie Ridge, for example, suggested that the young were “turned off from voting not politics” (Ridge 2014), and argued that British politics was “old and crumbling”, and therefore asked “is it any wonder the young won’t vote?”

(Moore 2015). They also suggested that if the young were given ‘real alternatives’ to vote for they would be more likely to do so (Moore 2015). Jennifer Dale (2015) agreed, arguing that “clearly there is a desire among the young public to be involved in politics, but MPs simply aren’t introducing policies...that are relatable to young people”. The journalist Alex Stevenson summarised this view nicely: young people, he argued, “really do care about political issues. It’s just the political parties they hate” (Stevenson 2014). Similarly, Ian Birrell (2015), Rowena Mason (2013) and James Kirkup (2014) suggested that it was the failures of politicians that were responsible for alienating young people from political parties and therefore from the elections in which they fought. Emma Barnett (2015) argued that “[y]oung people aren’t from Mars. They care about the same stuff as everyone else...If you actually give them something to vote for or against, guess what? They’ll turn up”.

This position was also supported by a number of charities and think tanks. Javed Khan of the charity Barnardos suggested that British young people were effectively being ‘shut out’ of the political system by the failure of politicians to represent them, and that the young would only vote if the political establishment could prove its willingness to represent their concerns (Khan 2015). Jazza John of *Bite the Bullet*, a campaign organisation which promotes youth participation in politics, similarly argued that young people felt politicians could not be trusted to represent their interests fairly, and perceived politics as a ‘closed game’ (Sims 2015). The think tank *Demos* has argued that British Millennials are “turned off voting because politicians aren’t offering them credible, positive policies that address the issues they’re most concerned about” (*Daily Mail* 2014). In a report which identified itself as a ‘study of the

disillusionment of the young', *Demos* argued that "many [young people] are disengaged from traditional politics completely...this is not due to apathy, but disillusionment with politicians and political parties" (Birdwell et al. 2014, p.17).

A similar argument is that the Millennials' alienation is not caused by a failure of the political system to interest or appeal to them, but by the Millennials' perception that they have no influence over politics. As the commentator Kenny Imafidon argued: "young people simply cannot be branded as apathetic...[they] need to feel their participation in politics can make a difference and that together as a collective they can create massive changes and challenge the status quo" (Birdwell et al. 2014, p.12). The charity vInspired, which promotes political engagement among young people and claims to "know that young people are not politically apathetic" (Doughty 2014), argues that "they simply don't feel informed". Its CEO, Moira Swinbank, points out that 80% of Millennials campaigned on a political issue in 2013 through means such as petitions and consumer boycotts; the reason this does not translate into formal political participation is because young people do not know how to influence formal politics effectively (Swinbank 2014). Similarly, the television presenter Rick Edwards, who presents a youth-focussed political program and launched a campaign to get young people involved in the 2015 British general election, agrees that low electoral turnout among the young does not reflect their apathy but their lack of information (Barnett 2015).

The other commonly suggested cause of the Millennials' alienation – and which puts the blame for the Millennials' alienation even more squarely on the

shoulders of political elites – is specific, controversial political events or government decisions. As the ten year anniversary of the Iraq War approached, for example, journalists such as Owen Jones and Sam Parker (Jones 2013; Parker 2013) argued that the war “robbed a generation of their faith in politics” (Parker 2013), and ‘exploded’ their trust in the political process (Jones 2013). Tim Wigmore (2014), Alexandra Sims (2015), Lucy Sherriff (2015) and Daniel Pryor (2013), as well as the think tank the Institute for Public Policy Research (Birch et al. 2013), pointed towards more recent actions by the Coalition Government as drivers of Millennials’ alienation. Sims (2015), for instance, argues that “[s]harp rises in tuition fees, cuts to youth services and uncertainties over housing and jobs have left young people feeling overlooked and ignored by the political climate”. Tim Wigmore (2014) argued that “[t]wice in the past ten years, governing parties have broken their electoral promises... [and] [s]wathes of young people are giving up on democracy”, while Sherriff (2015) and Pryor (2013) pointed to the Liberal Democrats’ decision to perform “one of the most memorable U-turns in political history” and increase university tuition fees in 2010, as well as the MPs expenses scandal in 2009.

In addition, the IPPR links what it considers to be the maltreatment of the young at the hands of the Coalition government to the Millennials’ failure to vote and their alienation from politics. By refusing to vote, the Millennials leave little incentive for the government to prioritise them in policy-making, meaning that policies are skewed towards older voters, which in turn compounds the Millennials’ belief that they have no reason to participate in politics: non-voting “unleashes a vicious cycle of disaffection and under-

representation...As policy becomes less responsive to their interests, more and more decide that politics has little to say to them” (Birch et al. 2013, p.2).

These views are by no means limited to the media and think tanks – politicians and Parliamentary Committees have also supported the conventional wisdom. Both the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) and the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee (PCRC) have investigated the causes of low political engagement among the young and pointed towards political alienation as an explanation. The CSPL, for instance, found that 46% of British voters could be described as ‘alienated’ from the party system on the basis that they had no trust in politicians or parties (Grice 2013). The Committee Chair, Lord Bew, pointed out that of particular concern was “the number of...young people...who feel disconnected from the party system” (Grice 2013). In 2014, the PCRC completed an inquiry into low voter engagement and concluded that Britain’s democracy was ‘broken’ and failing to appeal to younger voters (Padmanabhan 2014).

Several politicians have also supported the view that it is they who bear some responsibility for failing to engage the Millennials with politics. The Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow, argues that unless young people start engaging with politics, British democracy will atrophy, and that the burden is on the political elite to avoid that (Birdwell et al. 2014). The Conservative MP Chloe Smith argued that there is a “space in democracy with this generation’s name on it” (Smith 2014), and that their lack of motivation to engage with politics stems from their hostility towards Britain’s political parties. Emma McClarkin, Conservative MEP, thinks that there is a general apathy among the

British public when it comes to many aspects of politics, but that it is most profound among young people, which reflects the failure of the political parties to sufficiently integrate them into their campaigns (Flannery 2015). Similarly, the Labour MP Graham Allen believes that radical measures are needed to improve the ways in which political parties communicate with young voters to engage them in the political process (Padmanabhan 2014). Sadiq Khan, another Labour MP, agrees with the IPPR and has argued that politicians' focus on the political priorities of older voters at the expense of the young who do not vote has created a vicious circle in which the Millennials feel ignored by politicians and so do not vote (Duff and Wright 2015).

These examples demonstrate the breadth of the conventional wisdom – and just in Britain. A similar pattern is clear in countries as varied as America (e.g., Cass 2015; Griffiths 2014; Glum 2014; Lock 2014; Montenegro 2014; The Economist 2014), Iceland (Benjamin 2014; Arnadottir 2014), Switzerland (swissinfo.ch 2014), Canada (McHardie 2014; Delacourt 2014; Lee and Medeiros 2014), and Australia (Evans et al. 2015; O'Neill 2014). Throughout Western democracies, the prominence of the conventional wisdom is clear: the Millennials, while distinct from previous generations, are said to be politically interested and engaged, but their alienation prevents them from participating in formal political processes, and that alienation is the result of the failures of the political elite and establishment.

1.3 What's Wrong with the Conventional Wisdom?

The conventional wisdom presents a coherent and potentially even compelling account for how and why today's young people engage with and participate in

politics. A fundamental problem with it, however, is that the academic evidence upon which it is based stands on shaky ground.

The first issue relates to the detail of the Millennials' political participation.

There is considerable dispute about just how active the Millennials are outside of formal politics. While many scholars (such as Sloam (2012a; 2012b), Norris (2001), and Dalton (2013)) argue that the Millennials are leading the way in embracing alternative forms of political participation, others (such as Wattenberg (2012) and Putnam (2000)) argue that while their political participation is undoubtedly diversifying, they are still less active than most of their elders. Many of these disputes relate to problems of data availability, and there is a clear need for a detailed assessment of the Millennials' political participation across a range of political arenas to clear this question up.

Furthermore, while few dispute that the Millennials are a distinct political generation in terms of their political participation, the evidence supporting such a view is still limited and little attention has been paid to considering why the Millennials are a distinct generation and what is even meant by the term 'political generation' in this context. Research methods capable of estimating cohort effects while accounting for the influence of the political life cycle and/or period effects (which refer to the influence of historic circumstances at a given moment) have had limited use in this field. Furthermore, there has been limited engagement with Mannheim's ([1928]1944) work on political generations, and particularly with the questions he raises about how and why a given group of people can be linked together into a 'generation' in a more

substantial way for explaining their behaviour than they could be linked through some other characteristic.

The second problem relates to the theory that it is alienation, and not apathy, which explains the Millennials' distinct participation. The concepts of 'political apathy' and 'political alienation' are central to the current understanding of how and why the Millennials participate in politics, and yet they are also among the most poorly understood in this field. There is a rich extant literature which could provide guidance as to how the concepts should be defined and measured, and to what their causal relationship with political behaviour is, yet this research is almost entirely absent from studies on the political alienation and apathy of the Millennials. Furthermore, the empirical rigour needed to confidently argue that the Millennials are a distinct generation in terms of political alienation is even sparser than that for their political participation. Finally, the lack of empirical rigour with which the Millennials' apathy and alienation have been explored means that there are no empirically verifiable theories about what the causes of their distinct apathy or alienation might be. The speculations in the media outlined above are just that, and have little academic basis.

1.4 Rescuing the concepts of Apathy and Alienation

The objective of this thesis is to address these weaknesses in the literature and so subject the conventional wisdom to empirical scrutiny. For practical purposes, this research focusses on the case of Britain as an illustrative example of Western democracies more broadly. Britain is a good case in which to test the conventional wisdom for two reasons: first, there is a great deal of

survey data available, relating to a vast range of acts associated with political participation as well as political apathy and alienation, going back almost half a century; second, there are good reasons for believing that if the Millennials are alienated from politics, it will be more apparent in Britain than many other Western democracies. For instance, electoral turnout among the youngest voters has fallen more sharply in Britain than elsewhere (Whiteley 2012; Sloam 2014; Martin 2012). In addition, Sloam (2014) has argued that while British Millennials may be more active in cause-oriented politics than formal politics, they are less active in this area than their European counterparts, leading him to believe that their alienation is more profound.

Finally, there have been several dramatic and controversial events in recent British politics which have been extensively linked with the alienation of the young. While British politics is certainly not unique for being affected by scandals and controversies, the rate at which such events have occurred over the last two decades is unusually high compared with similar countries. These include the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the financial crisis in 2008 and subsequent recession in 2009/10 (the consequences of which were disproportionately felt by the young), the Parliamentary Expenses scandal in 2009, and several high-profile government decisions which have negatively affected the young, such as the increases in university tuition fees (despite a promise from the Liberal Democrats not to do so) and the disproportionate concentration of the Coalition Government's austerity measures on services used by young people (Banaji 2008; Pattie and Johnston 2012; Furlong and Cartmel 2012; Sloam 2012a; 2012b). Simply put, there is a good case to argue that there are few national

contexts in which the alienation of the Millennials should be so profound, and therefore easier to identify empirically.

Focussing, therefore, on the distinct case of Britain, this thesis addresses the fundamental problems with the current explanation of the Millennials' unique political behaviour outlined above. It first grapples with Mannheim's (1928; [1928]1944) questions regarding how and why the Millennials could be usefully thought of as a distinct political generation in the British electorate, based on the work of Becker (1990; 1992) and Grasso (2014) in terms of the influence of substantial historic periods on the early years of political socialisation. It then examines the political participation of British Millennials, and considers how active they are in different dimensions of political activity. This includes not only formal and cause-oriented political participation, but civic and issue-specific formal participation as well. It then uses age-period-cohort analyses to estimate the influence of cohort effects, the political life cycle and historic circumstances on political participation in Britain, and to analyse the empirical case for identifying the Millennials as a distinct political generation for their political participation.

The thesis then focusses on political apathy and political alienation. Using and updating the extant literature on both concepts, conceptually clear and empirically robust indicators of 'formal political apathy' and 'formal political alienation' are developed. It then examines the impact of these on differences in political participation, and determines whether political apathy or political alienation offers the best explanation for the distinct behaviour of the Millennials. Age-period-cohort analyses are then again used to estimate cohort,

life cycle and period effects in apathy and alienation in Britain since the 1980s, and to determine whether the Millennials can also be described as a unique generation in terms of these characteristics. Finally, the thesis considers potential explanations relating to social evolution for the generational distinctiveness of the Millennials' apathy and alienation. Developing theories relating to the effect of rising levels of post-materialism and the fragmentation of media consumption on apathy and alienation, the thesis explores whether either of these processes can explain the trends which set the Millennials apart from older generations.

1.5 Six Key Findings

The empirical analyses throughout the following chapters lead to six key findings relating to the critique of this field outlined above. First, the Millennials are indeed found to be a distinct political generation in terms of their political participation. However, contrary to the conventional wisdom, they are not unusually inactive in formal politics while being active in other areas, but are instead unusually inactive in all four dimensions of political activity identified by this research. This relative inactivity not only reflects their current stage in the political life cycle, but a cohort effect as well i.e., not only are they typically less active than their elders today, but they have lower levels of participation than those generations did when they were young.

Second, and in another challenge to the conventional wisdom, the Millennials are found to also be a distinct generation for their political apathy: they are potentially the most apathetic generation in the history of British survey research. They are both more apathetic than their elders today, and have

entered the electorate with higher levels of apathy than did any of their predecessors since the Second World War. While some of their apathy is the result of their current stage in the life cycle, and so will likely reduce as they age, they are also likely to exhibit typically higher levels of apathy than older generations throughout their adult lives.

Third, the Millennials are shown to be a distinct generation for their political alienation as well – but not in the manner predicted by the conventional wisdom. Rather than being unusually alienated from the formal politics, the Millennials are the *least* alienated generation in the British electorate in terms of two dimensions of alienation: political powerlessness (referring to how much power one perceives they have over political decisions) and political normlessness (referring to one's trust that the norms and conventions which govern just political interaction are being adhered to).

The one dimension of alienation in which the Millennials are currently more alienated than their elders is political meaninglessness, which refers to an individual's confidence in their own knowledge and understanding of the political process. While there is no evidence that the Millennials are distinct as a political generation, there is a clear life cycle effect which means that the Millennials are typically more alienated in this regard than their elders. As they age and move through the life cycle, however, their levels of meaninglessness alienation should decline.

Fourth, both the Millennials' distinct political apathy and distinct political alienation are shown to have an important effect on their political behaviour, and both contribute to an explanation for why they are so inactive in politics

compared to older generations. The fact that the Millennials are particularly alienated from formal politics by their lack of confidence in their understanding of it is a definite obstacle to their participation. Given that this form of alienation is related to the life cycle, there are grounds for believing that it will dissipate as they age, and so they may become more active in time. The other dimensions of political alienation – feeling that one has an influence over the political process and trusting the political process and the actors and institutions within it – play little role in explaining the Millennials’ low levels of participation.

Far more important than their alienation, however, is their apathy. Formal political apathy has a substantial impact on how likely an individual is to participate in politics, regardless of the dimension of political activity (i.e., formal, cause-oriented etc.). The fact that the Millennials are the most apathetic generation in the electorate has a considerable impact on their participation, and while it does not completely account for the differences between them and their elders, it accounts for a good deal. The concerning point about the Millennials’ apathy is that while it is expected to decline somewhat as they move through the life cycle, they are expected to nonetheless exhibit higher levels of apathy throughout their lives, meaning that its depressing effect on their participation is also likely to endure to a greater extent than has been seen in other generations.

Fifth, the thesis demonstrates that two key processes associated with social evolution – the rise of post-materialism and media fragmentation – offer only a limited contribution to explaining the Millennials’ unique levels of apathy and

alienation. Despite the success of rising post-materialism in explaining a range of other trends in political characteristics (such as partisan dealignment), this process cannot account for the Millennials' unusually high levels of political apathy or low levels of alienation, both of which challenge theoretical expectations. The fragmentation of media consumption is more successful, in that it helps explain why the Millennials are so apathetic about politics: as the consumption of media becomes more individualised and varied, young people end up consuming less political information, resulting in them being exposed to a weaker stimulus to develop an interest in politics. The media fragmentation theory is less successful, however, in explaining why the Millennials' political alienation appears to be so low.

Finally, the numerous analyses which examine generational differences in political behaviour, apathy and alienation throughout this research demonstrate that while there are certainly significant and at times substantial differences between the Millennials and their elders, generational differences ultimately contribute little to explaining differences in political participation, apathy or alienation overall. While it is helpful, therefore, to view the Millennials as 'a generation apart' for explaining why they are so politically inactive compared with previous generations, this thesis repeatedly demonstrates that it is differences in political apathy, political alienation, social capital and political and social resources that are far more influential in explaining why different groups of people may be more or less politically active than others.

1.6 The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter Two begins the test of the conventional wisdom with a review of the existing research of the political participation of the Millennials in Western society, and of the theories that their behaviour is explained by political apathy and/or political alienation. It also elaborates on the key criticisms levelled against this literature above. Chapter Two also highlights the consistency of this research throughout Western society over the past fifty years, demonstrating the similarity in both the behaviour of the young and the study of that behaviour and so justifying the argument that a Western society-wide process – such as social evolution – is likely to be responsible for the unique characteristics of the Millennials.

Chapter Three begins by providing a more detailed discussion of the concept of a ‘political generation’ and addressing the challenges outlined by Mannheim ([1944]1928). It specifies the theory which underpins the notion that the Millennials’ distinct political socialisation is responsible for the unique political behaviour, apathy and alienation they exhibit. It then begins the process of examining the Millennials’ political participation, first by considering how to define and measure political participation in modern Britain, and then by identifying the various dimensions or arenas of political activity. Finally, Chapter Three compares the participation of the Millennials in all four dimensions of British political participation – formal, cause-oriented, civic and issue-specific formal – with that of older generations.

Chapter Four focusses on determining whether the Millennials are a distinct political generation for their political behaviour. It begins by outlining the

process, strengths and weaknesses of age-period-cohort analysis. It estimates the influence of cohort, age and period effects on political participation in Britain, and determines whether – once the influence of the political life cycle and historical circumstances have been accounted for – the Millennials can be described as a unique generation in terms of how they participate in politics.

Chapter Five turns to defining, conceptualising and measuring political apathy and alienation. Through bridging the literature on the apathy and alienation of the Millennials with that dedicated to the study of those concepts, Chapter Five develops clear definitions and conceptualisations of ‘formal political apathy’ and ‘formal political alienation’. It then explores how they manifest themselves, and determines a valid way of measuring each using the 2010 British Election Study.

Chapter Six uses these concepts to explore the political apathy and alienation of British Millennials compared with older generations in modern Britain. It also explores the effects of apathy and alienation on both formal and cause-oriented political participation, and considers whether the differences in apathy and alienation between the Millennials and their elders can account for the differences in their respective political behaviour.

In Chapter Seven the two theories relating to social evolution which are expected to affect political apathy and alienation are developed and outlined. Drawing on existing literature relating to the growth of post-materialistic social and political values among Western publics, and the fragmentation of media consumption, the chapter outlines the two theories and develops testable

hypotheses about their expected impacts on political apathy and political alienation.

Chapter Eight then performs two functions. It first uses age-period-cohort analysis to estimate the effects of cohort, age and period effects on political apathy and the three dimensions of political alienation in Britain since the 1980s, and to determine whether and how the Millennials might be considered to be a distinct political generation. Variables relating to the post-materialism and media fragmentation theories outlined in Chapter Seven are then used to estimate the impact of these two processes on trends in political apathy and alienation. The Chapter then considers whether the Millennials' distinct apathy and alienation can be explained by these broader processes relating to Western social evolution.

Finally, Chapter Nine returns to and reiterates the central arguments of the thesis and relates its findings to the conventional wisdom regarding the political engagement of young people in Western democracies. It also considers the broader implications of the findings. It outlines what the limited influence of the post-materialism and media fragmentation theories on trends in political apathy and alienation means for social modernisation theory more broadly, and argues that more attention needs to be paid in studies of social evolution to the changing ways in which citizens are consuming political information. Chapter Nine then considers the lessons learned about the concepts of political apathy and political alienation throughout this research, and identifies avenues of further study through which more can be learned about the way in which these characteristics affect political behaviour. It also

identifies extant fields of political research which could benefit from the incorporation of the concepts of formal political apathy and alienation developed here, such as ongoing studies of the rise of far-right populism throughout Europe, and the low levels of political participation expressed by other under-represented groups in Western democracies. Finally, Chapter Nine returns to the more public-facing dimension of the study of the Millennials' political behaviour and considers the implications of the findings of the thesis for the policy responses currently being considered by Western governments to improve the formal political participation of young citizens.

Chapter Two: The Political Participation, Apathy and Alienation of Young People in Western Democracies

The study of the politics of youth has always been one of two time periods – the politics of today and the politics of the future. On the one hand, the youth of a given society are an important sub-group of that community, potentially having their own attitudinal or behavioural characteristics, facing unique political, social and/or economic challenges, and expressing distinct political priorities. In the same way that different groups in society, such as men or women, and religious or ethnic minorities, are worthy of study, so too can the young be an insightful object of social research. On the other hand, in studying the young at a given time we are also studying the middle-aged/old of the future. Studying the political characteristics, habits and values of the young gives us a valuable insight into how our societies will develop as this generation ages and replaces their elders. It is for this multi-dimensional character that the study of young citizens has become such a substantial feature of modern social science.

In recent years, it is the latter of these two dimensions that has become the more prominent in light of the political characteristics of the most recent generation of young citizens – the Millennials – some of which are thought to constitute a serious threat to democratic stability. As Chapter One noted, at the end of the last millennium, the electoral turnout of the youngest citizens in almost every Western democracy was substantially lower than that of older generations. The quest to explain why, and to determine what could be done to re-engage these young citizens, has had a profound impact on the study of

young people in academia, and produced several substantial evolutions in social research. This, in turn, has had an equally significant effect on our understanding of the ways in which modern young people engage with and participate in politics. Furthermore, a variety of explanations for the distinction of the Millennials' participation in politics have been produced.

This chapter reviews the literature on the political characteristics of young citizens in Western democracies since the 'birth' of the field following the behavioural revolution in political science in the 1940s. It outlines the development of this field from a pre-1990s 'first wave' of research – which was heavily dependent on quantitative methods, theoretically underpinned by the life cycle and employed narrow, election-focussed conceptions of political participation – to a 'second wave' which emerged out of the evolution of social science research more broadly, and the challenges to the assumptions of the first wave approaches. It details the participatory characteristics of the Millennials, and discusses the explanations developed for their distinct behaviour. Finally, it also highlights how the study of the political characteristics of young people is very similar and reveals similar characteristics throughout Western democracies. This is suggested to indicate that the Millennials are in fact a Western democracy-wide cohort of citizens, whose emergence is linked to Western democracy-wide causal processes and trends.

The chapter then focusses on the political apathy versus political alienation dimension to the study of the young, and demonstrates how the shift from the first to the second wave of research in this field was linked to a shift in

emphasis for explanations for their distinct behaviour. In the first wave, this explanation was usually based around the life cycle and suggested that the young were largely politically apathetic, but that this would change as they aged. In the second wave, more attention was paid to generational factors, and the idea that today's young people – the Millennials – were a distinctly alienated political generation gained prominence.

Finally, the chapter sets the stage for the remainder of the thesis by highlighting the four key weaknesses in the current literature which will be addressed throughout this research: i) the lack of clarity surrounding the participatory characteristics of the Millennials, particularly outside of the formal political arena, and surrounding whether their distinct characteristics reflect life cycle, period or generational effects; ii) the lack of clarity regarding the conceptualisation of political participation in light of the effect of social evolution on Western citizens' opportunities to participate; iii) the lack of clarity regarding the role of political apathy and alienation in driving that behaviour because of a failure to adequately define, conceptualise or operationalise them; and iv) the failure to empirically examine potential causes of trends in apathy and alienation which may explain the Millennials' distinct behaviour.

2.1 Young People in 'The Good Old Days'

The study of political participation and engagement began in earnest following the behavioural revolution in political science in the 1940s.¹ While age was not

¹ It is important to note that while this chapter refers to two 'waves' of research in this field, the intended distinction is very broad and somewhat fuzzy. Obviously, behaviouralist studies were conducted well before what is defined here as 'the first wave', such as Campbell et al (1954)

often considered an important explanatory variable in the earliest studies (Abramowitz 1980), a picture gradually began to emerge throughout Western democracies of the typical young citizen in which “a lack of political awareness, political apathy and low levels of political participation... [were] commonplace” (Matthews et al. 1999, p.138, e.g., Abrams and Little 1965a; 1965b; Barnes et al. 1979; Berelson et al. 1954; Lazarsfeld et al. [1944]1968; Campbell et al. 1960).

Unlike today, however, this characterisation of the young did not cause concern about the future of democratic society, because the vast majority of studies were underpinned by the theory of a stable political life cycle. This suggests that the young are expected to be less politically engaged than older citizens because of the ‘start-up’ problems associated with early adulthood, such as completing full-time education, finding a partner and starting a family, launching a career, and buying a home – none of which are particularly conducive to political engagement (Jankowski and Strate 1995; Smets 2008). As people age, however, their circumstances change; as they have children, own their own houses, cultivate savings, pay more tax, and look towards their retirement, they start to take more interest in political affairs, and so political engagement increases (Smets 2008; Martin 2012; Jankowski and Strate 1995). More recent studies into the life cycle have also shown that political engagement declines again once people reach old age (though not usually to

and Lazarsfeld et al ([1944]1968). These early studies were in many ways distinct from later ones for a variety of reasons, including prominently the absence of computer power and the consequences for data analysis. With regard to the study of the young, however, these earlier studies are similar to what is defined in this chapter as ‘wave one’ studies in terms of their reliance on a life cycle model, and their preference for quantitative analyses. For purposes of simplicity, therefore, these two clusters of research are conceptualised as the ‘first wave’ in this discussion.

the low levels seen among the young), and start to face physical, social and economic impediments to participating in politics (Smets 2008).

The political life cycle was assumed to be stable from one generation to the next. Each successive cohort was assumed to go through the same life process as their parents, and to ultimately adopt similar habits, attitudes and values which were conducive to a stable democracy: political socialisation was “an education in traditionalism... [with] the young being effectively de-politicised, learning to accept and endorse the *status quo*, to assimilate the orientations to politics of their elders, and in particular to share with them certain consequential perceptions of what are and are not the salient issues” (Abrams and Little 1965a, p.95; Campbell et al. 1960; Berelson et al. 1954). The below-average participation of the young, therefore, was not thought to be a problem for democracy, but rather a necessary part of its stability and security.

The dominance of the theory of a stable political life cycle was one of the key characteristics of the first wave of research. Another was the narrow conceptions and definitions of ‘political participation’ these studies used. ‘Political participation’ was generally considered to refer only to activity related to elections or interaction with elected officials, such as voting, joining or campaigning for a political party, or writing to elected officials or the media (Verba and Nie 1972; Almond and Verba 1963; Abrams and Little 1965a). The exception was political protest, which was often studied in relation to young people as they were found to be particularly likely to do it (e.g., Barnes et al. 1979; Abrams and Little 1965b). For the most part, therefore, the conclusion that young people were characterised by limited political participation was

based on a narrow conception of 'political participation' which was based almost entirely within the formal arena of politics i.e., dominated by traditional political institutions (such as political parties) and in which citizen-elite interactions are governed or represented by law (such as through elections) (Parry et al. 1992). There was almost no consideration of informal political activity, and those studies which did examine informal participation tended to focus on political protest as a form of 'deviant' or 'unconventional' – and therefore undesirable – political participation (e.g., Abrams and Little 1965b).

The final key characteristic of the first wave is that this research was largely dominated by quantitative research methods, usually survey research. Limited attention was paid to more detailed studies of political attitudes or values, with conclusions relating to them often derived from observations of behaviour (e.g., Lazarsfeld et al. [1944]1968)

2.2 Young People and Politics in the First Wave

This research developed a characterisation of young citizens with remarkable consistency throughout Western democracies. The most widely studied characteristic was that they were the least likely to vote in elections. This was repeatedly confirmed in the UK (Abrams and Little 1965a; Mulgan 1997; Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995; Parry et al. 1992; Jones and Wallace 1992; Lansdown 1995), the US (Verba and Nie 1972; Nie et al. 1974; Bennett 1997; Campbell et al. 1960; Hyman 1972), in West Germany (Baker 1973), and other West European democracies (Topf 1995; Milbrath and Goel 1977). Several studies also pointed towards the lower likelihood of the young being registered

to vote in the first place (Mulgan 1997; Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995; Abrams and Little 1965a; Bennett 1997).

Furthermore, the young were found to be less likely than older age groups to engage with political parties, such as through joining them, donating money to them or campaigning for them in elections (Abrams and Little 1965b; Matthews et al. 1999; Parry et al. 1992; Cochrane and Billig 1982; Verba and Nie 1972; Campbell et al. 1960; Hyman 1972; Lazarsfeld et al. [1944]1968). They were also less likely to exhibit a party identification i.e., to express a psychological orientation in favour of or against a particular party (or parties in ideological proximity) (Parry et al. 1992; Campbell et al. 1960; Verba and Nie 1972; Butler and Stokes 1969). This also extended to a reluctance to engage with other political institutions such as trade unions (Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995; Parry et al. 1992) or government officials or agencies (Verba and Nie 1972). In addition, several studies found that the young were less likely to engage with the media as a source of political information (Bennett 1997; Feldman and Kawakami 1991; Verba and Nie 1972; Adoni 1979; Atkins 1981; McLeod et al. 1981).

The one act in which young people were found to be more likely to engage than older voters was protest. Barnes et al. (1979), for instance, examined protest potential in Britain, the US and several other Western democracies, and found that the young consistently had a greater expectation of becoming involved with protests than their elders. They also showed that the young were more likely to be involved in protest movements or organisations, such as those relating to feminism and environmentalism in the 1960s (Barnes et al. 1979),

while Abrams and Little (1965b) showed that British young people were disproportionately likely to engage with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (see also Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995; Parry et al. 1992; Ranade and Norris 1981; Verba and Nie 1972; Hedin et al. 1984).

2.3 Why Were the Young Inactive?

As outlined above, the basis of the majority of explanations for the young's political behaviour was the life cycle. They were suggested to be in a stage of their lives during which political engagement was not a priority and they were pre-occupied with other concerns, and so they rarely participated in politics. The life cycle was also used to explain young people's propensity to support protest politics, with Barnes et al. (1979) and Abrams and Little (1965a; 1965b) suggesting that youth was associated with a desire to rebel against the status quo which ultimately saw many young people supporting disruptive protest movements.

Some studies investigated more directly the reasons behind the lack of participation among the young, and usually pointed to other characteristics which confirmed that they lacked the motivation to seriously engage with politics – in other words, they were more politically apathetic than older people. Verba and Nie (1972), Abrams and Little (1965a) and Bennett (1997), for instance, highlighted the lack of political knowledge among American and British young people, suggesting that it undermined their capacity to identify the relevance of politics to their lives, which compounded their lack of motivation to engage with it. Others pointed towards young people's lack of engagement with institutional sources of political information through which

they could develop both the interest in political issues and knowledge of them needed to facilitate political participation, such as the news media (Bennett 1997; Feldman and Kawakami 1991) or political parties (Campbell et al. 1960; Butler and Stokes 1969; Remy and Nathan 1974).

While political apathy – whether induced by young people’s stage in the life cycle or their lack of engagement with sources of political information, or a combination of the two – was the most common explanation for their low participation it was not the only one. Some scholars outlined characteristics indicative of the young being actively discouraged from participating in politics i.e., indicative of their political alienation. Bynner and Ashford (1994) and Bhavnani (1991), for example, challenged the idea that the young were politically apathetic on the basis of their engagement with protest politics, suggesting that if they were motivated to protest then they could be motivated to participate in formal politics as well. Bynner and Ashford (1994) also highlighted the tendency of young people to be more likely to participate in ‘easier’ forms of formal political participation, such as watching party political broadcasts. Such studies concluded that young people’s reluctance to participate in formal politics more broadly must be more to do with the nature of formal politics itself – such as it being unappealing or too complicated – than with the apathy of the young towards it.

Another potential cause of low participation was young people’s dislike of or lack of faith in the formal political system. Dennis et al. (1971), for example, showed that while young people were not hostile towards the notion of ‘democracy’, they appeared to be more hostile towards its manifestation in

their home country. In Britain, for example, around half of 11-17 year olds rejected the view that their political system was worthy of replication (Dennis et al. 1971). In addition, Marsh (1975), Dennis et al. (1971) and Abrams and Little (1965b) found evidence of young people being dissatisfied with their lives in countries such as Britain or America, and of them blaming their political system for this which ultimately led to either their disengagement from it or their propensity for protesting against decisions taken within it.

This theory was challenged, however, by studies such as Conradt (1980), Baker (1973), Remy and Nathan (1974) and Campbell et al. (1960), who showed that young people actually held their democratic systems in high regard. The propensity for protest among the young, they suggested, did not reflect democratic dissatisfaction but simply the tendency of youth to challenge the status quo. This challenge could not refute, however, the arguments of Bhavnani (1991) and Bynner and Ashford (1994) that acknowledging the protest potential of young people undermined the sustainability of the view that they were largely apathetic about politics and that this explained their lack of formal participation.

Finally, several studies suggested that young people were alienated from politics by a failure of politicians and the media to adequately address and represent their political concerns and agendas. This, in turn, gave rise to the view among the young that the political system simply was not worth engaging with (Marsh 1975; Banks et al. 1992; Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995). There were two challenges to this position, however. First, Abrams and Little (1965a) showed that while there was certainly evidence of a slightly different political

agenda among British young people, they continued to express little interest in engaging with politics regardless of the political issues being discussed.

Second, Bennett (1997) highlighted the lack of political knowledge and attention to politics among American young people and argued that it meant they would be largely unaware of the issues dominating public political discourse, even if the issues they cared about most were at the top of the agenda. This meant, therefore, that politicians failing to pay attention to certain issues were unlikely to have much impact on how young people felt about politics.

While there were some who challenged it, the majority of first wave studies supported the conventional wisdom that young people exhibited below average participation in formal politics because they lived in a stage of their lives not conducive to political engagement. This was compounded by their lack of engagement with institutional sources of both a stimulus to engage and a source of political knowledge, such as the media or political parties. This was not thought to be problematic for the stability of democracy, however, because young people were assumed to follow broadly the same life cycle as that of their parents and grandparents. Eventually, therefore, they would not only develop an interest in and knowledge of politics as their life circumstances changed and the motivation to engage with it grew (such as by having children or purchasing a house), but would develop similar political values and attitudes which underpinned the continuation of a stable democratic system (Abrams and Little 1965a; 1965b; Berelson et al. 1954).

2.4 The Arrival of the Millennials and the Challenge to the First Wave

Until the 1990s, this view of the young as largely apathetic, inactive citizens who would become more active as they aged was largely, though not entirely, unchallenged. This began to change, however, with the arrival of new generations of young people into the electorate around the turn of the millennium (i.e., the Millennials), who exhibited a lower propensity to vote in elections than even previous generations of young citizens. Furthermore, the gap between their turnout and that of older generations began to grow, suggesting that their declining turnout was not necessarily driven by processes influencing turnout for the wider electorate.

In Britain, for example, the turnout of the 18-24 age group in the 1983, 1987 and 1992 general elections was 64%, 67% and 67% respectively: an average of 66%, compared with an average overall turnout of 75%. For the 1997, 2001 and 2005 elections, the turnout for this age group was 54%, 40% and 38% respectively: an average of 44%, compared with an overall average of 64% (House of Commons Library 2013; see also Phelps 2005; Whiteley 2012). The difference between the average turnout of the youngest voters and that of the wider electorate increased from 9% between 1983 and 1992, to 20% between 1997 and 2005. There was a modest recovery in the 2010 election, with 44% of under 25s voting compared with an overall turnout of 65% (Henn and Foard 2012), but the difference between them was still 21%.

In America, the turnout of the 18-24 year olds in Presidential elections was just over 50% in 1972, and remained fairly steady at around 44% in the 1976, 1980 and 1984 elections that followed (CIRCLE 2013). As in Britain, the difference

between the average turnout of the young and overall turnout grew throughout this period: for the 1972, 1976 and 1980 presidential elections, the difference was 17%, whereas for the 1992, 1996 and 2000 elections, it was 21% (McLeod 2000). Levine and Lopez (2002) showed that youth turnout in US presidential elections fell by between 13-15% between 1972 (when the voting age was lowered to 18) and the late 1990s. Wass (2007) found similar evidence in Finland, showing that the youngest Finnish voters in 1999 were 1.4% less likely to vote than their predecessors, and Franklin (2004) showed that a similar trend was apparent throughout Western democracies, particularly those that had lowered the voting age to 18 in the 1970s. Throughout the late 1990s and into the new millennium, multiple studies found evidence of a cohort effect, in which young people entering Western electorates in the late 1990s were substantially less likely to vote in national elections than previous cohorts of young voters, and that the difference between their turnout and that of the wider electorate was widening (Miller and Shanks 1996; Vowles 2004; Norris 2004; Wattenberg 2002; Gimpel et al. 2004; Burgess et al. 2000; Clarke et al. 2004).

This evidence of a cohort effect presented a strong challenge to many of the theories and assumptions about how and why young people engaged with politics, but particularly to the dominance of life cycle theory to explain young people's below-average political participation. The theory of an inter-generationally stable political life cycle was incapable of explaining why this particular generation of young people was so much less likely than previous generations to vote in elections. Moreover, if their participation was the result of a cohort rather than a life cycle effect, there was little reason to expect that

the turnout of this generation would eventually match that of their parents' as they aged (Henn et al. 2002; Phelps 2005; Wass 2007; McLeod 2000; Wattenberg 2002).

The challenge was given greater impetus as more evidence of cohort effects in other political characteristics began to appear, which suggested that there was a wider shift in the way that young citizens related to politics underway. Studies such as Whiteley (2012), Dalton (2004; 2013) and Dalton and Wattenberg (2000) showed that there were cohort effects apparent in the decline of party identification across many Western democracies, with the Millennials developing the weakest attachment to political parties of any generation. Putnam (1995; 2000) argued that similar effects were apparent in social capital, while Dalton (2004) found the same for political trust. Clarke et al. (2004), Dalton (2009; 2013), Blais et al. (2004), Furlong and Cartmel (2012), Wattenberg (2012) and Rubenson et al. (2004) found evidence that new generations were developing new conceptions and understandings of citizenship, which placed far less emphasis on the civic duty of voting in elections. Blais et al. (2004), Furlong and Cartmel (2012), Zukin et al. (2006), Jowell and Park (1998), Park (2000) and Rubenson et al. (2004) also found that new cohorts were developing lower levels of interest in formal politics. Dalton (2013) and Whiteley (2012) also suggested there was a cohort effect relating to political interest, but that it was one in which younger generations were becoming more interested in politics.

Wattenberg (2012) suggested that throughout Western democracies there were also cohort effects apparent in declining levels of political knowledge,

identifying American Millennials as the least politically knowledgeable generation in the history of survey research. Finally, accompanying the cohort effect in electoral turnout was evidence of cohort effects with regard to other forms of political participation. Studies such as Grasso (2014), Putnam (2000) and Wattenberg (2012) argued that the cohort-based decline in turnout was being replicated in other political acts, such as protest activity or forms of civic participation. Others, such as Norris (2001; 2004) and Dalton (2013) argued that the cohort effect went the other way; that the Millennials were at the leading edge of a generation-based increase in informal political participation, particularly acts associated with protest and volunteering.

While there were disagreements regarding the nature of these cohort effects, there was clearly growing evidence of a cohort effect in political participation, interest, knowledge and values which suggested that the Millennials were, as Henn et al. (2002) put it, ‘a generation apart’. Every additional piece of evidence hinting at the presence of a cohort effect was another challenge to the idea that the Millennials’ participation could be explained by their stage in the political life cycle, as well as to the assumption that they would eventually mimic their parents in the way that they engaged with politics.

This sparked serious concern among academics, politicians and journalists alike as to what the implications of this shift might be for representative democracy. In light of research into political socialisation which suggested that habits formed during youth could last throughout a given individual’s or cohort’s adult lives (Jennings 1984; Jennings and Niemi 1968; 1981), concern began to grow that the Millennials’ lack of formal political participation could

become a lifelong habit which could have serious consequences for the legitimacy of future democratic decisions (Henn and Foard 2012; Farthing 2010; Soule 2001). This concern eventually became a priority for policy-makers throughout Western society, who increasingly began to focus on the ‘problem’ of low youth engagement with politics (Timmerman 2009; Evans and Sternberg 1999). There was a shift in the way policy-makers viewed young people as citizens; they increasingly became “the focus of the fears, rather than the hopes, of Western societies” (Pain et al. 2010, p.972).

These developments underpinned three significant changes in the academic study of young people and politics which constituted the transition from the first to the second wave of research. The first was the shift from a focus on the life cycle as the explanation for the political characteristics of the young towards a focus on cohort effects. This invariably led to greater interest in the role of political socialisation and the habits formed during youth as a source of differentiation between the behaviour of generations (Wattenberg 2012; Martin 2012). It also led to a change in the way young people were viewed as political actors, with studies such as Marsh et al. (2007) and O’Toole (2004) leading the charge to stop young people being viewed as ‘political apprentices’, living in a stage of the life cycle which diminished their significance. Instead, Marsh et al. (2007) argued that young people should be viewed as political actors in their own right, both by scholars and politicians, and their political attitudes, values and behaviour seen as expressions of fully-fledged democratic citizens rather than apprentices who would one day mimic their parents (see also Henn et al. 2002; Henn et al. 2005).

The second major change was that the definition and conceptualisation of ‘political participation’ employed in much first wave research was challenged. Scholars such as Phelps (2005), Marsh et al. (2007) and Henn et al. (2002) criticised the tendency of earlier studies to focus only on formal or electoral behaviour as meaningful political participation. They suggested that such a view not only undermined the importance of other forms of political activity, but also led to the view of young people as politically apathetic which, it was argued, was unjustified once their participation in informal politics was considered (Marsh et al. 2007; Henn et al. 2002). In addition, a growing body of literature was arguing that social evolution in Western democracies – such as in the form of technological development (e.g., the Internet) – was substantially expanding opportunities for Western citizens to participate in politics (Norris 2001; Stolle et al. 2005; Sloam 2007; see Fox 2014 for a review).

This was not only giving rise to new forms of political participation, but also creating opportunities for people to interact with each other as never before to the extent that they could form new political organisations, such as trans-national campaign groups (Sloam 2007; 2012b; Norris 2001; 2002; O’Neill 2010). Finally, White et al. (2000) and Marsh et al. (2007) argued that new generations of young citizens – such as the Millennials – were conceptualising their participation in politics in a distinct way from older generations. This saw them place less emphasis on engaging through formal channels based on traditional institutions of social and political identity (such as class or religion) and more emphasis on engaging through channels which reflected their conception of politics as a lived experience (Marsh et al. 2007; O’Toole 2004;

White et al. 2000). In light of such developments, focussing only on formal politics was said to be unsustainable and suggested to lead to inaccurate impressions of the Millennials' political characteristics (Henn et al. 2002; Henn et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2007; Sloam 2007; Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) 2009; Fahmy 2006; Sheerin 2007; Vowles 2004; O'Neill 2010; Norris 2001; McLeod 2000; Zukin et al. 2006; de Vreese 2007; Vesnic-Alujevic 2012).

The third major change to the study of young people was primarily methodological. Linking with the criticism that first wave studies employed overly narrow conceptions of political participation, many studies also argued that such studies were overly dependent on quantitative research methods, which led to a disproportionate focus on observable political behaviour and easily measurable attitudes (Marsh et al. 2007; Henn et al. 2002; Moffett and Albowicz 2003; Skattebol 2011; Gauthier 2003). Such critics argued that insufficient use was made of alternative, qualitative approaches which were capable of identifying how the young conceptualised 'politics' and their political participation (Marsh et al. 2007; Henn et al. 2002; Print et al. 2004; Sheerin 2007). If such approaches were adopted, the view of young people as largely inactive and uninterested in politics would, it was claimed, be challenged (Marsh et al. 2007; O'Toole 2004; Henn et al. 2002; Gauthier 2003).

2.5 The Second Wave and the Political Characteristics of the Millennials

Collectively, these challenges led to the transition from the first to the second wave of research into the political characteristics of young people. In some

areas, this shift led to substantial differences in the way in which the Millennials were thought to relate to and participate in politics. In others, the conclusions reached by second wave scholars were largely in agreement with those in the first.

Second wave studies confirmed that young people had always been less likely to vote in elections than older people, and also that the Millennials were unusual for being so unlikely to vote even when compared with previous young generations (Russell et al. 2002; Pattie et al. 2004; Sloam 2007; Henn and Foard 2012; Henn et al. 2002; Henn et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2007; Furlong and Cartmel 2012; Farthing 2010; Phelps 2005; 2012; Hansard Society 2012; Burgess et al. 2000; Jacobs et al. 2009; McLeod et al. 2000; Sheerin 2007; Vowles 2004; Print et al. 2004; Mellor and Kennedy 2003; Wass 2007; Dalton 2012; 2013; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Wattenberg 2002; 2012; Norris 2002; Smets and van Ham 2013; Sloam 2014; Martin 2012).

The unprecedented reluctance of the Millennials to vote was shown to reflect a broader reluctance to participate in formal politics more generally. The Millennials were shown to be less likely to join or otherwise engage with political parties (such as through campaigning for them) (Russell et al. 2002; Henn et al. 2005; Mycock and Tonge 2012; Henn and Foard 2012; Whiteley 2012; Dalton 2013; Soule 2001; Utter 2011; Sheerin 2007; Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Martin 2012). They were also shown to be less likely to develop a party identification – both than older people and previous generations of young citizens – and those that did identify with a party generally exhibited weaker attachments (Russell et al. 2002; Mycock and

Tonge 2012; Whiteley 2012; Zukin et al. 2006; Dalton 2013; Norris 2002; 2011; Wattenberg 2002; 2012; Martin 2012). In addition, the Millennials were shown to be less likely to join or otherwise engage with other traditional political institutions (such as trade unions) and religious institutions, and to identify with social institutions which underpinned much political support, such as social class (Phelps 2012; Pattie et al. 2004; Flanagan et al. 2012; Dalton 2013; Quintelier 2008; Putnam 2000; Marsh et al. 2007). They were also shown to be less likely to directly interact with the government, such as through contacting elected officials or government agencies (Henn and Foard 2012; Pattie et al. 2004; Russell et al. 2002; Sloam 2014; Hansard Society 2012; Martin 2012)

The Millennials were also found to be less interested in formal political issues than their elders, and even than previous generations of young citizens (Henn and Foard 2012; Henn et al. 2005; Dalton 2013; Sheerin 2007; Wattenberg 2012; Putnam 2000; Utter 2011; Pattie et al. 2004; Delli Carpini 2000; Park 2000; Blais et al. 2004; Rubenson et al. 2004). They were also shown to exhibit lower levels of political knowledge than their elders, with some studies (such as Wattenberg 2012) suggesting that they were the least knowledgeable generation to have entered Western electorates in recent history (Russell et al. 2002; Hansard Society 2012; Pattie et al. 2004; Mellor and Kennedy 2003; McLeod 2000).

When it came to the Millennials' formal political engagement and participation, therefore, the second wave of research produced very similar conclusions to the first: the Millennials were generally less active in, attached

to, interested in and knowledgeable of formal politics than their elders. The major difference between the first and second waves was that the latter showed the Millennials' to be less active and engaged with formal politics than previous generations at the same age. When looking beyond the Millennials' immediate engagement with and participation in formal politics, however, many second wave studies suggested that there was much more to the story than simply greater political apathy than previous generations.

While few disputed that the Millennials were typically less interested in formal politics than their elders, for instance, several argued that once their engagement outside of the formal political arena was examined they were found to maintain an active interest in political issues, and that the difference with the interest of their elders in such areas was much smaller (Russell et al. 2002; White et al. 2000; Henn and Foard 2012; Henn et al. 2002; Henn et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2007; ICR 2006; Print et al. 2004; Dalton 2013; Moffett and Albowicz 2003; Martin 2012; Sheerin 2007). Studies such as Marsh et al. (2007), White et al. (2000), Moffett and Albowicz (2003) and Henn et al. (2002) also argued that if political issues – even those which were often at the heart of mainstream political debate in the formal political arena – were explored with the Millennials from the perspective of their daily lives and experiences, the Millennials were found to have an active interest in and awareness of them. On the basis of similar evidence in New Zealand, Sheerin (2007) concluded that the Millennials appeared to have an unprecedented lack of interest in formal political processes and institutions, but maintained an active interest in political issues, particularly those of relevance to their daily lives.

A similar debate occurred with regard to the Millennials' political knowledge. Few disputed that the Millennials were less knowledgeable about formal politics than their elders, but many argued that they were nonetheless "highly articulate about the issues which affect their lives" (Marsh et al. 2007, p.122), and that therefore to consider them uninformed or unknowledgeable was misleading (Sheerin 2007; White et al. 2000; Henn et al. 2002; Dalton 2013).

Related to the issue of the Millennials' political knowledge was the issue of their engagement with sources of political knowledge, primarily the news media. First wave scholars established that young people were generally less likely to engage with news media than their elders, and that this in part reflected and in part compounded their lack of political interest. Second wave scholars agreed, showing that the Millennials were less likely to engage with news media than their elders and previous young generations, and were consequently less politically interested and knowledgeable (Wattenberg 2012; Buckingham 1999). Some, however, suggested that this view was biased as it was based on the Millennials' engagement with traditional sources of media, such as newspapers, and that if more attention was paid to their engagement with new media, such as the Internet, then they would be found to be quite active in seeking out and engaging with political information (Norris 2001; 2002; O'Neill 2010; Casero-Ripolles 2012; Di Gennaro and Dutton 2006; Gibson et al. 2005; Baumgartner and Morris 2010). De Vreese (2007), for example, argued that contrary to spending less time interacting with news media than their elders, the Millennials spent more time doing so because the Internet and social media were such a big part of their daily lives. Such scholars argued that any effort to study the Millennials' engagement with

political news media should, therefore, account for the evolution of the media itself (de Vreese 2007; Norris 2001; O'Neill 2010).

A characteristic explored in the second wave which was barely a feature of earlier research was the Millennials' conception of citizenship. Several scholars suggested that one of the key reasons the Millennials were less likely to vote than previous generations is because they were less likely to consider voting to be a civic duty (Dalton 2013; Norris 2004; Clarke et al. 2004). Russell et al. (2002), for example, found that British Millennials were more likely than older people to feel that voting was not a duty but something worth doing only if they cared who won the election. Sanders et al. (2005) showed that 56% of British under 25s felt that voting was a civic duty, compared with 73% of 35-44 year olds and more than 90% of the over 65s. Wattenberg (2012) identified a similar trend in other Western democracies: for example, in the Netherlands 26% of 18-29 year olds felt that voting was a civic duty, compared with 44% of over 65s; in Japan, the equivalent figures were 32% and 61% respectively; and in Finland, they were 24% and 63%.

This trend was not taken to suggest that the Millennials thought that political participation was unimportant. Several studies showed that the Millennials felt following and participating in politics was a good and important thing for a citizen to do: Mellor and Kennedy (2003), for example, found that more than half of Australian Millennials felt that a good citizen should follow and participate in politics (see also Mayer and Schmidt 2004; White et al. 2000; Russell et al. 2002; YCC 2009; Dalton 2013). Instead, this trend was taken as evidence of an evolving notion of what it meant to be a democratic citizen;

while the Millennials still felt that political participation was important, they did not feel that they had to participate in formal politics unquestioningly, particularly if political elites failed to convince them it was worth doing so (Dalton 2013; Norris 2011).

In a further difference between the two research waves, the second wave assigned far more significance to informal political participation. Norris (2001) identified a particular aspect of informal politics as ‘cause-oriented politics’: acts outside of the formal political arena in which the actor engages directly with an entity (such as another individual or an institution) which is either directly responsible for a political decision or issue (such as a company drilling for oil) or which is related to a political issue the individual cares about (such as a trans-national campaign organisation) (Norris 2001; Sloam 2014).

Examples include signing petitions, supporting new social movements, protesting, political consumerism, and many forms of Internet based activism (Sloam 2012b; 2014; Norris 2001; Theocharis 2012).

Many second wave studies argued that the Millennials were more active in this area than previous generations, and that consequently the difference between the Millennials’ cause-oriented political participation and that of their elders was much smaller than that for formal politics. In some cases, they were even suggested to be more active than their elders in this area. Sloam (2012b), for instance, argued that British Millennials were particularly active in protest activity – even more so than previous generations of young people – pointing towards their participation in protests against the Iraq War in 2003, and the Occupy movement in 2010/11. In addition, Sloam (2012a; 2012b), Norris

(2001; 2011), Print et al. (2004) and Paloniemi and Vainio (2011) argued that Millennials were far more likely than their elders to engage with and/or support new social movements and global campaign organisations.

Martin (2012) showed that 21% of British 18-29 year olds had participated in a consumer boycott, compared with 24% of the over 60s; the equivalent figures for the US were 25% and 18%; in Australia they were 40% and 25% (see also Vromen 2003); and in Canada they were 48% and 22%. Martin (2012) also found that Australian Millennials were roughly three times more likely to take part in a protest or public demonstration than the over 60s, while Print et al. (2004) showed that 61% were willing to or had already participated in a protest, and 95% were willing to or had already signed petitions. Whether the specific form of cause-oriented activity was protesting, signing petitions, supporting campaign organisations or taking part in political consumerism, many second wave studies suggested that the Millennials' were more likely to be active in this area than previous generations, and that this pointed to an evolution, rather than a decline, of political engagement and participation among this generation (Fahmy 2006; Furlong and Cartmel 2012; Marsh et al. 2007; Matthews et al. 1999; Henn and Foard 2012; Mycock and Tonge 2012; Theocharis 2012; Henn et al. 2005; Sheerin 2007; Vromen 2003; Mellor and Kennedy 2003; Print et al. 2004; Gauthier 2003; ICR 2006; Paloniemi and Vainio 2011; Delli Carpini 2000; Jacobs et al. 2009; Dalton 2013; Norris 2002; 2011; Sloam 2014; Martin 2012).

While there was little doubt that the Millennials were active in cause-oriented politics, and that the difference between their cause-oriented participation and

that of their elders was smaller than that seen for formal political activity, there was much more doubt about the extent to which they were more active than previous generations of young citizens in this area. This partly reflected the fact that these were often ‘new’ forms of political participation, or at least new forms as far as the academic study of political activity was concerned, meaning that data availability was limited (O’Neill 2010; Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Dalton 2013). In some cases, however, there were direct challenges to this view based on empirical evidence. Grasso (2014), for instance, examined cohort effects in formal and informal political participation throughout Europe, and not only questioned the view that the Millennials were more active than their elders in informal politics, but suggested that they were the least politically active generation – in both formal and informal politics – in Europe.

Similarly, Wattenberg (2012) argued that the Millennials were actually less active in cause-oriented and informal politics than previous generations, and that they appeared to be more active because such acts were becoming more common throughout the electorate. In other words, Wattenberg (2012) argued that a period effect – in which cause-oriented political activity was becoming more common for all Western citizens – was being mistakenly interpreted as a cohort effect (see also Putnam 2000). The one exception to this dispute was volunteering. Many studies – including those sceptical of the extent to which the Millennials were more active than previous generations in informal politics – showed that the Millennials were more likely to volunteer in their local communities than previous generations (Dalton 2013; Zukin et al. 2006; Wattenberg 2012; Sloam 2014; Henn et al. 2005; Henn and Foard 2012; Roker et al. 1999; Roker and Eden 2002; Fahmy 2006).

2.6 Wave Two and the Millennials' Political Alienation

The second wave of research produced, therefore, a rich characterisation of the Millennials as political actors, one that to an extent challenged the first wave view of them as largely politically apathetic, inactive citizens. They were viewed as less interested in, knowledgeable of and active in formal politics than their elders and previous young generations. At the same time, however, there was evidence of them maintaining an active interest in and awareness of political issues which affected their lives, as well as being active in informal politics and through alternative means of accessing and acting on political information, and exhibiting a broader transition in the way they viewed themselves as democratic citizens. This more optimistic view of the Millennials did not, however, undermine the concerns of many about what their low formal political participation might mean for Western democracy if it did indeed become a lifelong habit. Several scholars highlighted the negative consequences for democratic representation, legitimacy and the efficiency of policy-making from having substantial chunks of the electorate not participate in formal politics – especially elections – and argued that the Millennials' participation in informal politics would not offset this problem (Farthing 2010; Whiteley 2012; Martin 2012; Head 2011; Sloam 2012a). Furthermore, scholars were left with a paradox: if the Millennials were sufficiently interested in and knowledgeable of politics to engage with and participate in it through informal means, and still valued formal political participation, why were they so inactive in formal politics?

By far the most common solution to this paradox was the theory that the Millennials were uniquely alienated from formal politics. Their alienation, it was argued, was the obstacle which prevented their interest in politics from being realised through participation in formal political processes. Henn et al. (2005), for instance, assessed whether an unprecedented level of political apathy or political alienation could better explain the Millennials' generationally distinct lack of formal political participation, and concluded that "at the heart of young people's...disenchantment with Westminster politics is a strong sense of political alienation" (Henn et al. 2005, p.574). Similarly, Henn and Foard (2012) concluded that "young people remain serious and discerning (sceptical) observer-participants of the electoral process, rather than...apathetic onlookers" (Henn and Foard 2012, p.57), while Sloam (2007) suggested that the "problem is less political apathy...than the disconnection of young people from the political process" (Sloam 2007, p.562). Not all studies directly used the term 'political alienation', but the theory that some form of active disenchantment explained the Millennials' lack of formal political participation rather than a lack of interest was widespread.

The expression of this alienation varied from one study to another, as did its proposed cause. Second wave scholars developed a wide range of theories which could conceivably explain why the Millennials were alienated from politics to an extent not seen by either previous young generations or their elders. Henn and Foard (2012), Utter (2011), Delli Carpini (2000) and Fahmy (2006) pointed towards the Millennials' lack of confidence in their own political knowledge and understanding, suggesting that this undermined their confidence in their capacity to effectively participate in politics and promote

their interests. Henn and Foard (2012), for instance, found that 46% of British Millennials did not feel confident in their knowledge of politics, and 47% felt that they did not know enough about politics in general. Similarly, the Hansard Society (2012) also showed that just over one in three under 25s in Britain felt at all politically knowledgeable, compared with almost half of over 55s, and suggested that this related to the Millennials' having little confidence in their knowledge of politics because political knowledge correlates so strongly with one's perception of how knowledgeable they actually are.

Others suggested that the Millennials exhibited a particularly limited faith in the responsiveness of the formal political system to their influence. Sloam (2012b; 2014), for instance, suggested that the electoral system in countries such as Britain or the US – i.e., majoritarian systems which undermined the support of new or small political parties – discouraged the Millennials from participating because they felt that their demands could not be represented by the traditional mainstream parties. Similarly, Wattenberg (2002) suggested that the American political system was so complicated that it undermined young Americans' faith in their capacity to influence it. Other scholars pointed towards the Millennials' dissatisfaction with the operation of the political system, rather than its structure. For example, Mycock and Tonge (2012), Fahmy (2006) and Marsh et al. (2007) suggested that the adversarial nature of British party politics discouraged young people from engaging with political parties and elections.

Both of these arguments were challenged, however, by extensive evidence that the Millennials, for all their negative views of political parties and politicians,

exhibited strong support for their democratic system. Henn et al. (2005), for example, who strongly argued that British Millennials were alienated from formal politics, showed that only 26% of them were dissatisfied with British democracy (see also Henn and Foard 2012; Martin 2012; Pattie et al. 2004; Whiteley 2012; Dalton 2013).

A related theory was that the way the media presented politics – with its focus on conflict, personalities and partisan division – was what discouraged the Millennials’ from engaging with formal politics, rather than the practice of politics itself. Wayne et al. (2010), for instance, examined British Millennials’ perceptions of political news media and found that it was largely negative, and that the politics presented to them through the media was not something they wanted to be part of. Evans and Sternberg (1999) found a similar trend among Australian Millennials, concluding that “due largely to the news media’s presentation, politics, democracy and citizenship have developed a bad reputation with young people” (Evans and Sternberg 1999, p.109; also Soule (2001) for American Millennials). Evans and Sternberg (1999) also argued that the media depictions of young people as politically apathetic and inactive – based partly on academic research conducted during the first wave – was a further alienating force in that young people felt compelled to conform to this stereotype out of resentment, i.e., it became a self-fulfilling prophecy (Evans and Sternberg 1999; Russell 2004). Similarly, the YCC (2009) suggested that the British media plays a substantial role in alienating young people not just from politics but from society more widely through ‘demonising’ youth and presenting it as a societal problem, a conclusion Benyon (2012) shared in light of the media coverage of young people involved in riots in England in 2011.

Another common theory was that the Millennials were alienated by the failure of politicians and political parties to adequately represent their interests and agendas. This was mainly said to stem from politicians' inability to relate to young people's daily lives and concerns rather than a deliberate ignorance of their issues (Henn et al. 2005; White et al. 2000; Furlong and Cartmel 2012; Sheerin 2007; Sloam 2012b; Print et al. 2004; Delli Carpini 2000; ICR 2006; Soule 2001; Moffett and Albowicz 2003; Mellor and Kennedy 2003). Some scholars suggested, however, that the Millennials had a distinct political agenda which politicians were not prepared to prioritise for fear of upsetting older citizens who were more likely to vote (Soule 2001; Henn et al. 2005; Dalton 2013), although others argued that the differences between the Millennials' agenda and that of the wider electorate of which they were a part were negligible (Marsh et al. 2007; Evans and Sternberg 1999; Mellor and Kennedy 2003; Sheerin 2007; Gauthier 2003).

Another potential source of alienation was a lack of trust in politics or some aspect of the formal political arena (such as political parties or elections). Several studies showed that many Millennials felt that participating in politics was a waste of time because they had so little faith that politicians would keep their promises or promote their interests (Martin 2012; Marsh et al. 2007; Henn and Foard 2012; Henn et al. 2005; Furlong and Cartmel 2012; Fahmy 2006; Sloam 2014a; Pattie et al. 2004). Furlong and Cartmel (2012), for example, pointed to a particularly poignant example in the case of British Millennials, in which they were alienated by the Liberal Democrats' decision to renege on their pledge to vote against tuition fee increases upon entering government in 2010. Henn and Foard (2012) linked such events to a broader lack of trust

among British Millennials in politicians' willingness to care about what they thought (only 54% felt politicians cared what they thought) and to treat them fairly in government (less than half felt they were treated fairly).

This theory was challenged, however. Dalton (2004), for example, showed that political trust in general was in decline throughout Western society, and so the Millennials would not be special for having low levels of political trust. Others suggested that while the young certainly had less trust than their elders, the difference between them was so small it was unlikely to account for the large differences between their respective political participation (Pattie et al. 2004; Whiteley 2012; Hansard Society 2012).

For the most part, attempts by second wave scholars to explain the unusually low formal political participation of the Millennials were based around some form of alienation from the formal political system. Some also linked alienation from formal politics with higher levels of engagement in cause-oriented politics exhibited by the Millennials, suggesting that they were compelled to influence political outcomes through informal means because they had so little faith in formal processes, actors and institutions (e.g., Dalton 2013; Henn and Foard 2012; Sloam 2014).

Nonetheless, there were some who challenged the dominance of political alienation based explanations, focussing more on the Millennials' particularly profound lack of interest in and knowledge of formal politics and suggesting that they were indicative of an unprecedented level of apathy towards politics in all arenas rather than alienation. Phelps (2012), for example, argued that there must be "some justification for calling today's young people apathetic..."

[as they] seem apathetic when it comes to conventional politics...despite there being more opportunities to participate now than there ever had been” (Phelps 2012, p.295).

There were two main theories behind this argument. The first related to the Millennials’ lack of engagement with traditional news media, and suggested that their engagement with new forms of political media (such as online blogs or social media) did not compensate for the loss of information resulting from their rejection of traditional media sources intended for larger and more diverse audiences (Wattenberg 2012; Buckingham 1999; McLeod 2000; Soule 2001). This effectively meant that even though the Millennials were engaging with political information through new media, they were still consuming less information – and so getting a weaker stimulus to engage with politics and developing less political knowledge – than previous generations.

The second theory reflected Putnam’s (1995; 2000) work on social capital. Several studies suggested that in addition to an unprecedented reluctance to engage with formal politics the Millennials were also exhibiting an unprecedented reluctance to engage with their local communities and develop social and community networks (Putnam 2000; Macedo et al. 2005; Gray and Caul 2000; Smith 1999). This was depriving them of an essential resource – social capital – through which they could acquire and debate political information, develop an interest in and knowledge of political issues and processes, and develop a sense of political efficacy through being able to collectively influence the formal political process in their area (Putnam 2000; Verba et al. 1995; Smith 1999; Grey and Caul 2000).

Overall, therefore, there were eight theories which were suggested to explain the distinct political participation of the Millennials, and primarily their lack of participation in formal politics. Six suggested that they were politically alienated, by a lack of confidence in political knowledge, low external efficacy, dissatisfaction with democratic politics, unpleasant media reporting and stereotyping, and lack of political trust. Two suggested that the Millennials were distinctly apathetic, either because of their lack of engagement with traditional media or their lack of social capital.

2.7 Challenges to the Second Wave

Within the present literature, there are several challenges, disputes and unanswered questions which represent gaps in our current understanding about how and why the Millennials participate in politics. Several of these challenges provide the justification for this thesis. The first relates to the lack of consensus regarding the Millennials' participatory characteristics. While there is little question that the Millennials are among the least active generations in formal politics to have entered Western electorates, there remains much dispute about their participation in informal political activity. The review above showed that there are essentially two sides to this debate. On one side is the view that the Millennials are disproportionately active in certain areas of informal politics, such as cause-oriented politics, to the extent that they may even be more active than previous young generations (e.g., Sloam 2012a; 2012b; 2014; Norris 2001; Martin 2012; Dalton 2013). On the other side is the view that while the difference between the Millennials' participation in informal politics and that of their elders is smaller than that for formal politics, they are nonetheless less

active in this area than both their elders and previous generations (Wattenberg 2012; Putnam 2000).

The cause of this disagreement is unclear, though there are several potential explanations. One is that the differences reflect variations in the Millennials' behaviour across national contexts. Sloam (2014) for example, showed that while the basic trend of declining formal participation and increasing informal participation is apparent among Millennials throughout Europe and America, there are nonetheless substantial national differences – such as British Millennials being significantly less active in cause-oriented politics than their German and American counterparts. While this review has shown that the majority of research from countries throughout Western democracies points towards similar characteristics exhibited by Millennials, as have cross-national comparative studies such as Dalton (2013), Wattenberg (2012) and Fieldhouse et al. (2007), there are nonetheless differences such as those highlighted by Sloam (2014) which may account for some of the disparities.

A further contributor is the relatively new nature of the study of forms of political participation the Millennials are suggested to be unusually active in. For example, Bakker and de Vreese (2011) have argued that determining the nature of young people's online political participation is challenging because the research methods for studying online participation are still in their infancy. A further challenge is that many citizens do not necessarily see their engagement in acts considered 'political' by social researchers (such as political consumerism or engaging with trans-national policy networks) as political activity, meaning that they do not identify themselves as being

politically active through such acts in surveys (Marsh et al. 2007; White et al. 2000). While the problem of assuming a common conception of ‘political behaviour’ between researcher and participant is a problem with all social research, in areas outside of formal politics where the definition of ‘the political’ can become more subjective and varied, it is particularly profound (Marsh et al. 2007; Henn et al. 2002). Both of these problems make measuring political participation outside of the formal political arena problematic, and could easily account for differences in conclusions about the Millennials’ behaviour.

Finally, the problem may reflect different conceptions and measures of ‘political participation’ employed by scholars. As the above discussion highlighted, there was considerable debate around the turn of the millennium about how ‘political participation’ should be defined and measured in light of the impact of social evolution on the opportunities for Western citizens to participate in politics. While there was widespread agreement that the first wave definition based almost entirely around elections was inadequate, there was less agreement about how that definition should be expanded. Some, such as Marsh et al. (2007), argued that political participation needed to be defined on the basis of how individuals perceived it through their ‘lived experiences’. Others, such as Whiteley (2012), suggested that while political participation was certainly about more than voting in elections, formal political activity should still lie at the heart of the concept. The result of these various approaches is that the Millennials’ political participation is studied in different ways and using different tools, which could account for the differences in conclusions about their behaviour.

A related criticism regards how scholars conceptualise political participation, and in particular how they view the distinction between formal and informal/cause-oriented political activity. Many scholars implicitly assume a two-dimensional structure: political activity either occurs within the formal, institutionalised arena of politics and so is dominated by traditional political institutions and processes (such as elections or political parties); or it occurs outside of that arena and is more varied (such as protests or political consumerism) (e.g., Sloam 2014; Norris 2001). Very few studies consider how political participation can be conceptualised beyond this two-dimensional outline, nor do they provide empirical evidence to inform it. An established literature has shown that political participation can be considered to be multi-dimensional, and that assuming that all forms of formal and informal participation are essentially similar is misguided (Verba and Nie 1972; Parry et al. 1992; Pattie et al. 2004). Furthermore, this research has shown that most citizens tend to ‘specialise’ in different dimensions which are more appealing to them and the time and resources they can and wish to dedicate to politics (Verba and Nie 1972; Parry et al. 1992). The literature on the Millennials’ participation, including that which has argued that ‘political participation’ should be redefined and reconceptualised in light of social change, has largely failed to engage with this body of research. No attempt has been made to empirically verify the distinction between formal and cause-oriented political participation, or to justify the assumption that all political acts fit within one of these two broad categories. This also means that lessons which can be learned based on individuals’ preferences for certain dimensions of participation along

the lines of those identified by Verba and Nie (1972) and Parry et al. (1992) cannot be explored in the context of the Millennials.

The second major weakness in this literature relates to how the concepts of political apathy and alienation are defined and measured. It is clear from both the above discussion and Chapter One that the concepts are central to current academic and public understandings of how and why the Millennials participate in politics, as well as to policy efforts to increase their engagement with formal politics. Yet both remain very poorly understood in the literature; there are no attempts to provide a clear definition or conceptualisation of either apathy or alienation, and the two are employed in variable ways from one study to the next. There are existing literatures on both concepts from which lessons on defining and measuring them can be drawn, which also provide detail regarding their relationship with political behaviour and attitudes. Yet this research is almost entirely absent from the current study of the Millennials' political participation. Even those studies which directly engage with the competing views that apathy or alienation explains the Millennials' distinct behaviour fail to offer a clear definition of either concept (e.g., Henn et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2007). Consequently, there can be very little confidence in the accuracy or empirical validity of the claims that the Millennials are unusually apathetic or politically alienated, and that either characteristic plays any role in explaining their distinct political participation. Furthermore, the causal role of processes and events which are said to have contributed to either the Millennials' alienation from or apathy towards formal politics (such as scandals or controversial decisions which undermine their trust in politicians or their failure to engage with traditional news media) also remains unclear. Until

clear and validated definitions and operationalisations of political apathy and alienation have been developed, it is impossible to test causal theories about the effects of certain events or trends on the apathy and alienation of the Millennials.

Finally, the last major problem with this research relates to the specific claims that the Millennials are a distinct political generation for their political participation, their political apathy, or their political alienation. Very few studies which have argued that the Millennials are a distinct political generation have addressed the various challenges associated with such a claim, such as identifying how and why this group of people represent a distinct political generation from another. Furthermore, the existing literature has barely engaged with research methods capable of estimating cohort effects while accounting for the role of period effects and the political life cycle. The consequence of this limitation is clearly illustrated in the above review in the various disputes about whether characteristics exhibited by the Millennials are indicative of life cycle, cohort or period effects. For example, Henn and Foard (2012) have argued that there is a distinct lack of political trust among the Millennials (i.e., a cohort effect) which inhibits their political participation, while Dalton (2004) has argued that lower levels of trust are apparent across all age groups in all Western democracies, thereby implying that the trait Henn and Foard (2012) document is actually the result of a period effect. Similarly, Sloam (2012b; 2014), Norris (2001) and Dalton (2013) argue that there is a cohort effect evident in which the Millennials are unusually active in cause-oriented and civic politics. Wattenberg (2012), on the other hand, suggests that the Millennials only appear to be unusually active in these areas because of a

period effect in which all Western citizens' participatory habits are changing towards a greater emphasis on informal politics, and argues that this period effect is being misinterpreted as a cohort effect.

Finally, there is a need for greater recognition of the evidence suggesting that the political characteristics which are said to differentiate the Millennials from other generations are apparent throughout Western society. The evidence supporting this claim is clear first in the fact that unrelated research from throughout Western democracies which has documented the characteristics of the Millennials (particularly in relation to their formal political participation, their interest in political issues, and their propensity to participate in cause-oriented politics) has identified a remarkable consistency across different national contexts (e.g., Henn et al. 2002; Henn and Foard 2012; Henn et al. 2005; Fahmy 2006; Marsh et al. 2007 and Russell et al. 2002 in the UK; Sheerin 2007 in New Zealand; Print et al. 2004 and Mellor and Kennedy 2003 in Australia; ICR 2006 in Ireland; Soule 2001; McLeod 2000; Utter 2011 in the US). Furthermore, numerous cross-national comparative studies have confirmed that the differences between Millennials in different national contexts are far less substantial than the similarities between them (e.g., Sloam 2014; Fieldhouse et al. 2007; Norris 2001; 2011; Dalton 2013; Wattenberg 2012; Martin 2012).

In light of this, when searching for explanations for the Millennials' distinct participation the focus needs to be on causal factors which could conceivably produce similar effects in the Millennials at similar times throughout Western democracies. As Wattenberg (2012) points out, "[w]hen similar changes occur

in country after country, we need to search for factors that are reshaping the political environment everywhere” (Wattenberg 2012, p.2). The alternative is to “conclude that it just so happens that various events in most of the world’s established democracies have led young people to stay out of politics” (Wattenberg 2012, p.2; see also Dalton 2013). Far more likely than a series of unrelated coincidences is a Western society-wide process or series of events, which have produced common political characteristics in the generation of young people who entered those electorates around the turn of the millennium.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the academic study of the political participation of young people in Western democracies since the ‘birth’ of the field in the 1940s, focussing particularly on the emergence of the Millennial generation in the late 1990s and the attempts to explain their distinct political participation. It has shown how efforts to explain the distinct political behaviour of young people throughout Western democracies have followed a similar trajectory: shifting from a focus on the life cycle studied almost exclusively through quantitative methods, and which implied that young people were less active because of life cycle induced political apathy; to a focus on the generational distinctiveness of the Millennials and their unique political characteristics, studied using a wide range of methods, and in which explanations are dominated by the theory that they are a uniquely alienated generation of citizens.

Finally, the chapter has offered a critique of this literature, and identified four major problems which make the current conventional wisdom highly questionable. These relate to: the definition, conceptualisation and

measurement of ‘political participation’; the lack of clarity regarding the definition and manifestation of political apathy and political alienation; the inability to effectively explain the Millennials’ supposed apathy/alienation; and the limited use of methods capable of estimating what it is about the Millennials which makes them generationally distinct as well as limited attention to conceptual questions regarding how and why they should be considered a distinct political generation. Addressing these problems, and so essentially verifying the conventional wisdom, is the focus of the next five chapters.

Chapter Three: Political Participation and the Millennials in Britain

Chapter Two showed that there has been a great deal of research into the distinct participatory characteristics of the Millennials, though there is nothing approaching a consensus. This chapter takes the first steps towards addressing the weaknesses in the understanding of how the Millennials participate in politics, and identifying how they differ from older and previous generations. First, however, the issue of what exactly a ‘political generation’ is and how the Millennials can be defined as a distinct generation needs to be addressed. This chapter begins by outlining the concept of a ‘political generation’ and the impressionable years theory of political socialisation on which it is based, before identifying the generations of the British electorate against which the Millennials can be compared. It then considers the definition, conceptualisation and measurement of ‘political participation’ in light of the criticisms levelled against recent literature in Chapter Two regarding the impact of social evolution on the opportunities for modern citizens to participate in politics. Using the Audit of Political Engagement survey series, the chapter outlines a four-dimensional conception of political participation, based around formal, cause-oriented, civic and issue-specific formal political activity.

Finally, Chapter Three analyses the political participation of British Millennials around the 2010 general election in these four arenas and compares it with that of their elders. The data clearly identifies a generation who are not only less politically active than their elders in formal politics (which, as Chapter Two showed, is expected), but also less active in the other dimensions of political participation as well.

3.1 Political Generations and the Impressionable Years Theory

The concept of a political generation has its roots in that of a cohort, which refers to a group of individuals who were born around the same time and are thought to share common characteristics as a result (Bartels and Jackman 2014; Glenn 1977). The members of this cohort age together and move through the life cycle at approximately the same time (at least to the extent that that passage is dictated by age) (Glenn 1977; Debevec et al. 2013). A political generation differs from that of a cohort in that it implies that this group of people are bound by more than just being born around the same time, but also by their common passage through a historical context which results in their developing lasting habits underpinning political attitudes, values and behaviour (Mannheim [1928]1944; 1928; Grasso 2014). The way in which people can be grouped together into a political generation varies, and identifying appropriate criteria is a substantial challenge; some studies link generations to macro political and economic contexts during their youth (e.g., Grasso 2014; Becker 1990), some link them to dramatic political events (such as the collapse of the Soviet Union (Neundorf 2010)), while others highlight more specific political contexts such as periods in which government was dominated by a particular party or leader (e.g., Clarke et al. 2004).

In social research, the identifying characteristic of a given generation is often not when its members were born but what their year of birth means for when they experienced the early years of their political socialisation – their ‘formative years’ (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). As Jennings (2007), Dinas (2013) and Van der Eijk and Franklin (2009) have showed, during an

individual's formative years they are more susceptible to the influence of external socialising forces (such as family or school) on their attitudes and behaviour. As the individual ages and expresses these attitudes and behaviours repeatedly, they become habitual and 'crystallise' (i.e., become resistant to change). Barring a particularly dramatic event (such as a war), they tend to stick with the individual throughout their lives, changing only slightly in response to that individual's ongoing experiences and the influence of external factors (Dinas 2013; Jennings 2007). An individual's – or an entire cohort's – experiences during their formative years, therefore, leave a lasting imprint on their attitudes, values and behaviour which can stick with them throughout their lives.

3.2 The Political Generations of the British Electorate

One of the biggest challenges to studying political generations is determining how to classify individuals into generations. Any attempt to do so runs the risk of applying the wrong 'cut-off' points and incorrectly assuming that groups of people share common socialisation experiences (Grasso 2014). There is also an unavoidable loss of data from this categorisation, as studying the theoretical assumption that certain groups have similar socialisation experiences (and resultant attitudinal and behavioural characteristics) requires assuming that they have identical experiences and responses in empirical research (Grasso 2014; Neundorf and Niemi 2014). Mitigating the risks and justifying this loss of information requires, therefore, a convincing case based on as much historic, theoretical and empirical evidence as possible that grouping people into these somewhat arbitrary groups allows for the scholar to learn and explain more

about them than would otherwise be possible (Mannheim 1928; Grasso 2014). Furthermore, the case for grouping individuals in the chosen manner (such as on the basis of historic circumstances during socialisation) has to be shown to be a more informative and effective way of grouping than another potential method (such as simply grouping on the basis of year of birth) (Mannheim [1928]1944).

With this difficulty in mind, the political generations studied in this research will be identified based on the approach employed by Grasso (2014). Grasso (2014) employed a two-stage approach to developing and assuring the validity of her generations. First, she categorised survey respondents on the basis of the defining political features of the historic period in which they spent the majority of their formative years (Grasso 2014; see also Becker (1990; 1992) and Mannheim ([1928]1944)). Grasso (2014) assumed that the differences between the major historic events/circumstances which defined each period were proxies for wider differences in the social, economic and political environment facing generations during their formative years, and so which could become sources of lasting generational difference. Examples of such salient political features include World War Two, the sudden rise of ‘protest politics’ in the 1960s and 1970s, the Europe-wide recession of the 1970s, and the sharp shift towards ‘New Right’ politics in the 1980s (Grasso 2014). The formative years were assumed to occur between the ages of 15 and 25², and so any individual who spent at least 50% of this period within a particular

² This is consistent with the ‘formative period’ described by most studies in this field, such as Van der Eijk and Franklin (2009), Jennings (2007), and Dinas (2013), although there is growing evidence that the beginning of one’s formative years could be much sooner (Van Deth et al 2011; Bartels and Jackman 2014; Smets and Neundorf 2014).

historical context was classified as belonging to the generation defined by that context (Grasso 2014; Becker 1990).

The second stage of Grasso's (2014) approach was to follow the example of Neundorf (2010) and Tulley (2002) and employ generalised additive modelling to provide a novel validity check of her generational classification (see Chapter Four and Appendix Seven). As Grasso's (2014) study was on political participation, and given the substantial empirical evidence she provided to support the classification of her political generations in relation to this characteristic, her study provides an excellent starting point from which to identify the political generations in the British electorate for this research. Applying Grasso's (2014) approach to the British electorate, therefore, produces six distinct political generations based on the macro social, economic and political conditions prevalent during their formative years:

- The Pre-War Generation (born between 1893 and 1925, experienced most of their formative years between 1908 and 1950). Experiencing their impressionable years before and during the Second World War, this generation grew up experiencing serious threats to their survival and poor living standards, meaning that assuring physical and economic security was a daily concern (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Inglehart 1990). This was also the time when politics was highly institutionalised; participation beyond elections was limited, and took place almost entirely within the formal, institutionalised arena dominated by mass member political parties (Grasso 2014; Abrams and Little 1965a).

- The Post-War Generation (born between 1926 and 1945, experienced their formative years between 1941 and 1970). Sometimes called ‘the silent generation’ (Furlong and Cartmel 2012), this generation also grew up at a time when politics was highly institutionalised and conducted almost exclusively through mass member parties and formal institutions (Grasso 2014). Social institutions such as class and religion were very influential in determining political allegiances, and by extension behaviour, attitudes and preferences (Grasso 2014; Franklin et al. 1992; Butler and Stokes 1969). The politics of their formative years was dominated by the post-war consensus, with the government playing a very active role in the economy, as well as in citizen’s lives through the development of the welfare state. Many of these changes resulted in a steady improvement in living standards, though trouble and insecurity were still common features of the British economy, and so assuring one’s economic security was still a priority (Inglehart and Welzel 2005).
- The 60s-70s Generation (born between 1946 and 1957, experienced most of their formative years between 1961 and 1982). This generation closely corresponds to that often identified as ‘the Baby Boomers’ (Furlong and Cartmel 2012). Their formative years were marked by “rising social affluence, the boom of mass production, and the expansion of higher education” (Grasso 2014, p.67), producing a social and political optimism which they are suggested to have reflected throughout their lives (Furlong and Cartmel 2012). Their formative years were also marked by the rise of “political militancy and

ideological polarisation” (Grasso 2014, p.67), and a growth of political participation outside of the formal political arena, particularly protest politics. Radical left-wing parties gained support, and the student and youth protest movements saw young citizens become a major political force for the first time (Ranade and Norris 1981). Despite rising living standards throughout this period, the British economy was nonetheless dominated by economic problems throughout most of the 1970s, which left a lasting impression on citizens’ faith in the government to assure the nation’s economic security (Debevec et al. 2013).

- The 80s Generation (born between 1958 and 1968, and experienced most of their formative years between 1973 and 1993). This generation is often known as ‘Thatcher’s Children’, as they experienced their political socialisation almost entirely during the Thatcher governments (Clarke et al. 2004). Their formative years were dominated by the rise of the New Right and the dominance of the Thatcher government, the economic and industrial crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the end of the period of affluence and security which characterised their predecessor generation’s formative years (Furlong and Cartmel 2012; Grasso 2014). This period was also marked by a tumultuous time in British politics more broadly, which saw the Thatcher government end the post-war consensus and the commitment to high or full employment, reduce the welfare state, and privatise many state industries. There were also heightened phases of civil unrest, such as that seen during the 1984/85 miners strikes, protests organised by the

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and the mass protests against the Community Charge (i.e., the ‘Poll Tax’).

- The 90s Generation (born between 1969 and 1981, experienced most formative years between 1984 and 2006). During their formative years, the 90s generation experienced several recessions and periods of economic insecurity, followed by the beginning of a period of sustained economic growth. They also grew up enjoying an unprecedented standard of living, with access to healthcare and education being more developed and widespread than ever (Dalton 2013; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). They witnessed the end of the Cold War and the symbolic victory of market capitalism over socialism (Grasso 2014). Left-wing parties either fell out of favour altogether or were forced to embrace a reformist view of market capitalism, and abandon grand ideological narratives (Grasso 2014) – the evolution of the British Labour Party into ‘New Labour’ is one of the most poignant illustrations of this shift. This cohort also experienced the gradual decline of faith in Thatcherite ideology and government, beginning with a recession at the end of the 1980s and Margaret Thatcher’s removal as Prime Minister, following through the unpopular John Major government of 1992-1997, and culminating in the landslide victory of Tony Blair’s New Labour in 1997.
- The Millennial Generation (born since 1982, experiencing the majority of their formative years since 1997). In Britain, this generation experienced their formative years almost entirely under the New Labour government, and the unprecedented period of economic growth

that accompanied most of it. Their access to education and the integration of technology into their daily lives was unprecedented (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Dalton 2013), with some studies suggesting that this is the key distinguishing feature of this generation (Norris 2001; Debevec et al. 2013; Wattenberg 2012). Unlike older generations, their formative experiences of formal politics were not dominated by a fierce ideological struggle between Left and Right, but rather a more consensual period in which there was little disagreement over what the major parties wanted to achieve (Debevec et al. 2013; Clarke et al. 2004; Whiteley et al. 2013). Their experiences were dominated, however, by the rise of ‘new’ political issues, such as global warming and climate change, and the ‘War on Terror’ (Debevec et al. 2013). The Millennials also witnessed the financial crisis in 2008 which threatened to undermine global capitalism, followed by the ‘Great Recession’ of 2009. This brought a sudden and dramatic end to a prevailing assumption of economic growth and security, with studies such as Welzel (2007) suggesting that this is likely to have left a lasting impression upon their faith in government.

3.3 Defining ‘Political Participation’

Chapters One and Two argued that one of the major weaknesses in extant research was the lack of clarity surrounding the detail of the Millennials’ participatory characteristics, particularly in relation to informal political activity. This is in part the result of a lack of attention given to how ‘political participation’ should be defined and measured, particularly in studies of the

Millennials, who are suggested to be disproportionately active in ‘new’ forms of political activity.

Traditionally, studies of political participation defined the concept primarily in terms of activity within the formal arena of politics, with only limited recognition of informal activity (e.g., Almond and Verba 1963; Verba and Nie 1972; Parry et al. 1992). A review of the definitions employed in studies of British political participation since the 1950s, for example, showed that the concept was defined largely in terms of activity within, or at least intending to directly influence actors or institutions within, the formal arena of politics (Fox 2014). Recently, however, research has demonstrated that such a formal-heavy focus is insufficient to capture the ways in which modern citizens can and do participate in politics in light of the effects of rapid social and technological evolution on the opportunities for them to do so (Norris 2002; Dalton 2013; Marsh et al. 2007; Stolle et al. 2005; Fox 2014).

This research identifies three related processes of particular importance. The first is the development of information and communication technology (ICT) and its integration into daily life (Norris 2001). Whereas in the past citizens were largely dependent on traditional, hierarchical institutions for political information (such as political parties or the mass media), today they can access more information and sources of information online (Norris 2001; O’Neill 2010). Furthermore, they can do so at any time, and with far less constraint over who they get information from and who they communicate with (Dalton 2013; Norris 2001).

As well as making citizens more informed about politics, these developments have allowed citizens to participate in new ways – or to make more use of existing forms of participation – which are less dependent on traditional political institutions such as political parties (Norris 2001; Theocharis 2012). This includes Internet-based political activity (such as ‘hacktivism’) (Theocharis 2012), as well as informal and direct forms of activity such as consumer boycotts (Stolle et al. 2005) and petition signing (Sloam 2014). While the extent to which that potential has been realised is contested (Norris 2001; 2002; 2011; Theocharis 2012; Di Gennaro and Dutton 2006), there is little question that the development of ICT has broadened the potential participatory repertoire of the Western citizen.

The second key aspect of this social evolution is the dramatic improvement in the provision of education, which studies such as Dalton (2013) and Wattenberg (2012) have suggested has produced more politically sophisticated cohorts of citizens. Political sophistication refers to an individual’s capacity to gather and interpret information, to link that information up with a series of concepts and ideas, and to use such information in an attempt to realise their political objectives (Starling 2014; Dalton 2013; Wattenberg 2012). While “there is not a one-to-one relationship between education and political sophistication” (Dalton 2013, p.38), there is a strong correlation, showing that the more educated an individual is the more politically sophisticated they are likely to be (Dalton 2013; Wattenberg 2012).

Higher levels of political sophistication have several consequences for political participation, not least of which is to make it more common (Dalton 2013; Van

der Eijk and Franklin 2009; Wattenberg 2012). It is also associated with the broadening of participatory repertoires (Norris 2001; 2004; Marsh et al. 2007; Dalton 2013). More politically sophisticated citizens have the skills and knowledge to enable them to participate in politics through a range of methods, and to do so with less dependence on hierarchical institutions to initiate and guide their activity (Dalton 2013; Norris 2011; Wattenberg 2012). Not only does this make such citizens more likely to be active regardless of whether a political party or similar institution mobilises them, but their activity is less constrained to the formal political arena in which such institutions dominate (Dalton 2013). Higher levels of political sophistication, therefore, are not only expected to produce more active citizens, but citizens more active in informal arenas of political activity.

Finally, several studies have pointed towards the consequences of rising levels of individual autonomy for the ways in which people are prepared to participate in politics, and for what motivates them to do so (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Welzel 2007). Individual autonomy refers to an individual's capacity to express attitudes and behave without constraints from external factors, such as social institutions (e.g., gender) or economic concerns (e.g., ensuring they have enough money to eat) (Welzel 2007). The influence of such external constraints have weakened in Western societies over the last fifty years as a result of several changes, including: rising living standards, which have reduced constraints relating to ensuring economic and physical security; the declining significance of social institutions such as social class and religion, which have reduced the constraint over lifestyle choice and activity; and rising levels of education, which have weakened constraints based on a lack of skills

and information, and on dependence on hierarchical institutions (Welzel 2007; Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; 2010; Dalton 2013).

For political participation, rising levels of individual autonomy not only make citizens more likely to be active – because they have more opportunities and a greater individual capacity to participate – but it also affects their political agenda by making them more concerned about protecting and promoting the individual autonomy of themselves and others (Welzel 2007; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). This has been linked with citizens employing broader participatory repertoires to directly influence institutions besides the government which can affect individual autonomy (such as corporations), as well as higher levels of community activism and volunteering (Dalton 2013). Inglehart (1990) and Norris (2001) have also linked this process with the rise of ‘new’ political issues such as environmentalism, as well as support for new social movements and trans-national campaign organisations which campaign on those issues, and for forms of political participation related to those campaigns (such as protests, signing petitions, and political consumerism).

These three processes – the rise of ICT, improvements in the provision of education, and rising levels of individual autonomy – have broadened the potential participatory repertoire of the modern Western citizen, particularly younger citizens who experienced their formative years in this environment. There is evidence linking these processes to not only an expansion in the number of acts a typical citizen engages in within the formal arena of politics, but outside of that arena as well. As the Millennials are the youngest generation currently in Western electorates, they most recently experienced their

politically formative years in this environment. Consequently, the integration of ICT into their daily lives is more extensive than for any generation before them (Bakker and de Vreese 2011); they are the most educated generation in the history of Western societies (Dalton 2013; Wattenberg 2012; Whiteley 2012); and they have grown up at a time of unprecedented autonomy from traditional forms of constraint from social and economic pressures (such as class, religion and economic deprivation) (Dalton 2013; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Norris 2001; 2011). The consequences of social evolution for political participation, therefore, should be more readily apparent in the political activity of the Millennials than any other generation.

3.4 The Definition of Political Participation in Modern Britain

In order to account for the implications of social evolution on political participation there is a clear need to account for a much broader range of arenas of political activity than just the formal. This, in turn, means that the definition of political participation needs to recognise political activity outside of the formal political arena, and that subsequently data on a wide range of political acts needs to be analysed.

Beyond this revision, the definition for this study can be developed on the basis of similar principles found in other studies of British political participation. A review (see Fox 2014) of the key articles in this body of research assessed these principles and identified five key characteristics around which the definitions of political participation were based:

- Political participation is always active behaviour

- It can be engaged in by an individual or a group, with the intention of influencing individual or group level political issues
- It can be instrumental or symbolic
- It must be voluntary (it cannot be forced, or paid employment)
- It can be legal or illegal

Bringing these characteristics together and taking account of the above discussion, political participation can be defined as active, voluntary behaviour on the part of the citizen with the intent of influencing a societal political outcome – that is, an outcome related to the distribution or application of power in the context of societal issues, events or decisions (activity relating to the use of power in the workplace or the home is not covered by such a definition). The activity can be individual or communal in nature and in scope, instrumental or symbolic, legal or illegal, and can be targeted at any individual or institution with the power to influence or affect societal level political outcomes.

3.5 The Multi-dimensionality of Political Participation

The majority of research into political participation assumes that it is multi-dimensional i.e., that there are different arenas of political activity, with acts within given arenas more similar to each other than acts from different arenas, and which potentially share attributes which make them more or less common among certain sections of the population. The distinction drawn between formal and informal, or formal and cause-oriented, political activity is an example. Very few studies, however, empirically demonstrate this multi-dimensionality.

Previous research into political participation, however, has explored the empirical evidence for a multi-dimensional conception (Verba and Nie 1972; Parry et al. 1992; Pattie et al. 2004). This literature has shown that political acts can indeed be placed into distinct dimensions, and that citizens are generally likely to ‘specialise’ in certain dimensions i.e., some citizens are more likely to engage in clusters of acts associated with one dimension of political participation, while others specialise in other clusters relating to other dimensions (Verba and Nie 1972; Parry et al. 1992).

Following the example of Verba and Nie (1972) and Parry et al. (1992), latent structure analysis was used to explore the multi-dimensional structure of detailed data relating to British political participation from the Audit of Political Engagement (APE).³ The APE is an annual survey of a range of political attitudes, perceptions and activities among British citizens, and contains the most detailed indication of political participation in Britain available. Furthermore, the range of participatory acts measured by the APE stretches well beyond the formal political arena, and can be related to conceptions of cause-oriented political activity (Norris 2001; Sloam 2014) and civic political activity (Dalton 2013).

The drawback to using APE data is its typical sample size. While the APE uses a large enough sample to provide representative estimates of the characteristics of the British electorate, the samples struggle to sustain statistical estimates once respondents have been categorised according to political generation. To

³ Note that while the approach taken is the same as that of Verba and Nie (1972) and Parry et al (1992), the specific method is different. Those studies employed factor analysis to study the dimensional structure of political participation, while here Mokken Scale Analysis is used because of its greater suitability for working with survey data (Van der Eijk and Rose 2015).

overcome this problem, three APE surveys (in 2009, 2010 and 2011) were merged into a single dataset and analysed as if they constituted a single cross-sectional sample.⁴ Merging these three datasets provides a composite dataset with a sample of 3,712 respondents, and measuring a total of 20 acts of political participation.

The specific method used to explore the multi-dimensionality of this data was Mokken Scale Analysis (MSA), which is capable of identifying the number of latent constructs being indicated by a series of survey items (Van Schuur 2003; 2011) – in this case, the acts of political participation in the APE. Table 3.1 reports the results of the MSA, and details both the 20 specific acts included in the analysis and the latent structure of the data identified. The results presented in Table 3.1 are the last in a series of refined analyses used to determine the best parameters for identifying the latent structure of the political participation data.⁵ The H-Coefficient column in Table 3.1 reports the Loevinger's H-Coefficient which represents how closely a given survey item relates to the other items in the identified scale in terms of measuring a common latent

⁴ This merging is made possible by the fact that the questions measuring political participation, and the appropriate demographic characteristics used in later analyses in this chapter, are virtually identical across the three surveys. The sample size for the 2009 survey is 1,156; for the 2010 survey is 1,295; and for the 2011 survey it is 1,261, producing a combined sample size for the composite dataset of 3,712.

Obviously, merging the data in this way assumed that the respondents in the 2009 survey are qualitatively identical to those in 2010 and 2011, and that the effect of taking the survey in 2009, 2010 and 2011 has no effect on a given individual's political participation. While there were several events in this period which could have influenced respondents' political participation, not least the 2010 general election, there is little reason to think that any of these events had a big impact on the participatory characteristics of some respondents but not others, to the extent that the analysis of the differences in political participation, or of the nature of political participation more broadly, would be unduly affected.

In order to minimise any such period effects, in regression analyses examining generational differences in political participation, a year variable is included as a control. Such a step cannot be taken in the MSA of the multi-dimensional structure of the political participation data; therefore, the MSA was first conducted on the composite dataset, and then the results confirmed for each individual survey dataset to ensure there are no substantial survey-specific or time-specific differences.

⁵ The full range of analyses are reported in Appendix Two.

construct. The Scale H-Coefficient column reports the same coefficient but for the overall scale. If the H-Coefficient of the overall scale is 0.45 or greater, and each of the items within the scale has an H-Coefficient of 0.45 or greater, that cluster of items is accepted as a composite indication of a latent construct – in this case, a dimension of political participation.⁶

⁶ The typical threshold at which an individual item and cluster of items is said to acceptably represent a common latent construct is an H-Coefficient of 0.3 (Van Schuur 2003; 2011). However, in the case of this data, such a threshold simply confirms that all 20 survey items are measuring the same broad, latent construct – political participation. Increasing the threshold to 0.45 allows for the identification of sub-clusters of survey items corresponding to sub-dimensions of political participation. Appendix Two details the process by which this threshold was determined.

Table 3.1: MSA on Modes of Political Participation

Formal Political Participation	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Urged someone to contact MP or Cllr	0.13	0.52	0.54	3686
Urged someone outside family to vote	0.17	0.53		
Voted in last general election	0.56	0.52		
Voted in last local election	0.54	0.56		
Stood for public office	0.01	0.53		
Taken an active part in a political campaign	0.03	0.55		
Discussed politics or political news with someone else	0.36	0.53		
Cause-Oriented Political Participation	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Donated or paid membership fee to charity or campaign organisation	0.36	0.51	0.52	3686
Expressed political opinion online	0.07	0.51		
Boycotted products	0.13	0.56		
Signed a petition	0.31	0.53		
Taken part in a demonstration, march or rally	0.04	0.49		
Civic Participation	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Helped with fund-raising	0.18	0.46	0.48	3686
Made a speech to an organised group	0.10	0.45		
Been an officer of a club or organisation	0.09	0.50		
Done voluntary work	0.24	0.51		
Issue-Specific Formal Participation	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Presented views to Cllr or MP	0.15	0.51	0.51	3686
Attended a political meeting	0.05	0.51		
Un-scaled Items	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Written a letter to an editor	0.05	N/A	N/A	3686
Donated or paid a membership fee to a political party	0.04			

Source: Mokken Scale Analysis of Audit of Political Engagement 2009, 2010 and 2011 data and the APE composite dataset. All coefficients are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. MSA conducted using the Stata msp and loevh modules designed by Dr Jean-Benoit Hardouin, available for download at <http://ideas.repec.org/c/boc/bocode/s439401.html> (Accessed 21st March 2014).

The MSA identified four latent structures within the data, which represent four sub-dimensions of political participation. 18 of the participatory acts fit into this structure, while two (writing to an editor, and donating or paying a membership fee to a political party) did not. Looking at the mean scores for these two items in Table 3.1 (which correspond to the proportion of APE respondents reporting engaging in the acts), this may at least in part reflect the fact that so few people report either writing to a newspaper editor or donating money to a political party.

The four dimensions correspond broadly to those outlined in similar research (Verba and Nie 1972; Parry et al. 1992). The first dimension (at the top of Table 3.1) consists of acts which occur within the formal arena of British politics, such as voting in elections or standing for public office. This dimension is taken to represent formal political participation. All of the acts either imply direct interaction between the actor and the institutional framework of British democracy or between the actor and another with the intent of influencing their actions within this environment.

The second dimension relates to the conceptions of ‘cause-oriented political participation’ outlined by Norris (2001) and Sloam (2014). The acts in this dimension vary substantially in terms of the costs they imply for the actor and the range of causes they could be used to influence, but share two important features: i) they occur outside of the institutionalised arena of British politics (i.e., there is no institutionalised framework specifying the role of such acts in the process of citizen-government/elite interaction within British democracy),

and ii) they usually (though there will be exceptions) are engaged in with regard to single, specific political issues rather than in relation to broader ideologies. When an individual signs a petition, for example, or attends a protest, there is usually a very clear stated objective for that act (such as opposing a war or protesting against a particular policy); in contrast, some of the acts in the formal arena of politics can be far broader and more symbolic in scope. Voting in an election, for instance, could potentially be done in relation to a single issue, but more commonly represents voters' views in relation to a broad programme for government, or the ideology that programme represents (Whiteley et al. 2013; Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). All of the acts in the cause-oriented political participation dimension are more likely to be conducted in relation to a single, specific political objective.

The third dimension resembles notions of civic or community-based participation outlined by Dalton (2013) and Putnam (2000). All of the acts occur outside of the institutionalised arena of British democracy, but are not necessarily as issue-specific as those in the cause-oriented politics dimension. For example, standing to be an officer in a club or organisation could imply a desire to influence a range of issues in which the organisation takes an interest, or could imply a determination to address or change a single specific issue.

The key feature of these acts is that they occur within the arena of a community in which the individual takes an interest or is a part. The term 'community' is not solely dictated by geography in this context, but refers to the wide range of communities to which modern citizens can belong which can be based on various characteristics, including geography, values, political ideology,

interests, sport, and religious belief (Sloam 2007; Giddens 1991; Norris 2001; Marsh et al. 2007; YCC 2009; Macedo et al. 2005). Indeed, several studies have shown that geographic conceptions of ‘community’ are of limited use for the study of young people, who often lack attachments to local communities and are instead drawn to issue-specific communities which utilise, among other things, ICT (YCC 2009; Macedo et al. 2005). With this conception of community, it is clear that the participatory acts within the third dimension in Table 3.1 can be associated with ‘civic participation’ – political activity intended to influence, and involving interaction with, one’s community (Putnam 2000; Macedo et al. 2005; Dalton 2013).

The final dimension in Table 3.1 is represented by just two acts and corresponds to what Verba and Nie (1972) and Parry et al. (1992) identified as ‘particularised’ or ‘contacting’ political participation. Those studies found that small groups of citizens limited their participation beyond voting to contacting their elected representatives in relation to specific issues (Parry et al. 1992; Verba and Nie 1972). The act of presenting views to an elected representative clearly fits this description, and research by the Hansard Society (2010 – see also Appendix Two), which shows that the term ‘political’ is interpreted by the majority of citizens as referring to the formal arena of politics, suggests that the act of attending a ‘political’ meeting could also be viewed by respondents as a context in which they present their views or listen to information about a specific issue relating to the issues or processes of formal politics. This final dimension is identified, therefore, as ‘issue-specific formal participation’; activity within the formal arena of politics intended to influence or in relation to a specific issue.

The political participation of the Millennials, therefore, can be examined and characterised in terms of four distinct dimensions of political activity. Formal political participation occurs within the formal, institutionalised arena of British democracy, dominated by hierarchical institutions such as the mass media and political parties. The relationship between the individual and these institutions will, therefore, be very influential in explaining how active they are in this arena. The acts within this dimension vary from addressing specific political issues to broad government agendas and political ideologies.

Cause-oriented political participation occurs outside the formal political arena, and is generally used to address specific and clearly identifiable political issues. Given the weaker presence of traditional institutions such as political parties in this area, the actors' relationship with them will be less important in dictating how active they are. More important will be the individuals' motivation to engage in relation to a political issue in the first place, and their capacity and access to resources to do so (Sloam 2007; 2012b; 2014; Dalton 2013).

Civic participation takes place within the context of the individual's community, whether it is based on locality, interest, values, beliefs or experiences. The acts within it can be issue-specific or broader in scope – the defining characteristic is that they are intended to influence issues relating to the community. The important characteristics which to dictate how active an individual is in this arena are likely to relate to the individual's interest in engaging with their community in the first place, as well as the resources they

possess to facilitate them doing so, such as skills, time, money and social capital (Putnam 2000; Verba et al. 1995; Macedo et al. 2005).

Finally, issue-specific formal participation is similar to formal participation in that it occurs within the institutionalised arena of British democracy and is likely to be heavily influenced by the individual's relationship with those institutions (such as their party identification). Given that these activities can imply a greater cost (in terms of skills, time and money) for the actor than some of the acts in the formal participation dimension (particularly voting), however, the actor's access to individual resources and personal motivation are likely to be more influential in dictating how active they are here.

3.6 The Political Participation of the Millennials in Modern Britain

The analyses below employ the definition and conceptualisation of political participation developed above to explore the participatory characteristics of the Millennials and compare them with those of the older generations. The survey indicators which corresponded to the latent dimensions of political participation identified above were merged into a single variable representing respondents' participation in that political arena; the higher the 'score', the more active the respondent was. This produced a formal political participation variable with a range of 0-7, a cause-oriented participation variable with a range of 0-5, a civic participation variable with a range of 0-4, and an issue-specific formal participation variable with a range of 0-2.

The respondents in the APE composite dataset were divided into the political generations outlined above, and the average scores for their participation in each dimension were calculated (representing the average number of acts

associated with each dimension participated in in the 2009-11 period).⁷

Regression analyses were then used to allow for other factors which influence political participation to be controlled for, so as to identify differences which could reflect generation-specific factors as much as possible.

3.6.1 Average Participation

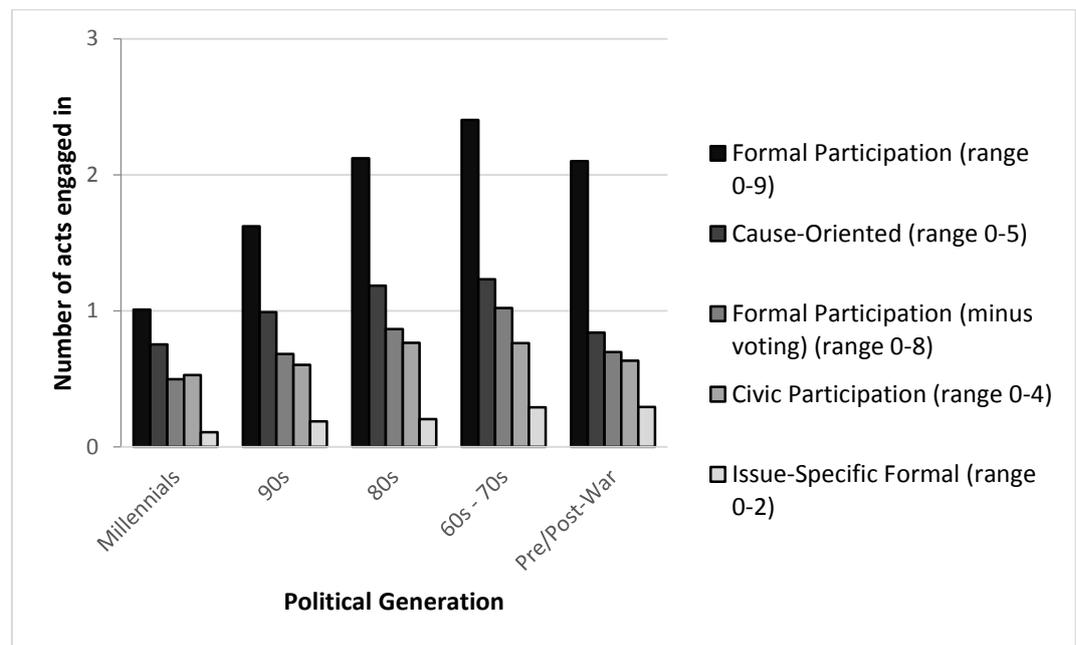
Figure 3.1 shows the average participation score for each generation in each of the four participatory dimensions. The figure also includes a ‘formal participation minus voting’ mode. This is because voting in elections is a unique political act (in terms of the social pressure and media attention given to it, and the notions of civic responsibility associated with it) and one in which there are fewer differences between citizens because it is comparatively so common (Whiteley 2012; Miller and Shanks 1996; Martin 2012). Using the revised ‘formal participation’ variable allows, therefore, for participation in the formal political arena beyond that of the distinctive act of voting to be examined.

The political generations are presented in Figure 3.1 from left to right in order of ascending age. The participatory dimensions are also presented from left to right for each generation in descending order of popularity across the entire sample i.e., formal political participation is the most common throughout the sample, and so is displayed on the far left of each generational block. This

⁷ Note that due to the limited number of respondents in the ‘Pre-War generation’ in the APE (to be classified as belonging to this generation, respondents would have to have been aged at least 84), the Pre and Post-War generations have been merged into a single category. This produces 5 generation categories in the APE data; the Millennials (n = 726); the 90s (n=768); the 80s (n=655); the 60s/70s (n=665); the Pre/Post-War (n=861).

allows for the popularity of each mode in the entire sample as well as for each particular generation to be viewed simultaneously.

Figure 3.1: Average Participation for Political Generations by Participatory Mode



Source: Audit of Political Engagement composite dataset. Data is weighted using probability weights provided in APE datasets.

While only a handful of respondents (16%) were completely inactive, most British citizens appear not to be particularly active in politics: the average number of acts engaged in across all four dimensions was 3.7, and this fell to 2.6 if voting in elections was removed. With the exception of formal political participation for the oldest three generations, the average number of acts engaged in for any particular dimension barely rose above 1.

There is a clear hierarchy of popularity for the four dimensions which is almost replicated across all five generations. Formal political participation was by far the most common, with the average respondent engaging in 1.9 acts in this dimension. Demonstrating the significance of voting in elections as an unusually common act, this fell to 0.8 if voting in elections was removed. The second most common dimension was cause-oriented participation, with respondents typically engaging in 1 act of cause-oriented activity, although this became the most common once voting in elections was discounted. Third was civic participation, with respondents typically participating in 0.6 acts, and the least popular was issue-specific formal participation, with respondents typically engaging in just 0.2 acts. The most common means through which British citizens seek to influence political outcomes, therefore, is through acts associated with the formal political process. That said, they are also clearly active in other areas, particularly through issue-specific forms of activity outside of the formal political arena.

Figure 3.1 also suggests that there were some substantial generational differences, though these relate primarily to the overall levels of political participation rather than its qualitative nature (i.e., which dimensions of activity were the most common for different generations). The Millennials were found to be the least politically active overall, and were the least active in each specific dimension as well. For example, the Millennials were found to have typically engaged in 2.5 acts of participation across all dimensions, compared with an average of 3.4 for the 90s generation, 4.3 for the 80s, 4.7 for the 60s-70s, and 3.9 for the Pre/Post-War generations.

While the claims that the Millennials are more active outside of formal politics than older generations were not supported, the suggestion that the difference between their participation and that of their elders is smaller outside of formal politics than within it is. Typically, Millennials were found to have engaged in 1 act of formal participation, compared with an average of 2 for the older generations. This difference of 1 compared with a gap of 0.3 for formal politics not including voting and for cause-oriented politics, 0.16 for civic participation, and 0.14 for issue-specific formal participation. The extent of the Millennials' relative inactivity in formal politics – and in voting in particular – is highlighted by the fact that once voting in elections was discounted, the Millennials' were shown to be more slightly active in civic politics than formal politics, a magnitude of change not apparent for any of the older generations. Rather than reflecting an unusually high level of activity in civic politics, this more likely reflects the Millennials' unusually low levels of activity in formal politics, as their civic participation appears to be typical within the context of the Millennials' lower overall levels of participation compared with their elders.

3.6.2 Regression Analysis

Exploring these differences using regression analysis allows for the influence of individual characteristics which are known to affect political participation to be controlled for. These included education, gender, ethnicity and social class (Whiteley et al. 2013; Clarke et al. 2004; Verba et al. 1995; Verba and Nie

1972).⁸ A ‘year’ variable representing the year in which the three APE surveys which make up the composite dataset was also included to control for potential differences resulting from historic context. By including these control variables and accounting for the potential influences of these individual characteristics and external contexts, the participatory differences which could reflect generation-specific traits could be more confidently identified.

Table 3.2 reports the results of the regression analyses; Table 3.2a reports the results using only the generation variable, and 3.2b reports the results which included the controls. The Millennials were the reference category against which the other generations were compared.

⁸ The details of these control variables can be found in Appendix One. Normally an age variable would also be included in such an analysis, however this variable would be collinear with the political generation variable.

Table 3.2a: Regression Analysis of Political Generation and Participatory Modes

Dimension	Formal		Formal minus vote		Cause oriented		Civic		Issue specific	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)										
90s	0.38***	0.07	0.32**	0.10	0.28**	0.08	0.14	0.10	0.57**	0.18
80s	0.66***	0.07	0.55***	0.09	0.45***	0.08	0.36***	0.10	0.64***	0.18
60s - 70s	0.78***	0.06	0.72***	0.09	0.5***	0.07	0.38***	0.10	1.01***	0.17
Pre/Post-War	0.65***	0.06	0.34***	0.10	0.12	0.08	0.19*	0.10	1.02***	0.16
Year (2009)										
2010	0.14***	0.04	0.01	0.06	-0.11*	0.06	-0.25**	0.07	-0.08	0.10
2011	-0.01	0.04	-0.19**	0.06	-0.32***	0.06	-0.47***	0.07	-0.46***	0.11
Constant	0.05	0.07	-0.64***	0.09	-0.15*	0.07	-0.42***	0.08	-2.07***	0.17
Obs	3675		3675		3675		3675		3675	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	

Source: Negative Binomial Regression of APE Composite dataset. Data is weighted using probability weights provided in APE datasets. * - coefficient has p-value of <0.05; ** - p-value of <0.01; *** - p-value of <0.001.

Table 3.2b: Regression Analysis of Political Generation and Participatory Modes with Control Variables

Dimension	Formal		Formal minus vote		Cause Oriented		Civic		Issue Specific	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)										
90s	0.35***	0.07	0.27**	0.09	0.22**	0.08	0.1	0.1	0.54**	0.19
80s	0.61***	0.06	0.49***	0.09	0.36***	0.07	0.3**	0.1	0.62**	0.19
60s - 70s	0.75***	0.06	0.69***	0.09	0.42***	0.07	0.3**	0.1	1***	0.18
Pre/Post-War	0.75***	0.06	0.53***	0.1	0.23**	0.08	0.33**	0.1	1.2***	0.17
Education	0.15***	0.01	0.25***	0.02	0.22***	0.02	0.22***	0.02	0.22***	0.04
Social Class	0.1***	0.01	0.15***	0.02	0.17***	0.02	0.21***	0.03	0.14***	0.04
Ethnicity	-0.28***	0.05	-0.38***	0.08	-0.55***	0.08	-0.47***	0.1	-0.27*	0.14
Gender	-0.03	0.03	-0.07	0.05	0.09*	0.04	0.06	0.06	-0.11	0.09
Year (2009)										
2010	0.1**	0.04	-0.06	0.06	-0.18**	0.05	-0.29***	0.07	-0.13	0.1
2011	-0.02	0.04	-0.2**	0.06	-0.31***	0.05	-0.44***	0.07	-0.47***	0.11
Constant	-0.77***	0.08	-2.00***	0.12	-1.47***	0.1	-1.9***	0.14	-3.26***	0.23
Obs	3633		3633		3633		3633		3633	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	

Source: Negative Binomial Regression of APE Composite dataset. Data is weighted using probability weights provided in APE datasets. * - coefficient has p-value of <0.05; ** - p-value of <0.01; *** - p-value of <0.001

The regression analyses lead to similar conclusions to those reached based on Figure 3.1. The generational coefficients, both with and without control variables, show that the Millennials were the least active across all dimensions of political activity, and that the difference was statistically significant in each case. The only exceptions include first the difference between the Millennials and the 90s generation for civic participation; the coefficient suggests that the 90s generation were slightly more active on average, but the effect is not significant. Second, the Pre/Post-War generation coefficient for cause-oriented participation is 0.12 but non-significant.

As with Figure 3.1, the coefficients also suggested a somewhat curvilinear relationship between generation and political participation which mirrors the theoretical expectation of the relationship between the life cycle and political participation i.e., the youngest generation (the Millennials) was the least active, and the middle aged generation (the 60s-70s) was the most active. Whether or not this effect actually did reflect the generations' various stages in the political life cycle or reflected a curvilinear cohort effect cannot be ascertained with this data and will be analysed in Chapter Four.

Table 3.2b shows that most of the control variables had significant effects on political participation, and that the nature of those effects was identical across all four participatory dimensions. Education and social class, for example, both of which relate to the individual's political and social resources and political sophistication, had a positive and significant effect in all dimensions. Ethnicity was also important, with respondents from a minority ethnic background being significantly less active across all dimensions except issue-specific formal

participation. Finally, gender had a fairly minor effect, with the only significant effect apparent for cause-oriented politics in which women were found to be slightly more active than men.

Once the control variables were accounted for, the differences between the Millennials and the older generations remained very similar to those in Table 3.2a, suggesting that differences in political and social resources, ethnicity and gender played only a minor role in explaining generational differences in political activity. The exception is the coefficient for the Pre/Post-War generation. Including the control variables increases the coefficient for this generation for all four dimensions of political participation e.g., according to Table 3.2a the Pre/Post-War generation typically engaged in 0.65 acts more of formal participation than the Millennials, 0.19 acts more of civic participation, and 1 act more of issue-specific formal participation, with an insignificant coefficient for cause-oriented participation. With the controls included, these coefficients increased to 0.75, 0.33 and 1.21 respectively, and the coefficient for cause-oriented participation becomes a statistically significant 0.23.

Differences in education, social class and demographic characteristics appear to account for more of the difference between the Pre/Post-War generation and the wider electorate than is the case for other generations, and once these differences were controlled for the Pre/Post-War generation were found to be even more active than initially estimated.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter began by fleshing out some of the theoretical concepts central to this research, specifically that of political generations and the impressionable

years socialisation theory. It also addressed one of the recurring weaknesses in the study of the political participation of the young, namely by considering how ‘political participation’ should be defined and conceptualised in light of the impact of social and technological evolution on the way in which modern citizens can participate in politics.

In contrast with the two-dimensional (formal versus cause-oriented) conception of political participation often found in the literature, this analysis resulted in a four-dimensional conception in which political acts were found to occur either within the formal, informal or civic political arenas, and could be further differentiated on the basis of the scope of the issues they were intended to influence (i.e., a specific, single issue or a broader agenda).

The second half of the chapter was devoted to exploring the participatory characteristics of the Millennials in modern Britain through this four-dimensional structure, and comparing it with that of older generations. In contrast with the characterisation so often presented in academic studies and the media (see Chapters One and Two), there was no indication that the Millennials were a generation exhibiting dramatically different participatory behaviour from their elders. There was no sign, for example, of them being unusually active in informal arenas of politics, or of them leading the way in embracing issue-specific political activity and rejecting that associated with broad political agendas and/or ideological narratives. Generally speaking, the Millennials’ participatory characteristics are similar to those of their elders, with the main exception of their typically lower levels of participation overall, and particularly in the specific act of voting.

The finding that the Millennials stand out for being unusually inactive in formal politics and/or voting in particular is consistent with many conclusions found in the literature. It is particularly consistent with studies such as Henn and Foard (2012), Sloam (2012b), Phelps (2012), Wattenberg (2012) and Putnam (2000) who have argued – in relation to Millennials throughout Western democracies – that the difference between their participation and their elders is far larger for formal political activity than other forms. An unanswered question on this point is whether the smaller gap between the Millennials’ informal (i.e., cause-oriented and civic) political activity and that of their elders represents a greater propensity to participate in such acts among the Millennials (with their lower levels of activity at present being explained by their current stage in the political life cycle), as suggested by studies such as Sloam (2012b) and Norris (2011; 2001), or represents an unusually profound reluctance on their part to participate in formal politics, as suggested by Wattenberg (2012) and Putnam (2000). The fact that – within the context of the Millennials’ lower levels of political participation overall – their cause-oriented and civic political participation was not unusual suggests that the latter argument may be true and that it is in their rejection of formal political participation that the Millennials are particularly distinct. Addressing this question definitively, as well as identifying whether the Millennials’ lower levels of participation reflect generational effects, or are a function of either period effects or the Millennials’ current stage in the political life cycle, requires a longitudinal perspective and the use of age-period-cohort regression analyses. These are employed in Chapter Four, where these remaining

questions about the Millennials' distinctive political participation are addressed.

Chapter Four: Political Participation in Longitudinal Perspective

British Millennials, around the 2010 general election, were the least politically active generation in the electorate. What is not yet clear, however, is whether this reflects their current stage in the political life cycle, period effects affecting the entire electorate, or is a feature of their generational distinctiveness (i.e., reflects a cohort effect). This chapter brings a longitudinal perspective to the study of the Millennials' participation. Using data from the British Election Study (BES) and the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA), this chapter presents age-period-cohort analyses (APC) to isolate and estimate the effect of these three factors simultaneously, and identify as far as possible the features of the Millennials' political participation which mark them as a genuinely distinct political generation.

The chapter begins by outlining the APC method, and discussing some of the drawbacks to the approach and the steps taken to overcome them. It then presents the results of APC analyses examining age, period and cohort effects apparent in relation to political acts indicative of the four participatory dimensions identified in Chapter Three. The chapter concludes by arguing that the Millennials' lower levels of political participation reflect both life cycle and cohort effects; part of the reason they are typically less active than their elders is because of their life circumstances and priorities, but another part is that they have developed generationally distinct habits of political participation which ultimately make them less likely to be active than older generations.

4.1 Age-Period-Cohort Analysis

Differences between groups of people of different ages can essentially result from one or more of three factors: age effects, period effects, or cohort effects. Age effects reflect the influence of being a particular age on the characteristic of interest. These can reflect both biological factors (such as cognitive development) and social factors (such as those relating to one's stage in the political life cycle) (Glenn 1977). Age effects affect everybody, but different groups of people experience them at different times. Period effects reflect the influence of historic or contextual circumstances (such as living through a war). They affect all members of a population at the same time, but not necessarily in the same way (Glenn 1977; Neundorf and Niemi 2014). Finally, cohort effects are the result of differences in groups' political socialisation, usually stemming from them experiencing their formative years in different social or political climates, or experiencing different influences from important socialising institutions (such as their parents) (Grasso 2014; Neundorf and Niemi 2014; Glenn 1977). Cohort effects can persist throughout individuals' adult lives, once the habits developed during their formative years have crystallised and become more resistant to change (Grasso 2014; Dinas 2013).

In most survey data, separating these effects so that their impact on a given characteristic can be estimated is a statistical impossibility because all three are measured in the same unit, namely years (i.e., age is measured in years, the time the survey was taken is usually measured in years, and cohort is identified on the basis of year of birth). The three are linear functions of each other and so cannot be estimated independently (Glenn 1977). If age and period are

known, then cohort can be calculated; if age and cohort are known, period can be calculated; and if period and cohort are known, age can be calculated (Neundorf and Niemi 2014). This is known as the ‘identification problem’ (Grasso 2014; Rutherford et al. 2010; Neundorf and Niemi 2014; Smets and Neundorf 2014; Glenn 1977; Yang and Land 2013).

To overcome the identification problem, the linear dependency of the three effects has to be broken. Several methods for doing this have been developed, but because the process of breaking this linearity necessarily implies several assumptions and arbitrary decisions, none are perfect and all have drawbacks (Yang and Land 2013; Neundorf and Niemi 2014). On the basis that obtaining even an imperfect estimate of the effects of age, period and cohort is preferable to obtaining no estimate at all – and bearing in mind that a functional APC regression model allows for control variables to be included both to isolate the effects of age, period and cohort further and to test explanatory theories (Neundorf 2010; Grasso 2014; Rutherford et al. 2010; Fienberg and Mason 1979) – it is still worth making the attempt, though steps need to be taken to minimise these drawbacks as much as possible. It is essential, however, to bear in mind that APC analyses produce tentative estimates of age, period and cohort effects at best which must be interpreted with caution (Yang and Land 2013; Neundorf and Niemi 2014).

The method to overcome the identification problem in this study is what Yang and Land (2013) refer to as the ‘coefficient constraint’ approach. This essentially involves constraining one of the three variables – age, period or cohort –, in this case by categorising it and converting it from an interval

variable which shares linear dependency with the other two to a categorical variable which does not (Yang and Land 2013; Neundorf 2010; Grasso 2014). Most analysts apply this constraint to the cohort variable, categorising survey respondents into groups based on year of birth, such as political generations (Grasso 2014) or five-year birth cohorts (Fienberg and Mason 1979). The drawback to this approach is that the categorisation is necessarily arbitrary; there is no way of empirically identifying a ‘perfect’ constraint that will produce a valid result (Grasso 2014). Furthermore, it inevitably leads to a loss of data from assuming that the value of the constrained variable is equal for all respondents in each category (Grasso 2014; Glenn 1977; Spitzer 1973).

The only way of justifying such a constraint, therefore, is through the use of theory or side information which can guide the categorisation (Yang and Land 2013; Spitzer 1973), and/or with empirical information from other analyses which allow the cohort effect to be estimated non-parametrically, such as generalised additive modelling (though such analyses must still apply a constraint somewhere to overcome the identification problem) – although ideally both approaches should be used (Grasso 2014; Neundorf 2010; Tulley 2002; see Appendix Seven).

While overcoming the identification problem is a major challenge for APC analysts and which highlights the need for caution in interpreting the results, it is not the only difficulty pertinent to this research. Another is that while the effects of age, period and cohort can be estimated independently of each other (within the confines outlined above), they cannot be isolated from unidentifiable survey-specific sources of variation in the dependent variable.

These can include challenges common in survey research, such as measurement error or sample bias, as well as those specific to longitudinal analyses of cross-sectional surveys, such as differences in weighting procedures or methodology over time, or changes in societal sources of bias (Glenn 1977; Yang and Land 2013).⁹ As with the identification problem, these difficulties cannot be perfectly overcome. In some cases, a loss of information is the only way around such obstacles (such as avoiding the use of survey weights) (Glenn 1977; Yang and Land 2013), while in others, the only defence is large sample sizes and analyses well rooted in theory and supported with side information (Glenn 1977; Grasso 2014; Yang and Land 2013).

With these challenges in mind, the analyses in this chapter follow the example of Grasso (2014) in constraining the cohort variable into the political generations detailed in Chapter Three.¹⁰ This categorisation is supported by the empirical evidence provided by Grasso (2014) and the evidence in favour of generational differences based on historical contexts discussed in Chapter Three. While generalised additive modelling is not used to validate the cohort classification for the analyses in this chapter, it is used to validate the APC analyses in Chapter Eight which examine cohort effects in apathy and alienation, and provides more evidence to support generational distinctions along the lines suggested in Chapter Three and applied here (see Appendix Seven).

⁹ For example, social desirability bias can take a different form over time. For example, the bias relating to not wanting to appear racist or homophobic in Western democracies is far stronger today owing to modern attitudes towards those characteristics than it was in the 1950s.

¹⁰ The sample size for each generation for each year, for both the BES and BSA surveys, is provided in Appendix 3.

The theoretical expectations for the APC analyses of political participation are relatively straight-forward. Previous research suggests that there should be a life cycle effect apparent for all four dimensions, in which the youngest respondents should be less active and the middle-aged respondents the most active (Clarke et al. 2004; Smets 2008; Jankowski and Strate 1995). There may also be period effects though their nature is harder to predict. Clarke et al. (2004), for example, identified a period effect in electoral turnout around the 2001 general election, because the contest was a foregone conclusion and so many voters did not bother to vote. Furthermore, studies such as Blais and Rubenson (2013) and Whiteley (2012) suggest that a broader period effect should be apparent in which electoral turnout has declined in Britain since the late 1990s. Norris (2001) and Sloam (2014) have also identified period effects in acts associated with cause-oriented political participation – such as political consumerism and signing petitions – in which such activity has become more common throughout Western electorates.

Finally, there are studies which suggest cohort effects should also be apparent. Blais and Rubenson (2013), Clarke et al. (2004) and Whiteley (2012) suggest that there is a cohort effect in electoral turnout in which the younger generations – in this case the Millennials and 90s generation – should be less likely to vote than their elders. In addition, Norris (2001) and Sloam (2014) argue that there are cohort effects apparent in the uptake of acts associated with cause-oriented politics, in which the 90s and particularly Millennial generations should be more active.

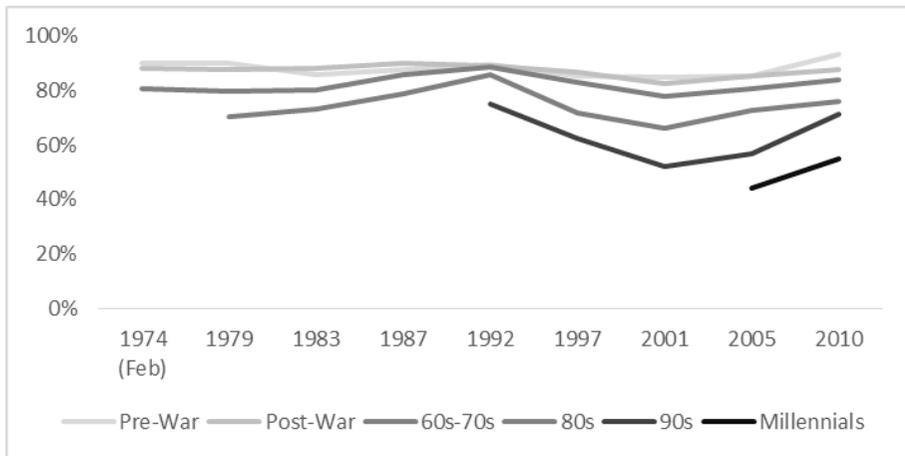
4.2 Political Participation over Time

The participation of British political generations over time was examined using a combination of data from the British Election Study (BES) and the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA). Owing to data limitations, it was not possible to construct composite variables relating to each dimension of political participation as was done in Chapter Three; instead, a selection of individual acts relating to those dimensions were examined to give an impression of how participation in them has changed over time. Formal political participation was represented by voting in general and local elections; cause-oriented participation was represented by taking part in protests and signing petitions; civic participation was represented by trade union membership and raising issues in organisations of which respondents were a member; and issue-specific formal participation was represented by contacting MPs. Figure 4.1 shows how participation in these acts has changed over time, with respondents categorised into political generations.¹¹

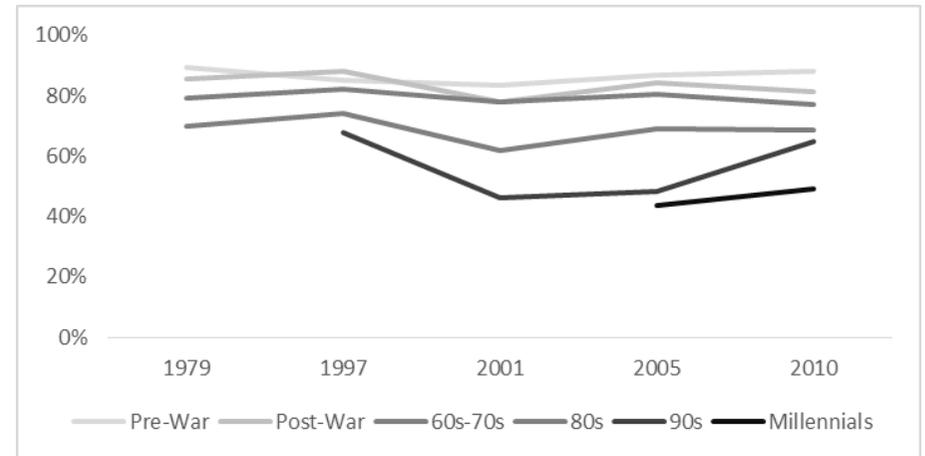
¹¹ The data in Figure 4.1 shows two of the three effects in the APC analyses – cohort and period. It is not possible to illustrate age, period and cohort effects in a single two-dimensional graph; separate figures can be produced to illustrate age and cohort and age and period. For purposes of space these have not been produced here, however they were examined and found to imply similar trends as those shown in Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1: Political Participation of Political Generations over Time

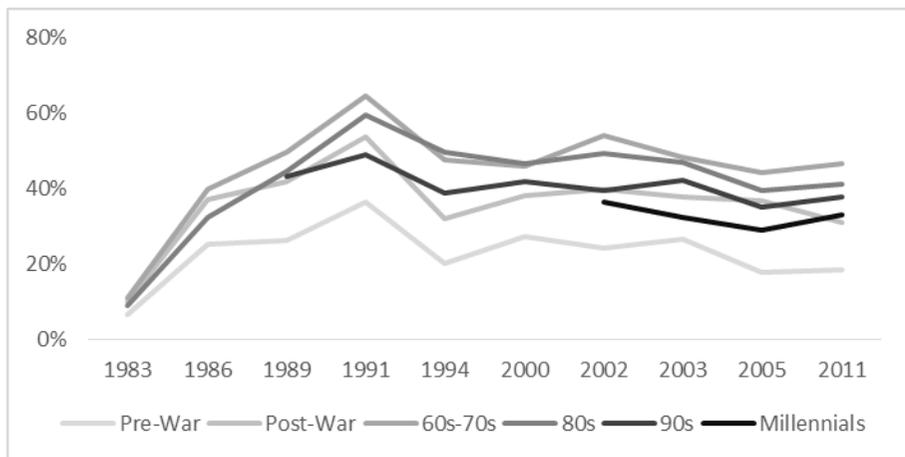
Voting in a general election



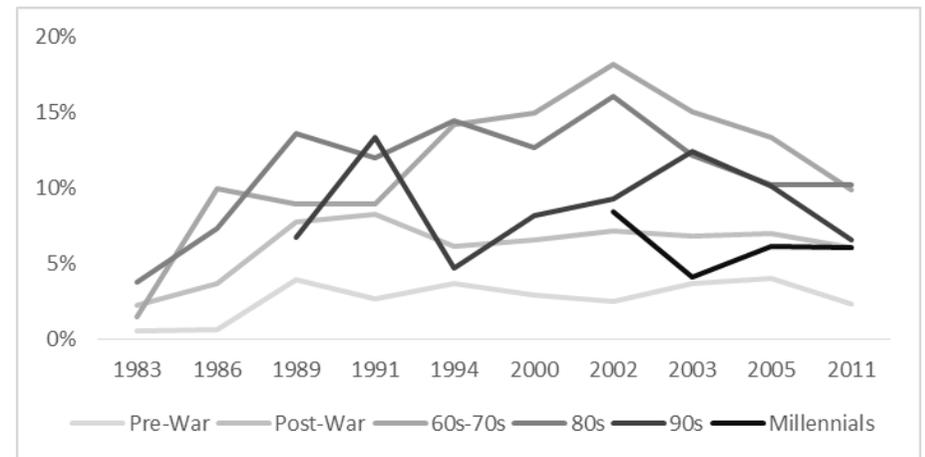
Voting in a local election



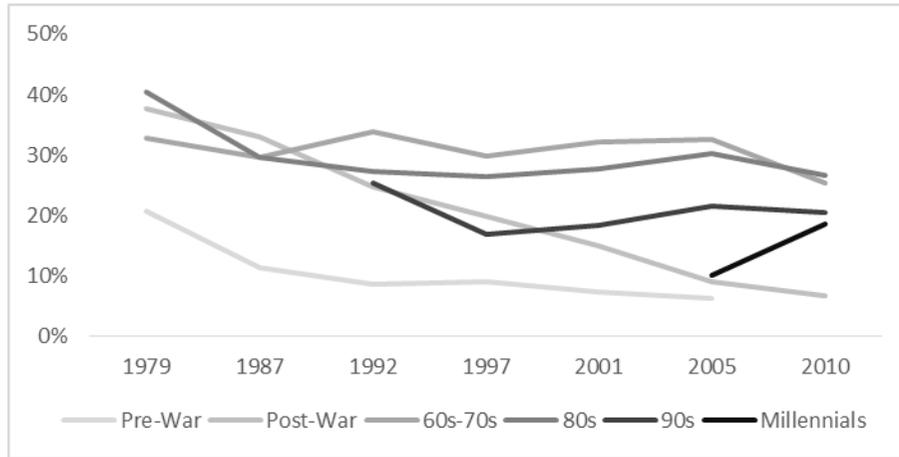
Signing a Petition



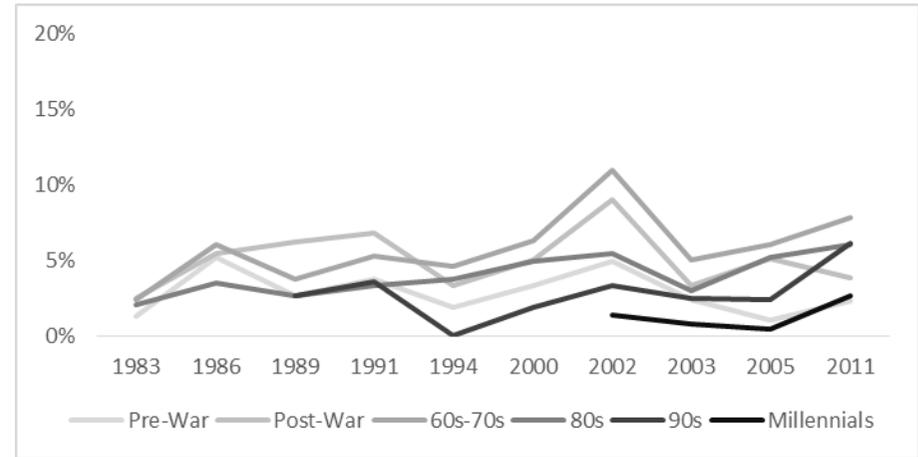
Protesting



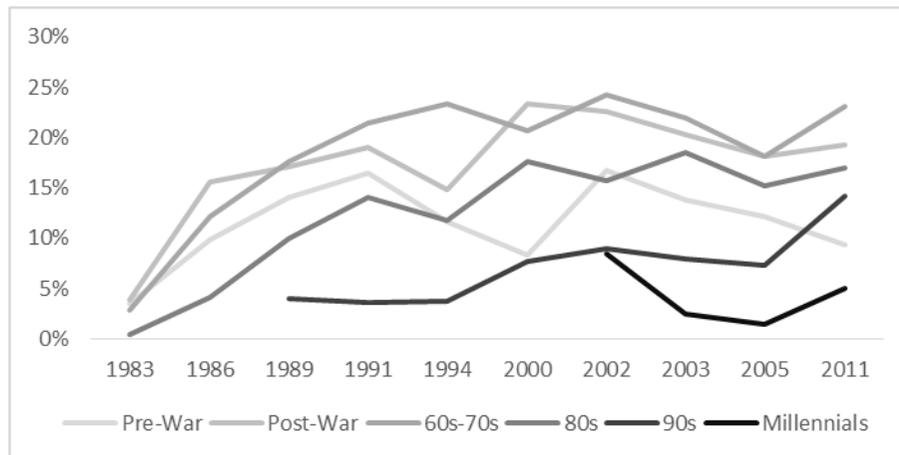
Union Membership



Raising Issues in an Organisation



Contacting MPs



Note: In some cases when the youngest generations were being surveyed for the first time the sample of respondents was too small (i.e. well below 100) to sustain a reasonable estimate of the typical activity of that generation. In such cases, the data has been omitted to avoid misleading interpretations. In some instances, the y-axis has been limited to less than the full 0-100% range to make trends visually discernible.

Source: British Election Study face to face, post-wave surveys, Feb 1974 – 2010 (excl. Oct 1974); British Social Attitudes Survey 1983 - 2011

4.3 Formal Political Participation: Voting in Elections

The first graph in Figure 4.1 shows the average turnout for each generation in each general election between February 1974 and 2010 (excluding October 1974), while Table 4.1 reports the results of the equivalent APC regression analyses.¹² Figure 4.1 suggested that there is indeed a generational effect in which turnout has declined in Britain, with the Millennials the least likely to vote. In 1974, for example, around 90% of the Pre- and Post-War generations voted, along with around 80% of the 60s-70s generations. When the 80s generation entered the electorate, there was already evidence of a generational decline, with only 70% of that generation voting in 1979, and the figure never exceeding that of the older generations up to 2010. The proportion of 90s generation voters in their first election was slightly higher - at 75% - but their turnout was still lower than that of the older generations and remained so throughout the series. Finally, the most dramatic sign of a generational effect was apparent with the first data on the Millennials in 2005, when only 44% of them voted. While their turnout increased in 2010, it remained considerably lower than that of the older generations.

¹² The October 1974 general election was omitted because the aim was to capture as much as possible the 'normal' behaviour of respondents; having two general elections in a single year is highly unusual, which may have had an impact on respondents' behaviour (such as making them more likely to vote in October because they knew the election was going to be close (Franklin 2004)).

Note that the period variable was entered as a factor variable so as to allow for any non-linear relationships between time and the dependent variable to be modelled (see Neundorf 2010). In addition, the age variable was accompanied by an age-squared variable, so as to capture the curvilinear relationship between age and political participation (see Clarke et al 2004; Smets 2008).

The details of the control variables for both the BES and BSA data are provided in Appendix One. While including ethnicity would have been preferable, the earlier surveys in the BES and BSA series did not include appropriate measures of ethnicity and so the variable had to be omitted.

The APC analyses supported this conclusion. Table 4.1 shows that the age and age-squared (age2) variables indicated – as expected – a curvilinear life cycle effect, in which the middle aged respondents were the most likely to vote, and the youngest and oldest less so. The year variables also suggested several period effects, with turnout fluctuating since the 1970s, as well as a sustained decline in the 2000s. Finally, the generation coefficients suggested that once the life cycle and period effects were controlled for, there was a cohort effect in which every generation to enter the electorate since the 60s-70s generation did so with a lower likelihood of voting than the Pre- and Post-War generations.

There was no indication of a significant difference between the oldest generations – the Pre-War coefficient was non-significant and suggests barely any difference between them and the Post-War generation (the reference category).¹³ The 60s-70s generation coefficient, however, was statistically significant and negative (-0.3), suggesting a significantly lower likelihood of voting than the Post-War generation. So too is that of the 80s generation (-0.6), the 90s generation (-0.9) and the Millennials (-1.25). The increasing magnitude of the coefficients shows an almost linear decline in vote likelihood with each successive generation that entered the electorate, and which identified the Millennials as the least likely to vote since the War.

The model reported in the far right column of Table 4.1 included control variables for political and social resources, gender, and party identification. It showed that accounting for these factors had little impact on the estimated life

¹³ The Post-War generation was used as the reference category for the APC analyses because it is consistently well represented throughout the time series, whereas the Millennial generation – which served as the reference category in Chapter Three – has a very limited sample size by comparison, and is not represented at all in most of the surveys.

cycle and generational effects. Both the age and generation coefficients were of almost identical magnitude and implied the same relationship as the first model, suggesting that while factors such as political and social resources are important determinants of individual political participation, they make a limited contribution to explaining differences based on the life cycle and political socialisation. The period effect was slightly different, with the magnitude of the statistically significant coefficients being larger (suggesting that changes in control variables over time help explain the period decline in turnout somewhat), but the general trend of a persistent post-2000 decline was still apparent. All of the control variables themselves had a positive and significant impact on turnout, with more political and social resources and political sophistication, identifying with a political party and being female increasing the likelihood of having voted in an election.

Finally, the Pseudo r-squared statistics in Table 4.1 show that these two models only explain a limited amount of variance in turnout.¹⁴ The initial model, accounting only for period, age and cohort effects, has a Pseudo r-squared of 0.06, suggesting only a very small amount of variance is explained. Including the controls improves the explanatory power of the model but only marginally – to 0.09.

¹⁴ This is the McFadden's Pseudo r-squared. All Pseudo r-squared statistics throughout this and remaining chapters are McFadden's Pseudo r-squared unless otherwise stated.

Table 4.1: APC Analysis, General Election Turnout

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Pre-War (Post-War)	-0.02	0.09	-0.08	0.10
60s-70s	-0.27***	0.07	-0.28***	0.08
80s	-0.57***	0.10	-0.55***	0.12
90s	-0.94***	0.14	-0.92***	0.16
Millennials	-1.25***	0.19	-1.24***	0.25
Age	0.05***	0.01	0.05***	0.01
Age2	-0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00
Year (1974)				
1979	-0.13	0.09	-0.21*	0.11
1983	-0.22**	0.08	-0.37***	0.09
1987	0.05	0.09	-0.09	0.10
1992	0.22*	0.10	0.06	0.12
1997	-0.36***	0.10	-0.60***	0.12
2001	-0.69***	0.11	-0.93***	0.13
2005	-0.55***	0.12	-0.79***	0.15
2010	-0.25	0.13	-0.87***	0.16
Education			0.12***	0.02
Social Class			0.17***	0.02
Gender			0.12**	0.04
Party Identification			1.46***	0.06
Constant	0.86***	0.29	-1.33***	0.26
Obs	29320		21611	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.06		0.09	

Source: Logistic regression analysis of data from British Election Study post-election face to face survey, Feb 1974 – 2010 (excl Oct 1974). * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

Table 4.2 reports the APC analyses for voting in local elections. Figure 4.1 shows that turnout in local elections is generally lower than that for general

elections, but suggests that there remains evidence of a generational decline. The Pre-War and Post-War generations were virtually identical, averaging a turnout above 80% throughout the series. The 60s-70s generation exhibited consistently lower turnout throughout much of the series, rarely rising above 80%. The 80s generation were less likely still to vote, with a turnout of 70% in 1979, followed by a slight increase to 74% in 1997, and then a fall to below 70% up to 2010. The 90s generation were even less likely to vote, with a peak turnout of 68% in 1997 but an average between 1997 and 2010 of below 60%. Finally, the Millennials, as with general elections, were consistently the least likely to vote and appear to have entered the electorate with a weaker propensity to vote in local elections than their elders; in 2005 their turnout was 44%, which rose to 49% in 2010.

The APC analyses in Table 4.2, however, suggest that while there is evidence of a generational decline in turnout comparable to that described above, the effect is not statistically significant. The 60s-70s generation, for instance, had a coefficient of -0.03, the 80s of -0.3, the 90s of -0.42, and the Millennials of -0.39, all of which showed a lower likelihood of voting than the Post-War generation, particularly for the 90s and Millennial generations, but none of which were significant. This suggests that other effects are likely to be more important in explaining the differences between the generations – specifically the life cycle effect and potentially period effects. As with voting in general elections, there was evidence of a curvilinear life cycle effect, as well as a notable period effect in which turnout declined after 1997.

The control variables had similar effects to those for voting in general elections; higher levels of resources and political sophistication, identifying with a political party, and being female all make respondents more likely to vote in local elections. Accounting for these factors had a notable impact on the period effect, in that they all became more negative and the 1997 coefficient became significant (suggesting that the decline in voting in local elections was even sharper once changes in party identification, education, social class and potentially gender have been taken into account). The life cycle effect also became marginally stronger. The generational coefficients were slightly changed following the inclusion of the controls, but remained insignificant. There was no evidence, therefore, of a generational decline in local election turnout, but rather of life cycle and period effects – as well as potentially differences in political and social resources and party identification – which help explain why the Millennials are less active in this area than their elders. The Pseudo r-squared statistics were marginally higher than those in Table 4.1 – at 0.07 and 0.11 – but continued to show that age, period and cohort effects, even with control variables, explained little of the variance in local election turnout.

Table 4.2: APC Analysis, Local Election Turnout

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Pre-War (Post-War)	0.04	0.17	-0.02	0.20
60s-70s	-0.03	0.13	0.03	0.16
80s	-0.30	0.19	-0.11	0.23
90s	-0.42	0.26	-0.17	0.32
Millennials	-0.39	0.35	-0.24	0.45
Age	0.07***	0.01	0.09***	0.02
Age2	-0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00
Year (1979)				
1997	-0.21	0.15	-0.53**	0.18
2001	-0.87***	0.17	-1.21***	0.20
2005	-0.75***	0.19	-1.12***	0.24
2010	-0.75***	0.21	-1.47***	0.27
Education			0.13***	0.03
Social Class			0.16***	0.03
Gender			0.21**	0.07
Party Identification			1.35***	0.13
Constant	-0.24	0.40	-2.93***	0.54
Obs	7515		5184	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.07		0.11	

Source: Logistic regression analysis of data from British Election Study post-election face to face survey, Feb 1979, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

The two analyses imply, therefore, a mixed picture for explaining why the Millennials were less active in formal politics. There is evidence of both period effects suggesting that participation in formal politics may be becoming less common, as well as life cycle effects suggesting that at their current stage of

the life cycle the Millennials would be expected to be less active. Both of these effects are consistent with theoretical expectations. There was also evidence, however, of a cohort effect in which the Millennials were at the most extreme edge of a generational decline in the propensity to participate in formal politics, but this only appears to apply to some acts associated with this dimension. Precisely why there would be evidence of such an effect for some acts and not others is unclear; the unique nature of the social pressure and media coverage surrounding voting in a general election may mean that there were processes making the Millennials less likely to perform it which were not apparent for other acts. Or the fact that turnout in local elections was comparatively so low to begin with may mean that generational declines in participation were less apparent. Either way, there was clear evidence of life cycle and period effects driving changes in formal political participation, alongside evidence of cohort effects for certain formal political acts though not all. Where there was a cohort effect, it suggested that the Millennials were the least likely to be active in formal politics.

4.4 Cause-Oriented Political Participation: Protests and Petitions

Looking next at petition signing as an indication of cause-oriented activity, Figure 4.1 reports the proportion of BSA respondents who signed a petition in response to what they felt was an unjust government decision. Consistent with the findings of Sloam (2014), Dalton (2013) and Norris (2001; 2011), there is clear evidence of a period effect in which this act became more common since the 1980s, although this was not a constant increase; more of a peak in the early 1990s followed by stabilisation at a higher level than that seen in the

1980s. The graph also suggests there may be a curvilinear generational effect, with the Pre-War and Millennial generations being the least likely to sign petitions, and the other generations in between. For example, on average 23% of the Pre-War generation signed petitions between 1983 and 2011. The activity was more common among the Post-War generation, and peaked in popularity among the 60s-70s, of which an average of 45% signed between 1983 and 2011. The 80s and 90s generations were slightly less likely to sign petitions, with an average of 42% between 1983 and 2011, and 41% between 1989 and 2011 respectively, and they were followed by the Millennials who averaged 33% between 2002 and 2011.

Table 4.3 shows that the regression analyses gave a similar impression. The year coefficients confirmed the evidence of a period effect in which signing petitions became more common after the 1980s, with a peak in the 1990s. The age variables also suggested a curvilinear life cycle effect comparable to that seen for formal political participation, with the youngest the least active and the middle aged the most active. Finally, the generational coefficients provided further evidence of a curvilinear cohort effect.

There was no evidence of a significant difference between Pre-War, Post-War, 80s and 90s generations; the Pre-War coefficient was a non-significant -0.14, and the 80s and 90s generations had non-significant coefficients of -0.04 and -0.24 respectively. While the direction of these coefficients suggest that all were less active than the Post-War generation (and the 60s-70s generation), the effects were not statistically significant. The most active generation appeared

to be the 60s-70s, with a significant coefficient of 0.14, and the least active was the Millennials, with a significant coefficient of -0.44.

The control variables were all found to have a significant effect on petition signing. Higher levels of political sophistication and resources, as well as identifying with a political party and being female, all increased the likelihood of signing petitions. Accounting for these effects, however, had little discernible impact on either the life cycle or period effects identified in the first model. There was more of an impact, however, on the generational effect, with the coefficient for the 60s-70s generation becoming non-significant, and the coefficient for the 90s generation becoming a significant -0.34. The magnitude of the Millennial coefficient was also marginally increased to -0.47. This suggested that once differences in resources, party identification and possibly gender were accounted for, there was little difference between the Pre-War to 80s generations, but there was evidence of the 90s generation and the Millennials entering the electorate with successively weaker propensities to sign petitions than their elders.

Finally, the Pseudo r-squared statistics for these two models suggest that age, period and generational effects explain a very small amount of variance in petition signing; the first model had a Pseudo r-squared statistic of 0.05, and even with the controls this only increased to 0.07.

Table 4.3: APC Analysis, Signing Petitions

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Pre-War (Post-War)	-0.14	0.09	-0.13	0.09
60s-70s	0.14*	0.07	0.10	0.07
80s	-0.04	0.10	-0.12	0.11
90s	-0.24	0.14	-0.34*	0.15
Millennials	-0.44*	0.20	-0.47*	0.21
Age	0.04***	0.01	0.04***	0.00
Age2	-0.00***	0.00	-0.00***	0.00
Year (1983)				
1986	1.67***	0.10	1.65***	0.11
1989	1.98***	0.10	1.94***	0.11
1991	2.53***	0.10	2.52***	0.11
1994	1.89***	0.11	1.86***	0.12
2000	2.05***	0.11	2.04***	0.12
2002	2.14***	0.11	2.12***	0.12
2003	2.09***	0.11	2.06***	0.12
2005	1.89***	0.12	1.85***	0.12
2011	1.98***	0.13	1.94***	0.14
Education			0.13***	0.01
Social Class			0.13***	0.02
Gender			0.14***	0.03
Party Identification			0.40***	0.04
Constant	-3.42***	0.16	-4.39***	0.19
Obs	20501		19250	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.05		0.07	

Source: Logistic regression analysis of data from British Social Attitudes Survey data, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1994, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2011. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

Table 4.4 reports the APC analyses for protest activity, based on the proportion of BSA respondents who reported protesting against an unjust government decision. The graph in Figure 4.1 shows that protesting was consistently a less common act of participation than petition signing among British citizens, with no more than 18% of any of the generations protesting at any point in the 1983-2011 series. Within this context, however, trends in protest activity were similar to those seen for signing petitions; there was a steady growth in its popularity since the 1980s, with a peak in the early 2000s, and there is evidence of a curvilinear cohort effect. For example, an average of 2.7% of the Pre-War generation protested between 1983 and 2011; the activity became more common among the Post-War generation and peaked among the 60s-70s generation, of which an average of 11.5% participated in that time, closely followed by the 80s generation with an average of 11.3%. There was then a decline in propensity for protesting, with an average of 9% of the 90s generation protesting between 1989 and 2011, and just 6% of Millennials between 2002 and 2011.

The data in Table 4.4 suggests similar effects. The year coefficients showed a period effect in which protesting became more common after the 1980s, peaking in popularity in the early 2000s. Perhaps surprisingly, given the well-established literature suggesting that the young are typically more likely to protest (e.g., Barnes et al. 1979; Abrams and Little 1965b), there was no indication of a life cycle effect (the age variable was non-significant). The generational coefficients suggested a similar pattern to that seen for signing petitions and suggested in Figure 4.1. The most active generation was the 60s-70s (with a significant coefficient of 0.29). The Pre-War, 80s and 90s

coefficients were all negative, suggesting that they were less active than the Post-War and 60s-70s generations, but all were also insignificant. The Millennials were suggested to be the least active, with a significant coefficient of -1.07.

The controls all had a significant effect, with political sophistication and resources and party identification being positively associated with protest. Gender also had a significant effect, but unlike that for signing petitions it suggested that men were more active than women. Accounting for these effects had a small impact on the magnitude of the period coefficients (reducing all of them), but they continued to show an increase in protest since the 1980s with a peak in the 2000s. There continued to be no indication of a life cycle effect. The generation coefficients were affected, with the coefficient for the 60s-70s generation becoming non-significant, but that for the Millennials remained significant and increased in magnitude (to -1.12).

Table 4.4: APC Analysis, Protesting

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Pre-War (Post-War)	-0.25	0.19	-0.19	0.20
60s-70s	0.29*	0.12	0.23	0.12
80s	-0.01	0.18	-0.60	0.19
90s	-0.49	0.25	-0.48	0.26
Millennials	-1.07**	0.36	-1.12**	0.40
Age	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.02
Age2	-0.00**	0.00	-0.00**	0.00
Year (1983)				
1986	1.10***	0.22	0.99***	0.23
1989	1.65***	0.21	1.48***	0.22
1991	1.71***	0.21	1.57***	0.22
1994	1.84***	0.22	1.66***	0.23
2000	1.94***	0.22	1.78***	0.23
2002	2.18***	0.22	1.95***	0.24
2003	2.10***	0.23	1.91***	0.24
2005	2.02***	0.23	1.78***	0.24
2011	1.92***	0.26	1.59***	0.28
Education			0.28***	0.02
Social Class			0.10***	0.03
Gender			-0.13*	0.05
Party Identification			0.53***	0.06
Constant	-3.80***	0.45	-5.56***	0.50
Obs	20501		19250	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.04		0.08	

Source: Logistic regression analysis of data from British Social Attitudes Survey data, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1994, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2011. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

Both sets of analyses imply comparable period and generational effects for cause-oriented political participation. As studies such as Sloam (2014) have argued, cause-oriented political activity has become more common in Britain since the 1980s, although this appears to reflect a surge in popularity which stabilised around the late 1990s/early 2000s rather than a consistent increase. The generational effects implied a weak curvilinear relationship, with the 60s-70s generation the most likely to participate in cause-oriented politics and the Millennials the least likely. The greater likelihood of the 60s-70s generation to participate appears to be largely explained by differences between them and the Pre-War, Post-War, 80s and 90s generation in terms of their relationships with political parties, demographic characteristics, and political sophistication and resources. These effects do not appear to explain, however, the Millennials' unprecedented reluctance to participate in cause-oriented politics. In direct contrast to the arguments of studies such as Sloam (2014; 2012b), Norris (2001; 2011) and Dalton (2013) among others, today's young people are not a distinct generation for their propensity to participate in issue-specific, informal forms of political participation. These activities have certainly become more common among all members of the British electorate over the last few decades, but the Millennials are distinctly unlikely to participate in them compared with their elders. This also means that there is no indication of the Millennials' being distinct for rejecting formal political participation in favour of a new embrace of cause-oriented activity; instead, the evidence suggests that they are distinct for being less likely to participate in both arenas. Finally, it is once again clear that despite the substantial differences between generations in terms

of cause-oriented activity, cohort effects along with age and period effects explain very little of the variance in this form of participation.

4.5 Civic Participation: Unions and Raising Issues in Organisations

Table 4.5 reports the APC analyses for union membership, which is a form of civic political participation. Figure 4.1 shows the proportion of BES respondents who were members of a trade union between 1979 and 2010.

There is evidence of what could be several effects; union membership became less common after the 1980s which could reflect a period effect, but it also became more common among the 60s-70s, 80s, 90s and Millennial generations after 2005 which could be indicative of either period, life cycle or generational effects. The data does suggest, however, that the Millennials and the 90s generation were typically less likely to be union members regardless of the year.

The APC analyses in Table 4.5 showed that there was indeed a period effect in which union membership declined after 1979. The age and age-squared variables also suggest a curvilinear life cycle effect, with the middle aged more likely to be members than the oldest citizens, and even more so than the youngest. There was also evidence of a curvilinear cohort effect. The Pre-War generation were the least likely to join a union, with a significant coefficient of -0.36. The Post-War generation were shown to be more likely to be union members than the Pre-War, but less so than the 60s-70s and 80s generations, which had significant coefficients of 0.26 and 0.34 respectively. The coefficients for the 90s and Millennial generations were positive (0.17 and 0.13

respectively), but non-significant, suggesting no substantial difference between their likelihood of joining a union and that of the Post-War generation.

The control variables suggested similar effects to those found for other forms of participation: higher levels of political sophistication and resources, identifying with a political party and being male made respondents more likely to join unions. With these effects accounted for, there was a modest impact on the period, life cycle and generational coefficients. The period effect continued to imply a decline in union membership, though its magnitude was larger. The life cycle effect barely changed. The only significant change in the generational coefficients was that of the 80s generation which became non-significant, resulting in the 60s-70s generation being most likely to join a union, with the Post-War, 80s, 90s and Millennial generations behind them, and the Pre-War generation the least likely.

Table 4.5: APC Analysis, Union Membership

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Pre-War (Post-War)	-0.36***	0.10	-0.36**	0.11
60s-70s	0.26**	0.08	0.21*	0.09
80s	0.34**	0.12	0.25	0.13
90s	0.17	0.17	0.01	0.19
Millennials	0.13	0.27	0.29	0.31
Age	0.11***	0.01	0.10***	0.01
Age2	-0.00***	0.00	-0.00***	0.00
Year (1979)				
1987	-0.32***	0.07	-0.68***	0.08
1992	-0.45***	0.08	-0.79***	0.10
1997	-0.64***	0.10	-0.98***	0.10
2001	-0.69***	0.11	-1.05***	0.12
2005	-0.71**	0.14	-0.95***	0.17
2010	-0.84***	0.15	-1.26***	0.16
Education			0.10***	0.02
Social Class			0.07**	0.02
Gender			-0.57***	0.04
Party Identification			0.30**	0.09
Constant	-2.96***	0.28	-2.75***	0.33
Obs	18170		14604	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.04		0.07	

Source: Logistic regression analysis of data from British Election Study post-election face to face survey, Feb 1979, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

Table 4.6 reports the APC analyses examining the raising of issues in organisations of which the respondent was a member – in other words, active

membership of associations and organisations. Figure 4.1 shows that this is a particularly rare form of political participation, with fewer than 1 in 10 respondents ever reporting having done so. There is little evidence of substantial period or generational effects in Figure 4.1, with the exception of an indication of a very slight generational effect in which the Millennials were less likely to engage in this act than their elders. In 2002, the year in which this act was most common and the first year for which data on the Millennials is available, fewer than 2% raised an issue in an organisation of which they were a member, lower than the 3% of 90s generation who did so, 6% of the 80s generation, 11% of the 60s-70s generation, 9% of the Post-War generation, and 5% of the Pre-War generation.

The APC analyses provided evidence of period, generation and life cycle effects. Raising issues in organisations was more common throughout the 1990s and 2000s than in the 1980s, but rather than a continuous increase the coefficients suggested that 1983 was an unusually quiet year for this form of participation. The age coefficients once again showed a curvilinear relationship in which the middle-aged are the most active in this form of participation, followed by the older citizens and then the youngest.

The generational coefficients identified a cohort effect in which the 80s, 90s and Millennial generations entered the electorate less likely to engage in this act than their elders. The Pre-War and 60s-70s generation both had non-significant coefficients of 0.17 and -0.18 respectively, suggesting that the three oldest generations had comparable likelihoods of raising issues in their organisations. The significant coefficients for the 80s, 90s and Millennial

generations (-0.65, -1.05, and -1.74 respectively), however, showed a generational decline in the likelihood of doing so with its most extreme manifestation in the Millennials.

The controls had almost the same effect as that seen for union membership; higher levels of political sophistication and resources, as well as identifying with a political party and being male, made respondents more likely to raise issues. The magnitude of the period effect was reduced somewhat once these effects were accounted for (though still suggested that 1983 was an unusual year), while the magnitude of the life cycle effect increased slightly (i.e., the age coefficient increased from 0.06 to 0.09). The generational coefficients were changed somewhat, with those of the 80s, 90s and Millennial generations reducing in magnitude (particularly that of the Millennials), but implied the same trend: that the oldest generations had a comparable propensity for raising issues in organisations, while the likelihood of doing so fell with the successive arrival of the 80s, 90s and Millennial generations.

Finally, the Pseudo r-squared statistic for the APC only model was 0.03, suggesting that barely any variance in this political activity was explained by age, period or cohort effects. Including the control variables increased this to 0.10, showing that the controls were more influential, though even combined with APC effects there was still a great deal about this political act unaccounted for in this model.

Table 4.6: APC Analysis, Raising Issues in Organisation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Pre-War (Post-War)	0.17	0.20	0.18	0.21
60s-70s	-0.18	0.14	-0.23	0.15
80s	-0.65**	0.23	-0.67**	0.34
90s	-1.05**	0.33	-0.99**	0.34
Millennials	-1.74**	0.52	-1.23*	0.56
Age	0.06**	0.02	0.09***	0.02
Age2	-0.00***	0.00	-0.00***	0.00
Year (1983)				
1986	1.00***	0.21	0.82***	0.22
1989	0.78***	0.22	0.53*	0.23
1991	1.05***	0.22	0.77**	0.23
1994	0.65*	0.26	0.31	0.26
2000	1.13***	0.23	0.78**	0.24
2002	1.63***	0.24	1.23***	0.24
2003	0.87***	0.25	0.46	0.26
2005	1.17***	0.25	0.72**	0.26
2011	1.60***	0.29	1.08***	0.30
Education			0.33***	0.03
Social Class			0.29***	0.04
Gender			-0.28***	0.07
Party Identification			0.62***	0.09
Constant	-4.78***	0.61	-7.68***	0.69
Obs	20501		19250	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.03		0.10	

Source: Logistic regression analysis of data from British Social Attitudes Survey data, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1994, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2011. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

The analyses of these two forms of civic participation reached somewhat different conclusions. There was evidence of different period effects for both acts; while union membership fell after the 1980s, the likelihood of raising

issues in organisations increased. The effect of the life cycle appears to be the same for both acts, and the same as that found for most other acts examined so far, in that the middle aged tend to be the most active.

The generational effects for the two were also quite different. The 60s-70s and 80s generations appeared to be unusually active when it came to union membership (although for the 80s generation this is largely explained by factors indicated by the control variables), while the Pre-War generation was the least likely to join unions, and the Post-War, 90s and Millennial generations were somewhere in between. For raising issues in organisations, however, the Millennials were suggested to be at the extreme edge of a generational decline in the likelihood of doing so, apparent from the 80s generation. As with the differences between the effects found for the acts related to formal participation, it is unclear why there would be such different generational effects for two related acts of political activity; the difference may reflect the unique nature of the acts examined, or indicate that despite the fact they are both indicative of civic political participation there are nonetheless differences in the way that various processes (such as the impact of social change on political socialisation) affect them. What is clear is that while the Millennials were the least active generation in civic political activity (as confirmed both by the data presented above and in Chapter Three), this does not entirely reflect their uniqueness as a political generation. The difference between their participation and that of their elders, therefore, may reduce as they move through the life cycle and they become more likely to engage in at least some forms of civic political participation. Finally, the low Pseudo r-squared statistics show that the APC models – with or without controls – were similar

to those looking at formal and cause-oriented political activity in explaining only a limited amount of the variance.

4.6 Issue-Specific Formal Participation: Contacting MPs

Table 4.7 presents the APC analyses for the final act of participation – contacting MPs, which represents issue-specific formal political activity.

Figure 4.1 shows the proportion of BSA respondents who reported contacting their MP in response to an unjust government decision between 1983 and 2011.

The graph suggests that this was not a particularly common form of political participation, with no more than 1 in 4 respondents ever reporting having done so. There is evidence of a period effect, however, in which this form of participation became more common after the 1980s. The graph also suggests a potential life cycle or generational effect, indicating a curvilinear relationship in which the oldest and youngest generations appeared least likely to contact their MPs. For example, an average of 12% of the Pre-War generation contacted their MP between 1983 and 2011, compared with 19% of the 60s-70s generation, and 4.4% of Millennials (since 2002).

Table 4.7 also showed a period effect in which contacting MPs became more common after the 1980s, with a peak in the early 2000s. This could well reflect technological advances increasing the opportunities for individuals to contact their elected representatives, such as through email or social media. The APC analyses also suggested a life cycle effect, in which the middle aged respondents were the most likely to contact their MPs and the youngest the least likely.

The generational coefficients implied a comparable generational trend to that suggest by Figure 4.1. There was no evidence of a significant difference between the Pre-War, Post-War and 60s-70s generations (the Pre-War generation had an insignificant coefficient of 0.02, and the 60s-70s of -0.08), but the 80s generation appeared to be at the leading end of a generational decline: the 80s generation coefficient was -0.34, the 90s was -0.8, and the Millennials was -1.4, and all were statistically significant. The three youngest generations, therefore, were less likely to have contacted their MPs than the older generations, with the Millennials the least likely of all.

Once again, the analyses suggested that higher levels of political sophistication and resources, and identifying with a political party, increased the chances of someone contacting their MP. Unlike the other acts examined above, gender had no significant effect. Accounting for these influences had no appreciable impact on the life cycle effect; although the magnitude was reduced, it still implied a curvilinear relationship, with the middle aged respondents the most active. The period coefficients were similarly only marginally affected, and continued to suggest that this form of participation became more common in Britain after the 1980s. Finally, there was also a minor effect on the generational coefficients, but the overall impression remained the same: the 80s, 90s and Millennial generations appeared to have entered the electorate with successively lower likelihoods of contacting their MPs. The Pseudo r -squared figures for both analyses were very similar to those above, and suggested that these models had only limited success in explaining variance in issue-specific formal participation.

Table 4.7: APC Analysis, Contacting MPs

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Pre-War (Post-War)	0.02	0.11	-0.05	0.12
60s-70s	-0.08	0.09	-0.13	0.09
80s	-0.34*	0.14	-0.43**	0.14
90s	-0.79***	0.19	-0.91***	0.21
Millennials	-1.38***	0.32	-1.40***	0.35
Age	0.09***	0.01	0.09***	0.01
Age2	-0.00***	0.00	-0.00***	0.00
Year (1983)				
1986	1.43***	0.16	1.33***	0.17
1989	1.75***	0.16	1.65***	0.17
1991	1.95***	0.16	1.88***	0.17
1994	1.78***	0.17	1.62***	0.18
2000	2.05***	0.17	1.90***	0.18
2002	2.13***	0.17	1.91***	0.18
2003	2.05***	0.17	1.86***	0.18
2005	1.86***	0.18	1.62***	0.19
2011	2.16***	0.19	1.90***	0.2
Education			0.25***	0.02
Social Class			0.22***	0.02
Gender			-0.07	0.04
Party Identification			0.39***	0.05
Constant	-5.47***	0.39	-7.03***	0.42
Obs	20501		19250	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.05		0.09	

Source: Logistic regression analysis of data from British Social Attitudes Survey data, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1994, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2011. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

Table 4.8: Summary

	Formal		Cause-oriented		Civic		Issue-specific
	Vote in General	Vote in Local	Sign a Petition	Protest	Union Member	Raise Issue	Contact MP
Millennials significantly different? with controls?	↓ ↓	- -	↓ ↓	↓ ↓	- -	↓ ↓	↓ ↓
Millennials lowest coefficient? with controls?	Yes Yes	No Yes	Yes Yes	Yes Yes	No No	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Model Pseudo r-squared	0.06	0.07	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.05
Model Pseudo r-squared w/controls	0.09	0.11	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.10	0.09

4.7 Conclusion

Chapter Three suggested that the Millennials were the least active generation in the British electorate around the time of the 2010 general election; regardless of whether the focus was on formal, cause-oriented, civic or issue-specific formal participation, the Millennials were less active than their elders. This chapter has used APC analyses to explore whether these differences reflect life cycle, period or cohort effects, with a particular interest in whether or not the cohort effects identify the Millennials as a distinct political generation. Table 4.8 summarises the key findings of the above analyses in relation to this issue.

Owing to data limitations, the range of participatory acts examined was smaller than that in Chapter Three, which has resulted in several questions about the way in which acts within a given participatory dimension relate to each other in light of different conclusions regarding life cycle, period and cohort effects.

For formal political participation, for instance, the analyses found that while the Millennials were less active than their elders, for voting in general elections this reflected a cohort effect and for voting in local elections there was no evidence of such an effect. Whether this reflects differences in the nature of the participatory acts (implying that there could be substantial variation between acts even within the same participatory dimension) or in the nature of the impact of political socialisation on the way the generations participate in different acts, or simply data limitations (perhaps because the range of data for local election voting was more limited than that for general election voting) is unclear, but suggests there is room for further study about the way in which participatory acts within a given dimension relate to each other.

What is clearly illustrated in Table 4.8, however, is that there is evidence of cohort effects for at least one act for each participatory dimension which suggests that the Millennials are the least active generation to have entered the electorate since World War Two. While there are life cycle effects apparent for all four participatory dimensions which mean the Millennials will most likely become marginally more active as they age, the cohort effects suggest that they will nonetheless be typically less active than the older generations in the electorate throughout their adult lives. There is clear evidence, therefore, that the Millennials are a distinct political generation in terms of their political participation, and in most cases this implies that they are less active than their elders. That said, the low Pseudo r-squared statistics for all of the APC analyses above shows that while there are significant and at times substantial differences between political generations' propensity to participate in politics, differences in political participation are only marginally accounted for by differences in generations, period effects or life cycle effects.

Relating these findings to the existing literature, they provide support for several arguments and challenge several others. Regarding the former, these conclusions echo the arguments of Grasso (2014), Wattenberg (2012) and Putnam (2000), who suggested that the Millennials were being socialised into an environment which would ultimately depress their interest in and participation with many aspects of politics – not just formal politics. While all three point to different factors within the Millennials' formative years which explain this trend, they all suggest that there should be a cohort effect apparent in which the Millennials are typically less active than their elders comparable to that identified above.

The main challenge of these findings is to the suggestion that the Millennials are at the leading edge of a transformation of political participation in which formal participation is in decline as young people embrace issue-specific activity instead (Dalton 2013; Martin 2012; Norris 2001; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Sloam 2014). This argument generally takes one of two forms; either that the Millennials are more active than older generations in the 'new' forms of political activity (e.g., Martin 2012; Norris 2001); alternatively that they are currently less active because of the life cycle but have the potential to become even more active than their elders as they age (in other words that there is a cohort effect in which the Millennials are starting with a greater propensity to engage in this form of participation) (Sloam 2014; Dalton 2013).

At least part of the difference between the conclusions of this chapter and this body of research will represent the different sources of data employed and contexts in which the conclusions were suggested to apply, and identifying whether or not those differences reflect the impact of various national contexts will require a cross-national comparative study beyond the scope of this research. However, as Chapters One and Two argued, these studies suffer from the under-utilisation of methods capable of estimating and controlling for life cycle, period and cohort effects, such as APC analyses. Consequently, they are forced to interpret trends in political behaviour with less evidence to disentangle and estimate the three, meaning they run a greater risk of misinterpretation. In the case of the Millennials' political participation, especially cause-oriented activity, it is possible that these studies have interpreted a period effect as a cohort effect; that is, the fact that the Millennials are more active in cause-oriented politics than older generations

were at the same age appears to be the result of a rising propensity among all citizens to engage in cause-oriented activity, rather than a cohort effect in which the Millennials are even more active than their predecessors.

Without a direct re-examination of the data used by these studies it is impossible to be certain that this is the case. Nonetheless, only here have APC analyses been employed to examine this question and so this chapter is uniquely able to simultaneously estimate and control for age, period and cohort effects. This means that the risk of misinterpreting those effects, while not non-existent, is substantially lower, and so there can be greater confidence in the validity of these findings. Contrary to the image of a generation who are shifting away from traditional political activity in the formal political arena and towards new dimensions of political engagement more focussed on issues, this chapter suggests that the Millennials are a distinct generation for their lack of political participation across the board. The extent of their disengagement varies from dimension to dimension, and from act to act within those dimensions, but nonetheless there is substantial evidence to suggest that they are likely to be the least active generation to have entered the British electorate since the Second World War.

Chapter Five: Defining and Measuring Political Apathy and Political Alienation

The concepts of political apathy and alienation are an integral component of the study and public discourse surrounding the political engagement of young people in Western democracies. The majority of academics, journalists and politicians who contribute to the debate tend to reach conclusions suggesting that either political alienation or political apathy is responsible for the lack of electoral engagement of young people, and so ultimately for the threat that lack of engagement poses to the stability of Western democracies. Seldom have such important concepts been so poorly understood in the academic literature, however. Despite their centrality to the academic and public understanding of young people's political participation, the concepts of 'apathy' and 'alienation' are under-theorised, poorly defined and inconsistently applied. In this chapter, this problem will be rectified and clear definitions, conceptualisations and operationalisations of political apathy and alienation will be developed.

The chapter begins by briefly revisiting the literature on the Millennials' participation which suggests that they are apathetic or alienated, and identifies the key ways in which the terms are defined. It then engages with the literature on political apathy and political alienation which has been almost entirely ignored in this field, and uses it to develop a definition and conceptualisation of both concepts in the context of formal politics. Finally, the chapter develops an operationalisation of formal political apathy and alienation, and validates those measures by examining their impact on political behaviour.

5.1 Apathy, Alienation and the Millennials in the Literature

As Chapter One discussed, conventional wisdom holds that the Millennials are a distinctly alienated generation, and that it is both inaccurate and unjust to describe them as politically apathetic. This alienation from the formal political arena – and the actors and institutions within it – is thought to explain why the Millennials exhibit an active interest in politics and political issues while being so reluctant to participate in the formal processes through which those issues might be affected.

The use of both the terms ‘apathy’ and ‘alienation’ in the academic literature, however, has severe short-comings because of the lack of clarity regarding their definition and measurement. Instead of theoretically clear and empirically verifiable concepts, apathy and alienation are more commonly used as summary terms; as ways of describing a variety of characteristics exhibited by Millennials which either mean they lack the motivation to engage with politics (apathy), or that they have the motivation but are in some way discouraged from acting on it (alienation) (e.g., Henn et al. 2005; Russell et al. 2002; Fahmy 2006; Marsh et al. 2007; Russell 2004; Henn and Foard 2012). As Chapter Two showed, the suggested source of this discouragement can vary from one study to the next, with six broad characteristics most commonly cited to represent the Millennials’ alienation:

- i) Low internal political efficacy, stemming from the Millennials’ lack of confidence in their knowledge of politics (e.g., Henn and Foard 2012; Fahmy 2006; Delli Carpini 2000)

- ii) Low external efficacy, reflecting their lack of faith in the responsiveness of the political system (e.g., Sloam 2014; Wattenberg 2002; Henn et al. 2005; White et al. 2000; Soule 2001)
- iii) Lack of trust in either the willingness or capability of politicians and/or parties to fairly represent them (e.g., Martin 2012; Henn et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2007; Furlong and Cartmel 2012)
- iv) Lack of appeal of the adversarial and conflictual nature of the political process (e.g., Mycock and Tonge 2012; Marsh et al. 2007; Fahmy 2006)
- v) Lack of appeal based on negative reporting of politics in the media and/or undue focus on personality and conflict rather than issues (e.g., Wayne et al. 2010)
- vi) Negative stereotyping of the young as apathetic (e.g., Russell 2004; Evans and Sternberg 1999)

This is not to say that these are not valid and accurate descriptions of the Millennials' alienation. The problem is that the assertion or implication that these characteristics reflect the Millennials' alienation, and that they have the suggested causal effects on their participation (i.e., depressing their formal participation, and according to some increasing their informal participation), has not been accompanied by a clear conceptual outline of 'political alienation' nor of the effect it has on political behaviour. The link between the proposed cause of alienation, the Millennials' expression of that alienation, and the subsequent impact on their political behaviour is assumed, not demonstrated.

5.2 The Definition and Conceptualisation of Formal Political Alienation

There is a large extant literature on political alienation, which can be used as a starting point for developing a concept to explore its manifestation in the Millennials. This literature primarily originated in studies of the political alienation of young Americans in the 1950s and 1960s, in response to many renouncing their American citizenship and/or engaging in violent protest against their government and political system (Ranade and Norris 1981). The seminal study is that of Finifter (1970), based on data from the US in the 1950s gathered by Almond and Verba (1963). Finifter (1970) defined political alienation as an orientation which implied long-standing feelings of estrangement from some aspect of the individual's political environment, suggesting that it could be thought of as being on a continuum the opposite end of which implied feelings of attachment, identification and integration (see also Nachimas 1974; Aberdach 1969; Southwell 2012; Schwartz [1973]2009). Citrin et al. (1975) suggested this orientation was associated with feelings of active 'non-identification', and the perception that this aspect of the political environment was in some way alien to the individual, which would prompt feelings of scepticism, cynicism and weariness towards it (see also Dermody et al. 2010; Gamson 1968; Olsen 1969; Aberdach 1969).

This literature also identified several characteristics which political alienation as a concept was said to either exhibit or be related to. The first is that alienation is not an attitude – Finifter (1970) deliberately refers to it as an 'orientation'. This distinction reflects the view that alienation is a long-standing trait, more a lasting component of an individual's political personality

than a temporary attitudinal perception or opinion (Finifter 1970; Citrin et al. 1975; Gniewosz et al. 2009). This means that political alienation is more the result of an individual's formative experiences during their political socialisation than it is their opinions on day-to-day experiences or events (unless they are particularly dramatic) (Gniewosz et al. 2009; Sherrod et al. 2002; Damico et al. 2000; Verba et al. 2005; see Chapter Three's discussion on political socialisation).

Second, political alienation is an active orientation i.e., the alienated individual necessarily has at least some cognitive awareness of what it is they are alienated from and of the perceptions, values or opinions which lie at the heart of that alienation (Citrin et al. 1975; Dermody et al. 2010; Gamson 1968). This distinguishes political alienation from what Citrin et al. (1975) identify as 'passive' or 'symbolic' alienation, in which an individual claims to be politically alienated either because there is a social desirability bias to do so or they feel that doing so is an important symbolic expression of their political identity (such as a Labour voter may feel when the Conservative Party is in office, for example), or because they find such a characterisation more appealing and socially acceptable than revealing that they have no interest in politics.

A related characteristic is that political alienation necessarily produces identifiable behavioural consequences (Citrin et al. 1975). A long-standing orientation towards politics which indicates that an individual feels estranged from the political system or perceives that it is alien to them should produce behavioural consequences i.e., an alienated person should, all other things

being equal, behave in exactly the same way as an identical un-alienated person if their alienation was removed. This is in contrast with ‘symbolic’ or ‘passive’ alienation, which does not represent lasting orientations towards the political system or some aspect of it, but is simply an expression of another characteristic (such as party identification or political apathy) (Citrin et al. 1975). These forms of alienation would not be direct causes of certain behaviour in the individual, but are rather ‘symptoms’ of that other characteristic. Any change in the expression of this ‘alienation’ would not necessarily, therefore, produce a change in political behaviour.

The third characteristic of political alienation is its multi-dimensionality. In the same way that political participation was described in Chapter Three as a concept within which there were several discernible sub-dimensions, political alienation is expected to consist of several related but distinct dimensions as well (Finifter 1970; Southwell 2003; 2012; Nachimas 1974; Denters and Geurts 1993; Olsen 1969; Weatherford 1991). The dimensions represent different manifestations of political alienation, and may have different relationships with other characteristics (such as political behaviour or demographic attributes), but all represent a lasting, active orientation towards some aspect of the political environment denoting feelings of estrangement and non-identification (Finifter 1970; Southwell 2012).

The literature identified four dimensions of political alienation which could relate to an individual’s interaction with the formal arena of politics:¹⁵

¹⁵ An additional dimension, political isolation, was also identified as a theoretical possibility (Finifter 1970; Nachimas 1974; Citrin et al 1975), however this dimension refers to an individual’s desire to actively isolate themselves from their political community (as illustrated

- i) Political Powerlessness: this reflects “an individual’s feeling that he cannot affect the actions of the government... [and that] the heart of the political process... is not subject to his influence” (Finifter 1970, p.390). The alienated individual feels that political decisions are imposed upon them rather than taken in a manner which includes their input (Olsen 1969). This dimension is closely linked to perceptions of political efficacy (Gniewosz et al. 2009; Kabashima et al., 2000)
- ii) Political Normlessness: this is “the individual’s perception that the norms or rules intended to govern political relations have broken down, and that departures from prescribed behaviour are common” (Finifter 1970, p.390). This is closely related to political trust in that it reflects an individual’s belief that the rules and/or conventions of political interaction are not being adhered to, and that they are or would be treated unfairly as a result (Dermody et al. 2010; Gamson 1968). An individual who feels that politicians are corrupt, for instance, would be characterised as exhibiting normlessness alienation.
- iii) Political Meaninglessness: this “refers both to the individual’s perception of the political process as lacking an easily intelligible pattern... that allows the citizen to understand the effects of his choice, and to his feelings that such choices are essentially futile” (Denters and Geurts 1993, p.447; Nachimas 1974). In other words,

through young Americans’ voluntary renunciation of their citizenship, or separatist movements in Scotland or Spain). This is not, however, a manifestation of alienation said to distinctly apply to the Millennials or to explain their behaviour, and so is not examined here.

it reflects an individual's lack of confidence in their capacity to understand the political process and so interact with it in a way which can promote their agenda (Finifter 1970; Gniewosz et al. 2009; Kabashima et al. 2000).

- iv) Political Deprivation: this refers to an individual's perception that the political system is structurally organised in a manner which prevents them from receiving their just desserts (Thompson and Horton 1960; Citrin et al. 1975). In contrast to normlessness, the individual does not believe that they are treated unfairly because of corrupt officials, but because the system itself is organised in a way that disadvantages them. Thompson and Horton (1960) suggested that this could be a common form of alienation among people of lower social class, for example.

The final characteristic which specifically relates to the concept of alienation developed for this research is that it is focussed exclusively on the formal arena of politics and/or the institutions, actors or processes within it. It is, of course, possible to be alienated from other dimensions of politics, such as one's local community, or from other aspects of life involving politics, such as the workplace. The theory this thesis is testing, however, is that at the heart of the conventional wisdom that it is alienation from the processes, institutions and/or actors of formal British politics which alienates the Millennials and which is subsequently responsible for their distinctive behaviour. The concept of alienation developed here, therefore, refers specifically to alienation from the formal political arena.

Bringing these characteristics together, formal political alienation refers to a lasting and relatively stable orientation denoting feelings of estrangement from or non-identification with some aspect of the formal political system, arena or process. It is an active orientation which implies clear behavioural consequences, and in which the individual has at least some cognitive awareness of the object and manifestation of their alienation. It can manifest itself in a number of ways, and this is reflected in its various dimensions.

5.3 The Definition and Characteristics of Formal Political Apathy

There is a far less extensive literature on the nature of political apathy, and it has rarely been directly defined and conceptualised. Most references to the concept – including those in the field of the Millennials' political participation – imply that it refers to an individual's motivation to engage with politics (Dalton 2013; Wattenberg 2012; Henn et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2007). This implication, however, strongly overlaps with the conception developed in the few studies which did directly address how political apathy should be defined and measured.

Dean (1960) and Rosenberg (1954), for example, defined political apathy as referring to an individual's lack of desire for personal involvement with politics. This could refer to their participation in politics, or their engagement with it (Dean 1960; Rosenberg 1954). Similarly, Thompson and Horton (1960) summarised apathy as a generalised indifference towards politics; the apathetic individual has little awareness of politics, only needing enough to know it is not something they are motivated to engage with.

Linking these definitions with the focus on formal politics (since, as with alienation, it is the Millennials' apathy towards formal politics which is of interest), formal political apathy can be defined as an individual's lack of motivation for personal involvement with formal politics. This could mean that they lack a desire for limited engagement (such as taking an interest in a political issue) or for participation (such as discussing politics, or voting). Like alienation, it can be thought of as a continuum rather than an absolute, in that more apathetic individuals have a weaker motivation for personal involvement, and the opposite end of the continuum is defined by the expression of an active interest in politics and a strong motivation for personal involvement with it. It is important to note that this conception of political apathy differs from that often implied in the media and public discourse, in which apathy is taken to refer to a lack of interest in politics (i.e., an attitude) and a lack of political participation (i.e., behaviour) simultaneously (e.g., Mason 2013; Evans et al. 2015). In this research, the concept refers specifically to an attitudinal orientation, which is posited to have a causal effect on political behaviour: i.e., political apathy and a lack of political participation is not the same thing; the latter is caused by the former.

The limited nature of the study of political apathy means that there is less information available about the characteristics the concept may exhibit. Some characteristics can be identified, however, through contrasting apathy with alienation. First, based on studies which have suggested that political interest is relatively stable once individuals have passed through their politically formative years (though it does still change over time as a result of the life cycle, but not dramatically), formal political apathy can, like alienation, be

thought of as a relatively stable political orientation (Smets 2008; Neundorf et al. 2013; Prior 2010; Jankowski and Strate 1995).

Second, in contrast with political alienation, political apathy is not an active orientation i.e., there is no expectation of a cognitive awareness of one's political apathy or its causes; apathy is, by definition, a reflection of one's lack of cognitive awareness of and interest in politics (Thompson and Horton 1960). Political apathy is still expected to be associated with behavioural consequences, but they are less the direct consequences of an active orientation than the reflection of a lack of motivation to do anything else. This means that the behavioural consequences of political apathy are straight-forward to identify; higher levels of apathy imply lower levels of motivation for personal involvement with politics, which in turn implies lower levels of political participation (Thompson and Horton 1960; Dalton 2013).

Finally, in contrast with political alienation, political apathy is expected to be a uni-dimensional concept. There is no expectation that apathy has several manifestations which could constitute different dimensions; it is a single dimension representing an individual's motivation to involve themselves with politics, or in this case, formal politics.

5.4 The Multi-Dimensional Structure of Formal Political Apathy and Formal Political Alienation

The multi-dimensionality of political alienation has been widely discussed (Southwell 2003; 2012; Kabashima et al. 2000; Gniewosz et al. 2009; Finifter 1970; Weatherford 1991). The uni-dimensional structure of political apathy is assumed to be so uncontentious that it has barely been remarked upon in the

extant literature. Both, however, are lacking in empirical verification; no studies have examined the dimensional structure of political apathy, and the only study in the vast literature on political alienation to have done so was Finifter (1970). Following Finifter (1970) – who concluded that of the dimensions of alienation outlined above only powerlessness and normlessness were empirically identifiable, the others were theoretically possible but not empirical realities – almost every study of political alienation since has adopted the same structure. This is true even for studies in very different contexts to Finifter’s (1970) (which was based on 1950s America), including different historic periods or different countries (Southwell 2003; 2012; Southwell and Everest 1998; Dermody et al. 2010; Kabashima et al. 2000; Gniewosz et al. 2009). Following her analysis, Finifter’s (1970) conceptualisation quickly became uncritically accepted as a conventional wisdom, to the extent that Wright (1976) suggested that the issue of its dimensional structure was settled.

As Weatherford (1991) argued, assuming a universal dimensional structure for political alienation, which holds across time and space, is highly questionable, particularly in light of the fact that Finifter (1970) herself did not study the stability or universality of her structure. It is easy to imagine, for example, that political alienation in as different a context from 1950s America as Britain around 2009 (Dermody et al. 2010), Japan in the late 1990s (Kabashima et al. 2000), or America in the 2000s (Southwell 2003; 2012), could be expressed very differently by citizens living in and being socialised into such dramatically different social, economic and political environments.

Furthermore, Finifter's (1970) method for empirically identifying her structure of alienation can also be criticised. Finifter (1970) employed principal components analysis on a range of attitudinal survey variables, and concluded that they loaded onto two factors – one relating to powerlessness and the other to normlessness. However, Van der Eijk and Rose (2015) have argued that principal components analysis is poorly suited for analysing the latent structure of survey data because a) such methods have a tendency to over-estimate the number of latent dimensions, and b) the methods assume that survey respondents do not vary in terms of the characteristics being measured, but instead assume that the survey items themselves are the only thing that vary. This is a highly contentious assumption for social survey data, which is designed to identify and elicit as much variance based on differences between individuals as possible. Van der Eijk and Rose (2015) suggest that methods from the item response theory family – such as the Mokken Scale Analysis (MSA) presented in Chapter Three – are more appropriate.

5.5 Identifying the Dimensional Structure of Formal Political Apathy and Formal Political Alienation

Given these concerns, there is a need to analyse the latent structure of formal political alienation and apathy to confirm the expectations of multi-dimensional and uni-dimensional latent structures respectively as outlined above. Data from the 2010 British Election Study (BES) will be used, as it contains a wide range of variables relating to both political apathy and alienation referring quite explicitly to the formal processes and arena of British politics. The 2010 BES also contains a series of indicators of political

participation which can be used to explore the relationship between apathy, alienation and participation – and to determine whether apathy and/or alienation explain generational differences in participation – in the next chapter.

MSA was used to determine the latent structure of first formal political apathy and then formal political alienation. Variables measuring characteristics which were conceptually consistent with the definitions of political apathy and alienation (as well as the specific dimensions of alienation) outlined above were identified, and recoded so that in all cases a higher score implied a greater level of apathy or alienation.¹⁶ The clusters of variables identified were taken to be indicative of sub-dimensions of the overall concept of political apathy or political alienation (the full results of both MSA are reported in Appendix Four for presentational purposes).

The first MSA examined formal political apathy, and included variables relating to interest in politics and political affairs (including general interest in politics, interest in the 2010 election, and attention to politics), and to political knowledge (including true or false questions about various aspects of British formal politics). The variables relating to political interest were obvious choices on the basis of them essentially measuring the opposite of political apathy. The knowledge variables were included on the basis that an individual with no motivation for personal involvement with politics would be unlikely to be particularly knowledgeable about it.

¹⁶ Responses which could not be meaningfully interpreted in this context – such as ‘don’t know’ or ‘n/a’ – were omitted

The MSA found that the three indicators of political interest reflected a common latent construct, and were accompanied by several political knowledge variables. Two other dimensions of political knowledge were also identified, but disregarded as without some variable relating to political interest, they would be impossible to link to the concept of political apathy. The scale of items was recoded into a composite indication of formal political apathy, with a potential score range of 3 (implying the lowest level of apathy) to 23 (the most apathetic). The average score for this variable in the BES sample was 11.

The second MSA examined formal political alienation and included a total of 22 variables relating to a range of characteristics indicative of alienation. These included variables measuring political trust, political efficacy, perceptions of the gap between life expectations and experiences, life satisfaction, and confidence in political knowledge. In contrast with Finifter's (1970) findings, the analysis identified a total of five dimensions.

The first scale consisted of variables measuring political trust, perceptions of whether or not the government treated the respondent fairly, and democratic satisfaction. These indicators relate to perceptions of how much faith the individual has in the political system itself and in the various institutions and actors within it (including political parties, Parliament, and politicians). This scale represents, therefore, political normlessness.

The second scale consisted of two items both measuring trust in other people rather than some specific aspect of politics. This was not indicative of any dimension of political alienation outlined above, but rather of social trust.

Given the overlap between political and social trust (Newton 2007), this variable should be included in regression analyses involving political normlessness.

The third scale consisted of five items, all reflecting respondents' confidence in their political knowledge based on their willingness to answer questions about their knowledge of politics. This corresponds to political meaninglessness. The fourth scale consisted of two items measuring political efficacy, capturing respondents' views about the effectiveness of political activity for obtaining benefits. However, a survey item which was not related to these two – measuring respondents' perceptions of how much influence they had on politics – more closely relates to the dimension of political powerlessness detailed above, and so this single variable was selected to represent it instead. Finally, the fifth scale consisted of variables measuring life satisfaction and assessments of the gap between life expectations and receipts. This corresponds well with political deprivation.

All of the variables identified to correspond to each dimension of political alienation were recoded into single, composite variables (except for powerlessness which was measured by a single variable) to measure each dimension, with an additional variable measuring social trust. In each case, higher scores implied higher levels of political alienation. The final four variables are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Summary of Formal Political Alienation Measures

Dimension	Variables	Score Range	Mean
Powerlessness	Influence on politics	0 - 11	8.27
Normlessness	Democratic satisfaction	3 - 39	22.78
	Feels govt treats people like respondent fairly		
	Trust in Parliament		
	Trust in Parties		
Meaninglessness	Trust in MPs	0 - 5	1.17
	Recoded Political knowledge variables		
Deprivation	Life satisfaction	2 - 9	5.29
	Feels gap between expectations and what they get		

Source: British Election Study 2010, face to face post-election wave

5.6 Dimensions or Separate Concepts?

While the analyses outlined above identified four dimensions of political alienation, they do not alone provide empirical justification for considering political alienation as a multi-dimensional construct. Conceptually, this justification is straight-forward; each dimension represents a distinct manifestation of alienation from formal politics, based on different attitudes and potentially having different behavioural consequences. There is no empirical justification in the above analyses, however, and nor was one provided in previous studies of alienation, including Finifter (1970).

A straight-forward way of examining the empirical relationship between them is to look at their correlation coefficients. If they are dimensions of the same construct, they could be expected to be significantly and positively correlated,

which could imply that they positively reinforce each other. If the dimensions are not at all correlated, however, it may suggest that there is little empirical reason for considering them to be sub-dimensions of the same concept.

Table 5.2 shows a correlation matrix for the four dimensions. It suggests that while they are correlated – all positively and all of the coefficients are statistically significant – that relationship is quite weak. The strongest coefficient is between normlessness and deprivation, but even this is only moderately strong at 0.31. The next strongest is powerlessness and normlessness at 0.25, while all the other coefficients are below 0.2 and so suggest a very weak association (with that between powerlessness and deprivation as low as 0.1). The data suggests, therefore, that not all of the dimensions are substantially correlated, but not all of them are uncorrelated either.

Table 5.2: Correlation Matrix for Alienation Dimensions

	Normlessness	Meaninglessness	Deprivation
Powerlessness	0.25	0.12	0.10
Normlessness		0.13	0.31
Meaninglessness			0.15

Source: BES 2010, post-election face to face wave; all coefficient statistically significant at 95% confidence level (p<0.001)

The weak association poses a challenge to their being conceptualised as dimensions of the same concept – but the fact that several are moderately correlated suggests that the notion is not entirely without merit either. There is

clearly scope to explore the ways in which these dimensions are related further, making use of structural equation modelling to explore the causal relationships between them, as well as extensive regression analyses to see if empirical justification could come from them sharing common causes or consequences. Such a study would substantially advance the understanding of formal political alienation, but is beyond the scope of this research. For the remainder of the thesis, formal political alienation will be assumed to have a multi-dimensional structure.

5.7 Valid Measures of Apathy and Alienation?

In this section, the measures of apathy and alienation will be validated by examining their effect on political behaviour to ensure that it is consistent with theoretical expectations. This is another step that has not been taken in extant literature on apathy or alienation, which has assumed that the variables were valid representations of the concepts based on theory, but never with empirical justification.

As both are indicators of an orientation towards formal politics, they were validated on the basis of their effect on formal political participation – specifically voting in a general election. Voting is the best choice for two reasons: first, it is the most common form of political participation, meaning that if apathy or alienation do have an impact on formal political behaviour it should be readily apparent here (Martin 2012; Whiteley 2012); and second, voting in elections is the participatory act around which the majority of the claims about the Millennials' alienation and apathy are based (see Chapters One and Two).

The expected consequences of formal political apathy are straight-forward: the concept represents an individual's lack of motivation for personal involvement with formal politics, and so it should be associated with a substantially lower likelihood of them participating in it. Higher levels of political apathy should, therefore, be associated with a lower likelihood of voting in an election.

The expected consequences of political alienation are slightly more complex, not least because the characteristic has been associated with many behavioural traits (see Chapter Two; also Ranade and Norris 1981; Citrin et al. 1975; Schwartz [1973]2009), and because it is conceivable that the different dimensions of alienation could affect different forms of political behaviour in different ways (Aberdach 1969). That said, in terms of Hirschman's (1970) research, there are in essence only two behavioural options open to an individual who is politically alienated in terms of formal politics: "When an individual is faced with an external situation that is perceived as undesirable, he is presented with two options: (1) take remedial action, or; (2) exit the scene" (Southwell and Everest 1998, p.43). In the context of voting in elections, this implies that the alienated individual will either refuse to vote at all (exit the scene), or vote for a candidate or party proposing substantial change to the status quo (take remedial action). In the case of a general election, this would imply voting for a non-mainstream party that proposed substantial changes to the dominant makeup of the political elite or policy status quo. Individuals who vote for such candidates rarely do so out of a genuine expectation that they will win, or that their party will form the next government, and they may not even consider such an outcome desirable (Southwell 2012; Citrin et al. 1975); they do so to either express support for the

change they advocate, or to express dissatisfaction with the status quo supported by the mainstream parties (Southwell 2003; 2012). This can be called ‘non-mainstream voting’. For each proposed measure of political alienation, therefore, there should be a clear association with either a lower likelihood of voting at all, or a greater likelihood of voting for a non-mainstream political candidate, or both.

The tests were conducted using two vote behaviour variables from the 2010 BES; one measuring whether or not the respondent voted at all, and the other (for respondents that did vote) identifying which party they voted for.¹⁷

Logistic regression analysis was used to examine the effects of the proposed indicators on voter behaviour, and a series of control variables were also included to account for other characteristics shown to affect turnout and/or vote choice, including: education, age, gender, social class, income, ethnicity, and (for turnout only) the belief that voting is a civic duty (Clarke et al. 2004; Whiteley et al. 2013; Verba et al. 1995; Verba and Nie 1972).¹⁸

¹⁷The first is a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not the respondent voted, with ‘don’t know’ and similarly unclassifiable responses omitted. The second variable is also dichotomous, scoring respondents who voted for any non-mainstream party in the 2010 election (i.e. the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the British National Party (BNP), the Green Party, or any candidate coded as ‘other’) a ‘1’, and those who voted for the Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Scottish Nationalist (SNP) or Plaid Cymru parties scored a ‘0’. Respondents refusing to answer or responding ‘don’t know’ were omitted. Votes for the SNP and Plaid Cymru were not considered ‘non-mainstream voting’ in this context. While these parties advocate a dramatic change to the status quo as far as the political community is concerned – with both supporting separation from the United Kingdom – their other policies do not constitute such a dramatic change. As political isolation – the form of alienation associated with the desire to reject one’s political community – is not being examined in this analysis, voting for parties representing that form of alienation was not considered ‘non-mainstream voting’.

¹⁸ The details of these control variables are provided in Appendix One.

5.8 Validity Test of Formal Political Apathy

Table 5.3 reports the analyses which examined the effect of formal political apathy on the likelihood of voting in the 2010 general election. The effect of the apathy variable alone (reported in the first analysis in the middle column) was significant and negative, as expected (with a coefficient -0.23). With the control variables included, the effect of apathy persisted and remained significant, though of less magnitude (with the coefficient falling to -0.17). Higher scores on the formal political apathy variable, therefore, were associated with a lower likelihood of voting in the general election, both with and without control variables, and so it can be accepted as a valid measure. It is also worth noting the Pseudo r-squared figure for the models, which show that the formal political apathy measure makes an impressive contribution to explaining variance in turnout: in the apathy only model, the figure was 0.18, and once the controls were included this rose to 0.3.

Table 5.3: Effect of Formal Political Apathy on Vote Likelihood

Voted in 2010	Coef	Std Err	Coef	Std Err
Apathy	-0.23***	0.01	-0.17***	0.02
Age			0.02	0.02
Age2			0.00	0.00
Education			0.07	0.05
Social Class			0.09	0.05
Income			0.09***	0.02
Gender			0.37**	0.13
Ethnicity			-1.01***	0.19
Civic Duty			0.68***	0.06
Constant	4.13***	0.15	-1.63*	0.66
Obs	3064		2351	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.18		0.30	

Source: Logistic regression analysis on 2010 BES post-election face to face survey wave data. Figures rounded to 2 decimal places. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

5.9 Validity Test of Formal Political Alienation

Table 5.4 reports the analyses which examined the effect of the four alienation dimensions on the likelihood of respondents voting in the 2010 election. Table 5.4a shows the effects of the dimensions alone, first individually and then collectively (from left to right). The Table 5.4b show the effects of those dimensions with the control variables included.

The analyses showed that on their own, all four indicators had a significant and negative effect on the likelihood of an individual voting (powerlessness: -0.21; normlessness: -0.09; meaninglessness: -0.55; deprivation: -0.23), though their contribution to explaining differences in turnout was very limited (with all four

pseudo r-squared statistics below 0.1). The fifth model shows that when all four dimensions of alienation were included, powerlessness (-0.09), normlessness (-0.07) and meaninglessness (-0.45) continued to have significant and negative effects on vote likelihood, though the magnitude of each was reduced.¹⁹ Political deprivation, however, no longer had a significant effect. The explanatory potential of this model was vastly superior to the individual dimension models, with a Pseudo r-squared of 0.12.

The inclusion of the control variables reduced the individual effects of all of the alienation indicators, but those of powerlessness (-0.15), normlessness (-0.04) and meaninglessness (-0.34) remained statistically significant. The political deprivation indicator, however, no longer had a significant effect. The composite alienation model showed that including all four alienation dimensions with the control variables reduced the magnitude of the effect of each dimension on vote likelihood still further, but the effects of powerlessness (-0.11), normlessness (-0.04) and meaninglessness (-0.3) continued to be significant. The effect of political deprivation continued to be non-significant. The Pseudo r-squared for this final model was much better than all of the previous models (at 0.28), showing that the composite political alienation measure plus the control variables contributes a substantial amount to explaining variation in turnout, though it is still inferior to the apathy models.

¹⁹ Note that as the four dimensions are measured on different scales, the regression coefficients are not directly comparable

Table 5.4a: Effect of Formal Political Alienation Dimensions on Turnout in 2010 (no controls)

Voted in 2010	Coef	Std Er								
Powerlessness	-0.21***	0.02							-0.09**	0.03
Normlessness			-0.09***	0.01					-0.07***	0.01
Meaninglessness					-0.55***	0.03			-0.45***	0.04
Deprivation							-0.23***	0.03	-0.07	0.04
Constant	3.01***	0.22	3.53***	0.18	2.04***	0.07	2.51***	0.18	4.82	0.31
Obs	3057		2854		3070		3014		2809	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.02		0.06		0.09		0.02		0.12	

Source: Logistic regression analysis BES 2010, face to face survey post-election wave. Figures rounded to 2 decimal places. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

Table 5.4b: Effect of Formal Political Alienation Dimensions on Turnout in 2010 (with controls)

Voted in 2010	Coef	Std Er								
Powerlessness	-0.15***	0.03							-0.11**	0.03
Normlessness			-0.04***	0.01					-0.04***	0.01
Meaninglessness					-0.34***	0.05			-0.30***	0.06
Deprivation							-0.03	0.05	0.04	0.05
Age	0.04*	0.02	0.05*	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.04*	0.02	0.03	0.02
Age2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Education	0.17**	0.05	0.14**	0.05	0.16**	0.05	0.19***	0.05	0.11*	0.05
Social Class	0.15**	0.05	0.16**	0.05	0.11*	0.05	0.16**	0.05	0.13*	0.05
Income	0.10***	0.02	0.08***	0.02	0.09***	0.02	0.10***	0.02	0.08***	0.02
Gender	0.02	0.12	0.07	0.13	0.25	0.13	0.00	0.12	0.30*	0.13
Ethnicity	-1.15***	0.18	-1.21***	0.19	-0.92***	0.19	-1.08***	0.18	-1.10***	0.20
Civic Duty	0.80***	0.06	0.78***	0.06	0.78***	0.06	0.83***	0.06	0.71***	0.06
Social Trust			0.02	0.02					0.01	0.02
Constant	-3.97***	0.63	-4.11***	0.68	-3.70***	0.61	-5.20***	0.64	-2.19**	0.81
Obs	2347		2214		2354		2331		2192	
Prob > Chi2	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.25		0.24		0.26		0.24		0.26	

Source: Logistic regression analysis BES 2010, face to face survey post-election wave. Figures rounded to 2 decimal places. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

Turning to non-mainstream voting, Table 5.5 shows the effects of the four alienation indicators on the likelihood of an individual voting for a non-mainstream candidate in the 2010 election. The data is presented in the same format as Table 5.4: Table 5.5a shows the models for the alienation indicators only, and Table 5.5b shows those that included the controls.

Table 5.5a shows that individually neither political powerlessness nor meaningfulness had significant effects on non-mainstream voting.

Normlessness and deprivation, on the other hand, did, with statistically significant coefficients of 0.14 and 0.39 respectively. The composite model showed similar effects; when controlling for the other dimensions of alienation, powerlessness and meaningfulness had no significant impact, while normlessness (0.12) and deprivation (0.21) had a significant, positive effect.

The Pseudo r-squared statistics for these two models show that normlessness makes a reasonable contribution to explaining non-mainstream voting (0.10), and much higher than it makes to explaining turnout (see Table 5.4a), but deprivation makes a more limited contribution (0.04). In the composite model, the figure barely increased from that in the normlessness only model, to 0.12.

Including the controls (Table 5.5b) had only a small impact on these effects.

Both powerlessness and meaningfulness continued to have non-significant effects, individually and in the composite alienation model. Normlessness continued to be positively associated with non-mainstream voting, with a significant coefficient of 0.11, both when considered alone and once the other dimensions of alienation were controlled for. Deprivation had a significant, positive effect (0.23) alone, but once the other dimensions of alienation were

accounted for, the effect became non-significant. Including the control variables made almost no difference to the explanatory power of the models; the normlessness plus controls model had a Pseudo r-squared of 0.11, barely above that of the normlessness-only model, and the composite model with controls actually had a slightly lower figure than that of the composite alienation only model – with a Pseudo r-squared of 0.11 compared with 0.12.

Table 5.5a: Effect of Formal Political Alienation on Non-Mainstream Voting (no controls)

N-M Voting	Coef	Std Er								
Powerlessness	0.06	0.05							-0.03	0.05
Normlessness			0.14***	0.02					0.12***	0.02
Meaninglessness					0.17	0.09			0.12	0.09
Deprivation							0.39***	0.07	0.21**	0.08
Constant	-3.01***	0.42	-5.80***	0.43	-2.70***	0.13	-4.63***	0.42	-6.56***	0.63
Obs	1544		1505		1549		1530		1487	
Prob > Chi2	0.23		0.00		0.06		0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.00		0.10		0.00		0.04		0.12	

Source: Logistic regression analysis BES 2010, face to face post-election wave. Figures rounded to 2 decimal places. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

Table 5.5b: Effect of Formal Political Alienation on Non-Mainstream Voting (with controls)

N-M Voting	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Powerlessness	0.01	0.05							-0.06	0.06
Normlessness			0.11***	0.02					0.11***	0.02
Meaninglessness					0.14	0.11			0.16	0.11
Deprivation							0.23**	0.09	0.11	0.09
Age	-0.02*	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01
Education	-0.17	0.09	-0.10	0.09	-0.16	0.09	-0.14	0.09	-0.08	0.09
Social Class	-0.13	0.09	-0.15	0.09	-0.11	0.09	-0.12	0.09	-0.12	0.09
Income	-0.08*	0.04	-0.06	0.04	-0.08*	0.04	-0.06	0.04	-0.04	0.04
Gender	-0.39	0.23	-0.32	0.24	-0.48*	0.24	-0.37	0.23	-0.40	0.25
Ethnicity	0.16	0.45	0.13	0.46	0.13	0.45	0.10	0.45	0.09	0.47
Social Trust			0.00	0.03					0.02	0.03
Constant	-0.05	0.73	-3.63***	0.9	-0.31	0.65	-1.75	0.9	-4.38***	1.18
Obs	1209		1183		1211		1202		1174	
Prob > Chi2	0.001		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.04		0.11		0.04		0.05		0.11	

Source: Logistic regression analysis BES 2010, face to face post-election wave. Figures rounded to 2 decimal places. * - p-value <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

The tests showed, therefore, that only the indicators of political powerlessness, normlessness and meaninglessness can be taken as valid based on the criteria outlined above. Higher levels of political powerlessness and meaninglessness are both associated with less chance of an individual voting in a general election, but they have no impact on whether or not they will support a non-mainstream candidate. Higher levels of normlessness alienation both depress the chances of an individual voting and increase the chances of them voting for a non-mainstream candidate. Finally, higher levels of political deprivation have no effect on the likelihood of someone voting, and, once political normlessness has been accounted for, no effect on their chances of supporting a non-mainstream candidate either. This means that the measures of powerlessness, normlessness and meaninglessness are accepted as valid as they are all associated with at least one of the two expected behavioural outcomes of being politically alienated. The measure of political deprivation, however, must be rejected as it has no effect on the chances of an individual 'exiting the scene' or taking 'remedial action'.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has developed clear and empirically informed definitions, conceptualisations and measurements suitable for studying formal political apathy and formal political alienation in Britain. It has developed the tools, therefore, to test the theories that British Millennials are a distinctly alienated, as opposed to a distinctly apathetic, political generation, and that this is responsible for their unique political behaviour.

The assessment has produced a uni-dimensional conception of formal political apathy, relating to an individual's lasting lack of motivation for personal involvement with formal politics. It is measured by indicators relating to interest in politics and political affairs, as well as political knowledge, and depresses political participation. It has also produced a multi-dimensional conception of formal political alienation, referring to an individual's lasting active estrangement from the formal political arena and/or particular processes, institutions or actors within it. Political powerlessness refers to the individual's perception that they have no influence over political decisions from that arena, and is measured by a variable relating to influence on politics. It depresses the likelihood of someone participating in formal politics. Political normlessness refers to a lack of faith that the norms and conventions of just political conduct are being adhered to by actors or institutions within formal politics. It is measured by a series of variables relating to political trust, democratic satisfaction and perceptions of fair treatment by the government, and has the effect of both depressing formal political participation and increasing support for non-mainstream candidates. Finally, political meaninglessness refers to an individual's lack of confidence in their knowledge and understanding of formal politics, and is measured by variables examining confidence in political knowledge. Like political powerlessness, it depresses formal political participation but has no effect on support for non-mainstream candidates.

A fourth dimension of alienation – political deprivation – was also examined, but ultimately rejected as a valid indicator of an individual's estrangement from politics because it had no significant impact on formal political participation or support for non-mainstream candidates (once political

normlessness was accounted for). Whether this means that political deprivation is not actually a recognisable manifestation of formal political alienation as defined above, or that the indicator of political deprivation selected was invalid, is unclear.

Chapter Six: Apathy, Alienation and the Political Participation of the Millennials

This chapter uses the measures of formal political apathy and alienation to examine a) the Millennials' apathy and alienation relative to their elders' at the time of the 2010 British general election, and b) what role their apathy and/or alienation play in explaining their lower levels of political participation. Using the same 2010 British Election Study (BES) data employed in Chapter Five, this chapter begins by looking at the differences in the typical expressions of apathy and each dimension of alienation between the Millennials and the older generations in the British electorate. It then uses data on expected political participation to explore the effect of apathy and alienation on the Millennials' formal and cause-oriented political behaviour, with a particular focus on whether or not they explain the difference between the Millennials' participation and that of their elders.

The conclusions challenge the often argued conventional wisdom that the Millennials are as interested in formal politics as their elders, identifying them as the most apathetic generation in the British electorate. The analyses do find evidence to support the assertion, however, that the Millennials are also unusually alienated from politics, showing that they are typically more alienated by their lack of confidence in their own political knowledge than their elders (i.e., political meaninglessness). There is no indication, however, of the Millennials being unusually alienated in terms of the other characteristics so frequently attributed to them, such as their perception of having no influence

on politics (political powerlessness) or lacking trust in the formal political process (political normlessness).

The data also suggests that both the Millennials' distinct levels of apathy and alienation help explain their unusually low levels of political participation. Their alienation depresses their formal and cause-oriented political participation, even once the effects of other characteristics (such as political sophistication) were accounted for. By far the most substantial effect, however, comes from their political apathy. Their alienation is important, but it is the Millennials' lack of motivation for involvement with formal politics which best helps explain their unwillingness to participate in formal or cause-oriented politics.

6.1 Apathy and Alienation in the British Electorate

This section examines the typical levels of formal political apathy and alienation exhibited by the political generations of the British electorate (see Chapter Three), and compares the Millennials' apathy and alienation with that of their elders. Table 6.1 shows the average scores for each generation on the apathy and three alienation dimension variables (details on the measures of apathy and each dimension of alienation are provided in Chapter Five and Appendix Four).²⁰ A t-test was conducted on each score to determine whether or not the difference between the Millennials and each of the older generations was statistically significant.

²⁰ The Pre-War and Post-War generations have been merged into a single 'Pre/Post-War' category because the Pre-War category would be too small to sustain reliable analyses.

Table 6.1: Average Formal Political Apathy and Formal Political Alienation Score by Generation

Generation	Apathy	Powerlessness	Normlessness	Meaninglessness
Millennials	13.47	8.11	23.05	2.13
90s	11.32***	8.01	22.79	1.24***
80s	11.21***	8.18	23.80	1.07***
60s-70s	9.86***	8.20	22.83	0.80***
Pre/Post-War	10.61***	8.67†††	21.93***	1.11***

Source: 2010 BES face to face post-election wave. * relate to test that selected score is lower than that for the Millennials (* - $p < 0.05$; ** - $p < 0.01$; *** - $p < 0.001$). † relate to test that selected score is greater than that for the Millennials († - $p < 0.05$; †† - $p < 0.01$; ††† - $p < 0.001$)

The table shows that the Millennials were typically more apathetic than their elders, scoring just over two points higher (at 13.5) than all of the other generations (whose scores range from 9.9 for the 60s-70s generation to 11.3 for the 90s generation), with all of the differences being statistically significant. The figures suggest something of a curvilinear relationship between apathy and age similar to that implied by the life cycle theory of the relationship between age and political interest (Jankowski and Strate 1995). While this cannot be confirmed in cross-sectional data, whatever the cause the fact remains that the Millennials were substantially more apathetic than their elders.

The second column in Table 6.1 shows the average scores for political powerlessness. The figures show that the most alienated generation was the Pre/Post-War generation, with an average score of 8.7. The other four generations had similar and lower levels of alienation, with scores ranging between 8 and 8.2. The Millennials – at 8.1 – were generally no different from the wider electorate; none of the differences between the Millennials' and their elders, except for the Pre/Post-War generation, were statistically significant. The third column shows the scores for political normlessness. This time, the Pre/Post-War generation were the least alienated, with a score of 21.9, while all the other generations had similar and higher levels of alienation, scoring 22.8 and 23.8. The Millennials' score of 23.1 was not significantly different from any of the others apart from the Pre/Post-War, showing that, as with powerlessness, they did not stand out from most of the wider electorate for being alienated. Finally, the fourth column shows the scores for meaninglessness alienation and suggests that the Millennials were significantly more alienated than the wider electorate. Their average score was 2.1,

significantly higher than those of all the older generations, whose scores ranged between 0.8 and 1.2.

6.2 Regression Analysis of Apathy and Alienation in the British electorate

Past research on political apathy and alienation and the traits indicative of them suggests that there are several individual characteristics which could influence how apathetic or alienated a given individual may be. These include political and social resources, social capital, political sophistication, gender and ethnicity (Dalton 2013; Clarke et al. 2004; Finifter 1970; Verba et al. 1995; Persson 2013; Citrin et al. 1975; Putnam 2000; Southwell 2003; 2012). Differences in these characteristics, therefore, may explain the differences in apathy and alienation between the Millennials' and their elders identified above.

Table 6.2 reports the results of regression analyses used to examine the differences between the political generations in terms of apathy and alienation further and to determine whether those differences could be explained by other characteristics.²¹ Table 6.2a shows the data for political apathy, and the initial analysis (i.e., without controls) unsurprisingly corresponds to the data in Table 6.1, suggesting that the Millennials were the most apathetic generation and the 60s-70s generation the least apathetic (with all of the differences between the Millennials and the older generations being statistically significant).

Adding in the control variables had a substantial impact on the relationship between apathy and generation. As expected, higher levels of political and

²¹ The control variables are identical to those used in Chapter Four. Details can be found in Appendix One.

social resources and political sophistication (measured by education, social class and income) were associated with lower levels of apathy, as were higher levels of social capital (measured by social trust), and being male. Ethnicity had no significant effect. With these effects controlled for, the magnitude of the differences between the Millennials and the 90s, 80s and 60s-70s generations were reduced (with the 90s generation coefficient shifting from -2.14 to -1.08; the 80s shifting from -2.25 to -1.46; and the 60s-70s shifting from -3.61 to -3.09), but all remained statistically significant and continued to suggest that the Millennials were more apathetic. The magnitude of the difference between the Millennials and the Pre/Post-War generation, however, increased (from -2.86 to -3.29), suggesting that this was the least apathetic generation once differences represented by the control variables were accounted for.

Table 6.2a: Regression Analysis of Formal Political Apathy by Generation

Apathy	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)				
90s	-2.14***	0.32	-1.08**	0.33
80s	-2.25***	0.33	-1.46***	0.34
60s-70s	-3.61***	0.32	-3.09***	0.35
Pre/Post-War	-2.86***	0.31	-3.29***	0.35
Education			-0.65***	0.07
Social Class			-0.51***	0.07
Income			-0.15***	0.03
Gender			1.78***	0.17
Ethnicity			0.19	0.29
Social Trust			-0.13***	0.02
Constant	13.47***	0.26	18.38***	0.43
Obs	3053		2346	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00	
R-squared	0.04		0.25	
Adj R-squared	0.04		0.25	

Source: 2010 BES face to face post-election wave. OLS regression analysis, missing observations removed through list wise deletion. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value for coefficient <0.01; *** - p-value for coefficient <0.001

Table 6.2b: Regression Analysis of Political Powerlessness by Generation

Powerlessness	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)						
90s	-0.10	0.15	0.04	0.18	0.06	0.18
80s	0.07	0.15	0.27	0.18	0.28	0.19
60s-70s	0.09	0.15	0.07	0.19	0.23	0.19
Pre/Post-War	0.56***	0.14	0.40*	0.19	0.69***	0.20
Normlessness					0.08***	0.01
Meaninglessness					0.10*	0.04
Education			-0.19***	0.04	-0.13***	0.04
Social Class			-0.01	0.04	0.01	0.04
Income			-0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
Gender			0.05	0.09	-0.01	0.09
Ethnicity			-0.36*	0.15	-0.23	0.16
Social Trust			-0.03*	0.01	0.02	0.01
Constant	8.11***	0.12	9.08***	0.23	6.03***	0.34
Obs	3046		2341		2210	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00	
R-squared	0.01		0.05		0.10	
Adj R-squared	0.01		0.04		0.10	

Source: 2010 BES face to face post-election wave. OLS regression analysis, missing observations removed through list wise deletion. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value for coefficient <0.01; *** - p-value for coefficient <0.001

Table 6.2c: Regression Analysis of Political Normlessness by Generation

Normlessness	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Generation (Millennials)						
90s	-0.26	0.50	0.67	0.54	0.76	0.53
80s	0.75	0.51	1.62**	0.55	1.53**	0.54
60s-70s	-0.22	0.5	0.03	0.56	0.13	0.56
Pre/Post-War	-1.12*	0.48	-1.37*	0.57	-1.54**	0.56
Powerlessness					0.68***	0.06
Meaninglessness					0.18	0.12
Education			-0.59***	0.11	-0.44***	0.10
Social Class			-0.09	0.11	-0.07	0.10
Income			-0.18***	0.04	-0.16***	0.04
Gender			0.02	0.27	-0.12	0.27
Ethnicity			-2.37***	0.46	-2.15***	0.45
Social Trust			-0.45***	0.04	-0.43***	0.04
Constant	23.05***	0.42	31.49***	0.69	24.93***	0.90
Obs	2843		2216		2210	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00	
R-squared	0.01		0.14		0.19	
Adj R-squared	0.01		0.14		0.19	

Source: 2010 BES face to face post-election wave. OLS regression analysis, missing observations removed through list wise deletion. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value for coefficient <0.01; *** - p-value for coefficient <0.001

Table 6.2d: Regression Analysis of Political Meaninglessness by Generation

Meaninglessness	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)						
90s	-0.89***	0.09	-0.50***	0.09	-0.47***	0.09
80s	-1.06***	0.09	-0.74***	0.09	-0.68***	0.09
60s-70s	-1.34***	0.09	-1.02***	0.1	-0.89***	0.10
Pre/Post-War	-1.02***	0.08	-0.90***	0.1	-0.80***	0.10
Powerlessness					0.02*	0.01
Normlessness					0.01	0.00
Education			-0.09***	0.02	-0.06***	0.02
Social Class			-0.14***	0.02	-0.12***	0.02
Income			-0.04***	0.01	-0.03***	0.01
Gender			0.62***	0.05	0.58***	0.04
Ethnicity			0.41***	0.08	0.43***	0.08
Social Trust			-0.03***	0.01	-0.03***	0.01
Constant	2.13***	0.07	2.85***	0.12	2.18***	0.18
Obs	3059		2349		2210	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00	
R-squared	0.07		0.25		0.22	
Adj R-squared	0.07		0.24		0.22	

Source: 2010 BES face to face post-election wave. OLS regression analysis, missing observations removed through list wise deletion. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value for coefficient <0.01; *** - p-value for coefficient <0.001

Table 6.2b reports the analyses for political powerlessness. The initial analysis once again confirmed the finding of Table 6.1; that the most alienated were the Pre/Post-War generation, and the other four generations (including the Millennials) were less alienated and did not substantially differ from each other. Adding in the first set of control variables (i.e., those relating to the characteristics specified above, not the other dimensions of political alienation) had only a limited impact on the generational differences; the difference between the Millennials and the 90s, 80s and 60s-70s generations remained non-significant and very small, while the coefficient for the Pre/Post-War generation reduced from -0.56 to -0.4 but remained statistically significant. The controls themselves only had a small impact on powerlessness; education (relating to political sophistication) depressed powerlessness (coefficient of -0.19), as did higher levels of social capital (-0.03) and being from a minority ethnic background (-0.36). None of the other controls had a significant effect.

Once the other dimensions of political alienation were also controlled for, the effect of social capital and ethnicity on powerlessness became non-significant; education was the only control variable which continued to have a significant effect (coefficient of -0.13). Both normlessness (0.08) and meaninglessness (0.1) were significantly and positively associated with powerlessness alienation, reflecting the fact that the three are slightly positively correlated (see Chapter Five) and suggesting that they may be reinforcing i.e., someone who is alienated through one dimension has a greater likelihood of also being alienated through another. In this model, the differences between the Millennials and the 90s, 80s and 60s-70s generations increase in magnitude but remain non-significant. The coefficient for the Pre/Post-War generation

increased to 0.69, suggesting that differences in other dimensions of alienation are important to explaining generational differences in political powerlessness, further supporting the suggestion that they may be mutually reinforcing.

Table 6.2c shows the data for political normlessness. Once again, the initial coefficients suggested a similar relationship to that found in Table 6.1, in which the Pre/Post-War generation were the least alienated, and there was no significant difference between the remaining generations, although the coefficients did suggest that the 80s generation may have stood out for being unusually alienated. Introducing the controls had a notable impact on the generational coefficients: the magnitude of the Pre/Post-War generation coefficient increased to -1.37 from -1.12, suggesting that differences in the control variables helped explain why the oldest respondents were so much less likely to be alienated than the younger generations. There continued to be no significant difference between the Millennials and either the 90s or 60s-70s generations, but the coefficient for the 80s generation increased to a statistically significant 1.62, suggesting that they were typically the most alienated generation in the electorate. The control variable coefficients suggested that political sophistication (education), income, being from a minority ethnic background and social capital all depressed normlessness alienation, with the biggest impact from ethnicity, and there was no significant effect from either gender or social class.

Adding in the controls for the other dimensions of alienation suggested that meaningfulness alienation had no significant effect on normlessness, but powerlessness had a positive, significant effect (coefficient of 0.68). The

magnitude of the Pre/Post-War coefficient increased still further to -1.54, and that of the 80s generation fell slightly to 1.53. The differences between the Millennials and the 90s and 60s-70s generations – while implying lower levels of alienation among the Millennials – continued to be non-significant.

Finally, Table 6.2d reports the analyses for political meaninglessness. The initial coefficients identified the Millennials as the most alienated, at the lowest end of a curvilinear effect comparable to that seen for political apathy in Table 6.2a, in which the 60s-70s generation were the least alienated. The second model showed that all of the control variables had a significant effect on meaninglessness alienation: higher levels of political sophistication and political and social resources, and of social capital, as well as being male and being white British were all associated with lower levels of meaninglessness. Controlling for these factors reduced the magnitude of the generational coefficients, but the overall pattern was the same: the Millennials were the most alienated, followed by the 90s generation (-0.5), then the 80s (-0.74), then the Pre/Post-War (-0.9), and finally the 60s-70s (-1.0). Adding in the controls for the other dimensions of alienation suggested that normlessness had no significant effect on meaninglessness, but powerlessness had a small, positive impact (with a significant coefficient of 0.02). All of the other control variables continued to exert a comparable impact on meaninglessness as suggested in the previous model, and the generational coefficients implied a similar relationship, with the only difference being that the magnitude of the effects was slightly reduced.

6.3 Summary

The data above shows that, in contrast to the somewhat categorical nature of the ‘apathy versus alienation’ debate as it is sometimes conducted in the literature and/or public discourse (see Chapter One), at the time of the 2010 election the Millennials were both the most apathetic generation in the electorate and – in terms of political meaningfulness – the most alienated. In other words, the Millennials exhibited the weakest motivations for personal involvement with formal politics, and the lowest levels of confidence in their own political understanding. There is no indication, however, that they were particularly alienated in terms of political powerlessness or normlessness.

The analyses presented above also shed some light onto the causes of this generational distinction. Political sophistication, political and social resources and social capital were all shown to have a significant impact on political apathy and alienation in at least one dimension, with education and social capital affecting all four. Gender and ethnicity were also important, but made less of a contribution to explaining generational differences. The data showed that differences between the Millennials and their elders in terms of primarily social capital, income, social class and education helped to explain – though not entirely – their unusually high levels of apathy and/or meaningfulness alienation. This finding is consistent with many of the arguments in the literature (see Chapter Two) regarding the consequences of the Millennials’ unusually low levels of social capital (Putnam 2000; Macedo et al. 2005), their unique habits of media consumption (Wattenberg 2012), their lack of identification with political parties and other political institutions (Dalton 2013;

Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Whiteley 2012), and the pressures of their current stage of the political life cycle (Stoker 2006; Smets 2008), all of which have been associated with the Millennials' having less interest in politics or being less knowledgeable – or being less confident in their knowledge – about it.

Finally, the Pseudo r-squared statistics in the models show that differences in political generation play a very limited role in explaining differences in political apathy and alienation. Generational differences alone were shown to account for the most variance in political meaninglessness, for which the generation-only model had a Pseudo r-squared of 0.07. For apathy, powerlessness and normlessness, the equivalent figures were 0.04, 0.01 and 0.01 respectively. Only with the inclusion of the control variables did these figures markedly improve: the final model for apathy had a Pseudo r-squared of 0.25, for powerlessness of 0.10, for normlessness of 0.19 and for meaninglessness of 0.22. While there are clearly substantial differences between political generations in terms of apathy and each dimension of alienation, as with political participation, these analyses suggest that it is differences in political and social resources, social capital and (in some instances) individual demographic characteristics that are much more influential.

6.4 The Effects of Apathy and Alienation on Political Participation

To explore whether these differences help explain the Millennials' low levels of political participation, data on expected political participation from the 2010 BES was used. These indicators are not the same as those measuring previous

political participation analysed in Chapters Two and Three, but are the only variables in the 2010 BES capable of exploring the effects of the Millennials' apathy and alienation on a wide range of political acts.²² Respondents were asked how likely they were to participate in a total of nine acts, on a scale from 0 (meaning not at all likely) to 10 (meaning very likely), including: voting in the next local election; voting in the next European election; boycotting or 'buycotting' (i.e., deliberately purchasing rather than refusing to purchase) a product for political reasons; taking part in a rally or demonstration; working with a group to solve a common problem; discussing politics with friends and/or family; campaigning for a political party; and donating money to a political party.

Replicating the processes reported in Chapter Three, latent structure analysis was conducted on this data to identify the dimensions of political participation to which these nine acts corresponded (this analysis is reported in Appendix Five). The results showed that two of the dimensions outlined in Chapter Three were indicated: formal political participation and cause-oriented political participation. While data relating to the civic and issue-specific formal participation dimensions would have been preferable, none was available in this dataset. That said, an analysis of formal and cause-oriented participation is sufficient to test the theory that the Millennials' alienation (or apathy) is responsible for their unusually low levels of political participation both inside

²² Appendix Five discusses the potential drawbacks of using measures of expected rather than previous political participation, and also examines the similarities between the two, confirming that they are sufficiently similar for this study.

and outside of the formal political arena, and that their alienation increases their cause-oriented activity.

6.5 Expected Political Participation in the British Electorate

This section presents analyses exploring the differences between the Millennials and their elders in terms of the expected formal and expected cause-oriented political participation measures developed in Appendix Five, so that the role of political apathy and each dimension of alienation in explaining those differences can be identified. Table 6.3 shows the differences between the generations for both expected formal and cause-oriented participation, and then shows those differences while controlling for political and social resources, political sophistication, ethnicity, gender and social capital.²³

²³ The detail of these variables is provided in Appendix One.

Table 6.3: Expected Political Participation by Generation

Expected Formal Participation	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Expected Cause-oriented Participation	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)					(Millennials)				
90s	2.76***	0.70	1.55*	0.77	90s	2.39***	0.68	2.37**	0.78
80s	2.68***	0.72	1.75*	0.79	80s	2.09**	0.69	2.43**	0.80
60s-70s	4.48***	0.71	4.43***	0.81	60s-70s	1.24	0.68	2.43**	0.82
Pre/Post-War	2.93***	0.68	4.27***	0.81	Pre/Post-War	-2.63***	0.66	-0.32	0.82
Education			1.30***	0.16	Education			1.09***	0.16
Social Class			0.84***	0.16	Social Class			0.80***	0.16
Income			0.30***	0.06	Income			0.07	0.06
Gender			-1.05**	0.39	Gender			0.24	0.40
Ethnicity			0.98	0.68	Ethnicity			-0.55	0.68
Social Trust			0.33***	0.05	Social Trust			0.20***	0.06
Constant	18.65***	0.58	6.30***	1.00	Constant	13.42***	0.56	3.30**	1.01
Obs	2927		2267		Obs	2961		2294	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		Prob > F	0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.01		0.16		r-squared	0.04		0.11	
Adj r-squared	0.01		0.16		Adj r-squared	0.04		0.11	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001

The initial analyses without controls showed that the generational pattern corresponds to that identified in Chapter Three: the Millennials expect to be the least active in formal politics, typically scoring between 2.7 and 4.5 points lower than their elders on the 0-50 variable. The middle-aged 60s-70s generation expect to be the most active (coefficient: 4.48), with the Pre/Post-War, 90s and 80s generations expecting similar levels of activity (with significant coefficients of 2.93, 2.76 and 2.68 respectively).

Accounting for the control variables produced almost the same conclusions as those in Chapter Three, with higher levels political sophistication, political and social resources, and social capital, as well as being male, raising respondents' expectations of formal political activity (ethnicity had no significant impact). The effect of controlling for these factors was to reduce the magnitude of the 90s and 80s generations' coefficients (to 1.55 and 1.75 respectively), suggesting that differences in these characteristics help explain why the Millennials are slightly less active than these two generations, and had almost no impact on the 60s-70s generation coefficient, suggesting that differences in these characteristics play little role in explaining why this generation is so much more active than the Millennials. It also increased the coefficient of the Pre/Post-War generation to 4.27. The data confirms, therefore, that even with differences in political sophistication and resources, as well as social capital, gender and ethnicity accounted for, the Millennials continue to expect to be the least active in formal politics.

Table 6.3 suggests that the situation is slightly different for expected cause-oriented participation. The generational coefficients in the initial model

suggested that the Pre/Post-War generation expect to be the least active rather than the Millennials (with a significant coefficient of -2.6), and there was no significant difference between the Millennials and the 60s-70s generation (with an insignificant coefficient of 1.24). The 80s and 90s generations expect to be the most active, with significant coefficients of 2.09 and 2.39 respectively. The coefficients suggested, therefore, that the Millennials were in the middle of the pack for expected cause-oriented activity; they expected to be more active than the Pre/Post-War generation, as active as the 60s-70s, and less active than the 80s and 90s.

Accounting for the control variables changed this picture somewhat. In contrast with expected formal participation, only political sophistication and certain aspects of political and social resources, along with social capital, had a significant and positive effect (education, social class and social trust had significant effects, but income did not). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between men and women or white and non-white British respondents. With these effects accounted for, the Millennials were found to expect to be the least active generation along with the Pre/Post-War (the coefficient for which shifted to an insignificant -0.32). There was no identifiable difference between the 90s, 80s or 60s-70s generations.

6.6 Effects of Apathy and Alienation on Expected Political Participation

This section explores the impact of formal political apathy and alienation on expected political participation, and particularly on the differences in expected participation between the Millennials and their elders. Table 6.4 begins with analyses examining the effect of formal political apathy on expected formal

political participation, both with and without the controls. It also reports the analyses presented in Table 6.3 for ease of comparison.

Table 6.4: Effect of Formal Political Apathy on Expected Formal Political Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.76***	0.70	-0.4	0.51	1.55*	0.77	-0.09	0.60
80s	2.68***	0.72	-0.67	0.53	1.75*	0.79	-0.32	0.62
60s-70s	4.48***	0.71	-0.83	0.53	4.43***	0.81	-0.04	0.65
Pre/Post-War	2.93***	0.68	-1.48**	0.50	4.27***	0.81	-0.68	0.65
Apathy			-1.49***	0.03			-1.43***	0.04
Education					1.30***	0.16	0.35**	0.13
Social Class					0.84***	0.16	0.15	0.12
Income					0.30***	0.06	0.09	0.05
Gender					-1.05**	0.39	1.46***	0.32
Ethnicity					0.98	0.68	1.10*	0.53
Social Trust					0.33***	0.05	0.14**	0.04
Constant	18.65***	0.58	38.56***	0.57	6.30***	1.00	32.54***	1.04
Obs	2927		2923		2267		2265	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.01		0.48		0.16		0.49	
Adj r-squared	0.01		0.48		0.16		0.49	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.001

The second model shows that political apathy has, as expected, a significant and negative effect on expected formal participation, with a one-point increase in apathy depressing expected participation by roughly 1.5 points. The effect of accounting for political apathy on the generational coefficients was dramatic. Whereas the coefficients in the first model suggested that the Millennials expected to be less active than all of their elders, once political apathy was controlled for these differences disappeared; the coefficients for the 90s, 80s and 60s-70s generations all became non-significant and negative. The Millennials were shown to expect to be even more active than the Pre/Post-War generation (who had a significant coefficient of -1.48). This suggests, therefore, that formal political apathy could almost entirely explain the differences between the Millennials' and their elders' formal political participation. The importance of political apathy to differences in formal participation is reinforced by the r-squared statistic in the second model: 0.48, compared with 0.01 for the generations only model.

Introducing the control variables (the fourth model in Table 6.4) had only a slight impact on the effect of apathy, reducing the coefficient from -1.49 to -1.43, suggesting that political apathy has a largely independent effect on expected formal participation. It also increases the r-squared figures to 0.49; barely different from the apathy-only model. Controlling for apathy meant that several of the control variables no longer had significant effects (as illustrated by comparing the third and fourth models). The effects of education and social capital remained significant and positive, though both were substantially reduced, and the effects of social class and income became non-significant. This suggests that much of the difference in expected participation explained

by political and social resources is actually accounted for by the effect of those characteristics on political apathy, and that once apathy is accounted for it is social capital and political sophistication that are the more important.

Furthermore, the effect of ethnicity in this model became statistically significant to the extent that non-white British respondents expected to be more active (by 1.1 points), and the effect of gender was reversed, with women expecting to be more active than men (by 1.46 points), suggesting that gender differences in political participation actually reflect gender differences in the motivation to engage with formal politics.

In this final model, the magnitude of all of the generation coefficients was reduced and none of the differences were found to be statistically significant (though the Pre/Post-War coefficient did still imply that they expected to be less active than most). This suggests, therefore, that once differences in apathy, political and social resources, social capital and demography are accounted for, there are no generational differences in anticipated formal participation left to explain. The r-squared for the final model was 0.49 – barely higher than the apathy-only model. Differences in political apathy are extremely important for explaining differences in anticipated formal participation, and dwarf the influence of generational differences and individual demographic characteristics and resources.

Table 6.5: Effect of Formal Political Apathy on Expected Cause-Oriented Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.39***	0.68	0.70	0.63	2.37**	0.78	1.51*	0.73
80s	2.09**	0.69	0.31	0.64	2.43**	0.80	1.23	0.75
60s-70s	1.24	0.68	-1.75**	0.64	2.43**	0.82	-0.04	0.78
Pre/Post-War	-2.63***	0.66	-4.90***	0.61	-0.32	0.82	-2.93***	0.79
Apathy			-0.86***	0.04			-0.80***	0.05
Education					1.09***	0.16	0.57***	0.15
Social Class					0.80***	0.16	0.39**	0.15
Income					0.07	0.06	-0.04	0.06
Gender					0.24	0.40	1.64***	0.38
Ethnicity					-0.55	0.68	-0.45	0.64
Social Trust					0.20***	0.06	0.09	0.05
Constant	13.42***	0.56	24.81***	0.69	3.30**	1.01	17.94***	1.26
Obs	2961		2957		2294		2292	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.04		0.20		0.11		0.22	
Adj r-squared	0.04		0.20		0.11		0.22	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.001

Table 6.5 reports the analyses for expected cause-oriented political activity. The second model showed that apathy towards formal politics was also associated with lower levels of cause-oriented political participation, with a one point increase in apathy associated with a 0.86 point decrease in expected participation. Accounting for differences in apathy reduced all of the generational coefficients i.e., raised the Millennials' expected participation relative to their elders, showing that the Millennials' lower expectations than at least some of their elders of participating in cause-oriented activity are heavily influenced by their apathy. The coefficients for the 90s and 80s generations both become insignificant, and the magnitude of both the 60s-70s and Pre/Post-War coefficients increased (to a statistically significant -1.75 and -4.9). Once the Millennials' high levels of apathy were controlled for, therefore, they were found to expect to be even more active than the oldest generations. That said, while apathy is clearly very important it is much less influential in explaining differences in expected cause-oriented participation than formal participation; the r-squared statistic in the second regression model was 0.2.

As was found for expected formal participation, accounting for political apathy produced marked changes in the effects of the control variables. Both education and social class continued to have significant, positive effects on cause-oriented activity, but their magnitude was reduced substantially. Social capital no longer had a significant impact, while income and ethnicity continued to be insignificant. The magnitude of the effect of gender was substantially increased – to a coefficient of 1.64 from 0.24 – showing that with political apathy controlled for, women expect to be more active in cause-oriented politics than men. As was also shown in Table 6.4, including the

controls had only a minor effect on the magnitude of political apathy, with its coefficient falling from -0.86 to -0.8; apathy appears to have a substantial negative impact on cause-oriented participation which is mostly independent from that of the other factors represented in the model.

Controlling for apathy in this model produced marked changes in the relationship between cause-oriented activity and political generations. With only the other control variables included (as shown in the third model), the Millennials were found to expect to be significantly less active than the 90s, 80s and 60s-70s generations, and about as active as the Pre/Post-War generation. Once the Millennials' high levels of apathy are accounted for, the differences between them and the 60s-70s (coefficient -0.04) and the 80s (coefficient 1.23) became insignificant. The 90s generation continued to expect to be more active, with a significant coefficient of 1.51, identifying them as expecting to be the most active in the electorate. Finally, the Pre/Post-War generation were shown to expect to be significantly less active than the Millennials and the wider electorate, with a significant coefficient of -2.93. Including the control variables in the model produced only a tiny increase in its explanatory power compared with the apathy-only model – the r-squared statistic of the fourth model was 0.22, up from 0.2 for the second model.

This data showed, therefore, that once political apathy has been controlled for, the Millennials' typically expect to be as active as the 80s and 90s generations, and slightly more active than the oldest generations. However, there are other important factors, relating to political sophistication and social resources, in which differences between the generations essentially depress the Millennials'

expected participation relative to their elders. While political apathy is certainly important in explaining differences in cause-oriented activity, therefore, its significance is weaker than that found for formal political participation, with political sophistication and social class playing a substantial role.

Tables 6.6 and 6.7 present the same series of analyses for political powerlessness. Table 6.6 shows the analyses for expected formal participation. The second model shows that, as expected (see Chapter Five), higher levels of political powerlessness depress expected formal participation, with a 1 point increase in powerlessness associated with a 1.8 unit decrease in expected formal activity. Comparing the generation coefficients in the first and second models shows that there was little impact on the relationship between generation and formal political activity from accounting for powerlessness, although there was a marked increase in the magnitude of the coefficients for the 60s-70s and Pre/Post-War generations, suggesting that powerlessness has more of an effect on their participation than that of the younger generations. The coefficients for the 90s (2.61), 80s (2.75), 60s-70s (4.66) and Pre/Post-War generations (3.97) remained significant and positive, and continued to identify the Millennials as substantially less active than their elders.

Comparing the third and fourth models showed that there was similarly little impact from accounting for powerlessness once the controls were included. With controls the magnitude of powerlessness was decreased somewhat, with the coefficient falling to -1.54, although the effect remained significant. This suggested that the effect of powerlessness was largely independent of the

controls, and similarly the effects of the controls appeared to be largely independent of powerlessness. The generation coefficients in the fourth model were very similar to those in the third model, with only slight increases in magnitude apparent for the 80s and Pre/Post-War generations; all the coefficients remained positive and significant and implied that the Millennials' were the least active. While powerlessness has a significant effect on formal participation, therefore, it explains little of why the Millennials' are typically less active than their elders. Finally, the r-squared statistics show that powerlessness plays an important role in explaining differences in expected formal participation; the second model had an r-squared of 0.16, compared with 0.01 for the generation-only model. While its influence is less substantial than that of political apathy, political powerlessness is still more important than generational differences.

Table 6.6: Effect of Political Powerlessness on Expected Formal Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.76***	0.70	2.61***	0.65	1.55*	0.77	1.57*	0.72
80s	2.68***	0.72	2.75***	0.66	1.75*	0.79	2.07**	0.74
60s-70s	4.48***	0.71	4.66***	0.65	4.43***	0.81	4.48***	0.76
Pre/Post-War	2.93***	0.68	3.97***	0.63	4.27***	0.81	4.82***	0.76
Powerlessness			-1.80***	0.08			-1.54***	0.09
Education					1.30***	0.16	1.00***	0.15
Social Class					0.84***	0.16	0.85***	0.15
Income					0.30***	0.06	0.27***	0.05
Gender					-1.05**	0.39	-1.00**	0.37
Ethnicity					0.98	0.68	0.35	0.64
Social Trust					0.33***	0.05	0.28***	0.05
Constant	18.65***	0.58	33.24***	0.84	6.30***	1.00	20.28***	1.21
Obs	2927		2918		2267		2261	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.01		0.16		0.16		0.27	
Adj r-squared	0.01		0.16		0.16		0.26	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.001

Table 6.6 shows the effect of powerlessness on expected cause-oriented participation. Powerlessness had a significant negative effect (-1.31) on cause-oriented participation, but accounting for it had only a marginal effect on the generational differences. The coefficients for the 60s-70s and Pre/Post-War generations both became more positive relative to the Millennials', and the 60s-70s generation coefficient became statistically significant (1.44), suggesting that powerlessness alienation has more of a role in depressing the participation of the older generations than the young. The overall impression of the generational relationship is, therefore, similar; the Millennials expect to be less active than the 90s, 80s and 60s-70s generations in cause-oriented politics, but more active than the Pre/Post-War generation.

As was also shown in Table 6.5, accounting for powerlessness and the control variables in the same model had little impact on their respective effects; the magnitude of the powerlessness coefficient in the final model fell to -1.2, and the magnitude of the significant controls variables – education, social class and social trust – also fell slightly. Ethnicity, income and gender continued to be insignificant. The effect of controlling for powerlessness on the generational coefficients identified in the third model was very small; the magnitude of the 90s, 80s and 60s-70s generations' coefficients increased slightly (to 2.46, 2.76 and 2.56 respectively), while that of the Pre/Post-War generation became positive as opposed to negative (0.21) but remained non-significant. Collectively, therefore, these models suggest that political powerlessness depresses the cause-oriented participation of the oldest generations and helps explain why they may be less active than the Millennials, but its role in explaining why the Millennials' expect to be less active than the 90s and 80s generations is minimal, with differences in political sophistication, social class

and social capital being more influential. Finally, as with political apathy, political powerlessness is less influential in explaining differences in expected cause-oriented participation than formal participation; the r-squared for the final model was 0.18. Nonetheless, this was a substantial improvement on the 0.04 for the original generation-only model.

Table 6.7: Effect of Political Powerlessness on Expected Cause-Oriented Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.39***	0.68	2.34***	0.65	2.37**	0.78	2.46**	0.75
80s	2.09**	0.69	2.24**	0.66	2.43**	0.80	2.76***	0.77
60s-70s	1.24	0.68	1.44*	0.66	2.43**	0.82	2.56**	0.79
Pre/Post-War	-2.63***	0.66	-1.78**	0.63	-0.32	0.82	0.21	0.80
Powerlessness			-1.31***	0.08			-1.20***	0.09
Education					1.09***	0.16	0.86***	0.15
Social Class					0.80***	0.16	0.78***	0.15
Income					0.07	0.06	0.05	0.06
Gender					0.24	0.40	0.30	0.38
Ethnicity					-0.55	0.68	-0.94	0.66
Social Trust					0.20***	0.06	0.16**	0.05
Constant	13.42***	0.56	23.97***	0.84	3.30**	1.01	14.19***	1.27
Obs	2961		2951		2294		2287	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.04		0.12		0.11		0.18	
Adj r-squared	0.04		0.12		0.11		0.17	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.001

Table 6.8 shows the analyses for political normlessness on expected formal participation. As shown in the second model, normlessness has a significant negative effect, with a 1 point increase in normlessness associated with a -0.49 point decrease in expected participation. Despite the data in Table 6.1 showing that there were few differences between the generations in terms of normlessness – apart from the Pre/Post-War generation standing out for being unusually un-alienated – the effect of controlling for normlessness on the relationships between generation and formal participation was notable. With normlessness accounted for, the expected participation of all the older generations was reduced relative to the Millennials'; the coefficient for the 90s generation fell to 1.94, the 80s' fell to 1.96, the 60s-70s' fell to 2.89, and the Pre/Post-War fell to 1.23 and became non-significant. Political normlessness, therefore, accounts to some extent for the fact that the Millennials expect to be less active than their elders in formal politics.

The fourth model suggested that the effect of normlessness on expected formal participation was largely independent of that of the other controls. The magnitude of the normlessness effect fell to -0.35 and remained significant, while the magnitude of all of the other controls also fell, and all remained significant (apart from ethnicity which was non-significant to begin with). The effect of including all of these controls on the generational differences was mixed; the difference between the Millennials and 90s and 80s generations increased (with their respective coefficients increasing to 1.8 and 2.08 respectively), and that between the Millennials and the 60s-70s and Pre/Post-War generations fell (with their respective coefficients falling to 3.7 and 3.1 respectively). This suggests that differences in political normlessness help

explain why the Millennials expect to be less active than particularly the older generations, but that there are also differences based on political sophistication and resources, social capital and gender which widen the gap between them.

The role of political normlessness in explaining differences in expected formal participation overall is more limited than that of powerlessness or apathy; in the normlessness-plus-generation model, the r-squared statistic was 0.12, while for the final model including controls it was 0.19.

Table 6.8: Effect of Political Normlessness on Expected Formal Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.76***	0.70	1.94**	0.69	1.55*	0.77	1.80*	0.78
80s	2.68***	0.72	1.96**	0.71	1.75*	0.79	2.08**	0.80
60s-70s	4.48***	0.71	2.89***	0.70	4.43***	0.81	3.70***	0.82
Pre/Post-War	2.93***	0.68	1.23	0.67	4.27***	0.81	3.10***	0.83
Normlessness			-0.49***	0.03			-0.35***	0.03
Education					1.30***	0.16	0.95***	0.16
Social Class					0.84***	0.16	0.86***	0.15
Income					0.30***	0.06	0.19**	0.06
Gender					-1.05**	0.39	-0.79*	0.39
Ethnicity					0.98	0.68	-0.02	0.68
Social Trust					0.33***	0.05	0.15**	0.06
Constant	18.65***	0.58	31.38***	0.03	6.30***	1.00	18.67***	1.4
Obs	2927		2741		2267		2151	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.01		0.12		0.16		0.19	
Adj r-squared	0.01		0.12		0.16		0.19	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.001

Table 6.9: Effect of Political Normlessness on Expected Cause-Oriented Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.39***	0.68	1.65*	0.72	2.37**	0.78	1.92*	0.82
80s	2.09**	0.69	1.43	0.73	2.43**	0.80	1.93*	0.84
60s-70s	1.24	0.68	0.1	0.72	2.43**	0.82	1.54	0.86
Pre/Post-War	-2.63***	0.66	-3.60***	0.70	-0.32	0.82	-1.24	0.87
Normlessness			-0.12***	0.03			0.01	0.03
Education					1.09***	0.16	1.01***	0.16
Social Class					0.80***	0.16	0.80***	0.16
Income					0.07	0.06	0.03	0.06
Gender					0.24	0.4	0.41	0.41
Ethnicity					-0.55	0.68	-0.41	0.71
Social Trust					0.20***	0.06	0.21***	0.06
Constant	13.42***	0.56	17.34***	0.87	3.30**	1.01	4.16**	1.48
Obs	2961		2773		2294		2172	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.04		0.05		0.11		0.11	
Adj r-squared	0.04		0.05		0.11		0.10	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.001

Table 6.9 shows the analyses of normlessness on expected cause-oriented participation. The second model showed that normlessness alienation depresses expected cause-oriented activity, by -0.12 points for every 1 point increase in normlessness, which is perhaps surprising given the relationship between normlessness and non-mainstream voting identified in Chapter Five. Despite its relatively small effect on cause-oriented activity, controlling for normlessness had a notable effect on the generational differences, essentially raising the expected participation of the Millennials relative to the older generations. The 90s generation coefficient fell to 1.65 (though remained significant), that of the 80s generation fell to 1.43 (and became insignificant). The 60s-70s generation coefficient remained insignificant and fell to 0.1, while the Pre/Post-War generation coefficient continued to suggest that they were significantly less likely to be active than the Millennials, falling to -3.6. A further surprising point is that variations in normlessness have so little impact on variations in expected cause-oriented activity: the r-squared for the second model was 0.05, barely different from the 0.04 for the generation-only model. Normlessness appears to be the only dimension of alienation in which its contribution to explaining overall variation in expected cause-oriented behaviour is smaller than that of political generations, and yet its role in accounting for generational differences in expected activity is quite substantial.

Once the other control variables were included, normlessness no longer had a significant effect (with a non-significant coefficient of 0.01). The magnitude of the control variables was barely affected, with political sophistication, social class and social capital continuing to be positively associated with cause-oriented politics. Controlling for normlessness in this model did, however, still

have a notable effect on generational differences, as was found in the second model in Table 6.9, raising the Millennials' expected participation relative to the wider electorate. The coefficients for the 90s and 80s generations fell to 1.92 and 1.93 respectively, though remained significant, while the coefficients for the 60s-70s and Pre/Post-War generations fell to 1.54 and -1.24 and both were insignificant. Overall, therefore, while normlessness had no direct effect on expected cause-oriented activity once differences in political sophistication, resources and social capital were controlled for, and appeared to explain virtually no variance in overall cause-oriented activity, controlling for it nonetheless helps to explain why the Millennials expect to be less active in cause-oriented politics than the 60s-70s, 80s and 90s generations.

Table 6.10 reports analyses of the effect of meaninglessness on expected formal participation. The second model showed that meaninglessness alienation had a substantial effect both on formal participation – reducing expected formal activity by 3 points for every 1 point increase in meaninglessness, and increasing the r-squared from 0.01 to 0.15 – and in explaining generational differences. With meaninglessness controlled for, all of the generational coefficients fell substantially in magnitude and become non-significant, suggesting no significant difference between the Millennials' expectations of formal political activity and that of the wider electorate.

Including the other control variables reduced the effect of meaninglessness to -2.38, though it remained statistically significant. The magnitude of most of the control variables was slightly reduced, but they too remained significant. The exception was ethnicity, the coefficient for which increased from 0.98 to 1.8

and became statistically significant. The generational coefficients in the final model were also quite different from those in the third. All of the coefficients were reduced in magnitude, confirming that meaningfulness alienation is an important explanatory factor behind the Millennials' lower levels of formal political participation. The coefficients for the 90s and 80s generations fell to 0.36 and -0.02, and both became non-significant. The coefficients for the 60s-70s and Pre/Post-War generations fell to 1.99 and 2.07 respectively, but remained significant. This suggests that while meaningfulness alienation is important in explaining differences in formal participation between the generations, there is an important role for political sophistication and resources, social capital and demography as well.

Table 6.10: Effect of Political Meaninglessness on Expected Formal Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.76***	0.70	0.20	0.66	1.55*	0.77	0.36	0.74
80s	2.68***	0.72	-0.46	0.68	1.75*	0.79	-0.02	0.77
60s-70s	4.48***	0.71	0.54	0.68	4.43***	0.81	1.99*	0.80
Pre/Post-War	2.93***	0.68	-0.16	0.65	4.27***	0.81	2.07*	0.80
Meaninglessness			-3.01***	0.14			-2.38***	0.17
Education					1.30***	0.16	1.09***	0.15
Social Class					0.84***	0.16	0.54***	0.15
Income					0.30***	0.06	0.21***	0.06
Gender					-1.05**	0.39	0.40	0.39
Ethnicity					0.98	0.68	1.80**	0.66
Social Trust					0.33***	0.05	0.26***	0.05
Constant	18.65***	0.58	24.87***	0.61	6.30***	1.00	13.00***	1.08
Obs	2927		2927		2267		2267	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.01		0.15		0.16		0.23	
Adj r-squared	0.01		0.15		0.16		0.22	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.001

Table 6.11 reports the analyses of meaningfulness on expected cause-oriented participation. Meaninglessness was found to have a significant, negative effect on cause-oriented activity (-2.12), and controlling for it had a notable effect on the generational coefficients. The coefficients for the 80s and 90s generations fell (to -0.06 and 0.59 respectively) and both became non-significant. The coefficient for the 60s-70s generation reversed in sign and became significant (at -1.51), while the magnitude of the Pre/Post-War coefficient increased to -4.68 and remained significant. Controlling for meaningfulness alienation, therefore, raised the Millennials' participation relative to their elders. The r-squared statistic for the second model also confirmed that meaningfulness alienation is important for explaining differences in expected cause-oriented activity, at 0.11 compared with 0.04 in the first model.

With the control variables included the effect of meaningfulness fell to -1.72, but remained significant. The magnitude of the control variables was also marginally changed, with political sophistication, social class and social capital continuing to have positive, significant impacts. There was a large change in the effect of gender, however, the magnitude of which increased from an insignificant 0.24 to a significant 1.3; once the fact that women were typically more alienated than men was controlled for, they were found to expect to be more active in cause-oriented politics.

Finally, the final model found no significant differences between the Millennials and either the 90s, 80s or 60s-70s generations (with them having non-significant coefficients of 1.53, 1.2 and 0.74 respectively). The coefficient for the Pre/Post-War generation fell from -0.32 in the third model to -1.84, and

became statistically significant. This data suggests that political meaningfulness exerts a significant negative effect on the Millennials' cause-oriented participation such that controlling for it removes much of the difference between them and their elders. Significant differences do persist, however, reflecting the importance of further variations between the Millennials and particularly the oldest generations in terms of social capital and political and social resources. Finally, the r-squared statistic of the fourth model – 0.15 – shows that meaningfulness had a substantial and independent role in explaining variance in expected cause-oriented activity, though it was less substantial than that seen for political apathy or political powerlessness.

Table 6.11: Effect of Political Meaninglessness on Expected Cause-Oriented Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.39***	0.68	0.59	0.67	2.37**	0.78	1.53	0.77
80s	2.09**	0.69	-0.06	0.68	2.43**	0.80	1.20	0.79
60s-70s	1.24	0.68	-1.51*	0.68	2.43**	0.82	0.74	0.82
Pre/Post-War	-2.63***	0.66	-4.68***	0.65	-0.32	0.82	-1.84*	0.82
Meaninglessness			-2.12***	0.14			-1.72***	0.18
Education					1.09***	0.16	0.94***	0.16
Social Class					0.80***	0.16	0.57***	0.16
Income					0.07	0.06	0.00	0.06
Gender					0.24	0.40	1.30**	0.40
Ethnicity					-0.55	0.68	0.15	0.67
Social Trust					0.20***	0.06	0.15**	0.05
Constant	13.42***	0.56	17.80***	0.61	3.30**	1.01	8.13***	1.10
Obs	2961		2961		2294		2294	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.04		0.11		0.11		0.15	
Adj r-squared	0.04		0.11		0.11		0.14	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.00

The final two tables report analyses exploring the effects of all the dimensions of political alienation on expected political participation simultaneously; in other words, they examine whether the effects on formal and cause-oriented participation identified above persist once the other dimensions of political alienation are controlled for. Table 6.12 shows the analyses for expected formal participation. The second model showed that all three dimensions of political alienation were associated with lower levels of formal participation, and that they all had an independent effect similar to those found in the models above. Every 1 point increase in powerlessness depressed expected formal participation by 1.31 points, with the equivalent effects for normlessness being -0.33 and for meaninglessness being -2.32. With the three alienation dimensions accounted for, there were no significant differences between the generations, suggesting that once alienation is accounted for the Millennials' expect to be as active as the wider electorate. While the composite alienation model explains a substantial amount of variance in expected formal participation, it was still inferior to the political apathy model, with an r -squared of 0.23 compared with 0.48.

The magnitudes of the alienation effects were very similar in the final model including the control variables; the coefficients for powerlessness, normlessness and meaninglessness were -1.25, -0.24 and -2.0 respectively, and all remained statistically significant. The effects of the control variables were all reduced notably; education, social class, income and social trust all continued to have positive and significant, if weaker, effects, while the effect of gender was no longer significant (and the effect of ethnicity continued to be non-significant). The generational differences were larger in the final model

than the second model, emphasising once again the fact that at least part of the explanation for the Millennials' lower levels of political participation lie not in alienation (or apathy) but in differences based on political and social resources, political sophistication and social capital. In the final model, the coefficients for the 80s and 90s generations were 0.84 and 0.83 respectively, but both were insignificant, while the coefficients for the 60s-70s and Pre/Post-War generations were 2.03 and 2.19 respectively and were significant. With alienation and the control variables accounted for, therefore, the 60s-70s and Pre/Post-War generations were found to be the most active, and the youngest three generations similarly inactive by comparison. This model performed well in explaining generational differences in participation – with an r-squared of 0.31 –, therefore, but was still inferior to the apathy model (with an r-squared of 0.49), and even the apathy model without any controls (0.48).

Finally, Table 6.13 shows the effects of all three alienation dimensions on expected cause-oriented participation. Controlling for all three dimensions collectively reduced their individual effects, with single point increases in powerlessness and meaninglessness depressing expected cause-oriented activity by -1.16 and -1.77 points respectively, and normlessness no longer having a significant impact. Accounting for all three dimensions together had a similar effect to that seen in the meaninglessness and normlessness only models above, in that the expected activity of the Millennials was raised relative to their elders. The coefficients for the 90s and 80s generations fell to 0.46 and 0.09 respectively and both became insignificant, while that for the 60s-70s generation fell to -1.47 and became significant. The coefficient for the Pre/Post-War generation fell to -4.04 and remained significant; overall,

therefore, this model suggested that the most active were the Millennial, 90s and 80s generations (with little difference between them), followed by the 60s-70s and then the Pre/Post-War.

The effects of the three alienation dimensions once the other control variables were included were complex and contradictory. Powerlessness and meaningfulness continued to depress expected cause-oriented activity, though with slightly reduced (but still significant) coefficients of -1.18 and -1.42 respectively. The effect of normlessness was positive and significant, at 0.12. This suggested that once differences in political and social resources, social capital, demography and other forms of alienation were accounted for, higher levels of normlessness alienation made respondents more likely to engage in informal, direct political action. The generational coefficients still suggested that the Millennials expected to be slightly less active than the 90s and 80s generations, and more active than the Pre/Post-War generation, a similar pattern to that found in the third model in Table 6.12, but with differences in alienation accounted for there were no longer any significant differences between the generations. Overall, therefore, these analyses suggest that differences in particularly political normlessness and meaningfulness, as well as in political and social resources and social capital, help to explain why the Millennials expect to be less active than many of the elders (though not the Pre/Post-War generation) in cause-oriented politics. Finally, the contribution of the composite alienation model and the composite model plus controls to explaining variation in expected cause-oriented activity was greater than that of the individual models above (with r-squared statistics of 0.16 and 0.19

respectively), though they were still less substantial than the political apathy models (which had r-squared statistics of 0.20 and 0.22 respectively).

Table 6.12: Effect of Political Alienation on Expected Formal Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.76***	0.70	0.30	0.64	1.55*	0.77	0.84	0.72
80s	2.68***	0.72	-0.02	0.65	1.75*	0.79	0.83	0.75
60s-70s	4.48***	0.71	0.71	0.65	4.43***	0.81	2.03**	0.77
Pre/Post-War	2.93***	0.68	0.34	0.63	4.27***	0.81	2.19**	0.78
Powerlessness			-1.31***	0.08			-1.25***	0.08
Normlessness			-0.33***	0.02			-0.24***	0.03
Meaninglessness			-2.32***	0.14			-2.00***	0.17
Education					1.30***	0.16	0.64***	0.14
Social Class					0.84***	0.16	0.64***	0.14
Income					0.30***	0.06	0.14**	0.05
Gender					-1.05**	0.39	0.38	0.37
Ethnicity					0.98	0.68	0.46	0.63
Social Trust					0.33***	0.05	0.11*	0.05
Constant	18.65***	0.58	42.21***	0.90	6.30***	1.00	31.18***	1.45
Obs	2927		2733		2267		2145	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.01		0.28		0.16		0.31	
Adj r-squared	0.01		0.27		0.16		0.31	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.00

Table 6.13: Effect of Political Alienation on Expected Cause-Oriented Participation

	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
(Millennials)								
90s	2.39***	0.68	0.46	0.69	2.37**	0.78	1.33	0.79
80s	2.09**	0.69	0.09	0.71	2.43**	0.80	1.27	0.81
60s-70s	1.24	0.68	-1.47*	0.70	2.43**	0.82	0.51	0.84
Pre/Post-War	-2.63***	0.66	-4.04***	0.68	-0.32	0.82	-1.59	0.85
Powerlessness			-1.16***	0.08			-1.18***	0.09
Normlessness			0.02	0.03			0.12***	0.03
Meaninglessness			-1.77***	0.15			-1.42***	0.19
Education					1.09***	0.16	0.74***	0.16
Social Class					0.80***	0.16	0.62***	0.16
Income					0.07	0.06	-0.01	0.06
Gender					0.24	0.40	1.31**	0.40
Ethnicity					-0.55	0.68	-0.02	0.68
Social Trust					0.20***	0.06	0.18**	0.06
Constant	13.42***	0.56	26.59***	0.97	3.30**	1.01	15.00***	1.57
Obs	2961		2764		2294		2166	
Prob > F	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
r-squared	0.04		0.16		0.11		0.19	
Adj r-squared	0.04		0.15		0.11		0.19	

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey, post-election wave. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value is <0.01; *** - p-value is <0.00

Table 6.14: Summary

	Apathy	with	Power.	with	Norm.	with	Mean.	with	Alien.	with
		controls		controls		controls		controls		controls
Expected Formal Participation										
Account for Millennial distinctiveness?	√√	√√	x	√	√	√	√√	√	√√	√
Adj r-squared (Generation only model: 0.01)	0.48	0.49	0.16	0.27	0.12	0.19	0.15	0.23	0.28	0.31
Expected Cause-oriented Participation										
Account for Millennial distinctiveness	√√	√	x	√	√	√	√√	√√	√√	√√
Adj r-squared (Generation only model: 0.04)	0.20	0.22	0.12	0.18	0.05	0.11	0.11	0.15	0.16	0.19

√ – indicates that accounting for apathy/alienation in the model helped explain the difference between the Millennials and their elders; √√ – indicates that accounting for apathy/alienation completely explained the difference (i.e., made the coefficient non-significant).

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that at the time of the 2010 British general election, the Millennial generation was both significantly more apathetic about formal politics and alienated from it – in terms of their lack of confidence in their understanding and knowledge of politics – than the wider electorate. At least part of this difference was explained by differences between the Millennials and their elders in terms of political sophistication, access to political and social resources, and social capital. Even with these factors accounted for, however, there remained significant differences between the generations which identified the Millennials as distinct.

As the summary in Table 6.14 shows, both the Millennials' higher levels of apathy and meaninglessness alienation were shown to play an important role in explaining why they were less active in both formal and cause-oriented politics than their elders. Once again, differences between the generations in terms of their political sophistication, resources and social capital were important, but with these effects controlled for there was nonetheless a substantial impact from apathy and meaninglessness alienation. Furthermore, even though there was no evidence of a substantial difference between the Millennials and their elders in terms of normlessness alienation – with the exception of the Pre/Post-War generation, who stood out for being the least alienated in the electorate – normlessness alienation was also found to help explain generational differences and to be depressing the Millennials' participation in politics.

These significant generational effects notwithstanding, it is also once again clear that generational differences only account for a limited degree of

variation in expected political participation; as Table 6.14 shows, the regression models including political generations produced r-squared statistics of 0.01 for expected formal participation, and 0.04 for expected cause-oriented participation. Accounting for the various dimensions of political alienation substantially boosted these figures, as did controlling for political and social resources, demography and social capital. By far the most influential, however, was political apathy; differences in political apathy were shown to account for almost half of the variance in expected formal participation, and just over a fifth in expected cause-oriented participation. There are clearly substantial and significant differences between political generations in these characteristics; but their scope is dwarfed by the importance of differences between individuals in terms of their motivation to associate with formal politics.

The conventional wisdom that it is political alienation rather than political apathy, therefore, which explains why the Millennials are less active in formal politics than their elders, and more active in informal politics, was found to be only partly right. Political alienation – specifically meaninglessness and normlessness – is definitely important in depressing the Millennials' participation in formal politics, but their apathy towards formal politics is not only far more important for explaining their distinct participatory habits, but for explaining differences in expected participation more broadly. In addition, contrary to the conventional expectation, the Millennials' alienation was found to depress their cause-oriented political activity rather than increase it.

Whatever causes the Millennials to feel estranged from the processes, institutions and/or actors of formal British politics does not, as some have argued, push them towards other channels of political expression in the

informal political arena, but rather depresses their political activity more broadly.

Chapter Seven: Apathy, Alienation and Social Evolution

When trying to explain the (supposed) unprecedented alienation of young people, many commentators tend to point towards controversial political events, such as the financial crisis, the Iraq War or the Parliamentary expenses scandal, arguing that such events confirm to the Millennials that the political system is untrustworthy and does not serve their interests. Such an argument ignores, however, the fact that the political characteristics which are said to differentiate the Millennials from older generations – including their apathy and/or alienation – are shown to be apparent in Millennials throughout Western democracies. As Chapter Two argued, this means that the search for explanations for the Millennials' apathy and/or alienation should begin from the premise that it is the result of a process affecting all Western societies at a similar time and in a similar way.

This chapter outlines a potential causal process in the form of the social evolution of Western democracies, summarised by social modernisation theory which suggests that social change and evolution is linked to generational changes in political attitudes, values and behaviour because of its effect on political socialisation. This chapter focusses on two specific aspects of social modernisation which are suggested in the literature to be particularly important in explaining the Millennials' political characteristics: the rise of post-materialist social and political values, and the fragmentation of media consumption patterns. These two theories and their role in driving changes in political engagement and participation are discussed, before specific

hypotheses regarding their expected effects on political apathy and each dimension of political alienation are outlined.

7.1 Social Modernisation Theory

The idea that social evolution – such as that resulting from technological development or economic growth – affects change in the political attitudes, values and behaviour of democratic citizens has been widely studied by a field of literature that can be broadly labelled ‘social modernisation theory’. At its heart, the theory suggests that “socioeconomic development brings major social, cultural, and political changes” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p.1), which alter the experiences and contexts of the political socialisation of young generations to the extent that they develop different habits of political engagement and participation from those of previous generations (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; 2009; 2010; Inglehart 1990). The theory is strongly intertwined with the impressionable years theory of political socialisation; while the effects of social modernisation can be felt by all in a given society at a given time, it is most profound for those who are still living through their politically formative years, and the consequences will be expressed by that cohort throughout their adult lives (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; 2010). Relating this to the distinct political characteristics of the Millennials, therefore, social modernisation theory suggests that Western socio-economic development has been so dramatic over the past thirty years that the political and social environment which faced the Millennials during their formative years was substantially different from that which faced their predecessors, to the extent that they have developed substantially different political characteristics (Van

Deth et al. 2011; Wattenberg 2012; Dalton 2013; Norris 2002; 2011; Sloam 2014).

While this process lies at the heart of social modernisation theory, there is no single social modernisation argument to speak of when it comes to explaining the distinct characteristics of the Millennials. This partly reflects the fact that social evolution takes many forms and has many different impacts on various aspects of life. Rather, there are several ‘sub-theories’ which tend to focus on the consequences of specific aspects of social evolution for the Millennials. They share the view that social evolution (or some aspect of it) is responsible for the emergence of the Millennials as a distinct political generation, but focus on different aspects of that evolution and highlight different attitudinal and/or behavioural consequences. One important such sub-theory relates to the rise of post-materialism, which takes an optimistic view of the consequences of social evolution and suggests that in the Millennials it has resulted in a politically sophisticated, engaged and active generation. Another is the media fragmentation theory, which takes a more pessimistic view and suggests that the Millennials are the most uninformed, uninterested and unengaged generation in modern history.

7.2 Post-Materialism

Both the post-materialism and media fragmentation theories share the view that social modernisation has produced a distinct political generation in the Millennials, but disagree regarding the consequences of social change. This disagreement often mirrors that outlined in Chapter Two regarding the exact participatory characteristics expressed by the Millennials, particularly in

relation to informal political activity. Studies arguing that the Millennials are unusually active in informal and civic politics tend to take the optimistic view of the consequences of social evolution outlined by the post-materialism theory.

Broadly, the post-materialism theory argues that social evolution has had a positive impact on the Millennials' political engagement, suggesting that they have the potential to be the most politically sophisticated and engaged generation in modern history once they reach a stage of the life cycle more conducive to political engagement (Dalton 2013; Sloam 2014; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). While the theory acknowledges that the Millennials are less active than their elders in formal politics, it suggests that they are disproportionately active in other political arenas, such as through cause-oriented politics (Sloam 2012a; 2012b; 2014; Dalton 2013; 2007; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Norris 2002; Martin 2012).

The cause is said to lie in the consequences of three different aspects of recent Western social evolution: i) the enhancement of individual autonomy; ii) improvements in education; and iii) technological development. Enhanced individual autonomy stems from the consequences of socio-economic development well documented in research on the shift from materialist to post-materialist political values (e.g., Inglehart 1971; 1990; 2007; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; 2009; 2010; Welzel 2007). The central argument is that as societies become more economically and technologically developed, and as the provision of education improves, the social values and priorities of citizens shift so that fewer constraints on individual autonomy based around social

institutions and economic concerns – such as class, religion, gender, sexuality, or concerns of ensuring economic and physical security – are apparent.

For example, the development of the welfare state and economic growth in Western societies following the Second World War meant that fewer citizens faced a daily challenge to ensure their material needs (such as food and shelter), meaning that constraints over their daily activities and priorities relating to economic security were weakened (Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). This was compounded by the evolution of domestic and international politics which has dramatically reduced the prospect of crime and war, meaning that physical security is also more assured (Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Furthermore, citizens today face fewer constraints over their lifestyle and daily choices from the influence of, or discrimination based on, social institutions such as gender, class or sexuality, because social and political development has changed people's values towards placing greater emphasis on individual freedom and choice (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Franklin et al. 1992; Welzel 2007). Finally, improvements in the provision of education alongside developments in technology have meant that constraints over life choices and lifestyle stemming from a lack of skill, information or human capital have also been undermined (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Dalton 2013; Norris 2004).

The result of the weakening of such constraints over daily life, lifestyle, social interactions and human capital is that Western citizens live in an environment of increased individual autonomy. They live in a society in which they are free to act, believe, interact, and value to an unprecedented extent (Welzel 2007;

Inglehart and Welzel 2005; 2010; Inglehart 2007). As a result, “[p]eople become...intellectually more autonomous, and socially more independent... [they] experience a greater sense of human autonomy” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, p.24). New generations socialised into this environment develop habits which both reflect and seek to advance that autonomy. This has substantial consequences for the political values these generations develop, with greater levels of autonomy associated with a propensity towards ‘self-expression’ values (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Welzel 2007).

Post-materialistic values are one aspect of self-expression values which have important consequences for political engagement (Inglehart 2007). At their heart is a fierce concern with protecting and advancing individual autonomy, as well as with promoting the political agenda which accompanies it (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; 2010; Norris 2002). This produces a lack of interest in, or in some cases direct hostility towards, hierarchical social and political institutions (which constrain autonomy); less interest in ‘materialist’ political issues, such as those relating to economic security (which new generations are more likely to habitually take for granted); an emphasis on social tolerance and equality, as well as individual rights and freedoms (which promote individual autonomy); an embrace of social change and evolution (to bring further autonomy); and demands for democratic involvement and participation (through which individual autonomy can be expressed and protected, and agendas reflecting that autonomy pursued) (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Inglehart 2007; Welzel 2007; Norris 2002; Dalton 2004; 2013; Martin 2012). The post-materialistic approach, therefore, suggests that the Millennials experienced their formative years in the most socio-economically developed environment Western society

has ever known, and so are socialised into an environment of unprecedented human autonomy. Their expression of post-materialistic political values, and the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics associated with them, therefore, is more profound than that seen in any generation before them (Dalton 2013; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Norris 2002).

The second key component of the post-materialism approach is the development of the provision of education. In what Wattenberg (2012) describes as the most drastic sociological development since the 1940s, Western societies have expended vast resources to the improve quality of and access to education. The quality of education is now substantially superior to that of thirty or even twenty years ago, and new cohorts tend to spend longer receiving education and gaining more qualifications than their predecessors (Wattenberg 2012; Dalton 2013; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). In Britain, for example, Whiteley (2012) shows that only 5% of British Election Study respondents had a degree in 1974, a figure which increased to over 20% by 2005. Dalton (2013), Norris (2002), Martin (2012) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005) highlight comparable trends throughout Western society, in a process which has – in the Millennials – produced the most educated generation in history.

The post-materialist theory argues that this development has not only contributed to the growth of human autonomy in Western society, but it has increased levels of political sophistication among Western citizens as well. Political sophistication refers to an individual's capacity to gather, interpret and understand political information, to link that information up into a series of

political ideas and concepts, and to use such concepts and information to inform their political participation and pursue their goals (Starling 2014; Dalton 2013; Wattenberg 2012).

Greater political sophistication has been strongly associated with greater political knowledge (Wattenberg 2012; Dalton 2013; 2007; Verba et al. 1995). It is also related to broader participatory repertoires – such as a propensity to participate in politics through alternative arenas to the formal – (Sloam 2014; Norris 2002; 2011; Verba et al. 1995; Dalton 2013), greater political interest (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1995; Sloam 2014), and both the capacity and willingness to participate in politics without the support of, or without being associated with, hierarchical political institutions such as political parties (Dalton 2013; Fuchs and Klingemann 1995; Norris 2002). The more educated a citizen is, therefore, the more politically sophisticated they are likely to be, and so the more politically knowledgeable, interested, active and independent they are likely to be. As the Millennials are the most educated generation in history, therefore, they also have the potential to be the most politically sophisticated, meaning they have the potential to be the most knowledgeable, active, engaged and independent citizens to have entered Western electorates.

The third and final component of the post-materialism theory is the development of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly the Internet. The effects of the Internet and social media on political engagement are still fairly poorly understood, and whether or not they increase the engagement of under-represented citizens or merely replicate existing political inequalities remains unclear (Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Norris

2001; O'Neill 2010; Di Gennaro and Dutton 2006; Theocharis 2012).

However, there is little question that the growth of the Internet and social media, alongside new forms of existing media (such as newspaper websites and 24-hour news channels) has made political information more accessible than ever, and has also made disseminating political views and information less costly and dependent on institutions like the media or political parties (Norris 2001; 2002; 2011; Dalton 2013; Casero-Ripolles 2012; O'Neill 2010).

As Norris (2001) points out, political information is a vital resource for any political actor; it is “the primary coinage of the realm...the resource that persuades, that influences”, and is vital for an individual’s sense of political efficacy, trust, confidence in their ability to reach informed decisions, and so ultimately, their political participation (Norris 2001, p.19). Any change in access to political information, therefore, can be expected to have a substantial impact on political engagement and behaviour (Norris 2001; 2002; Dalton 2013; Martin 2012).

The Millennials have been socialised into an environment in which the Internet and social media are more accessible and integrated into daily life than ever, and in which using them are skills developed from an early age (Ward and de Vreese 2011; Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Russell 2004; Wattenberg 2012).

The post-materialist theory argues that – alongside other changes to the media (such as the proliferation of 24-hour news channels) – this has resulted in them being socialised into an environment in which political information, and the capacity to access and disseminate it, is greater than ever. Consequently, they have the capacity to be more politically informed than previous generations,

more confident in their ability to influence and understand politics, and so ultimately more politically active (Dalton 2013; Norris 2001).

The post-materialist theory, therefore, argues that the Millennials have been socialised into a social, economic, political and technological environment which has resulted in them developing unprecedented levels of human autonomy as well as stronger post-materialistic values predisposing them towards political engagement and participation, and which has given them access to more political information than any generation has ever seen.

Consequently, they have the potential (once they reach a stage of the life cycle more conducive to political engagement and participation) to be the most politically sophisticated, informed and active generation in history.

Proponents of the post-materialism theory suggest that this process is apparent in a wide range of the Millennials' political characteristics through which they are suggested to differ substantially from their elders. For instance, post-materialistic values, increased political sophistication, and greater access to political information have been associated with: i) a broader political agenda, in which issues such as environmentalism, gender and sexual equality, individual freedom, democratic rights and participation, and global politics play a more prominent role (Inglehart 1990; 2007; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; 2010; Norris 2002; Fuchs and Klingemann 1995; Dalton 2007; 2013; Stoker 2006); ii) greater expectations of government (partly reflecting the broader agenda) (Stoker 2006; Fuchs and Klingemann 1995), and greater cynicism towards and dissatisfaction with political elites that fail to meet those expectations (Dalton 2004; 2013; Stoker 2006; Inglehart and Welzel 2005;

2010); iii) less interest in and attachment to more traditional sources of community identity and political conflict (such as social class or religion) (Franklin et al. 1992; 2009; Dalton 2013; Inglehart and Welzel 2005); and iv) a shift from ‘duty based’ conceptions of citizenship towards more individualistic and instrumental conceptions (Dalton 2013; Norris 2002; Sloam 2007; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). All of these characteristics, this theory argues, are apparent in the Millennials’ participatory characteristics and political agendas.

Three further important consequences are particularly relevant in the context of the Millennials’ distinct participation. Firstly, post-materialistic values imply a desire to express and advance individual autonomy, which leads to a greater motivation to engage with politics (Dalton 2013; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Sloam 2014). This has been linked with the Millennials’ active interest in specific political issues (if not formal politics), and also with the prediction that they will become a particularly engaged political generation as they age (Sloam 2007; 2012b; Dalton 2013; 2012; 2007; Norris 2002; Martin 2012). Second, post-materialistic values imply a lack of interest in, if not an active hostility towards, institutions which could constrain human autonomy. This leads to the Millennials being less likely to associate with many of the traditional social and political institutions which have been central to democratic politics in Western democracies for decades, such as social institutions including class, religion or local communities, and political institutions including trade unions or political parties (Dalton 1984; 2013; Norris 2002; 2011; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Franklin et al. 1992; Fuchs and Klingemann 1995; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Sloam 2014; Martin 2012).

Finally, they are consequently expected to avoid forms of participation which necessitate involvement with, or are associated with identification with, such institutions (such as many acts of formal political participation including voting in elections or joining and/or campaigning for political parties) (Dalton 2013; Norris 2001; 2002; Sloam 2014; Martin 2012). Instead, they embrace a broader participatory repertoire. They actively seek ways of influencing political actors and institutions in order to advance their agenda, and do not feel constrained to waiting for formal occasions or processes (such as elections) to do so (Dalton 2013; Sloam 2014; Norris 2002). They are prepared to engage with a wide range of institutions and actors to influence the political outcomes they care about, and employ a wide range of participatory acts, either individually or as part of a group, which are more suited to influencing institutions with no formalised channels of citizen communication, to do so (Norris 2002; Dalton 2013). This evolution of political participation – in which the targets and repertoires of participation are expanded beyond those associated solely with formal politics – is associated with the rise of cause-oriented political activity (Norris 2002; 2004; Sloam 2014; Martin 2012; Marsh et al. 2007). As the Millennials are the most post-materialistic generation in Western society, therefore, they should be the ones who are most likely to exhibit this evolution in political participation, increasingly rejecting formal political activity in favour of cause-oriented political acts (Sloam 2012b; 2014; Dalton 2013; Norris 2002; 2011; Marsh et al. 2007).

The overlap between the expectations of the post-materialism theory and the characteristics identified in the literature in Chapter Two as being uniquely expressed by the Millennials is extensive, and illustrates the success of the

theory in explaining their behaviour. The post-materialist theory expects the Millennials to reject the notion that voting is a civic duty, not to identify with political parties, to be more cynical about political elites, and to have a weaker commitment to formal political engagement and participation. It also expects that they will have an active interest in and knowledge of political issues relevant to their daily lives (if not necessarily formal politics). The overlap, however, between the characteristics identified within the Millennials in the literature and those expected by the post-materialism theory is not complete, and this forms the basis of criticisms of the theory.

First, while there is little disagreement that the Millennials have the potential to be one of the most sophisticated and informed political generations owing to their access to education and technology, several studies challenge the claim that they are particularly interested in or knowledgeable about politics as a result. Wattenberg (2012), Putnam (2000), the Hansard Society (2012), Utter (2011) and Blais and Rubenson (2013) suggest that the Millennials are quite uninterested in politics compared with previous generations, regardless of whether formal politics or other spheres of political life are considered.

Similarly, the Hansard Society (2012), Wattenberg (2012), Roker et al. (1999) and Buckingham (1999) suggest that the Millennials are not well informed about politics, with Wattenberg (2012) describing American Millennials as “the least politically knowledgeable generation ever in the history of survey research” (Wattenberg 2012, p.5). These criticisms relate more to matters of data and interpretation than a flaw in the logic of the theory, but nonetheless constitute a substantial challenge: if the Millennials are and remain among the

least politically interested and knowledgeable of political generations, how can a theory which predicts the opposite be sustainable?

The second challenge relates to the view that the Millennials are particularly active in cause-oriented politics, and that this supplements or may even replace their formal political participation. For example, Wattenberg (2012) and Putnam (2000) argue that with the exception of volunteering, the Millennials are less active in most forms of political activity, including those associated with cause-oriented participation, than previous generations. The Hansard Society (2012) supports this argument, and also points out that there is little indication that citizens (Millennials or otherwise) who are inactive in the most common forms of formal participation, such as voting in elections, compensate for this by being disproportionately active in other areas (see also Oser et al. 2013). Finally, Chapters Three and Four disproved the claim that the Millennials are more active than their elders in other modes or dimensions of political participation, showing that a) the Millennials are less active in all spheres of politics than their elders, and b) that they appear to have a lower propensity to participate in all dimensions of politics, even once period effects and the life cycle have been taken into account. Once again, therefore, the challenge is that in light of evidence suggesting that the Millennials are the least active generation ever to have entered the British electorate, how can a theory which predicts the opposite be accepted?

7.3 Media Fragmentation

The media fragmentation theory agrees with many of the arguments of the post-materialist theory regarding the consequences of socioeconomic

development for the Millennials' socialisation. It agrees that they are the best educated generation in history, and, because of advances in information technology, that they have access to more political information than ever and are more comfortable engaging with the media to access it than their elders. The theory also broadly agrees with the process set out by the post-materialism approach by which the Millennials are said to have become more individually autonomous and more likely to exhibit post-materialistic political values and habits. The key argument of the media fragmentation theory, however, is that while the Millennials have the *potential* to be the most politically interested, sophisticated and active generation in Western society, they are not realising that potential. The explanation for this lies in another distinctive characteristic stemming from the formative socialisation of the Millennials: their unique habits of political news media consumption. As a result of the way they interact with and consume political news media, the Millennials do not access political information in a way which facilitates political interest or knowledge. This, in turn, means they participate in politics less than their elders, and so are ultimately likely to be less engaged and active throughout their adult lives.

While the post-materialism theory suggests that changes to the media and information technology have made political information and news more accessible, the media fragmentation approach points to the adage that 'you can take a horse to water but you can't make it drink'. It argues that the Millennials are not taking advantage of the opportunities open to them to engage with political information because they have no motivation to do so. Consequently, they are less interested in and informed about politics because of their lack of exposure to it: "More access to higher education has provided recent

generations with the ability to learn more about politics than their grandparents were able to. But just because the potential is there doesn't mean that someone will use it. Without reading a daily newspaper, watching the TV news, or otherwise following current events, even the best-educated people will probably not pick up much knowledge about the political world" (Wattenberg 2012, p.69).

This argument is based on the view that news consumption is habitual (Wattenberg 2012; Graber 2002; Buckingham 1999; Putnam 2000). Once citizens get into the habit of reading newspapers or watching television news during their formative years, they are likely to do so for the rest of their adult lives, even as technology and the means through which that news can be accessed continues to evolve (Wattenberg 2012). Wattenberg (2012), for example, shows that 42% of the American cohort born between 1953/57 read a newspaper every day in the 1970s, and that 38% continued to do so in the 2000s despite the proliferation of news media channels and the spread of the Internet.

More recent generations, however, have been increasingly less likely to develop such habits. Of the 1968/72 US cohort, only 22% reported reading a daily newspaper in the 1980s, and only 20% of the 1978/82 birth cohort did so in the 2000s (Wattenberg 2012; Graber 2002). Fewer and fewer members of recent generations have developed habits of reading newspapers, and the same is also true for listening to news on the radio and watching news on television (Wattenberg 2012; Buckingham 1999; McLeod 2000; Graber 2002). While more members of recent generations report using the Internet and social media

on a daily basis (Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Norris 2001), most do not use it as a source of political news and information (Di Gennaro and Dutton 2006; Gibson et al. 2005), and even those that do are less likely to consume as much political information as they would through reading a newspaper or watching broadcast news (Wattenberg 2012; Baumgartner and Morris 2010). Internet news consumption is not, therefore, a like for like replacement for more traditional forms of media, meaning that habits of consuming political news through the Internet are not a like for like replacement for habits of consuming it through traditional media. The Millennials, therefore, are developing habits which either mean that they consume less political information than did previous generations, or that they consume political information which is less likely to foster interest in or knowledge of politics; consequently, they are a distinctly uninterested and uninformed political generation (Wattenberg 2012; Buckingham 1999; Soule 2001; McLeod 2000; Casero-Ripolles 2012).

Through its impact on political interest and political knowledge, consuming political news is an important facilitator of political participation by making citizens both more aware of and more informed about political events and what they can do to influence them (Buckingham 1999; Casero-Ripolles 2012; Wattenberg 2012). In addition, increased exposure to and knowledge of political events makes people more likely to discuss them with friends and peers, which in turn develops political interest and sophistication, and so ultimately participation (Buckingham 1999; Wattenberg 2012; Van Deth et al. 2011; Soule 2001). This also helps people to develop habits of thinking about and debating political issues which facilitates their doing so again in the future (Roker et al. 2009). Furthermore, consuming political news endows people

with a greater sense of political efficacy as a result of their knowledge of the political process and political issues (Wattenberg 2012; McLeod 2000).

Finally, Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) and Wattenberg (2012) show that the habitual consumption of news media can support conceptions of citizenship which emphasise voting as a civic duty. This is partly a result of receiving messages promoting such a view through the media itself, and partly as a result of the habit of political news consumption and engagement spilling over into a habit of political participation (Wattenberg 2012; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

Through developing habits of consuming political news, therefore, citizens develop greater political interest, knowledge, sophistication and efficacy, and also conceptions of citizenship which emphasise political participation. As a result, developing habits of consuming political news facilitates habits of political participation and ultimately make citizens more active in politics, both inside and outside of the formal political arena (Wattenberg 2012; Roker et al. 2009; McLeod 2000; Soule 2001; Buckingham 1999). With regard to the Millennials, the key argument of the media fragmentation theory is that they are not developing these habits of news consumption, or that they are developing habits which are not conducive to the development of political interest, knowledge, sophistication and efficacy, nor to conceptions of citizenship which emphasise political participation, to the same extent as those of previous generations.

This is said to be the result of two processes associated with social modernisation: the proliferation of media outlets, and the fragmentation of

media consumption. The proliferation of media outlets is primarily the result of technological advancement. The rapid development of the Internet and social media, as well as the arrival of hundreds of new television and radio channels, has provided more media outlets for people to choose from than ever (Wattenberg 2012; Wayne et al. 2010; Casero-Ripolles 2012; Baumgartner and Morris 2010). Before, people were restricted to watching (or listening to) a small number of channels and/or to reading newspapers for their news and entertainment media (Wattenberg 2012; Putnam 2000). These media sources were ‘broadcasters’, intended to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, so they had a wide range of programmes, including those providing political news (Wattenberg 2012). People who consumed such media – which was almost everybody through one form or another – were highly likely to come into contact with political news at some point during their day (Wattenberg 2012). This was true even if they were not interested in politics; rather than switch off the television or radio, people would sit through the news until a more appealing programme appeared (Putnam 2000).

This effect was compounded by the fact that media consumption used to be a family affair. Before the 1990s, it was common for families to sit and watch television or listen to the radio together (Putnam 2000). As a result, whatever happened to be broadcast on the channel the family was viewing would be watched by all members of the household (Wattenberg 2012). Even if the younger members of the family were uninterested in politics, they were likely to at least accidentally consume some political news media as they watched or listened to the channels preferred by their parents (Wattenberg 2012).

This pattern of media consumption, alongside the limited range of available media outlets to choose from, meant that political news was quite hard to avoid. Unless people were willing to avoid media altogether, or resist social and family pressure to watch television/listen to the radio together, they would be likely to see or hear or read some political news at some point during their day (Wattenberg 2012). The seeds of a habit of news consumption that included at least a little political news would be sown during most people's formative years, and that would underpin a habit of news consumption conducive to political engagement and participation in their later years when they were likely to be more interested in politics (Wattenberg 2012; Buckingham 1999).

The rapid rise of the Internet and social media, the proliferation of television and radio channels, and the fragmentation of family media consumption habits means that this is no longer the case. Political news is far easier to avoid for today's young generation than it was for their parents or grandparents. There are many media outlets to choose from, and people do not have to tolerate watching programmes they do not like while waiting for their favourite programme to appear – they can change the channel, or get out their smartphone while they wait (Wattenberg 2012; Buckingham 1999). People no longer need to watch channels that contain a range of programmes designed to appeal to a broad audience. Instead, “[s]ports buffs can watch ESPN; music buffs can tune to MTV or VH1; history buffs can glue their dial to the history channel” (Wattenberg 2012, p.30). In addition, the new and popular forms of media – the Internet and social media – are inherently flexible (Putnam 2000; Baumgartner and Morris 2010). If people do not like the content of a website,

they close the browser or go elsewhere. If they are not interested in the content of their Twitter or Facebook feed, they unfollow the source of the boring content or ignore it. Furthermore, families do not necessarily watch television together anymore. Children are more likely to have televisions in their rooms and watch what they want rather than joining their parents (Wattenberg 2012; Putnam 2000). The young are also more likely to consume the newer, more individualistic sources of media in which they have total control (Casero-Ripolles 2012; Russell 2004; Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Di Gennaro and Dutton 2006; Baumgartner and Morris 2010; Norris 2001).

All of these changes make it less likely that the Millennials will ‘accidentally’ come into contact with political news in some form or another. The accidental consumption of political news that was central to people developing habits of news consumption which facilitated political interest, knowledge, efficacy and habits of political engagement in adulthood is a thing of the past (Wattenberg 2012; Graber 2002; Buckingham 1999). New generations either develop habits of news consumption that have a much weaker effect on political sophistication and engagement (such as those based around social media and the Internet), or do not develop habits of political news consumption at all (Wattenberg 2012; Buckingham 1999; Soule 2001; McLeod 2000). Consequently, the Millennials – who are at the forefront of this trend, being the least likely to use traditional forms of media and the most likely to use the Internet and social media (Evans and Sternberg 1999; Wattenberg 2012; Baumgartner and Morris 2010; Russell 2004; Graber 2002; Norris 2001) – are less likely to be interested in or knowledgeable about politics, or to develop habits and conceptions of citizenship which facilitate political participation.

One of the strengths of the media fragmentation theory is that it is capable of addressing the major challenge to the post-materialist theory, namely by being capable of explaining why the Millennials might be less interested in and knowledgeable about politics, and less active, than previous generations. There are, however, several substantial challenges to its approach. First, the nature of the causal relationship between news media consumption and political engagement central to the theory is far from clear. Wattenberg (2012) and Buckingham (1999), for instance, argue that news consumption is causally prior to political interest and knowledge. However, as Putnam (2000) notes, it is entirely possible that political interest and knowledge stimulate news media consumption. In this case, the media fragmentation theory would be unable to explain why the Millennials may be less interested in or knowledgeable about politics, as their lack of news media consumption would stem from their lack of motivation to engage with political media, not the other way around.

The second challenge is the same as that levelled at the post-materialism theory: the media fragmentation approach cannot explain the evidence which goes against its theoretical expectations for the political engagement and participation of the Millennials. The theory expects that the Millennials should be less interested in and knowledgeable about politics than previous generations, and that this in turn makes them less politically active. Studies such as Henn and Foard (2012), Henn et al. (2005) and Marsh et al. (2007), however, suggest that the Millennials maintain an active interest in politics and are knowledgeable about the issues which affect their lives. Similarly, Sloam (2012b), Norris (2002; 2011) and Dalton (2013) maintain that while the Millennials may be less active in formal politics than their elders, they are

disproportionately active in cause-oriented politics. While this claim is in serious doubt given the evidence Chapters Three and Four, the media fragmentation theory is nonetheless incapable of explaining why the Millennials might be unusually inactive in one form of politics (such as the formal political arena) but active in another (such as the informal).

7.4 Social Modernisation and Formal Political Apathy and Alienation

Most of the consequences of rising post-materialism and media fragmentation discussed above relate to the Millennials' political participation. It is clear, however, that they could also have substantial implications for the Millennials' apathy towards and/or alienation from formal politics. Indeed many of the consequences outlined by the two theories can expect to directly express themselves through apathy and alienation. The increased motivation to engage with politics suggested by the post-materialist theory, for example, should express itself in lower levels of political apathy among more recent generations. These expectations will be tested in Chapter Eight; in this section, the detail of and justification for those expectations is laid out.

7.4.1 Post-materialism, Apathy and Alienation

The post-materialism theory suggests that social evolution should have a varied impact on apathy and alienation. The increasingly post-materialistic nature of the Millennials compared with their elders suggests that they should be less apathetic than older generations once the effects of the life cycle (which will increase political apathy during youth) have been accounted for. This is because: a) they should be more motivated to participate in politics in order to defend and promote their individual autonomy; b) they should be more

motivated to participate to promote their post-materialistic agenda; c) they should be more likely to value political participation as an end in itself; d) they should be more politically sophisticated, which in turn facilitates the development of political interest; and e) they have access to more political information and discussion (through ICT) which should stimulate their political interest. The post-materialism theory firmly expects, therefore, that political apathy should be lower among the Millennials than older generations once the influence of the life cycle has been accounted for.

The post-materialism theory expects that the Millennials should be mostly less alienated than their elders as well. Owing to their political sophistication and access to ICT to both access and disseminate political information, post-materialists should be expected to feel more confident about their ability to influence political outcomes. The Millennials, therefore, should be expected to feel more powerful than their elders (i.e., exhibit lower levels of powerlessness) once any life-cycle effects have been accounted for. They should also exhibit lower levels of meaninglessness. Owing to both their political sophistication and their access to political information through ICT, the Millennials should be more knowledgeable about politics than older generations (again, once the life cycle is taken into account). Given that political knowledge is strongly correlated with confidence in one's knowledge and understanding of politics (Hansard Society 2012), this should give them more confidence in their political knowledge and so lead to lower levels of meaninglessness.

Finally, the one form of alienation which post-materialism should increase is political normlessness. One of the defining characteristics of post-materialists is their degree of individual autonomy, something which they fiercely defend and seek to promote. This makes them hostile towards institutions which could conceivably constrain that autonomy, including political or social institutions such as social class, political parties, or the government. One of the ways in which this hostility could manifest itself is through lower levels of trust and faith in the institutions of the formal political arena i.e., higher levels of political normlessness. Furthermore, post-materialists also have higher expectations of government, which in part reflects their wider and distinctly 'post-materialist' political agenda. Studies such as Stoker (2006) and Dalton (2004) have suggested that these expectations are often so high as to be almost unattainable for the government, and the dissatisfaction and cynicism about both the intentions and capabilities of the political elite (as well as associated institutions such as political parties) that results could also increase levels of political normlessness.

7.4.2 Media Fragmentation, Apathy and Alienation

The more sceptical media fragmentation theory predicts an increase in political apathy and political meaninglessness among younger generations. As outlined above, while the media fragmentation approach does not dispute the potential for the Millennials to become more engaged, active and sophisticated etc. as a result of social evolution, it argues that this potential is not realised because of the increasingly fragmented and individualist patterns of media consumption they are developing. This makes it easier for young citizens to avoid political

news, at a time in their lives when they are least likely to seek it out, meaning that habits develop in which engagement with political news is limited.

Consequently, the Millennials engage less with political news and information, and so develop lower levels of interest in and knowledge of politics. This means that the Millennials are expected to exhibit both higher levels of political apathy and higher levels of political meaninglessness (reflecting the link between actual political knowledge and confidence in political knowledge).

There are no suggestions of a relationship between the fragmentation of news media consumption and political powerlessness. While several studies (including Wattenberg (2012) and Roker et al. (2009)) suggest that media fragmentation could be associated with lower levels of political efficacy, this is based on the claim that media fragmentation reduces the political knowledge of younger generations and consequently their confidence in their political understanding. While these studies relate this with political efficacy (which is closely related to political powerlessness), the fact that the perceptions of efficacy they outline are based on confidence in political knowledge means that this process is related to changes in political meaninglessness.

There are also no suggestions in this literature for how media fragmentation might affect attitudes and perceptions associated with political normlessness i.e., political trust, democratic satisfaction and perceptions of fair treatment by the government. None of the studies discussed above proposed a link between changes in media consumption and any of these characteristics, and so there is no reason to expect that media fragmentation will affect political normlessness.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the theoretical framework from which distinct expressions of formal political apathy and formal political alienation from the Millennials, and the subsequent impact on their political participation, can be potentially explained. This framework reflects the argument made in Chapter Two that the Millennials are a Western society-wide political generation, and so are likely to be the result of Western society-wide causal factors and processes – such as social evolution. The chapter has detailed two strands of social modernisation theory which focus on different aspects, and their respective consequences, of social evolution: the post-materialism theory, which focusses on economic, social and technological development and has a broadly optimistic view of the implications for the Millennials’ political engagement; and the media fragmentation theory, which focusses on changes in media consumption and has a more pessimistic expectation. Both theories, while predicting very different attitudinal and behavioural consequences, provide a consistent theoretical framework which can potentially explain the generational distinctiveness of the Millennials’ political apathy and alienation, and subsequently their participation. The success of these theories in explaining these trends will be tested in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight: The Generational Distinction of the Millennials

This research has shown that British Millennials are the least politically active generation in the electorate, regardless of the political arena examined. Chapter Six also showed that at the time of the 2010 general election, the Millennials were the most apathetic generation in the electorate, and also the most alienated in terms of meaninglessness, and that both of these contributed to their lower expectations of participating in politics. This chapter answers two remaining questions about the relationship between the Millennials' apathy and alienation, and their political participation: first, are they a distinct political generation for their apathy and alienation once the influence of period effects and the life cycle have been accounted for; and second, can such a trend be explained by the evolution of Western society over the last three decades?

This chapter begins by using age-period-cohort (APC) analyses to estimate age, period and cohort effects in formal political apathy and alienation.

Attention then turns to exploring the role of social modernisation in driving trends in apathy and alienation through incorporating variables indicative of post-materialism and media fragmentation into the APC models. The chapter concludes by arguing that there is evidence of age, period and cohort effects with regard to both formal political apathy and formal political alienation.

Once life cycle and period effects have been accounted for, there is evidence of a cohort effect which suggests that the Millennials are the most politically apathetic generation to have entered the British electorate for decades.

Furthermore, there are similar effects apparent for both political powerlessness and normlessness, however they suggest that the Millennials are the least

politically alienated generation. In addition, the high levels of meaninglessness among the Millennials found in Chapter Six are suggested to reflect their current stage in the life cycle; there is no indication of a cohort effect which suggests that the Millennials are unusually (un)alienated. Finally, the analyses suggest that the two social modernisation theories offer limited insight into the causes of these cohort effects. The rise of post-materialism is suggested to help explain period effects in political apathy, political normlessness and political meaninglessness, but cannot explain the Millennials' distinct apathy and lack of alienation. The fragmentation of media consumption helps to explain the Millennials' unusually high levels of political apathy, but offers little in the way of explaining trends in political alienation.

8.1 Data and Indicators

The data for this chapter comes from the British Social Attitudes survey (BSA). The BSA has a range of variables suitable for measuring formal political apathy and alienation and for estimating the impact of post-materialism and media fragmentation. The series does not contain as many variables for measuring apathy and alienation as found in the British Election Study – which means that the indicators of these characteristics employed in this chapter are less complex and comprise of single variables – however this is compensated for by the fact that the BSA has run for almost every year since 1983 and many of the variables of interest were measured in almost the same way throughout. This makes the BSA ideal for examining trends in apathy and alienation.

The analyses were conducted using data from those survey years in which variables relating to political apathy and each dimension of political alienation were present and in the same form: this meant that data from 12 surveys covering a period of 26 years between 1986 and 2012 were examined. The indicators of apathy and alienation were selected on the basis of their correspondence to the constituent variables which made up the composite indicators developed in Chapter Five:

- Political apathy was measured by looking at respondents' interest in politics, with a potential score from 1 (meaning very little apathy) to 5
- Political powerlessness was measured by capturing agreement with the view that people like the respondent have no say in what the government does, with a potential score from 1 (meaning very little powerlessness) to 5
- Political normlessness was measured through looking at trust in the government, with a potential score from 1 (meaning very little normlessness) to 4
- Political meaninglessness was measured by a variable representing agreement with the view that politics and government is complicated, with a potential score from 1 (meaning very little meaninglessness) to 5

Two further variables were used to measure the effect of post-materialism and media fragmentation. Following the commonly used approach of measuring post-materialism with a proxy indication of the respondents' level of education, post-materialism was measured based on respondents' highest qualification

(Dalton 2013; Welzel 2007; Inglehart and Welzel 2005).²⁴ While the media fragmentation theory refers to a range of processes, all of which could theoretically be measured with different variables, the fact that these processes are all closely related means that a single variable measuring a single aspect of the media fragmentation process can be used. The best variable in the BSA is a variable measuring whether or not respondents' read a daily newspaper at least three times a week; daily newspaper readership is negatively associated with both weakening habits of political news consumption and the consumption of news media through the Internet, meaning that respondents who do not read a newspaper at least three times a week are most likely to exhibit the consequences of media fragmentation.²⁵

The data was analysed using the same method as that seen in Chapter Four: graphical representations of trends in apathy and alienation for each political generation were used to support the interpretation of estimates of age, period and cohort effects from APC analyses. The details of this method and of the steps taken to overcome the 'identification problem' are provided in Chapter Four. Furthermore, additional analyses using generalised additive modelling were also conducted to check the validity of the cohort classification used to overcome the identification problem, based on the approach used by Grasso (2014), Neundorf (2010) and Tulley (2002). These analyses, and a discussion of the results which support the validity of the classification of political

²⁴ The details of this variable are provided in Appendix One.

²⁵ The details of this variable are in Appendix One, and a validity check of this assumption is provided in Appendix Six.

generations used in this research for the estimation of cohort effects in political apathy and alienation, are provided in Appendix Seven.

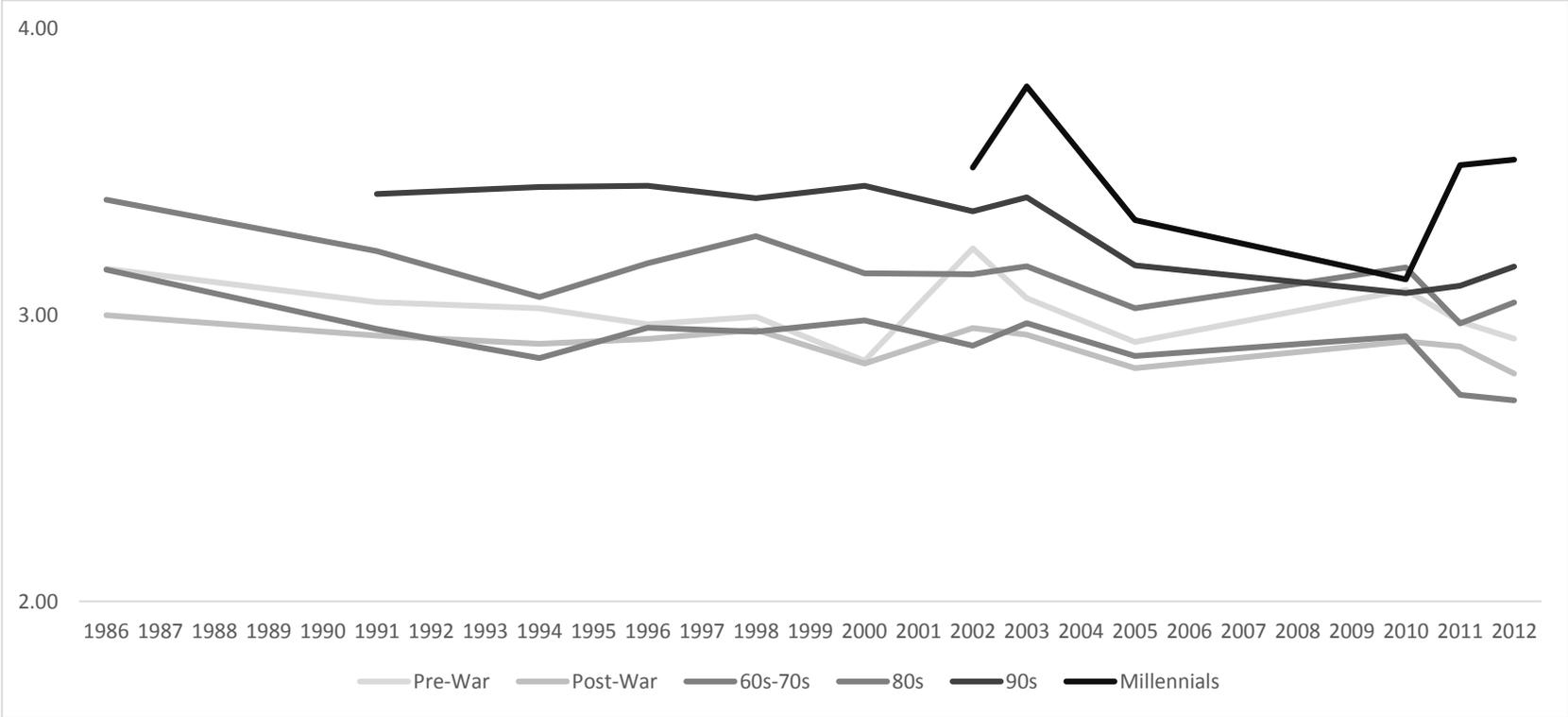
8.2 Apathy, Alienation and the Millennials

Figure 8.1 shows the trends in formal political apathy and each dimension of formal political alienation for each generation for the 26 years covered by the BSA data. Table 8.1 shows the APC regression analyses for each. The generation coefficients can be interpreted as estimating the effect of being a member of the given generation on the dependent variable compared with being a member of the reference generation (the Post-War generation), while controlling for the influence of the life cycle (measured through the age and age-squared variables) and period effects (measured by survey year).²⁶

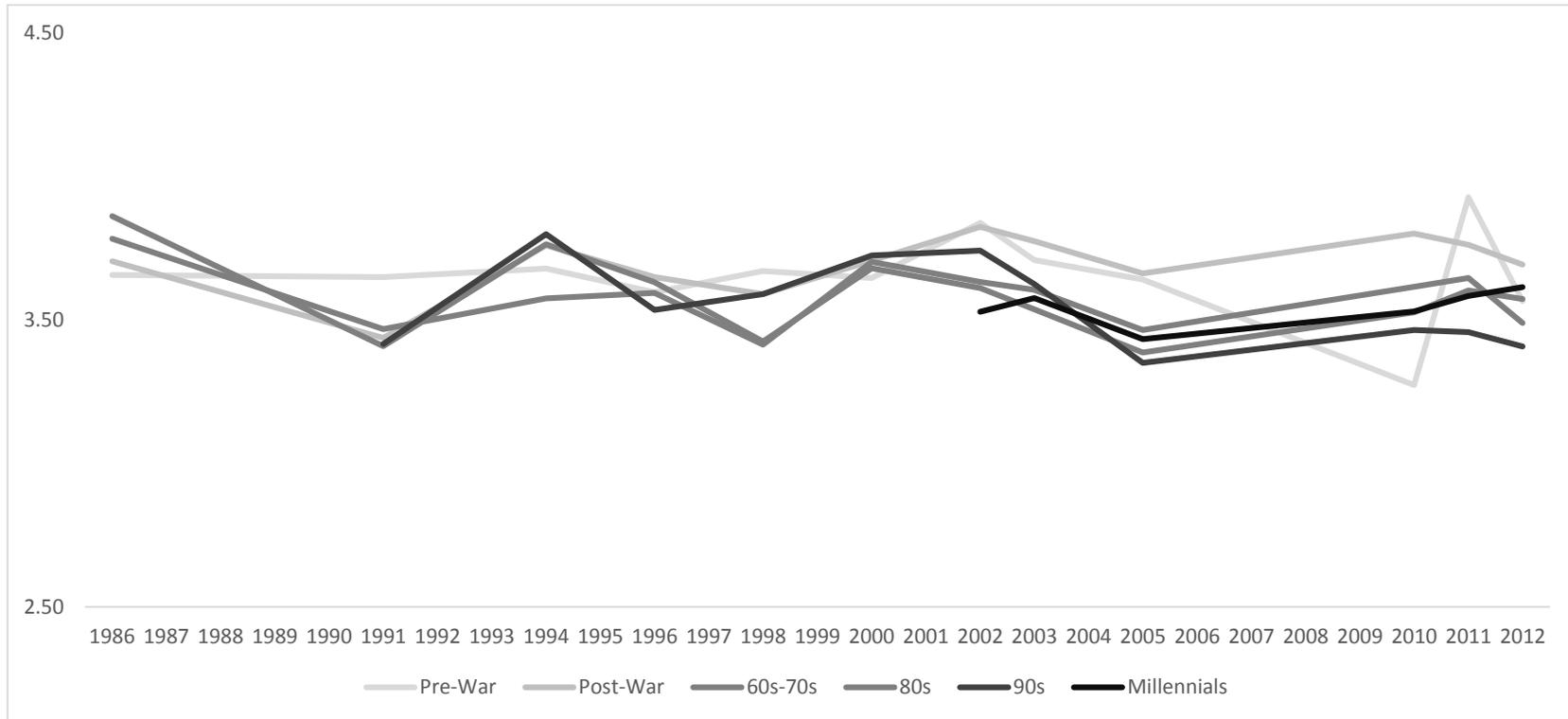
²⁶ The inclusion of a quadratic age function was based on several factors, including previous research suggesting a curvilinear relationship between the life cycle and characteristics such as political interest and political knowledge (Smets 2008), and comparisons of APC models in which the life cycle was modelled using both an 'age' variable and an 'age' plus 'age2' variable. For apathy, powerlessness and meaninglessness, both of these variables were statistically significant and model fit improved (albeit marginally), suggesting a curvilinear relationship with the life cycle. For normlessness, the 'age2' variable was insignificant and so the life cycle was modelled with the single age variable only.

Figure 8.1: Apathy and Alienation in Britain, 1986 - 2012

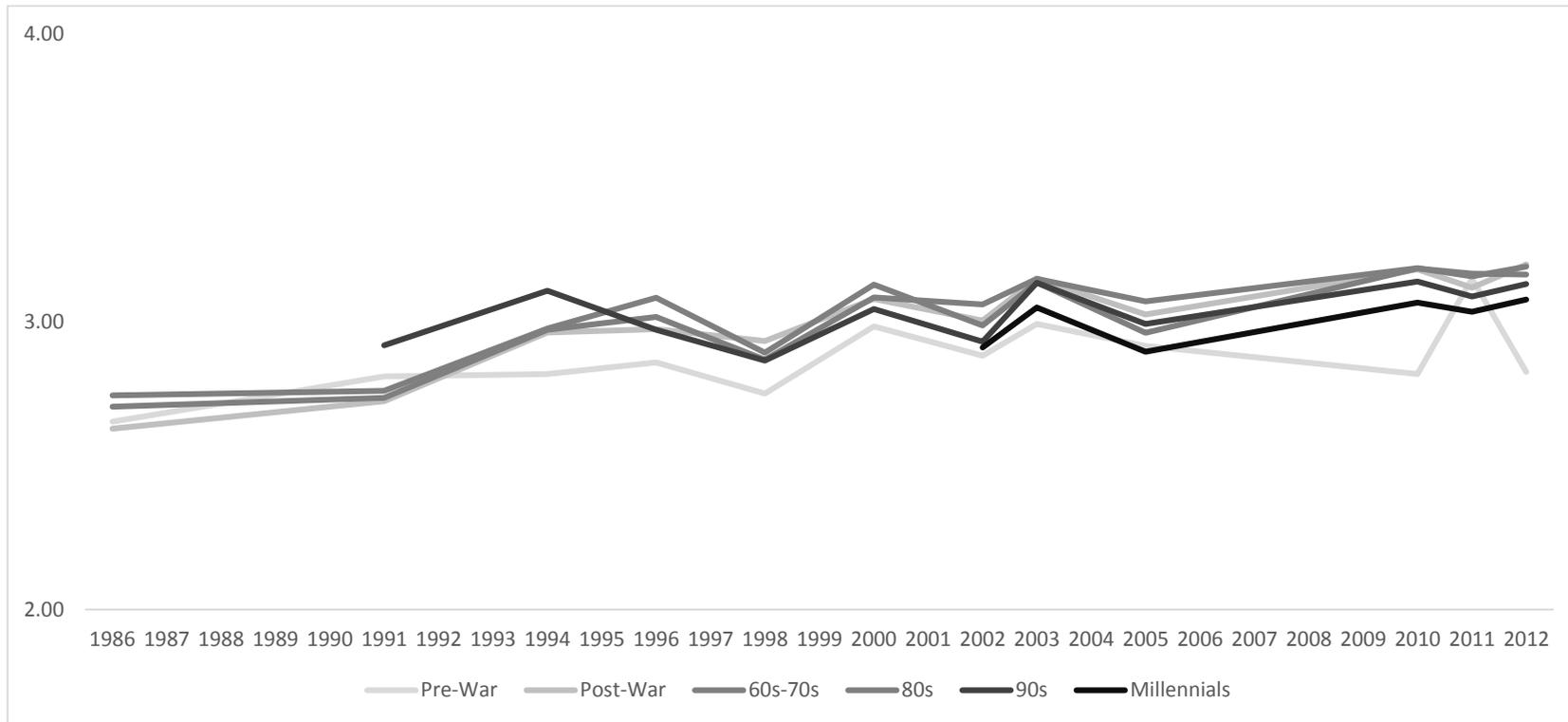
Political Apathy



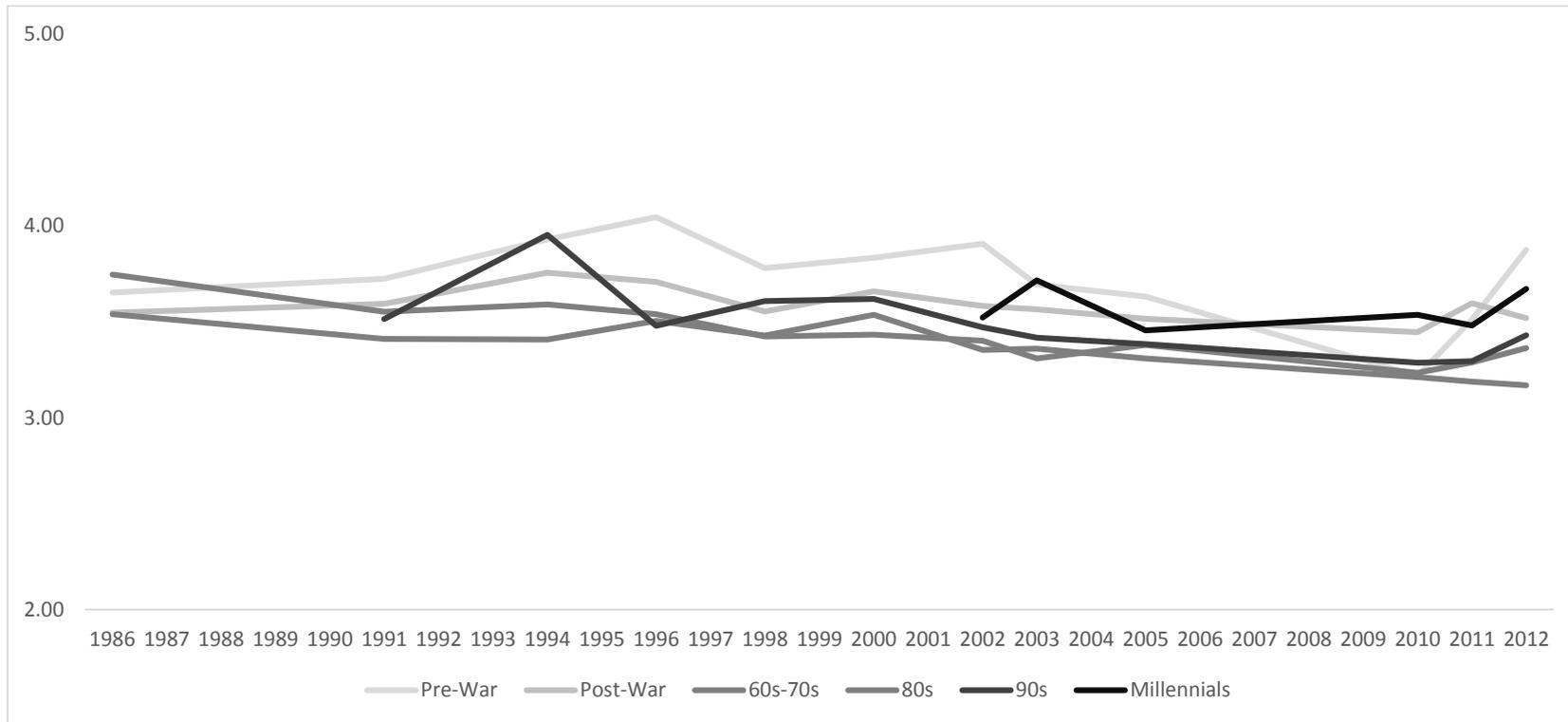
Political Powerlessness



Political Normlessness



Political Meaninglessness



Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Note that the y-axes have been constrained to make visual inspection of trends easier. In some cases where the initial sample of respondents for a given generation was too small (i.e., below 100 respondents) they were omitted from the chart for that year.

Table 8.1a: APC Analysis, Political Apathy and Political Alienation

	Apathy		Powerlessness	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	0.36*	0.14	-0.64***	0.16
90s	0.20*	0.10	-0.50***	0.11
80s	0.13	0.07	-0.36***	0.08
60s-70s (Post-War)	-0.04	0.05	-0.22***	0.05
Pre-War	0.06	0.06	-0.13	0.07
Year (1986)				
1991	-0.14*	0.07	-0.41***	0.07
1994	-0.23***	0.06	0.06	0.08
1996	-0.14*	0.06	-0.10	0.08
1998	-0.08	0.06	-0.29***	0.07
2000	-0.15*	0.07	0.05	0.07
2002	-0.08	0.07	0.10	0.07
2003	-0.04	0.07	-0.03	0.07
2005	-0.28***	0.07	-0.31***	0.08
2010	-0.21*	0.09	-0.09	0.10
2011	-0.27**	0.08	-0.06	0.09
2012	-0.27**	0.09	-0.11	0.10
Age	-0.06***	0.01	-0.03***	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00
Obs	29621		23645	
Prob > chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.01		0.00	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001.

Table 8.1b: APC Analysis, Political Apathy and Political Alienation

	Normlessness		Meaninglessness	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.47**	0.16	-0.01	0.16
90s	-0.22	0.12	-0.17	0.12
80s	-0.09	0.09	-0.19*	0.09
60s-70s (Post-War)	-0.02	0.06	-0.23****	0.06
Pre-War	-0.16*	0.07	0.06	0.07
Year (1986)				
1991	0.24**	0.07	-0.08	0.07
1994	0.74****	0.08	0.17*	0.08
1996	0.82****	0.08	0.10	0.08
1998	0.52****	0.07	-0.12	0.07
2000	1.03****	0.07	0.00	0.07
2002	0.83****	0.08	-0.13	0.08
2003	1.21****	0.08	-0.24**	0.07
2005	0.88****	0.08	-0.32****	0.08
2010	1.34****	0.1	-0.47****	0.10
2011	1.24****	0.1	-0.41****	0.09
2012	1.33****	0.11	-0.29**	0.10
Age	0.00	0.00	-0.03****	0.01
Age2	-	-	0.00****	0.00
Obs	22255		22549	
Prob > chi2	0.00		0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.02		0.01	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; **** - p-value below 0.001.

8.2.1 Political Apathy

Both the APC analysis reported in Table 8.1a and the data in Figure 8.1 showed comparable trends for political apathy. Figure 8.1 showed evidence of a slight period effect in which apathy declined throughout the British electorate after the 1980s; for example, the average score on the 1-5 apathy variable for

all the generations represented in the data in 1986 was 3.18, while in 2012 it was 3.03. The presence of such an effect was apparent in Table 8.1a, with the year variables suggesting that the average level of political apathy fluctuated around the 1986 level between 1991 and 2003 (all of the coefficients were negative, suggesting lower levels of apathy, but most were not statistically significant). From 2005 onwards, however, the coefficients suggested a sustained decline in apathy, with the statistically significant coefficients for 2005, 2010, 2011 and 2012 averaging -0.26 compared with 1986 levels. Numerous scholars have suggested that, owing to a number of effects relating to social modernisation and changes in the nature of electoral competition, political apathy declined in many Western democracies since the early 2000s (e.g., Dalton 2013; Whiteley 2012), and this data supports that.

It is difficult to determine whether there is evidence of a life cycle effect from Figure 8.1. However, the data in Table 8.1a suggests that, as expected based on the known relationship between the political life cycle and interest in politics (Jankowski and Strate 1995), there is a curvilinear relationship between apathy and the life cycle, as both the age and age-squared coefficients were statistically significant. Apathy is higher among youth, and falls as people reach middle age and have more reason to engage with formal politics, before rising again in old age.

Finally, both Figure 8.1 and Table 8.1a show clear evidence of a cohort effect indicative of a generational increase in political apathy apparent from the entry of the 90s generation into the electorate. Figure 8.1 shows that throughout the 1986 to 2012 period, there was little difference between the average levels of

apathy exhibited by the Pre-War, Post-War and 60s-70s generations, which varied only slightly throughout the series; their average apathy scores throughout were 3, 2.9 and 2.9 respectively. This impression was supported by the cohort coefficients in Table 8.1a; that of the Pre-War cohort was 0.06, and that of the 60s-70s generation was -0.04, and both were non-significant. The average apathy level of the 80s generation was slightly higher, at 3.2 throughout the series. The cohort coefficient for the 80s generation supported this impression – at 0.13 – but was also non-significant.

The average apathy score for the 90s generation in 1991, however, was 3.3, and it remained at this average throughout the series – notably higher than that of the older generations, and the coefficient in Table 8.1a of 0.2 was statistically significant. Similarly, the average score for the Millennials when they entered the electorate in 2002 was 3.5, and their average for the following years also stayed around the same level. The Millennials' coefficient in Table 8.1a of 0.36 was also statistically significant. Both Table 8.1a and Figure 8.1 suggest, therefore, that with the arrival of the 90s generation there was evidence of a sustained and significant generational increase in political apathy, which continued and was more extreme with the Millennial generation. The Millennials entered the electorate with the highest level of political apathy of all of the generations, and Table 8.1a suggests that while the life cycle played a role in explaining this, it was also in part the result of a cohort effect.

8.2.2 Political Powerlessness

As opposed to formal political apathy, Figure 8.1 showed no evidence of a sustained period effect in political powerlessness; the overall levels of

alienation exhibited in the electorate appear to have remained stable between 1986 and 2012, ranging between 3.5 and 3.8 on the 1-5 powerlessness scale. The period coefficients in Table 8.1a give a similar impression; with the exception of 1991, 1998 and 2005, none of the remaining year coefficients were significant nor suggested much difference from the powerlessness levels of 1986. Apart from short-lived falls in normlessness alienation in 1991 (which had a significant coefficient of -0.41), 1998 (-0.29) and 2005 (-0.31) there was no indication of a sustained period effect in powerlessness.

The age coefficients show that there is a relationship between the life cycle and political powerlessness, with both coefficients being statistically significant. The effect was similar to that seen for political apathy; powerlessness is higher among youth, and falls as people reach middle age. It then increases again as people reach old age. This suggests that similar forces which limit political engagement among youth (e.g., not having a career or family home and so having less motivation to engage with politics) and the elderly (e.g., being physically unable to participate in politics) also depress people's expectations of being able to influence political outcomes.

The evidence between Figure 8.1 and Table 8.1a diverges somewhat in relation to cohort effects. Figure 8.1 suggested only very limited evidence of a cohort effect: the powerlessness scores of the Pre-War, Post-War, 60s-70s and 80s generations in 1986 were 3.7, 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 respectively. The score for the 90s generation in 1991 was 3.4, though this was in the context of a drop in powerlessness for all generations in that year. The Millennials' score in 2002 was 3.5, lower than those of their elders which ranged from 3.6 (for the 60s-

70s and 80s) to 3.8 (for the Pre- and Post-War). Similarly, the average scores for the Millennials throughout the entire series was 3.5, compared with 3.6 for 90s, 80s and 60s-70s, and 3.7 for the Post-War and Pre-War generations. These figures suggested that there was a very slight fall in powerlessness apparent in the younger generations compared with the oldest.

Table 8.1a, however, shows that once the political life cycle and period effects had been accounted for, the cohort effects were more substantial. The coefficients suggested an almost linear generational decline in powerlessness alienation beginning with the arrival of the 60s-70s generation into the electorate. The Pre-War coefficient was not significantly different from that of the Post-War, at -0.13. The 60s-70s generation, however, were significantly less alienated than the Post-War, with a significant coefficient of -0.22. They were followed by the 80s generation – with a coefficient of -0.36 – then the 90s – with a coefficient of -0.5 – and finally the Millennials – with a coefficient of -0.64, all of which were also significant. In short, therefore, the analysis showed that once the life cycle and period effects were controlled for, the Millennials were at the leading edge of a generational decline in powerlessness alienation, and so – once they age – are likely to feel more influential in politics throughout their adult lives than their elders.

8.2.3 Political Normlessness

Figure 8.1 clearly suggested the presence of a period effect in which the entire British electorate has become more alienated by their lack of faith in the integrity and fairness of formal politics since the 1980s. In 1986, the average overall normlessness level was 2.7; by 2012, it had risen to 3.1. Figure 8.1 did

not suggest the rise was dramatic, but it was fairly constant. This impression is supported by the data in Table 8.1b, in which all of the year coefficients were positive and statistically significant. Moreover, the coefficients grew larger (though not constantly) over time. This suggests that once other factors – namely the (non-significant) effect of the life cycle and cohort effects – were controlled for, there was still evidence of a clear rise in political normlessness throughout the electorate.

Table 8.1b suggested that there was no evidence of a life cycle effect for political normlessness, with the age variable being non-significant. This is consistent with expectations in that there are no suggestions that there should be a relationship between the life cycle and normlessness alienation either in the political alienation literature, or research relating to political trust or young people. Table 8.1b did suggest, however, that there was evidence of a significant cohort effect which was not apparent in Figure 8.1. Figure 8.1 suggested that there was little difference between the alienation exhibited by the different generations; the average normlessness scores for each on the 1-4 variable throughout the series ranged between 2.9 and 3.0. Furthermore, in 1986 the normlessness levels of the Pre-War, Post-War, 60s-70s and 80s generations were between 2.6 and 2.7; when the 90s generation entered the electorate in 1991 their figure was 2.9, and for the Millennials in 2002 it was also 2.9, neither of which appear surprising nor unusual in light of the period effect.

The coefficients in Table 8.1b, however, suggested that the Millennials and the Pre-War generation were significant for exhibiting lower levels of alienation

than the others. The coefficients for the 60s-70s (-0.02), 80s (-0.09) and 90s (-0.22) generations suggested that they may be slightly less alienated than the Post-War generation, but the differences were not statistically significant. The Pre-War coefficient, however, was significant at -0.16, and the Millennials' was more dramatically different at a statistically significant -0.47. Essentially, the coefficients implied a lob-sided curvilinear relationship between generation and normlessness, in which the oldest and particularly the youngest generations were significantly less alienated, once the period effect and life cycle were accounted for, than the rest of the electorate. The Millennials, therefore, appear to be the least alienated generation in terms of their trust in formal politics.

8.2.4 Political Meaninglessness

Figure 8.1 suggested evidence of a similar period effect for political meaninglessness as that seen for political apathy, though less dramatic: a steady decline throughout the electorate between 1986 and 2012. For example, the average meaninglessness score across all of the generations in 1986 was 3.6, which fell to 3.5 in 2012, though was closer to 3.4 between 2005 and 2011. Table 8.1b similarly suggested such an effect; there was evidence of minor and usually insignificant fluctuations (except for 1994, which saw a slight but significant spike in meaninglessness) between 1986 and 2002, but from 2003 there was evidence of a sustained, but not constant, decline with all of the year coefficients being negative and significant and ranging between -0.24 (in 2003) and -0.47 (in 2010). This decline was very similar to that seen for political apathy, and also supportive of the arguments of studies such as Dalton (2013) and Whiteley (2012), who suggest that Western electorates are becoming more

politically knowledgeable and confident as a result of access to the Internet and rising levels of education.

Table 8.1b suggests that there is also a curvilinear life cycle effect apparent for meaningfulness, in which alienation is greater among the young and the old, with the middle-aged being less alienated. The cause of this effect is unclear, however it seems likely that as people have more contact with formal politics through having a greater incentive to engage with it, they end up being more knowledgeable about it and so are more confident in their understanding of political issues and the political process.

Both Figure 8.1 and Table 8.1b suggested that there was a cohort effect apparent, but not one which suggested the Millennials were particularly unusual. Instead, the data suggested that the Millennials, 90s, Post-War and Pre-War generations had similar levels of meaningfulness alienation, with the 80s and 60s-70s generations being significantly less alienated. For example, the average meaningfulness score for the 80s and 60s-70s generations throughout the series displayed in Figure 8.1 was 3.4, compared with 3.7 for the Pre-War generation, 3.6 for the Post-War, 3.5 for the 90s generation and 3.6 for the Millennials. The coefficients in Table 8.1b suggested a similar relationship, with the coefficients for the Pre-War (0.06), 90s (-0.17) and Millennial generations (-0.01) being non-significant, while those for the 80s and 60s-70s generations were -0.19 and -0.23 respectively and both significant. The data suggested, therefore, that once the life cycle and period effects were accounted for, the Millennials were quite typical for their levels of meaningfulness

alienation; it was the 80s and 60-70s generations that stood out for being less alienated than the wider electorate.

8.2.5 Summary

The data examined above has shown evidence of age, period and cohort effects behind trends and differences between political generations in terms of formal political apathy and alienation. In three instances – apathy, powerlessness and normlessness – these effects identified the Millennials as distinct. While there was clear evidence of a life cycle effect which would increase the Millennials’ political apathy at their relatively early stage of adulthood, there was nonetheless evidence of a cohort effect which suggested that they are the most apathetic generation about formal politics to have entered the British electorate since the Second World War. Based on the evidence provided in Chapter Six, this data suggests that the fact that the Millennials have entered the electorate with a typically higher level of political apathy than their elders is a substantial part of the explanation for their unusually low levels of political participation. Furthermore, as at least some of the Millennials’ high levels of apathy is the result of a cohort effect, they are likely to remain unusually apathetic throughout their adult lives. This, in turn, suggests that they are likely to exhibit unusually low levels of political participation throughout their adult lives as well.

The data for political powerlessness and normlessness suggested a different picture, and poses a substantial challenge to the conventional wisdom discussed in Chapter One. There was evidence of a life cycle effect for powerlessness which would suggest that, given their stage in the life cycle, the

Millennials should be more alienated than their elders. However, with this effect accounted for, there was also evidence of a cohort effect which suggested that the Millennials were at the most extreme edge of a generational decline in powerlessness. In other words, successive generations of British citizens have tended to feel more influential in formal politics, and the Millennials are the latest and most extreme. Contrary to the suggestions of the Millennials as a generation alienated by their perception that they cannot influence formal politics, this evidence suggests that they feel unusually influential in the formal political process, and that this is likely to remain a feature of this generation throughout their adult lives.

There was no evidence of a life cycle effect for political normlessness; the most apparent trend in Figure 8.1 was the steady increase in this form of alienation throughout the British electorate since the 1980s. There were no spikes in normlessness to coincide with controversial political events or scandals – such as the cash for honours scandal in 2006, or the expenses scandal of 2009 – suggesting that this reflects longer running trends in the way that British citizens relate to their political system rather than the cumulative effect of various political events. With this effect controlled for, there was also evidence of a cohort effect which suggested that the Pre-War and especially the Millennial generations were less alienated than the wider electorate. This is also contrary to the description of the Millennials as an alienated generation, in this case reflecting their lack of trust in politicians or the formal political process more broadly, and instead suggests that the Millennials will, on average, be a more trusting generation throughout their adult lives. The combined effects of the Millennials' lower than average levels of both

powerlessness and normlessness – based on the analyses in Chapter Six – should be to increase their political participation relative to their elders. Rather than being part of the explanation for the Millennials’ unusually low political participation, therefore, their alienation from politics, or rather their lack of it, should be expected to make them more active than their elders.

Finally, there was no suggestion of a cohort effect which showed the Millennials as unusually alienated in terms of political meaningfulness. They were similar to the wider electorate, with their elders in the 80s and 60s-70s generations standing out for being unusually un-alienated. There was evidence, however, of a life cycle effect in which the Millennials would be expected to be more alienated than the wider electorate because of their stage in the political life cycle. It is this effect which most likely explains the finding in Chapter Six relating to the Millennials’ meaningfulness alienation at the time of the 2010 general election: while at that time they were more alienated than the wider electorate, and this did help explain why they expected to be less active in both formal and cause-oriented politics, this reflected the fact that they were young and had had little contact with formal politics at that time. As the Millennials age and exhibit greater engagement with politics, their meaningfulness alienation can be expected to decline. Overall, therefore, quite contrary to the expectations of the conventional wisdom, the Millennials’ alienation from formal politics only partially helps to explain why they were less active in politics around the 2010 election, and offers no explanation as to why that participation can be expected to stay lower than their elders throughout their adult lives. In fact, the cohort effects in political powerlessness, normlessness and meaningfulness suggest that the Millennials’

political alienation (or lack of it) can be expected to make them more active in politics in time. The strong and lasting depressing effect on the Millennials' political activity appears not to come from their alienation, but from their apathy towards formal politics.

8.3 The Role of Social Modernisation

In this section, the indicators of post-materialism and media fragmentation are used to explore the role of social modernisation in driving the trends in apathy and alienation identified above. The detail of these two theories, as well as a discussion of their expected impact on political apathy and political alienation, is provided in Chapter Seven. To aid with interpretation and assessment, a brief recap of those expected impacts is provided here.

Rising post-materialism is expected to increase the motivation of younger generations to engage with politics, in order to protect and promote their individual autonomy and promote their political agenda. Higher levels of post-materialism, therefore, should be associated with lower levels of political apathy among the youngest generations in the British electorate. Greater post-materialism is also associated with greater political sophistication, which in turn increases both political knowledge and individuals' views about their potential to affect the political process. Higher levels of post-materialism should also, therefore, be associated with lower levels of alienation in the form of powerlessness and meaninglessness among the younger generations. Finally, owing to the greater expectations post-materialists have of their government, as well as the weaker habitual loyalty they express towards political elites, higher levels of post-materialism should be associated with lower levels of political

normlessness among younger generations. As rising post-materialism is almost exclusively realised through successive cohorts entering Western society, the consequences of post-materialism should always be more apparent among the more post-materialist generations i.e., the younger generations.²⁷

The various processes associated with the fragmentation of media consumption are expected to increase levels of political apathy, again among the younger generations, because new habits of consuming political news lead to people generally consuming less political information. This should increase political apathy because without political information people receive less of a stimulus to take an interest in political issues, but it should also increase political meaninglessness because those same people have lower levels of political knowledge. This, in turn, means that those individuals will have less confidence in their understanding of the political process, and so greater meaninglessness alienation. There is no expected effect from the processes associated with media fragmentation for either levels of political powerlessness or political normlessness, so there should be no effect on trends in those dimensions of alienation from the incorporation of media fragmentation indicators into the APC models.

The effects of post-materialism and media fragmentation on the trends in political apathy and alienation were examined in several ways through their being accounted for in the APC regression models. First, the direct effect of each indicator on formal political apathy and each dimension of alienation was examined, and then the effect of controlling for that indicator on the estimates

²⁷ This generational pattern is apparent in the post-materialism variable, as shown in Appendix Six.

of age, period and cohort effects. If the post-materialism/media fragmentation indicator had the expected effect on the dependent variable, and if once it was included the generational coefficients identified in Table 8.1 were substantially reduced and/or rendered statistically insignificant, this was taken as evidence that rising post-materialism/media fragmentation could help explain that trend as a result of the processes outlined in Chapter Seven.

8.3.1 Political Apathy

Table 8.2 presents a range of APC analyses examining the impact of social modernisation on trends in formal political apathy. Model I was a replica of that presented in Table 8.1 above, for ease of comparison; Model II introduced the education variable to measure the effect of post-materialism; Model III added control variables for gender and social and political resources; Model IV added the media fragmentation variable to the original APC model, and Model V added the control variables to that model; Model VI shows a composite social modernisation APC model, including both the post-materialism and media fragmentation indicators, and Model VII added the control variables to that model.²⁸

²⁸ The details of the control variables are presented in Appendix One

Table 8.2a: Social Modernisation and Apathy, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model II - PM I		Model III - PM II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	0.36*	0.14	0.47**	0.14	0.30*	0.15
90s	0.20*	0.10	0.45***	0.10	0.35**	0.11
80s	0.13	0.07	0.32***	0.07	0.26**	0.08
60s-70s	-0.04	0.05	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.05
(Post-War)						
Pre-War	0.06	0.06	0.20**	0.06	0.20**	0.06
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.14*	0.07	-0.07	0.07	-0.12	0.07
1994	-0.23***	0.06	-0.11	0.06	-0.15*	0.07
1996	-0.14*	0.06	0.05	0.06	-0.01	0.06
1998	-0.08	0.06	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.07
2000	-0.15*	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.03	0.07
2002	-0.08	0.07	0.20**	0.07	0.18*	0.07
2003	-0.04	0.07	0.27***	0.07	0.27***	0.07
2005	-0.28***	0.07	0.02	0.07	0.01	0.07
2010	-0.21*	0.09	0.13	0.10	0.11	0.10
2011	-0.27**	0.08	0.15	0.09	0.13	0.09
2012	-0.27**	0.09	0.18	0.10	0.19	0.10
Age	-0.06***	0.01	-0.05***	0.01	-0.05***	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00
Education (No qual)						
CSE or equiv			-0.49***	0.04	-0.37***	0.04
O-level or equiv			-0.94***	0.03	-0.79***	0.04
A-Level or equiv			-1.45***	0.04	-1.19***	0.04
Higher ed < deg			-1.44***	0.04	-1.15***	0.04
Degree or higher			-2.23***	0.04	-1.82***	0.04
Social Class					-0.25***	0.14
Gender					0.47***	0.02
Obs	29621		28607		27483	
Pseudo2	0.01		0.06		0.07	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Table 8.2b: Social Modernisation and Apathy, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model IV - MF I		Model V - MF II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	0.36*	0.14	0.28*	0.14	0.08	0.15
90s	0.20*	0.10	0.12	0.10	0.08	0.10
80s	0.13	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07
60s-70s	-0.04	0.05	-0.08	0.05	-0.04	0.05
(Post-War)						
Pre-War	0.06	0.06	0.02	0.06	0.08	0.06
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.14*	0.07	-0.17*	0.07	-0.21**	0.07
1994	-0.23***	0.06	-0.28***	0.06	-0.27***	0.06
1996	-0.14*	0.06	-0.20**	0.06	-0.19**	0.06
1998	-0.08	0.06	-0.15*	0.06	-0.12	0.07
2000	-0.15*	0.07	-0.22**	0.07	-0.17*	0.07
2002	-0.08	0.07	-0.17*	0.07	-0.07	0.07
2003	-0.04	0.07	-0.12	0.07	0.00	0.07
2005	-0.28***	0.07	-0.38***	0.07	-0.27***	0.07
2010	-0.21*	0.09	-0.34***	0.09	-0.19*	0.10
2011	-0.27**	0.08	-0.41***	0.08	-0.25**	0.09
2012	-0.27**	0.09	-0.40***	0.09	-0.21*	0.10
Age	-0.06***	0.01	-0.06***	0.01	-0.05***	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00
Read paper x3 per wk			-0.45***	0.02	-0.39***	0.02
Social Class					-0.54***	0.01
Gender					0.43***	0.02
Obs	29621		29615		28397	
Pseudo2	0.01		0.02		0.05	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Table 8.2c: Social Modernisation and Apathy, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model VI - SM I		Model VII - SM II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	0.36*	0.14	0.39**	0.15	0.23	0.15
90s	0.20*	0.10	0.36***	0.10	0.28**	0.11
80s	0.13	0.07	0.25**	0.07	0.20**	0.08
60s-70s	-0.04	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.03	0.05
(Post-War)						
Pre-War	0.06	0.06	0.16*	0.06	0.16*	0.06
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.14*	0.07	-0.10	0.07	-0.14*	0.07
1994	-0.23***	0.06	-0.16*	0.06	-0.19**	0.07
1996	-0.14*	0.06	-0.01	0.06	-0.06	0.06
1998	-0.08	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.01	0.07
2000	-0.15*	0.07	-0.01	0.07	-0.03	0.07
2002	-0.08	0.07	0.11	0.07	0.11	0.07
2003	-0.04	0.07	0.19**	0.07	0.20**	0.07
2005	-0.28***	0.07	-0.08	0.07	-0.07	0.07
2010	-0.21*	0.09	0.00	0.10	0.01	0.10
2011	-0.27**	0.08	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.09
2012	-0.27**	0.09	0.04	0.10	0.07	0.10
Age	-0.06***	0.01	-0.05***	0.01	-0.05***	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00
Education (No qual)						
CSE or equiv			-0.47***	0.04	-0.35***	0.04
O-level or equiv			-0.93***	0.03	-0.78***	0.04
A-Level or equiv			-1.44***	0.04	-1.19***	0.04
Higher ed < deg			-1.44***	0.04	-1.14***	0.04
Degree or higher			-2.24***	0.04	-1.82***	0.04
Read paper x3 per wk			-0.46***	0.02	-0.40***	0.02
Social Class					-0.25***	0.02
Gender					0.43***	0.01
Obs	29621		28601		27477	
Pseudo2	0.01		0.06		0.07	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Model II showed that post-materialism had a substantial effect on political apathy, with greater post-materialism (indicated by higher educational qualifications) depressing apathy as expected. The effect ranges from that of having CSEs or equivalent reducing apathy by -0.47 points compared to the average apathy score of an individual with no qualifications, and the effect of having a degree or higher reducing relative apathy by -2.24 points. Accounting for post-materialism had a notable effect on the period and cohort effects reported in Model I, but had almost no impact on the life cycle effect. The period effect in Model I was almost entirely absent from Model II, with only one or two year coefficients standing out for being significant and suggesting minor fluctuations in apathy from one year to the next. The trend of declining apathy in the British electorate illustrated in Figure 8.1, therefore, would seem to be almost entirely explained by the increasingly post-materialistic nature of the British electorate and its effect of increasing citizens' willingness to engage with formal British politics.

The cohort effect in Model I was also affected, with the difference between the 90s and Millennial generations and the wider electorate becoming even larger. The coefficient for the 90s generation increased to 0.45, almost indistinguishable from that of the Millennials, which increased to 0.47. The coefficient for the 80s generation also increased from an insignificant 0.13 to a significant 0.32, implying that they, too, were significantly more apathetic towards formal politics than the older generations once the depressing effect of post-materialism on apathy was controlled for. The data suggested, therefore, that the greater post-materialism of the 80s, 90s and Millennial generations relative to the three older generations depressed their relative political apathy.

In short, if the younger generations were not more post-materialistic, they would be even more apathetic compared with their elders. Post-materialism helps to explain why the Millennials (as well as the 90s and 80s generations) were not even more apathetic than they already appeared to be, therefore, but it cannot explain why they had such high levels of apathy in the first place.

Model III examined whether or not the effect of post-materialism remained once other characteristics were accounted for, namely gender and social class (indicating demographic characteristics and social and political resources). The age and year coefficients were barely different from those found in Model II, but the cohort effect was again altered, with the differences between the 80s, 90s and Millennial generations and the Post-war generation shrinking (the coefficients fell to 0.26, 0.35 and 0.3 respectively, but all remained statistically significant). In addition, the coefficient for the Pre-War generation became significant, at 0.2, implying that they too were more apathetic than the Post-War generation. This suggests that differences in demography and social and political resources help to explain the greater levels of apathy seen amongst the oldest and youngest generations relative to the Post-War and 60s-70s generations.

Models IV and V analysed the effect of media fragmentation on political apathy, and the newspaper readership coefficient in Model IV showed that (as expected) a lack of engagement with broadcast print media is associated with greater political apathy (with a significant coefficient -0.45). Comparing the coefficients in Model IV with Model I showed that accounting for media fragmentation has a notable impact on both the period and cohort effects, and

little to no impact on the life cycle effect. The year coefficients in Model IV were of a greater magnitude (i.e., more negative) than those in Model I, suggesting that once newspaper readership was controlled for the decline of political apathy in the British electorate was even more substantial. This suggested that, as expected, trends in media fragmentation are exacerbating political apathy in Britain, as controlling for the effect on the apathy of reading newspapers exacerbates the period effect.

The cohort effects in Model IV were of less magnitude than those in Model I; the coefficient for the 90s generations was reduced to 0.12 and became insignificant, and that for the Millennials fell to 0.28 but remained significant. This suggested that media fragmentation does help to explain the unusually high apathy of the younger generations; they are less likely to engage with traditional print media, and so are more politically apathetic as a result. Model V added the control variables and showed that the magnitude of the period effect was reduced compared to that in Model IV, with several of the year coefficients becoming non-significant. This suggested that trends in social and political resources over time were important in explaining the decline in apathy and to some extent mitigated the effects of media fragmentation in increasing it. Furthermore, the cohort effect in Model V was notably different, with all the generation coefficients being similar and non-significant (the Millennials' coefficient, for example, fell to a non-significant 0.08 from 0.28 in Model IV). This also confirmed that differences in social and political resources (and potentially demography) were important in explaining generational differences in apathy, and complemented the effect of media fragmentation.

Finally, Models VI and VII provided a test of the overall social modernisation theory outlined in Chapter Seven and included the media fragmentation and post-materialism variables together. In both models, the effects of the post-materialism and media fragmentation variables was largely the same as that seen in Models II and IV respectively; post-materialism and newspaper readership had significant and negative impacts on political apathy, neither of which was encapsulated by the other.

Accounting for the two theories together had no notable impact on the age effects estimated in Models VI and VII compared with those in Model I, suggesting that the life cycle has a substantial impact on political apathy independent of processes associated with social modernisation. The period effects in Models VI and VII are almost identical to those in Models II and III i.e., most of the year coefficients were statistically insignificant once post-materialism had been accounted for. Finally, the composite model produced different estimates of the cohort effect from those found in other models. In Model VI, the cohort effect was similar to that in Model II, but with smaller coefficients (the Millennials' coefficient was, for example, 0.39 compared with 0.47 in Model II), though those for the 80s, 90s and Millennial generations remained significant and suggested that they were more apathetic than the Post-War generation. The coefficients were still larger, however, than those in Model I, suggesting that both post-materialism and media fragmentation affects the differences in apathy between the generations, and are having contradictory impacts. The increasingly post-materialistic nature of the younger generations reduces their political apathy relative to their elders', but their lack of engagement with traditional forms of media exacerbates it.

With the controls for gender and social class added, the cohort coefficients in Model VII were smaller than those in Model VI, with the greatest reduction apparent in the coefficient of the Millennials, whose relative apathy was suggested to fall below that of the 90s generation (their coefficients fell to a non-significant 0.23 from 0.39, and to a still significant 0.28 from 0.36 respectively). The lack of significance suggested that the differences between the Millennials and the Post-War generation was explained by a combination of differences in social resources, post-materialism and media fragmentation, however the coefficient (which was larger than that of the 80s generation, whose coefficient remained significant) still suggested that the Millennials were more apathetic so this result must be interpreted with caution.

It is clear, therefore, that social modernisation plays an important role in explaining generational differences in political apathy. The fragmentation of media consumption alongside differences in access to social and political resources helps to explain why the Millennials were suggested to be more apathetic than their elders. Post-materialism cannot explain the unusually high apathy of the younger generations, but it appears that if they were not so post-materialistic they would have been found to be even more apathetic. That said, post-materialism and generational differences play a limited role in explaining overall differences in political apathy. In all seven regression models reported above, for example, the Pseudo r-squared statistic never rose above 0.07.

8.3.2 Political Powerlessness

Table 8.3 presents the same series of regression models with political powerlessness as the dependent variable.

Table 8.3a: Social Modernisation and Powerlessness, 1986 - 2012

	Model I - APC		Model II - PM I		Model III - PM II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.64***	0.16	-0.60***	0.16	-0.44**	0.17
90s	-0.50***	0.11	-0.36**	0.12	-0.28*	0.12
80s	-0.36***	0.08	-0.26**	0.08	-0.18*	0.09
60s-70s	-0.22***	0.05	-0.16**	0.06	-0.11	0.06
(Post-War)						
Pre-War	-0.13	0.07	-0.04	0.07	-0.12	0.08
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.41***	0.07	-0.39***	0.07	-0.47***	0.07
1994	0.06	0.08	0.15	0.08	-0.11	0.08
1996	-0.10	0.08	-0.01	0.08	-0.29**	0.08
1998	-0.29***	0.07	-0.19**	0.07	-0.37***	0.08
2000	0.05	0.07	0.17*	0.07	-0.16*	0.08
2002	0.10	0.07	0.24**	0.08	-0.01	0.08
2003	-0.03	0.07	0.13	0.07	-0.26**	0.08
2005	-0.31***	0.08	-0.16*	0.08	-0.46***	0.08
2010	-0.09	0.10	0.06	0.10	-0.32**	0.11
2011	-0.06	0.09	0.10	0.09	-0.25*	0.10
2012	-0.11	0.10	0.04	0.10	-0.37**	0.11
Age	-0.03***	0.01	-0.02**	0.01	-0.02**	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00*	0.00	0.00**	0.00
Education (No qual)						
CSE or equiv			-0.15**	0.05	-0.09	0.05
O-level or equiv			-0.37***	0.04	-0.19***	0.04
A-Level or equiv			-0.65***	0.04	-0.34***	0.05
Higher ed < deg			-0.72***	0.04	-0.38***	0.05
Degree or higher			-1.21***	0.04	-0.65***	0.05
Normlessness					0.64***	0.02
Meaninglessness					0.32***	0.01
Social Class					-0.06***	0.02
Gender					-0.24***	0.03
Obs	23645		22812		20512	
Pseudo2	0.00		0.02		0.05	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Table 8.3b: Social Modernisation and Powerlessness, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model IV - MF I		Model V - MF II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.64***	0.16	-0.63***	0.16	-0.46**	0.17
90s	-0.50***	0.11	-0.49***	0.11	-0.32**	0.12
80s	-0.36***	0.08	-0.35***	0.08	-0.21*	0.09
60s-70s (Post-War)	-0.22***	0.05	-0.21***	0.05	-0.11	0.06
Pre-War	-0.13	0.07	-0.12	0.07	-0.18*	0.07
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.41***	0.07	-0.41***	0.07	-0.48***	0.07
1994	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.08	-0.16	0.08
1996	-0.10	0.08	-0.10	0.08	-0.33***	0.08
1998	-0.29***	0.07	-0.28***	0.07	-0.40***	0.07
2000	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.07	-0.22**	0.08
2002	0.10	0.07	0.11	0.07	-0.05	0.08
2003	-0.03	0.07	-0.02	0.07	-0.33***	0.08
2005	-0.31***	0.08	-0.30***	0.08	-0.51***	0.08
2010	-0.09	0.10	-0.08	0.10	-0.36**	0.10
2011	-0.06	0.09	-0.04	0.09	-0.28**	0.10
2012	-0.11	0.10	-0.10	0.10	-0.39***	0.11
Age	-0.03***	0.01	-0.03***	0.01	-0.26***	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00
Read Paper x3 per wk			0.06*	0.02	0.09**	0.03
Normlessness					0.65***	0.02
Meaninglessness					0.36***	0.01
Social Class					-0.15***	0.01
Gender					-0.24***	0.03
Obs	23641		21233		22808	
Pseudo2	0.00		0.05		0.02	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01.

Table 8.3c: Social Modernisation and Powerlessness, 1986 - 2012

Generation	Model I - APC		Model VI - SM I		Model VII - SM II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.64***	0.16	-0.59***	0.16	-0.42*	0.17
90s	-0.50***	0.11	-0.35**	0.12	-0.26*	0.12
80s	-0.36***	0.08	-0.25**	0.08	-0.17	0.09
60s-70s	-0.22***	0.05	-0.16**	0.06	-0.10	0.06
(Post-War)						
Pre-War	-0.13	0.07	-0.03	0.07	-0.12	0.08
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.41***	0.07	-0.39***	0.07	-0.47***	0.07
1994	0.06	0.08	0.15	0.08	-0.10	0.08
1996	-0.10	0.08	0.00	0.08	-0.28**	0.08
1998	-0.29***	0.07	-0.18	0.07	-0.35***	0.08
2000	0.05	0.07	0.18*	0.07	-0.15	0.08
2002	0.10	0.07	0.25**	0.08	0.01	0.08
2003	-0.03	0.07	0.14	0.07	-0.25**	0.08
2005	-0.31***	0.08	-0.15*	0.08	-0.45***	0.08
2010	-0.09	0.10	0.07	0.10	-0.30**	0.11
2011	-0.06	0.09	0.12	0.09	-0.23*	0.10
2012	-0.11	0.10	0.05	0.10	-0.35**	0.11
Age	-0.03***	0.01	-0.02**	0.01	-0.02**	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00*	0.00	0.00**	0.00
Education (No qual)						
CSE or equiv			-0.15**	0.05	-0.09	0.05
O-level or equiv			-0.37***	0.04	-0.19***	0.04
A-Level or equiv			-0.65***	0.04	-0.34***	0.05
Higher ed < deg			-0.72***	0.04	-0.38***	0.05
Degree or higher			-1.22***	0.04	-0.65***	0.05
Read Paper x3 per wk	0.09**	0.03	0.06*	0.03	0.08**	0.03
Normlessness	0.65***	0.02			0.64***	0.02
Meaninglessness	0.36***	0.01			0.32***	0.01
Social Class	-0.15***	0.01			-0.06***	0.02
Gender	-0.24***	0.03			-0.23***	0.03
Obs	23645		22808		20508	
Pseudo2	0.00		0.02		0.05	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Model II shows that post-materialism had the expected impact on powerlessness of depressing it; the more educated (i.e., post-materialist) a respondent, the more influential they felt in politics. The effect ranged from having a CSE or equivalent depressing powerlessness by -0.15 compared with someone with no qualifications, to that of -1.21 from having a degree or higher. Comparing Model II with Model I showed, however, that this effect had little impact on the age, period and cohort effects estimated in the original APC model. The age coefficients were slightly reduced (suggesting that some of the life cycle effect on powerlessness reflected education and post-materialism). The year coefficients were all more positive than in Model I, but most remained non-significant (with only those for 2000 and 2002 becoming significant). They continued to show short-lived fluctuations in powerlessness between 1986 and 2012 rather than a sustained trend such as that seen for political apathy.

The effect of accounting for post-materialism on the cohort coefficients was to reduce their magnitude i.e., to reduce the differences between the Post-War generation and the others. Essentially this implied that by controlling for post-materialism, the generational decline in political powerlessness was less pronounced; it was, however, still clear and continued to imply that the Millennials were the least powerlessly alienated generation in the electorate. Rising levels of post-materialism, therefore, help to explain the generational decline in political powerlessness, but only marginally.

As was found in Chapter Five, higher levels of social and political resources and being female tended to reduce powerlessness, and Model III also

confirmed that the other dimensions of alienation were positively associated. With the controls included, the magnitude of the generational coefficients was reduced; with the Millennial, 90s, 80s and 60s-70s generations coefficients falling to -0.44, -0.28, -0.18 and -0.11 respectively and, in the case of the 60s-70s generation, becoming non-significant. Some of the generational differences in political powerlessness, therefore, reflected differences in social and political resources and other dimensions of alienation, but there remained a distinct difference between the powerlessness alienation of the three younger generations and their elders, and the Millennials were still identified as the least alienated in the electorate. The most notable impact of accounting for the controls was on the year coefficients; while Models I and II suggested no sustained period effect in political powerlessness, almost all of the year coefficients in Model III were negative and significant. They did not suggest a constant decline, more of a sustained fall after the 1980s with the occasional increase in powerlessness in 1994 and 2002 (the coefficients for which were non-significant). This suggests that trends in either social and political resources or another dimension of political alienation had exacerbated political powerlessness since the 1980s.

Turning to media fragmentation, Model IV shows that – contrary to expectations – there is a significant effect from media fragmentation on political powerlessness, with newspaper readership increasing alienation (with a significant coefficient of 0.06). This suggests that the shifts away from traditional forms of media associated with the media fragmentation theory, while they might be exacerbating political apathy, are leading to citizens feeling (albeit marginally) more influential in the formal political process. This

does not, however, offer much by way of an explanation for the life cycle, cohort and period effects identified in Model I; the coefficients for the age, year and generation variables were virtually identical between the two models. Adding the control variables to the media fragmentation model (Model V) resulted in a similar model to Model III; normlessness and meaninglessness were positively associated with powerlessness, and gender and social class were negatively associated with it. Model V also showed a sustained decline in political powerlessness after the 1980s, with year coefficients almost the same as those in Model III. There was no substantial effect on the cohort or age effects from including the control variables compared with the effects identified in Model III, confirming the suggestion above that it was differences in other dimensions of alienation and/or social and political resources which helped to explain – but did not fully account for – generational differences in powerlessness.

The composite social modernisation models (Models VI and VII) support the conclusion that social modernisation had little impact on trends in powerlessness. The coefficients in Model VI for age, year and generations are almost identical to those in Models II and IV. While post-materialism and media fragmentation had significant, negative effects on powerlessness, neither accounts for generational differences in it. Similarly, the age, year and generation coefficients are almost identical in Models VII, III and V, suggesting that the control variables rather than post-materialism or media fragmentation have the substantial effect on powerlessness. Finally, the Pseudo r-squared statistics throughout all of the models once again point to political generations, the life cycle, period effects and social modernisation accounting

for a limited degree of variance in powerlessness alienation; the initial APC model (Model I) had a statistic of smaller than 0.01, while the most successful models (Models III, IV and VII) had statistics of 0.05.

8.4.3 Political Normlessness

Table 8.4 presents the models for political normlessness, with Model II showing the effect of post-materialism. Contrary to expectations, rising levels of post-materialism were associated with lower levels of normlessness, with the effect ranging from -0.12 for respondents with a CSE compared to those with no qualifications, to -0.71 for those with a Degree or higher. The data did not support the theoretical expectation, therefore, that rising levels of post-materialism were associated with higher levels of cynicism and dissatisfaction with political elites that manifested themselves through political normlessness.

Accounting for the effect of post-materialism in Model II had almost no impact on the generational coefficients (the Millennials' coefficient, for instance shifted from -0.47 to -0.48), suggested that rising levels of post-materialism among younger generations does not explain the Millennials' unusually low normlessness. Accounting for post-materialism did have, however, a notable impact on the period effect, increasing the magnitude of all of the year coefficients. This suggests, therefore, that rising levels of post-materialism have arrested the rise of normlessness alienation somewhat, and that if the British electorate was not becoming more post-materialist then overall levels of normlessness alienation would be even higher. The age coefficient had a statistically significant and slightly negative effect (of -0.01) in this model, as opposed to having no significant effect in Model I, implying that with post-

materialism accounted for there was evidence of a relationship between age and political normlessness, in which older respondents were less likely to be alienated. Why controlling for post-materialism would lead to the identification of a relationship between age and normlessness was unclear.

Table 8.4a: Social Modernisation and Normlessness, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model II - PM I		Model III - PM II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.47**	0.16	-0.48**	0.16	-0.35*	0.17
90s	-0.22	0.12	-0.16	0.12	-0.10	0.12
80s	-0.09	0.09	-0.02	0.09	0.02	0.09
60s-70s	-0.02	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.07	0.06
(Post-War)						
Pre-War	-0.16*	0.07	-0.18*	0.07	-0.19*	0.07
Year (1986)						
1991	0.24**	0.07	0.26***	0.07	0.37***	0.08
1994	0.74***	0.08	0.80***	0.08	0.80***	0.08
1996	0.82***	0.08	0.88***	0.08	0.93***	0.08
1998	0.52***	0.07	0.59***	0.07	0.67***	0.08
2000	1.03***	0.07	1.10***	0.08	1.12***	0.08
2002	0.83***	0.08	0.93***	0.08	0.92***	0.08
2003	1.21***	0.08	1.33***	0.08	1.39***	0.08
2005	0.88***	0.08	1.00***	0.08	1.10***	0.09
2010	1.34***	0.10	1.43***	0.11	1.47***	0.11
2011	1.24***	0.10	1.35***	0.10	1.38***	0.10
2012	1.33***	0.11	1.48***	0.11	1.57***	0.11
Age	0.00	0.00	-0.01*	0.00	-0.01	0.00
Education (No qual)						
CSE or equiv			-0.12*	0.05	-0.07	0.05
O-level or equiv			-0.23***	0.04	-0.12**	0.04
A-Level or equiv			-0.44***	0.05	-0.23***	0.05
Higher ed < deg			-0.44***	0.04	-0.20***	0.05
Degree or higher			-0.71***	0.04	-0.30***	0.05
Powerlessness					0.44***	0.01
Meaninglessness					0.05***	0.01
Social Class					-0.04*	0.02
Gender					0.10***	0.03
Obs	22255		21473		20512	
Pseudo2	0.02		0.02		0.05	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Table 8.4b: Social Modernisation and Normlessness, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model IV - MF I		Model V - MF II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.47**	0.16	-0.48**	0.16	-0.39*	0.16
90s	-0.22	0.12	-0.23	0.12	-0.14	0.12
80s	-0.09	0.09	-0.1	0.09	-0.02	0.09
60s-70s	-0.02	0.06	-0.02	0.06	0.06	0.06
(Post-War)						
Pre-War	-0.16*	0.07	-0.16*	0.07	-0.16*	0.07
Year (1986)						
1991	0.24**	0.07	0.24***	0.07	0.36***	0.08
1994	0.74***	0.08	0.74***	0.08	0.78***	0.08
1996	0.82***	0.08	0.82***	0.08	0.91***	0.08
1998	0.52***	0.07	0.52***	0.07	0.64***	0.08
2000	1.03***	0.07	1.02***	0.07	1.10***	0.08
2002	0.83***	0.08	0.82***	0.08	0.89***	0.08
2003	1.21***	0.08	1.20***	0.08	1.34***	0.08
2005	0.88***	0.08	0.87***	0.08	1.06***	0.08
2010	1.34***	0.10	1.32***	0.1	1.46***	0.11
2011	1.24***	0.10	1.22***	0.1	1.35***	0.10
2012	1.33***	0.11	1.32***	0.11	1.49***	0.11
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Read Paper x3 per wk			-0.04	0.03	-0.04	0.03
Powerlessness					0.45***	0.01
Meaninglessness					0.07***	0.01
Social Class					-0.09***	0.01
Gender					0.09**	0.03
Obs	22255		22251		21233	
Pseudo2	0.02		0.02		0.05	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Table 8.4c: Social Modernisation and Normlessness, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model VI - SM I		Model VII - SM II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.47**	0.16	-0.49**	0.16	-0.35*	0.17
90s	-0.22	0.12	-0.16	0.12	-0.11	0.12
80s	-0.09	0.09	-0.03	0.09	0.02	0.09
60s-70s	-0.02	0.06	0.02	0.06	0.07	0.06
(Post-War)						
Pre-War	-0.16*	0.07	-0.19**	0.07	-0.19*	0.07
Year (1986)						
1991	0.24**	0.07	0.26***	0.07	0.37***	0.08
1994	0.74***	0.08	0.79***	0.08	0.80***	0.08
1996	0.82***	0.08	0.87***	0.08	0.92***	0.08
1998	0.52***	0.07	0.59***	0.07	0.67***	0.08
2000	1.03***	0.07	1.10***	0.08	1.12***	0.08
2002	0.83***	0.08	0.92***	0.08	0.92***	0.08
2003	1.21***	0.08	1.33***	0.08	1.38***	0.08
2005	0.88***	0.08	0.99***	0.08	1.09***	0.09
2010	1.34***	0.10	1.42***	0.11	1.46***	0.11
2011	1.24***	0.10	1.34***	0.10	1.38***	0.10
2012	1.33***	0.11	1.47***	0.11	1.56***	0.11
Age	0.00	0.00	-0.01*	0.00	-0.01	0.00
Age2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education (No qual)						
CSE or equiv			-0.12*	0.05	-0.06	0.05
O-level or equiv			-0.23***	0.04	-0.12**	0.04
A-Level or equiv			-0.43***	0.05	-0.23***	0.05
Higher ed < deg			-0.43***	0.04	-0.20***	0.05
Degree or higher			-0.71***	0.04	-0.30***	0.05
Read Paper x3 per wk			-0.03	0.03	-0.03	0.03
Normlessness					0.44***	0.01
Meaninglessness					0.05***	0.01
Social Class					-0.04*	0.02
Gender					0.09**	0.03
Obs	22255		21469		20508	
Pseudo2	0.02		0.02		0.05	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Model III included the control variables for the other alienation dimensions as well as social class and gender, and showed that the controls were more successful in explaining generational differences in normlessness than post-materialism.²⁹ The coefficient for the Millennials was reduced to -0.35 and remained statistically significant, while that for the Pre-War generation also remained significant but was largely unchanged (at -0.19). The coefficients for the other generations were similar to those in Model II and continued to imply no significant differences between them and the Post-War generation. The control coefficients showed that being male and having more social and political resources reduced normlessness, while powerlessness and meaninglessness were positively associated. Controlling for these effects had a small impact on the period effect as well as the cohort effect, with the magnitude of the year coefficients increasing to varying degrees; this suggested that the rise of normlessness in the British electorate could be even more pronounced if not for the influence of social and political resources and the depressing effect on normlessness of other dimensions of political alienation.

Model IV shows the effect of media fragmentation on political normlessness, and as expected it had no significant effect. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there were few differences between the age, period and cohort effects identified in the media fragmentation models (Models IV and V) and those in Model I, nor between those in the composite social modernisation models (VI and VII) and those in the post-materialism models (II and III). The fragmentation of media

²⁹ Note that ideally, a control variable for social trust would be included in this analysis, as it was in analyses of political normlessness in Chapters Five and Six, to account for the relationship between political trust and social trust. Unfortunately, there is not a social trust variable available for all the year variables considered in this BSA series.

consumption makes almost no contribution to explaining either the increasingly normlessness alienated nature of the British electorate, nor the unusually low levels of normlessness exhibited by the Millennials. In fact, given that post-materialism was shown to contribute to such an explanation to only a limited extent (the Pseudo r-squared statistics of the post-materialist model was 0.02, and with the controls included was 0.05), the data in Table 8.4 suggests that the processes associated with these two social modernisation theories have little to do with trends in political normlessness at all.

8.3.4 Political Meaninglessness

Table 8.5 shows the APC analyses for political meaninglessness. Model II showed that – as expected – rising levels of post-materialism are associated with lower levels of meaninglessness. Having a degree, for example, was shown to depress one’s average meaninglessness score by just over two points (with a significant coefficient of -2.14) compared with someone with no qualification, while having a CSE or equivalent had a smaller but still significant effect of -0.37. Political meaninglessness is the only dimension of alienation for which the Millennials were not found to stand out from the older generations, and controlling for post-materialism did nothing to change that. Controlling for post-materialism made all of the generation coefficients more positive (reinforcing the view that post-materialism reduces meaninglessness), and reduced the difference between the Post-War generation and the 60s-70s and 80s generations. The coefficient for the 60s-70s generation fell from -0.23 in Model I to -0.11, and that of the 80s generation fell from -0.19 to -0.02, and both became insignificant. The coefficient for the Pre-War generation

increased from 0.06 to 0.21 and became significant, while the coefficients for the Millennial and 90s generations were made more positive but remained non-significant. This suggests, therefore, that the unusually low levels of political meaningfulness exhibited by the 80s and 60s-70s generations were the result of the increasingly post-materialist nature of those generations compared to the Pre- and Post-War generations. The coefficients for the 90s and Millennial generations suggested that their post-materialism was also depressing their meaningfulness, but not to such an extent that they were significantly different from the Post-War generation; it appears that something else, therefore, was increasing their meaningfulness at the same time that their post-materialism was depressing it.

There was no discernible impact on the estimated life cycle effect on meaningfulness, but there was a substantial change in the period effect once post-materialism was accounted for. The year coefficients – which in Model I suggested a sustained drop in meaningfulness after 2002 – all became more positive, and all but those for 1994, 1996, and 2000 (all of which suggested unusually high levels of meaningfulness alienation) became non-significant. The electorate-wide decline in meaningfulness shortly after the turn of the millennium, therefore, appears to have been caused by rising levels of post-materialism and political sophistication among British citizens.

Including the control variables (Model III) had little impact on either the life cycle, period or cohort effects estimated in Model II. Women were shown to be typically more alienated than men, while higher levels of resources depressed meaningfulness. Political powerlessness and normlessness both had positive

and significant effects. With these controls included the magnitude of the post-materialism variable was reduced but continued to suggest that greater post-materialism reduced meaningfulness, but the age, year and generation coefficients were virtually identical to those in Model II.

Model IV included the media fragmentation variable and showed that, as expected, media fragmentation is increasing political meaningfulness.

Reading a newspaper regularly reduced meaningfulness alienation by -0.2 points. There were some effects on the age, year and cohort coefficients from accounting for media fragmentation. The estimated life cycle effect was increased compared to that in Model I (with the age coefficient falling to -0.04). The year coefficients all became slightly more negative, albeit to varying degrees, suggesting that media fragmentation has contributed to falling levels of meaningfulness throughout the electorate. The generational coefficients also became slightly more negative, though still only those of the 60s-70s (-0.25) and 80s (-0.22) generations were statistically significant.

Including the control variables (Model V) reduced the magnitude of the media fragmentation coefficient (to -0.14) but it remained significant. The effects of the control variables was similar to those in Model III – lower levels of social and political resources, being female, and greater powerlessness and normlessness increased meaningfulness alienation. In Model V the estimated life cycle effect was weaker (the age coefficient fell to -0.02) but remained significant, while the magnitude of the period effect was also slightly reduced. The impression of a sustained drop in meaningfulness after 2003, however, was still clear. Finally, the generational coefficients were for the most part very

similar to those seen in Model I. The most notable impact was that the coefficient for the 80s generation fell to -0.15 and became non-significant, and the coefficient for the 60s-70s generation fell to -0.16 but remained significant. The media fragmentation model, therefore, does help to explain why the 80s and 60s-70s generations were found to be less alienated than their elders.

Finally, the composite social modernisation models (Models VI and VII) showed that media fragmentation and rising post-materialism had significant effects on meaninglessness. The magnitude of those effects was very similar to those seen in Models IV and II respectively, suggesting that their effects were largely independent of each other. The period effect in Model VI was largely the same as that in Model II (i.e., the post-materialism model), though the coefficients were more negative meaning that while post-materialism largely accounts for the fall in meaninglessness after 2003, the impact of media fragmentation in decreasing it at the same time was still clear. The life cycle effect was suggested to be essentially the same as those estimated in the other models. The generational coefficients in Model VI suggested that the composite social modernisation model can help explain generational differences in meaninglessness and to a greater extent than the previous models. All of the coefficients were more positive in Model VI, with that of the 60s-70s generation continuing to suggest that they were unusually un-alienated (at -0.13 and significant) and that of the Pre-War generation suggesting that they were unusually alienated (at 0.19 and significant). The other coefficients, including that of the Millennials, remained non-significant.

Including the control variables into the composite model rendered the 60s-70s generation coefficient non-significant (reducing it -0.1), though the coefficient for the Pre-War generation remained almost unchanged at a significant 0.19. This suggested, therefore, that the unusually low meaningfulness of the 80s and 60s-70s generations identified in Model I was largely the result of their increasingly post-materialistic nature compared with their elders. Part of the reason why the 90s and Millennial generations were not less alienated still than the 80s and 60s-70s generations, despite being more post-materialistic (see Appendix Six), appeared to lie in the effects of media fragmentation alongside those of differences in social and political resources and potentially other forms of political alienation. As would be expected, controlling for gender, social class and the other alienation dimensions reduced the magnitude of the post-materialism and media fragmentation effects, but they remained significant. The life cycle effect was barely changed (though it was slightly lower than that estimated in Model VI, with a coefficient for age of -0.02), and the year coefficients were also very similar.

Overall, therefore, these analyses suggested that social modernisation plays a fairly important role in explaining trends in political meaningfulness. While it helps to explain period and generational effects, however, the Pseudo r-squared statistics show that even the most successful model – the composite social modernisation model with controls (Pseudo r-squared of 0.08) – explained only a limited portion of overall variance in meaningfulness. Social modernisation is more successful in explaining generational and period trends in meaningfulness than overall variation between individuals.

The growth of post-materialism is associated with declining meaningfulness throughout the British electorate and among younger generations, although its impact is mitigated somewhat for the Millennials and the 90s generation by the consequences of media fragmentation and factors relating to social and political resources. The processes associated with media fragmentation are also important in explaining changes in meaningfulness, though primarily in the form of offsetting the depressing effect of post-materialism. As for the Millennials' alienation in particular, these analyses confirm that they appear to be fairly typical in terms of meaningfulness, despite theoretical expectations to the contrary. The impact of social modernisation on their alienation appears to be contradictory, depressing it and exacerbating it at the same time.

Table 8.5a: Social Modernisation and Meaninglessness, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model II - PM I		Model III - PM II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.01	0.16	0.09	0.17	0.11	0.18
90s	-0.17	0.12	0.06	0.12	0.06	0.13
80s	-0.19*	0.09	-0.02	0.09	-0.02	0.09
60s-70s (Post-War)	-0.23***	0.06	-0.11	0.06	-0.08	0.06
Pre-War	0.06	0.07	0.21**	0.07	0.20*	0.08
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.08	0.07	-0.02	0.07	0.05	0.08
1994	0.17*	0.08	0.34***	0.08	0.34***	0.08
1996	0.10	0.08	0.27**	0.08	0.26**	0.08
1998	-0.12	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.09	0.08
2000	0.00	0.07	0.22**	0.07	0.16*	0.08
2002	-0.13	0.08	0.13	0.08	0.08	0.08
2003	-0.24**	0.07	0.05	0.08	0.00	0.08
2005	-0.32***	0.08	-0.04	0.08	-0.03	0.08
2010	-0.47***	0.10	-0.16	0.10	-0.25*	0.11
2011	-0.41***	0.09	-0.06	0.10	-0.12	0.10
2012	-0.29**	0.10	0.12	0.11	0.09	0.11
Age	-0.03***	0.01	-0.03***	0.01	-0.02**	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00**	0.00	0.00*	0.00
Education (No qual)						
CSE or equiv			-0.37***	0.05	-0.21***	0.05
O-level or equiv			-0.74***	0.04	-0.56***	0.04
A-Level or equiv			-1.26***	0.05	-0.92***	0.05
Higher ed < deg			-1.34***	0.04	-0.97***	0.05
Degree or higher			-2.14***	0.05	-1.60***	0.05
Powerlessness					0.32***	0.01
Normlessness					0.10***	0.02
Social Class					-0.21***	0.02
Gender					0.63***	0.03
Obs	22549		21743		20512	
Pseudo2	0.01		0.05		0.08	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Table 8.5b: Social Modernisation and Meaninglessness, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model IV - MF I		Model V - MF II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.01	0.16	-0.05	0.16	-0.05	0.17
90s	-0.17	0.12	-0.21	0.12	-0.12	0.12
80s	-0.19*	0.09	-0.22**	0.09	-0.15	0.09
60s-70s (Post-War)	-0.23***	0.06	-0.25***	0.06	-0.16**	0.06
Pre-War	0.06	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.10	0.08
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.08	0.07	-0.09	0.07	-0.01	0.08
1994	0.17*	0.08	0.15	0.08	0.23**	0.08
1996	0.10	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.13	0.08
1998	-0.12	0.07	-0.15*	0.07	-0.05	0.08
2000	0.00	0.07	-0.03	0.07	-0.01	0.08
2002	-0.13	0.08	-0.17*	0.08	-0.12	0.08
2003	-0.24**	0.07	-0.27***	0.07	-0.20*	0.08
2005	-0.32***	0.08	-0.35***	0.08	-0.23**	0.08
2010	-0.47***	0.10	-0.52***	0.10	-0.45***	0.11
2011	-0.41***	0.09	-0.47***	0.09	-0.37***	0.10
2012	-0.29**	0.10	-0.35**	0.10	-0.21	0.11
Age	-0.03***	0.01	-0.04***	0.01	-0.02**	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00	0.00***	0.00
Read Paper x3 per wk			-0.20***	0.03	-0.14***	0.03
Powerlessness					0.38***	0.01
Normlessness					0.12***	0.02
Social Class					-0.46***	0.01
Gender					0.60***	0.03
Obs	22549		22545		21233	
Pseudo2	0.01		0.01		0.06	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Table 8.5c: Social Modernisation and Meaninglessness, 1986 – 2012

	Model I - APC		Model VI - SM I		Model VII - SM II	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	-0.01	0.16	0.05	0.17	0.08	0.18
90s	-0.17	0.12	0.02	0.12	0.03	0.13
80s	-0.19*	0.09	-0.06	0.01	-0.05	0.09
60s-70s (Post-War)	-0.23***	0.06	-0.13*	0.06	-0.10	0.06
Pre-War	0.06	0.07	0.19*	0.07	0.19*	0.08
Year (1986)						
1991	-0.08	0.07	-0.03	0.07	0.04	0.08
1994	0.17*	0.08	0.32***	0.08	0.33***	0.08
1996	0.10	0.08	0.25**	0.08	0.24**	0.08
1998	-0.12	0.07	0.03	0.07	0.07	0.08
2000	0.00	0.07	0.19*	0.07	0.14	0.08
2002	-0.13	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.05	0.08
2003	-0.24**	0.07	0.01	0.08	-0.02	0.08
2005	-0.32***	0.08	-0.08	0.08	-0.06	0.09
2010	-0.47***	0.10	-0.21*	0.10	-0.28*	0.11
2011	-0.41***	0.09	-0.12	0.10	-0.16	0.10
2012	-0.29**	0.10	0.06	0.11	0.05	0.11
Age	-0.03***	0.01	-0.03***	0.01	-0.02**	0.01
Age2	0.00***	0.00	0.00**	0.00	0.00*	0.00
Education (No qual)						
CSE or equiv			-0.36***	0.05	-0.20***	0.05
O-level or equiv			-0.73***	0.04	-0.55***	0.04
A-Level or equiv			-1.25***	0.05	-0.91***	0.05
Higher ed < deg			-1.33***	0.04	-0.97***	0.05
Degree or higher			-2.13***	0.05	-1.60***	0.05
Read Paper x3 per wk			-0.20***	0.03	-0.14***	0.03
Normlessness					0.33***	0.01
Meaninglessness					0.10***	0.02
Social Class					-0.21***	0.02
Gender					0.62***	0.03
Obs	22549		21739		20508	
Pseudo2	0.01		0.06		0.08	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001. Prob > chi2 for each model = <0.01

Finally, Table 8.6 summarises the key findings from the above analyses, focussing on the extent to which accounting for social modernisation helps explain the generational distinctiveness of the Millennials in terms of apathy and alienation. The table shows whether the social modernisation variables help explain the difference between the Millennials and the reference generation (by reducing the coefficient) (\checkmark) or explain so much of that difference that it is no longer statistically significant ($\checkmark\checkmark$).

Table 8.6: Summary

	Apathy	Power.	Norm.	Mean.
Millennials different?	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Pseudo r2	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.01
Most/Least?	Most	Least	Least	Average
Post-materialism explain?	x	\checkmark	x	-
Pseudo r2	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.05
with controls?	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark	-
Pseudo r2	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.08
Media fragmentation explain?	\checkmark	x	x	-
Pseudo r2	0.02	0.05	0.02	0.01
with controls?	$\checkmark\checkmark$	\checkmark	\checkmark	-
Pseudo r2	0.05	0.02	0.05	0.06
Social modernisation explain?	x	\checkmark	x	-
Pseudo r2	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.06
with controls?	$\checkmark\checkmark$	\checkmark	\checkmark	-
Pseudo r2	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.08

8.4 Conclusion

These analyses conducted a detailed examination of the role of social modernisation – in the form of rising post-materialism and media fragmentation – in driving changes in formal political apathy and alienation through age, period and cohort effects. The results suggested that its impact was varied, in some instances making a substantial contribution to explaining those trends and in others playing a minor role. Furthermore, the analyses confirmed that the impact and significance of post-materialism and media fragmentation was variable from one analysis to the next, confirming the argument made in Chapter Seven that different aspects of social modernisation can have very different implications for political characteristics, which may sometimes even work against each other.

Regarding the generational distinction of the Millennials in terms of formal political apathy and alienation, as Table 8.6 shows, social modernisation plays a limited role. The Millennials were identified as the most politically apathetic generation to have entered the British electorate since World War Two. Their particularly post-materialistic nature had little to do with this (in fact it merely meant that they were less apathetic than they otherwise might be), but the fragmentation of media consumption – of which the Millennials are among those leading the way (see Appendix Six) – is clearly important. The Millennials' lack of engagement with traditional and broadcast media has led to them developing a weaker motivation to engage with formal politics than their elders. While their engagement with other sources of media to get political information may offset this effect somewhat, the evidence in this

research supports Wattenberg's (2012) argument that new forms of media do not provide sufficient information so as to compensate for the lack of engagement with more traditional forms. It is also important to note, however, that alongside this cohort effect was a clear and significant life cycle effect, meaning that while the Millennials can be expected to exhibit a higher average level of political apathy than older generations throughout their adult lives, their apathy will nonetheless decline at least a little as they reach middle age.

Perhaps surprisingly, and in direct challenge to the conventional wisdom regarding the Millennials' alienation from formal politics, they were found to be the least alienated generation in terms of both political powerlessness and political normlessness. Regarding the former, the evidence suggests that the Millennials are at the leading edge of a generational decline in powerlessness alienation as successive generations of the electorate feel more influential in formal politics. There is also evidence of a life cycle effect which suggests that powerlessness is lower among the middle aged than the young and old, meaning that the Millennials may well become even less alienated as they age. Social modernisation made virtually no contribution to explaining this distinction – although both post-materialism and media fragmentation were found to depress powerlessness. Instead, the control variables were found to help – though not completely – explain the generational decline in powerlessness, suggesting that trends primarily in social and political resources and other dimensions of alienation are important.

The Millennials' lack of normlessness alienation was less a reflection of a generational decline and more indicative of a lob-sided curvilinear effect, in

which the oldest (Pre-War) and youngest (Millennial) generations were generally less alienated than the wider electorate. Consistent with expectations, media fragmentation was found to have no substantial impact on political normlessness, while post-materialism depressed it. While rising levels of post-materialism in the British electorate were related to the period effect of rising normlessness (arresting that increase), it was not related to the generational distinction of the Millennials (or the Pre-War generation). The more substantial contribution came from the control variables, particularly for social class and the other dimensions of alienation. The fact that the Millennials are evidently so un-alienated in terms of political powerlessness, therefore, may also be related to why they are so un-alienated in terms of normlessness, based on the fact that the two are moderately correlated. These analyses have not, however, identified a potential common cause for this relationship, and this is an avenue identified for further study in Chapter Nine.

Finally, political meaninglessness was the only dimension of political alienation in which the Millennials did not stand out from the wider electorate. The distinction attributed to the Millennials in Chapter Six to this effect appeared to actually be the result of the political life cycle, which was shown above to have a comparable relationship with meaninglessness to that found for political apathy. The Millennials' alienation is likely to fall slightly as they get older as a result, but there is no indication that they will exhibit persistently higher or lower levels of meaninglessness throughout their lives. That said, there was evidence that the processes associated with rising post-materialism and media fragmentation were having contradictory effects on the Millennials' meaninglessness. The regression analyses confirmed that post-materialism

depressed meaningfulness, and was largely responsible for the distinction of the 80s and 60s-70s generations in being unusually un-alienated compared with the wider electorate. The fact that the Millennials (and the 90s generation) are the most post-materialistic suggests that they should be among the least alienated as a result. However, media fragmentation was shown to be exacerbating meaningfulness alienation, and the 90s and Millennial generations are also at the leading edge of that trend. While more detailed analyses would be needed to explore this question in more detail, the evidence above suggests that while the Millennials' post-materialism has resulted in them being less alienated in terms of meaningfulness than they otherwise might be, the fact that they are not engaging with traditional forms of news media is counteracting this effect. The result is that, against the theoretical expectations of both the post-materialism and media fragmentation theories, the Millennials are somewhere in the middle of the road for their meaningfulness alienation stemming from their lack of confidence in their political knowledge.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

In the run up to the 2015 general election, the familiar arguments, theories, worries – and, of course, conventional wisdoms – about the implications of ‘the youth vote’ and the relationship that British young people had with politics once again became a prominent feature of the news media: would young people vote? If not, why not? What would it mean for British politics if once again a sizeable chunk of the ‘youth vote’ failed to turn out? The 2015 election injected new life into the public profile of the conventional wisdom which dominates both our public and academic understanding of how and why today’s young people participate in politics: the young, the wisdom tells us, are unusually inactive in formal politics while simultaneously expanding the frontiers of political participation in other arenas, and this is driven not by their apathy towards formal politics, but by their alienation from it.

This thesis has interrogated the academic literature behind this conventional wisdom, based around answering three research questions and through focussing on Britain as an illustrative example of a Western democracy in which this wisdom is widespread: i) to what extent do British Millennials constitute a distinct political generation in terms of their political participation, in formal politics and beyond; ii) to what extent are they a distinct generation in terms of their apathy towards and alienation from formal politics, and does either characteristic explain their political participation; and iii) reflecting the assumption (outlined in Chapters One and Two) that the Millennials constitute a Western society-wide cohort whose emergence is linked to Western society-

wide processes, has Western societal evolution caused the Millennials' generational distinction in terms of apathy and/or alienation?

These research questions not only form the basis of an empirical interrogation of the conventional wisdom underlying contemporary understanding of how and why young people participate in politics, but are also framed so as to resolve four major problems with the academic literature which underpins that conventional wisdom detailed in Chapter Two. First, the current understanding of the Millennials' participatory characteristics, and whether the distinctions in those characteristics are driven by age, period or cohort effects, is limited. This is primarily the result of a failure to employ methods capable of distinguishing between the three in empirical analyses. Second, and compounding the issue of being unclear about the Millennials' participatory characteristics, there is also a lack of clarity about how 'political participation' should be conceptualised in light of the effects of social evolution on the opportunities for Western citizens to participate in politics.

Third, the claim that the Millennials are politically alienated has been subjected to little empirical scrutiny because of a failure in the existing literature to develop a clear idea of what 'political alienation' actually is, how it can be defined and conceptualised, and how it should be measured. Finally, the failure to develop a clear idea of what alienation or political apathy are and how they should be measured has meant that there has been little scope to empirically examine the role of potential causal processes behind trends in those characteristics. Each of these issues has been resolved while answering the

three research questions above, and the solutions to the specific problems have been discussed in detail in the preceding chapters.

In this concluding chapter, the answers to the research questions and the lessons learned in the process are spelled out, and six key arguments about the way in which the Millennials participate in politics, the extent to which they are apathetic and alienated compared with their elders, the role of apathy and alienation in causing their distinct participation, the role of social evolution in causing their distinct apathy and alienation, and the importance of political generations more broadly for understanding differences in political apathy, alienation and participation are outlined. The chapter then turns to consider the academic implications of this research for the ongoing study of the Millennials' political participation, apathy and alienation, as well as that of future generations of young citizens. It also considers the lessons learned about political apathy and particularly political alienation, and what these mean for the future study and use of these concepts in future research, as well as the implications of the findings regarding the role of social evolution in driving trends in these concepts for theories relating to the effect of social modernisation on Western citizens' political characteristics.

The chapter then identifies several avenues of further research relating to the political participation of the Millennials, the study of political apathy and alienation, and the study of the effects of social evolution, which are based both on limitations identified to the analyses presented in this thesis, and on new and unanswered questions raised by those analyses. Finally, the chapter turns to the 'public facing' aspect of the issue of the political participation of

young people in Western democracies, and considers the implications of the findings of this research for the likely success or failure of policy solutions to the issue of low electoral engagement among the young currently being considered in Britain, as well as many other Western democracies.

9.1 The Millennials' Distinct Political Participation

The issue of the Millennials' political participation, and the consideration of whether or not their participatory habits distinguished them from older generations in the British electorate, was addressed in Chapters Three and Four. Chapter Three considered the way in which 'political participation' should be defined and conceptualised. Building on the arguments outlined in Fox (2014), the chapter discussed the need to employ a broad measure of political participation which was capable of recognising the breadth of political activity in a modern democratic society. It also acknowledged the arguments of studies such as Verba and Nie (1972) and Parry et al. (1992) relating to the benefits of assessing the multi-dimensional nature of political participation for understanding the sorts of political activity certain groups may prefer or avoid and why. The result was a four-dimensional conception of political participation, consisting of formal political participation, cause-oriented political participation, civic political participation, and issue-specific formal participation.

Using a combination of cross-sectional analyses and age-period-cohort analyses (APC), Chapters Three and Four collectively demonstrated that the Millennials are typically the least politically active generation across all four of these dimensions. While the difference between the Millennials and their elders

varies depending on the specific act in question, on average they are less active in each dimension of political activity. In addition, Chapter Four found evidence of substantial cohort effects for acts associated with each dimension, which suggested that the Millennials have entered the electorate with the lowest propensity to participate in politics in the history of British survey research. By far the strongest effects were apparent in analyses of formal political participation, and especially voting. While the conventional wisdom that the Millennials are unusually active in 'new' forms of political activity (such as those associated with cause-oriented or civic politics) is challenged by these findings, the assertion that they are unusually inactive in formal politics – and particularly elections – is supported.

In addition to cohort effects, Chapter Four also found evidence of significant life cycle effects for all four dimensions of political participation. In the case of formal politics, this is unsurprising – an extensive literature has demonstrated that the political life cycle has a consistent impact on how likely a given individual is to participate in formal politics (Smets 2008; Jankowski and Strate 1995). Chapter Four shows, however, that these effects are also apparent for other dimensions of political activity as well. This suggests that the depressing effects on formal political participation associated with living in the early stage of the political life cycle – such as not yet being established in a community, not yet starting a career, having children or owning a home – are also important for informal acts of participation. This not only reinforces the need to account for the life cycle in studies of young people's formal political participation – both so that a reliable understanding of why they are in/active can be developed and to ensure that life cycle effects are not confused with

cohort effects (Phelps 2012) – but demonstrates the need to do so in studies of any form of political participation regardless of whether it is within or beyond the formal political arena.

Finally, Chapter Four also found evidence of period effects in which certain forms of political participation (particularly associated with formal politics such as voting in elections) have become less common across all generations in recent decades, while other forms (such as cause-oriented activity) have become more common. This supports theories emphasising the evolution of political participation through the rising popularity of informal arenas of political activity and to some extent away from traditional, formal arenas (such as those made by Sloam (2012b; 2014), Norris (2001; 2011) and Dalton (2013)). It also highlights the need to account for such period effects in studies of young people's political participation, so that trends which are apparent throughout the entire electorate at a given time (such as, for example, the increasing tendency of British citizens to sign petitions) are not misinterpreted as cohort effects in which the younger generation are suggested to stand out.

There are two broader implications from these findings. The first relates to future studies of the Millennials' political participation, as well as that of future generations of young citizens. As Chapters One and Two detailed, scholars such as Phelps (2012) have emphasised the need to take account of the political life cycle in studies of young citizens' political activity so that differences between young and old are not mistakenly taken to indicate generational distinctions. This research not only supports Phelps' argument, but shows the need to expand it: in addition to the life cycle, scholars must be sensitive to

period effects as well. There is evidence of electorate-wide shifts in political participation which are not confined to a particular political generation. Any study which ignores such period effects runs the risk of misinterpreting them, potentially assigning an unjustified emphasis to the distinctiveness of a given generation as a result. Future studies of the political participation of the young must, therefore, be sensitive to age, period and cohort effects to at least some degree, in order not to confuse the three and mischaracterise a given generation of citizens, as has frequently happened in the case of the Millennials (e.g., Sloam 2014; Henn and Foard 2012; Henn et al. 2005).

The second implication relates to the future trajectory of the Millennials' participation. Given that the Millennials' unusually low levels of political participation at least partly reflect cohort effects, this means their lower propensity to participate is likely to be a lasting habit which will endure throughout their adult lives. While they are likely become more active relative to their current levels as they move through the life cycle, and may become more active in certain areas because of electorate-wide shifts in political behaviour, they are nonetheless likely to be typically less active than previous generations at the same stage of the life cycle and in similar contextual circumstances throughout their lives.

9.2 The Millennials' Apathy and Alienation

Chapter Five focussed on defining, conceptualising and operationalising formal political apathy and formal political alienation. Through a review of extant literature on the concepts supported by empirical analyses, it developed a clear definition, an empirically informed conceptualisation, and an empirically

validated operationalisation of apathy and alienation in regard to formal politics which could effectively test the theory that either characteristic was responsible for the Millennials' distinct political behaviour. The result was a uni-dimensional conception of apathy which reflects an individual's motivation for personal involvement with formal politics, and a multi-dimensional conception of alienation which reflects an individual's estrangement from formal politics. This estrangement could take the form of political powerlessness (relating an individual's sense of political efficacy), political normlessness (reflecting to their faith that the norms governing just political interaction are being adhered to) or political meaninglessness (reflecting their faith in their knowledge of politics).

Chapter Six then explored the extent to which the Millennials were distinct from older generations in terms of apathy and each dimension of alienation at the time of the 2010 British general election, and examined the impact of apathy and alienation on differences between the Millennials' formal and cause-oriented political participation and that of their elders. The analyses showed that at the time of the 2010 election, the Millennials stood out in two important ways. First, they were the most apathetic generation in the electorate, even with important influences on political interest and knowledge (the constituent components of political apathy), such as political sophistication and social capital, controlled for. Second, while they did not differ from their elders in terms of powerlessness or normlessness, the Millennials did stand out for being unusually alienated through meaninglessness.

Chapter Six also showed that once differences between the Millennials' levels of apathy and that of the older generations was accounted for, the differences between their respective expected political participation were dramatically reduced. In other words, the fact that the Millennials are so apathetic about formal politics plays a major role in explaining why they are so inactive in it, and to a lesser extent informal politics as well. In addition, while powerlessness and normlessness played small roles in explaining differences in participation, the Millennials' high levels of meaninglessness alienation were also responsible for substantially depressing their formal, and to a lesser extent their cause-oriented, political participation. In short, therefore, the analyses suggested that both the Millennials' high levels of apathy and meaninglessness alienation were important in explaining why they were less likely to be active in politics than their elders, both within and beyond the formal political arena.

Chapter Eight considered the source of the Millennials' distinct levels of apathy and alienation, and used APC analyses to determine whether they reflected the political life cycle, period effects, or generational differences. The analyses showed that for both apathy and alienation, there was evidence of life cycle effects which to some extent accounted for differences between the Millennials and their elders, as well as period effects in which the typical expressions of apathy and certain forms of alienation have changed throughout the British electorate over the past thirty years.

With these effects controlled for, however, there was clear evidence of cohort effects for both apathy and alienation. The Millennials were shown to have entered the electorate with a greater propensity towards political apathy than

any of the older generations. This means that the unusually high levels of apathy identified in the Millennials in Chapter Six were at least partly the result of cohort effects, and so are likely to remain a lasting characteristic of the generation throughout their adult lives. The analyses also found evidence of cohort effects for both political powerlessness and normlessness, which identified the Millennials as the least politically alienated generation to have entered the electorate since the Pre-War generation. While expressions of powerlessness and normlessness appear to be changing as a result of different causal forces (discussed further below), in both cases the Millennials' were shown to have typically lower levels than their elders once period effects and the life cycle were accounted for. This suggests that a propensity towards lower levels of powerlessness and normlessness alienation may accompany a propensity towards a typically higher level of political apathy in being a lasting characteristic of the Millennials.

Finally, there was no evidence of a cohort effect relating to the Millennials in meaningfulness alienation once the life cycle and period effects were controlled for. The life cycle effect implies that higher levels of meaningfulness are to be expected during youth, with levels falling once people reach middle age. This suggests, therefore, that the unusually high level of meaningfulness alienation identified in the Millennials in Chapter Six is actually the result of a life cycle, rather than a cohort, effect. The Millennials are unlikely, therefore, to exhibit a lasting propensity towards unusually high or low levels of meaningfulness alienation. As they age and move through the life cycle, their meaningfulness alienation can be expected to broadly mimic the pattern seen among older generations.

Collectively, therefore, Chapters Six and Eight suggest that the Millennials are a particularly distinct political generation for their unusually high levels of political apathy, and their unusually low levels of powerlessness and normlessness alienation. Moreover, they suggest that it is the Millennials' apathy which plays the more substantial role in explaining their unusually low levels of political participation. Apathy was shown to significantly depress both formal and cause-oriented participation, suggesting that a lack of desire for personal involvement with formal politics overlaps to some extent with a similar lack of desire for involvement with other forms of politics outside the formal political arena as well. The Millennials' unusually high apathy, therefore, is suggested to be an important driving force behind their lack of participation in politics, be it in the formal, informal or civic arenas.

The Millennials' unusually low levels of powerlessness and normlessness alienation appear to play little role in explaining their low participation. In fact, the analyses in Chapter Six would suggest that their lack of alienation compared with their elders should make them relatively more active. While this may well be the case, the positive effect from their lack of alienation is unlikely to offset the depressing effect on their participation from their political apathy. The one form of alienation which depresses the Millennials' participation (and so compounds the effect of their political apathy, at least temporarily) is meaninglessness. The effect of meaninglessness, however, is expected to weaken as the Millennials move through the life cycle.

9.3 The Role of Social Evolution

Chapter Seven considered a potential theoretical explanation for cohort effects in political apathy and alienation in the form of social modernisation theory, i.e., the impact of social, economic, political and technological evolution in Western society on the way Western citizens are socialised into engaging with politics. Two sub-theories of this approach were focussed on: the rise of post-materialism, which emphasises the development of post-materialistic political values with a major focus on enhancing and protecting individual autonomy; and media fragmentation, which focusses on the consequences of shifts in habits of media consumption in light of social change for the way in which people acquire political information.

Chapter Eight then examined the role of these two processes in producing the cohort effects discussed above in political apathy and political alienation, with a particular focus on whether either post-materialism or media fragmentation could explain the Millennials' distinct apathy towards and lack of alienation from formal politics. The growth of post-materialism was shown to be an important factor behind period effects in political apathy and meaninglessness in the British electorate since the early 2000s. Specifically, the British electorate has become gradually less apathetic and less meaninglessly alienated since the turn of the millennium, and this in large part is a result of increasing levels of post-materialism (which implies a greater motivation to engage with politics) and political sophistication among British citizens. Rising post-materialism was also shown to be suppressing a period effect in political normlessness: the British electorate has become steadily more alienated since

the 1980s as a result of their lack of faith and trust in the integrity of the political process and those within it, and if they were not also becoming more post-materialistic at the same time this increase would have been even more dramatic.

The fragmentation of media consumption patterns was shown to have several consequences in Chapter Seven, but one of the most significant is that it means the Millennials were consuming much less political news than did previous generations at the same age. This process was found to play an important role in explaining the unusually high levels of apathy among the Millennials, suggesting that their lack of engagement with traditional political news media, or even with any news media at all, was undermining their exposure to political issues and events and preventing them from developing a motivation to engage with formal politics.

Media fragmentation was not found to explain the cohort effects relating to political alienation, but was suggested to influence period effects. Specifically, the shift of media consumption away from traditional sources and towards new (i.e., online) media (or towards consuming no political news at all) was shown to be offsetting the decline of political apathy and meaninglessness being driven by the rise of post-materialism somewhat. In other words, British citizens were shown to be becoming less apathetic and less alienated (in terms of meaninglessness) as a result of their increasingly post-materialistic nature, but this decline was being offset by their lack of engagement with traditional sources of political news.

The role of social evolution, therefore, at least in terms of rising post-materialism and the fragmentation of media consumption, in explaining the Millennials' distinct apathy and alienation (and consequently their participation) is quite limited. The distinctively post-materialistic nature of the Millennials is not capable of explaining why they are so apathetic towards politics, nor could it account for their low levels of alienation. The media fragmentation theory offers little by way of explaining the Millennials' distinctive alienation, but is important for their apathy. Part of the reason for the Millennials' unusually high levels of political apathy, and subsequently their lack of political participation, is that they consume less political information through news media than previous generations.

9.4 Academic Implications: Study of the Millennials

The answers to the three research questions at the heart of this thesis have, therefore, thrown up some considerable challenges to the conventional wisdom of the Millennials as a distinctly alienated generation, disengaging from formal politics but leading the way in embracing alternative dimensions of political activity. These findings have substantial implications for both the extant literature on the Millennials' political participation, apathy and alienation, and for the future study of those characteristics.

As Chapter Two showed, the conventional wisdom regarding the Millennials' participation is based on a large body of academic literature which has argued, albeit in different ways and in different national contexts, that the Millennials are unusually active in 'new' forms of political participation outside the formal political arena (such as protesting, volunteering or signing petitions) (e.g.,

Dalton 2013; Martin 2012; Marsh et al. 2007; Norris 2001; 2011; Sloam 2014).

In addition, some have suggested that this is indicative of a broader transition in the nature of political participation away from traditional, institutionalised activity and towards issue-specific and community based politics, driven primarily by the entry of new cohorts into Western electorates (Sloam 2014; Norris 2001; Dalton 2013).

The findings of this thesis challenge several aspects of this theory. First, Chapters Three and Four show that the Millennials are typically less active than their elders in every dimension of political participation identified. The difference may vary depending on the specific act in question (and it is important to acknowledge that one of the key acts around which these arguments are based – volunteering – could not be analysed in the APC analyses in Chapter Four because of data limitations), but nonetheless there is no indication that the Millennials are unusually active in informal arenas of politics, even once the life cycle has been accounted for. What can be said is that the difference between the Millennials' participation in formal politics and that of their elders is much larger – particularly for voting in national elections – than that for their participation in other forms of politics. Chapter Four showed that this should not be misinterpreted as an unusually high propensity to participate in informal arenas of politics on the part of the Millennials, however, but as an unusually low propensity on their part to participate in formal politics.

This does not mean, however, that political participation is not transforming in the way scholars such as Sloam (2012b; 2014) suggest i.e., with a decline in

formal political participation being accompanied by an increase in cause-oriented participation. It simply means that the mechanism through which this transformation is occurring is different. Whereas Sloam (2012b; 2014) and Dalton (2013) among others suggest that the change is driven by the entry of new cohorts into Western electorates (i.e., a cohort effect), Chapter Four shows that it is more likely to be driven by a period effect. Western electorates on the whole are becoming more likely to favour informal political activity over formal politics, and the shift is not disproportionately apparent among any particular political generation. Within this shift, however, there is a cohort effect in which the Millennials are exhibiting a weaker propensity to participate in politics in all arenas than their elders.

The second challenge to the dominant position of much of the literature relates to the claim that the Millennials are a distinctly alienated generation and that this explains their low levels of formal participation, and moreover that they maintain a high interest in politics (e.g., Henn et al. 2005; Henn and Foard 2012; Russell et al. 2002; Marsh et al. 2007; Fahmy 2006). As outlined above, Chapters Six and Eight show that such an argument is untenable. While there is nothing to suggest that the Millennials exhibit no interest in politics or political issues at all, they nonetheless have lower levels of interest than their elders.

While at least part of this difference can be explained by the Millennials' current stage in the life cycle, there is strong evidence that part of it is the result of a cohort effect and that the Millennials are a distinctly apathetic political generation. Furthermore, the analyses in Chapter Six showed that political apathy has a substantial negative effect on political participation; the fact that the Millennials are so apathetic about formal politics compared with their

elders, therefore, plays a substantial role in explaining why they are less politically active.

Furthermore, the suggestion that the Millennials are unusually alienated is also challenged. Chapter Eight suggested that there are clear cohort effects apparent for both political powerlessness and normlessness in which the Millennials exhibit the lowest levels of alienation in the electorate. Far from depressing their chances of participating in formal politics, their lack of alienation should, if anything, increase their propensity to participate. Moreover, suggestions that the Millennials' alienation would lead them to shift away from formal politics towards informal politics (e.g., Sloam 2014) are also challenged: on such logic, the Millennials' low levels of alienation should see them have more faith in the formal political process than their elders and so see less need for informal political participation as a result. The only form of alienation in which the analyses supported assertions in the literature (such as from Henn et al. 2005; Fahmy 2006; Henn and Foard 2012) is in relation to political meaningfulness: the Millennials' are actively discouraged from participating in both formal and informal politics by their lack of faith in their own knowledge of the political process. Contrary to Henn et al.'s (2005), Fahmy's (2006) and Henn and Foard's (2012) suggestion that this is a distinguishing characteristic of this generation, however, the analyses in Chapter Eight suggest that this is likely to reflect the Millennials' current stage in the life cycle. Once they age and move into later stages of the life cycle, their confidence in their political knowledge should increase and they can expect to become more active.

In addition to presenting challenges to the extant literature, the conclusions of this thesis also imply several lessons to be heeded in future research into the political characteristics of the Millennials and future young generations. While there is clearly a role for both political apathy and political alienation to explain the distinct behaviour of the Millennials, this research has shown that it is their apathy towards formal politics that is the far more substantial and so needs to be given much more focus in future research. Not only does political apathy appear to have a stronger depressing effect on political participation than alienation (both inside and beyond the formal political arena – see Chapter Six), but the Millennials’ high levels of apathy appear to be the result of a cohort effect while their high levels of (meaninglessness) alienation appear reflect their stage in the life cycle. In other words, the Millennials’ tendency to be more apathetic about politics is likely to stick with them throughout their adult lives, while their tendency to have less confidence in their political knowledge will likely reduce as they age.

This does not, of course, mean that studying the Millennials’ alienation, and particularly exploring why they appear to be so un-alienated in terms of powerlessness and normlessness, would not be a worthy pursuit. It does mean, however, that if explanations for the Millennials’ distinguishing participatory features – namely their tendency to be less active than previous generations – are to be explored, the focus needs to shift much more towards political apathy than is currently the case.

In addition, the conclusions of Chapter Eight regarding the role of media fragmentation in explaining cohort effects in political apathy suggest that

greater attention also needs to be paid to the ways in which young citizens develop habits of consuming political information, and subsequently developing the motivation to engage with formal politics, during their formative years. Supporting the arguments of Putnam (2000), Wattenberg (2012) and Buckingham (1999) among others (see Chapters Two and Seven), this study suggests that the Millennials' are developing unprecedented levels of political apathy because of their lack of exposure to political stimuli during their formative years. This is at least in part a result of their developing habits which do not involve the frequent consumption of political news media, or which involve the consumption of news media which provides less political information (such as many online sources, or political news obtained through social media). Without political information to act as both a stimulus to take an interest in politics and a source of political knowledge, young people are left with higher levels of political apathy (Wattenberg 2012).

This research suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the ways in which young people's consumption of news media affects their interest in and knowledge of politics, and what changes could be made to mitigate the loss of political information communicated as a result of shifts in typical media consumption. It also suggests that other potential sources of political information during one's formative years – such as education, parental political involvement and social capital (Putnam 2000) – should also be explored to see if they too are expressed in a sufficiently different way among today's young people to the extent that they explain the Millennials' unusually high levels of political apathy. The tendency to focus on claims that the Millennials are politically alienated has led to a tendency to search for sources of that

alienation in recent research into young people's political participation (e.g., Henn and Foard 2012; Sloam 2014; Henn et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2007), meaning that causes of unprecedented levels of political apathy among the young are understudied. This thesis suggests that not only is a focus on political apathy needed to improve our understanding of why the Millennials participate in politics in the way that they do, but this must be accompanied by a renewed focus on the causes of that unprecedented apathy.

The requirement to pay more attention to political apathy overlaps with another recommendation for further research and for the wider public discourse: the need to abandon the normative connotations attached to the view that young people are politically apathetic or politically alienated. As Chapter One outlined, since the turn of the millennium the concepts of apathy and alienation in the context of the Millennials' political participation have become intertwined with normative implications. The suggestion that the young are apathetic about formal politics has become associated with deliberate attempts to negatively stereotype them as disengaged 'onlookers' (Henn and Foard 2012), as well as attempts by politicians to accuse younger voters of apathy to divert attention from their own behaviour (Evans et al. 2015). Meanwhile, the view of young people as politically alienated implies some form of victim status, in which they are politically articulate, 'engaged sceptics' (Marsh et al. 2007; Henn et al. 2005), and their lack of political participation is suggested to be the result of the failures and poor judgement of the political elite.

These normative connotations are neither justified nor helpful. It is unclear why suggesting the Millennials are politically apathetic or alienated should

necessarily be viewed as ethically appealing or distasteful in the first place. One of the arguments of this thesis – that the Millennials are unusually apathetic as a result of the habits of news media consumption they have developed – does not necessarily imply that their political apathy is their fault or something they should be negatively judged for. Their unusually low levels of powerlessness and normlessness alienation are unlikely to be interpreted as a success on the part of the British political elite, nor would doing so seem logically appropriate.

The major problem with these normative connotations, however, is that they inhibit debate about why today's young people are less politically active than their elders. In an environment in which suggesting the Millennials are unusually apathetic is considered unfair and inappropriate, for instance, scholars are discouraged from saying so and politicians are discouraged from addressing political apathy as a policy response to low political participation. As this study has shown, the Millennials are the most politically apathetic generation to have entered the British electorate since the Second World War, and this plays a substantial role in depressing their participation in politics. Any serious policy attempt to increase the political participation of the young must be developed with this fact in mind.

There are four further implications for the ongoing study of the Millennials' political participation from this thesis. First, this research has shown that there is evidence of life cycle, cohort and period effects behind trends in political participation. These suggest that while the Millennials are indeed a distinct political generation in terms of their participation in politics (across all arenas),

at least some of the difference between them and their elders, or between the Millennials today and young citizens in the past, can be explained by life cycle or period effects. Any attempt to explore the generational distinctiveness of the Millennials' participation (or, indeed, their apathy and/or alienation) must be capable of accounting for life cycle and period effects as well. A failure to do so will undermine confidence in the validity of any 'generational effects' identified. This means that greater emphasis will have to be placed on longitudinal research, with more attention given to analysing pseudo-cohorts in repeated cross-sectional datasets (as in this thesis), or panel data. It also means that methods capable of estimating age, period and cohort effects (such as APC analyses) will need to be used more widely.

Second, and related to the first, the results of this research show that scholars must not get carried away in focussing on the Millennials as a distinct political generation. The analyses throughout this study have shown that differences in political generation often contribute very little to overall variation in political participation, apathy or alienation. While the Millennials are clearly a distinct generation in numerous ways, the differences between the Millennials and their elders do little to explain why a given individual may be more likely to participate in politics, or be more apathetic, or be more alienated than another individual. Other factors explored in this research were shown to be much more influential. Political apathy, for example, was shown to explain a substantial amount of variance in political participation, as was political alienation (though to a lesser extent). Differences in political apathy and alienation across generations are far more important for explaining variations in political participation than differences between generations. Similarly,

differences in social capital, gender and social and political resources had a greater impact on differences in political participation than political generations. When looking to explain why members of the Millennial generation are less active in politics than older people, therefore, this research suggests that the focus should be on differences in apathy, alienation, demography and social resources rather than on a given individual's membership of a political generation.

This does not mean, however, that those generational differences are not substantial or important, or that analysing differences in behaviour through a generational framework cannot help shed light on why a given group of people may behave differently from another – indeed, this thesis has demonstrated the utility of such a perspective. In addition, these generational differences are particularly important in the context of aggregated societal events, such as elections, because they mean that the Millennials contribute less to them than other generations. Moreover, they are likely to continue doing so throughout their adult lives. Exploring why this is the case, and considering how future generations could be encouraged to take a more active role in politics, remains an important academic and public priority.

Third, future studies of the Millennials' participation – and potentially of political participation more broadly – must take account of the multi-dimensional nature of the concept. As Chapters Two and Three argued, in many studies of the Millennials' participation a two-dimensional conception is assumed in which activity is considered to be either formal or cause-oriented in nature. While the evidence in this research suggests that there is good reason to

distinguish between formal and informal political activity, it also suggests that this two-dimensional approach is too broad. In particular, Chapter Three showed that there is a difference between formal political activity and issue-specific formal activity, which is far less common. It also showed that there is a distinction between cause-oriented and civic political participation, with the latter being particularly focussed on the politics of one's community. Both of these distinctions are absent from studies of the Millennials' political participation, and yet offer greater insight into the ways in which political acts relate to each other. Further study of these dimensions could uncover yet more information about the preferences of certain citizens for certain types of political participation.

Finally, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of providing a clear definition, conceptualisation and operationalisation of political apathy and alienation in studying how and why young people participate in politics. Chapters One and Two criticised much of the extant literature (e.g., Henn et al. 2005; Marsh et al. 2007; Fahmy 2006; Henn and Foard 2012; Sloam 2014) for failing to do so, and argued that the utility of such theoretically under-developed conclusions is limited and that there can be little confidence in the validity of their claims. Having developed clear definitions and measures of apathy and alienation, this thesis not only challenged the conceptions often employed in other research, but has challenged many of their conclusions as well – not least the view that the Millennials are unusually alienated and not apathetic. Furthermore, this research has been uniquely placed to examine whether changes in political apathy and alienation over time are the result of age, period or cohort effects, as well as to study the role of explanatory theories

in driving those effects. While future research may challenge the conception and measures of political apathy and alienation developed here, the case for actually developing clear conceptualisations and validated measures of them is unchallengeable.

9.5 Academic Implications: Apathy and Alienation

The efforts to develop the definitions, conceptualisations and measures of formal political apathy and alienation taken in this research have also revealed a great deal about the concepts themselves. These lessons can both advance our understanding of political apathy and alienation as characteristics, and provide a basis for future research to develop that understanding further, as well as inform future studies in other fields in which political apathy and/or alienation are thought to be important (such as, for instance, the study of the rise of far-right populism in Europe).

The concept of ‘formal political apathy’ developed in this study broadly corresponds to the impression given in existing research (e.g., Rosenberg 1954; Dalton 2013): it is a one-dimensional orientation reflecting an individual’s lack of desire for personal engagement with politics. It is strongly influenced by the life cycle in the manner conventionally understood from studies on the relationship between the life cycle and political interest (Smets 2008; Stoker 2006; Jankowski and Strate 1995). It is also heavily influenced by political socialisation, in that habits relating to political apathy developed during one’s formative years are likely to influence how apathetic that person is throughout their adult lives. This is consistent with studies of the relationship between political socialisation and political interest (Prior 2005). Finally, consistent

with studies of the relationship between political interest and knowledge (characteristics central to political apathy) and other individual characteristics (such as Verba and Nie 1972; Verba et al. 1995; Putnam 2000; Wattenberg 2012; Whiteley 2012; Clarke et al. 2004), Chapters Five, Six and Eight showed that political apathy tends to be higher among socially under-represented or under-resourced groups (such as young people, women, the poor, and the uneducated).

Political alienation is a more nuanced and complex characteristic, and the differences between the conception developed in this research and that which dominates the existing literature are more extensive. As Chapter Five showed, the dominant conceptualisation of political apathy is based on that developed by Finifter (1970) who used data from America in the 1950s. Finifter (1970) argued that political alienation should be conceptualised and measured in terms of two dimensions: political powerlessness, indicated by measures of political efficacy; and political normlessness, indicated by measures of political trust. One of the major challenges to that approach suggested in this research is that a third dimension of political meaninglessness, rejected by Finifter (1970) as theoretically possible but empirically unverifiable, is also a valid manifestation of alienation from formal politics.

The reason for the difference between the conclusions of Chapter Five and Finifter (1970) remain unclear. It could reflect methodological differences in the way the multi-dimensional structure of alienation was determined, or it could reflect genuine differences in the structure of political alienation between the context of Finifter's (1970) research and this study. In any event, it is clear

that the assumption that political alienation as conceptualised by Finifter (1970) can be universally applied across national and historical contexts – as done in much literature since (e.g., Gniewosz et al. 2009; Kabashima et al. 2000; Southwell 2003; 2012; Southwell and Everest 1998; Dermody et al. 2010) – is unsustainable.

This research has also revealed further lessons about how manifestations of political alienation may differ between citizens. Like political apathy, all three dimensions of political alienation were shown to typically have negative relationships with indicators of political sophistication (such as education). However, the different dimensions of alienation have variable relationships with other individual characteristics. Powerlessness, for example, is not related to social class, whereas normlessness and meaninglessness are higher among those of lower social classes. Higher levels of income depress normlessness and meaninglessness, but have no effect on powerlessness. There are no differences based on gender in terms of powerlessness or normlessness, but women are more likely to exhibit higher levels of meaninglessness alienation than men. Members of minority ethnic groups typically exhibit higher levels of meaninglessness alienation, while exhibiting lower levels of normlessness. Finally, as detailed above, the young are more likely to be alienated through meaninglessness and powerlessness than the old at any given time.

The analyses in Chapter Eight also suggest that the three dimensions of alienation may be changing as a result of different forces over time. Political normlessness, for example, is increasing as a result of a period effect in Britain which has been apparent since at least the 1980s, and is also changing as a

result of cohort effects. Powerlessness is in decline as a result of a cohort effect in which successive generations enter the electorate with more faith in their ability to influence political outcomes than the last. Meaninglessness is in decline as a result of a period effect apparent since the early 2000s.

Furthermore, both powerlessness and meaninglessness are related to the life cycle in a comparable manner to that seen for political apathy (i.e., they are higher among the young, fall as people reach middle age and then increase slightly again amongst the very old), whereas normlessness is not. It is unclear, however, what the causal relationship between the life cycle and these dimensions of political alienation is. For political meaninglessness, it is likely that the ‘start-up’ problems associated with the early stages of political life – such as starting a career, finding a partner, purchasing a home, and having children (Smets 2008) – which inhibit political engagement could increase political meaninglessness as a result of young people’s lack of exposure to politics which in turn means they have lower levels of political knowledge. Given that actual political knowledge correlates strongly with one’s confidence in their own political knowledge (Hansard Society 2012), this could explain why the young and the very old typically have higher levels of meaninglessness alienation than the middle aged. As for powerlessness, it is unclear why the young would typically feel more influential over politics than the middle aged; perhaps it reflects a degree of naivety on their part regarding how much influence they will have once they engage, or perhaps the lack of commitments associated with the ‘start-up problems’ of the political life cycle equip the young with a greater sense of their capacity to influence politics if they needed to. Further research into the relationship between the life cycle and

both meaninglessness and powerlessness is clearly needed to answer these questions.

9.6 Academic Implications: Social Modernisation

The final implications of this research relate to the ongoing study of the impact of social modernisation on Western citizens' political characteristics. It is important to note that the test of the role of social modernisation in this research was not exhaustive; there are many other components to social modernisation which were not examined, such as changes to social capital. Nonetheless, Chapter Eight suggested that the current understandings of the post-materialism and media fragmentation 'sub-theories' of social modernisation are in need of refinement. In challenge to the post-materialist theory outlined by studies such as Inglehart and Welzel (2005), Dalton (2013) and Norris (2001), Chapter Eight showed that the theory cannot explain why the Millennials are the most politically apathetic generation in the British electorate, despite their being the most 'post-materialist' at the same time. It also cannot explain why they are so un-alienated in terms of political normlessness, as the current theory suggests that post-materialism should be positively associated with normlessness alienation through its impact on political trust (Dalton 2004). The post-materialism theory also predicts that the Millennials should be the least alienated in terms of meaninglessness (Dalton 2013; Norris 2001), which again Chapter Eight showed not to be the case. The only characteristic which did correspond to the theoretical expectations was political powerlessness, in which the Millennials were found to be at the leading edge of a generational decline in powerlessness alienation which

corresponds to a generational increase in post-materialism. However, the rise of post-materialism was found not to explain this generational effect.

Furthermore, the model fit statistics in Chapter Eight showed that post-materialism made a very modest contribution to explaining differences in apathy and alienation, and was usually inferior to that of demographic characteristics (gender) and social and political resources (social class).

Overall, therefore, while the post-materialism theory has some success in explaining period effects in political apathy and alienation, and is even more successful in helping to explain both generational and period effects in other characteristics (such as shifts in political agendas (Inglehart and Welzel 2005) and partisan dealignment (Dalton 2013)), it is poorly suited to explaining generational shifts in apathy and alienation.

The media fragmentation theory was successful in helping to explain the generational trends in political apathy, and so why the Millennials (as well as the 90s generation) are more apathetic than previous generations. It was unable to account, however, for the generational trend in meaninglessness alienation; i.e., the media fragmentation theory predicts that there should be a similar increase in meaninglessness among the younger generations to that seen in political apathy, but Chapter Eight showed no such trend. The theory correctly predicted that there would be no significant relationship between media fragmentation and political normlessness, but is unable to explain why the fragmentation of media consumption would lead to a reduction in political powerlessness (although Chapter Eight showed that this process is not related to the generational decline in powerlessness). As with the post-materialist

theory, therefore, there is scope for the media fragmentation theory to be updated and to consider why the process would have such an unexpected effect on powerlessness, and to address its failure to explain the absence of a generational trend in meaninglessness. That said, like post-materialism, media fragmentation was shown to make a modest contribution to explaining overall differences in apathy and alienation – demography and social and political resources were suggested to be more influential in most cases.

Furthermore, the findings in Chapter Eight relate to a broader debate regarding the role of new media in driving political engagement, particularly among the young. Studies such as Casero-Ripolles (2012) and O’Neill (2010) have argued that young people’s engagement with new media compensates for their lack of engagement with more traditional media (e.g., newspapers), and can provide the information and stimulus needed for them to engage with politics. Others, such as Wattenberg (2012) and Theocharis (2012) argue either that this is not the case, or that there is insufficient evidence to sustain such a claim (see Chapters Two and Seven). The analyses in Chapter Eight support the latter argument, suggesting that the processes associated with media fragmentation – which include a shift from old to new media among the young – are leading to higher levels of political apathy and are related to higher levels of meaninglessness alienation (though not necessarily among the young). In other words, media fragmentation is associated with people developing lower levels of motivation for engagement with politics and lower levels of political knowledge.

9.7 Further Research

In addition to implications for the existing research on the Millennials' political participation, political apathy and alienation, and social modernisation, this research has implications for future research in these fields through raising several questions and avenue of inquiry worthy of further study. The first relates to the assumption behind this research that the findings relating to British Millennials (in terms of political participation as well as apathy and alienation) are generalizable to Millennials in other Western democracies. Chapter Two outlined the grounds upon which this assumption is based: that the characteristics – and many suggested causes of them – exhibited by the Millennials are apparent throughout Western society, suggesting that a Western society-wide causal factor is likely responsible for their emergence as a unique political generation. While there is plenty of evidence supporting this assumption in the extant literature, it is nonetheless untested with regard to the four-dimensional conceptualisation of political participation developed in Chapter Three, as well as the conceptualisation and operationalisations of political apathy and alienation developed in Chapter Five. A worthy avenue of further research, therefore, is to test the assumption that the Millennials' are indeed a distinct political generation in terms of similar characteristics relating to political participation, apathy and alienation – as well as in terms of the relationship between apathy, alienation and participation – in other Western electorates besides that of Britain.

This study also clearly identified several avenues for further research into the nature of formal political alienation. Many lessons have been learned about

how the various dimensions of alienation are related to individual characteristics, how their manifestations in British citizens are changing over time, and their effects on political participation, and these were discussed above. Further examination of how political alienation is related to individual characteristics and of how it affects other dimensions of political participation not examined in Chapter Six – particularly civic participation – would be an obvious route for further inquiry. There is also the question of why the conception of alienation developed in Chapter Five differs from that outlined by Finifter (1970). Future research should aim to resolve the matter of whether those differences reflect historic or national context, or variations in methodological approach.

There are also some more fundamental questions, however, about the concept of formal political alienation. First, as Chapter Five discussed, political alienation is widely assumed to be a multi-dimensional construct; this was implicit in Finifter's (1970) study, in the majority of studies using Finifter's conceptualisation since, and in this research. Empirical justification, in the form of latent structure analysis, has been provided for considering the various components of political alienation as distinct dimensions; but justification has yet to be provided for considering the three dimensions as part of one overarching concept (i.e., alienation) rather than three separate yet correlated constructs. Future research should explore the ways in which the three dimensions of powerlessness, normlessness and meaninglessness relate to each other in order to justify their being considered sub-dimensions of political alienation. This will require both theoretical exploration – to identify the conceptual requirements for three related constructs to be considered part of

the same over-arching construct – and empirical exploration. The empirical exploration could, for example, examine the causal relationships between the three using structural equation modelling, and so determine whether they are mutually reinforcing (as was hinted at by the data in Chapters Five, Six and Eight) and so more strongly related than simply being correlated with similar effects on political behaviour.

An additional unanswered question relates to the dimensions of alienation themselves. Chapter Five determined that political powerlessness, normlessness and meaninglessness are valid indications of political alienation. It found that a fourth potential dimension – political deprivation – was not valid. Chapter Five was unable to determine, however, whether this simply reflected an inadequate choice of survey instrument for measuring deprivation, or a genuine rejection of the concept as a valid indication of alienation. Future research should explore the concept of political deprivation in more detail and consider whether it can be considered a sub-dimension of political alienation if operationalised differently.

The final possibilities for further study relate to the examination of the effects of social modernisation on political apathy and alienation. Owing to matters of practicality, only the rise of post-materialism and the fragmentation of media consumption were examined as potential causal processes behind trends in political apathy and alienation. There are, of course, numerous other trends associated with the evolution of Western society which could conceivably affect apathy and alienation, and which should be explored in this context. The most notable of these trends, based on the impact they have been suggested to

have on the political participation of the young in the present literature (see Chapter Two), include the decline and/or evolution of social capital (Putnam 2000; Macedo et al. 2005); the impact of globalisation in expanding the ‘youth’ section of the political life cycle (Smets 2008; Peterson 1996; Norris 2001); and evolving conceptions of citizenship and civic duty (Dalton 2013).

Finally, the success of the media fragmentation theory in helping to explain the unusually high levels of political apathy apparent in the Millennials suggests that young citizens’ consumption of news media, and the effect of new media on the way young people interact with political information, is in need of further study. This research presents the consequences of media fragmentation in a fairly negative light, in that the process is leading to lower levels of political knowledge (and confidence in that knowledge) and political interest among the younger generations. Developing a greater understanding of why this is happening and of the impact on political knowledge and interest of new forms of media, and of how this trend relates to some of the more positive aspects of the evolution of the media (such as the expansion of opportunities for political participation stemming from the rise of the Internet (O’Neill 2010; Norris 2001)), would enhance our understanding of the ways in which young generations relate to and engage with politics further.

9.8 Policy Implications

The conclusions of this study have substantial implications beyond academia as well, particularly with regard to ongoing efforts to increase electoral participation among young citizens by Western governments. This debate is particularly salient in Britain at present, in light of not only the recent general

election, but the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum in which 16 and 17 year olds were allowed to participate, and the focus on political issues of salience to young people in light of high-profile policy decisions taken by the Coalition Government (such as the increase in university tuition fees, and plans to restrict access to benefits for the under-25s) and apparent in the decision of the Labour Party to launch a ‘youth manifesto’ in the 2015 election campaign. Britain, and the current debates about how to increase the electoral participation of the British youth, therefore, provides a good setting in which to consider the policy implications of this research.

There are three key proposals currently being debated in this regard: to lower the voting age to 16; to implement online voting and encourage the government, political parties and politicians to give greater significance to online communication; and to dramatically re-design citizenship education and give it a more prominent place in school curricula.

There are two aspects to the debate about lowering the voting age: one based on what can be called the ‘rights issue’ in which supporters of lowering the voting age argue that the rights of 16 and 17 year olds are being disrespected by their not having the franchise (BYC 2015); and one based on political participation, in which supporters suggest that lowering the voting age will increase participation among the young (BYC 2015; Democratic Audit 2014). The implications of this study clearly relate to the latter, and so the discussion will focus on this area.³⁰ The main argument for lowering the voting age is based on studies such as Franklin (2004) which have shown that – consistent

³⁰ See Cowley and Denver (2004) for critiques of the ‘rights issue’ arguments.

with the impressionable years theory outlined in Chapter Three – voting behaviour is largely the result of a habit developed during the formative years of political socialisation. By lowering the voting age, therefore, supporters expect that more people will be given the chance to vote during their formative period while in an environment more conducive to political engagement than the period surrounding the ages 18-21. This is because, for example, 16 and 17 year olds are more likely still to live at home and be in education, meaning that they can be encouraged and supported to participate by parents and teachers (Democratic Audit 2014; Zeglovits and Aicholzer 2014). In addition, supporters suggest that politicians will be forced to pay more attention to young people if they make up a greater proportion of the electorate, which in turn will convince those young people that their engagement matters and can make a difference (e.g., Prof Sarah Birch, Democratic Audit 2014).

The findings of this research suggest that the second of these two arguments is unconvincing. The suggestion that the young do not vote because they do not feel listened to implies that they are alienated in terms of political powerlessness i.e., have no influence over formal political outcomes. Chapters Six and Eight have shown that this is not the case and that, in fact, the Millennial generation are likely to be the least alienated generation in these terms throughout their adult lives.

There is more cause for optimism in relation to the first argument, however. The Millennials have been shown to be the most politically apathetic generation in the electorate, and are likely to remain more apathetic than their elders throughout their adult lives. Part of the reason for this is that they do not

receive the same stimulus to engage through the consumption of political information through news media as previous generations. Providing the opportunity for young people to engage with politics, therefore, in an environment in which other sources of information and stimulus are readily available (such as the parental home or school) could encourage them to register to vote and engage with election campaigns to a greater extent than is currently the case. That said, Chapter Eight also showed that a lack of political information through the news media only accounted for part of the reason for the Millennials' unusually high level of political apathy. While lowering the voting age could address part of the problem of unusually low formal participation among the younger generations, therefore, there are other factors at work which it may be less successful at addressing.

The second common suggestion to increase youth engagement is to introduce online voting and encourage more political communication to be delivered online. The Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, for example, recently recommended the introduction of online voting and more online communication from politicians and political parties, arguing that it would make voting and political engagement more accessible to young people and more relevant to the way they communicate in their daily lives (PCRC 2014). Similarly, the charity vInspired suggests that communicating through social media will allow politicians to reach more young people and encourage them directly to engage with politics (vInspired 2015). At the heart of this approach, therefore, is the suggestion that young people do not vote because they perceive that the cost of doing so through existing methods (such as going to a

polling station) is too great, or because political information is inaccessible or unappealing to them and they are consequently too uninformed to cast a ballot.

It is certainly true that young people are more likely to use the Internet in their daily lives (Di Gennaro and Dutton 2006; Bakker and de Vreese 2011).

However, this research has shown that the Millennials are the most apathetic generation in the electorate i.e., they possess the lowest motivation for engagement with formal politics. The suggestion that making the method of voting more appealing will increase youth turnout assumes that young people possess the motivation to vote in the first place. While this research has shown that some young people undoubtedly possess such a motivation, they are nonetheless less likely to do so than their elders. Changing the method of voting is unlikely to make the world of formal politics – which that vote is intended to influence – more appealing to these young citizens.

The suggestion of communicating more political information through social media faces a similar problem: if young people lack the motivation to engage with formal politics in the first place, they are unlikely to consume information about it regardless of how it is presented to them. One of the main arguments of the media fragmentation theory is that while social media has provided more channels through which young people can access political news, it does so in a way which makes that news easier to avoid. High levels of political apathy make the Millennials more likely to avoid political news, regardless of the medium through which they encounter it, meaning that changing how that news is presented is unlikely to have much of a positive impact on their political engagement.

The one benefit to this suggestion, however, is that by communicating political information more widely through social media it will make that information more accessible to those young people who already possess the motivation to seek it out. Through being able to access more political information, those young people may become more politically knowledgeable, and so ultimately more confident in their knowledge of how to influence the political system. In other words, their meaningfulness alienation would be reduced. As Chapter Six showed that the higher level of meaningfulness associated with the youth stages of the life cycle in which most Millennials currently live depress their political participation, this could well have a positive impact on their chances of participating in elections.

Finally, the third common suggestion to increase youth electoral engagement is to reform the citizenship education curriculum in UK schools (YCC 2009; Sloam 2015; Citizenship Foundation 2015). Supporters argue that the current citizenship curriculum leaves school-leavers with limited political knowledge and interest – a problem which is compounded through the weakening of young people’s association with other sources of such resources, such as the traditional media and political parties – to the extent that either they take no interest in elections or feel too poorly equipped to cast an informed vote (Sloam 2015; Crowhurst 2015). In terms of apathy and alienation, therefore, this argument suggests that the current citizenship curriculum does not do enough to offset the higher levels of political apathy and political meaningfulness among today’s young people. Through assigning more resources and school time to the delivery of citizenship education, and reforming that curriculum so that pupils are given the opportunity to engage

with and participate in politics in their community, supporters argue that school-leavers would be exposed to more political information and issues so that they a) receive the stimulus to develop a motivation to engage, and b) develop greater political knowledge and a greater confidence in their knowledge to facilitate their political participation. There is also the hope that by delivering such opportunities during pupils' formative years, they would be more likely to develop habits of engagement with political issues and sources of political information which would endure throughout their lives.

Of the three proposals considered here, this is the one most likely to have a positive and substantial influence on young people's formal political engagement and participation based on the conclusions of this study. Chapters Six and Eight have shown that a lack of motivation to engage with politics and a lack of confidence in one's own understanding of politics are two strong negative influences on the Millennials' political participation. Furthermore, Chapter Eight showed that at least part of the explanation for the Millennials' high levels of apathy lies in their lack of exposure to political information through the news media. Reforming the citizenship education curriculum in the manner described above would directly address both of these issues by increasing pupils' exposure to political information and events. This, in turn, can be expected to increase their motivation to engage with politics and their knowledge – and confidence in that knowledge – of how to do so. Should this behaviour become habitual, this measure could instil habits of political engagement among future generations of school children which will reduce both political apathy and political meaninglessness, and subsequently increase their formal – and indeed their informal – political participation.

9.9 Conclusion

Conventional wisdom holds that the stability of Western democracy is under threat, and that this threat takes the form of the political alienation of the young, who are actively discouraged from participating in formal politics and are instead forced into other arenas of political life to promote their agendas. As is the ambition of much social research, this study has demonstrated that the conventional wisdom is wrong: the Millennial generation are indeed unusually inactive in formal politics, but this is not being compensated for by their being unusually active in other arenas of politics. Nor is this behaviour the result of their unprecedented political alienation, but rather their political apathy. In direct challenge to the conventional wisdom, the Millennial generation appear to be the least politically active, most politically apathetic and least politically alienated generation in the history of British survey research.

These findings pose a substantial challenge not only to the conventional understanding of how and why the Millennials participate in politics, but also to the academic study of and policy responses to that behaviour which is often (though not always) based on the misconception of a politically alienated youth. The normative dimension to the study of political apathy and alienation should be abandoned, and a determination to identify and study the true nature of the Millennials' (as well as future generations) relationship with politics, palatable or not, embraced by journalists, academics and politicians alike. Political apathy, and processes that could exacerbate it (such as changes in media consumption) must be made a central concern of academic studies in the political participation of the young. Finally, the lessons regarding the

importance and benefits of clearly defining, conceptualising and measuring political apathy and political alienation learned in this study need to be examined and built upon so that a further unjustified conventional wisdom can be avoided.

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Appendix One

This Appendix provides additional details on the survey data used throughout the thesis, including specific details of control variables used in regression analyses.

- **Chapter Two: Audit of Political Engagement**

Further information on the Audit of Political Engagement surveys (including the datasets and codebooks) can be found here:

<http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/research/public-attitudes/audit-of-political-engagement/>

- *Control Variables*

The details of the control variables used in the regression analyses reported in Table 2.2 are:

Education - highest educational qualification of respondent: *none; other; GCSE/NVQ Level 2 or equivalent; A-Level/NVQ Level 3 or equivalent; Degree or above*

Social Class - respondents' social class based on occupation: *Lowest grade/unemployed/pensioner/students; semi-/unskilled manual; skilled manual; supervisory/clerical/junior management; intermediate management/administrator; professional/higher managerial*

Ethnicity - *white British (0), non-white British (1)*

Gender - *male (0); female (1)*

Year - the survey year: 2009; 2010; 2011

In all cases, 'n/a' or 'refused to answer' responses were coded as missing data.

- **Chapter Three: British Election Study & British Social Attitudes Survey**

Further information on the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) can be found here: <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/british-social-attitudes/>

Information on the British Election Study (BES) is available here:

<http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/>

The details of the control variables used in both the BES and BSA analyses in Chapter Three are:

Education - age at which respondents left full-time education: *15 or under; 16; 17; 18; 19 or older*

Social Class - respondents' social class based on occupation:

unskilled/unemployed/lowest subsistence; semi/skilled manual; non-manual; intermediate non-manual; professional or higher managerial

Gender - *male (0); female (1)*

Party Identification - represents whether respondent reports identifying with or feeling closer to a political party: *no (0); yes (1)*

In all cases, 'n/a' or 'refused to answer' responses were coded as missing data.

- **Chapter Four and Chapter Five: British Election Study**

The details of the control variables used in the regression analyses (throughout both Chapters Four and Five) are:

Age - respondents' age at their last birthday

Education - age at which respondents left full-time education: *15 or under; 16; 17; 18; 19 or older*

Social Class - respondents' social class based on occupation:
unskilled/unemployed/lowest subsistence; semi/skilled manual; non-manual; intermediate non-manual; professional or higher managerial

Income - 15 category continuous variable, ranging from £0-£5000 a year to £90,001 and over

Gender - *male (0); female (1)*

Ethnicity: *white British (0), non-white British (1)*

Civic Duty - the extent to which respondents agree that voting in elections is a civic duty: *strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)*

Social Trust - This is the social trust variable that was identified in the Mokken Scale Analysis

Appendix Two

- **Mokken Scale Analysis**

This section reports the Mokken Scale Analyses (MSA) to identify the latent dimensional structure of political participation, and ultimately refined into the finalised analysis presented in Chapter Three. The process involved a series of analyses in which the parameters were refined so as to find the best level at which the multi-dimensional structure could be identified without losing too much information.

- Analysis 1

The first analysis included all twenty political participation items and used the standard H-Coefficient threshold of 0.3. Table 10.1 reports this analysis, which found that all twenty items represented a single latent dimension to a fairly strong level (scale H-Coefficient 0.42). This confirmed that all twenty acts were measuring a common latent construct (political participation), and showed that a coefficient threshold of 0.3 was insufficient to identify ‘sub-dimensions’ within the data.

Table 10.1: Mokken Scale Analysis of Political Participation 1

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Helped with fund-raising	0.18	0.35	0.42	3686
Done voluntary work	0.24	0.38		
Presented views to Cllr or MP	0.15	0.36		
Written a letter to an editor	0.05	0.35		
Been an officer of an organisation or club	0.09	0.40		
Made a speech to an organised group	0.10	0.41		
Donated to or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaign organisation	0.36	0.46		
Expressed political opinion online	0.07	0.39		
Signed a petition	0.31	0.45		
Taken part in a demonstration, march or rally	0.04	0.37		
Urged someone to contact their MP or Cllr	0.13	0.41		
Donated to or paid a membership fee to a political party	0.04	0.36		
Urged someone outside family to vote	0.17	0.38		
Voted in last general election	0.56	0.42		
Voted in last local election	0.54	0.48		
Attended any political meeting	0.05	0.40		
Stood for public office	0.01	0.50		
Boycotted products	0.13	0.41		
Take an active part in a political campaign	0.03	0.46		
Discussed politics or political news with someone	0.36	0.52		

Source: Audit of Political Engagement composite dataset. All coefficients are statistically significant at 95% confidence level

- Analysis 2

For the second analysis the H-Coefficient threshold was increased to 0.4, and the results are reported in Table 10.2. Three sub-dimensions of political participation were identified; one very large including fifteen of the survey items, and two much smaller. While this analysis provided more discriminatory capacity, it was still unsatisfactory for identifying distinct sub-dimensions of political participation given that the majority are still represented by a single scale.

Table 10.2a: Mokken Scale Analysis of Political Participation 2

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Made a speech to an organised group	0.1	0.42	0.46	3686
Taken part in a demonstration, march or rally	0.04	0.4		
Donated to or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaign organisation	0.36	0.46		
Signed a petition	0.31	0.46		
Expressed political opinion online	0.07	0.43		
Urged someone to contact their MP or Cllr	0.13	0.44		
Donated to or paid a membership fee to a political party	0.04	0.38		
Urged someone outside family to vote	0.17	0.45		
Voted in last general election	0.56	0.45		
Voted in last local election	0.54	0.5		
Attended a political meeting	0.05	0.42		
Stood for public office	0.01	0.49		
Boycotted products	0.13	0.46		
Taken an active part in a political campaign	0.03	0.48		
Discussed politics or political news with someone else	0.36	0.54		

Source: Audit of Political Engagement composite dataset. All coefficients are statistically significant at 95% confidence level

Table 10.2b: Mokken Scale Analysis of Political Participation 2

Scale 2	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Helped with fund-raising	0.18	0.47	0.5	3686
Been an officer of an organisation or club	0.09	0.54		
Done voluntary work	0.24	0.52		
Scale 3	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Presented views to MP or Cllr	0.15	0.44	0.44	3686
Written a letter to an editor	0.05	0.44		

Source: Audit of Political Engagement composite dataset. All coefficients are statistically significant at 95% confidence level

- Analysis 3

Table 10.3 reports the results of the third analysis, in which the H-Coefficient threshold was increased to 0.5. This threshold provided much more discriminatory power and identified several distinct sub-dimensions of political participation, however it did so at the cost of six of the twenty survey items which were found to be un-scalable. Losing almost a third of data is unacceptable, and so a further refined H-Coefficient threshold of 0.45 was employed.

Table 10.3a: Mokken Scale Analysis of Political Participation 3

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Urged someone outside family to vote	0.17	0.5	0.52	3686
Voted in last general election	0.56	0.52		
Attended any political meeting	0.05	0.46		
Stood for public office	0.01	0.5		
Voted in last local election	0.54	0.56		
Boycotted products	0.13	0.49		
Taken an active part in a political campaign	0.03	0.54		
Discussed politics or political news with someone else	0.36	0.56		

Source: Audit of Political Engagement 2009, 2010, 2011. All coefficients are statistically significant at 95% confidence level

Table 10.3b: Mokken Scale Analysis of Political Participation 3

Scale 2	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Expressed political opinion online	0.07	0.54	0.58	3686
Signed a petition	0.31	0.68		
Taken part in a demonstration, march or rally	0.04	0.5		
Scale 3	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Made a speech to an organised group	0.1	0.52	0.55	3686
Been an officer of an organisation or club	0.09	0.52		
Donated to or paid a membership fee to a charity or campaign organisation	0.36	0.62		
Un-scaled Items	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Donated or paid a membership fee to a political party	0.04	N/A	N/A	3686
Helped with fund-raising	0.18			
Done voluntary work	0.24			
Written a letter to an editor	0.05			
Presented views to an MP or Cllr	0.15			
Urged someone to contact their MP or Cllr	0.13			

Source: Audit of Political Engagement 2009, 2010, 2011. All coefficients are statistically significant at 95% confidence level

- Analysis 4

This analysis initially produced three clear scales which corresponded fairly closely to the conceptual outline of formal, cause-oriented and civic political participation outlined in Chapters Two and Three. Some of the acts, however, were identified in what were conceptually unusual scales (e.g., boycotting products was found to fit in the first scale corresponding to formal political participation, whereas conceptually it is better placed in the cause-oriented participation scale).

Table 10.4a: Mokken Scale Analysis of Political Participation 4

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Urged someone to contact MP or Cllr	0.13	0.46	0.51	3686
Urged someone outside family to vote	0.17	0.48		
Voted in last general election	0.56	0.52		
Voted in last local election	0.54	0.56		
Attended a political meeting	0.05	0.45		
Stood for public office	0.01	0.5		
Boycotted products	0.13	0.45		
Taken an active part in a political campaign	0.03	0.53		
Discussed politics or political news with someone	0.36	0.57		

Source: Audit of Political Engagement 2009, 2010, 2011. All coefficients are statistically significant at 95% confidence level

Table 10.4b: Mokken Scale Analysis of Political Participation 4

Scale 2	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Made a speech to an organised group	0.1	0.47	0.49	3686
Donated or paid membership fee to a charity or campaign organisation	0.36	0.49		
Expressed political opinion online	0.07	0.47		
Signed a petition	0.31	0.51		
Taken part in a demonstration, march or rally	0.04	0.46		
Scale 3	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Helped with fund-raising	0.18	0.47	0.5	3686
Been an officer of an organisation or group	0.09	0.54		
Done voluntary work	0.24	0.52		
Un-scaled Items	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Donated to or paid membership fee to political party	0.04	N/A	N/A	3686
Written letter to an editor	0.05			
Presented views to MP or Cllr	0.15			

Source: Audit of Political Engagement 2009, 2010, 2011. All coefficients are statistically significant at 95% confidence level

The analysis with an H-Coefficient threshold of 0.45 was consequently re-run with boycotting products and attending political meetings removed. The act of boycotting products was tested for being suitably placed in the second scale, which improved the scale H-Coefficient from 0.49 to 0.52 (and also resulted in the formal political participation scale H-Coefficient increasing from 0.51 to 0.54). This analysis also identified a fourth scale, in which the act of attending a political meeting was found to associate with presenting views to a Councillor or MP, thereby reducing the total number of un-scalable items from three to two. The MSA test function was employed on these four scales which confirmed the statistical validity and significance of this four-dimensional structure of the data, and this structure was detailed in Chapter Three.

- **The Meaning of Politics**

Chapter Three argued that the majority of British citizens tend to think of formal, Westminster politics when they are asked to consider what ‘politics’ means to them. This section presents the evidence for this argument using data from the Audit of Political Engagement survey for 2010. Respondents were asked an open question about ‘what they understood by “politics”’ (Hansard Society 2010), and were allowed to provide as many responses as they wished. These were then coded and categorised, and the proportion of respondents providing answers which fit into each category reported in Table 10.5 below, broken down by political generation.

Table 10.5: What do respondents understand by 'Politics'?

What is 'Politics'?	Mills	90s	80s	60s-70s	Pre/Post-War	Total
The way the country is governed/run	22%	21%	23%	31%	24%	24%
Parliament	15%	14%	17%	18%	22%	18%
Elections/Voting	18%	13%	14%	13%	18%	15%
Local government/Council	12%	12%	10%	11%	10%	11%
Sleaze/Corruption	7%	8%	10%	11%	14%	10%
People with power	8%	8%	11%	11%	11%	10%
Arguments between parties & politicians	9%	8%	9%	5%	12%	9%
Party system/Alignment of groups	4%	7%	12%	12%	9%	9%
Talking/People discussing issues/Reaching decisions	7%	6%	11%	5%	6%	7%
Choices for society/How the country should be run	6%	5%	6%	7%	6%	6%
Spin/Lies	3%	9%	5%	7%	6%	6%
A way of making decisions	4%	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%
Public link with/control over government	3%	3%	5%	5%	6%	4%
Boring	8%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%
Disagreement/Confrontation/Argument	4%	3%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Not listening/Ignoring public opinion	1%	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Important issues of the day	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Irrelevant/Doesn't involve me	1%	5%	3%	4%	2%	3%
Campaigning	0%	1%	2%	3%	4%	2%

Source: Audit of Political Engagement 2010; note that responses provided by fewer than 2% of the total number of respondents are omitted.

The most common responses imply an understanding of ‘politics’ similar to the conception of formal politics outlined in Chapters Two and Three. The three most common responses related to ‘the way the country is governed’ (24%), ‘Parliament’ (18%), and ‘elections and voting’ (15%). 82% of responses were related to formal politics, as were 75% of the Millennials’ responses. Fewer than 1 in 5 respondents, and 1 in 4 Millennials, failed to indicate an understanding of politics not related to formal politics. This suggests, therefore, that when the majority of people refer to ‘politics’ (such as when reporting attending a ‘political meeting’) they tend to think of the formal political environment. In addition, the differences between the Millennials and their elders are very small. The most popular responses for the Millennials, for example, included ‘the way the country is governed’, ‘elections’, ‘Parliament’, and ‘local council/government’. These are also the most popular categories for the older generations as well. While there are certainly differences in the ranking of the less popular responses between the generations, on the whole the Millennials are no different from their elders in tending to think of ‘politics’ in terms of formal political activity, institutions and processes.

Appendix Three

The sample sizes for each generation in each survey year used in the analyses throughout Chapter Four are as follows:

Table 10.6: Sample Sizes for British Social Attitudes Survey

Year	Millennials	90s	80s	60s- 70s	Post- War	Pre- War	Total
1983	0	0	239	416	575	525	1755
1986	0	0	639	734	1047	677	3097
1989	0	160	627	671	933	628	3019
1991	0	206	611	615	863	611	2906
1994	0	344	852	724	945	591	3456
2000	34	649	801	643	933	359	3419
2002	111	706	814	616	868	316	3431
2003	172	925	956	923	1122	333	4431
2005	272	857	923	865	1081	268	4266
2011	456	766	635	657	722	72	3308

Source: British Social Attitudes surveys, 1983 – 2011. See Chapter Two for details on generational classifications.

Table 10.7: Sample Sizes for British Election Study

Year	Millennials	90s	80s	60s- 70s	Post- War	Pre- War	Total
1974	0	0	1	448	852	1139	2440
1979	0	0	101	455	672	649	1877
1983	0	0	636	920	1268	1111	3935
1987	0	59	774	912	1178	872	3795
1992	0	314	741	816	1043	571	3485
1997	0	526	827	769	1012	463	3597
2001	55	503	663	607	879	306	3013
2005	212	800	905	884	1114	227	4142
2010	322	659	595	635	772	76	3059

Source: British Election Study 1974 – 2010. See Chapter Two for details on generational classification

Appendix Four

This Appendix reports the Mokken Scale Analyses (MSA) for political apathy and alienation discussed in Chapter Five.

- **Mokken Scale Analysis 1 – Formal Political Apathy**

Table 10.8 reports the results of the MSA for formal political apathy. The variables included were:

Interest in politics (*'none at all', 'not very much', 'some', 'quite a lot', 'a great deal'*)

Interest in the 2010 election (*'not at all interested', 'not very interested', 'somewhat interested', 'very interested'*)

Attention to politics (0-10 scale, with 0 indicating *'no attention'*)

As well as the responses to eight true or false statements:

- Polling stations close at 10pm
- The Liberal Democrats favour proportional representation
- The minimum voting age is 16
- The standard income tax rate is 26p
- The Chancellor of the Exchequer sets interest rates
- It is Labour policy to withdraw troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2010
- It is Conservative policy to reduce the deficit and not touch the NHS
- Any registered voter can request a postal ballot

Table 10.8: MSA for Formal Political Apathy

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Chancellor sets interest rates	0.41	0.44	0.61	3069
Lib Dems favour PR	0.36	0.5		
Polling stations close at 10pm	0.1	0.34		
Interest in 2010 general election	1.86	0.64		
Attention to politics	5.46	0.64		
Interest in politics	2.83	0.7		
Scale 2	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
The minimum voting age is 16	0.16	0.4	0.4	3069
The standard income tax rate is 26p	0.59	0.4		
Scale 3	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Tory policy is to reduce the deficit and protect NHS spending	0.53	0.3	0.3	3069
Any registered voter can have a postal ballot	0.13	0.3		
Un-scaled items	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Labour policy to withdraw troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2010	0.61	N/A	N/A	3069

Source: BES 2010, post-election face to face survey.

- **Mokken Scale Analysis 2 – Formal Political Alienation**

Table 10.9 reports the MSA results for formal political alienation. The variables included:

Democratic satisfaction (*very dissatisfied, a little dissatisfied, fairly satisfied, very satisfied*)

Government treats people like respondent fairly (*five item Likert scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree*)

Trust Parliament (1-10 scale)

Trust MPs (1-10 scale)

Trust political parties (1-10 scale)

People can generally be trusted (1-10 scale)

People will generally be fair rather than take advantage (1-10 scale)

Political activity brings benefits to me and my family (five item Likert scale, *strongly disagree to strongly agree*)

Political activity brings benefits to groups in need (five item Likert scale, *strongly disagree to strongly agree*)

Life satisfaction (1-10 scale)

There is a gap between what respondent expects out of life and what they get (five item Likert scale, *strongly disagree to strongly agree*)

Political activity takes too much time and effort (five item Likert scale, *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*)

Influence respondent feels they have on politics (1-10 scale)

The government takes better care of minorities than it does the majority (five item Likert scale, *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*)

Where necessary the items were recoded so that higher scores indicated a greater level of political alienation. Table 10.9 reports the results of the MSA, the results of which were discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Table 10.9a: MSA for Formal Political Alienation

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Democratic Satisfaction	2.39	0.36	0.60	2625
Govt treats people like respondent fairly	3.00	0.46		
Trust Parliament	5.42	0.66		
Trust Parties	5.96	0.65		
Trust MPs	5.94	0.67		
Scale 2	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
People can generally be trusted	3.86	0.64	0.64	2625
People will generally be fair	3.65	0.64		
Scale 3	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Conservative Policy is to reduce the deficit & not touch the NHS	0.18	0.34	0.37	2625
Standard income tax rate is 26p	0.36	0.35		
Polling stations close at 10pm	0.04	0.30		
Liberal Democrats favour proportional representation	0.26	0.40		
Chancellor sets interest rates	0.14	0.40		

Source: BES 2010, post-election face to face survey

Table 10.9b: MSA for Formal Political Alienation

Scale 4	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Political activity brings benefits to me and my family	3.17	0.40	0.40	2625
Political activity brings benefits to groups in need	2.37	0.40		
Scale 5	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Life satisfaction	1.83	0.31	0.31	2625
There is a big gap between what respondent expects in life and what they get	3.39	0.31		
Un-scaled Items	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Political activity takes too much time and effort	3.11	N/A	N/A	2625
How much influence does respondent feel they have on politics	8.27			
The government takes better care of minorities than the majority	3.45			
(True or False) Minimum voting age is 16	0.84			
(True or False) Any registered voter can have a postal ballot	0.87			
(True or False) Labour policy is to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 2010	0.61			

Source: BES 2010, post-election face to face survey

There were no variables in the BES which directly measured respondents' confidence in their political knowledge, which relates to the conception of political meaningfulness. To capture this dimension of alienation, therefore, the 'true or false' political knowledge variables used in the MSA for political apathy above were recoded so that respondents who attempted to answer the question (regardless of whether or not they gave the correct answer) were scored '1', and those who did not attempt to answer (thereby indicating a lack of confidence in their political knowledge to such an extent that they choose not even to attempt a guess to a question for which they have a 50% chance of getting the answer right either way) were scored '0'.

The validity of this assumption can be tested using data from the 1991 British Social Attitudes survey, which included a series of 'true or false' political knowledge questions as well as a direct measure of respondents' confidence in their political knowledge (through assessing their agreement with the view that 'politics and government can be so complicated'). The 'true or false' questions were recoded in the same manner as described above and the confidence in political knowledge variable recoded so that higher scores implied less confidence. These indicators were then analysed using MSA to determine whether or not they were measuring the same latent construct, namely a lack of confidence in one's political knowledge and understanding.

Table 10.10 shows the results of two MSA – the first to confirm that the recoded 'true or false' political knowledge variables were measuring the same latent construct, and the second to test the theory that this battery of items measured the same latent construct as the question measuring confidence in

political knowledge. Table 10.10 shows first that all of the recoded political knowledge indicators measured the same latent construct, and second that they scaled with the question on confidence in political knowledge. The recoded 'true or false' political knowledge indicators, therefore, can be taken to measure the extent to which a given respondent has confidence in their own political knowledge and understanding.

Table 10.10a: MSA on BSA 1991 Indicators Political Knowledge

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Women not allowed to sit in the HoL	0.13	0.36	0.43	1145
MPs from different parties sit on committees	0.30	0.41		
Cabinet ministers are elected by MPs	0.15	0.39		
Cannot be on electoral roll in two places	0.10	0.37		
Home Secretary is responsible to Parliament for law and order	0.19	0.42		
Warsaw pact is a trade agreement between GB and Poland	0.30	0.42		
GB has separate elections for national and European Parliament	0.19	0.44		
GBs electoral system is PR	0.23	0.45		
PM is appointed by the Queen	0.08	0.48		
Cannot stand for Parliament without a deposit	0.14	0.42		
Longest time between elections is 4 years	0.10	0.44		
Leader of Labour is Neil Kinnock	0.03	0.72		
Number of MPs is about 100	0.28	0.43		
Un-scaled items	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Prime Minister prepares the Queen's Speech	0.21	N/A	N/A	1145

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 1991; Mokken Scale Analysis conducted in Stata.

Table 10.10b: MSA on BSA 1991 Indicators of Confidence in Political Knowledge

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Political Knowledge battery	2.09	0.4	0.4	1418
Politics and Government can be so complicated	3.56	0.4		

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 1991; Mokken Scale Analysis conducted in Stata.

Appendix Five

- **Mokken Scale Analysis for Expected Political Participation**

This section reports the MSA on the indicators of expected political participation employed in Chapter Six. In total nine variables were analysed, all of them measuring respondents' expected likelihood of participating in a given act on a scale from 0 (meaning 'not at all likely') to 10. As was found in Appendix Two, the nine variables were found to measure the same latent construct when using an H-Coefficient threshold of 0.3, and so the threshold was increased to 0.4 so as to provide more discriminatory power and identify latent dimensions within the series of variables without losing too much information. Table 10.11 reports the results of the MSA using the 0.4 H-Coefficient threshold only.

Table 10.11: MSA Results for Expected Political Participation

Scale 1	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Discuss politics with family or friends	5.46	0.41	0.47	2865
Campaign for a political party	1.18	0.44		
Donate money to a political party	1.14	0.44		
Vote in the next European election	6.2	0.49		
Vote in the next local election	7.58	0.53		
Scale 2	Mean	H Coef	Scale H Coef	Obs
Work with a group to solve a problem	3.58	0.41	0.45	2865
Take part in a rally or demonstration	2.51	0.46		
Boycott products for political reasons	3.63	0.48		
Buycott' products for political reasons	4.28	0.46		

Source: 2010 BES face to face survey post-election wave

- **Expected Political Participation vs Previous Political Participation**

The BES 2010 post-election face to face survey contains only a few variables asking respondents about previous political participation comparable to those used in Chapter Three, too few to get a detailed picture of the relationship between political apathy and alienation, and political participation. Instead, therefore, the variables measuring expected participation were used. While there are differences in the nature of data obtained by asking people about their expected political participation and their previous participation, it is expected that these differences are very small, meaning that the relationships between apathy, alienation and participation identified in Chapter Six can be used to give meaningful insights into the differences between the political activity of the Millennials and their elders in Chapters Three and Four.

Studies such as Pattie et al. (2004) and Grasso (2014) point out that measures of expected activity tend to produce more optimistic impressions of overall participation than measures of previous participation. This is partly because questions on expected participation tap into respondents' normative beliefs about the importance of participating in politics for a good citizen, and also because they fail to provide a context in which respondents' can predict their activity, leading them to predict their future participation while imagining a context unlikely to ever be realised (such as without constraint from time or money) (Grasso 2014; Pattie et al. 2004). Despite this 'inflation' in how active respondents expect to be compared with how active they usually end up being, however, there are no further substantial differences between the two measures (Pattie et al. 2004; Grasso 2014).

This assumption is validated below by comparing the relationship between the measures of expected participation used in Chapter Six with those of previous participation used in Chapter Three. Table 10.12 shows a standardised (percentile) indication of the average participation score for the formal and cause-oriented measures in Chapters Three and Six for each political generation. The data shows that respondents typically score higher on the expected participation variables than the previous participation indicators, but that the relationship of each with political generation is very similar. There are one or two small exceptions, such as the Pre-Post-War generation expecting to be less active than the Millennials in cause-oriented politics (based on data for Chapter Six) while actually being more active (based on data for Chapter Three). They do not, however, indicate a substantial difference in the relationship between political generation and political activity which would undermine the utility of measures of expected political participation being used to study the relationship between participation, apathy and alienation in Chapter Six to help explain the relationship between generation and activity outlined in Chapter Three.

Table 10.12: Expected versus Previous Political Participation

Chapter Two: Previous Political Participation		
	Formal Participation Percentile	Cause-Oriented Participation Percentile
Millennials	12.6%	12.5%
90s	20.3%	16.5%
80s	26.5%	19.8%
60s-70s	30.0%	20.5%
Pre/Post-War	26.3%	14.0%
Chapter Five: Expected Political Participation		
	Formal Participation Percentile	Cause-Oriented Participation Percentile
Millennials	36.6%	32.7%
90s	42.0%	38.6%
80s	41.8%	37.6%
60s-70s	45.4%	35.8%
Pre/Post-War	42.3%	26.3%

Source: Audit of Political Engagement composite dataset and British Election Study 2010 post-election face to face survey

Appendix Six

This Appendix provides validity tests of the variables used to measure post-materialism and media fragmentation in Chapter Eight. The first tests relate to the measure of post-materialism, indicated by the highest educational qualification obtained by survey respondents. For this to be a valid proxy, it should have an almost linear relationship with political generation and survey year. The oldest generations – socialised in an environment of limited individual autonomy and indicated by their limited access to education – should be the least post-materialist and on average have the lowest educational qualifications. The youngest generations, in contrast, should have the highest qualifications. There may be little difference between the 90s and Millennial generations in this regard, however, as at least some members of the Millennial generation will not yet have had the opportunity to complete their education. There should also be an almost linear relationship between highest educational qualification and survey year, similarly reflecting the fact that (as post-materialist theory points out) the quality of and access to education has generally expanded over time.

Table 10.13 shows the results of a regression analysis examining the relationship between generation and educational qualification, while table 10.14 shows the analysis of the relationship between survey year and educational qualification. In both cases, an almost linear relationship is clearly apparent – more recent surveys, and younger political generations, show higher educational qualifications. This corresponds to the linear relationship between rising post-materialism – both indicated and caused by rising levels of education – and both time and generation outlined by Inglehart and Welzel

(2005), Dalton (2013) and Welzel (2007), and confirms that the highest educational qualification indicator is appropriate.

Table 10.13: Regression Analysis of Highest Educational Qualification versus Political Generation

	Coef	Std Err
Generation (Millennials)		
90s	0.15**	0.04
80s	-0.12**	0.04
60s-70s	-0.51***	0.04
Post-War	-1.32***	0.04
Pre-War	-1.87***	0.05
Constant	3.75***	0.04
Obs	39871	
Prob > F	0.00	
r-squared	0.14	
Adj r-squared	0.14	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012, ols regression. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001.

Table 10.14: Regression Analysis of Highest Educational Qualification versus Year of Survey

	Coef	Std Err
Year (1986)		
1991	0.22***	0.05
1994	0.29***	0.04
1996	0.44***	0.04
1998	0.47***	0.05
2000	0.50***	0.04
2002	0.70***	0.04
2003	0.67***	0.04
2005	0.69***	0.04
2010	0.92***	0.05
2011	0.91***	0.05
2012	0.91***	0.05
Constant	2.54***	0.03
Obs	39963	
Prob > F	0.00	
r-squared	0.02	
Adj r-squared	0.02	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012, ols regression. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001.

The tests below assess the validity of the media fragmentation measure. The first test looks at the correlation between newspaper readership – taken to represent the broader process of media fragmentation – and Internet use outside of work. If newspaper readership is indeed a good proxy for the processes associated with media fragmentation, a key component of which is increasing Internet use at the expense of engagement with traditional media (Wattenberg 2012), then this correlation should be negative and statistically significant. Table 10.15 confirms that this is indeed the case; while the correlation is very weak, it is nonetheless negative and suggests that increasing Internet use is negatively associated with engagement with traditional media.

Table 10.15: Correlation between Newspaper Readership and Internet Use

	Read paper
Hours of Internet use	-0.0279

Source: BSA 2000 – 2012. Coefficient statistically significant to the 95% confidence level

The media fragmentation theory argues that the decline of traditional media engagement and subsequent growth of Internet based media engagement (or no media engagement at all) should be related to political generation and time in a similar way to that seen for post-materialism i.e., almost linear. Table 10.16 reports a regression analysis examining the relationship between newspaper readership and political generation, while Table 10.17 shows the relationship between newspaper readership and BSA survey year. Both analyses correspond to expectations: there has been a continual decrease in overall newspaper readership over time, and this is reflected in changing patterns of media consumption exhibited by different generations – with the youngest generations being the least likely to read newspapers at all. This supports the validation of the newspaper readership variable as an indicator of the processes associated with the media fragmentation theory.

Table 10.16: Analysis of Newspaper Readership and Generation

	Coef	Std Err
Generation (Millennials)		
90s	0.27***	0.05
80s	0.47***	0.05
60s-70s	0.83***	0.05
Post-War	1.24***	0.05
Pre-War	1.19***	0.06
Constant	-0.63***	0.05
Obs	41557	
Prob > chi2	0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.03	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012, logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001.

Table 10.17: Analysis of Newspaper Readership and Survey Year

	Coef	Std Err
Year (1986)		
1991	-0.36***	0.06
1994	-0.54***	0.05
1996	-0.64***	0.05
1998	-0.73***	0.05
2000	-0.74***	0.05
2002	-0.87***	0.05
2003	-0.90***	0.05
2005	-0.99***	0.05
2010	-1.33***	0.05
2011	-1.40***	0.05
2012	-1.40***	0.05
Constant	0.97***	0.04
Obs	41660	
Prob > Chi2	0.00	
Pseudo r2	0.03	

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012, logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient <0.05; ** - p-value <0.01; *** - p-value <0.001.

Appendix Seven

APC Analysis and Generalised Additive Models

A recurrent methodological issue in this thesis has been overcoming the ‘identification problem’ associated with APC analysis i.e., overcoming the fact that age, period and cohort are measured in the same unit – year – and so are linear functions of each other. The method chosen to overcome this issue in Chapters Four and Eight was what Yang and Land (2013) identify as the ‘coefficient constraint approach’ – in this case, categorising the cohort variable into political generations so that the linear dependency between the three variables is broken. As Chapter Four discussed, however, this approach is problematic because of the somewhat arbitrary nature of that categorisation.

While the risks of applying an inaccurate constraint were mitigated somewhat through reference to empirical evidence provided by Grasso (2014), there is still a need to provide further empirical support for the categorisation of political generations used to constrain the cohort coefficient when running APC analyses of trends in political apathy and alienation. This appendix provides this empirical support by presenting Generalised Additive Models (GAMs) which estimated age, period and cohort effects based on the data used in Chapter Eight.

A GAM is a semi-parametric version of a generalised linear model, in which one of the variables can be modelled non-parametrically i.e., without constraints from prior assumptions regarding the relationship between it and the dependent variable (Keele 2008; Neundorf 2010). In the case of APC analyses, this allows for the constrained coefficient to be modelled without any

prior assumptions (such as those implied when categorising the cohort variable into political generations) while still accounting for the influence of age and period effects (which are still modelled parametrically) (Neundorf 2010; Grasso 2014; Keele 2008). This is not a perfect solution to the identification problem (no such solution is possible (Glenn 1977)), as it still requires one of the three effects to be constrained so as to overcome the co-linearity of the age, period and cohort effects so that the model can function. Following the example of Keele (2008), Neundorf (2010) and Grasso (2014), this constraint will be applied to the age variable on the basis that there is a great deal known about the relationship between age and political apathy and alienation already (see Chapters One, Two and Five), and so the risk of information loss or invalid conclusions based on such a categorisation is smaller.³¹

The results of the GAM can be presented graphically, which allows for visual inspection of the estimated effects (Keele 2008). In this case, the (smoothed) cohort coefficient can be presented so that it can be visually examined by inspecting how the estimated effect corresponds to year of birth. This visual representation can be compared with the relationship suggested by the APC regression outputs (in which the cohort variable was constrained) to see if they produce similar results. If the relationship implied by the APC regression analysis is similar to that implied by the GAM, then there is additional empirical evidence to support the validity of the constraint applied to the cohort coefficient – because when the cohort effect was estimated non-parametrically

³¹ Specifically, 18-35, 36-50, 51-69 and 70-95. The categories had to be broad enough to contain enough respondents, but not so broad that they ran the risk of losing too much information and minimising variance. This categorisation meets these requirements and broadly corresponds to what is already known about the relationship between political attitudes and the life cycle (Jankowski and Strate 1995; Stoker 2006; Smets 2008).

and without any constraint, it was found to correspond to that produced in the regression analysis.

In this Appendix, therefore, the visual depictions of the estimated cohort effects from GAMs are presented, and compared with the implied cohort effects reported in Chapter Eight. This can be used to determine whether categorising the cohort variable into the political generations used throughout this thesis produces a valid estimate of the cohort effect when modelling changes in political apathy and alienation.

Table 10.18 presents a section of the regression outputs in Chapter Eight – specifically the coefficients showing the relationship between political generation and apathy and each dimension of political alienation. The visual depictions of the smoothed cohort effect from the GAMs below can be compared to the relationship implied by these coefficients.

Table 10.18: APC Analysis, Political Apathy and Political Alienation

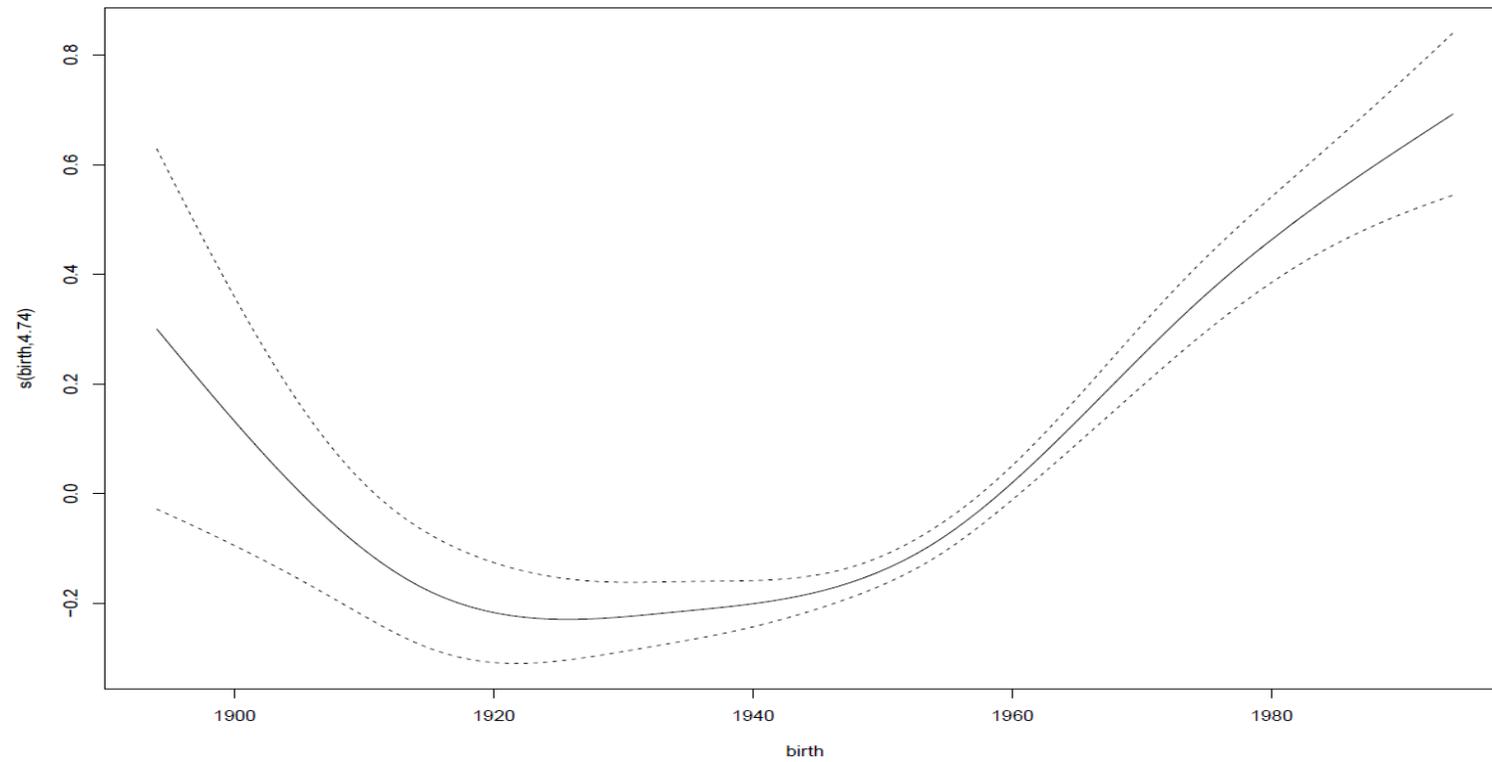
Generation	Apathy		Powerlessness		Normlessness		Meaninglessness	
	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er	Coef	Std Er
Millennials	0.36*	0.14	-0.64***	0.16	-0.47**	0.16	-0.01	0.16
90s	0.20*	0.1	-0.50***	0.11	-0.22	0.12	-0.17	0.12
80s	0.13	0.07	-0.36***	0.08	-0.09	0.09	-0.19*	0.09
60s-70s (Post-War)	-0.04	0.05	-0.22***	0.05	-0.02	0.06	-0.23***	0.06
Pre-War	0.06	0.06	-0.13	0.07	-0.16*	0.07	0.06	0.07

Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. Ordered logit regression. * - p-value for coefficient is <0.05; ** - p-value below 0.01; *** - p-value below 0.001

Political Apathy

Figure 10.1 shows the smoothed cohort effect estimate for political apathy. A quadratic age function was included in the GAM to model the curvilinear relationship between apathy and the life cycle. The year variable was modelled as a factor variable (as in Chapter Eight) to allow for non-linear relationships between year and apathy to be estimated (Neundorf 2010). The cohort variable (measured by year of birth) was estimated non-parametrically as a continuous variable. The line in the graph shows the smoothed estimate of the cohort effect on political apathy. The y-axis represents the magnitude of that effect, and the x-axis reports year of birth.

Figure 10.1: GAM output for Cohort and Political Apathy



Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. GAM performed in R

Figure 10.1 implies a curvilinear relationship between cohort and apathy, with those born between 1920 and 1950 having the lowest levels. There is evidence of a sharp rise in apathy among those born after 1950, with a slight tailing off of the effect for those born after 1980s, though their levels of apathy continue to rise. There is also evidence of high apathy among pre-1920 respondents; however, the large confidence intervals which surround that estimate (illustrated by the dashed lines) mean that it must be interpreted with caution. Overall, therefore, Figure 10.1 implies a cohort effect broadly consistent with that implied by the regression coefficients in Table 10.18. The least apathetic are the Post-War and 60s-70s generations i.e., those born between 1927 and 1957. There was increasing levels of apathy among those born since 1958 (i.e., the 80s, 90s and Millennial generations), although the effect for the 80s generation was not significant according to Table 10.18. Finally, Table 10.18 suggested that the Pre-War generation was more apathetic than the 60s-70s and Post-War generations – this is also suggested by Figure 10.1, but to a much greater magnitude (wide confidence intervals notwithstanding).

There are some differences between the curve in Figure 10.1 and the impression given by the coefficients in Table 10.18, however. Figure 10.1 shows that the most dramatic increase in apathy was among those born after the 1950s; this includes, therefore, those born between 1950 and 1957, many of whom are categorised in the 60s-70s generation which were suggested (along with the Post-War generation) to be the least apathetic in the electorate. In addition, the curve suggests that the difference in apathy between the Pre-War generation (i.e., those born prior to 1925) and the Post-War generation (born

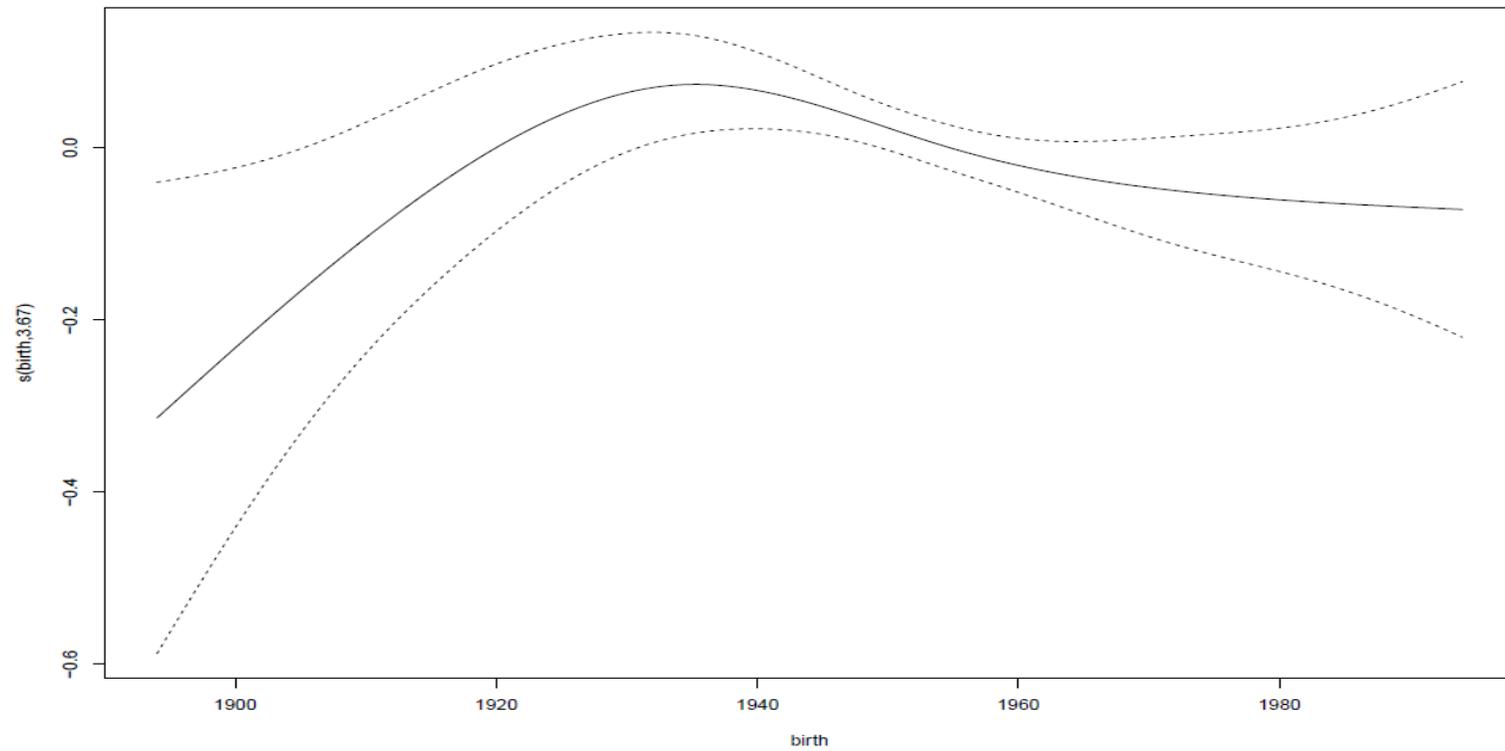
between 1926 and 1945) was much more dramatic than the impression given by the coefficients in Table 10.18.

For the most part, therefore, the cohort effect depicted in Figure 10.1 corresponds to the impression given by Table 10.18, with some minor differences. The overall impression from both analyses is of a trend of increasing apathy among people born since the 1960s which culminates in those born after the 1980s (the Millennials) being the most apathetic. The differences between the two analyses suggest there is room for small improvement in the categorisation applied to the cohort effects in Table 10.18, but not that a dramatic change is needed.

Political Powerlessness

Figure 10.2 presents the GAM graph for political powerlessness. It suggests a non-linear relationship between powerlessness and year of birth. The curve suggests a steady increase in powerlessness among respondents born between pre-1900 and the 1930s. This was followed by a steady decline among those born after 1930, which tails off slightly among those born after 1970 (though this tailing off effect is accompanied by a notable widening in the confidence intervals).

Figure 2: GAM output for Cohort and Political Powerlessness



Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. GAM performed in R

As with apathy, this cohort effect is broadly similar to that suggested by the generation coefficients in Table 10.18, but there are some more notable deviations this time. Table 10.18 suggested that the Post-War generation were the most alienated, at the peak of a curve with the Pre-War generation slightly less alienated on one side, and a steady decline in powerlessness among all of the younger generations on the other. Figure 10.2 depicts a similar relationship, but suggests that the Pre-War generation are by far the least alienated, rather than the Millennials. It also suggests that the difference between the Millennials (born after 1982) and the 90s generation (born between 1969 and 1981) is negligible, as opposed to the more substantial difference suggested in Table 10.18.

These two slight differences suggest that some refinement of the cohort classification used to model powerlessness may be warranted. However, it is important to note that the confidence intervals surrounding the estimated cohort effect for respondents associated with the Pre-War and Millennial generations are much wider than those for other years. In other words, while the cohort effect in Figure 10.2 is slightly different from that suggested by Table 10.18, the confidence in that estimate at the points at which it is suggested to deviate from the impression in Table 10.18 is much lower than elsewhere.

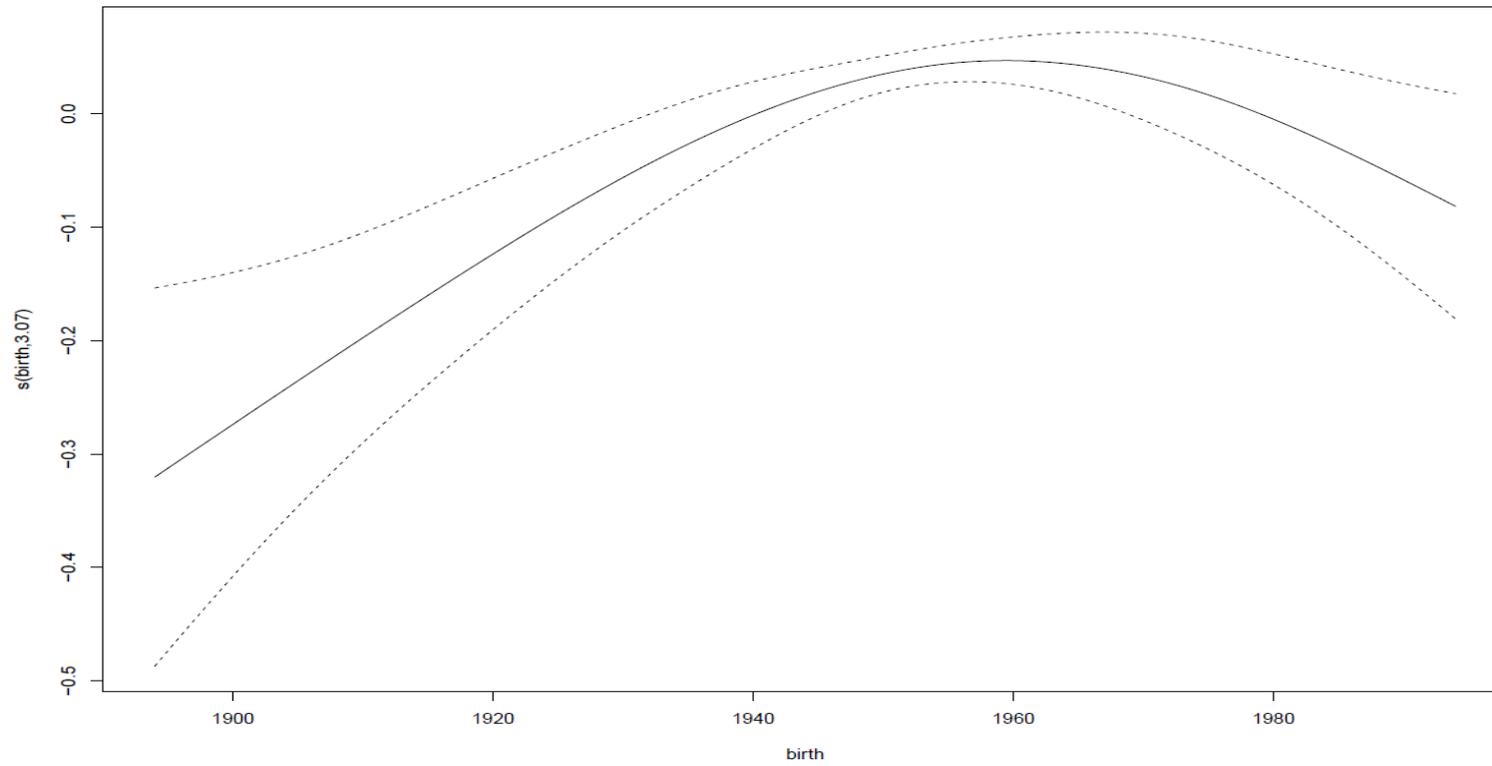
Political Normlessness

Figure 10.3 presents the GAM for political normlessness. The graph depicts a fairly straight-forward curvilinear relationship between cohort and normlessness: those born before 1920 are the least alienated, those born between the 1950s and the 1970s are the most alienated, and those born after

1970 are less alienated (though not so much as those born prior to 1920). This effect fits well with the impression given in Table 10.18, which also suggested a curvilinear relationship in which the Millennials and the Pre-War generation (born after 1982 and before 1926 respectively) were less alienated than the generations in between.

The only exceptions to the overlap between the impressions given by the two analyses relate first to the differences estimated between the generations born between 1926 and 1981 (Table 10.18 suggests no significant difference between them, while Figure 10.3 suggests that the differences between those born in the 1920s and the 1960s may be more substantial), and second to the issue of which group is the least alienated. Table 10.18 suggests that the Millennials are the least alienated, and by a notable margin, while Figure 10.3 suggests that the Pre-War generation are the least alienated, followed by the Millennials. Once again, the GAM estimates for the points at which there is difference between the GAM and the APC regression in Table 10.18 are accompanied by large confidence intervals.

Figure 3: GAM output for Cohort and Political Normlessness

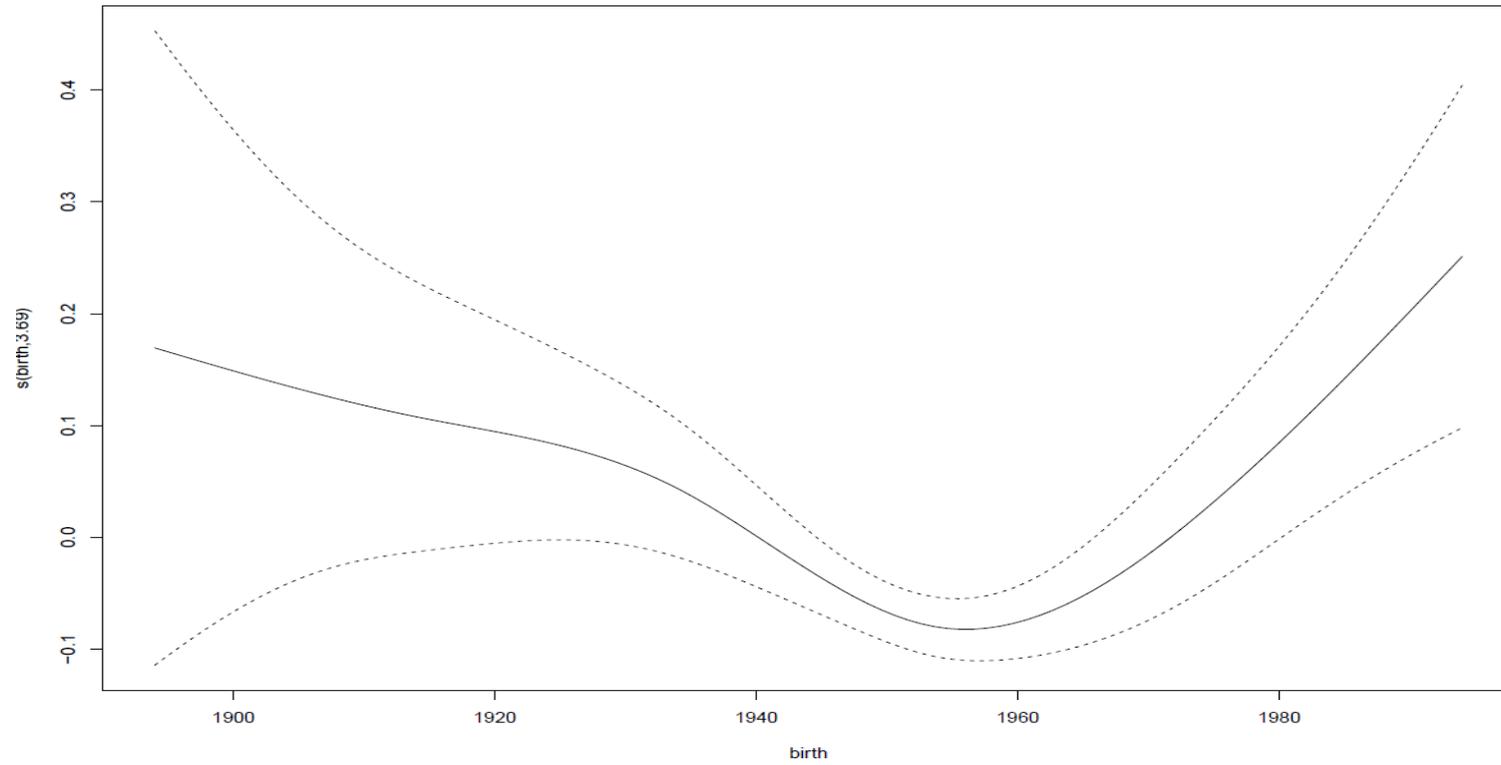


Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. GAM performed in R

Political Meaninglessness

Finally, Figure 10.4 relates to the GAM on political meaninglessness. Once again, the graph implies a curvilinear relationship between cohort and alienation. The curve suggests that the least alienated respondents were those born between the 1950s and early 1960s. There is evidence of a slight decline in meaninglessness alienation among those born between around 1900 and the late 1940s, and of a more dramatic increase among those born after the 1980s.

Figure 4: GAM output for Cohort and Political Meaninglessness



Source: BSA 1986 – 2012. GAM performed in R

Here the differences between the cohort effect implied by the GAM results and that in Table 10.18 are more notable. There are clear similarities between the two: Table 10.18 suggested that the least alienated respondents were those born between 1946 and 1968 (i.e., the 60s-70s and 80s generations), which corresponds to the lowest point of the curve in Figure 10.4. Table 10.18 also suggested that there was little difference between the Pre-War and Post-War generations (i.e., any respondent born prior to 1945), and apart from a decline in meaningfulness among those born in the early 1940s compared with those born pre-1940, the curve in Figure 10.4 also gives this impression. Finally, Table 10.18 suggested that respondents in the 90s generation were slightly less alienated than those in the Post-War generation (the 90s generation coefficient was -0.17, but was not statistically significant), which the curve in Figure 10.4 also supports. For most respondents, therefore, Table 10.18 and Figure 10.4 give comparable impressions of the cohort effect.

The difference between the two comes in relation to the Millennials. Table 10.18 suggested that there was essentially no difference between the Millennials and the Post-War generation (the Millennial coefficient was an insignificant -0.01). Figure 10.4, however, suggests that the Millennials (i.e., those born after 1982) were becoming increasingly alienated compared with those born between the 1940s and 1960s, and (the large confidence intervals for the oldest and youngest respondents notwithstanding) could be the most alienated cohort in the electorate.

Summary

Overall, the four GAMs presented above estimate cohort effects broadly similar to those in Table 10.18. For political apathy, powerlessness and normlessness in particular, the differences between the two are largely trivial and limited to slightly different impressions of how the oldest and youngest respondents differ from those in-between, the estimates for whom are always accompanied by large confidence intervals. At most, therefore, the GAMs imply that minor differences could be made to the generational classification for estimating cohort effects in apathy, powerlessness and normlessness, though it is unlikely that such small changes would produce substantial results in the final conclusions.

A more substantial difference emerges when looking at political meaninglessness. For the most part, the cohort effect is suggested to be very similar in the two analyses; for the Millennials, however, Figure 10.4 suggests that they could be the most alienated generation (notwithstanding large confidence intervals around that estimate) while Table 10.18 suggests that there is no difference between them and the Post-War generation. As the difference relates, however, specifically to the estimate of the Millennials' alienation, it seems unlikely that this is a problem for the generational classification used to constrain the cohort coefficients in the APC regression analyses. It is more likely to specifically reflect differences in the estimates for the alienation of the Millennials compared with the Post-War generation. Rather than suggesting a revision to the generational classification used to estimate cohort effects in Chapter Eight, therefore, this data suggests that caution should be employed when interpreting the specific estimate relating to the Millennials' meaninglessness alienation compared with their elders.

Overall, therefore, the evidence presented in this Appendix is broadly supportive of the cohort classification employed in Chapter Eight, and provides empirical evidence of the validity of that classification for estimating cohort effects in political apathy and alienation.