On Principles and Values: Mining for Conservative Rhetoric in the London *Times*, 1785–2010

Joris van Eijnatten
Professor of Cultural History
Utrecht University, the Netherlands
j.vaneijnatten@uu.nl

Abstract: *This article explores the nature of conservative rhetoric in the London-based* Times *between 1785 and 2010. What kind of language did writers in this newspaper consciously use to express a moral opinion that might be qualified as "conservative"? Such moral languages can be traced over time by examining commonly used word clusters, which in turn reflect ideas—in this case, "conservative" ideas. Word clusters can be highly iterative and often limited in size, which make them ideal for a computer-assisted analysis over a longer period of time. Methodologically, the article employs two proven, easy-to-use text mining techniques: n-grams (especially bigrams) and word embeddings. It traces a number of bigram phrases over the whole period, the most important of which are "conservative principles," "conservative values," "traditional values," and "permissive society."*

The term "conservative principles" figured as a moral and political expression especially in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Major changes in conservative rhetoric occurred mainly during and after the 1960s. New terms began to be used to denote moral positions, especially after the emergence of the so-called permissive society. At the same time, however, it became increasingly difficult to identify a specifically conservative rhetoric. First, the tension between tradition and modernity, which conservatives were bound to address, was part of a much larger public debate. Second, all moral languages became "moralised," as it were: great store began to be put by words such as "values" and "tradition." The result was a confluence of left- and right-wing rhetoric, and the concomitant submergence of ideological differences.

Keywords: conservatism ■ moral language ■ the London *Times* ■ digital history ■ principles ■ values

CONSERVATIVE RHETORIC

On September 25, 1997, Michael Portillo, a Tory politician who had been Secretary of State for Defence in John Major's government since 1995 but had just lost his seat, wrote a book review for the *Times*. He discussed *Is Conservatism Dead?*, a book by two conservative intellectuals, philosopher John Gray and member of parliament David Willetts. At one point Portillo quoted Willetts as having said that "where Mr. Blair offers soft soap about 'values,' Conservatives have 'principles.'"[1] Apparently, Willets had identified a difference in the political rhetoric used by Tories and Labourites (or at least the Blairites among them). The Left talked about values, the Right about principles. Whether Willetts actually said this is a moot point. But interestingly, a historical relationship between conservatism and the word "principles" does, in fact, exist.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "principle" as "a general law or rule adopted or professed as a guide to action; a settled ground or basis of conduct or practice; a fundamental motive or reason for action, esp. one consciously recognized and followed."[2] One of the *OED*'s example sentences is a quotation from the novel *Coningsby* (1844) by the arch-conservative Benjamin Disraeli: "Before I support Conservative principles … I merely wish to be informed what those principles aim to conserve."[3] "Principles" have a distinct nineteenth-century feel to them;[4] acting on a principle meant doing something that followed unambiguously from a deeply rooted moral conviction. Principles could be contrasted among each other, thus making clear the possibility of different courses of action, some of which were right and some of which were wrong, given the ethical status of the starting point. Disraeli used the phrase "conservative principles" no less than thirteen times in *Coningsby*, at one point contrasting it to "concessionary principles."[5] The latter were wrong, because one does not concede principles, and the actions they logically gave rise to could only be unfortunate.

This article deals with the use of conservative rhetoric in the *Times* between 1785 and 2010.[6] What kind of language did writers consciously use to express a moral opinion that might be qualified as conservative in nature?[7] The *Times* itself has a reputation for inclining towards the centre-right, so this source may be less likely to portray conservative rhetoric through stereotypes. The latter do occur, of course, for example in a Letter to the Editor from 2001, in which a reader noted ironically that the prominent Conservative Iain Duncan Smith was not just "a 'never' on the euro" but also "in favour of corporal punishment, hanging and foxhunting."[8] This article also examines conservative rhetoric (which is not the same as the rhetoric of Conservatives or Conservatism) as a "moral language," that is as a form of rhetoric that presupposes fundamental judgements about what is good and what is bad in its attempts to justify social and political action. The importance of such ethically informed languages can scarcely be underestimated, for they influence the decisions and inspire the actions that have brought into being the world as we know it.

Conservative rhetoric is a useful entry into the languages of the past, but only one among many. In what follows I am not primarily interested in conservatism per se, or in arguing that conservatism is a unified political language, the lineage of which can be traced across more than two centuries to the ideas of Edmund Burke;[9] I am first and foremost interested in word clusters that make up the moral languages of the past. These clusters are highly iterative and often limited in size; this enables them to figure as popular memes or sound bites. As such they point to larger semantic fields, repositories of ideas and beliefs that have normative connotations and vary over time in complex ways. Because these memes are iterative, computers can be used to trace them. This article makes ample use of computer-assisted analysis, but I have focused on content rather than methodology. Central to what follows are two proven, easy-to-use digital techniques: n-grams (especially bigrams) and word embeddings. At the same time, the digital analyses are contextualised through a traditional reading of the original material. The methodology has been outlined briefly in the notes.

THE DECLINE OF CONSERVATIVE PRINCIPLES

The term "principles" was apparently significant to Tory history, and we can regard it as a first instance of conservative rhetoric—and an obvious place to start. To illustrate historical usage of the bigram "conservative principles," we can plot simple frequency counts of the bigram as it cropped up in the *Times* (figure 1).[10]

Evidently, the term was in continuous use during the more than two centuries covered by the newspaper. Given that newspapers tend to cover political goings-on, most of the usage will have concerned political journalism. We can test this by comparing the *Times* with debates in the British Parliament between 1800 and 2005 (figure 2).
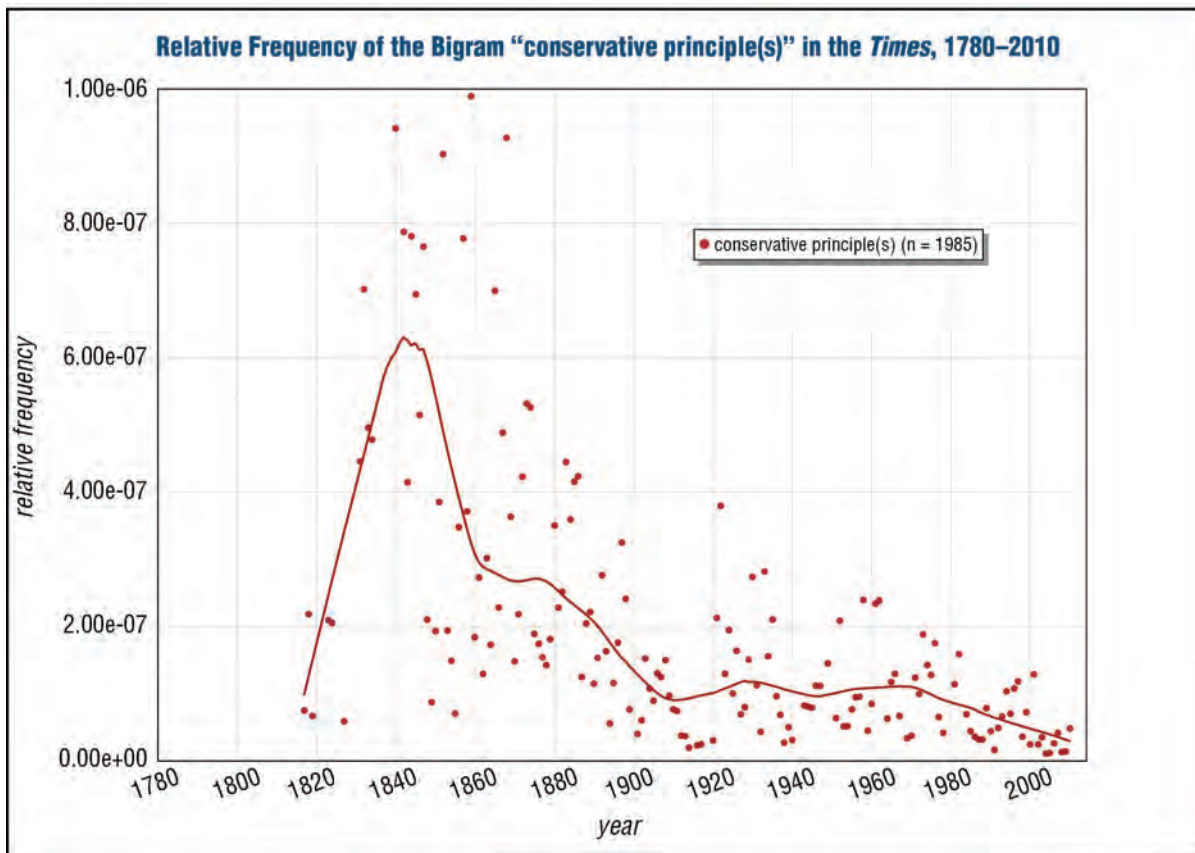
Figure 1. Relative frequency of the bigram "conservative principle(s)" in the Times, *1780–2010; n = 1,985. Relative frequency is the number of hits in relation to the total number of words per year. The curve is a so-called "smoothing" curve based on a local polynomial regression function ("loess") which allows us to better see patterns.*

The bigram occurred more often in the House of Lords than in the House of Commons but the pattern is quite similar to that of the *Times*. Nineteenth-century MPs were particularly fond of the term; the pattern shows some ups and downs but also a steady decline since 1850.

What, then, were the "conservative principles" to which the *Times* referred in over 1,780 instances between 1785 and 2010? The general pattern is related in part to the passing of fundamental laws. The ups in figures 1 and 2 correspond more or less to the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and 1884, the Education Act of 1870, and the so-called Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. In other words, when liberal reform was on the agenda, conservative principles were called for. The high relative frequency of the bigram between 1820 and 1850 was due to reports about candidates running for members of parliament. Their reliability was often affirmed during platform addresses and dinner speeches, when orators assured that they were of sound "conservative principles." This kind of journalism disappeared in the second half of the century.

The term "conservative principles" was used mostly in the context of politics. Only in a few instances was it employed in the *OED*'s sense of "a primary element, force, or law which produces or determines particular results" in culture and society.[11] In 1907, for example, human activity was presented as "the result of two complementary principles," imitation, the conservative principle, and initiation, the progressive one.[12] In 1930 Keith Feiling, an Oxford historian and well-known conservative thinker, tried to ground conservatism ideologically in a metaphysics of sorts. According to Feiling, the basic conservative principle is one of continuity, which manifests itself in both "prolonged material strength" and an "inherent spiritual quality." Because national strength
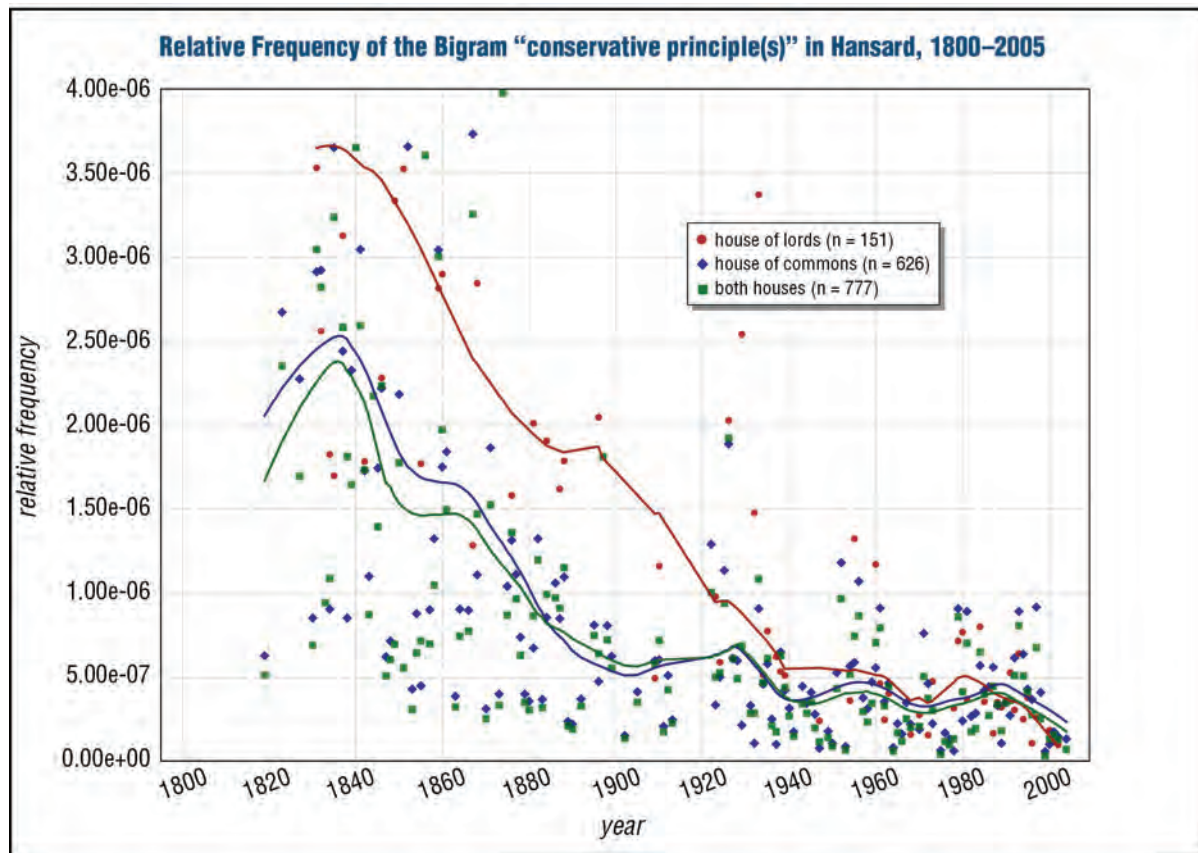
Figure 2. Relative frequency of the bigram "conservative principle(s)" in Hansard, 1800–2005; n = 777. Relative frequency is number of hits in relation to total number of words per year.

is diverse in its forms, "diverse quality and not gross volume is a conservative criterion of national well-being." One way of securing such qualitative differences is through the preservation of class, which must therefore be defended "against the alternative of obliterating it in a universal democracy." Despite his predilection for difference and inequality, Feiling stressed a paternalistic obligation to ensure the well-being of all. What distinguished conservatism from socialism was not concern for the collective, but its aim, which was not equality but "the lasting values of life."[13]

Between 1785 and 2010 the more strictly political usage of the bigram in the *Times* falls into roughly three phases. Before 1830 the term "conservative principles" occurs infrequently and when it does it refers to foreign policy in the context of revolutionary thought and action. Newspaper reports from 1823 mention the "conservative principle of legitimacy" (in France) and "the conservative principle of social order" (in Spain).[14] Such statements reveal the central, counter-revolutionary thrust of early conservative thought. Indeed, the idea of "law and order" would remain a core conservative tenet. It basically entailed the rejection of all ideologies that proposed rapid, radical change, ranging from the French Revolution and nineteenth-century Liberal reform to communism and Labour Party socialism.

Phase 2 (1830–1950) is also in part negatively related, not so much to revolution as to reform and the Reform Movement. One critic helpfully simplified conservative rhetoric by defining its principles as the mere "denial of all comprehensive reform."[15] More justice is done to the conservative rhetoric of the time by summarizing its principles under four related headings: throne, constitution, church, and empire. Law and order remains a central tenet, often under the aegis of the constitutional settlement achieved during the Glorious Revolution (1688–1689)— which was exactly what most Conservatives wished to conserve. In 1841 the *Times* put "the main

principle of Conservatism" in a nutshell by describing it as "the preservation of the ancient constitutional balance of power." The objective of the principle was "to vindicate the integrity and freedom of action of all the classes and constituents which compose the legislative authority, each within its separate limits, without either suffering any one class to encroach upon the rest, or permitting the whole together to isolate themselves from the body of the people."[16]

This was the age of what has been called Benjamin Disraeli's "one-nation conservatism"—a phrase, incidentally, that only began to be used regularly in the *Times* in the 1970s.[17] The idea was a corporate state in which the King, the Lords, and the Commons maintained a peaceful balance, each estate exercising its own rights and privileges to the benefit of the whole. The argument was sometimes flavoured with references to historical or national identity. This "ancient principle and practice of the constitution" was grounded in "the collected wisdom of many individuals."[18] It preserved "that constitution of law, of institutions, of usages, of habits, and manners, which have contributed to mould and form the character of Englishmen."[19] To this constitutionalist and legalist mix were added as further conservative principles the union of church and state and the maintenance of the integrity of the British Empire.

Religion played a significant role in all of this. Society, suggested a clergyman at a conservative dinner in Birmingham in 1838, was best preserved by educating and enlightening the poor, imparting "lessons of moral duty, a wholesome spirit of contentment, a spirit of Christian and not slavish obedience." This enabled the less fortunate to "fill their allotted station as worthy members of society, and grateful sons of the church of Christ."[20] Such paternalism was the necessary corollary of representation by proxy in a situation where suffrage was limited. Hence one critic's definition of conservative principles as "investing a particular individual sitting upon a throne with absolute power" and "a few hundred privileged families (…) with power no less absolute."[21] What nineteenth-century conservatives really meant, of course, was "a fair representation of different classes and different interests," rather than giving "control of the country to a numerical majority."[22]

After World War I, conservative principles in the *Times* were framed in particular in opposition to socialism and the Labour Party. In conservative rhetoric "the Conservative principle of comradeship and the good of all classes alike" was contrasted "with the Socialist desire to limit the expression of comradeship to one class alone."[23] A group of conservative "Die-Hards" included the empire in their rather standard list of principles; its global presence allowed Britain to secure "to peoples less advanced than ourselves the priceless gift of just and civilized government."[24] Stanley Baldwin, one of the more significant conservative leaders of the period, likewise reiterated the four "eternal principles" of religion, throne and constitution, empire, and the people's welfare, laid down repeatedly by Disraeli (and now promoted by the Primrose League).[25]

The third phase (1950–2010) saw a decline in use of the bigram "conservative principles," suggesting that political leaders were looking for ways to give new content to the expression. Winston Churchill still quite traditionally discussed the "free and flexible working of the laws of supply and demand," and thought that this principle ought to be balanced by "compassion and aid for those who, whether through age, illness or misfortune, cannot keep pace with the march of society."[26] But in Edward Heath's 1965 programme "Putting Britain Right Ahead," change and reform had been fully internalised and paternalism seemingly cast aside. The Empire was on the wane and social rank had become less obviously important; in this situation it would be wise to recognise the "reality of Britain's position in the modern world." What now qualified as conservative principle was the idea that "the individual human being" was "the mainspring of change, modernization and reform."[27]

The 1970s and 1980s retained the individualism but saw a reorientation towards cultural conservatism. With the rise of the New Right the bigram "conservative principles" began to mean less than before as a political rallying cry. Tellingly, the "Reaganite" (and Thatcherite) neoliberal

"creed of strong international leadership, free trade, smaller government, lower taxes, deregulation and cultural conservatism" was now referred to as a set of "neo-conservative principles."[28] This quotation is from the 1990s, however, when both Reagan and Thatcher had already relinquished power. In general, these years had witnessed the rise of the American moral majority and a turn to right-wing politics under George Bush Sr., whose programme "Empower America" was presented as an alternative to "the isolationist, protectionist 'paleo-conservatism' championed by Pat Buchanan."[29]

Times had changed. Principles were out. In the 1990s John Major tried to revamp traditional "one nation conservatism," while Michael Portillo advised the Tory leadership to "reassociate" the Tory party with "compassion and magnanimity."[30] That was a clear indictment of Thatcher's neoliberalism. Letters to the editor confirmed the doubts entertained by some conservative-minded readers concerning Thatcher's politics. "For too long the Conservative Party has been hijacked by free-market dogmas, spawned in American universities by securely tenured academics," wrote one reader of the *Times*. He spurned an economic doctrine that clearly owed "more to 19th-century liberalism than any recognisably Conservative principles." What the Tories needed was "a compassionate, flexible and inclusive politics in keeping with the best Conservative traditions."[31] If the increasingly confusing word usage in the *Times* is anything to go by, the conservatives of the 1990s needed a new rhetoric.
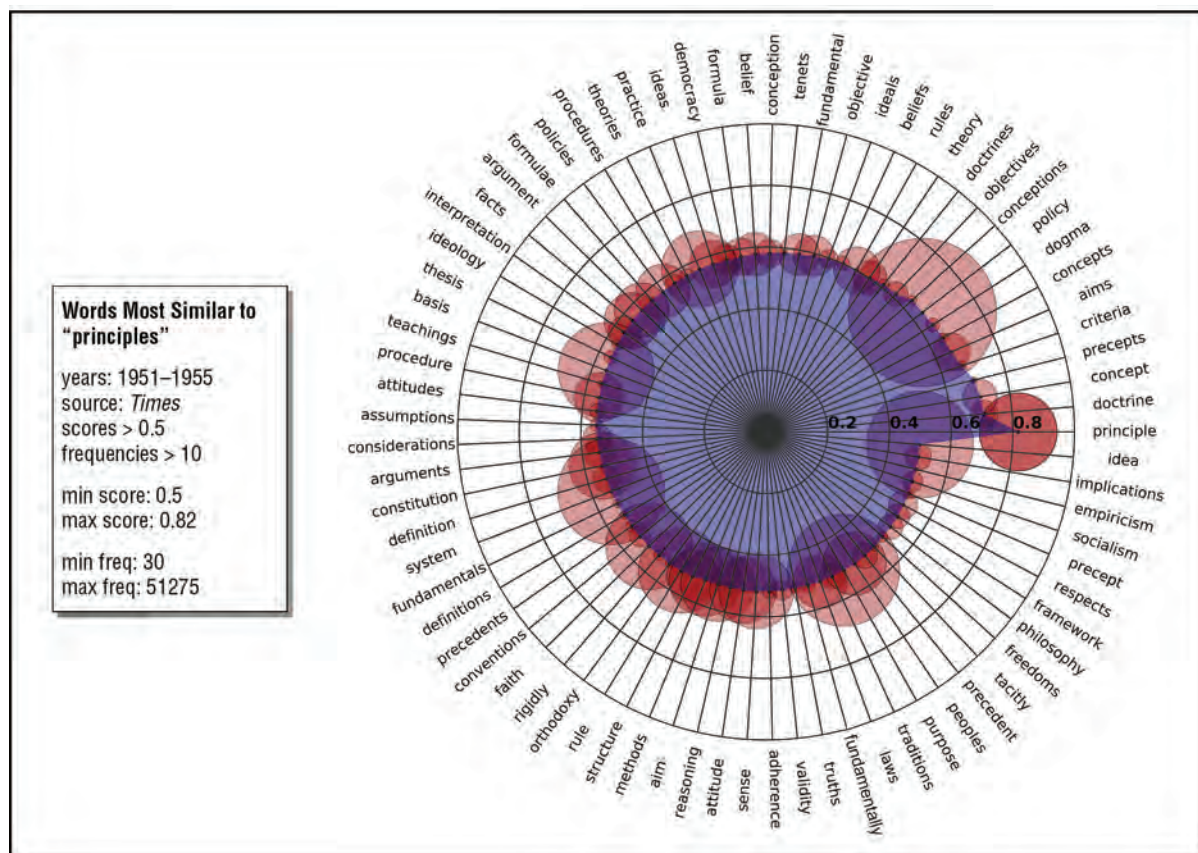

Figure 3. Words most similar to "principles," based on unigram embeddings of the Times *(1951–1955). The radial graph shows the similarity score of each word in relation to the word "principles," for all values equal to or higher than 0.5; the higher the score, the greater the similarity. The red circles reflect the occurrence of each word in the dataset for the period in question; words with frequencies lower than 30 have been discarded.*

Top Twenty Words Most Similar to "principles"

1851-1855	1901-1905	1951-1955	2001-2005
doctrine	doctrine	doctrine	tenet
basis	policy	concept	doctrine
theory	idea	precept	belief
truth	proposition	criterion	concept
dogma	notion	aim	value
system	theory	dogma	norm
policy	tenet	policy	framework
opinion	axiom	conception	philosophy
tendency	method	objective	ideology
tenet	conception	theory	ideal
maxim	formula	rule	ethos
notion	ideal	belief	constitution
dictate	belief	ideal	policy
interest	shibboleth	fundamental	precept
Idea	dictate	tenet	concept
consideration	tradition	formula	approach
wisdom	dogma	idea	objective
reasoning	usage	practice	purpose
rules	consideration	procedure	rule
assumption	teaching	argument	notion

Table 1. Top twenty words most similar to "principles," based on word embeddings for four periods; duplications result- ing from plural forms have been removed.

FROM PRINCIPLES TO VALUES

Until World War II the bigram "conservative principle" had been a common enough expression, a turn of phrase preferred by those who spoke for conservatism, and recognized as such by their critics. But were there other ways in which conservative writers could articulate basic beliefs that expressed a similar sense of moral purpose? Were phrases analogous to the bigram "conserva- tive principles" in use, in which a noun referring to something fundamental (such as "principles") was qualified by an adjective referring to something ideological (such as "conservative")? One might expect "conservative beliefs" or "conservative tenets" to have been used, but was this, in fact, the case?

Ideally, we would be able to detect phrases similar to "conservative principles" automatically by using bigram embeddings.[32] The top synonym for "conservative principles" in the years

Number of Occurrences of Most Similar Words Preceded by "conservative" for All Years (1785–2005)

bigram	occurrence	range	bigrams	occurrence	range
conservative policy	5407	1830-2010	conservative law	70	1830-2010
conservative interest	2340	1830-2010	conservative convention	60	1865-2010
conservative basis	1257	1840-2010	conservative faith	56	1880-2010
conservative element	778	1845-2010	conservative argument	53	1885-2010
conservative opinion	684	1835-2010	conservative belief	49	1925-2010
conservative approach	368	1930-2010	conservative standard	39	1830-2010
conservative attitude	366	1880-2010	conservative practice	35	1930-2005
conservative rule	352	1840-2010	conservative ideology	30	1970-2010
conservative tradition	234	1850-2010	conservative standpoint	25	1885-2010
conservative tendency	192	1830-2010	conservative notion	13	1840-2005
conservative value	216	1910-2010	conservative dogma	11	1870-1995
conservative method	155	1885-2010	conservative objective	11	1970-2005
conservative philosophy	151	1930-2010	conservative orthodoxy	10	1980-2010
conservative aim	118	1880-2010	conservative concept	6	1980-2000
conservative idea	117	1855-2010	conservative definition	6	1970-2010
conservative legislation	91	1840-2010	conservative interpretation	6	1970-2005
conservative system	87	1830-2010	conservative theory	6	1970-1990
conservative assumption	80	1930-2010	conservative constitution	5	1975-2005
conservative doctrine	80	1830-2010	conservative structure	5	1970-1990
conservative ideal	78	1890-2010	conservative tenet	5	1840-1870

Table 2. Number of occurrences of most similar words preceded by "conservative" for all years (1785–2005), including a rough indication of the year range of their occurrence.

2001–2005 transpires, however, to be "winning elections," while the bigrams "hard-line minority" and "tasted blood" follow close behind. Although evidently related to politics, these rather unspecific results indicate that the bigram "conservative principles" simply does not occur often enough for phrase embeddings to make much sense. The bigrams most similar to "conservative

principles" for the years 1876–1880 (when the bigram occurred more often) are more meaningful, with such phrases as "liberal principles" and "political convictions." The latter sounds promising: however, a bigram such as "conservative convictions" occurs only a dozen times in the whole corpus.

The unigram "principles" occurs with much greater frequency (more than 300,000 hits between 1785 and 2010) so that it should make more sense to use unigram embeddings to find out which words were given a similar meaning to "principles." For brevity's sake we will look at the top 100 most similar bigrams in four brief periods only, skipping half a century at a time: 1851–1855, 1901–1905, 1951–1955 and 2001–2005. The results for the third period (1951–1955) are shown by way of illustration (figure 3).

Table 1 shows the top twenty synonyms per period.

Were any of these words used in the context of conservative rhetoric? Examining bigrams in which "conservative" is the qualifying adjective is the most straightforward way to test this. By combining each of the top one hundred most similar words for each period (i.e., 400 words in total) with the adjective "conservative" and subsequently removing all duplicates (including the plural form of each word) we obtain the result in table 2.

The first ten bigrams do not convey the strong sense of ethical worth carried by the term "principle." The bigrams that do convey this connotation, and also occur with meaningful frequency over a longer period, are "conservative tradition(s)," "conservative value(s)," "conservative philosophy," "conservative idea(s)," and "conservative belief(s)." While conserva-
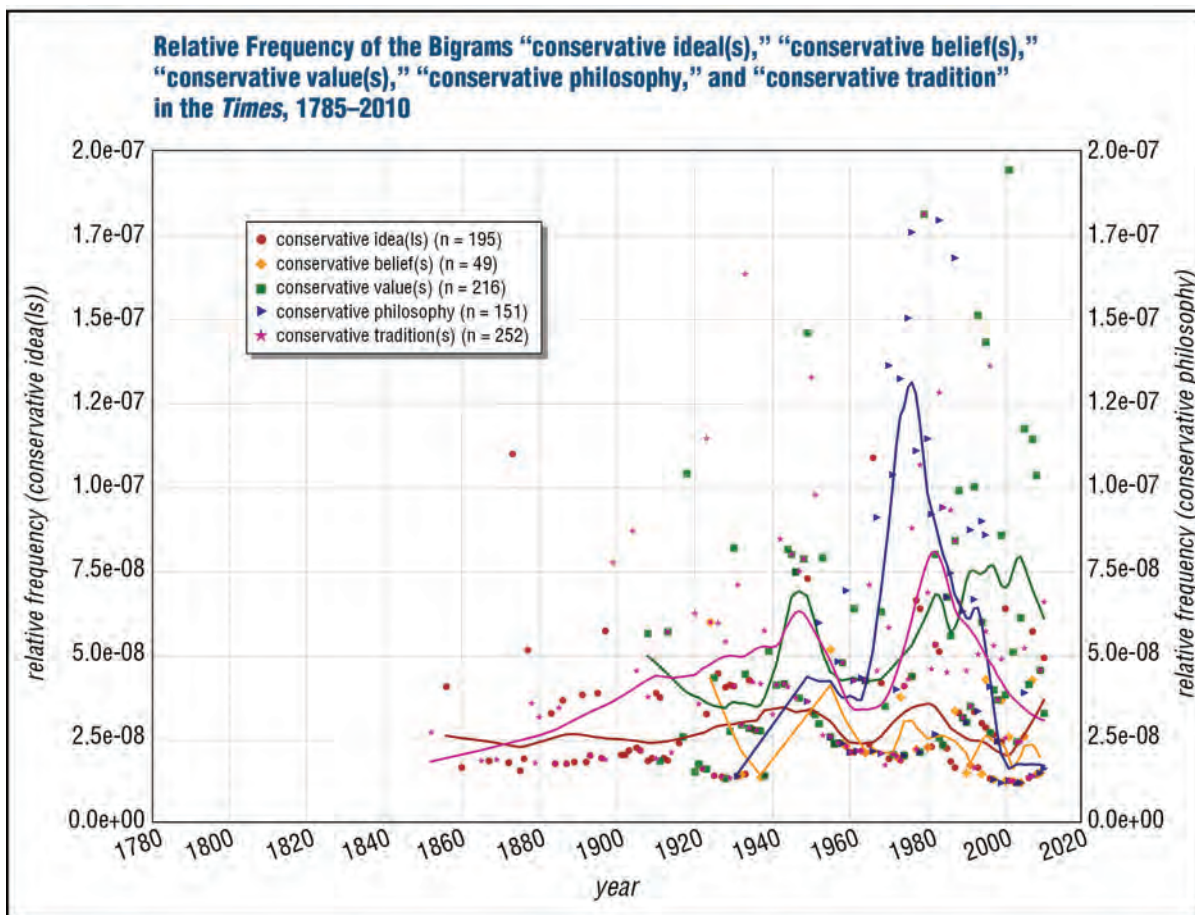

Figure 4. Relative frequency of the bigrams "conservative ideal(s)" (n=195), "conservative belief(s)" (49), "conservative value(s)" (216), "conservative philosophy" (151), and "conservative tradition" (252) in the Times, *1785–2010.*
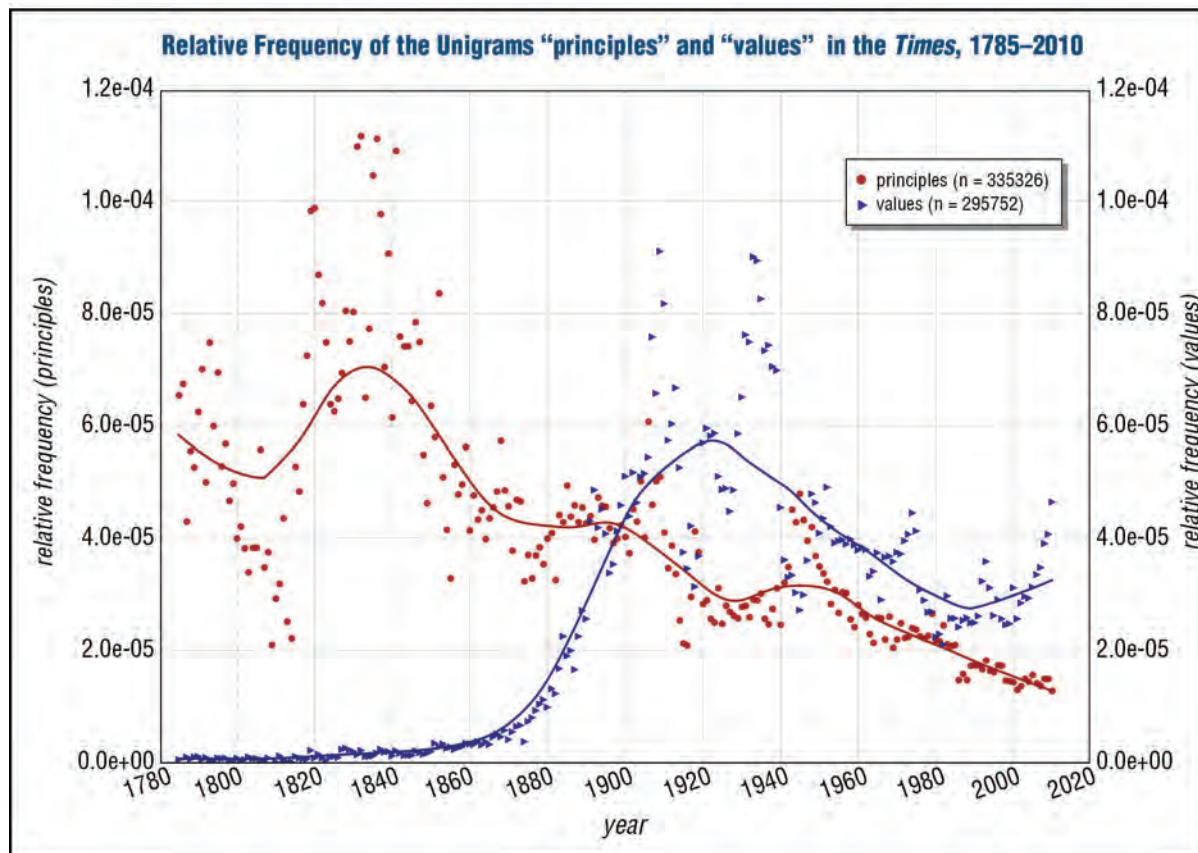
Figure 5. Relative frequency of the unigrams "principles" (n=335,326) and "values" (n=295,752) in the Times*, 1785–2010.*

tive traditions, ideas, and ideals were already present in the nineteenth century (figure 4), the more ethically imbued bigrams are largely a twentieth-century affair.

"Beliefs" are not very prominent, but, interestingly, "philosophy" becomes rather popular after about 1970 and "values" after 1980. The latter is probably the bigram that comes closest to the moral sense of "conservative principles." We will therefore turn to "conservative value(s)" as a phrasal soundbite that became more common to conservative rhetoric once conservative principles had become all but extinct.

THE RISE OF CONSERVATIVE VALUES

The word "values" began to be used regularly towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the unigram "principles" was already on the wane (see figure 5).

As an element of bigrams, however, values were then predominantly if not exclusively connected to economy, finances, and trade, as in "closing values" or "market values." The *OED* suggests that the ethical rather than economic or monetary connotation of values, as "the principles or moral standards held by a person or social group; the generally accepted or personally held judgement of what is valuable and important in life," originated in the USA.[33] But it became a common enough word in British English. And, *pace* Willetts, it was not a term restricted to left-wing rhetoric.

The first relevant use of the bigram "conservative values" stems from an account of the proceedings of a "Conservative Conference" in 1961. "I hope this conference will put Conservative values to the test," Lord Home, foreign secretary under Harold Macmillan, was reported as saying, "and see that those values give a clear lead to the people."[34] True to the spirit of pre-war Toryism, the values he mentioned implied that actions should "all stem from the principles of Christian religion," be "steeped in loyalty to the Crown, the constitution and the law" and "inspired by the desire to serve all."

Like conservative principles, conservative values more often than not referred to political values: those values supported by adherents to the Conservative Party or analysed by conservative political philosophers. Chris Patten, the later governor of Hong Kong, was the person who (if we follow the *Times*) in 1982 initiated in-depth talk about conservative values, in an article on "Why Mrs Thatcher should join the real Tories" and thus "return to traditional Conservative values." The terms he used in this connection included such conservative evergreens as proportion and balance, values that implied pragmatism but in Patten's view also community. Man, he argued, is "a social animal who can reach his full stature only in groupings greater than himself, such as his country, his church or his family."[35]

Margaret Thatcher would echo this position six years later, although she magnified the family as the locus of conservative values. That distinctive community, moreover, was a territory presided over specifically by women. "For the family," she posited in a celebrated speech to the Conservative Women's Conference in 1988, "is the building block of society. It is a nursery, a school, a hospital, a leisure centre, a place of refuge and a place of rest. It encompasses the whole of society. It fashions our beliefs. It is the preparation for the rest of our life. And women run it."[36] Rather than women, however, it was the "traditional" family that became central to conservative rhetoric. In newspaper accounts between 1980 and 2010, the bigram conservative values was employed in three contexts, which all point to a tendency to harness the "traditional" to the cause of conservatism.

The first context concerned the younger generation of the "post-permissive society," who apparently no longer found "radical protest" attractive. Instead, they favoured conservative values like "old-fashioned patriotism, religious belief and support for 'law and order' policies," or, alternatively, took a more conservative stance regarding marriage and homosexuality.[37] Such assessments would prove to be incorrect, but they were relatively common in the 1980s. The second context was the USA, where Reagan and the "New Right" worked to "restore" conservative values and remove "the evils of abortion, bussing, pornography, reverse discrimination and institutionalized atheism."[38]

The third context was British politics. In her 1988 speech on women as time-tested managers, Thatcher had mentioned self-reliance, personal responsibility, good neighbourliness, and generosity as "the Conservative values." Barring the neoliberalism she espoused[39] her ideas remained popular. Every now and then someone would hark back to "the old Conservative values of freedom, nation, family and responsibility," on which Tory politician Keith Joseph had built Thatcherite policies in the 1970s.[40] John Gray however, made short shrift of Thatcherism. In a more or less prophetic article called "Why Tories should vote Labour" he lamented the way Tories had come to spurn the time-honoured objectives of traditional conservatism, "the nurturing of communities and the renewal of civic institutions in Britain." Thatcher's neoliberalism had only increased "risk and uncertainty in the everyday lives of ordinary people." Unfortunately, conservatives now flouted the "norms of fairness and decency which are deeply ingrained in British culture." Thatcherism had given rise to "a divided and demoralised society in which crime is endemic, and family life neglected and fractured."[41]

In the decades that followed no Tory politician, whether pro or anti-Thatcher, could afford not to mention what he or she regarded as the traditional (and invariably nuclear) household. "We believe in the family," reiterated David Cameron time and again. But as a journalist observed in 2005, Labour now too believed in families. Together with all the other conservative values Cameron put on his list—personal responsibility, lower taxes, high standards of health and

education, limited government, national sovereignty—the traditional family appealed to the Left as much as it did to the Right. Values, apparently, had not been the best choice for replacing principles.

MORALISING POLITICS

All this conservative talk about "conservative values" was of course highly normative, if not downright moralistic. That raises the question as to the broader linguistic context in which these words were being used: did values arise in another context than principles? Again, we can use word embeddings to find which meaningful associations with "conservative" existed between 1785 and 2010. Because usage of the word "conservative" itself in the *Times* is almost exclusively focused on politics ("Conservatives" and "Conservative Party" are extremely common) we need to identify a broader set of words worth investigating. These words need to have relatively stable meanings over the whole period, to facilitate comparisons.

I selected nine words: "conservative" (the central term), "constitutional" (as a political term associated with conservative), "traditional" and "customary" (as related in meaning to the adjective conservative), "Christian," "religious," "spiritual" and "moral" (indicating the sources of religious and secular morality conservative writers will often have referred to), and "civilised" (signalling the quality of being moral, again a word one might expect conservatives to be fond of).[42] For each of these words, in each of the three periods 1901–1905, 1951–1955, and 2001–2005, I generated the top fifty most similar words; for each of the these fifty words I again calculated another top fifty most similar words (figure 6).

This resulted in 22,500 words in total (9 x 50 x 50), with the number of unique words ranging from 5,000 to 7,500. The data was then visualised as a network, in which the unique words figure as nodes and the "similarity scores" (showing the degree of similarity between words) as the edges.

By forcing the network to cluster automatically into three groups, a rough pattern emerges.[43] In the first period (1901–1905, figure 7), two clusters are visible, which, judged by their semantic import, are clearly "political" (blue) and "civilisational" or "moral" (orange). Half a century later (1951–1955, figure 8), three clusters are visible. Again, we see a political and a civilisational cluster, and a dark green cluster relating to words most similar to "traditional" or "customary." The surprise is in the third period (2001–2005, figure 9), where the same algorithm with the same settings identifies only one cluster, which I have identified as "civilisational," based on the semantic import of the majority of words.

This approach is imprecise and needs to be explored further, but we can draw one obvious conclusion. The pattern appears to indicate what we might call the historical "moralisation" of politics: between 1955 and 2001 the semantic relations between the "political" and the "civilisational" became stronger. The transition we have described so far from conservative principles to conservative values fits into this pattern. This suggests that, if we want to fully explore the nature of conservative rhetoric, we must do more than look only at "conservative values"; we should examine value-laden phrases in which a political qualifier (such as "conservative") does not necessarily appear. A logical choice to test the occurrence of such phrases is simply to look at the bigram "traditional values," since the conservation of tradition is what conservatism is supposed to be about, and values now lay at the heart of political discourse. The bigram indeed proves to be meaningful. Where "conservative value(s)" had an incidence of 165, "traditional value(s)" rocketed after 1950, with a total score of 2,095 (figure 10).

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, the bigrams related to national identity ("national," "British," and "English" values) all lag far behind. Let us take an extensive look at the bigram "traditional values."

Representation of the Method Used to Create a Network of Most Similar Words to "civilised" to the First and Second Degree

"civilised" → "decency" → "honesty", "evil", +48...

"civilised" → "barbarous" → "degrading", "inhuman", +48...

"civilised" → "sociable" → "friendly", "flappable", +48...
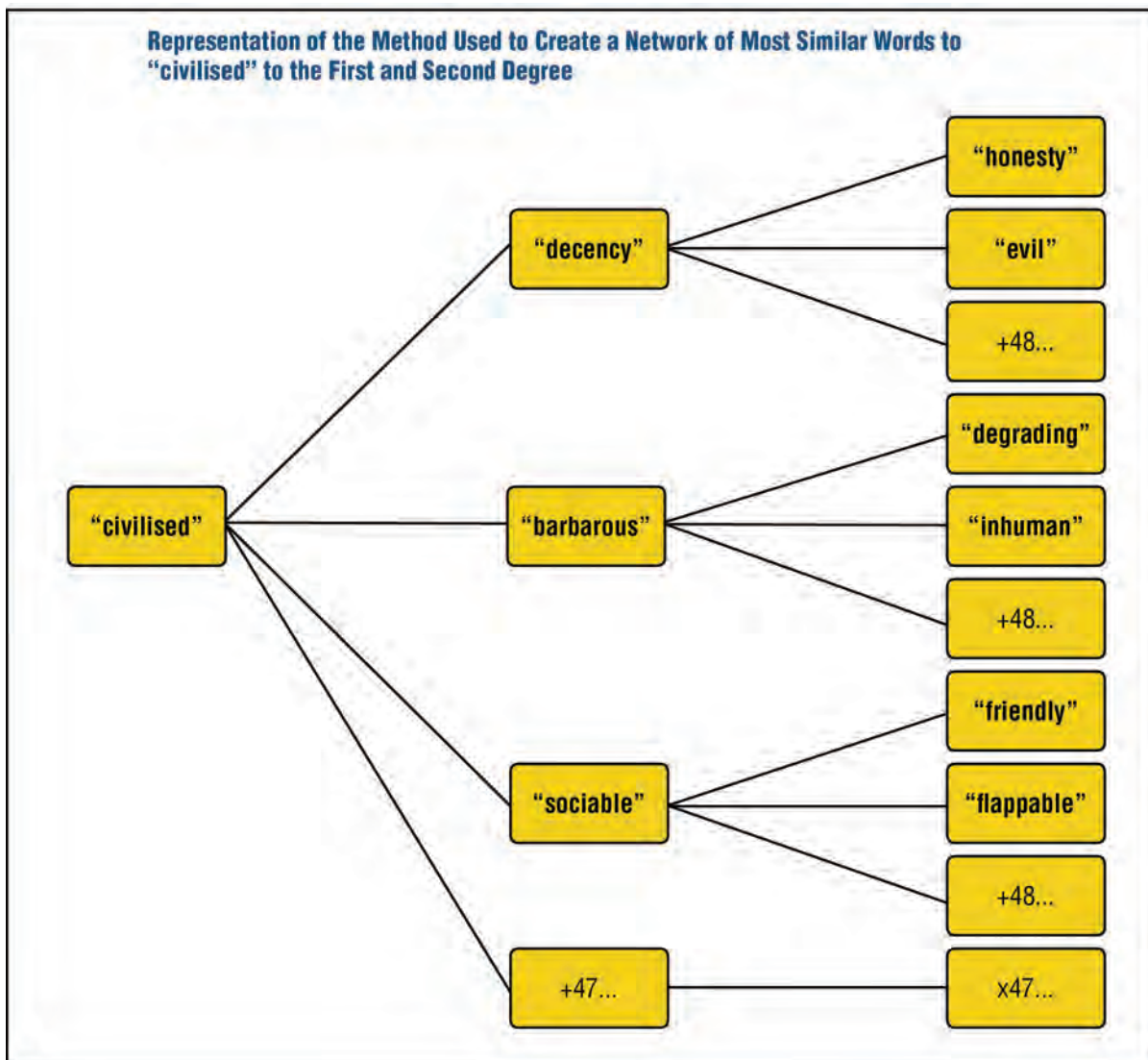
"civilised" → +47... → x47...

Figure 6. Representation of the method used to create a network of most similar words to the first and second degree; the example is based on the word "civilised."

TRADITION VS. MODERNITY

In which context did the bigram "traditional values" occur in *the Times*? It materialised in the first half of the twentieth century, for example in 1934 when Thorold Coade (1896–1963), headmaster of Bryanston School in Dorset, described education as "handing on the culture of the past to the rising generation." This approach, he argued, implied character building, "the perpetuation of traditional values," disciplined scholarship, organised games, and the prefect system.[44] Whether Coade voted for the Conservative Party is not directly relevant here; the point is that the values he appealed to can be called conservative. And underlying this kind of appeal to things traditional was an opposition to, or rather a tension with, modernity.

Sometimes this friction was expressed in overtly ideological terms. Bolshevism, Adolf Hitler was reported as saying in 1935, sacrifices to its theory of a classless society "millions of human beings and incalculable cultural and traditional values," achieving very little in the process.[45] But more often the bigram "traditional values" was employed to indicate a problem rather than a
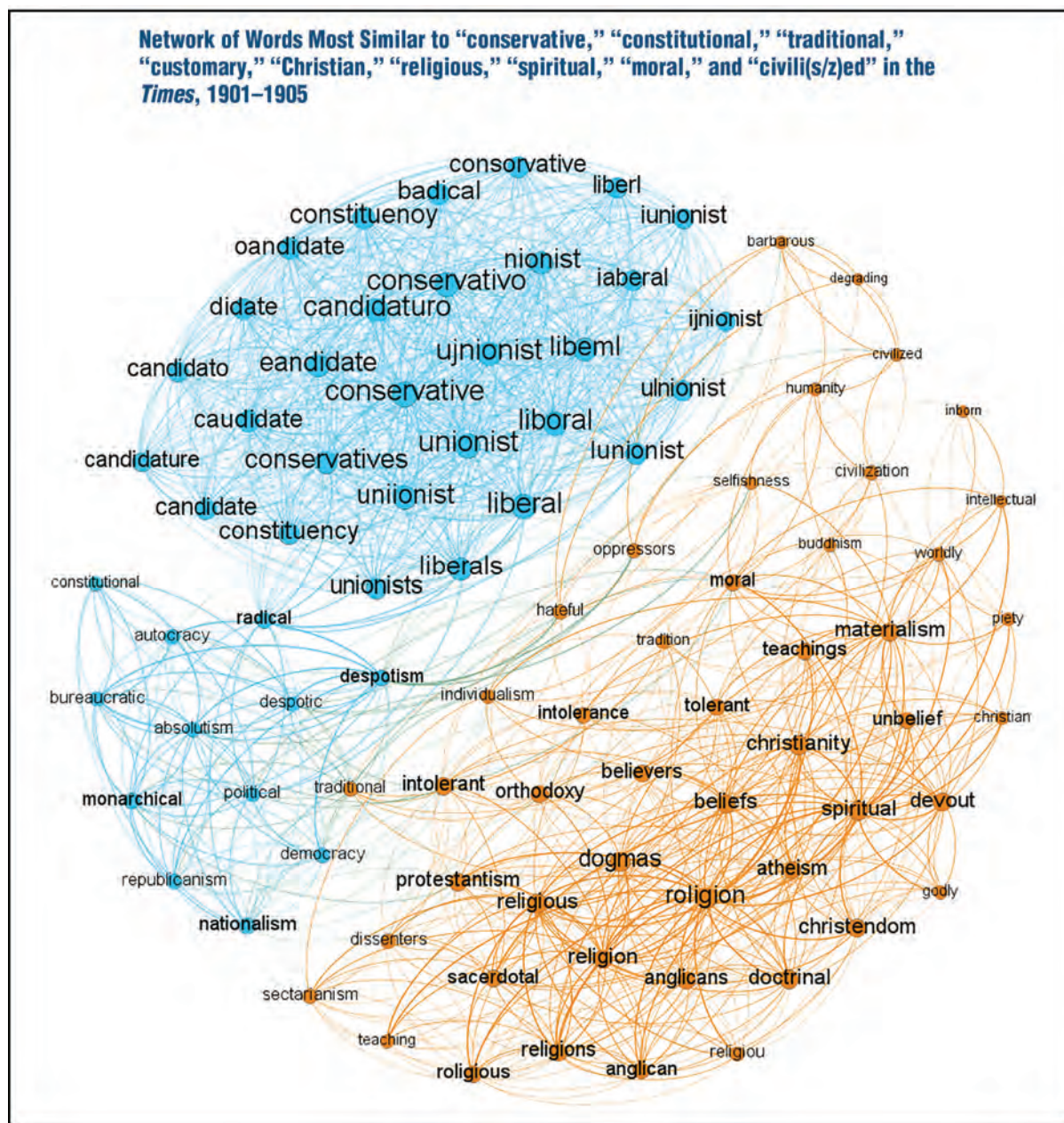
Figure 7. Network of words most similar to "conservative," "constitutional," "traditional," "customary," "Christian," "religious," "spiritual," "moral," and "civili(s/z)ed," to the first and second degree. Based on unigram embeddings of all words in the Times*, 1901–1905 (no OCR correction).*

doctrine. That the twentieth century was an age of unprecedented, rapid change is perhaps a cliché; but it did witness the passing of a traditional way of life for many people. Most were uncomfortable with that change, whether they were explicitly conservative or not (see figure 11).

In 1970 in Japan the novelist Yukio Mishima, who, admittedly, was "dedicated to the restoration of full imperial rule" and in that sense an outright reactionary, even committed *seppuku* over the loss of traditional values.[46] In the *Times* this discourse about tradition and modernity arose especially in the 1950s. Pakistan's new constitution, for instance, needed to harmonise secular law with the Quran. The *Times* noted: "The task of reconciling traditional values with modern needs has been complex and delicate."[47]
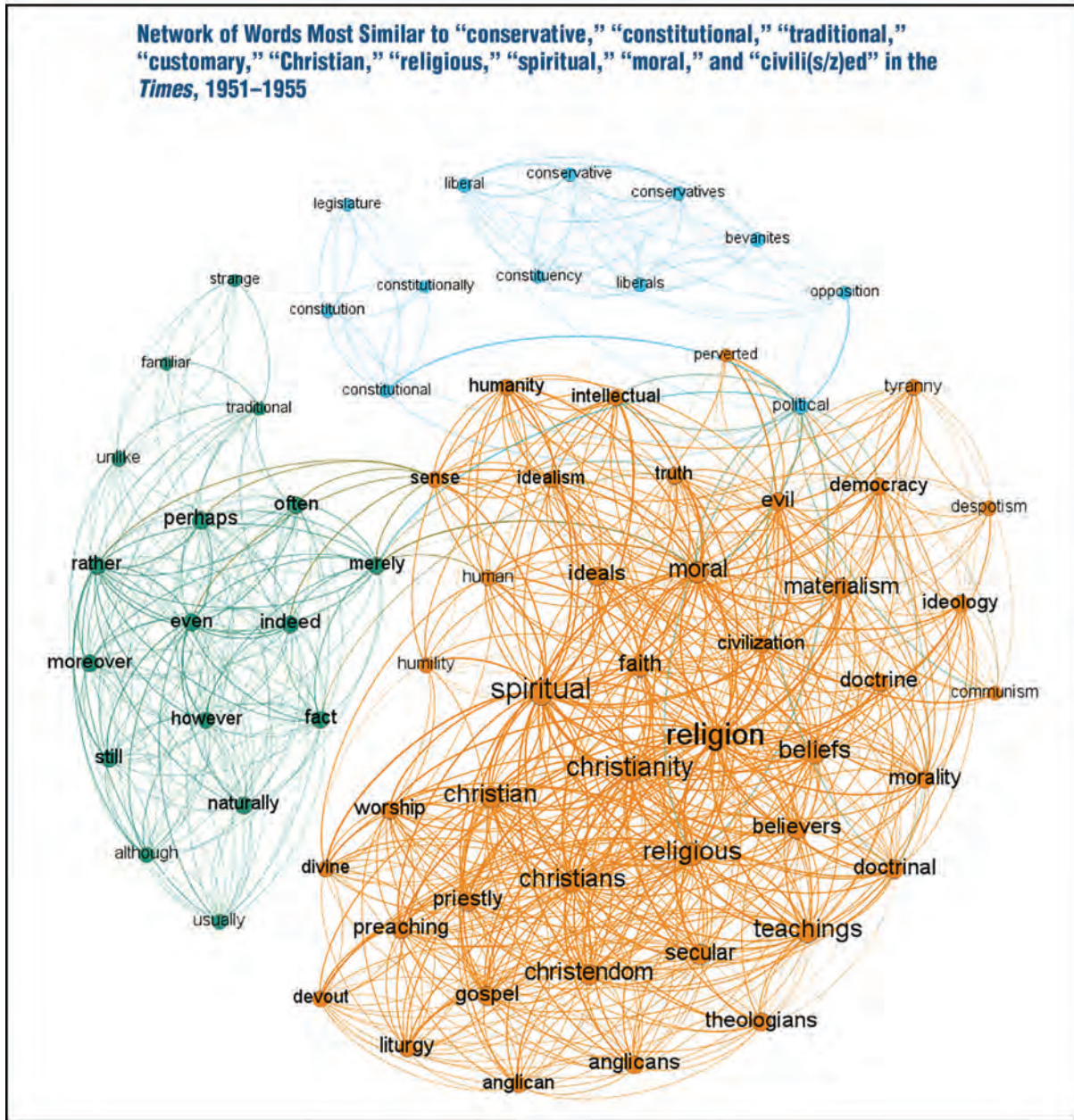
Figure 8. Network of words most similar to "conservative," "constitutional," "traditional," "customary," "Christian," "religious," "spiritual," "moral," and "civili(s/z)ed," to the first and second degree. Based on unigram embeddings of all words in the Times, *1951–1955 (no OCR correction).*

Modernity related to tradition in various ways. This association often took place on the level of a society or state, as in the case of Pakistan's constitution. Sometimes modernity was equated with Western society in particular, as in a report on Southeast Asia, where traditional values were "being swept aside by the mass products of the West."[48] Whether the tradition/modernity drama was framed positively or negatively or neutrally, it played out everywhere, from Zambia, Ceylon, Canada, and Sardinia to Zaire, Iran, and Morocco.[49] Tanzania's *ujamaa* socialism was represented not as the negation but rather as the transformation of traditional values: "solidarity, collective ownership and work-sharing" simply became "democracy, egalitarian sharing of
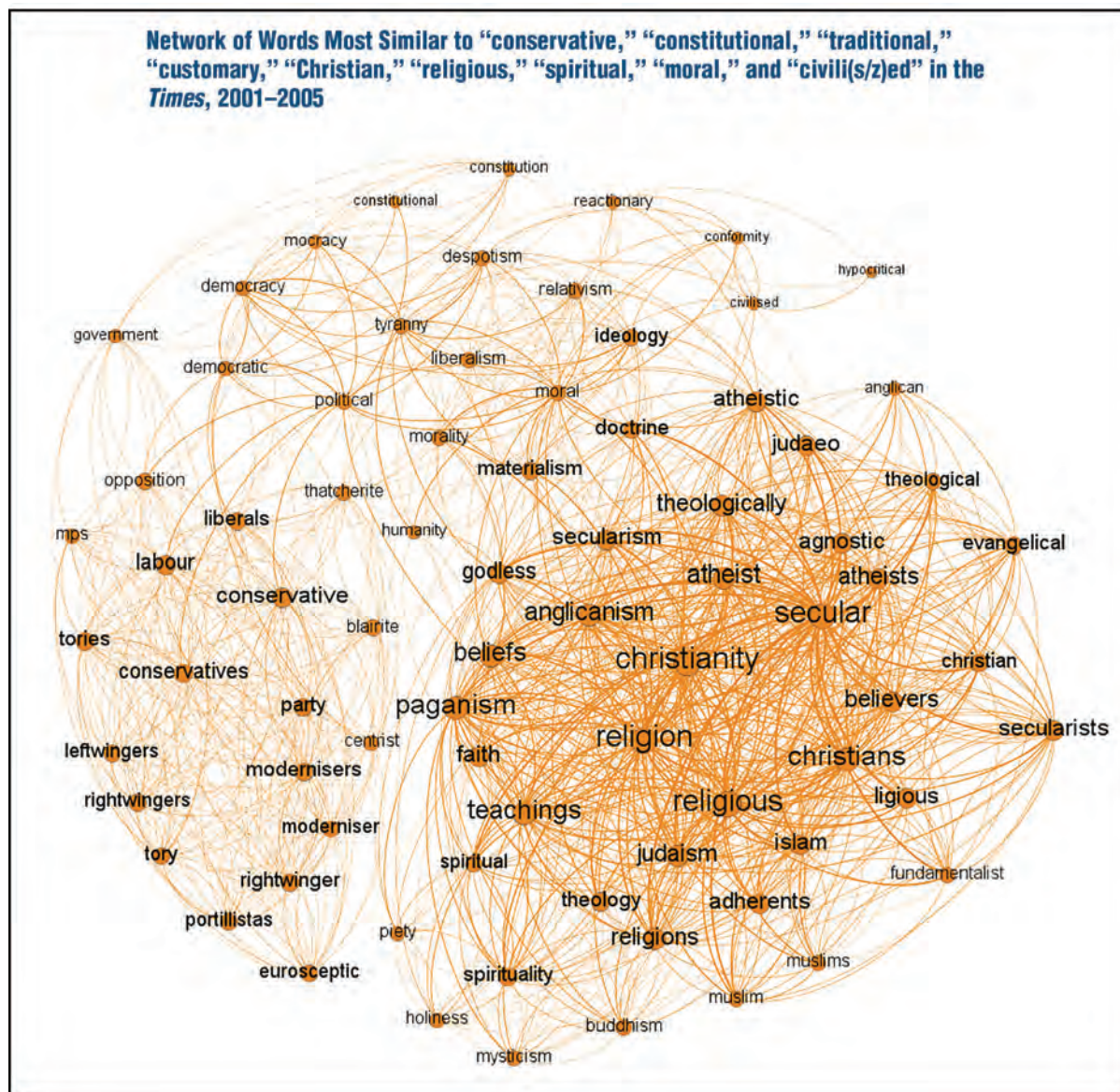
Figure 9. Network of words most similar to "conservative," "constitutional," "traditional," "customary," "Christian," "religious," "spiritual," "moral," and "civili(s/z)ed," to the first and second degree. Based on unigram embeddings of all words in the Times*, 2001–2005 (no OCR correction).*

resources and cooperation."[50] The exception, apparently, was Chile, where in 1970 traditional values still remained intact. "These values uphold constitutional and orderly government, a respect for legality, politeness and hospitality between people, education, and a fierce regard for all things Chilean."[51]

Business values were an important domestic motif. In 1965 the *Times* gave managers a wake-up call. Technological change was leading "to the evolution of a new science-based culture in industry in direct conflict with traditional values." Man's natural reaction, however (and that of a British man particularly), was "to cling more resolutely to his old and once successful customs and habits."[52] Traditional values had made Britain great, economically speaking. But old-fashioned qualities—a "high degree of technical competence and complete integrity and impartiality"—were now no longer an asset if British business failed to modernise.[53]

Another obvious theme was the metropolitan city as the seat of modernity contrasted to the countryside as the bulwark of traditional values. Western France tended to vote Roman Catholic and conservative, demonstrating that "provincial life and opinion is less excitable, more down to earth, and more suggestive of an underlying stability."[54] Gender roles were yet another thread in the *Times*. The French feminist Evelyne Sullerot, arguing for women's participation in civic life, portrayed tradition as a masculine concern. "In an increasingly technological society, it is reassuring for men to keep women as their link with traditional values, bending over stewpots as their mothers and grandmothers did."[55]

When gender was combined with reverence for the rural, nostalgia tended to triumph over emancipation. "It is encouraging," wrote one (male) art critic, "to think that the traditional values are being preserved somewhere." The Mazowsze Song and Dance Company from Poland championed the cause. It represented "all the old-fashioned virtues," with "coy and pretty" women in voluminous petticoats modestly taking care not to reveal their undergarments while dancing the mazurka with "active and attentive" men carrying agricultural tools.[56] To some extent such exuberant reviews are timeless: tradition is always good and nostalgia always sells well, even when it comes expensive. A hotel in Keswick, Cumbria, offered a pricey return to traditional values, including freshly "ironed morning papers, evening dress codes, old sixpences for tipping and ancient copies of Punch."[57] At another in Sidmouth, Devon, guests might enjoy "the gentle sounds of cricket on the village green, a stroll along the promenade, or a Traditional English afternoon tea on the lawn."[58] Meanwhile, the Hamper People's gift baskets celebrated "traditional values in a modern world."[59] The popularity of traditional values in advertising was a sign that things were changing.
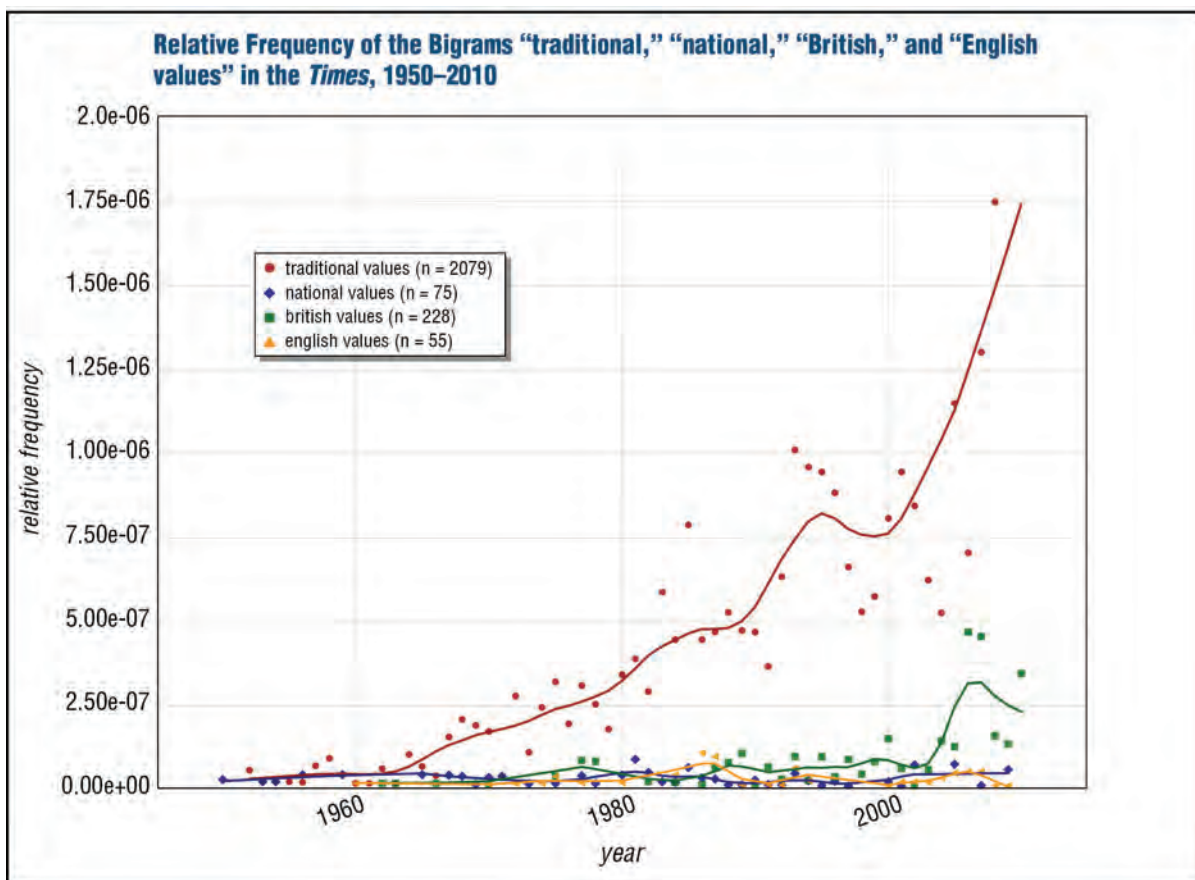

Figure 10. Relative frequency of the bigrams "traditional" (n=2,095), "national" (412), "British" (252), and "English values" (61) in the Times, *1950–2010.*
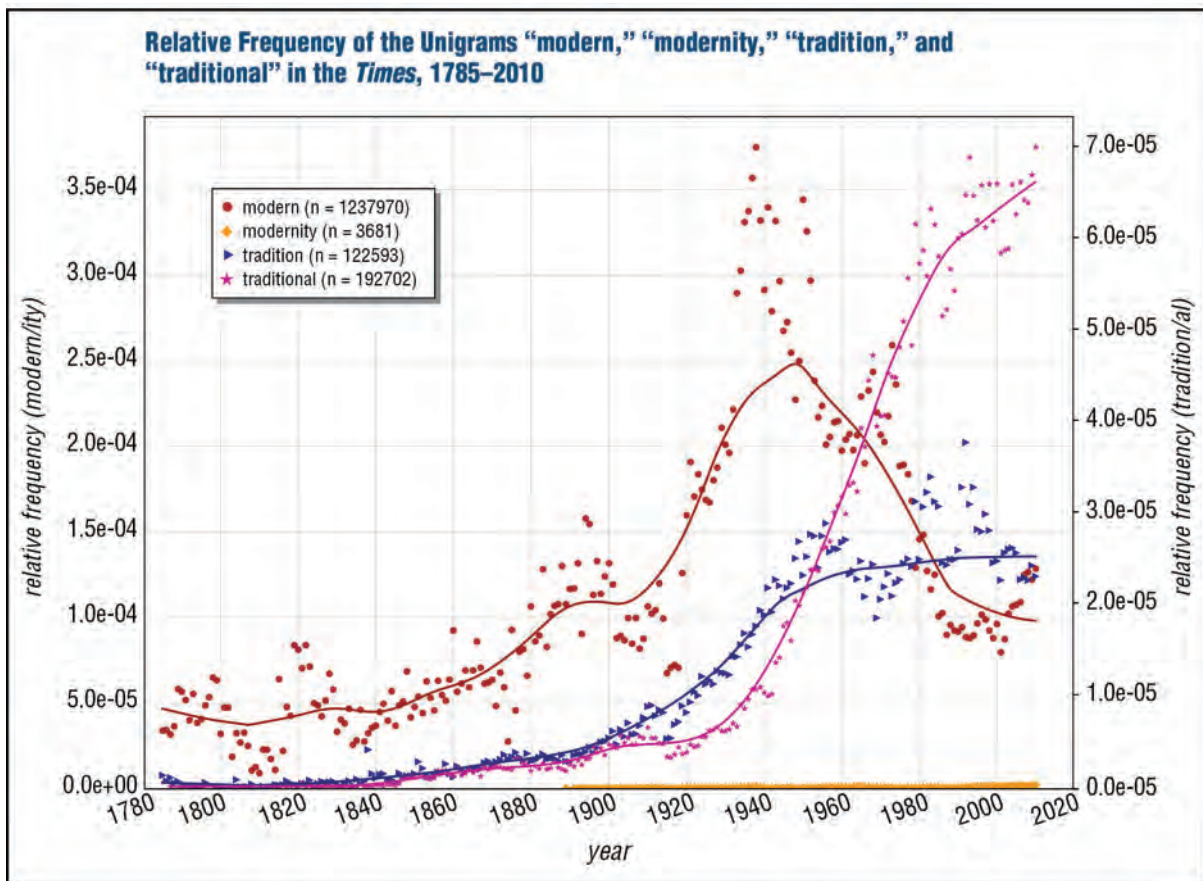
Figure 11. Relative frequency of the unigrams "modern," "modernity," "tradition," and "traditional" in the Times, *1785–2010. Note that* y axes have different scales.

By the early 1980s traditional values had turned from a liability into an asset. This is evident from classified ads, which now began to invoke them indiscriminately. Boarding schools paraded their attachment to traditional values.[60] Car manufacturers summoned the moral past. A reviewer applauded the Series 200, a "breed of Rover that combines traditional values with more than a little panache."[61] The construction company Mowlem successfully blended "traditional values and skills with a visionary approach to today's challenges."[62] The Isle of Man seduced companies with "a way-of-life that emphasises traditional values of friendliness and independence" (and much lower taxes).[63] Next to the Post Office and the mature 1997 Chateau Cissac, companies in real estate (Hillier Parker), law (Walker, Smith & Way; Reynolds Porter Chamberlain), housing (Beazer), medicine (Bayer), yacht building (Westerly), and consultancy (ADTI Consulting; Connaught) all presented their ability to reconcile tradition with modernity as a unique selling point until 2010, and probably beyond.

In the tradition-vs.-modernity debate anybody could take in any position; it was largely a debate about socio-cultural change. So when did the friction between tradition and modernity mutate into a conflict between conservatism and progressivism? The *Times* included some attempts at dispassionate analysis, which pointed to a fundamental ideological transformation. Long before the re-emergence of Western populism and the protests of a disenfranchised middle class, radical Liberal journalist Nesta Wyn Ellis warned that "fascism" was lurking around the corner. A sense of "social dislocation resulting from the breakdown of traditional values" encouraged "patriotism and racial identity" especially among "a seemingly beleaguered bourgeoisie of small shop-keepers, business people and professionals whose status and security are thus at

risk."[64] But in the minds of those who attached importance to traditional values, the main culprit was not immigration or globalisation, but the protest generation. Modernity, "sixties" style, was responsible for undermining the traditional values.

The Governor-General of Canada, Georges Vanier, and his wife Pauline had already founded the Canadian Conference of the Family in 1964 (later the Vanier Institute of the Family), to recapture the traditional values and spiritual heritage so essential to society.[65] But once all hell had broken loose, once "long hair, short skirts and obscene entertainment" had brought about the wholesale "ruin of traditional values,"[66] right-wing commentators and politicians from Italy to Britain began to climb the barricades themselves. Sometimes comments were extremely nuanced. The conservative editor of the *Times*, William Rees-Mogg, famously impressed his readership by taking British justices to task for harshly prosecuting "Mr. Jagger" on a drug charge. "Who breaks a butterfly on a wheel?," ran the editorial's headline: "If we are going to make any case a symbol of the conflict between the sound traditional values of Britain and the new hedonism, then we must be sure that the sound traditional values include those of tolerance and equity."[67] But society was changing, and it was changing fast.

AGAINST THE PERMISSIVE SOCIETY

Already in the 1960s the self-styled "guardians of tradition and morality" had been railing against the "permissive society," this unexpected, head-on collision with authority, this wilful destruction of the "spiritual realities on which all healthy society is based." To prevent traditional values from being permanently lost, "we shall all have to learn that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."[68] Unsurprisingly, the conservative rejection of what was seen as surrender to unrestrained self-gratification was often expressed in religious terms. Church of England bishops eagerly entered into the debate, although some, like Russell Barry, wisely took the middle ground. "In the present mood of public opinion it is thought that an absolute, normative morality is a violation of individual freedom." If progressives undermined traditional values, moralists "equated absolute moral norms with inflexible and unchanging moral rules."[69]

The moralists, religious or otherwise, were there to stay. Religious organisations arose to preserve what they thought had been lost. Pro Fide, an organisation opposed to "progressive" influences in the Roman Catholic Church in Britain, reasserted traditional values.[70] The Order of Christian Unity "pledged to defend traditional values of British life";[71] Family Solidarity upheld "traditional values and culture," which came down to a condemnation of family planning and divorce.[72] Once the AIDS epidemic became really serious, persons of a conservative but unrealistic persuasion (m/f) had a field day. As one reader of the *Times* advised: the "traditional values of chastity and fidelity within a permanent relationship and the high ideal of one partner for life should be actively promoted."[73] Chaste friendship, in the spirit of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, and "the English Abbot Ailred," was the solution to AIDS presented by another letter-writer worried about the loss of traditional values.[74]

A Manchester University professor had remarked in 1973 that "ideological warfare" had broken out between conservative radicals and Marxist progressives. The former believed in high culture and the traditional values of the past; the latter thought all cultures to be of equal worth but especially appreciated the "primitive" ones.[75] The warfare lasted a while. When Britain's Chief Scout, the decorated ex-army officer Michael Walsh, suggested in 1982 that the Scout Association might benefit form a "return to traditional values" (better turnout, sportsmanship, politeness, and a preference for backwoodsmanship rather than rubbing brass) a controversy ensued.[76] The phrase "permissive society" was highly charged with moralistic connotations, including those related to sexuality, and in the 1980s and 1990s was especially linked with ideologies that would have elicited negative comments from a conservative point of view (see table 3).

Politicians soon tried to capitalise on the discourse about traditional values. In 1970s USA, George McGovern deflected accusations of radicalism by elevating "the restoration of America's traditional values" to the mission of the Democratic Party.[77] The traditional values of "middle

Top Twenty Phrases Most Similar to the Bigram "permissive society" in the *Times*, 1961–2010

	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985	1986-1990	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010
1	foreignness	racial prejudice	permissiveness	uncaring	materialist	feminism	puritans	social revolution	insidious	freedom choice
2	exotically	misguided	morality	mentality	holocaust	permissiveness	feminism	religious differences	institutionalised	public discourse
3	scenes characters	intolerance	nazism	bigotry	telling phrase	intolerance	liberalism	sexual matters	road serfdom	totalitarian regimes
4	opera goer	bigotry	homosexuality	neuroses	sexual freedom	materialism	stalinism	secularism	irrational self	moral superiority
5	inaccessibility	immoral	death wish	atavistic	christian beliefs	liberalism	oppressor	calvinism	dismisses	whole notion
6	characteristic	morals	materialistic	taboos	modern architecture	anarchism	reactionary	sexual liberation	trade unionism	completely justified
7	altogether absent	hypocritical	fanaticism	restlessness	lust power	homosexuality	reactionaries	turmoils	lies root	proper regulation
8	difficult detect	permissive	perversion	inarticulate	liberal democracy	elitism	moralists	solidarity union	miscegenation	cultural relativism
9	regional characteristics	shameful	perverted	world weary	detestation	marxism	traditionalists	permissiveness	simply repeat	incapable
10	appreciate true	dogmatic	elitist	fatalism	agnosticism	family values	fascism	western culture	islamophobia	sense fairness
11	form expression	permissiveness	revolting	callousness	grossest	hypocrisy	puritanism	xenophobia	jobbery	persuasions
12	habits mind	ignorance	atheist	repressed	moralism	egalitarianism	(camille) paglia	atmosphere fear	totalitarian state	become burden
13	antecedent	misunderstood	womanhood	work ethic	sentimentality	authoritarianism	heretics	matriarchy	religious toleration	presumption
14	affluent society	revulsion	totalitarianism	egotism	tibetan people	passionately	sense shame	rastafarianism	woolly minded	restriction
15	avoid becoming	hypocrisy	neurosis	miseries	israel diaspora	reactionary	cruelties	apprehensions	superstition	permissiveness
16	great religions	facts life	revulsion	inbred	spiritualism	evils	triumphalist	provisionals	occultism	confusing
17	primordial	self-righteous	blasphemy	xenophobia	iconoclasm	bigotry	peasantry	anti-american	preoccupation	weak vulnerable
18	abrupt changes	homosexuality	sexuality	human spirit	semitism	selfishness	homosexuality	feminism	immigration crime	context explanation
19	horror films	ignorant	bigoted	craving	hardly blamed	tyranny	bad loser	radicalisation	strangled birth	opaquely
20	becomes aware	vindictive	self-righteous	hatreds	irreligious	feminists	marxists	sectarianism	tim luckhurst	imaginative ways

Table 3. Top twenty phrases (stop words removed) most similar to the bigram "permissive society," based on bigram embeddings per five-year period in the Times*, 1961–2010. Words/phrases related to morality are in red; words related to ideologies (mostly "ism" and "ist") in blue; words related to sexuality in green; all other words in black. Camille Paglia (listed in the column for 1991–1995) is a critic of mainstream feminist ideas about sexuality; Tim Luckhurst (column 2001–2005) wrote about sex education as a* Times *columnist. Recognisable too (in the column for 2001–2005) is Friedrich Hayek's* Road to Serfdom *(1944).*

America" were identified elsewhere as "patriotism, religiosity, independence, optimism and self-improvement,"[78] those of Nixon's supporters as "law and order, personal morality, sobriety, self-help and patriotism."[79] The right-wing phenomenon that eventually caught everyone's attention was Ronald Reagan, who conquered America on a programme of "God, country, family and traditional values."[80]

This was also the heyday of the American Coalition for Traditional Values, to which many conservative evangelicals in the USA subscribed. To push back homosexuality, pornography, and other forms of permissiveness, proclaimed its chairman, "we must flood the federal Bureaucracy with Christians."[81] That was in 1983; almost a decade later, the Coalition campaigned against Clinton's "anti-God agenda," supporting televangelist Pat Robertson, who defined feminism as "a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practise witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."[82] This kind of rhetoric was probably difficult to stomach even for hard-line conservatives on the London side of the Atlantic, especially after the Coalition turned its attention to Harry Potter (whose "witches also believe in abortion as a sacred act").[83]

The American turn to the moral Right resonated in Western Europe, which likewise witnessed the ascent of moralised conservative rhetoric. Germany's Christian Democrat leader Helmut Kohl began to stress the need to properly reward women for staying at home, since the family was the bastion of "traditional values and moral qualities."[84] In France, right-wing politician Raymond Barre extolled the traditional values of *travail*, *famille*, *patrie*.[85] In Italy, the right-wing alliance favoured a Christian society, "the primacy of the nation," and traditional values in language and dress.[86] In Britain, a rejuvenated conservative rhetoric on "decent, healthy traditional values" made itself felt in the 1980s, when the House of Lords passed an amendment of the Education Act. It prescribed that sex education should instill into the young "moral considerations and the value of family life."[87] Not long after that, Thatcher started her "clean-up Britain crusade" to reinstate the "traditional values of fairness, integrity, honesty and courtesy" and eradicate the "false values of socialism."[88]

The problem for British conservatives (in contrast to American Republicans) was, of course, that their appeal to religion had a tenuous basis in society. There was a time when the Church of England had been called "the Tory party at prayer"; by 2004 the only stalwart defenders of traditional religious values left were Roman Catholics.[89] A journalist had already observed in 1991 that:

> It is likely that a majority of the Tory conference fodder, as they bay for traditional values, as well as most of the Cabinet are atheists. The nostalgia they feel for the English hymnal, the Book of Common Prayer and the Authorised Version is terribly nice and respectable and entirely vacuous in religious terms. The easy way out of this for the atheist Tory is to insist that Christianity is the most important historical and cultural force in our society and must be taught as such. (…) They are aspiring to resurrect religion as a socially unifying force amid the widespread conviction that it is untrue.[90]

That was hitting the nail on the head. It was also the reason for people anxious about the world they lived in to turn to moralised politics: if we no longer believe in Christianity, at least we can value it as a cultural force. Only the already converted could take comfort in the Prince of Wales' expectation that "the survival of civilised values, as we have inherited them from our ancestors, depends on the corresponding survival in our hearts of that profound sense of the sacred."[91]

Nor did the Conservatives monopolise traditional values; the Labour Party, too, identified with them. To Tony Benn, they had included adherence "to the democratic rights of the British people and to the advocacy of socialism by consent."[92] To the trade unionist Bill Sirs they amounted to "democracy, tolerance, fairmindedness and understanding."[93] But these early appropriations of what to all intents and purposes was an expression of conservative rhetoric did not even come close to the unabashed left-wing hijack of conservative moral language in the 1990s, when "New Labour" began to put traditional values "in a modern setting."[94]

TRIVIALISING THE TRADITIONAL

In 1993 the *Times* reported on John Major's famous "Back to Basics" speech in Blackpool. The Prime Minister had made an inspirational, revivalist appeal to "traditional values, family

responsibility, grammar and spelling and crime-free streets." The journalist who wrote this account observed that it struck a chord, even though it was "more notable for its tone and style than its substance." It was not a mere protest against the 1960s and the permissive society. "It was more an invocation of an earlier age, the world of Picture Post and Ealing comedies, a time when Surrey always won the county cricket, an era of black-and-white films rather than Technicolor blockbusters."[95] The Tory right rejoiced. "Basic values," fifties' style, were now on the national agenda, even though a columnist wisely predicted that this new "emphasis on duties and responsibilities, rather than rights" would be mostly rhetorical.[96]

Traditional values, including "self-discipline and fidelity,"[97] were certainly on the agenda, but not in the way Major had anticipated. There were two problems. The first one was that Major's cabinet soon had to deal with a procession of serial adulterers and an assortment of sexual delinquents from within the Tory Party itself. The second problem was that tradition had become more socially acceptable than ever. *Good Housekeeping*, for instance, not just any magazine, had already claimed that male chauvinism and female victimhood were things of the past; the future lay with women as the "new traditionalists."[98] Tradition was certainly no longer the sole prerogative of Conservatives.

This is where Tony Blair came in. In 1994 he issued a statement, "strong on vision and short on pledges," in which he revealed his ambition "to retain Labour's traditional values but put them in a modern setting."[99] A year later the *Times* reproduced part of another speech by Blair:

> The family is important because it is in the family that self-respect and respect for others are learnt. It is in the family that the limits of freedom are first experienced and the roots of responsibility are put down. The family is the antithesis of narrow selfishness. From the family, we build out into broader society. I believe in a moral obligation to help those worse off or weak or unemployed. Here is where the traditional values of the Left, applied sensibly and practically to the modern world, are its strength. It can fashion a new moral purpose for the nation.[100]

If the single, capitalised word "Left" in this quotation were replaced with "Right," a trueblood Tory would have found the message entirely palatable. Labour had defeated the Conservatives on their own ground.

The triumph did not last long. The "hard, struggling no-nonsense voice of Middle Britain" wanted a better life; it might become all gooey about traditional values but it had no interest in hearing politicians talk about them.[101] Admittedly, Blair's rhetoric was unsurpassed. The *Times* tended to present Tony Blair as an extremely talented orator whose speeches managed to make any audience feel that it really belonged. To what, exactly, it was supposed to belong was not always so clear. Experts who analysed Blair's language found a distinct preference for "bringing together apparent opposites, linking them with 'and' or 'but,' and conveying them as though available jointly rather than as alternatives." By running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, rhetorically speaking, Blair was able to compress an all-inclusive message into a single 839-word speech consisting of numerous paired opposites:

- ambition and compassion
- head and heart
- invest and also change
- social justice and opportunity
- unite work with business but pursue social justice
- different but more reasonable
- continue but make sure
- punished but offered rehabilitation
- quickly but properly

Meanwhile, the most famous example of Blair's (and his speech writers') ability to merge left- and right-wing language by conjoining disjunctions remained Labour's sublimated antithesis "traditional values in a modern setting."[102]

One commentator (the erstwhile Marxist Mick Hume) noted that ostensibly right-wing rhetoric was now spurned by the intellectual elite, so that "the champions of traditional values have retreated before the politics of cultural relativism, difference and identity." "Western civilisation has become a dirty expression."[103] But what may have applied to the intelligentsia did not apply to society at large. Despite "the liberal supremacy in media circles, ordinary people" still clung to traditional values. Society revelled openly in them, so much so that some twenty-first-century Conservatives based hope for recovery on a message of "faith, the flag and family."[104]

In the *Times* the bigram "traditional values" (and its corollary "family values," which became so pervasive between 1980 and 2010 that it deserves separate analysis) was now appropriated by anyone who felt the need to express a "conservative" outlook on life. Personal dating advertisements offer a fine illustration of this penchant for trivialities. Ads began to invoke traditional values around 1990. "It could change your life," advertised a "gentleman farmer with sporting Interests," on the look-out for a "young woman of breeding and education with traditional values." A "cantankerous old codger" sought a "strong-minded, smartly turned out merry widow," middle-aged, intelligent, well-educated, good background, and stocked with traditional values.[105] Not long after, references to traditional values, as something single people with a conservative mind-set valued in prospective soulmates, hit the roof (figure 9). The term had become a part of everyday speech.

It is difficult to discern a specific pattern in the associations these ads made with traditional values, other than what one would have expected, given the presumably rather elitist *Times* readership. Male and female advertisers shared upscale hobbies like music, theatre, art, travelling, cooking, and countryside activities. They put great store by their appearance. They expected potential partners to be cultured, refined, successful, professional, well-balanced, sociable, humorous, and intelligent. Very occasionally people identified themselves as being Christian, Greek Orthodox or otherwise religious, but usually companion seekers did not advertise their ideologies. One notable exception was an "attractive writer," a female Oxford graduate who sought "a gentleman of intellect, culture and traditional values" whom she expected to be "kind, interested in politics and soundly right wing."[106] The lady in question apparently had some difficulties in finding a spouse; she began at age 39 in 2007, curiously turned 44 only two years later, and was still at it in 2010.

BEYOND THE CONSERVATIVE

Tracking several strands of conservative rhetoric, from "conservative principles" through "conservative values" to "traditional values," I have tried to map out part of a moral language we might call "conservative." This has led to some interesting discoveries. Specific phrases clearly followed specific historical trajectories. Principles were replaced by values. Political options began to be couched explicitly in moral terms after the 1960s: political rhetoric was moralised, as it were. This played out in the ideological differences between the Left and the Right, a tension sublimated in the 1980s by the assimilation of conservative rhetoric into popular discourse. British society as a whole seemed to have made a spectacular turn to tradition, or at least to a general conservative rhetoric promoting traditional values.

By 2010, this seemingly conservative rhetoric had practically become mainstream. Reading the *Times*, it seemed that small government and national identity were the only options left to develop further a politics that could somehow be called "conservative," and even these options were no longer always identifiably "right-wing." The fact that since the 1960s people with a conservative mind-set have found it difficult to discover a rhetoric that could replace the once self-evident discourse on "conservative principles" is less interesting than the fact that these new forms of rhetoric emerged from a tension with modernity provoked especially by the "sixties." Yet, as time moved on permissiveness itself became a relative notion, so that it was unclear what it was, exactly, that needed to be conserved. But this wrestling with modernity applied not just to conservatism; it presumably applied to all moral languages that grew out of that problematic category, the "modern."

We tend to categorise moral languages as ideologies, as, e.g., "Enlightened," "liberal," "Christian," "nationalist," or "conservative," but these simple labels often do more justice to ordering the present than to understanding the past, and vice versa. What I hope to have made clear is that digital history techniques help us to identify the changing clusters of words that come together in moral languages. This article's focus on principles and values, both conservative and traditional, has allowed us to touch on the complexity of these shifting fields. The challenge is to break them down into the normative, dynamic rhetorical elements that constitute them. That would allow us to appreciate a different, more complex, ambiguous, and varied past, and help us conceive of different futures in a present that seems to have lost its bearings.

NOTES

1. "Right foot forward, march," *Times* (Sept. 25, 1997), 38. All references to the *Times* are through *The Times Digital Archive* (https://www.gale.com/intl/c/the-times-digital-archive) and accessed in April 2019.

2. "principle, n.," *OED* Online (Oxford, Oxford University Press), accessed April 29, 2019.

3. The reference is to Disraeli, *Coningsby, or The New Generation*, Vol. III, Book viii, Chapter iii.

4. This does not just apply to the English language. Cf. for example the Dutch word for principles, *beginselen*, which is still in use but has a nineteenth-century flavour; see "beginsel" in http://gtb.ivdnt.org/, accessed April 8, 2019.

5. Disraeli, *Coningsby*, Vol. I, Book iii, Chapter v.

6. For this research the full dataset of the *Times* was used, made available by Gale as XML files, which were then converted to CSV for further processing. No further OCR correction was done.

7. For a history of conservative ideas, see E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism. Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

8. "Conservative Values Past, Present and for the Future," *Times* (July 23, 2001), 15.

9. The recent literature includes: Emily Jones, *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830–1914. An Intellectual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Richard Bourke, "What Is Conservatism? History, Ideology and Party," *European Journal of Political Theory* 17 (2018), 449–75.

10. N-grams were calculated per year on the basis of all newspapers. Only n-grams with a frequency higher than 4 over the whole corpus (1784–2010) were taken into consideration.

11. See note 2.

12. "British Association," *Times* (Aug 2, 1907), 9 (on physiological inquiry in London).

13. "Conservatism," *Times* (May 9, 1930), 10, a review of Feiling's *What Is Conservatism?* (1930). On Feiling: Reba N. Soffer, *History, Historians, and Conservatism in Britain and America: From the Great War to Thatcher and Reagan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 86–109.

14. "Private Correspondence," *Times* (Feb. 13, 1823), 3; "Despatch from the Count de Nesselrode," *Times* (Jan. 20, 1823), 3.

15. "House of Commons," *Times* (Nov. 21, 1837), 2.

16. "London, Tuesday, August 3, 1841," *Times* (Aug. 3, 1841), 4.

17. The trigrams "one nation," "tory," "tories," "toryism," "conservatism," "conservative(s)," and "party" occur 250 times from 1971 onwards. In "Why Tories Are Unpopular," *Times* (Jan. 12, 1996), 1, Thatcher was reported castigating John Major's pro-European politics as "no-nation Conservatism." On the one-nation tradition, see Robert Walsha, "The One Nation Group and One Nation Conservatism, 1950–2002," *Contemporary British History* 17, no. 2, 69–120; David Seawright, *The British Conservative Party and One Nation Politics* (New York: Continuum, 2010); Stephen Evans, "The Not So Odd Couple: Margaret Thatcher and One Nation Conservatism," *Contemporary British History*, 23, no. 1 (March 2009), 101–21.

18. "The British Constitution," *Times* (Mar. 20, 1832), 3.

19. "The Peel Banquet," *Times* (May 14, 1838), 5.

20. "Conservative Dinner at Birmingham," *Times* (Dec. 20, 1838), 3.

21. "Mr. Bright at Birmingham," *Times* (Apr. 25, 1859), 11.

22. "Election Intelligence," *Times* (Mar. 19, 1867), 12.

23. "Equal Sacrifice in Industry," *Times* (July 2, 1925), 13. On the rejection of socialism, see G. C. Webber, *The Ideology of the British Right, 1918–1939* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

24. "Manifesto by 'Die-Hards,'" *Times* (Mar. 8, 1922), 14. See N. C. Fleming, "Diehard Conservatism, Mass Democracy, and Indian Constitutional Reform, c. 1918–35," *Parliamentary History* 32, no. 2 (2013), 337–60.

25. "Mr. Baldwin on Defence," *Times* (May 2, 1936), 8. On the Primrose League, Mitzi Auchterlonie, *Conservative Suffragists: The Women's Vote and the Tory Party* (New York: Tauris, 2007).

26. "Prime Minister on Defence of Europe," *Times* (Oct. 12, 1953), 11.

27. "The Conservative Path for 'Putting Britain Right Ahead,'" (Oct. 7, 1965), 18. See Peter Dorey and Mark Garnett, "'The Weaker-Willed, the Craven-Hearted': The Decline of One Nation Conservatism," *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought* 5, no. 1 (2015), 69–91.

28. "Republicans Already Staking Claims for 1996 Nomination," *Times* (Jan. 13, 1993), 11.

29. "Right's Knight Issues Challenge to Bush," *Times* (Dec. 11, 1991), 8.

30. "Right Foot Forward, March," *Times* (Sept. 25, 1997), 38.

31. "Christian Conservatism," *Times* (Dec. 7, 1998), 23.

32. Unigram and bigram embeddings were created mostly per five-year period in all cases with a minimum of 100 million tokens per period after stop word removal, on the basis of the following article genres in the *Times*: "Law," "News," "Sport," "Letters to the Editor," "News in Brief," "Reviews," "Editorials/Leaders," "Business and Finance," "Politics and Parliament," "Arts and Entertainment," "Feature Articles (aka Opinion)," and "Obituaries." Gensim's word2vec (https://radimrehurek.com/gensim/models/word2vec.html) was used with the following settings: size=160, window=10, iter=12, min_count=3, workers=3.

33. "value, n.," *OED* Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press), accessed April 29, 2019.

34. "Soviet Convinced of Risks, Says Lord Home," *Times* (Oct. 12, 1961), 6.

35. "Why Mrs Thatcher Should Join the Real Tories," *Times* (Oct. 5. 1982), 10.

36. "We Are Only in Our Third Term, and a Woman's Work Is Never Done," *Times* (May 26, 1988), 12.

37. "The New Young Embrace the 'Older' Values," *Times* (Nov. 26, 1982), 14; "European Teenagers Value Money above Personal Happiness," *Times* (May 11, 1989), 3.

38. "The Right Hopes It Can at Last Court Favour," *Times* (June 21, 1986), 5.

39. Cf. "MPs in New Group Are 'Steeped in Traditional Tory Values,' says Pym," *Times* (May 15, 1985), 4, on the "Conservative Centre Forward" group.

40. "I Will Not Make the Same Mistake," *Times* (July 4, 2001), 12.

41. "Why Tories Should Vote Labour," *Times* (June 24, 1994), 16; based on Gray's *The Undoing of Conservatism* (1994).

42. Joris van Eijnatten and Ruben Ros, "The Eurocentric Fallacy: A Digital Approach to the Rise of Modernity, Civilization and Europe," *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* (2019).

43. The networks were generated in Gephi: filtered on degree > 75; the modularity was set to 3 clusters; no OCR corrections were done. The network layout is based on the Fruchterman-Reingold algorithm.

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45. "Herr Hitler's Thirteen Points," *Times* (May 22, 1935), 16.

46. "Japan Keeps the Mask on Mishima," *Times* (June 19, 1985), 12.

47. "Pakistan's New Shape," *Times* (Dec. 29, 1952), 7.

48. "Problems of the New Burma," *Times* (Aug. 22, 1955), 7.

49. "An Alienated Elite," *Times* (Nov. 18, 1968), VII; "Elite Point Tasks Ahead," *Times* (Jan. 8, 1969), II; "Indians on the March—A Crucial Choice," *Times* (Feb. 26, 1969), VII; "Collapse of Farm Economy," *Times* (Apr. 27, 1970), 26; "Mobutu—A Personal Portrait," *Times* (Nov. 24, 1972), III; "Conditions in Iran," *Times* (Sept. 22, 1978), 15; "Moroccans Fast in Daylight but Feast by Night," *Times* (June 14, 1983), 5.

50. "Letter from Dar es Salaam," *Times* (Mar. 4, 1975), XIV.

51. "Order in the Midst of Strife," *Times* (Aug. 29, 1970), I.

52. "Managers Must Be Ready for Revolutionary Changes," *Times* (Sept. 8, 1965), 7.

53. "Consultants: A Major Force in Engineering," *Times* (Aug. 9, 1971), 14.

54. "Traditional West Undergoing Process of Change," *Times* (Nov. 7, 1958), 11.

55. "France's Feminine Feminist," *Times* (May 14, 1969), 11.

56. "Mazowsze," *Times* (July 23, 1976), 11.

57. "Necks Please," *Times* (Jan. 18, 1994), 18.

58. "The Victoria Hotel," *Times* (May 26, 1994), 2.

59. "Hamperpeople," *Times* (May 21, 2001), 19.

60. "Courses and Seminars Review 1981," *Times* (Aug. 17, 1981), 20 (on Buckswood Grange).

61. "Austin Rover," *Times* (Jan. 8, 1985), 7.

62. "John Mowlem & Company Plc," *Times* (Apr. 19, 1985), 17.

63. "Isle of Man," *Times* (Feb. 21, 1986), 23.

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66. "Italians Fear Growth of Gangster Violence," *Times* (Sept. 27, 1967), 5.

67. "Who Breaks a Butterfly on a Wheel?," *Times* (July 1, 1967), 11.

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