

This is the final author version post peer review of: Moss J, Clarke N, Jennings W, and Stoker G (forthcoming) ‘Golden age, apathy, or stealth? Democratic engagement in Britain, 1945-1950’, *Contemporary British History*, accepted for publication 27/03/16.

Abstract

This article revisits democratic engagement in post-war Britain in a context of debates about political disaffection in the current period. The study systematically re-analysed volunteer writing in the Mass Observation Archive and represents a significant methodological advance on previous studies. Little evidence was found to support common existing interpretations: whether ‘golden age’ narratives of deference to authority, partisan alignment, and high voter turnout; or revisionist accounts of apathy. Instead, evidence was found of something akin to what Hibbing and Theiss-Morse call ‘stealth democracy’. Citizens thought democracy to be important and felt a duty to vote, but wished for government by experts in the national interest. This ‘stealth’ interpretation builds on existing studies of duty, populism, and expertise in twentieth-century Britain. It helps to move discussion of democratic engagement after the Second World War beyond the binaries of self/collective and private/public, and to explain the paradox of high voter turnout in a context of hostility to party politics. It also promises to inform debates about declining political support in the current period.

Key words

Britain, post-war, democracy, politics, Mass Observation.

Looking back from the ‘Age of Anti-politics’

Historians need to keep revisiting the formal politics of post-war Britain, not least because it is often positioned, implicitly or explicitly, as a ‘golden age’ in debates about rising political disaffection. These debates are informed by a large literature in Political Science on declining satisfaction with government, trust in politicians, interest in formal politics, membership of political parties, and turnout in elections.¹ In the build up to the 2015 General Election, such debates gave rise to claims by journalists of an ‘age of anti-politics’, when voters feel disconnected from politics and angry with politicians, while politicians feel insecure in the face of such anger, or an ‘era of anti-politics’, when citizens don’t join political parties, don’t trust politicians, feel alienated from politics, feel that Westminster is powerless to effect meaningful change, turn to small parties, prefer their MPs to be more constituency-focused, and prefer coalition government to majority government.² Of course, these debates also

include other positions. Historians of popular politics have claimed that public apathy and cynicism towards formal politics are by no means new.³ Meanwhile, some have understood withdrawal from formal politics as part of a public reorientation of political engagement that has increasingly centred on citizens' private interests and participation in new social-movements and non-governmental organisations since the Second World War.⁴ In the context of these debates, it remains important for historians to continue investigating citizen-engagement with formal politics, asking what formal politics meant to citizens in the past and what and how citizens thought about democracy.

The next section summarises the historiography. Existing interpretations of popular politics between 1945 and 1950 have generally been divided between narratives of a 'golden age', emphasising high levels of voter turn-out, party membership, and support for the two main parties; and revisionist accounts of apathy, focusing on the prevalence of self-interest, cynicism, and anti-party feeling evidenced in the press and opinion polls. This article aims to supplement existing accounts by identifying popular understandings of democracy present in the writing of respondents to Mass Observation (MO). Our first contribution is methodological. Existing accounts of political engagement in the post-war period have drawn on MO as a source of contemporary attitudes and opinion, utilising the organisation's File Reports, Topic Collections, or Publications. We move beyond these significantly mediated syntheses of volunteer writing and return to the 'raw data'. We propose a 'horizontal' way of reading MO material to identify the cultural resources respondents used and shared with each other – and, plausibly, with citizens more broadly – as they constructed and expressed their understandings, expectations, and judgements of politics and democracy.

We identify a discursive repertoire used by many respondents when writing about formal politics. This was made up of numerous cultural resources or categories. Two main stories were that democracy was important and party politics was unnecessary. These narratives were constituted by numerous storylines, including that citizens had a duty to participate, and party-politics was little more than mud-slinging. They were also populated by numerous prototypical characters, including the independent candidate and the statesman.

The concluding section discusses these findings in relation to existing interpretations of post-war democratic engagement. Historians often describe the combination of negativity towards politicians and high levels of political participation during this period as a paradox.⁵ But focusing on the raw data of MO makes visible how this apparent contradiction between attitudes and behaviour made sense to citizens at the time. They viewed their own interests as part of a common local or national interest. They did not operate with binaries of

self/collective and private/public. They expressed negativity towards politics and politicians, but not a desire for more participatory democracy. We suggest that Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's writing on stealth democracy provides a useful framework in which to view democratic engagement at this moment in contemporary British history; a short period when people held negative views about formal politics but participated in representative democracy to an extent not witnessed since. Stealth democracy, for Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, is a folk theory of how democracy does or should work. Political debate is understood by citizens to be not only unpleasant but also pointless, because consensus is presumed to exist about the common good. Within this model, government is expected to make decisions based on objective knowledge and expertise, rather than personal or partisan interests.⁶ From reading MO materials, we find a rejection of party politics and a preference for independent 'statesmen', which we argue reflected a wider preference for stealth democracy shared among British citizens during the immediate post-war period. By focusing on citizens' folk theories of democracy, we move debates beyond the question of participation versus apathy. We show that deference and partisanship have been significantly overestimated for this period. And we help to explain the paradox, commonly perceived, between hostility towards party politics and popular support for representative democracy after the Second World War.

1945-1950: 'Golden Age' or 'Age of Apathy'?

The 1945 General Election is widely understood as a significant turning point in modern British history. Labour won their first ever majority government and introduced a wide-ranging programme of social and economic reform, establishing the foundations of a political consensus that was sustained until the 1970s. Historical accounts of popular politics in the immediate post-war period have focused on questions of why Labour won the election in 1945, before losing in 1951; and the impact of the Second World War on political attitudes.

For some, the 1945 election represented the beginning of a 'golden age' for British politics. By comparison to the present period, turnout was high and support for the two main parties was high. It was estimated that 45 per cent of the public listened to election broadcasts on the radio and large numbers flocked to outdoor meetings to see politicians in the flesh.⁷ Party membership grew to unprecedented levels.⁸ In 1951, turnout reached a record high of 91 per cent (adjusted) and support for the two main parties reached 97 per cent.⁹ For historians on the left, Labour's first parliamentary majority represented the highpoint of post-war enthusiasm and consensus for social democracy. The 'people's war' strengthened left-wing feeling and produced a sense of national purpose and social reconciliation, not least

through conscription, evacuation, rationing, and communal air-raid shelters. Labour's victory was a consequence of greater public engagement and support for collectivism, planning, and egalitarian principles.¹⁰ Some argue that Labour did not go far enough to meet the new demands of the radicalised electorate.¹¹

This 'golden age' interpretation of the immediate post-war period forms one basis for theories in Political Studies about the decline of deference and partisan dealignment. The former holds that affluence and rising living standards transformed the relationship between citizens and the state in post-war industrial democracies.¹² Better-educated citizens with 'post-material' values are understood to have become less accepting of 'traditional' social and political authorities, and more likely to engage in elite challenging forms of politics.¹³ Partisan dealignment connects declining political support to an erosion of citizens' partisan identities in the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁴ Both theories appear to assume that citizens operated with higher levels of respect for political authorities and a deeper attachment to political parties in the 1940s than in the current period.

Steven Fielding and colleagues have questioned this 'golden age' narrative and especially the idea that war politicised the electorate.¹⁵ They argue that voters turned to Labour as a reaction against the Conservatives, rather than as 'a tidal wave of left-wing fervour'.¹⁶ The 'spirit of 1945' was a myth and few people voted for Labour because they desired socialism or social democracy.¹⁷ Citizens supported the implementation of the 1942 Beveridge Report out of individual self-interest and were indifferent to broader projects of social transformation. In the words of Fielding et al, 'most people remained preoccupied with their private spheres' and 'uninterested in wider events'.¹⁸ According to this interpretation, citizens 'turned away from party politics'; they were dispirited, unfocused, and operated under 'a cloak of apathy'.¹⁹ The implications of this argument extend into the post-war period. It is suggested that Labour's failure to establish democratic socialism as a dominant force in British politics resulted not from the party's failure but from the reluctance of British citizens to support a participatory political culture.²⁰

This revisionist interpretation of post-war popular politics has been labelled 'the apathy school' by James Hinton, who criticises it for its binary division between personal concerns or private ends on the one hand, and big issues or political abstractions or the public realm or the public good on the other – noting how there is no clear division between the two sets, with the latter often constituting a means to pursuing the former (and so not necessarily evidence of apathy).²¹ More recently, there has been a reassertion that popular opinion swung to the left during the war and that Labour won by successfully identifying itself with popular

dissatisfaction with the pre-war social order and popular aspirations for a more egalitarian and democratic political nation.²² Responses to ‘the apathy school’ have demonstrated that popular support for the Labour party was more widespread than Fielding et al suggest, citing opinion polls and the lack of tactical-voting against Conservative candidates as evidence.²³ Labour won the election by appealing to an alliance of progressive middle-class ‘workers by brain’ and ‘workers by hand’, who made an active choice to vote Labour because they believed the party would improve their experiences of inter-war insecurity.²⁴ Post-war austerity, the loss of domestic servants, and the growing assertiveness of organised labour generated an anti-socialist reaction from the middle classes who voted Conservative in 1950 and 1951.²⁵

To date, historical analyses have focused on citizens’ attitudes towards specific political parties and ideologies, apathy has been measured in terms of popular support for parties and policies, and analysis has relied on newspapers, popular literature, opinion polls, surveys, and some relatively unsystematic treatment of MO materials. Kevin Jefferys has provided a useful synthesis of survey data and existing studies of political attitudes and levels of participation from the Great War to the present day.²⁶ He argues that Britain never possessed a vibrant political culture and there has been no decline from some ‘golden age’ to a contemporary period of crisis.²⁷ In doing so, however, Jefferys draws heavily on Fielding et al, using that same binary division criticised by Hinton; in this case, between personal things or private affairs or issues of immediate relevance on the one hand, and political abstractions or public affairs or the great issues of the day on the other.²⁸ This division obscures the possibility that citizens may imagine their own personal interests to be shared by other members of a singular public – something we return to below. It also reflects the categories of commentators at the time, including MO researchers, which may not have been the same as the categories of many citizens. In all this, the idea that citizens could hold their own understandings of and expectations for democracy remains unexplored. The remainder of this article focuses on theories of democracy evident in the relatively unmediated volunteer writing of MO panellists.

Re-reading Mass Observation

MO was a social research organisation established in 1937 by Tom Harrison, Charles Madge, and Humphrey Jennings with the aim of developing ‘a science of ourselves’. MO conducted research into everyday life in Britain by two primary means: first, through a team of researchers who carried out questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation studies in

particular communities; and second, through a panel of volunteer writers who recorded diaries and day surveys, and responded to monthly open-ended questions called ‘directives’. Laura Beers connects the organisation to the inception of opinion polling in British politics. Launched in the same year as the British Index of Public Opinion (BIPO), MO claimed to offer a ‘scientific understanding’ of public opinion on politics and a multitude of other social and cultural issues.²⁹ As a result, material from the MO archive has been used as evidence of political attitudes in the past, albeit in a relatively unsystematic way.

For example, Fielding et al and Jefferys both draw on material collected by MO to construct their accounts of political engagement in the immediate post-war period from the perspective of ‘ordinary people’ or ‘the population at large’.³⁰ Both use a combination of File Reports and Topic Collections, alongside opinion polls and social surveys. We see two problems with this approach. First, these sources only provide a mediated and brief glimpse into what is a vast and complex body of heterogeneous data. File Reports provide top level summaries and conclusions of the findings of each MO study. According to Tom Jeffrey, ‘these reports were based on a minute part of the raw material now available in the archive.’³¹ Topic Collections contain the data MO researchers selected as evidence to use in their published studies, including a range of questionnaire responses, interview responses, overhears, and ephemera.³² Such collections of material have been criticised because they are more likely to reflect the views and values of the MO researcher than of those being observed.³³

The second problem with this approach is the premise that such material could provide a direct window onto the political views of ‘ordinary people’. It has been well established that participants in MO were anything but ‘ordinary’.³⁴ Almost by definition, they were particularly dutiful citizens. It is therefore unsurprising to find that participants expressed dismay at the apathy of their fellow citizens, which was reflected in the conclusions of MO’s own publications, and again in those of historians relying on these publications.³⁵ Yet such criticisms do not mean that material from MO cannot offer insights into popular understandings of politics in the past. We now explain how this might be so by discussing strategies for sampling and analysis of MO data.

Between 1945 and 1950, MO asked its panel of volunteer writers to record their engagements with and thoughts and feelings about politics on 22 separate occasions. The panel varied in size from 400 to 1000 writers during this period. Open-ended directives asked for panellists’ views on elections, political parties, politicians, and local councils. For this article, we selected eight of these directives for analysis, listed below in Table 1. They

include directives asking about politics in general, excluding those asking about just one politician, party, or government (e.g. ‘the current Labour Government’) – because we are interested in declining support for political institutions more than public opinion regarding particular actors. We also avoided directives where questions were repeated from previous directives within only a year or two of those questions having been asked, not least to keep the dataset at a manageable size. By focusing on the raw data – the responses of MO panellists, relatively unmediated by researchers of the time – our approach is significantly different to previous studies of political attitudes found in MO.

Table 1: Selected Mass Observation directives

| Code | Date | Relevant question/task | Number of responses |
|--------------|--------------|--|---------------------|
| SxMOA1/3/84 | Feb/Mar 1945 | 5) What would you say is your normal conversational attitude when talk gets round to each of the following groups of people: a) clergymen; b) politicians; c) doctors; d) advertising agents; e) lawyers; f) scientists. | 161 |
| SxMOA1/3/86 | May/Jun 1945 | 1) Please report at intervals on the election campaign in your constituency and people’s feelings about it. 4) What is your present attitude to: a) the Conservative Party; b) the Labour Party; c) the Liberal Party; d) the Communist Party; e) the Commonwealth Party. 5) What would you say are the chief points in the Liberal Party policy, and how would you say their policy differed from the Labour and Conservative Party policies respectively? | 98 |
| SxMOA1/3/88 | Nov 1945 | 1a) How much interest do you and other people you know take in municipal elections? How important do you think they are? Did you vote in your municipal election last month? If not, why not, and if so, describe your reason for voting as you did. 1b) Do you consider your local council to be a good or bad one? Why? | 160 |
| SxMOA1/3/102 | Jun 1947 | 1) Give in as much detail as you like your views on recent pronouncements of policy by each of the political parties and by Government. Arrange in this order: a) Labour Party; b) Conservative Party; c) Liberal Party; d) Communist Party; e) Government. Write this without referring to any pamphlets etc. you may have about the house, and, if you haven’t been following political party policies at all, say so. 2) When you have finished Q1, if you have any recent political party publications in the house which you have already | 420 |

| | | | |
|--------------|----------|--|-----|
| | | read, please refer to them and describe your reactions to them in detail, saying which parts or points in them especially affect you and how. | |
| SxMOA1/3/121 | May 1949 | 3) What is your attitude to the principle of obedience to a 'party line' (regardless of the political colour of the party) in the case of: a) members of Parliament; and b) rank and file members of a political party. | 476 |
| SxMOA1/3/123 | Aug 1949 | 1) Do you intend at the moment to vote the same way at the next Parliamentary elections as you did at the last? If not, please give reasons in detail. In all cases, please let us know how you voted last time (if you did vote then) and how you intend to vote next time. 2) Regardless of his political beliefs, how effectively do you think the MP for your constituency represents you in Parliament? | 351 |
| SxMOA1/3/113 | Jul 1950 | 4) How do you feel about: a) Atlee; b) Churchill; c) Bevin; d) Cripps? | 369 |
| SxMOA1/3/116 | Nov 1950 | 2) Which political party do you most of all sympathise with a present? Give an account of the development of your feelings about politics and of your political outlook and sympathies. | 336 |

Some will remain concerned about the representativeness and social constitution of the MO panel. For Jeffrey, the original MO was a social movement of the radicalised lower middle class.³⁶ For Hinton, while not all the original panellists were lower middle class, that group was certainly over-represented, along with people from London and the South East, and people of the Left.³⁷ To address these concerns, we sampled within the panel. Information about age, gender, occupation, and place of residence was available for all panellists. We sampled 60 respondents for each directive, seeking to include a range of responses from people holding a range of social and geographical positions in British society. For the purposes of this article, we collected 480 responses to 8 directives, which amounted to 705 sides of A4 paper (typed and single-spaced).

More importantly, our analytical approach reduced the significance of the social constitution of the panel. Following Hinton, we did not read the responses as representative of understandings of people in general or of particular genders, age groups, occupational groups, or regions. Hinton argues that MO panellists are unique and not representative of broader society.³⁸ Instead, he suggests how these particularly reflective people provide access to the cultural world they and others inhabit – a world of newspapers, advice manuals, novels, films etc; a world of discourse; a world of raw materials from which people in general construct their own unique selfhoods.³⁹ Hinton advocates what might be called a 'vertical'

approach to analysis, whereby individual contributors are followed over a series of contributions to MO. He argues that by focusing on the life histories of individuals and ‘paying attention to their self-fashioning, we may have come closer to glimpsing those deeply personal processes from which history’s vast impersonal forces are, in the end, constructed’.⁴⁰

Our approach seeks to learn from Hinton, but our starting point was a little different. Rather than focusing on the construction of selfhood and the democratisation of everyday life, we were searching for shared understandings, expectations, and judgements regarding formal politics. We wanted to establish these for certain moments of contemporary British history. These objectives demanded a more ‘horizontal’ approach to analysis, focused on as many contributors as possible, from as many social and geographical positions as possible, and the stories and categories they held in common with each other – and, plausibly, with other citizens too (in their families, friendship networks, workplaces, and so on). For the cultural resources found in the writing of MO panellists did not exist in a vacuum, but were drawn from what LeMahieu describes as ‘a common culture’, which by the 1930s circulated across music, newspapers, literature, cinema, radio, and advertising. This common culture provided a shared frame of reference in which individuals from widely divergent groups could develop common understandings.⁴¹

The focus of this paper is the systematic analysis of MO directive responses. We believe that such responses tell us what citizens drew from LeMahieu’s common culture. But later in the paper, we discuss findings from this single source in relation to findings from existing studies of newspapers, literature, cinema etc. from the time. We also acknowledge some limitations of the horizontal approach we take to the MO data. In seeking commonalities, it is likely to downplay ambiguity and complexity in the MO material. By not following individuals, it is likely to downplay the role of individual agency in social change. We have sought to keep these limitations in mind during analysis and interpretation. For example, we have read transcripts not only for shared cultural resources but also for how panellists interact with such categories as individuals. We have taken more than brief snapshots by using eight directives across a period of five years. Most importantly, we have not sought representation but have instead read for the cultural world inhabited by panellists; the discursive resources available to them from which unique selfhood might be constructed, but also from which popular understanding might be constructed.

In post-structuralism, narratives, storylines, subject positions etc. sometimes fit together into discursive repertoires or higher-level discourses.⁴² Cognitive anthropology provides a

similar framework, with prototypical entities, roles, and events sometimes combining with daily experiences to make up worldviews or folk theories.⁴³ We follow these compatible and in some ways overlapping approaches and read the MO material not only for cultural resources but also for the cultural models or folk theories citizens fashion from both cultural resources and daily experiences, and use to guide their behaviour. Political scientists have recently sought to identify folk theories of democracy among citizens using survey questions.⁴⁴ We argue that folk theories of democracy are seen more easily, and in all of their richness, in the qualitative data collected by MO.

In some respects, our approach is akin to that of Gazeley and Langhamer, who read MO materials for ‘proverbs, truisms, and everyday episteme’ by which respondents constructed and expressed their views on happiness.⁴⁵ The writing which for Gazeley and Langhamer can be used to construct ‘meaning of life frameworks’, we believe can be used to establish folk theories of democracy.⁴⁶ The remainder of this article adopts this approach to seek a better understanding of democratic engagement in the immediate post-war period. We seek to identify the cultural resources MO panellists used to construct understandings, expectations, and judgements of democracy. Rather than simply suggesting that Britain has ‘always had an anaemic political culture’, we show how citizens shared quite distinct understandings of politics and democracy in the immediate post-war period.⁴⁷

Stories of democracy, politicians, and party politics

The 1945 General Election was rather unusual in some respects. It had been ten years since the last election and many citizens were voting for the first time at the end of a war against spreading totalitarianism. Unsurprisingly, many respondents to MO shared the story that democracy was important when they wrote about formal politics. One prominent category that helped in constituting this narrative, found across multiple responses to the eight directives between 1945 and 1950, was the duty to vote and to take an interest in democracy. Duty was a norm panellists mobilised in their writing: ‘I feel it is a duty to vote in a democratic country’ or ‘my interest in party politics (so far as it goes) is a matter of a sense of duty, not spontaneous’.⁴⁸ Another respondent offered a similar view: ‘I believe that we are not worthy of democracy (the highest form of government) unless we take some interest in the way our community is governed. It is a Christian’s duty to vote for the system which he believes to be the fairest to everyone’.⁴⁹ Panellist 2818 had ‘gotten to the stage when I vote because one has a duty to do so’.⁵⁰ Respondents also stressed the importance of a duty to participate in local elections. Panellist 3120 ‘voted because of a) duty b) interest in public

affairs'.⁵¹ Another respondent noted how 'There seems to be a general feeling (justified I think) that it is one's duty to vote'.⁵² For panellist 2703, 'I think it is the duty of [each] elector to inform himself or herself about the issues at stake, and if he or she can come to a decision about the matter, to use the vote'.⁵³

Many respondents connected this duty of citizenship to a storyline about the apathetic masses. Panellist 1095 'attach[ed] much importance to local elections and regret[ted] apathy'.⁵⁴ Panellist 1974 reported in her election diary that she overheard a Tory supporter say 'we'll win this election with the apathy of the people'.⁵⁵ Another respondent was 'disappointed to find I wasn't on the register this time [...] I heard around the village about the elections. Complete apathy, apparently'.⁵⁶ Panellist 2511 observed how 'there is already a noticeable feeling of apathy, distrust, cynicism, and frustration, which spreads outside politics'.⁵⁷ Writing about the local elections, respondent 2865 explained that 'most people in Sutton were [...] unaware an election was in progress [...] The result was of course that the Socialists gained two seats, which were obviously due to the apathy of the local Conservatives'.⁵⁸ Panellist 3307 commented that 'I am interested and so are people who are interested here in politics. Otherwise I find complete apathy'.⁵⁹

Dutiful citizens emphasised the importance of democracy and distinguished themselves from the apathetic masses. Respondent 1016 reported in her election diary that 'CWS insurance agent and Labour man calls as usual. We talk politics. He talks that the Birtley council contains the most ignorant lot in the country. The Jew bag ignorant mouths elect whom they want and the rest [...] are apathetic'.⁶⁰ Another panellist reported how 'Now that the election is over, people in the office seem quite apathetic about the results'.⁶¹ Respondent 1644 explained that:

[M]ost rank and file members of any party have no 'opinions' where they are strong party members. They chatter out slogans, clichés, and stock arguments without any background of reading or experience. Or so I find. These are the backbone of party politics and they are at least one step above the apathetic unthinking mass.⁶²

Other respondents used the category of the indifferent or irresponsible masses to write about their political views. One panellist was 'disturbed' by the 'vast mass of ignorant people [...] The voting I thought very irresponsible', or 'at present, numbers of people are ignorant and [...] would vote for any fool', or 'this election has shown me one thing – how politically uninformed and immature everyone is who doesn't make politics their special concern'.⁶³

Respondent 1210 regarded ‘municipal Elections as very important indeed, and have been heard to go on record as disapproving of those who take no interest in them’.⁶⁴

A consequence of this widely shared story about democracy being important was that some respondents felt guilty about their lack of knowledge, interest, or participation in politics. One respondent was ‘ashamed to confess I took next to no interest in the Municipal elections’.⁶⁵ ‘I should really be attending more meetings’, wrote another panellist in his election diary.⁶⁶ When asked about their voting intention for the 1950 election, respondent 2675 felt that ‘to abstain from voting would be really most honest – but that is generally regarded as a sign of indifference and bad citizenship’.⁶⁷ Another panellist wrote that ‘I take less interest than I should. In theory I’m interested but in practice I wouldn’t do anything unless it was made easy’.⁶⁸ Respondent 2903 was ‘afraid that I have not paid very much attention recently to the policy of any political party’ but was keen to stress that ‘normally, I take an intelligent interest in politics and like to discuss such topics with people’.⁶⁹ Another panellist wrote: ‘I do realise that they should be more important to me, but I am so little interested in politics and local elections do tend to become more and more ‘party’’.⁷⁰

Our claim here is not that citizens were politically engaged or apathetic during this period. Instead, these quotations illustrate the prevalence of duty and apathy as categories or cultural resources in the discursive repertoire available to people after the Second World War. Democracy was understood as something one ‘ought’ to be interested in; people ‘knew’ or ‘realised’ they should participate. Apathy was shameful and associated with ignorance and irresponsibility, which many respondents were at pains to distance themselves from. This identification of duty as a prominent category of the period is not surprising, given the character of the MO panel, but it also fits the high levels of voter turnout at the time. The prevalence of duty in panellists’ writing also aligns with political scientists’ understandings of changing citizenship norms in the second half of the twentieth century. Russell Dalton describes the ‘good citizen’ in 1940s America as the dutiful citizen who felt they had a duty to vote and participate in civic life. For Dalton, duty-based norms of citizenship stimulated political engagement in the past but have since been replaced by alternative norms of ‘engaged citizenship’, which encourage more individualised and elite challenging forms of action.⁷¹ In Britain, Paul Whiteley similarly refers to the importance of civic duty to explain why older generations are currently more likely to vote in elections than younger citizens.⁷² The strong presence of duty in MO panellists’ writing about democratic participation in the immediate post-war period makes further sense in this broader context.

If one story shared by MO panellists when they wrote about politics between 1945 and 1950 was that democracy was important – that voting and taking an interest in politics was a duty – then a second story, told by numerous respondents, was that party politics was unnecessary. Throughout the MO material, politics – and party politics in particular – is repeatedly dismissed as ‘a dirty business’, ‘a game’, ‘clap-trap’, ‘eyewash’, ‘platform talk’, ‘guttersnipe’, ‘petty squabbles’, and ‘mud-slinging’.⁷³ ‘Mud-slinging’ was the most common line in the story circulating in the late 1940s about politics being unnecessary. One respondent bemoaned in her election diary how ‘there seemed to be so much mud-slinging’. Another commented that ‘many are tired of the mud-slinging and argument’.⁷⁴ Others wrote that ‘I hate party mud-slinging’ or ‘I am sure this mud-slinging is not liked and gives people a bad view of politics’.⁷⁵ Panellist 2794 enjoyed an election meeting because of the ‘absence of mud-slinging’.⁷⁶ Other respondents were similarly ‘tired of all the accusations and counter accusations’ or were unimpressed with politicians who ‘spend their time justifying and defending themselves, or in slanging individuals’.⁷⁷ For this panellist, ‘politics is a dirty game and largely talk anyway. General conception? Much the same as mine’.⁷⁸

Associated with the storyline that party-politics equates to mud-slinging was another line about how the 1945 General Election was unnecessary. For respondent 1165, ‘without exception, everyone seemed to think it was a pity to have an election at the particular time it took place’.⁷⁹ Panellist 2974 ‘strongly disfavoured July election’, whilst respondent 3426 explained: ‘most people are also sorry that there is to be an election before the end of the war in Japan [our] candidate is a convincing talker though he could not persuade me that some form of party politics was essential to government’.⁸⁰ Another panellist had ‘nothing but condemnation for those who pressed for this election. There is no point in indulging ourselves in this exercise in democratic exhibitionism’.⁸¹ The line circulating in 1945 was that a General Election was unwarranted; the war was still going on in Japan and people had other things on their mind, such as this respondent who explained that ‘being a housewife with a job outside my home, I am too fully occupied to study politics. I am a little tired of the constant dissension between the parties. They seem to agree on nothing and waste time finding fault with each other’.⁸² While the end of the war represented a unique context for an election, many respondents also thought the election to be unnecessary because they viewed political debate as manufactured bickering by self-serving politicians. We continue to see this rejection of politics in the various characters populating MO writing on formal politics.

The first category to consider here is the ‘national government’. Respondent 3121 explained that ‘National government is hoped for by many, frequently one is asked “why

need there be parties?’⁸³ When asked for her thoughts about ‘the principle of obedience to party line’, panellist 2899 wrote: ‘once elected to parliament, men’s politics should be rated second to his ability when government appointments are handed out. I am strongly in favour of a national government all the time’.⁸⁴ Another respondent reflected on a conversation she had with a friend prior to the 1945 election:

She said that she knew that the Labour party made a mess of things last time and that a national government had to be formed to get them out of it. She was definite in her opinion that it would always be better to have a national government rather than party politics.⁸⁵

Panellist 3784 wrote: ‘in the hope that this is possible I shall endeavour to vote for a National Govt at the next election’.⁸⁶ A final respondent explained that ‘I hear very many criticisms of the present government [...] But practically never do I hear a constructive proposal attached to these criticisms. A national government against “this rationing”, “let’s get back to the eggs and bacon we used to have!”’.⁸⁷

‘Coalition government’ was a second character in this popular story questioning the need for political conflict. Respondent 3402 reported: ‘one thing about which people of all classes are agreed, wherever, is that the coalition should have continued until the end of the Japanese war’.⁸⁸ Panellist 3426 agreed: ‘most people seemed to think that it was a pity that the coalition Government did not continue’.⁸⁹ Respondent 3388 was one of these people and wrote that ‘I am normally non-party, and prefer an independent, or one will stand for a coalition’.⁹⁰ Panellist 1778 held that ‘if the Labour, Liberal, and Communist Parties could be blended, the result might be very good – if of course I did the blending’.⁹¹ When asked for an account of ‘your feelings about politics’, respondent 2675 replied:

I went to a course of lectures on current affairs (civics) then by an extremely able lecturer who really discussed the different points of view without showing any bias. This made me feel that there was so much right and so much wrong in each of the parties that there wasn’t much to choose between them. In reaction I think I inclined then to turn against the Tories. I set myself a course of reading – of books setting both the point of view of each party [...] but I never finished it. Other interests superseded politics – I was rather fed up with politics anyhow and wished we could be governed by a perpetual coalition.⁹²

A third character of this narrative about politics being unnecessary was ‘the independent’ who was free from party politics. Respondent 3655 was ‘glad that the other three parties exist to moderate the worst excesses and deficiencies of the two great parties, but would be gladder still if there were more Independent members’.⁹³ During the 1945

General Election campaign, panellist 3351 'filled in favour of Independent progressive'.⁹⁴ Another respondent was disappointed by the Prime Minister: 'not as independent as he seems to be to many'.⁹⁵ In contrast, panellist 3684 thought 'the Labour Party have put up by far the best show. They have a programme of sincerity and ability and the only other people likely to get a look in are the independent progressives'.⁹⁶ MO respondents continued to draw on this category when they wrote about local and municipal elections. For this panellist, 'municipal elections are extremely important but I think they should not involve party on account of the lying propaganda both sides use [...] whereas 24 Independents sitting round a table have only the business to be loyal to'.⁹⁷ Another respondent 'voted for two of the three independent candidates because they were living in my ward and I reflected they would be efficient'.⁹⁸ Panellist 1165 described his local council as 'fairly good' because 'many of the members have no axes to grind, being quite independent people of substantial means'.⁹⁹

Independent candidates, like national governments and coalition governments – and as opposed to party politicians – were thought to act in the public interest (which was thought to exist in singular form: the national or local interest). They were also thought to advance by ability. Respondent 2703 'deprecated' the 'importation of party politics into local affairs' because 'merit should be the sole test'.¹⁰⁰ Panellist 1015 'deplore[d] greatly that politics should enter municipal elections' because 'it should be the best man or woman for the post'.¹⁰¹ Respondent 2471 'biased my vote to keep party politics out of the district' and voted for the 'men whom I thought most capable'.¹⁰² It was declared by one panellist that 'party politics warps the judgement of clever men'.¹⁰³

Throughout the MO materials, we find respondents writing of 'best men' who are 'capable', elected on 'merit', and 'have only the business to be loyal to'. This panellist explained: 'once elected to parliament, men's politics should be rated second to his ability when government appointments are handed out'.¹⁰⁴ Ahead of the 1950 election, another panellist wrote that 'I shall probably vote for the man I consider the best candidate irrespective of party'.¹⁰⁵ Like independent politicians, coalition governments were thought to advance by ability. One respondent wrote that 'I don't like party politics. We had the best men for the job regardless of party in the war. Why can't we have the same during peace?'.¹⁰⁶ For panellist 1016: 'If only we could have a govt of the best men from all parties!!! And there are some good ones'.¹⁰⁷ For another respondent: 'Above all I should prefer government by the best of all parties, not a 'tory' government or a Labour government – the times demand it, the best brains we have working for the country, not a party'.¹⁰⁸

A final character in this story of party politics being so much unnecessary mud-slinging, who for many panellists embodied the governor of ability, independently working in the national interest, was ‘the statesman’. Different panellists perceived different politicians as ‘statesmen’. Respondent 2817 wrote of Ernest Bevin: ‘I can’t help admiring him as a statesman while disliking him as a man’.¹⁰⁹ Panellist 3808 described Churchill as ‘an excellent statesman’ and respondent 4191 explained Churchill’s ‘actions in this very latest crisis show a real statesmanship’.¹¹⁰ Respondent 3648 believed ‘Attlee [to have] everyone’s respect for his sincerity, intellect and real statesman like qualities’.¹¹¹ Conversely, panellist 3648 wrote of Churchill: ‘no trace of statesmanship, nothing but a ranting party man’, whilst respondent 1688 described Attlee as ‘a very uninspiring statesman’.¹¹² These quotes tell us less about which politicians were perceived to be (or not be) statesman, and reveal more about the prevalence of ‘statesmanship’ as an ideal type in the criteria citizens used to judge politicians more broadly. We continue to see this in panellists’ writing about politicians as a class. For example, Respondent 2247’s normal conversational attitude towards politicians was ‘self-seeking [...] or statesmen’. Panellist 3960 similarly described the politicians listed by MO (see Table 1, row 8) as holding ‘one thing in common – and a very important thing and that is they are all sincere [...] they are all statesman as distinct from politicians’.¹¹³ Finally, respondent 3479 reflected on how ‘the Government, and certainly the present one, has always very many shortcomings and see no sign of being really overcome, or likely to be, for we would need indeed an inspired body of mature and supremely wise statesmen (I almost went too high and said ‘Philosophers’) for that’.¹¹⁴

As we have indicated, this final narrative – politics is unnecessary – turned on a line that one general interest existed, or at least that interests were shared by a majority. In this view, democracy would function more effectively should politicians possess the ability and character to recognise these shared interests and put them ahead of party interests. As one respondent put it: ‘A statesman must put the real need of his country first [...] A really great man recognises universal greatness and has universal aims’.¹¹⁵ Many panellists judged politicians and parties from this perspective. Respondent 2511 judged ‘the member for whom I voted, I think to be on the whole quite effective. I think he is conscientious and has the interests of most of the people in his constituency at heart’.¹¹⁶ Panellist 2895 wrote that his MP for Boscastle was ‘entirely popular and seems sincerely devoted [...] to the local interests’.¹¹⁷ Ahead of the 1950 General Election, respondent 2576 preferred the Liberal Party ‘Chiefly because both other parties seem to represent sections of the community and not the interests of the country as a whole’.¹¹⁸ Panellist 2921 would not vote for Labour because they

‘allow political philosophy and expediency to usurp the place of the common economic good’. Respondent 3653 judged that Labour ‘seem to be too class conscious, instead of running the business of the country for the benefit of the country as a whole’.¹¹⁹ Alternatively, panellist 2895 ‘voted Labour at the last election out of a feeling of loyalty to see the party which I had regarded [...] to have the welfare of the country most at heart’.¹²⁰

We are now in a position to summarise the discursive repertoire available to people when thinking and writing about formal politics in the immediate post-war period. It was made up of two main stories. The first was that democracy was important. This was constituted by the norm of duty to participate. The second was that politics was unnecessary. Three lines made up this second narrative: that party politics was just mud-slinging; that the 1945 General Election was particularly unnecessary (in the context of continuing peace negotiations in Europe and war against Japan); and that government was best done by those capable of working in what was perceived to be a singular local or national interest. Characters populating this last storyline included the national government, the coalition government, the independent politician, and the statesman.

Such cultural resources were used by MO panellists to construct and express their understandings, expectations, and judgements of democracy and formal politics. As argued above, it is plausible that such categories were used in similar ways by citizens more broadly. Furthermore, findings from BIPO surveys of the period lend support to these claims. In 1945, a poll found that 42 per cent of respondents ‘disapproved of the way the election campaign was conducted’ because of ‘too much heckling and interference at meetings, too many vote-catching stunts, too much mud-slinging, [and] too little stress laid on policy by all parties’.¹²¹ BIPO found that a significant proportion of citizens associated party politics with seemingly unnecessary mud-slinging during this period. It also found that many citizens wished for coalition government and independent candidates. In 1942, a poll found that 48 per cent of respondents approved of independent candidates contesting by-elections.¹²² In 1943, BIPO found that 41 per cent of respondents wanted coalition government to continue after the war.¹²³ And in 1944, a poll found that over a third of citizens – 35 per cent – held a preference for ‘all party government’.¹²⁴

Our argument here also fits with certain existing studies of post-war politics and popular culture. Steven Fielding’s more recent work suggests that films like the Ealing comedies expressed and articulated popular attitudes towards politics by depicting politicians as self-interested, and party difference as superficial.¹²⁵ Films like *Passport to Pimlico* (1949) presented politics as a populist conflict between ‘Them’ and ‘Us’, where differences between

the two main parties were interchangeable. Fielding also shows that politicians and experts were common figures in popular fiction such as H.G. Wells' earlier novels and television series like Nigel Kneale's *The Quatermass Experiment*.¹²⁶ Kate Bradley's study of the John Hilton Bureau of Current Affairs at the *News of the World* provides further evidence of citizens' growing demand for experts to solve social problems on their behalf.¹²⁷ Finally, MO panellists' scepticism towards party politics and belief in a singular national interest makes sense in the context of J.B. Priestley's commonsensical cultural dissent of the period. According to LeMahieu, Priestley's universal values and criticism of self-interested elites embodied Britain's common culture in the 1930s.¹²⁸ These existing studies of popular culture, alongside the survey data from BIPO, illustrate how the storylines and categories identified in this section circulated more broadly in post-war British society, and were not simply invented by MO panellists. The discursive repertoire we describe in this paper provides a historically specific shape to what Fielding has labelled as 'the latent and formless force' of anti-party feeling located in 'the dark corners of public life' during the 1940s.¹²⁹

A preference for stealth democracy

Anti-party feeling and preferences for independent MPs and coalition government are not entirely novel findings. Fielding described 1942 as 'the movement away from party'.¹³⁰ For Fielding, Labour annexed anti-party feeling and won the election by appealing to 'the people' and the nation, rather than class and sectional interests. People voted for Labour without enthusiasm and because they promised social and economic reform that would benefit them individually. Conversely, Geoffrey Field argues that anti-party feeling has been exaggerated and popular support for independents was symptomatic of dissatisfaction with how the Conservatives handled the war. Preference for coalition government represented a 'strategic choice' for voters who thought Labour would not win a majority. For Field, 'the mood in 1942 was less anti-political than a demand for a different type of politics'.¹³¹ Labour were not the passive beneficiaries of public hostility towards Conservatism and played a major role in determining their own success.

Fielding and Field focus on the implications of (anti-)party feeling for the election result. We focus on its implications for political support and disaffection, arguing that rejection of party politics in the immediate post-war period was expressive of the cultural model or folk theory of democracy suggested by the discursive repertoire identified in the previous section. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's writing on stealth democracy provides a useful framework in which to develop this argument.¹³² In focus groups and surveys, completed

around the turn of the twenty-first century, they found a belief prevalent across America that citizens have broadly the same goals – understood as ‘the common good’ or ‘the silent majority’ – and all debate, deliberation, deal-making, compromise (i.e. politics) is therefore unnecessary and generated by special-interest lobbying and self-serving politicians. For citizens listened to by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, government could just be technical in character: management by neutral experts or business-people. So in contemporary America, politics is thought to be unnecessary, politicians are thought to be self-serving, and independent experts or business-people are thought to be needed for government. Proponents of stealth democracy reject both strongly partisan-based representative democracy and participatory models of democracy emphasising active citizenship. Instead, they endorse decision-making based on objective knowledge and independent expertise.

As we have seen, in Britain around the middle of the last century, politics was thought to be unnecessary, politicians were thought to be self-serving, and those believed to be needed were independents, statesmen, coalitions, and national governments. We see citizens believing in democracy but wanting to leave government to experts. They may not have used the precise term of ‘experts’ – in a period when it was not commonly used at all, at least compared to the last few decades– but they did want government by people of ability and independence: the ‘best candidates’, ‘best men’, ‘clever men’, and ‘best brains’ found in the quotations of the previous section, who are ‘wise’, ‘capable’, of ‘merit’, without ‘bias’, and ‘loyal to the public interest’.¹³³ The key difference from the current period is that, instead of a preference for experts from beyond the world of formal politics, there was a belief that some elected representatives possessed the ability and independent judgement to resolve problems on behalf of citizens.

This argument contributes to existing research on the rise of expertise in early and mid-twentieth century Britain. G.R. Searle’s history of the National Efficiency Movement identifies a growing cross-party desire for state and scientific planning in the national interest in response to concerns around Britain’s decline as a major power after the Boer War.¹³⁴ Arthur Marwick claims the formation of bodies such as Political and Economic Planning and the Next Five Years Group symbolised the emergence of ‘middle opinion’ in the 1930s. Marwick credits such groups with prompting a shift in political thought from the polarised party-politics of the 1920s towards consensus over applying disinterested scientific methods to social and economic problems, and rational planning of national resources led by professionals and experts.¹³⁵ Keith Middlemas argues that British politics was transformed in the inter-war period by the transfer of power from Parliament and political parties to

industrial associations that were increasingly positioned as independent experts capable of managing the competing demands of capital and labour in the national interest.¹³⁶ Finally, Harold Perkin argues that growth of middle-class occupations in the interwar period prefigured the professionalisation of society after the war when ability and expertise became the only respectable justification for recruitment to positions of power and responsibility.¹³⁷

Our contribution here is to demonstrate how this gathering interest in rationality, state planning, and independent expertise in early twentieth-century Britain was expressed in citizens' understandings of democracy by the late 1940s. In this respect, our argument also connects to Hilton et al's research on the politics of expertise after the Second World War.¹³⁸ They hold that political participation changed after 1945 from voting and membership of political parties to involvement with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This was the result of two processes. First, the professionalisation of politics meant that citizens placed their trust in bodies of experts better positioned to make cases on behalf of citizens regarding complex issues. Second, the privatisation of politics meant that citizens constructed their own personal manifestos of complaints, causes, and commitments, before joining and supporting groups working on those particular issues. Our argument is that in 1945-1950, the professionalisation of British society was in its relatively early stages and so citizens could still look to politicians for resolution of increasingly complex problems. There was a desire for expertise among British citizens at this time, but it was commonly expressed in preferences for independent politicians of ability. In the following decades, it would become expressed in support for professionalised NGOs.

Returning to the question of anti-politics in the twenty-first century, we find historical continuity regarding stealth understandings of politics in Britain. Stoker and Hay show stealth attitudes are prevalent in the current period.¹³⁹ So what has changed? It may be that citizens used to want experts to govern but could imagine politicians as those experts (in the form of independents, statesmen, coalitions, and national governments). Today, we suggest, citizens want experts to govern but struggle to imagine politicians as experts for at least three reasons. First, the continued professionalisation of society has meant that citizens today can readily imagine experts beyond Parliament – in NGOs, for example – more than was possible in the late 1940s. Second, the prevalence of career politicians in Parliament today, in contrast to the politicians of previous periods who often had successful careers outside of politics, may lead citizens to view them as lacking in experience and the competencies developed in life beyond private school, Oxbridge, and Westminster. Third, as we show elsewhere, politicians have found it increasingly difficult to perform their expertise as long radio speeches and local

political meetings have been replaced by modernised political campaigning and media reporting.¹⁴⁰

Stoker and Hay use the term ‘stealth populism’ to describe the orientation of citizens towards formal politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century.¹⁴¹ Citizens think democracy is important but also that most people agree on what should be done by government. They find party politics to be unnecessary and view government as primarily a technical exercise in administering the will of the people. What makes this orientation populist is that citizens view politicians as poorly placed to be those technicians working on behalf of the people. They view politicians instead as corrupt elites working on behalf of their cronies (and against the interests of the people). Of course, populism has a long history in British political culture. For example, Fielding identifies populism of this kind in commercial feature films of the post-war period.¹⁴² But what we find in the MO material is that, despite the presence of such populism in films of the time, citizens for the most part called for experts from within the world of formal politics. They called for independent candidates, statesmen, coalitional governments, and national governments. In this view, populism may be derived from endemic tensions at the heart of democracy, and may be particularly visible in the current period, but was tempered in the late 1940s by an imagination of certain politicians and political arrangements as potentially working in the interests of the people.¹⁴³

In this article, we have revisited the question of democratic engagement in post-war Britain in a context of current debates about declining political support and rising political disaffection. We systematically re-analysed the raw data collected by MO and thus provided a significant methodological advance on previous studies of political engagement based on MO material. Our findings lead us to question certain common accounts and theories. Post-war Britain was neither a golden age for democratic engagement nor a period characterised by apathy. Citizens were neither particularly deferential in their attitudes towards politicians nor particularly partisan in their attitudes towards formal politics. By focusing on the categories used by citizens, we have shown that many people did not operate with binaries of individual and collective interests, or private and public concerns. They imagined one public interest – the national or local interest – best served by independent and capable leaders. They held something akin to a stealth model of democracy. This interpretation, bolstered by existing studies of duty, populism, and expertise in twentieth-century Britain, helps to explain the apparent paradox of the immediate post-war period when support for representative democracy accompanied hostility towards politicians and parties. It may also help to explain political disaffection in the current period.

Acknowledgements

The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, grant number ES/L007185/1. The authors also wish to thank staff at the Mass Observation Archive for their help, advice, and permission to use materials. The paper was improved in response to comments at various seminars and workshops during 2015 and 2016, and from the editor and reviewers, for which the authors are also very grateful.

Note

¹ Stoker et al., *Prospects for Citizenship*; Hansard Society, *Audit of Political Engagement 11*.

² Steve Richards, writing in *The Independent*, 21 November 2014; James Landale, writing for *BBC News Online*, 10 November 2014.

³ Fielding, 'The Permanent Crisis of Party'.

⁴ Inglehart, *Modernisation and Postmodernisation*; Black, *Redefining British Politics*; Hilton et al., *Politics of Expertise*.

⁵ For example Jefferys, *Politics*, 90, Lawrence, *Electing our Masters*, 133, 140 and 141.

⁶ Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy*.

⁷ Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, 134.

⁸ In 1951, the Conservative party had 2.5 million members and Labour had 4.9 million affiliated trade union members and 876,000 individual party members. Lawrence, *Electing our Masters*, 139.

⁹ Denver et al., *Elections*

¹⁰ See: Morgan, *Labour in Power*; Addison, *The Road to 1945*.

¹¹ Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*.

¹² Norris, *Critical Citizens*; Dalton, *Good Citizen*.

¹³ Inglehart, *Modernisation*.

¹⁴ Dalton and Wattenburg, *Parties without Partisans*; Mair, *Party System Change*.

¹⁵ Fielding et al. *England Arise*.

¹⁶ Fielding, 'What did the people want?', 639.

¹⁷ Fielding, 'Ken Loach's spirit of '45 is a fantasy', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2013.

¹⁸ Fielding et al., 212-213.

¹⁹ Fielding, 'What did the People Want?', 632.

²⁰ Fielding et al., *England Arise*.

²¹ Hinton, '1945 and the Apathy School'.

²² Field, *Blood Sweat and Toil*.

²³ Sloman, 'Rethinking a Progressive Moment'

²⁴ Field, *Blood Sweat and Toil*.

²⁵ McKibbin, *Parties and the People*.

²⁶ Jefferys, *Politics*, 5 and 121-122.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁸ Jefferys, *Politics*, 69, 70, 80, and 112.

²⁹ Beers, 'Whose Opinion'.

³⁰ Fielding, *England Arise*, 5; Jefferys, *Politics*, 3.

³¹ Jeffrey, *Mass Observation*.

³² See 'The Documents' at MO Online.

-
- ³³ MacClancy, 'Brief Encounter'.
- ³⁴ See Savage, 'Affluence and Social Change', 458-459; Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives*, 17-18.
- ³⁵ See MO, *Voters' Choice*, 13.
- ³⁶ Jeffrey, *Mass Observation*.
- ³⁷ Hinton, *The Mass Observers*.
- ³⁸ Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives*, 17.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.* 17.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 205.
- ⁴¹ LeMahieu, *Culture for Democracy*.
- ⁴² Fischer and Gottweis, *Argumentative Turn*.
- ⁴³ Lakoff, *Moral Politics*.
- ⁴⁴ Stoker and Hay, 'Understanding and Challenging'.
- ⁴⁵ Gazeley and Langhamer, 'Meaning of Happiness', 166.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 161.
- ⁴⁷ Jefferys, *Politics*.
- ⁴⁸ SxMOA1/3/88, 3419, 32, F, Housewife, Wales, 1945; SxMOA1/3/102, 2675, F, 55, Civil Servant, North West, 1947.
- ⁴⁹ SxMOA1/3/86, 3402, 40, F, Domestic Nurse, East Midlands, 1945.
- ⁵⁰ SxMOA1/3/123, 2818, 44, M, Aero-fitter, West Midlands, 1949.
- ⁵¹ SxMOA1/3/88, 3120, 79, M, Teacher, Yorkshire, 1945.
- ⁵² SxMOA1/3/88, 2514, 28, M, Statistician, North West, 1945.
- ⁵³ SxMOA1/3/88, 2703, 60, M, Temporary Hospital Worker, South West, 1945.
- ⁵⁴ SxMOA1/3/88, 1095, 69, M, Railway Draughtsman, South West, 1945.
- ⁵⁵ SxMOA1/3/86, 1974, 41, F, Teacher, North East, 1945.
- ⁵⁶ SxMOA1/3/88, 2475, 60 F, Lecturer, East of England, 1945.
- ⁵⁷ SxMOA1/3/86, 2511, 24, M, Forester, East of England, 1945.
- ⁵⁸ SxMOA1/3/88, 2684, 37, M, Food Packing Manager, South East, 1945.
- ⁵⁹ SxMOA1/3/88, 3307, 49, F, Clerk, East of England, 1945.
- ⁶⁰ SxMOA1/3/86, 1016, 60, F, Housewife, North East, 1945.
- ⁶¹ SxMOA1/3/86, 1346, 29, F, Technical Assistant, South East, 1945.
- ⁶² SxMOA1/3/121, 1644, 63, F, Drama Teacher, West Midlands, 1949.
- ⁶³ SxMOA1/3/86, 3388, 45, F, Housewife, South East, 1945; SxMOA1/123, 3859, 41, M, Golf Course Steward, N/A; 1949 SxMOA1/3/86, 21, F, Librarian, London, 1945.
- ⁶⁴ SxMOA1/3/88, 1210, 28, M, Bank Clerk, South West, 1945.
- ⁶⁵ SxMOA1/3/88, 3361, 25, M, Farm Worker, Scotland, 1945.
- ⁶⁶ SxMOA1/3/86, 3207, 39, M, N/A, Scotland, 1945.
- ⁶⁷ SxMOA1/3/123, 2675, 57, F, Civil Servant, North West, 1949.
- ⁶⁸ SxMOA1/3/88, 1478, 24, M, Student Draughtsman, South East, 1945.
- ⁶⁹ SxMOA1/3/102, 2903, 32, M, Youth Leader, Wales, 1947.
- ⁷⁰ SxMOA1/3/88, 3034, 46, F, Research Laboratory Assistant, London, 1945.
- ⁷¹ Dalton, *The Good Citizen*.
- ⁷² Whitely, *Political Participation*, 46.
- ⁷³ SxMOA1/3/84, 1048, 48, F, Teacher, East of England, 1945; SxMOA1/3/84, 2886, 29, F, Shop Assistant, Yorkshire; SxMOA1/3/86, 3402, 40, F, Domestic Nurse, East Midlands, 1945; SxMOA1/3/102, 1079, 56, F, Teacher, Wales, 1947; SxMOA1/3/102, 2708, 53, M, Jewellers Proprietor, East Midlands, 53; SxMOA1/3/86, N/A, F, Weaver, Yorkshire, 1945; SxMOA1/3/86, 1622, 71, M, Clergyman in Borstal, West Midlands, 1945; SxMOA1/3/86, 3419, 32, F, Housewife, Wales, 1945.

-
- ⁷⁴ SxMOA1/3/86, 3419, 32, F, Housewife, Wales, 1945; SxMOA1/3/86, 2384, 30, M, N/A, North West.
- ⁷⁵ SxMOA1/3/84, 3388, 54, F, Housewife, South East, 1945; SxMOA1/3/86, 1165, 34, M, Electrical Engineer, South East, 1945.
- ⁷⁶ SxMOA1/3/86, 2794, 24, M, Civil Engineer, East of England, 1945.
- ⁷⁷ SxMOA1/3/86, 1056, 63, F, Teacher, South East, 1945; SxMOA1/3/86, 1165, 37, M, Food Packing Manager, South East 1945.
- ⁷⁸ SxMOA1/3/86, 2794, 24, M, Civil Engineer, East Midlands, 1945; SxMOA1/3/86, 3426, 46, F, School Medical Inspector, Yorkshire, 1945.
- ⁷⁹ SxMOA1/3/86, 1165, 34, M, Electrical Engineer, South East 1945.
- ⁸⁰ SxMOA1/3/86, 2794, 24, M, Civil Engineer, East Midlands, 1945; SxMOA1/3/86, 3426, 46, F, School Medical Inspector, Yorkshire, 1945.
- ⁸¹ SxMOA1/3/86, 3484, 37, M, Commercial Traveller, West Midlands, 1945.
- ⁸² SxMOA1/3/102, 3432, 63, F, Domestic Worker, East of England, 1947.
- ⁸³ SxMOA1/3/86, 3121, 62, F, Teacher, South East, 1945.
- ⁸⁴ SxMOA1/3/121, 2899, 34, F, Secretary, North West, 1949.
- ⁸⁵ SxMOA1/3/86, 1346, 29, F Technical Assistant, N/A, 1945.
- ⁸⁶ SxMOA1/3/116, 3784, 65, M, Chemist, 1950.
- ⁸⁷ SxMOA1/3/86, 3121, 62, F, Teacher, South East, 1945.
- ⁸⁸ SxMOA1/3/86, 3402, 40, F, Domestic Nurse, East Midlands, 1945.
- ⁸⁹ SxMOA1/3/86, 3426, 46, F, School Medical Inspector, Yorkshire, 1945.
- ⁹⁰ SxMOA1/3/86, 3388, 54, F, Housewife, South East, 1945.
- ⁹¹ SxMOA1/3/116, 1478, 29, M, Draughtsman, North West, 1950.
- ⁹² SxMOA1/3/116, 2675, 59, F, Civil Servant, North West, 1950.
- ⁹³ SxMOA1/3/86, 3655, N/A, M, Journalist, Scotland, 1945.
- ⁹⁴ SxMOA1/3/86, 3351, 26, M, Clerk, Yorkshire, 1945..
- ⁹⁵ SxMOA1/3/86, 1980, 65, F, Nurse, South East, 1945
- ⁹⁶ SxMOA1/3/86, 3684, N/A, F, Weaver, Yorkshire, 1945.
- ⁹⁷ SxMOA1/3/88, 1644, 59, F, Housewife, West Midlands, 1945.
- ⁹⁸ SxMOA1/3/88, 3419, 32, F, Housewife, Wales, 1945.
- ⁹⁹ SxMOA1/3/88, 1165, 39, M, Electrical Engineer, South East, 1945.
- ¹⁰⁰ SxMOA1/3/88, 2703, 60, M, Temporary Hospital Worker, South West, 1945.
- ¹⁰¹ SxMOA1/3/88, 1015, 70, F, Office Worker, South East, 1945.
- ¹⁰² SxMOA1/3/88, 2471, 30, M, Chemist, Scotland, 1945.
- ¹⁰³ SxMOA1/3/84, 3371, 40, F, Domestic Nurse, East Midlands, 1945.
- ¹⁰⁴ SxMOA1/3/121, 2899, 34, F, Secretary, North West, 1945.
- ¹⁰⁵ SxMOA1/3/121, 1644, 63, F, Drama Teacher, West Midlands, 1949.
- ¹⁰⁶ SxMOA1/3/86, 2576, 35, M, Manager of Textile Mile, East Midlands, 1945.
- ¹⁰⁷ SxMOA1/3/116, 1016, 63, F, Housewife, North East, 1950.
- ¹⁰⁸ SxMOA1/3/116, 3640, 36, F, Civil Servant, North West, 1950.
- ¹⁰⁹ SxMOA1/3/113, 2817, 26, M, Methodist Minister, East Midlands, 1950.
- ¹¹⁰ SxMOA1/3/113, 3808, 50, M, Farmer, East of England, 1950;
- ¹¹¹ SxMOA1/3/86, 3648, N/A, F, Weaver, Yorkshire, 1945; SxMOA1/3/113, 4191, 71, F, N/A, N/A, 1950.
- ¹¹² SxMOA1/3/86, 3648, N/A, F, Weaver, Yorkshire, 1945; SxMOA1/3/113, 1688, 39, M, Estate Agent, Wales, 1950.
- ¹¹³ SxMOA1/3/84, 2247, 27, M, Goods Loader, East Midlands, 1945; SxMOA1/3/113, 3960, 27, M, Farm Labourer, N/A, 1950.
- ¹¹⁴ SxMOA1/3/102, 3479, 24, M, Unemployed, East of England, 1947.

-
- ¹¹⁵ SxMOA1/3/86, 3648, N/A, F, Weaver, Yorkshire, 1945.
¹¹⁶ SxMOA1/3/123, 2511, 28, M, Forestry Commission, East of England, 1949.
¹¹⁷ SxMOA1/3/113, 2859, 62, F, Teacher, South West, 1949.
¹¹⁸ SxMOA1/3/116, 2576, 40, M, Manager of Textile Mill, East Midlands, 1950.
¹¹⁹ SxMOA1/3/113, 2921, 27, M, Commercial Traveller, East Midlands, 1950;
SxMOA1/3/102, 3653, 66, M, Farmer, East of England.
¹²⁰ SxMOA1/3/116, 2895, 63, F, Music Teacher, South West, 1950.
¹²¹ BIPO, July 1945.
¹²² BIPO, April 1942.
¹²³ BIPO, November 1943.
¹²⁴ BIPO, August 1944.
¹²⁵ Fielding, 'Mirror for England'.
¹²⁶ Fielding, *State of Play*, 146.
¹²⁷ Bradley, 'All Human Life'.
¹²⁸ LeMahieu, *Culture for Democracy*, 318.
¹²⁹ Fielding, 'Mirror for England', 128.
¹³⁰ Fielding, 'The Second World War'.
¹³¹ Field, *Blood, Sweat and Toil*.
¹³² Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy*.
¹³³ Google Books Ngram Viewer.
¹³⁴ Seale, *Quest for National Efficiency*.
¹³⁵ Marwick, 'Middle Opinion'.
¹³⁶ Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society*.
¹³⁷ Perkin, *Rise of Professional Society*.
¹³⁸ Hilton et al, *The Politics of Expertise*.
¹³⁹ Stoker and Hay, 'Understanding and Challenging'.
¹⁴⁰ Clarke et al, 'Changing Encounters'.
¹⁴¹ Stoker and Hay, 'Understanding and Challenging'.
¹⁴² Fielding, 'Mirror for England'.
¹⁴³ Stoker and Hay, 'Understanding and Challenging'; Fielding 'Mirror for England'.

References

- Addison, P, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War (Revised Edition)*, London: Pimlico, 1994.
- Black, L., *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Beers, L, 'Whose Opinion?: Changing Attitudes Towards Opinion Polling in British Politics, 1937-1964', *Twentieth Century British History* 17, no. 2, (2006), 177-205. doi: 10.1093/tcbh/hwl009.
- Bengtsson, A., and Mikko M. 'Direct Democracy and its Critics: Support for Direct Democracy and 'Stealth' Democracy in Finland', *West European Politics*, vol. 32, no. 5, (2009), 1031-48.
- Bradley, K, 'All Human Life is There': The John Hilton Bureau of the News of the World and Advising the Public, 1942-1969', *The English Historical Review*, 129, 539, (2014), 888-911. doi: 10.1093/ehr/ceu210.

-
- Clarke, N, Jennings, W, Moss, J, Stoker, G, 'Changing encounters, interactions, and judgements between citizens and politicians: Evidence from Mass Observation's General-Election diaries', currently under review.
- Dalton R J, *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Washington: CQ Press, 2004.
- Dalton, R J, *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2008.
- Dalton, R J and Wattenberg, *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Denver, D, Carman, C, and Johns, R, *Elections and Voters in Britain, Third Edition*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.
- Field, G, *Blood, Sweat and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939-1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Fielding, S, 'A Mirror for England? Cinematic Representations of Politicians and Party Politics, circa 1944-1964', *The Journal of British Studies*, 27, no.1, (2008), pp. 107-128. doi:10.1086/522346.
- Fielding, S, *A State of Play: British Politics on Screen, Stage and Page, from Anthony Trollope to The Thick of It*, London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Fielding, S, 'The Permanent Crisis of Party', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21, no. 1 (2009), 102-109. doi: 10.1093/tcbh/hwp040.
- Fielding, S, 'The Second World War and Popular Radicalism: The Significance of the 'Movement away from Party'', *History*, 80, no. 25 (1995), 38-58. doi 10.1111/j.1468-229X.1995.tb01658.x.
- Fielding, S, 'What did "the people" want? The meaning of the 1945 general election', *The Historical Journal*, 35, no. 3, (1992), 623-39.
- Fielding, S, Thompson, P, and Tiratsoo, N, *England Arise! The Labour Party and Popular Politics in 1940s Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.
- Fischer, F and Gottweis, H (eds) *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice*, Durham NC, Duke University Press, 2012.
- Gazeley, I, Langhamer, I, 'The Meanings of Happiness in MO's Bolton', *History Workshop Journal*, 75, no. 1, (2013), 159-189. doi: 10.1093/hwj/dbs015.
- Hansard Society, *Audit of Political Engagement 11: The 2014 Report*, London, Hansard Society, 2014.
- Hay, C., *Why We Hate Politics*, Cambridge: Polity, 2007.
- Hibbing, J R and Theiss-Morse, E, *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government Should Work*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Hilton, M, McKay, J, Crowson, N, Mouhot, J, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Hinton, J, *Nine Wartime Lives*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

-
- Hinton, J, *The Mass Observers: A History, 1937-1949*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Hinton, J, '1945 and the Apathy School', *History Workshop Journal*, 43 (1997), 266-273. doi: 10.1093/hwj/1997.43.266
- Inglehart, R, *Modernisation and Postmodernisation: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Jeffrey, T, *MO: A Short History*, MO Archive Occasional Paper No. 10, 1999.
- Jefferys, K, *Politics and the People: A History of British Democracy Since 1918*, London: Atlantic Books, 2007.
- Lakoff, G, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think, Second Edition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Lawrence, J, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- LeMahieu, D. L, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Mair, P, *Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Marwick, A, 'Middle Opinion in the Thirties: Planning, Progress and Political "Agreement"', *English Historical Review*, 79, (1964), 891-912. doi:10.1093/ehr/LXXIX.CCCXI.285.
- Mass Observation, *The Voters' Choice: A Special Report by MO*, London, Art and Technics Ltd., 1950.
- MacClancy, J, 'Brief encounter: The meeting, in Mass-Observation, of British surrealism and popular anthropology', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 1, no. 3, (1995), 495-512.
- McKibbin, R, *Parties and People, England 1914-1951*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Middlemas, K, *Politics in Industrial Society: The Experience of the British System since 1911*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1979.
- Miliband, R, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961.
- Morgan, K, *Labour in Power, 1945-1951*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Neblo, M., Esterling, K., Kennedy, R., Lazer, D., Sokhey, A., 'Who Wants to Deliberate-And Why?', *American Political Science Review* 104, no.3, (2010), 566-583. doi: 10.1017/S0003055410000298.
- Norris, P, *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Perkin, H, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880*, Abingdon: Routledge, 1989.
- Savage, M, 'Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle-Class Identities: Britain, 1939-55', *Contemporary British History* 22, no. 4, (2008), 457-476. doi: 10.1080/13619460802439366.

-
- Searle, G. R., *The Quest for National Efficiency: a Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971.
- Sloman, P., 'Rethinking a progressive moment: the Liberal and Labour parties in the 1945 general election', *Historical Research*, 84, no. 226, (2011), 722-744.
- Stoker, G., Mason, A., McGrew, A., *Prospects for Citizenship*, London: Bloomsbury, 2001.
- Stoker, G., *Why Politics Matters: Making Democracy Work*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Stoker, G., Hay, C., 'Understanding and Challenging Populist Negativity towards Politics: The Perspectives of British Citizens', *Political Studies*, (2015), (forthcoming).
- Webb, P., 'Who is willing to participate? Dissatisfied democrats, stealth democrats and populists in the United Kingdom', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 52, no. 6, (2013), 747-72.
- Whitely, P., *Political Participation in Britain: The Decline and Revival of Civic Culture*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Whiteley, P., Clarke, H., Sanders, D., Stewart, M., 'Turnout' in Norris, P. (ed.) *Britain Votes 2001*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

