

Can't, won't and what's the point? A theory of the UK public's muted response to austerity

Since 2010 the UK government has undertaken extensive spending cuts which have manifested in significant reductions in welfare, local authority and justice system spending. The cuts have been linked with rising poverty, food bank use and serious health issues. Such extreme cuts are likely to affect how citizens view and interact with government. This paper argues that the theories of civic voluntarism, grievance and policy feedback in combination explain why austerity has provoked relatively little political participation in the UK.

Keywords: austerity; political participation; civic voluntarism; grievance theory; policy feedback

Introduction

In 2010 the UK coalition government introduced a programme of austerity, cutting spending substantially across nearly every government department (HM Treasury, 2010b). However, cuts have been unequally distributed across the country, deprived areas having typically seen the greatest spending cuts per person (Berry and White, 2014). This has had significant repercussions for local service users, including deterioration of public spaces, reduced leisure facilities and loss of support services (Hastings *et al.*, 2015).

Such extreme cuts to public services are likely to have affected how citizens view and interact with government. Research has shown that austerity has impacted upon voting and protest behaviour across the continent (Bartels and Bermeo, 2014; Ponticelli and Voth, 2017). Kern *et al* (2015) assessed participation across Europe from 2002 to 2010 to examine how it changed around the time of the financial crisis. They concluded that the extreme shock of the crisis and high unemployment was responsible for a sudden peak in protest behaviour in 2009 and 2010. However, this mobilisation was short-lived.

In the UK, after initial protests in 2010/11, there has been a muted response despite rising poverty and substantial cuts to government services. Given the serious impact that austerity has had on the UK's most vulnerable citizens, it is important to understand why the public response has not been greater. Low and unequal participation is problematic because particular groups can become overrepresented in elections and other political environments. In such cases, politicians are more likely to align policies with the needs and preferences of

these individuals over those who participate less (Lijphart, 1997). This overrepresentation enables the most powerful members of society to preserve their position of privilege (Young, 2000).

Existing literature predominantly focuses on southern Europe and less conventional political participation such as protesting. Despite extensive literature on what drives or undermines participation, Kern et al's (2015) research highlights a key gap in theoretical explanations of how this is linked to the financial crisis. In reviewing whether civic voluntarism or grievance theory were better able to explain rates of political participation, they found that grievance theory alone cannot fully account for sustained 'grievances', so the theories are most useful in combination.

This paper builds on the work of Kern et al (2015) by proposing a set of mechanisms to explain the complex relationship between economic shocks and political participation, explicitly linking this with austerity. It draws on theories of political participation and research into austerity to connect four explanations for the limited political activism in the UK following the introduction of austerity. None of these theories alone sufficiently explain the complex relationship between austerity and political participation, so I argue that each explanation builds on the last, providing a fuller overall picture.

The first explanation uses civic voluntarism to suggest that citizens most badly affected by austerity lack the time and money to participate. These individuals are typically from disadvantaged backgrounds and their resources have been further depleted by cuts, reducing their ability to participate. Yet this cannot explain the lack of mobilisation among the majority who have greater resources. Building on grievance theory, the second explanation suggests that the majority are not mobilised to act because they have been relatively little affected by austerity, meaning their own interests are not threatened.

However, there are also factors which are likely to affect the population as a whole. The first of these, drawing on policy feedback theory, is that the rhetoric the government chose to use about austerity was effective in persuading the public that austerity is necessary, suggesting that it is pointless to try to change the policy. The final theory is that austerity was not sufficiently mobilising to counteract the trend of declining participation in recent decades. This draws on extensive recent work on political participation that attempts to explain this trend. These theories together therefore provide a nuanced model of participation in response to austerity.

Implementation and impact of austerity

Following the financial crisis of 2007, to prevent the collapse of the banking sector, the UK Labour government implemented bank support schemes, costing £955 billion by the end of 2009 (National Audit Office, 2010). The bailout contributed to raising the budget deficit to £155 billion by the 2009/10 financial year, compared to £38 billion prior to the financial crisis in 2006/7 (Oliveira, 2018). Following the 2010 general election, the new coalition government chose to implement substantial, wide-ranging cuts to public spending. The policy of austerity was employed with the aim of eliminating the deficit by 2015. These cuts were to be achieved through £32 billion of spending reductions each year (HM Treasury, 2010a). The motivation behind the cuts was to free up capital so that it would be available to the private sector and create a level of deflation to encourage greater competitiveness and thus business growth (Blyth, 2013).

Such extensive cuts meant that most government departments were subject to budget reductions. Local authorities, responsible for social care, housing and public transport among many other services, were required to deliver significant cuts. Between 2009/10 and 2014/15 local authority budgets were cut by 23.4 per cent (Innes and Tetlow, 2015). As cuts continued, councils were faced with what Lowndes and Gardner (2016) call ‘super-austerity’: cuts upon cuts, compounding the problems they faced. Welfare spending saw a net cut of nearly £17 billion between 2010/11 and 2015/16, despite pension spending rising in this period (Hood and Phillips, 2015). These cuts were part of wider welfare reforms including the introduction of universal credit and a cap on benefits claims (Ormston and Curtice, 2015). Public sector pay was also frozen between 2011 and 2013 and has subsequently risen by only one per cent each year (Cribb, 2017).

Austerity was implemented with the intention of meeting certain fiscal targets, including eliminating the budget deficit. Yet the success of spending cuts in achieving these targets has been limited. The target to achieve a balanced budget by 2015 was not met and then repeatedly delayed (Ashworth-Hayes, 2015).

The Ministry of Justice has seen the greatest cuts of any government department. Judges have criticised the government for inadequate funding of the justice system, with criminal barristers subject to repeated fee cuts (Bowcott, 2018). Legal aid has been cut substantially, including a 99 per cent reduction in the number of disabled people granted legal aid in cases relating to welfare benefits between 2011/12 and 2016/17 (Steward, 2018).

Cuts have also been coupled with growing demand for services. 18 per cent growth in the number of adults with long-term needs and a six per cent fall in spending between 2009 and 2016 has squeezed the social care budget (Andrews *et al.*, 2017). Public health has continued to see significant cuts despite councils struggling to meet demand. The Local Government Association argues that public health cuts are also harmful to the National Health Service (NHS) and adult social care which benefit from effective public health prevention services (Seccombe, 2017).

Despite government rhetoric suggesting a need for everyone to tighten their belts, the impact of the cuts has been felt asymmetrically. By 2014, local authorities in the top 10 per cent most deprived areas had seen an average budget cut of £228.23 per person, compared to just £44.91 per person in the 10 per cent least deprived local authority areas (Berry and White, 2014). Labour controlled local authorities have also seen much greater cuts than those controlled by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties (*ibid.*).

There are significant geographic differences in the way spending cuts have been implemented. Spending on adult social care fell by 18 per cent in the North East and London between 2009/10 and 2015/6 compared to just two per cent in the South West, contrary to social care needs. Reductions in central government grants have more significantly affected those with high social care spending as these areas are less able to generate revenue through council tax (Simpson, 2017).

The personal impact of these cuts on service users has been considerable and, again, unevenly distributed across the population. Children have been disproportionately affected by spending cuts. The proportion of children living in relative poverty rose consistently between 2011 and 2017 and is forecast to sharply increase until 2022 (McGuinness, 2018). Service users have also seen declining provision of local services such as refuse collection and environmental maintenance. For some, this has caused issues of litter, fly-tipping and graffiti making local neighbourhoods unpleasant and even dangerous. Hazardous environments can prevent children from playing outside, restricting exercise and development. Reduced access to libraries, public transport and other council services also affects vulnerable groups who need support in accessing digital services, such as claiming benefits (Hastings *et al.*, 2015).

Spending cuts and welfare reforms have caused serious issues for some people in affording food. Reductions in welfare support, such as the benefits cap and two-child limit to tax credits and universal credit, disproportionately affect families with children and people

with disabilities or ill-health. These people are then more likely to use food banks (Loopstra, Lambie-Mumford and Patrick, 2018). The number of times children received food from Trussell Trust foodbanks rose staggeringly from 46,000 in 2011/12 to 397,000 in 2014/15. The Trussell Trust has seen the number food banks referrals more than double following the rollout of Universal Credit (Jitendra, Thorogood and Hadfield-Spoor, 2017).

The British Medical Association (BMA) has asserted that ‘robust action is needed to mitigate the adverse impacts of austerity’ because of its implications for health outcomes (BMA board of science, 2016, p. 1). Growing financial insecurity, reductions and sanctions on welfare benefits, fuel poverty and food insecurity are likely to have impacted on health, including widening health inequalities. Winter mortality, deterioration or relapse of long-term health conditions, infant mortality and mental health problems (including suicide) have all increased (ibid). Other budget cuts have also affected health and wellbeing. According to the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (2015), cuts to the police have reduced their ability to respond to cases of violence, including domestic abuse, and assist people with mental health problems. Closure of libraries, women’s refuges and Sure Start centres has undermined service users health and wellbeing (Unison, 2015).

Public political engagement with austerity

Given the serious impact that cuts have had, it seems likely that austerity would have affected how citizens view and interact with government. However, research into the relationship between austerity and political participation has so far been limited, particularly into austerity in the UK. The literature so far has demonstrated a connection between austerity and political participation. Bartels and Bermeo (2014) found that following the recession, voters punished incumbent governments across Europe in elections. A data analysis of 26 European countries between 1919 and 2008 by Ponticelli and Voth (2017) also found a strong positive correlation between the magnitude of spending cuts and social unrest, including demonstrations, riots, strikes, assassinations and attempted revolutions.

Within the UK, there is some evidence of organised political activism in response to austerity. Cuts to housing benefits and accommodation for the homeless have mobilised a group of young mothers to create the Focus E15 campaign for suitable local social housing (Focus E15 Campaign, no date). The collectives UK Uncut, formed in response to austerity, and Sisters Uncut, focusing on cuts to domestic violence services, use direct action to

campaign against cuts and promote alternatives to austerity (UK Uncut, no date; Sisters Uncut, 2018).

On a larger scale, the UK did see protests in response to austerity, of which the most significant were the Occupy movement and student protests. Occupy London arose in 2011 in connection with Occupy Wall Street (Van Gelder, 2011). Protesters occupied the grounds of St Paul's cathedral, in protest against spending cuts and bailouts of the banks following the financial crisis (Occupy London, 2011). Earlier, in 2010, there were student protests against spending cuts to further education and rising tuition fees, including demonstrations in central London, mass walk-outs and occupation of university campuses (Rheingans and Hollands, 2012). 2011 also saw rioting, initially starting in London but spreading across the UK. Thousands were involved in looting which resulted in over 3,000 arrests and £35 million of property damage. Research suggests the riots were largely motivated by anger at the police following the death of Mark Duggan, although there is evidence that spending cuts were a factor (Kawalerowicz and Biggs, 2015).

Much of this political activism occurred around the introduction of austerity in 2010 but there has been little evidence of austerity-related political participation since. Voters have not ostensibly punished the Conservative party for austerity policies, as they were re-elected into government in both 2015 and 2017, albeit as a minority government in 2017. The response to austerity through other means of participation has been generally muted in recent years. Given that austerity continues and its consequences are becoming increasingly evident and damaging, this is surprising.

Some researchers have suggested that the UK's vote to leave the European Union (EU) may have been in part prompted by the hardship created under austerity (Dorling, 2016; Gietel-Basten, 2016; Fetzer, 2018). Such a connection is plausible, given that some argue that it is typically poorer, working class and disadvantaged individuals who voted to leave the EU, a group which has considerable overlap those who have been most negatively affected by austerity (Becker, Fetzer and Novy, 2017). However, the view that support for Brexit is restricted to those in deprived areas does not account for the support for leaving the EU among many wealthier individuals, particularly the so-called 'petit bourgeoisie' (Clarke and Newman, 2017).

Further research is needed into a possible connection between austerity and Brexit. As such, it is not within the scope of this paper to address this question, however it must be

acknowledged that Brexit is possibly an avenue through which frustration at austerity has been expressed. This strengthens the argument that austerity has resulted in limited political participation because if, as some suggest, the vote to leave was a protest against austerity, voting to leave the EU is an indirect and non-specific way of expressing such opposition. This may indicate that many people feel unable to express their feelings towards austerity through more direct avenues, including elections and less traditional forms of participation. This paper, therefore, examines why that is the case.

Why aren't people doing more?

Given the serious consequences of this policy, it is worth asking why there hasn't been a stronger response from the public. I propose four possible explanations, which I explore in depth below. The first two relate to subsets of society, the latter two to the wider context.

Typically, those on lower incomes and from marginalised groups have been most affected by austerity and are likely to have seen a material decline in their incomes and support networks as a result of austerity. The first explanation therefore draws on the theory of civic voluntarism to argue that those who are most affected lack the resources to participate in politics.

The second theory, based on grievance theory, is that austerity has had comparatively little impact on the majority of the population, so are not mobilised by it. A third is that the rhetoric employed by the government about austerity has persuaded many people that austerity is necessary and unavoidable. This explanation draws on the theory of policy feedback, which argues that the way a policy is implemented affects how citizens see the policy and themselves in relation to it. In the case of austerity, the apparent inevitability of the policy renders austerity the only acceptable solution and political activism futile. Finally, austerity was implemented amid an overall decline in political participation. Rather than provoking revolt, any public rejection of austerity may have been enacted through continued disengagement from politics.

Lack of resources to participate

The first driver of public inaction concerns citizens most adversely affected by austerity, who, as discussed above, are typically from disadvantaged and minority groups. The theory of civic voluntarism claims that disadvantaged individuals lack the necessary

resources to participate in politics. Austerity undermines practical resources, such as money, and psychological resources, such as resilience and autonomy. Under austerity, marginalised individuals have even less time and money than they did previously due to cuts to benefits, public sector jobs and support services. Austerity has also left many feeling powerless about key aspects of their lives, including finding work and financial stability (Mckenzie, 2015), affording adequate food (Douglas *et al.*, 2015) and mental health issues and suicide, particularly for benefit claimants (McGrath, Griffin and Mundy, 2015). These reductions in resources therefore undermine capacity to participate in politics.

Those most affected by austerity are also least likely to engage in political participation. Demographic groups are unevenly represented across all forms of political participation within Western democracies. Citizens with above average wealth, income and education are more likely to participate in politics through both conventional and unconventional acts such as voting or joining demonstrations (Lijphart, 1997). People of a higher socioeconomic status are more likely to know others who participate in politics, increasing awareness and providing encouragement to participate (Verba and Nie, 1972).

A clear example of austerity suppressing political participation among minority groups can be seen in research on race. For people of colour, particularly women, austerity represents a ‘sharpening and prolongation of [...] ordinary and everyday experiences of inequality’ (Bassel and Emejulu, 2017, p. 40). Before the financial crisis, poverty stood at 40 per cent for ethnic minorities in Britain, twice that of the white population (*ibid*), and has subsequently increased for many minority groups, along with rising deprivation (Fisher and Nandi, 2015). Women from ethnic minorities are more likely to work in the public sector than men or white women, meaning that cuts have disproportionately affected their jobs, pay and conditions (Bassel and Emejulu, 2017).

Since the onset of austerity, there is evidence of a decline in the participation of minority groups, as predicted by civic voluntarism. Bassel and Emejulu (2017) found that, among minority women in the UK and France, austerity hindered political activism and volunteering. Their reduced participation was caused in part by the mental and physical fatigue from job insecurity and reduced access to childcare. It is well established that time and money, resources under increased pressure under austerity, are crucial for many forms of participation such as campaign work, writing letters to politicians or attending political meetings (Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994; Brady, Verba and Lehman Schlozman, 1995;

Perea, 2002). Reduced funding for activist organisations and rising transport costs to attend meetings and events also affected the participation of minority women. Yet for some, the high stakes of growing precarity, loss of public services and loss of activist organisations has been a mobilising force to create new informal, grassroots groups (Bassel and Emejulu, 2017).

The reasons why disadvantaged or minority groups are less likely to participate is multifaceted. It is often suggested that apathy causes non-participation, particularly in young people. However, this is contradicted by the disproportionate presence of youth in protests following the financial crisis, such as the Occupy movement, student protests and London riots (Mcdowell, 2012). While young people are less likely to vote, they are more likely to attend demonstrations (Melo and Stockemer, 2014). Rather than indifference, young people more often feel politicians do not address the issues they care about and that they are powerless to engender change. Many therefore believe that participating in politics would not achieve anything (House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, 2014).

Austerity has also reduced opportunities for developing and maintaining the intellectual and psychological resources that are also needed for participation. For example, education across age groups has been adversely affected by austerity. Despite early protections from budget cuts, schools are now subject to a freeze in spending per pupil, resulting in a real-terms cut of around eight per cent by 2019/20 (Belfield and Sibieta, 2017). Schools are increasingly dependent upon donations and fundraising, exacerbating patterns of deprivation as the wealthier 50 per cent of areas attract more than double the donations of time and money (Body and Hogg, 2018).

Withdrawal of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and closure of Connexions, an advice service for 13 to 19 year olds, has reduced the support available for children and young adults (Ridge, 2013). The number of part-time students has reduced by 47 per cent since the reduction in government funding for higher education and tripling of university fees. This decline has particularly affected mature students with caring responsibilities who are more likely to undertake part-time study but are unable to take on the burden of debt. Lack of access to higher education can have long-term consequences as it reduces the opportunities and development of both adults and their children (McGrath, Griffin and Mundy, 2015). Education inherently alters the resources available to people to participate by

developing their understanding and critical thinking about politics and society as well as improving communication skills (Dalton, 2017). Education is consistently associated with political engagement across a range of political activities (Stoker, 2017), indicating that poor educational opportunities may also reduce future political participation.

However, there is not just an issue of equipping people with the skills to engage, but also of making politics accessible to all. Since 2010, many day services for adults with learning disabilities have closed across the country (Unison, 2015). People with learning disabilities are significantly less likely to participate than the wider population – only one third voted in the 2010 general election (Every Vote Counts, no date). Their lower participation has been attributed to practical barriers in combination with cultural exclusion resulting from a lack of appropriately targeted communication (House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, 2014). The loss of services for these individuals under austerity can exacerbate this exclusion, suppressing their voices when they are already at a disadvantage with regards to political participation.

The internet could help to mitigate some inequalities by improving access to information and opportunities for participation (Shah *et al.*, 2002). Yet there is a ‘digital divide’ where certain disadvantaged groups are more likely to have limited or no access to the internet. This gap occurs in resources, such as access to a computer, and in the skills needed to utilise these resources. Age is a key factor, as is education and disability (Hindman, 2009). In the UK, 14.9 per cent of the population do not use the internet, of which nearly half have an annual income below £11,500 (Good Things Foundation, 2017). Any new online opportunities for political participation are therefore not equally accessible, perpetuating the pre-existing inequalities of more traditional forms of participation. Issues with internet access have been exacerbated by austerity. Library closures, combined with fewer staff available to assist customers in the remaining libraries, have reduced access to computers for many (House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Committee, 2012).

Unequal impact of austerity

The impact of austerity has been disproportionately negative for disadvantaged citizens. Certain cuts, including to the NHS and road maintenance, are less discriminatory, affecting the majority of citizens to at least some extent. Yet, the impact of these cuts for those with good health and higher incomes has been significantly lower. Research shows that people in

poverty have borne 39 per cent of all cuts, while the burden of cuts on disabled people is 19 times greater than other citizens (Duffy, 2013). This suggests that, although cuts are likely to have affected everyone to some degree, the impact of austerity on the UK's most disadvantaged citizens is incomparable to the impact on the healthy and wealthy. Civic voluntarism would predict political participation among those who have more resources available, so cannot explain their lack of action in response to austerity. That many remain relatively little affected by spending cuts may better explain this inaction.

Grievance theory predicts that when citizens feel deprived they are mobilised to participate to communicate their grievances to those in power (Kern, Marien and Hooghe, 2015). Grievance theory would thus predict growth in participation among those adversely affected by austerity policies, but not those who are unaffected. The majority of the public, who are less dependent upon the state, may not be aware of the consequences of the cuts for those most in need and see few consequences for themselves. Such people are thus not mobilised to act. When combined with civic voluntarism, the theories together predict low participation in response to austerity overall because those with grievances to communicate lack the resources to do so.

Research in Europe indicates that austerity policies have relatively little effect on political participation among those least affected. In response to the introduction of a harsh austerity policy, including significant cuts to public sector salaries, public investment, pensions and social benefits, Spain saw a wave of demonstrations and strikes. Yet, these actions were disproportionately undertaken by those most affected by it – public sector employees and subsidy recipients. Overall levels of political engagement, in fact, declined following the introduction of austerity (Muñoz, Anduiza and Rico, 2014).

Narrative of austerity as necessary and unavoidable

However, there are also factors that influence the public more generally. First, the government has communicated the policy of spending cuts in such a way that there appears to be no alternative. This could lead the public to either accept spending cuts as the most appropriate policy or, for those who remain opposed to it, feel that political activism is unlikely to bring about change.

This argument draws on the theory of policy feedback which claims that policies change both the capacities of the state and those affected by policies. In particular, the

narrative that governments choose influences how people understand policies and, consequently, their own identities, goals and capabilities in relation to them (Skocpol, 1995). For example, as argued by Adam Przeworski, if political parties appeal to voters as workers, they are more likely to think of themselves as workers, which puts a particular lens on their values and opinions (Przeworski, 1985). Policies can therefore influence the way citizens see their social status, their rights and thus whether and how they feel empowered to participate in politics.

Through careful narrative choices, the government has suggested that they have no choice but to cut spending. Firstly, the coalition government chose a discourse of austerity for the spending cuts in an effort to evoke the ‘blitz spirit’ of the war period. From the 1940s to the mid-1950s, the government implemented strict controls on consumer goods, including imports, production, distribution and prices. Government resources were focused on funding the war effort and, later, on economic recovery following the Second World War (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2000). This wartime austerity has now become romanticised by many, nostalgically remembered as a time when everyone did their share for the war effort (MacLeavy, 2011). Using language such as ‘sticking together as a country’ and ‘our children and grandchildren will thank us’ (Cameron, 2009) the government sought to gain the support of citizens by evoking this time.

Additionally, this dialogue shifted emphasis away from the role of the banks in the financial crisis, towards the apparent profligate spending on the welfare state and public sector of the previous Labour government (Clarke and Newman, 2012). A mantra of ‘Labour’s debt’ was heavily utilised by the Coalition government. This claim received some opposition from the public (Hay, 2013), but that Labour was to blame was broadly accepted by the public until late 2015 (Dahlgreen, 2015).

To emphasise the necessity of cuts, they made claims such as ‘we are not doing this because we want to, driven by theory or ideology. We are doing this because we have to’ (Cameron, 2010). This assertion is questionable, as many scholars argue that austerity is an ideological choice over alternatives such as Keynesian fiscal stimulus (MacLeavy, 2011; Blyth, 2013; Hay, 2013). Of course, such alternatives may not counteract growing government debt, but there is also no consensus that government debt is fundamentally problematic or that it cannot be reduced through other means (Portes, 2013; Krugman, 2015). The *choice* of austerity is partly dependent upon the discourse surrounding the policy. As

Colin Hay (2013) argues, describing the financial crisis as a ‘crisis of debt’ justifies austerity as a solution, which a ‘crisis of growth’ would not.

Nonetheless, this narrative has been largely effective. Opinion polls show that the general public consistently believed that spending cuts are necessary (Dahlgreen, 2016). Research suggests that members of the public accept this narrative and strongly regard cuts as a moral necessity (Stanley, 2013). For many, this may indicate an acceptance of cuts as the most appropriate policy. For those who nonetheless oppose it, it may feel that political participation would not achieve anything because there is no alternative.

However, the narrative of being ‘in it together’ has been less successful. This narrative is misleading because, as argued above, cuts have not been equally distributed. For those disproportionately affected by cuts, this discourse is likely to seem insensitive, if not insulting, exacerbating distrust in politicians. Accordingly, cuts have been considered unfair almost since they began (Dahlgreen, 2016).

Over time, public support for cuts has waned. In 2010, 59 per cent of people agreed that public spending cuts were needed, compared to 32 per cent who disagreed. By 2017 these percentages had reversed (Deloitte, 2017). In 2017, for the first time since the financial crisis, support for raising taxes to increase public spending overtook support for maintaining tax and spending levels (Clery, Curtice and Harding, 2017).

Although government narratives have undermined political participation, recent declines in support for spending cuts and growing perceptions of unfairness could counteract this trend. However, as deprived communities continue to lose resources, opportunities for participation become ever more limited and the grievances of the rest of the population remain low. Furthermore, the evidence suggests the public see austerity as unavoidable, undermining efficacy to change the situation. This builds on a pre-existing reluctance to participate in politics which will be discussed in the following section.

Declining participation

Finally, it is important to situate austerity within the wider context of declining political participation. Scholars have argued that many citizens are withdrawing from politics because politicians do not represent the needs and preferences of the people. Rather than mobilising citizens, austerity may be seen as further evidence of democratic failure.

Over the last three decades, there has been growing evidence in the US and Western Europe of public discontent with democracy, characterised by declining trust in government and growing support for populism (Mair, 2013). This discontent is reflected in decreasing levels of political participation. In the UK, between 1992 and 2001 general election turnout fell by over 18 per cent. It has since steadily increased, but in 2017 was still nearly nine per cent down on 1992 (Audickas, Hawkins and Cracknell, 2017). In 2010, the combined vote share of the Labour and Conservative parties was lower than the number of people who did not vote (House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, 2014). Scholars have suggested these are symptoms of the decline of democracy, moving towards what Colin Crouch (2000) calls ‘post-democracy’.

However, Pippa Norris (2011) argues that the problem lies in a ‘democratic deficit’, where public satisfaction with democracy falls short of its aspirations for it. She claims that citizens' expectations are rising due to greater knowledge, so government failure to meet expectations combined with negative media coverage results in public dissatisfaction. Conventional participation can decline in the face of such cynicism about politics. In 2013 32 per cent of people in the UK said they ‘almost never’ trust the government, three times the proportion in 1986. In the same period, trust the government nearly halved. By 2013, only 16 per cent of people believed parliament would pay serious attention if they made an effort to do something about an unjust law (Ormston and Curtice, 2015). Those opposed to austerity may regard it as simply more evidence of poor government decisions, rendering political activity pointless.

It is possible that austerity has exacerbated these attitudes of distrust and frustration. Generalised cynicism about politics is likely to make marginalised groups further disinclined to use the few resources they have for participation. For all, the view that participation doesn't change anything is reinforced by the discourse that cuts are inevitable.

How the theories interact

As illustrated by figure 1, these theories can account for the differing impact on subsets of the population in two general streams. Overall declining participation forms a backdrop for both streams, as growing alienation is likely to be found across the population. For those who claim benefits or live on low incomes, this generalised predisposition not to participate in politics is exacerbated by the alienation they are likely to feel as a result of the ‘in it together’ rhetoric employed by government. Cuts to benefits and other public services are likely to then

reduce the time, money and energy they need to participate, further undermining participation.

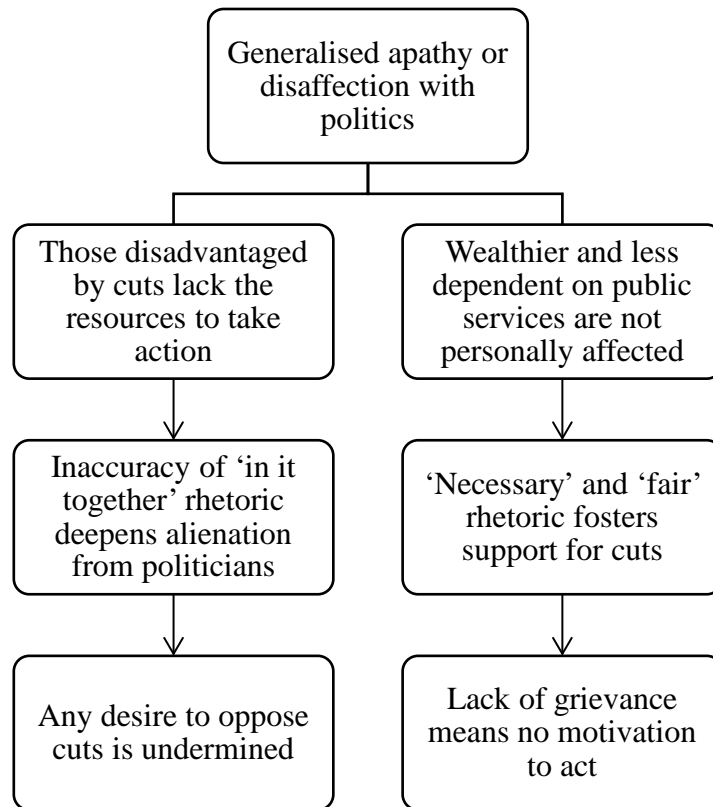


Figure 1 Theoretical model to illustrate low political participation in response to austerity

Although the outcomes may be similar, for those on higher incomes and less dependent on public services, the interaction of these theories differs. While generalised disaffection with politics remains an important undercurrent, the government’s rhetorical choices are likely to have garnered support, or at least indifference, towards austerity. This is because those who are not claiming benefits are more likely to accept that the cuts have been fair and necessary. In combination with the low personal impact of austerity, where financially comfortable individuals have no significant grievance to communicate, there is little motivation to act. When participation levels are already falling, a greater provocation than austerity is needed for political participation among this group.

Conclusion

The implications of unequal participation can be very serious for those who do not participate. A lack of political voice can result in policies which either fail to help or actively disadvantage non-participants, who are often most in need. Low political participation is associated with less redistributive policies, yet those who would benefit most from greater

redistribution of wealth are less likely to vote or engage by other means (Pontusson and Rueda, 2010). Ultimately, those who do not participate are more likely to lose out. The problem can then become self-perpetuating, as a lack of welfare state provision can entrench social inequalities, further reducing engagement and therefore representation of those most in need. In contrast, redistributive policies can assist lower status individuals in becoming more politically active by providing the resources that are central to participation (Dalton, 2017). The consequences of inequality of participation are crucial in the case of austerity, as those who lose out under austerity are also those who are less likely to participate. If the public does not engage with politicians over austerity, the government may continue to pursue it as a policy, further entrenching the issues it creates. It is therefore important to understand why people do not participate.

The theories of civic voluntarism, grievance theory and policy feedback all offer strong explanations for the low political participation in response to austerity. Yet none of these theories alone adequately explains the complex issues involved. All three most effectively build on one another to account for what is ultimately a complex picture.

Pre-existing declines in participation are likely to have undermined any potential response in the population as a whole, as participation is increasingly seen as ineffectual. The government's narrative of being 'in it together' contradicts the lived experience of those dependent upon public services, exacerbating distrust in politicians. The loss of resources through benefits and social services cuts has then created further barriers to participation for marginalised individuals.

The government's rhetorical choices are likely to have influenced those less dependent on public services differently, promoting the idea that cuts are necessary and unavoidable. This discourse indicates that participation would not change anything, while also encouraging many to support the policy. While these groups have the resources to participate, their limited personal impact of cuts means they do not have a grievance to communicate. As such, these theories together build a nuanced model to explain why austerity has provoked relatively little political participation in the UK.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council. The author would like to thank Dr John Boswell and Dr Matt Ryan for their support and advice on this article, as well as the reviewers for their valuable feedback.

Bibliography

Andrews, E. *et al.* (2017) *Performance Tracker A data-driven analysis of the performance of government*. Available at: www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/ (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Ashworth-Hayes, S. (2015) *Did George Osborne promise to eliminate the deficit by this year?*, *Full Fact*. Available at: <https://fullfact.org/economy/did-george-osborne-promise-eliminate-deficit-year/> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (2015) *GR-B 188/2015: APCC submission for the 2015 comprehensive spending review*. Available at: <http://www.apccs.police.uk/apcc-communications/email/?email=11092> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Audickas, L., Hawkins, O. and Cracknell, R. (2017) *UK Election Statistics: 1918-2017*. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7529#fullreport> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Bartels, L. and Bermeo, N. (2014) 'Ideology and Retrospection in Electoral Responses to the Great Recession', in Bermeo, N. and Bartels, L. (eds) *Mass Politics in Tough Times: Opinions, Votes and Protest in the Great Recession*. New York: Oxford University Press. Available at: www.oxfordscholarship.com (Accessed: 15 August 2018).

Bassel, L. and Emejulu, A. (2017) *Minority Women and Austerity: survival and resistance in France and Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Becker, S. O., Fetzer, T. and Novy, D. (2017) 'Who voted for Brexit? A comprehensive district-level analysis', *Economic Policy*. Narnia, 32(92), pp. 601–650. doi: 10.1093/epolic/eix012.

Belfield, C. and Sibieta, L. (2017) *The short-and long-run impact of the national funding formula for schools in England IFS Briefing Note BN195*. Available at: www.nuffieldfoundation.org. (Accessed: 14 August 2018).

Berry, C. and White, L. (2014) *Local authority spending cuts and the 2014 English local elections*. Sheffield. Available at: <http://speri.dept.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Brief6-local-authority-spending-cuts.pdf> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Blyth, M. (2013) *Austerity: the history of a dangerous idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BMA board of science (2016) *Health in all policies: health, austerity and welfare reform*. British Medical Association. Available at: <https://www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/policy-and-research/public-and-population-health/health-inequalities> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Body, A. and Hogg, E. (2018) *A Bridge Too Far? The Increasing Role of Voluntary Action in Primary Education*. Available at: <http://www.abridgetoofar.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/a-bridge-too-far-report-2018.pdf> (Accessed: 14 August 2018).

Bowcott, O. (2018) 'English justice "hanging on by fingernails", warns top judge | Law | The Guardian', *The Guardian*, 24 April. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2018/apr/24/english-justice-hanging-on-by-fingernails-warns-top-judge> (Accessed: 17 August 2018).

Brady, H. E., Verba, S. and Lehman Schlozman, K. (1995) 'Beyond Ses: A Resource Model of Political Participation', *The American Political Science Review*, 89(2), pp. 271–294. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2082425.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A71245fc3b749249f44c34acca3a61c97> (Accessed: 9 October 2019).

Cameron, D. (2009) 'The age of austerity'. Transcript, SayIt. Available at: <https://conservative-speeches.sayit.mysociety.org/speech/601367> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Cameron, D. (2010) 'We must tackle Britain's massive deficit and growing debt :: Conservative Party Speeches :: SayIt'. Transcript, SayIt. Available at: <https://conservative-speeches.sayit.mysociety.org/speech/601466> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Clarke, J. and Newman, J. (2012) 'The alchemy of austerity', *Critical Social Policy*. SAGE PublicationsSage UK: London, England, 32(3), pp. 299–319. doi: 10.1177/0261018312444405.

Clarke, J. and Newman, J. (2017) 'Critical Policy Studies "People in this country have had enough of experts": Brexit and the paradoxes of populism', *Critical Policy Studies*, 11(1), pp. 101–116. doi: 10.1080/19460171.2017.1282376.

Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Harding, R. (2017) *British Social Attitudes: the 34th Report*. London. Available at: www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

- Cribb, J. (2017) 'Public sector pay in the next parliament', *IFS Briefing Note BN210*. Available at: <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org>. (Accessed: 16 August 2018).
- Crouch, C. (2000) *Coping with post-democracy*. London: Fabian Society.
- Dahlgreen, W. (2015) *Current government now blamed more than Labour for spending cuts*. Available at: <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/11/25/conservative-blame-spending-cuts/> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).
- Dahlgreen, W. (2016) *Approval of government cuts at lowest level for years*. Available at: <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/03/16/cuts-approval-budget/> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).
- Dalton, R. (2017) *Political Equality as the Foundation of Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/oso/9780198733607.003.0001.
- Deloitte (2017) *The State of the State 2017-18*. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/public-sector/articles/state-of-the-state.html> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).
- Dorling, D. (2016) 'Brexit: The decision of a divided country', *BMJ (Online)*, 354(July), pp. 1–2. doi: 10.1136/bmj.i3697.
- Douglas, F. *et al.* (2015) 'Resourcefulness, Desperation, Shame, Gratitude and Powerlessness: Common Themes Emerging from A Study of Food Bank Use in Northeast Scotland.', *AIMS public health*. AIMS Press, 2(3), pp. 297–317. doi: 10.3934/publichealth.2015.3.297.
- Duffy, S. (2013) *A fair society? How the cuts target disabled people*. Sheffield. Available at: <https://www.centreforwelfare-reform.org/uploads/attachment/354/a-fair-society.pdf> (Accessed: 23 August 2019).
- Every Vote Counts (no date) *Survey and findings*. Available at: <https://www.everyvotecounts.org.uk/what-is-every-vote-counts/survey-findings/> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).
- Fetzer, T. (2018) 'Did Austerity Cause Brexit?', *CAGE Working Paper*.
- Fisher, P. and Nandi, A. (2015) *Poverty across ethnic groups through recession and austerity*. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-across-ethnic-groups-through->

recession-and-austerity (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Focus E15 Campaign (no date) *About Us*. Available at: <https://focuse15.org/about/> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Van Gelder, S. (2011) *This changes everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Gietel-Basten, S. (2016) 'Why Brexit? The Toxic Mix of Immigration and Austerity', *Population and Development Review*, 42(4), pp. 673–680. Available at: <https://about.jstor.org/terms> (Accessed: 11 October 2019).

Good Things Foundation (2017) *The real digital divide? Understanding the demographics of non-users and limited users of the internet: an analysis of Ofcom data*. Available at: https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/sites/default/files/research-publications/ofcom_report_v4_links.pdf (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Hastings, A. *et al.* (2015) *The cost of the cuts: the impact on local government and poorer communities*. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/cost-cuts-impact-local-government-and-poorer-communities> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Hay, C. (2013) 'Treating the symptom not the condition: Crisis definition, deficit reduction and the search for a new British growth model', *British Journal of Politics and International Studies*, 15(1), pp. 23–37. Available at: <http://speri.dept.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Treating-the-symptom-not-the-condition-Crisis-definition-deficit-reduction-and-the-search-for-a-new-British-growth-model1.pdf> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Hindman, M. (2009) *The myth of digital democracy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

HM Treasury (2010a) *Budget 2010*. London: The Stationery Office. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/budget-june-2010> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

HM Treasury (2010b) *Spending review 2010*. London: The Stationery Office. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2010> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Hood, A. and Phillips, D. (2015) 'Benefit Spending and Reforms: The Coalition Government's Record', *IFS Briefing Note BNI160*. Available at: www.nuffieldfoundation.org. (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Committee (2012) 'Library Closures Third Report of Session 2012-13', *HC 587*. London. Available at: www.parliament.uk/cmscom (Accessed: 14 August 2018).

House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee (2014) *Voter engagement in the UK*. London. Available at: www.parliament.uk/PCRC-publications (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Innes, D. and Tetlow, G. (2015) 'Delivering Fiscal Squeeze by Cutting Local Government Spending', *Fiscal Studies*, 36(3), pp. 303–325. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-5890.2015.12056.

Jitendra, A., Thorogood, E. and Hadfield-Spoor, M. (2017) *Early Warnings: Universal Credit and Foodbanks*. Available at: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/04/Early-Warnings-Universal-Credit-and-Foodbanks.pdf> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Kawalerowicz, J. and Biggs, M. (2015) 'Anarchy in the UK: Economic deprivation, social disorganization, and political grievances in the London riot of 2011', *Social Forces*. Oxford University Press, 94(2), pp. 673–698. doi: 10.1093/sf/sov052.

Kern, A., Marien, S. and Hooghe, M. (2015) 'Economic Crisis and Levels of Political Participation in Europe (2002–2010): The Role of Resources and Grievances', *West European Politics*. Routledge, 38(3), pp. 465–490. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2014.993152.

Krugman, P. (2015) 'The case for cuts was a lie. Why does Britain still believe it? The austerity delusion', *The Guardian*, 29 April. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/ng-interactive/2015/apr/29/the-austerity-delusion> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Lijphart, A. (1997) 'Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma', *The American Political Science Review*, 91(1), pp. 1–14. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2952255.pdf?casa_token=PyseOMD4mnYAAAAA:ozEcw0TVrCxmBsS0FgJd56Mzt_PDy4sbJbmLsMgB_HH9dZ81gX9DiA1Blk90slzLXi0LDXROSKI NYA7ovVDSwXTa--5Qs5GTB9PN5ZtHu8ULL5pZ2U0 (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Loopstra, R., Lambie-Mumford, H. and Patrick, R. (2018) *Family hunger in times of austerity: families using food banks across Britain*. Available at: <http://speri.dept.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SPERI-Brief-32-Family-hunger-in->

times-of-austerity.pdf (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Lowndes, V. and Gardner, A. (2016) 'Local governance under the Conservatives: super-austerity, devolution and the "smarter state"', *Local Government Studies*, 42(3), pp. 357–375. doi: 10.1080/03003930.2016.1150837.

MacLeavy, J. (2011) 'A "new politics" of austerity, workfare and gender? The UK coalition government's welfare reform proposals', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*. Oxford University Press, 4(3), pp. 355–367. doi: 10.1093/cjres/rsr023.

Mair, P. (2013) *Ruling the void: the hollowing of Western democracy*. London: Verso.

Mcdowell, L. (2012) 'Post-crisis, post-Ford and post-gender? Youth identities in an era of austerity', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 15(5), pp. 573–590. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2012.671933org/10.1080/13676261.2012.671933.

McGrath, L., Griffin, V. and Mundy, E. (2015) *The Psychological Impact of Austerity A Briefing Paper*. Available at: <https://psychagainstausterity.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/paa-briefing-paper.pdf> (Accessed: 13 August 2018).

McGuinness, F. (2018) *Poverty in the UK: statistics*. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07096#fullreport> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Mckenzie, L. (2015) *Getting By: Estates, class and culture in austerity Britain*. Policy Press. Available at: https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4jl7BgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=austerity+uk+powerlessness&ots=Y_8rAqdVGo&sig=cXylzwVIxMiyj4T-15A3YhViSsw#v=onepage&q=austerity+uk+powerlessness&f=false (Accessed: 14 August 2018).

Melo, D. F. and Stockemer, D. (2014) 'Age and political participation in Germany, France and the UK: A comparative analysis', *Comparative European Politics*, 12(1), pp. 33–53.

Muñoz, J., Anduiza, E. and Rico, G. (2014) 'How Welfare States Shape the Democratic Public: Policy Feedback, Participation, Voting, and Attitudes', in *How Welfare States Shape the Democratic Public: Policy Feedback, Participation, Voting, and Attitudes*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 19–40. Available at:

<https://www.elgaronline.com/view/9781782545484.00009.xml> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

National Audit Office (2010) *maintaining the financial stability of UK banks : update on the support schemes*. London: The Stationery Office. Available at:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/maintaining-the-financial-stability-of-uk-banks-update-on-the-support-schemes/> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Norris, P. (2011) *Democratic deficit : Critical citizens revisited*. Cambridge University Press.

Occupy London (2011) *Occupy London*. Available at:

<http://occupylondon.org.uk/about/about-2/> (Accessed: 14 August 2018).

Oliveira, A. (2018) *Dataset: Government deficit and debt return*. Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/publicsectorfinance/datasets/governmentdeficitanddebtreturn> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Ormston, R. and Curtice, J. (eds) (2015) *British Social Attitudes: the 32nd Report*. London: NatCen Social Research. Available at: www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Perea, E. A. (2002) 'Individual characteristics, institutional incentives and electoral abstention in Western Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(5), pp. 643–673. doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.00025.

Ponticelli, J. and Voth, H.-J. (2017) 'Austerity and Anarchy: Budget Cuts and Social Unrest in Europe, 1919-2008', *Discussion Paper No. 8513*. Available at:

<https://ssrn.com/abstract=1899287> (Accessed: 15 August 2018).

Pontusson, J. and Rueda, D. (2010) 'The Politics of Inequality: Voter Mobilization and Left Parties in Advanced Industrial States', *Comparative Political Studies*. SAGE

PublicationsSage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 43(6), pp. 675–705. doi:

10.1177/0010414009358672.

Portes, J. (2013) 'Believing in “miracles”? Self-defeating austerity and self-financing stimulus'. National Institute of Economic and Social Research. Available at:

<https://www.niesr.ac.uk/blog/believing-miracles-self-defeating-austerity-and-self-financing-stimulus> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Przeworski, A. (1985) *Capitalism and social democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Available at: <http://www.cambridge.org/gb/academic/subjects/philosophy/political->

philosophy/capitalism-and-social-democracy?format=PB&isbn=9780521336567 (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Rheingans, R. and Hollands, R. (2012) “‘There is no alternative?’: challenging dominant understandings of youth politics in late modernity through a case study of the 2010 UK student occupation movement’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16(4), pp. 546–564. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2012.733811org/10.1080/13676261.2012.733811.

Ridge, T. (2013) “‘We are All in This Together’? The Hidden Costs of Poverty, Recession and Austerity Policies on Britain’s Poorest Children’, *Children & Society*. Wiley/Blackwell (10.1111), 27(5), pp. 406–417. doi: 10.1111/chso.12055.

Schlozman, K. L., Burns, N. and Verba, S. (1994) ‘Gender and the Pathways to Participation: The Role of Resources’, *The Journal of Politics*, 56(4), pp. 963–90. Available at: <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/t-and-c> (Accessed: 9 October 2019).

Secombe, I. (2017) *Councils respond to cuts in Public Health grants allocation, Local Government Association*. Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/councils-respond-cuts-public-health-grants-allocation> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Shah, D. *et al.* (2002) ‘Nonrecursive Models of Internet Use and Community Engagement: Questioning Whether Time Spent Online Erodes Social Capital’, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. SAGE PublicationsSage CA: Los Angeles, CA, 79(4), pp. 964–987. doi: 10.1177/107769900207900412.

Simpson, P. (2017) *Public spending on adult social care in England IFS Briefing Note BN200*. Available at: <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org>. (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Sisters Uncut (2018) *FAQs*. Available at: <http://www.sistersuncut.org/faqs/> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Skocpol, T. (1995) *Protecting soldiers and mothers : the political origins of social policy in the United States*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Stanley, L. (2013) “‘We’re Reaping What We Sowed’: Everyday Crisis Narratives and Acquiescence to the Age of Austerity’. doi: 10.1080/13563467.2013.861412org/10.1080/13563467.2013.861412.

Steward, R. (2018) ‘Legal Aid Scheme: Social Security Benefits’, *Hansard: House of*

Commons written ministerial statements, 1 March(130690W). Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-01/130690/> (Accessed: 16 August 2018).

Stoker, G. (2017) *Why politics matters: Making democracy work*. London: Palgrave.

UK Uncut (no date) *About*. Available at: <http://www.ukuncut.org.uk/about/> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Unison (2015) *An austerity audit: coalition cuts to local communities in England since 2010*. Available at: <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/05/On-line-Catalogue23139.pdf> (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Verba, S. and Nie, N. (1972) *Participation in America : political democracy and social equality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Available at: https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Participation_in_America.html?id=9K5fdvfmGREC (Accessed: 23 August 2018).

Young, I. M. (2000) *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/0198297556.001.0001.

Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I. (2000) *Austerity in Britain : rationing, controls, and consumption, 1939-1955*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.