Article:

The Expert Cure? Exploring the Restorative Potential of Expertise for Public Satisfaction with Parties

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The declining legitimacy of political parties has become something of a truism in political science discourse. Less often reflected upon is how these legitimacy problems could potentially be resolved. This article contributes to this underexplored issue by examining the restorative potential of expertise as a supplement to intra-party democracy. Building on an established literature on Stealth Democracy we explore the potential for expert-inspired reforms to boost citizens' satisfaction with parties. Using original survey questions, we provide evidence that a perceived lack of expert engagement in parties predicts citizen dissatisfaction, before using deliberative workshop data to distil traits that define the appeal of experts and expertise. This mixed-methods approach allows us to demonstrate some common desires of which parties should be aware, but also traits that make these ideas difficult to realise. Combining these insights, we argue that whilst expertise has appeal, parties face considerable challenges in satisfying citizens' desires.

Across new and advanced democracies, it has been widely reported that political parties 'could scarcely be less liked or respected' (van Biezen, 2008: 263) and that 'contemporary publics seem increasingly sceptical about partisan politics' (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000: 3). Citing data on party membership, electoral turnout, public satisfaction and trust, successive scholars have argued that 'we now live in an age characterized by increasing popular disenchantment with political parties… the evidence points increasingly and unequivocally to the decline of parties as representative agencies' (Bartolini and Mair, 2001: 334). Whilst there have been recent fluctuations in party membership in the UK (Audickas, Dempsey and Keen, 2018), there remain many indicators that parties are held in low regard. Results from seven rounds of the European Social Survey from between 2004 and 2016 demonstrate that average party trust in the UK has constantly hovered around a very weak 3.6 out of ten. Most recently, Ignazi (2017: 172) has documented how issues of party legitimacy remain deeply problematic across Europe. The challenge facing political parties therefore appears considerable.

A common response to charges that party legitimacy is decreasing in the eyes of the public has been to explore ways of stimulating wider citizen participation (Faucher, 2014; Gauja, 2016) with the hope that this will help improve public perceptions. In contrast, in this article we bring together scholarship on declining party democracy with the finding that the notion of 'expertise' has public appeal. This might seem counterintuitive during a time in which populist discourse frames experts as elites and therefore not to be trusted (Clarke and Newman 2017). Presenting original survey data, we show that in fact there is a broadly positive link between satisfaction and perceptions of expertise in parties. However, our mixed-methods approach allows us to rigorously examine this

finding - using deliberative workshop data to unpack this idea, we outline the considerable challenges that parties face in realising citizens desires for expertise. These findings suggest that expertise is, as Newman and Clarke (2018) have argued, 'conjunctural' as it is, contingent, contested, and shaped by context. Rather than unanimously embracing experts, or rejecting them in favour of populists, the public therefore have complex views of these actors and their potential contribution to democratic governance. Exploring these ideas, this article moves forward the debate surrounding party legitimacy and public opinion whilst also laying out the implications of citizens' views for practitioners seeking to capitalise on the public appeal of expertise.

Models of Governance

Despite current travails, since the collapse of the Soviet Union multi-party democracy has provided perhaps the dominant model of state governance. In the ideal model, parties act as intermediaries between citizens and the state (Lawson, 1980). Serving as both representative and governing organisations, parties provide 'democratic linkage' between people and government, bridging the gap between rulers and the ruled by taking up and realising citizens' demands (Pastorella, 2016: 958). As Koole has argued, parties act as 'devices to structure the masses and to integrate them into the political system' (1996: 512). In principal-agent terms, parties act as the agents for members, electors or the wider public (dependent on your conception of party organization), channelling the interests of these groups into governing outcomes. The legitimacy of parties to exercise such governing power is bound up with procedures of representative democracy. Operating within voting systems, parties are authorized and held to account through competitive elections that give citizens equal opportunity to grant and withdraw a political mandate (Lipset, 1959). It is on this basis that parties claim that their exercise of power is rightful and why, as Beetham argues, those subject to it have a corresponding duty to obey (2004: 107). Whilst the nature of party representation is seen to have changed over time - moving from a system of mass participation to cartelised competition (Katz and Mair, 1995) - parties' governing legitimacy remains founded upon the idea that they are able to secure 'popular consent and compliance with [their] political authority' (Keman, 2014: 311).

In contrast to a system of party democracy, the technocratic approach is somewhat less defined (Centeno, 1993: 309) and often, as Hanley (2018) points out, is simply described as the 'reverse mirror image' of Richard Katz's classic definition of party government. As an ideal type, technocracies are seen to govern in accordance with the knowledge and experience of 'experts'. In contrast to party democracy, this model does not draw on mass participation or popular representation, but instead argues that an expert, ruling elite discerns 'a unitary, general, common interest' (Carmani, 2017: 60). Technocrats accordingly utilise 'value-free, objective criteria for making decisions' (Centeno, 1993: 11) that are rationalised to be in the public interest. A technocratic government does not act on a mandate derived from the electoral participation of the populace (Ibid: 63), but rather from an assurance 'that the higher rationality of [the] whole [of the population] is protected from the undue influence of particular interests' (Centano, 1993: 133). Technocratic legitimacy is therefore based on 'the appeal to scientific knowledge' and a rejection of '"politics" as inefficient and possibly corruptive' (Ibid: 313). This approach is grounded by 'the (undeniably intuitive) claim that experts are better equipped than citizens to make informed

judgements concerning complex political problems, [which] lends knowledge and "evidence" the last and leading word in politics' (Wolkenstein 2015: 116). The governing class are accordingly idealised as 'depersonalized frictionless machines monitored by equations' and a technocracy might be considered realised when it has 'succeeded in transforming the politician into a public administrator... [and] selfless discharger of social functions' (Sartori 1987: 437).

Emerging from these accounts are very different visions for how representation and governance occur that reify different types of actor and different sources of knowledge as legitimate; creating alternative benchmarks for acceptable governing practices. The relevance of these two models for this article lies in the crisis party democracies are currently seen to face. As successive studies have shown, parties face growing questions about their legitimacy in the light of declining levels of participation and a growth in negative political attitudes (Inglehart, 1997; Pharr, Putnam & Dalton, 2000; van Biezen, 2008; van Biezen and Poguntke, 2014; Webb, 2013). In response, scholars and practitioners have examined the potential for novel participatory avenues or engagement practices (Faucher, 2014; Gauja, 2016). In this article we direct attention to existing work that has demonstrated the attraction many citizens feel to the idea of depoliticised decision-making, experts and expertise. Although recognised in political surveys, we argue that, to date, limited attention has been paid to the potential cross-fertilisation of these approaches. For this reason, we explore the potential for parties to capitalise on the appeal of experts and expertise, according with Hanley's (2018: 82) observation that 'parties and elected politicians can (and do) boost their legitimacy with additional *non-elective* claims' (emphasis added).

Public perceptions of experts

The idea of expert-led governance has received some attention in public opinion surveys. For example, the World Values Survey asks respondents to what extent it is good to have 'experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country'. This question (and others like it) have tended to find consistent support for experts; in 2014, 55% answered that it was 'very' or 'fairly' good for experts, not government, to make decisions (across the 59 countries surveyed). In a similar way, the Eurobarometer found that 77% tended to agree or strongly agree that 'Politicians should rely more on the advice of expert scientists' (2005). In a more specific context, Moss et al. (2016: 454) used Mass Observation archives to find historical evidence that British citizens expressed a desire 'to leave government to experts' and decision-making led by 'the best candidates', 'clever men', the 'best brains' and 'individuals without bias'. Worth noting however is that such sentiment is not distributed equally across populations; for instance, in their study of 27 European countries, Bertsou and Pastorella (2017) link such support with low levels of political trust and living in a formerly communist state.

This idea of outsourcing to experts forms an integral part of the 'stealth democracy' argument made by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002). In a study of US citizens' perceptions on decision-making, they found that:

> '...the general notion of a dedicated bureaucratic elite calling the shots on the means to achieve the consensual ends, even if there is not direct accountability to the people, is attractive' (2002: 141).

Furthermore, they argued that:

> 'People would most prefer decisions to be made by what we call empathetic, non-self-interested decision makers…The people are surprisingly smitten with the notion of elite experts making choices' (Ibid: 86).

Although they found that these views were not unanimously held, a significant minority felt this way (with, for example, 31% of Americans agreeing that we should 'leave decisions to non-elected experts' (Ibid: 138)). These conclusions suggest that experts and expertise have appeal, but there remain questions about how and why expertise and experts are valued. These questions are particularly interesting in the context of recent debates about post-truth and suggestions – often raised by populist narratives – that elite knowledge should be challenged (Fuller, 2018; Van Zoonen, 2012).

Existing work interrogating attitudes towards experts has tended to examine the type of experts citizens' favour, or the relative appeal of experts as opposed to alternative sources of governance (comparing, for example, technocratic ideals with populism or representative governance). In the former tradition, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse showed that experts have appeal when they strive to 'achieve consensual ends' and are seen to 'have nothing to gain from selecting one option over another'. Also in the US context, VanderMolen (2017) used survey analysis to explore public views of independent experts, business leaders and bureaucrats and found that 'citizens expect a very specific kind of non-elected expertise. Outside of business leaders, the public would prefer to elect representatives rather than hand responsibility to either appointees or interest group leaders' (VanderMolen 2017: 694).

In the second tradition, scholars have shown differing levels of support for experts. Webb (2013), for example, found that in the UK context, 63.5% agreed that '[i]t is important for the people and their elected representatives to have the final say in running government, rather than leaving it up to unelected experts' (2013: 753). In demonstrating support for representative government, Webb's findings complicate questions about the kind of democracy citizens would like to see. Interrogating these desires in depth is important because, as Font et al. (2015: 168) have noted, 'the current socio-political climate is rendering increasingly important the tension between citizen demands for more participatory opportunities and international shifts towards more technocratic decision-making processes'. Citizens' desires have therefore been shown to be multi-dimensional, reflecting a desire for *configurations* of participatory, representative and expert-based governance.

In the analysis that follows, we present new data that examines citizens' views of experts in more detail. Unlike previous analysis, we do not look at preferences for experts as sole governors, or at the relative appeal of technocracy. Rather, we consider attitudes towards experts in the context of parties. Given the crisis facing parties, we ask whether experts are viewed positively in the context of parties, and whether an absence of expertise is related to negative views of parties as a whole. Finding evidence of a link between views of parties' use of expertise and satisfaction with parties we go on to distil the traits that define the appeal of experts and expertise and demonstrate the presence of not only very particular desires, but also of contradictory ideas. Combining these insights, we explore the potential for political parties to exploit the appeal of expertise and argue

that whilst some principles might be distilled, parties will find it difficult to capitalise on the appeal of this idea, not least because of gaps between citizens' perceptions and parties current use of expertise.

Methods

We present data collected in a multi-stranded programme of public opinion research designed to examine public perceptions of political parties. As part of a wider project exploring citizens' perceptions of parties, we collected quantitative and qualitative data to explore and test citizens' views. This approach sought to reflect the contingent nature of public opinion and utilised trade-off questions and deliberative discussion to identify the tensions and tolerances of individuals' views. Specifically, the survey data presented below was collected by the polling company YouGov from UK adults. Valid responses were gathered from 1,497 people between the 17th and 21st of November 2017.[1] The data presented is weighted in accordance with YouGov measures to extrapolate a national representative sample from respondents. To complement the survey data, deliberative workshops were conducted to generate insight into citizens' ideas. Three workshops were held in Sheffield in January and February 2018. Each had a different composition, with one composed of those with no former engagement with political parties, a second group composed of party activists and campaigners, and a final group composed of a 50/50 split of the prior two groups. In total 68 people participated, with as similar number of people in each session. Each workshop saw individuals engage in small group discussion in order to construct their ideal party, with interventions and facilitation used to probe and explore responses. This data was transcribed and analysed in NVivo. References to experts or expertise were collated across the five activities that structured the workshop, providing a corpus of data on attitudes towards experts in regards to policy-making, participation and governance. This data was then re-coded to identify three key themes (discussed below) that relate to *who* an expert is, *what* they do, and *how* they relate to a political party. This two-pronged approach allows us to offer complementary analyses; first, diagnosing views of experts and expertise within parties, and second, interrogating people's understanding of these terms.

The role of expertise in parties

To build on existing research, our survey assessed citizens' attitudes towards experts and expertise, with a specific focus on these ideas in the context of parties. We initially examined the extent to which experts as opposed to other actors were seen to be a desirable influence on party policy. We therefore asked respondents to what extent parties should ideally think about the views of different groups when they developed their policy positions. We gave respondents the option to specify their views about multiple groups: asking them about experts and three groups associated with party democracy – namely the majority of the public, party members and electorally significant voters.[2]

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[1] Valid responses here were determined according to the time taken to answer questions. Those respondents who took less than 5 minutes to answer the questions were excluded from analysis on the basis that it was not possible to read the questions (let alone answer them) in less time than this.

[2] We also have two additional responses: 'The majority of the population' and 'Business and special interest groups (such as trade unions)', but, for clarity, those results are not reported here.

Figure 1: 'Now thinking about how political parties should ideally behave, when parties develop their policy positions how often should they think about the opinion of each of the following groups?'
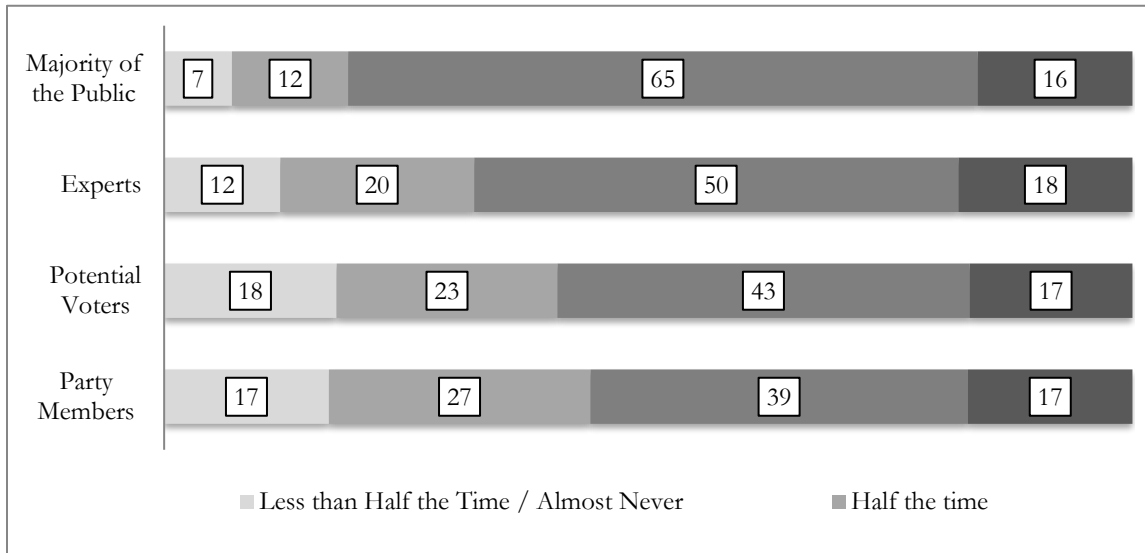
From results presented in Figure 1 we see strong support for experts: 50% wanted to see experts listened to more than half or almost all of the time. This group statistically out-performed potential voters (43%) and party members (39%). Interestingly, experts are not the only favoured group. The idea that the majority of the public should be listened to more than half of the time is the most strongly held, suggesting respondents see the appeal of multiple groups simultaneously informing policy formation. Indeed, if we compare respondent results across their answers (not shown), we find the same: 41% of respondents chose more than half/almost all the time for *both* experts and the public, and 27% chose the same for *both* experts and party members. Experts are seen to be an important influence on policy-making, yet for many people this support might not come at the expense of other constituencies associated with party democracy. Survey responses do not, however, allow us to effectively explore whether such responses reflect genuine beliefs of compatibility, or less considered 'top of the head' responses (Zaller 1992). On this basis, there are grounds for further exploring any potential compatibility of technocratic ideas *within* existing systems of party democracy through our workshop data.

Before we take up this challenge, and given concerns about party legitimacy, we also asked respondents who they thought parties *currently* listened to (as opposed to the ideal). Adopting an expectations gap approach (Kimball and Patterson, 1997), we subtracted perceived realities from desires to determine whether people's desires for parties were currently being met. The results, presented in Figure 2, suggest that a very similar percentage of respondents think experts, voters, and members were listened to the desired amount (between 29% and 31%). However, a considerable majority of respondents (77%) think the public are being listened to less than desired,

The second question asked: In your opinion, when parties develop their policy positions, how often do they think about the opinion of the following groups? (for each statement please tick one). For both questions the scale ran as follows: 1= Almost never, 2= Less than half of the time, 3= About half the time, 4=More than half the time, 5=Almost all of the time, Don't know.

with experts again the clear second-largest group here, at 56%. Experts therefore sit half-way between attitudes towards the majority of the public on one hand, and voters and party members on the other.

Figure 2: Calculated expectations gaps for who political parties listen to when making decisions

How often do parties listen to...

Majority of the public	77	17	6
Experts	56	29	17
Potential voters	33	29	39
Party Members	32	31	38

■ Less than desired ■ As desired ■ More than desired
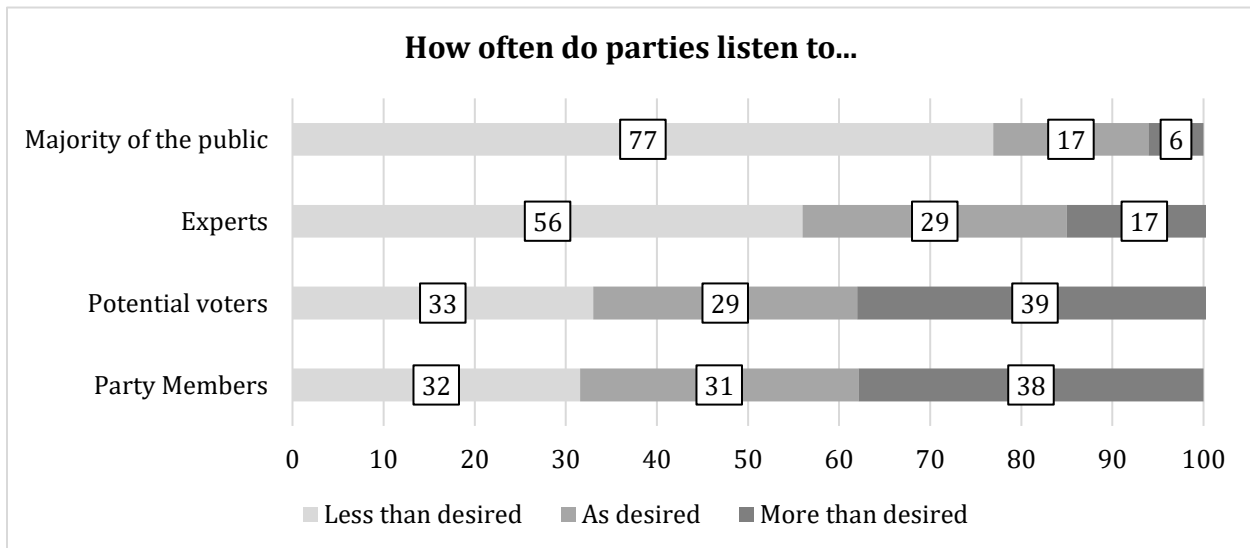
Having reviewed public attitudes concerning what sources parties should consider when they formulate policy, our next step explores the relationship between these judgements and satisfaction with political parties. As mentioned at the outset, negative attitudes towards political parties are widespread and have been linked to a weakening satisfaction with parties and a need for reform (van Biezen, 2008). A popular response has been for parties to open up their participatory structures to empower party members, strengthening links between citizens and parties (Gauja 2016: 103). However, these steps have often been taken without examining the drivers of dissatisfaction and the degree to which more participatory opportunities are desired. Where studies of satisfaction have occurred, these have tended to focus on satisfaction with 'democracy' at the system level rather than focusing on parties (see Martin 2014). Noting these trends, we ask whether there is a relationship between responses to the above questions and satisfaction with *parties*. In particular, we explore whether people who felt that parties didn't listen to experts were less satisfied than others, a finding that would support the case for parties devoting attention to experts and expertise. Therefore, we constructed a logistic regression to examine the 23% of our respondents who answered that they were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with political parties (coded as '1' with 'don't know' responses removed), against the remaining respondents who were 'not very' or 'not at all' satisfied.

Because we expect existing party preferences may colour attitudes towards political parties more generally, we control for party support, strength of partisanship and left-right ideology in our model. We also explored key demographic and attitudinal correlates utilised by existing studies through the inclusion of age, gender, education, class and attention to politics (Carman, 2006; Dennis, 1966; Martin, 2014; James, 2009; Seyd, 2016; Webb, 2013). We added our own specific

measure of political knowledge, asking respondents about their perceived knowledge of how parties work to get more insight into understanding of knowledge of these particular organisations.[3] Finally, for the purposes of our focus, the results of most interest are those for the expectation gaps. In each case the variable is categorised as in Figure 2, with the reference category being those who think the group are listened to the desired amount.

Table 1: Logistic regression model examining respondents who are very/fairly satisfied with political parties (coded 1) in comparison to those who are not very/not at all satisfied (coded 0)

Explaining satisfaction with political parties	Coefficient	s.e.
Gender *(ref = male)*	0.04	(0.17)
Age *(years)*	0.00	(0.01)
Attended university *(ref = did not attend)*	-0.39**	(0.18)
Social Grade (ref = A/B)		
C1	-0.10	(0.22)
C2	-0.94***	(0.27)
D/E	-0.23	(0.24)
Party Knowledge (ref = A great deal)		
A fair amount	0.32	(0.51)
Not very much	0.33	(0.52)
Nothing at all	-0.17	(0.63)
Don't know	-0.08	(0.79)
Political attention *(0-10)*	0.03	(0.04)
Left Right (ref = Centre)		
Left	0.04	(0.27)
Right	-0.22	(0.26)
Don't Know	-0.18	(0.30)
Party support (ref=No party)		
Conservative	0.77*	(0.27)
Labour	-0.27	(0.40)
Liberal Democrat	-0.25	(0.49)
UKIP	-0.42	(0.61)
Green Party	-0.13	(0.61)
Other party	-1.41**	(0.64)
Don't know	-0.49	(0.48)
Strength of Party Support (ref = Very Strong)		
Fairly strong	-0.15	(0.26)
Not very strong	-0.87**	(0.31)
Don't know	-0.35	(0.79)
Not applicable	-0.98*	(0.55)
Experts expectations (ref= Listened to as desired)		
Listen less than desired	-0.52**	(0.21)
Listen more desired	-0.43*	(0.25)

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[3] Specifically, we asked: 'How much, if anything, do you feel you know about the following:
How political parties work: *Scale: 1= A great deal, 2= A fair amount, 3= Not very much, 4= Nothing at all, 5= I can't place myself on this scale.'*

Members expectations (ref= Listened to as desired)		
Listen less than desired	0.32	(0.23)
Listen more desired	0.39*	(0.25)
Potential Voters expectations (ref= Listened to as desired)		
Listen less than desired	-0.05	(0.21)
Listen more desired	-0.17	(0.21)
Majority of the public expectations (ref= Listened to as desired)		
Listen less than desired	-0.69**	(0.24)
Listen more desired	0.51	(0.37)

n=1,057
McKelvey & Zavoina's R2 = 0.20

<div align="right">* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.001</div>

Results indicate that demographic and general political attitudinal measures have limited predictive power when it comes to satisfaction with parties. Matching findings on satisfaction with democracy (Norris 2011: 201) those with a university degree are less likely to be satisfied with parties in comparison to those without a degree (*b=-0.39, p<0.05*). Age, gender, perceived political knowledge of how parties work, left-right placement, and political attention were insignificant. Class was only significant for the C2 category who were less likely than the A/B group to be satisfied with parties (*b=-0.94, p<0.001*). At a lower level of significance, our party support measure does suggest that Conservative supporters were more satisfied, compared to those who supported no party (*b=0.77, p<0.10*). Those who supported one of the 'other' parties were more likely to be dissatisfied (*b=-1.41, p<0.05*) and further analysis suggests this result is driven by supporters of the SNP. In relation to the Conservative result, it is suggested that we are likely picking up something of a 'winner's bias' amongst voters (Anderson & Guillory 1997), as the Conservative Party was in government at the time of the survey.

When it comes to expectations gaps, there is no significant relationship between party satisfaction and a belief that parties listen to potential voters more or less than desired. As we might expect, there is a clear result for the wider public – those who think the public are listened to less than they should by parties are less likely to be satisfied with parties (*b=-0.69, p<0.05*). There is a weaker effect for listening to members and in an unanticipated direction – those who think parties listen to members more than they would desire are *more* satisfied with parties (*b=0.39, p<0.1*). This provides some evidence that dissatisfaction with parties is not necessarily driven by those with concerns that members are not having enough say or influence on policy. Our key results for listening to experts are interesting. In comparison to those who think experts are listened to the desired amount, there is evidence that those who think experts are listened to more than desired (*b=-0.43, p<0.1*) *and* those who think experts are less than desired (*b=0-52, p<0.05*) are significantly less likely to be satisfied with parties.

Our model therefore provides evidence that public attitudes concerning the way that parties utilise experts and expertise in their policy-making is associated with levels of satisfaction towards political parties. There is evidence that too little or too much perceived engagement with experts can tarnish citizen judgements. Reviewing the findings from our survey analysis, we therefore echo

Hibbing and Thesis-Morse by finding that a proportion of the public view experts and expertise positively. However, our findings also point towards complication in terms of just how experts might be utilised by political parties as they suggest that expertise is not viewed in uniformly positive terms. Given that scholarship from Science and Technology Studies has acknowledged the very different responses to '[t]he question [of] what expertise is and what experts do, what role they play in society and what role they should play' this finding makes it interesting to interrogate whether there are consistent conceptions of experts and expertise, and whether certain types of expert are viewed in more favourable ways (Grundmann 2017: 25). For this reason, we turn to our qualitative data to present more detailed evidence of how citizens view experts and expertise.

Public Desires for Expertise in Political Parties

Our workshop data indicated further generalised support for our survey findings. Participants in each of our workshops were split into smaller groups of 4-5 individuals, giving a total of 15 groups. Each of these 15 groups was then given the task of deciding which actors they thought should inform policy-making. Groups were asked to generate a list of different types of people they would like to see involved and then were given additional prompts (one of which was experts) that they could decide to include or reject in their list. Each of the 15 groups listed experts or independent advisors *before* being given the prompts, and subsequently experts were referenced in positive terms, demonstrating the appeal of this idea. In coding responses, however, it became clear that participants had some different preferences when it came to how parties might use experts and expertise and who constituted an (legitimate) expert. Three distinctive themes were distilled that related to:

1. The role of the expert
2. Who counts as an expert
3. Expert status and partisan affiliation

We scope citizens' views to highlight preferences before turning to discuss whether it is possible for parties to incorporate experts and expertise in ways that mirror citizens' desires.

The role of the expert in parties

The role of experts and expertise in parties can vary. Outside of technocratic systems in which experts have ultimate control, a range of powers and capacities can be taken up. Existing scholarship has recognised that experts can provide information and spread understanding amongst the general populace (Turner, 2001). As Schudson (2006: 500) argues, experts can play a facilitation role in which they 'clarify the ground of public debate and so improve the capacity of both legislators and the general public to engage effectively in democratic decision-making'. But experts can have differing degrees of personal (or collective) power, meaning there are circumstances where experts themselves have decision-making power. Within their discussions, participants recognised these possibilities and often had strong views about the desirability of each. Specifically, participants distinguished between experts as sources of information, as formulators of policy options, and as decision-makers in their own right, using these divisions to indicate

preferences for the former and concern over experts being given decision-making power. Three key themes emerged.

First, many participants explicitly linked their support for experts to the idea that these actors can provide invaluable information. It was therefore argued that parties needed "*accurate information to base our policies on that we actually trust*". From this view, it was contended that in an ideal party, actors other than experts would form policy and make decisions by getting "*researchers to look into it, and depending on what you find you formulate policy, you can't formulate your policy without research, can you?*". Voiced routinely throughout the three workshops, these kinds of statements demonstrated the appeal of experts as sources of information who are engaged by other party actors to clarify their understanding and inform decisions.

Second, and related to the above, a number of participants also cited experts' value as formulators of policy options. Discussing policy-making specifically, participants made comments such as: "*I would want the experts to be leading along the design*". Rather than just providing information to party actors who make policies, experts would therefore play a role in proposing, narrowing down and evaluating alternative ideas. Experts would therefore be determining "*what is doable and what isn't doable*" and presenting parties with options of what should be done. For some participants this meant that experts played an important part in broader policy and decision-making processes, with an ideal party having a '*panel of experts… narrowing [options] down*".

Finally, discussion also revealed important differences around experts' role in decision-making. Although a minority argued that it was preferable to have "*experts in the field making policy, because anyone can come up with a policy, but it can be completely wrong*" and that "*[i]t is a real shame that you have got to go beyond the experts isn't it [when making decisions]*", the overwhelming consensus was that experts should not make decisions themselves, and that party members and/or elites should retain decision-making power. It was therefore argued that:

> "*experts is fine, but I don't think they should decide…they should be providing information*" and that "*experts can only advise though, not make decisions*".

Some felt "*I don't think the experts should be voting on it so much as informing and conversing with the party*", whilst others noted: "*I think once a policy has been mooted they should provide input, and they should maybe be given higher priority than the public, but I am not sure that experts should be making policies*".

On this basis it appears that both politically active and non-active participants are comfortable with the idea of experts informing parties and aiding the formulation of policies and decisions, but that many have concerns about experts being given sole decision-making power. This suggests that there is support for integrating experts into existing party systems, but that there are preferences for precisely how this should be done that parties need to understand. Our work therefore echoes the finding of Ganuza et al. (2017: 270) that most people view experts' role as 'to advise politicians and support them so that public policies are of a high quality'.

Who counts as an expert in parties

In addition to preferences over *what* experts did, workshop discussion also revealed important differences in *who* was seen as a valid source of expertise. Participants frequently admitted to being *"a bit puzzled by the term expert",* asking questions like *"who is making these people experts, are they self-styled experts?"*. A short exchange illustrated the range of ideas:

> *"So who are these experts?"*
>
> *"Anyone who can help us!"*
>
> *… "People who know what they are talking about".*

The term expert is notoriously hard to classify and scholars have adopted different definitions. Whilst some have identified expert attributes, others have focused on the relationship between the users and consumers of expertise. Grundmann defines an expert as a specialist, noting that specialist characteristics can 'apply to several roles in modern society' (2017: 26). So, experts can be 'located in the professions and in science', 'possess technical skills, including manual and intellectual skills' and 'are impartial which makes their advice trustworthy' (Ibid). These ideas resonated in the comments of participants and provide important insight into who citizens would like to be informing parties activities. Our analysis identified 3 factors as influential:

1. Qualifications
2. Professional Expertise
3. Personal Expertise

For nearly all participants, qualifications were an important condition of expert status because otherwise it was argued that: "*anybody researching can become an expert"*. The idea of qualifications was seen to be important because, as one participant put it, "*[What] I find so scary about current party policy is that the policies are made by people who seem to have no qualifications in the areas about which they are pontificating".* Relevant qualifications were therefore seen to distinguish "so-called experts" from *"academics",* and were explicitly mentioned in comments such as: "*I would like people to be involved in making policies to actually have some experience, some qualifications, and some evidence behind the ideas, rather than just an ideology"*. And yet, as this comment reveals, qualifications alone are not the only factor: the idea of experience also played a role. It was argued that qualifications alone weren't enough: *"If we go with academics you can potentially know how an aircraft carrier works, but do they know how to drive it?".*

Experience is, then, a complex idea, and participants' comments revealed a range of desirable characteristics. Some emphasised the fact that experts needed to have professional expertise. Often connected to qualifications or status, the idea that doctors, nurses, shopkeepers, heart surgeons and artists were experts was commonly voiced. These individuals were seen to qualify as experts because they were *"Professionals in that field"* or had "*clinical experience"*, reflecting the idea that "*we want different people in different professions so they know what they are talking about".* Others, however, connected expertise to lived experience in comments such as "*if you're a carer say, then let's speak to her and get her views on what it is like to be a carer",* describing these people to be experts on that topic. Whilst voiced less readily, and often emerging only after extended discussion

of expertise, many participants came to argue that "*there are a wide variety of people who are experts, so there are lorry drivers that are experts, there are academics who are experts"*. These points reveal that differing types of experience can be seen to qualify someone for expert status.

Interpreting these findings, there was not a definitive preference for sources of expertise. Whilst there was a widespread belief that experts are those with qualifications, there was also (differing levels of) support for the idea that experts can possess professional or personal experiential knowledge. Distinguishing between these alternatives, participants' automatic assumptions were connected with qualifications, and, to a lesser extent, professional experience, but in-depth discussion led many to forcefully extol the virtues of personal experience as well. Thinking through the implications of these findings, it appears that more expansive understandings that include personal knowledge may not have immediate, widespread appeal. This is partly because such understandings reflect 'slower' forms of thinking (Stoker, Hay and Barr, 2016) or, in other words, are not 'instinctive' or 'fast' reactions to the issue (Kahnemann, 2011). Cumulatively, this suggests that the public are more likely to immediately be drawn to experts as qualified, professionally experienced actors, but some citizens may also value other sources of expertise.

Expert status and partisan affiliation

Finally, workshop discussion revealed important differences in views around the status of experts in relation to parties. As theories of technocratic governance indicate, neutrality and depoliticisation can be key aspects of experts' appeal. And yet in the context of parties, alternative attributes associated with partisan loyalty and ideological affinity also come into play. Building on the desire for experts that provide information and help to formulate policies, it became clear that participants held different views about the degree to which experts should be neutral individuals who provide expertise to *all* parties, or should rather be more partisan and work with specific parties to advance their ideas. Furthermore, there was variance in participants' opinions of whether it was possible for knowledge itself to be neutral, or whether it was inherently value-laden. These ideas were often highly entwined, as captured in a particularly indicative discussion:

> ""*What I'm saying is do you take advice that is based on an objective viewpoint or do you take advice that is politically motivated, what is your view?"*
>
> *"Well I would say it should be neutral"*
>
> *"Well I would say that advice should come from non-political parties, because you are deciding on an issue, you are not deciding on who is more loyal to a party agenda, if you really want to solve issues for a whole populace then I think advice should come from non-political"*
>
> *"I think it could be either...if you are taking political advice then you are taking advice from someone who has the interests of your party and is perhaps trying to put an alternative view within that contexts".*

This discussion shows the pull of different ideas upon participants' views of experts that, to some extent, reflect existing debates about whether experts should be issue-advocates promoting certain

agendas and ideas, or act in 'purer' terms by sharing information and acting as a resource for gaining additional information (Pielke, 2007). The weight of support for insider and outsider experts generally fell in favour of more neutral, independent actors, reflecting the well-established belief that 'social, ethical, and political values should have no influence over the reasoning of scientists' (Douglas, 2009: 1). Whilst some participants (especially in the party activist workshop) did argue that *"I don't want anyone deciding my party's policies who are opposed to what the party stands for"*, the majority favoured a hybrid system in which neutral experts offered advice that was then interpreted in a partisan way. It was therefore commonly argued that *"The experts would be external"*, that *"they do need to be independent, non-partisan"* and that expertise would be *"independent", "It has got to be cross party"*. This approach was seen to be feasible because of the way that different parties consume expertise. As the following discussion illustrates:

> *"I think isn't there also interpretation of the evidence, because I can present technical evidence to the Tory party and the Labour Party but they will interpret it in different ways"*
>
> *"Presumably because they don't have enough expert advice for us to peer review it?"*
>
> *"No, it is because it is ideological"*
>
> *"You see what you want to see because of what you believe".*

Parties themselves were therefore seen to need to navigate the value-status of experts by referring to their own principles when drawing on 'neutral' expertise. These preferences offer a steer for parties on how to integrate expertise and experts in line with public desires, but there remain important questions about the feasibility of realising citizens' ideals.

Discussion

The above analysis has shown that not only do the public find the idea of experts and expertise to be attractive, but that there are certain patterns in citizens' ideas. Specifically, it appears that people want experts to:

- Provide information and help in formulating policy options;
- Possess qualifications and professional experience; and
- Be neutral and independent, with it left to parties to interpret expert advice in line with partisan ideas.

Given our finding that those with concerns about how parties listen to experts are less likely to be satisfied with parties, there is reason for parties to consider reacting to these issues. And yet, we also found that satisfaction decreased when parties were seen to listen to experts too much. This may be because citizens have negative views of experts per se, but it could also be because survey respondents were not imagining experts in the same way when they answered the question. As the above discussion shows, some types of experts and expertise and viewed more favourably than others, hence it could be that dissatisfaction reflected instances in which respondents were

imagining parties to listen to the 'wrong' types of expert. To interrogate this possibility, further survey analysis is required that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this research. However, we argue that even if this is the case (and that certain types of expertise are viewed positively by a majority of respondents), our findings suggest that parties would find it difficult to capitalise on positive views of expertise.

An immediate challenge is the relationship between public perceptions and party practices. In studying how citizens view parties and expertise, there can be a presumption that citizen perceptions are accurate and reflect what it is that parties currently do. From this perspective, parties simply need to give the people what they want by, for example, creating an independent expert panel who would advise on policy development. The difficulty with such logic is that many parties already have practices that exemplify citizens' stated desires. The Labour Party, for example, created an economic advisory committee in 2015. Announcing the initiative, the Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell (2015), said the panel allowed Labour to:

> "draw on the unchallengeable expertise of some of the world's leading economic thinkers... for their specialist knowledge. I give you this undertaking that every policy we propose and every economic instrument we consider for use will be rigorously tested to its extreme before we introduce it in government."

The party's rhetoric closely mirrors citizens' desires, but this example also demonstrates the challenges parties face in realising a benefit from such moves. Our findings suggest that many citizens are simply unaware of such initiatives – not a single workshop attendee raised such practices, including the political activists – indicating that perceptions may not match up to what it is that parties do. From this perspective parties may need to think about how they communicate their activities to citizens.

Furthermore, in announcing the panel, Labour referenced the 'unchallengeable expertise' of its experts, painting a picture of neutral, academic experts of the kind citizens value. However, political journalist Robert Peston (2015) overtly challenged the 'neutral' status of Labour's experts by asserting that Labour were 'recruiting some of the world's most influential left-wing economists'. Whilst Labour therefore presented their expert panel in a way that mirrored our participants' stated desires, this example reveals that the status of independent and neutral expertise can be contested.[4]

Building on this point, our research raises further questions about the influences that may colour views of how parties use experts. In our survey and workshops, participants were explicitly prompted to think about their views of 'parties in general' to allow us to map the views of parties as a category of organisation. And yet as widely acknowledged, people often answer general questions differently to how they answer specific ones: "what do you think of parties in general" may elicit rather different responses to "what do you think of party X", not least as the latter is liable to be

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[4] Furthering the irony, numerous members of the panel in fact quit, arguing that their points were not listened to by the party, see Blanchflower (2016). It is not completely clear, but the panel seems to have been indefinitely suspended

influenced by individuals' own partisan perceptual filters. Our research design did not allow us to explore the significance of such differences, but building on the discussion above, it could be expected that partisan preferences and values may colour who is seen as legitimate, whilst other demographic traits could affect the kind of qualifications of experience seen to validate expert status. This makes it interesting to ask not only whether citizens' views of experts vary in specific situations compared to general contexts, but also whether certain attributes and traits inform the judgements that citizens make (with one possible explanation for dissatisfaction with parties listening too much to experts being the idea that they are listening to the wrong kind of expert). Whilst beyond the scope of our own research, this suggests the value of conjoint analysis which, using scenario based questions, could analyse the appeal of different expert roles, kinds of expert and partisan affiliations when it comes to giving expertise.

Even if these challenges can be overcome, it remains the case that citizens are not united in their views of what is desired from experts and expertise. Whilst there is clear praise for expert qualifications and experience alongside general scepticism about giving experts decision-making powers, we found that views were not uniform and that people adapted their answers when given time to reflect and discuss their ideas. This was particularly the case when it came to experiential knowledge as, although originally not cited as a valid kind of expertise, given time, many participants came to argue that such inputs were essential, often contradicting their initial stance.

Given these points, our article raises important questions for parties considering expert-inspired reform. Whilst initial survey findings suggest that parties may be able to boost satisfaction by listening more to (certain kinds of) experts and expertise, workshop discussions suggest that it is far from easy to design processes seen to be legitimate by citizens. Whilst the idea of independent experts with qualifications and professional expertise informing and formulating policies is attractive, the basis of valid expertise is not uniform and, on closer inspection may be difficult to realise.

Acknowledgements

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