

Public Opinion on State Party Funding

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Public Opinion on
State Party Funding

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Chapter One: Introduction

The dilemma of party funding

Political parties are necessary for democracy. This is the general consensus among citizens (Dalton & Weldon, 2005), scholars (for a discussion, see Kölln, 2015b), and naturally parties themselves (van Biezen, 2004). If parties are necessary for democracy, they need to be adequately funded so that they can perform the functions demanded of them in democracies, such as competing in elections, developing policy platforms, and communicating with citizens (Dalton, Farrell, & McAllister, 2011). Grassroots funding (small donations and party membership fees from private individuals) is perceived by scholars as the normatively ideal source (e.g. Hopkin, 2004; Katz & Mair, 1995; Nassmacher, 2009), because when parties are financially reliant on ordinary citizens, it both reflects and promotes strong linkages between parties and citizens. However, only a tiny minority of citizens now express any willingness to financially contribute to the party they support (Linz, 2002, p. 307). This makes the notion of modern parties relying on citizens for their income a “demand from never-land” (Nassmacher, 2009, p. 194), and leaves parties with two options: big donors and the state. Unfortunately, both sources of funds are presumed to be unpopular with citizens (Koss, 2011; Power, 2020).

When it comes to party funding, parties thus face a dilemma. If they try to gain public legitimacy by relying only on grassroots funds, they risk being too poor to perform their essential representative functions. However, if they capitalise on taxpayer funds or elite donations in order to ensure they are rich enough to perform their functions, they risk losing public legitimacy. It is currently difficult to properly evaluate how the choices parties make in response to this dilemma affect the quality of representation that citizens experience in democracies. “Representation in mass democracies is a relationship that is created and shaped by both the representative(s) and the represented” (Wolkenstein & Wratil, 2021, p. 863). As such, public opinion on party funding needs to be a central component of any such evaluations. Yet, remarkably, the topic of public opinion towards state party funding has so far been largely overlooked.

Statement of research question and main claims

In this dissertation I pose the overarching research question: “What do citizens think about state party funding?” To answer this question, I link the major but disconnected literatures of public opinion and party funding. In doing so, I develop two main claims. Firstly, I claim that citizens hold distinct preferences and considerations about state party funding that align well with normative positions in the party politics literature. Secondly, I claim that providing citizens with arguments in favour of state party funding can be effective in increasing their support for the policy.

Motivation

In this dissertation, I define state party funding as *the direct or indirect provision of state funds to political parties*. The practice is widespread: 92% of countries now offer some level of direct state funding to parties, and 79% offer indirect state funding in the form of some level of free media access to parties (Scarrow, 2018, p. 106). In some ways, this state party funding is no different from other spending policies. The government decides on which public goods or services money should be spent, for instance opening a new hospital, investing in infrastructure or expanding funding for schools. The policy is funded either through existing taxes or by increasing taxes. So far, these are the same principles on which state funding of political parties operate. However, the fact that parties are paying *themselves* separates state financing of parties from other spending policies. MPs vote to increase or decrease the funding that their own parties receive, and as such they are exercising their power to literally write their own checks (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 756). Compared to other spending policies, this makes state party funding an issue that centres much more squarely on parties’, rather than citizens’, interests (Nwokora, 2015). Yet, according to research, citizens’ interests are very much at stake, because whether parties are mostly funded by big donors or by the state has profound effects on how they compete against each other, how they organize themselves, and how they represent citizens.

The party politics literature has shown that relative to big donor funding, state funding results in greater equality amongst parties, and amongst citizens (Scarrow, 2018). Firstly, when states provide parties with substantial public funds, and set the threshold for parties to access these funds relatively low – as empirically, most European states have (Piccio & van Biezen, 2018) – it provides a floor for smaller and newer parties to compete in elections. Compared to donor-reliant systems where parties must raise often enormous amounts of private money to be able to compete, this results in a more level

playing field among parties (Kölln, 2016) and more party contenders for citizens to choose from at elections. Secondly, the provision of substantial state funds means that parties are less reliant upon private funds for their survival, funds which are sometimes characterised as “plutocratic” in nature (Nassmacher, 2009, pp. 239-244). The more parties are financially reliant on this handful of elite actors (affluent individuals, corporations, interest groups and trade unions), the more responsive they may be to their preferences, and the less responsive they may be to the often markedly different preferences of their constituents (Gilens, 2001, 2009, 2012; Gilens & Page, 2014; Lessig, 2015; Thompson, 2018; Warren, 2004, 2006b). This gives rise to concerns about political inequality (Dahl, 2006). Indeed, one study found that globally, state party funding decreases party corruption by “curtailing the role of private money in politics” (Gerring, Hummel, & Burt, 2019, p. 18). Because of this comparatively greater ability of state party funding to foster equality between parties and citizens, and its potential for reducing corruption, a dominant normative position in the party politics literature (Dalton et al., 2011; Hopkin, 2004; Nassmacher, 2009; Scarrow, 2004, 2007, 2018; van Biezen, 2004) is that state-reliant parties are preferable to donor-reliant parties.

Despite this scholarly consensus, most legislators expect the policy of state party funding to be unpopular with citizens. Even in Europe, where state funding has been drastically expanded with the express purpose to “restore public confidence in political parties and re-establish their legitimacy within the political system” (Bértoa, Molenaar, Piccio, & Rashkova, 2014, p. 356), in many cases it was introduced without much public fanfare or discussion (Koss, 2011). In the UK, the Electoral Reform Society and the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) have repeatedly advocated the expansion of state party funding as a solution to the over-reliance of parties upon big donors,¹ but as one such report states:

It is hard to imagine a more difficult climate in which to make such a proposal. We would not have made it if we thought there was a credible alternative. We do not believe there is. If the public want to take big money out of politics, as our research demonstrates they do, they also have to face up to the reality that some additional state funding will be necessary. We realise this is a very uncomfortable conclusion (Kelly, 2011, p. 8).

This statement stresses that elites perceive increasing state party funding as a politically toxic move. Ten years later, the author of another CSPL report on party funding echoed the Kelly Report’s recommendations, but lamented that there is neither the “the political will or public appetite for major reform of

¹ For reports from the Electoral Reform Society, see (Garland, 2015), and from the Committee for Standards in Public Life, see (Evans, 2021; Kelly, 2011; Neill, 1998).

party finance” (Evans, 2021). The “political will” for party funding reform is lacking in majoritarian systems (such as the US and the UK) because in such systems, the two major parties benefit from their institutionalised relationships with large donors and have limited strategic incentives to work together to enact reform (Koss, 2011, p. 178). Without the political will, increasing the “public appetite” for state funding could be the only path for pressurising elites to make reforms designed to limit the influence of big donors. However, surprisingly, whilst we know a great deal about what scholars think about state party funding and its effects upon the quality of representation, we have very limited scientific insights into what citizens think.

Party funding is often assumed to be an issue on which citizens are particularly difficult to please, a sentiment wittily captured by Linz in his oft-cited quote “Parties need money: but not mine, not from my taxes, and not from interest groups” (2002, p. 307). Given past findings that citizens are largely ignorant about how party funding works, but are nonetheless hostile towards the party funding system, it can be reasonably questioned to what extent it is even worth taking public opinion into account on this topic (vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011). It is certainly the case that party funding is salient only in times of scandal. This means that the only narratives citizens are likely to be exposed to are negative, and that the information environments in which they form opinions about the topic are devoid of positive arguments in favour of parties receiving funding from any source at all. There is therefore undoubtedly a negativity bias towards the topic of party funding in citizens’ minds, and indeed scepticism has been argued to be an even more important driver of opinion-formation on party funding than partisanship (Nwokora, 2015). Some caution that given the presumably blanket and uninformed cynicism on the topic, perhaps “politicians and parties should be freed from the constraints of public opinion in reforming party finance” (vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011, p. 41).

Then again, public opinion research shows us that the standard of informed opinion is an unrealistic criterion on which to assess how responsive democratic actors should be to the demands of citizens (Druckman, 2014, pp. 470-471). Rather than seeing public cynicism on party funding as a reason to ignore public opinion, it could be that this cynicism is even more of a reason to take it seriously. So far, the clearest single piece of information we have about public opinion on party funding is that citizens in donor-reliant countries are very dissatisfied with what they perceive as excessive influence of donors upon the political process (this is consistently found in the US, the UK and Australia. See: Garland, 2015; Nwokora, 2015; Persily & Lammie, 2004; Primo & Milyo, 2020; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011). Given that in these countries, parties and candidates are indeed reliant on a small set of wealthy donors who

often do have more conservative policy preferences than the rest of the electorate (Gilens & Page, 2014), it may be that “the public is justified in inferring improper influence” (Warren, 2006a, p. 172). In other words, the fact that they are cynical does not mean they are wrong to be. Party funding has drastic effects on representation outcomes and it seems that citizens intuitively understand this. Scepticism is therefore not a sufficient reason to write off the importance of public opinion on party funding.

Furthermore, past studies have provided indications that citizens *can* hold logically consistent opinions on, and draw broadly accurate conclusions about, party funding. For instance, in the UK citizens are able to clearly determine that their parties receive only a very small amount of money from the state (vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011). Citizens in the US and the UK also know which types of donors (i.e. trade unions or business) favour which types of parties (Democrats/Labour, Republicans/Conservatives) (Bowler & Donovan, 2016; Donovan & Bowler, 2019; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011). Additionally, experimental studies show that citizens are able to update their preferences when they encounter information about limitations on big donors (Avkiran, Kanol, Oliver, & Smith, 2016; Bowler & Donovan, 2016). They can reason about how factors such as group versus individual donations, types of campaign spending, and types of donor regulations, are more or less corrupting. This suggests that public opinion on this topic can be more sensible than it is often given credit for. Indeed, the authors of one of these studies concludes: “In the end, we find that there is much more to public attitudes about campaign money than unmovable cynicism about corruption and quid pro quo arrangements” (Bowler & Donovan, 2016, p. 276). To re-cap, we know that in line with scholars, citizens are highly sceptical of the systemic inequality perpetuated by parties’ dependency on big donors. We also know that their scepticism can be reduced by exposure to information about restricting these donations. However, we do not yet know enough about what they think of the main alternative of *state* party funding, nor how they respond to information arguing in favour for this policy.

Disconnected literatures: Party funding and public opinion

Given the normative weight of this question, how is it that we do not yet have adequate answers? I argue that the reason is that there are still large gaps, both theoretical and empirical, in two fields of literature: party politics (particularly the sub-field of party funding), and public opinion. These literatures are currently too disconnected, with gaps that could be closed by linking the

two fields more closely and deliberately. Party finance literature has long focused on the important and painstaking descriptive task of collecting cross-country data on party funding and spending, as well as on the wide variety of laws governing party funding and spending (IDEA, 2021; Katz & Mair, 1992; Poguntke et al., 2016). These data collection efforts have allowed scholars to analyse how party funding affects the ways in which parties organize, compete, and represent citizens (e.g. Kosiara-Pedersen, Scarrow, & van Haute, 2017; Kölln, 2016; Poguntke et al., 2016; Scarrow & Webb, 2017; van Biezen & Kopecký, 2017). This has led to a flourishing debate about the democratic implications of state party funding. Yet, “the dominant theoretical perspectives in the political finance literature overlook citizens” (Nwokora, 2015, p. 74). This means that although we know a lot about how party funding affects representation, we do not know how the citizens who are at the receiving end of this representation actually experience and evaluate party funding. The lack of theorising about what public perspectives on (state) party funding are, how they are formed, and how they can be *informed*, is a major gap in the party politics literature.

At the same time, it is a gap in the public opinion literature, because the field has virtually neglected the topic of party funding. Although it is assumed by many scholars and policy-makers that because of its positive effects on representation, state party funding “is beneficial for increasing parties’ legitimacy in the public eye” (Bértoa et al., 2014, p. 358), the mechanisms through which these effects are supposed to take place have not been thought through. How much do citizens support or oppose state funding relative to other sources, which considerations about state party funding do they find most relevant, and what information influences their support? Without the answers to these questions, we cannot disentangle whether state funding policies have the hoped-for effects on attitudes like trust, efficacy, corruption perceptions and democratic satisfaction (Bértoa et al., 2014; May, 2018; Razzuoli & Lobo, 2017). The more we understand opinions on state party funding, the more effectively public opinion scholars can grapple with the question of how this important policy issue, which fundamentally impacts the ways parties play their role in democracies, also influences citizens’ formation of these deeper political attitudes.

Related to the theoretical disconnect between the fields of party funding and public opinion is an absence of the application of methodological tools and the empirical data collection efforts that would allow us to answer the question of *what do citizens think about state party funding*. Our existing empirical picture is very sparse and scattered. The few past studies on public opinion of party funding are single case studies conducted in either the US, the UK, or Australia, which are all donor-reliant party systems. This means we

have no insight into public opinion in *state*-reliant systems, and no comparative insights between the two types of party funding regimes. We also lack validated measures of attitudes towards the three main funding sources of state funding, big donor funding and grassroots funding. As such, attitudes towards these funding sources are rarely examined in relation to each other, which is essential for understanding how citizens think about party funding in its totality. The available data about public attitudes towards party funding therefore creates a confusing descriptive image of how citizens perceive this vital pillar of party organization and representation. Finally, experimental studies exposing citizens to information about party funding has so far been limited to information about *private* funding, and has ignored the potential causal effects that providing information about state party funding could have upon policy support.

Bridging the divide: Statement of sub-research questions

Attitudes towards state party funding are sure to be shaped both by the behaviour of parties (understood through the party politics literature) and by traditional opinion formation processes (understood through the public opinion literature). In order to bridge the divide between these two fields and answer the question “what do citizens think about state party funding”, I focus on four specific aspects of the question. Firstly, there are important descriptive questions about citizens’ support for, and considerations about, state party funding. Secondly, there are explanatory questions about the types of information that may *affect* these opinions. The four sub-research questions I investigate in this dissertation are:

1. How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?
2. Which considerations relate to citizens’ support for state party funding?
3. How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?
4. How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?

In Chapter Two, I elaborate upon my reasons for choosing these specific questions, showing how they arise from gaps in the literature. Sub-research questions one and two are descriptive in nature, seeking to describe opinions, whilst sub-research questions three and four are explanatory, testing how

providing information can influence opinions. In order to answer these questions we need advancements in three areas. Firstly, theoretical linking of the fields of party funding and public opinion in order to develop theoretically sound hypotheses. Secondly, the application of appropriate methodological tools to test these hypotheses in a scientifically valid manner. Thirdly, empirical findings that illuminate how these expectations actually hold up among citizens in the real world. This dissertation makes advancements in all three areas. In this Introductory Chapter, I now briefly summarise the theoretical framework and hypotheses of this dissertation, and the research design employed to test them. I then move onto presenting the main empirical findings, and finally explicating the central contributions of this research.

Theory and hypotheses

To answer the overarching research question, I develop a theoretical framework and testable hypotheses in response to each sub-research question. The first sub-research question, “How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?”, is important because attitudes towards state party funding are surely not formed in a vacuum. They likely arise based on how people think of party funding in its totality, how they weigh up alternative sources, and finally evaluate their preferences. Therefore, to answer this question, I use existing concepts in the party politics literature about the main features of each of the three funding sources: grassroots funding, state funding, and big donor funding. As mentioned, the party politics literature shows that grassroots funding is the normatively ideal source of party funding because it reflects and promotes strong ties between parties and citizens (Duverger, 1954; Katz & Mair, 1995; Nassmacher, 2009; van Biezen & Kopecký, 2007). Many scholars in this literature also argue that in the absence of substantial grassroots funds, state funding promotes greater equality, among both parties and citizens, than big donor funding (Bértoa et al., 2014; Corduwener, 2020; May, 2018; Nassmacher, 2009; Scarrow, 2018). If citizens form preferences about state party funding in line with these normative claims in the literature, then they should prefer it to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding.

H1: Citizens prefer state funding to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding

The second sub-research question is “Which considerations relate to citizens’ support for state party funding?” To answer this question, I use a public opinion lens to scrutinise two dominant system-level perspectives about the pros and cons of state party funding: the cartel party theory (Katz & Mair, 1995,

2009, 2018) and the conception of parties as public utilities (van Biezen, 2004). Some scholars view the migration of parties to the state as a signal of parties' abandonment of citizens and thus as a threat to democracy. The cartel party theory highlights the negative and worrisome elements of state party funding and argues that party reliance on state funds poses real risks for democracy. Based on this view, I theorise that people who perceive parties as being poor representatives, parties as colluding over state funds, and state funding as benefiting larger parties, are significantly more likely to oppose state party funding. However, the public utility perspective views state party funding as a legitimisation of parties' role as "an essential public good for democracy" (Piccio & van Biezen, 2018, p. 68), and highlights the more positive elements of state funding. Based on this view, I theorise that people who perceive parties as essential for democracy, see regulation of party finances as desirable, perceive state party funding as benefiting smaller parties, and oppose big donor funding, are significantly more likely to support state party funding. These expectations form the basis of six hypotheses for this question (H2.1-H2.6, stated in full in Table 1.1).

To answer the third sub-research question, "How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens' support for the policy?", I first draw out the two major arguments in favour of state funding used by both academics and policy-makers. Scarrow argues that state party funding "generally has been justified in at least two ways, one of which emphasises the worthiness of political parties, the other of which emphasises their fallibility" (2006, p. 621). State funding emphasises the worthiness of parties because it sends a message that parties exist to provide a service to citizens; that they are essential democratic actors. It also emphasises the fallibility of parties because by providing parties with state funds, we recognise that they are vulnerable to the temptation of satisfying big donors over and above ordinary citizens. The public opinion literature demonstrates that frames can be a very powerful communication tool in shifting public opinion (Busby, Flynn, & Druckman, 2018; Chong & Druckman, 2007a, 2007b; Druckman, 2010, 2014; Leeper & Slothuus, 2014; Slothuus, 2008). In answering the question of how framing the issue of state party funding affects support for the policy, I expect that worthiness and fallibility frames, which are both pro-state funding, are effective in increasing support for the policy. However, given the pre-existing negativity bias citizens have towards the topic of party funding, I also expect that the fallibility frame will be more effective than the worthiness frame.

H3.1: Both the worthiness and fallibility frames increase citizens' support for state party funding

H3.2: The fallibility frame is more effective than the worthiness frame at increasing support for state party funding

The fourth and final sub-research question is “How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?” Providing citizens with raw policy-specific facts has been found to significantly affect people’s political judgments and demands for the policy (Bendz & Oskarson, 2020; Gilens, 2001). In considering which type of policy-specific information about state party funding is likely to increase citizens’ support for the policy, I draw on recent survey and focus group data about the types of changes people want to see from parties (Dommett, 2020; Dommett & Temple, 2019). This work shows that people want parties to be more accessible and more inclusive. In fact, there are a set of state party funding regulations designed with exactly this intention; attaching what I term “party-citizen linking conditions” to state funds.

When states give parties money, they sometimes attach different “conditions”, requiring parties to do something in return for state funds. In practice, there is a wide range of such conditions implemented globally (for an overview, see the Political Finance Database by IDEA, 2021). For instance, some aim to increase the diversity of party candidates, some aim to make parties more targeted towards micro-fundraising, and some aim to make parties recruit more members. All of these conditions aim to achieve one goal: to financially incentivise parties to engage more intensely with a wider range of citizens. Given that these conditions explicitly try to stimulate precisely the qualities people want to see in parties, I expect that informing people about them should increase support for state party funding. A priori, I have no reason to expect that any of these conditions will be more or less effective at increasing public support for state party funding than another.

H4: Policy facts about attaching party-citizen linking conditions to state funds increases citizens’ support for state party funding

Research design

To test these hypotheses, I collected survey data from two countries with very different party funding systems: the United Kingdom and Denmark. In all countries, parties rely on a mixture of private and public funds, but the relative importance of each source matters a great deal for party behaviour and representation. I elaborate upon this when I introduce the case studies in more detail in Chapter Four. British parties are institutionally reliant on big donors for their income. State funding is available but its importance pales in com-

parison to donations from trade unions (for Labour) and the business community (for the Conservatives). Further, due to the rules governing allocation of state funds in combination with the majoritarian electoral system, it is very difficult for small parties to access state funds and they must fundraise from private sources in order to compete. I therefore classify the UK as a donor-reliant party system. Conversely, I classify Denmark as a state-reliant party system. Whilst the two main Danish parties have a similarly institutionalised relationship with the business community (The Liberals/Venstre) and trade unions (the Social Democrats/Socialdemokraterne), these donations are nowhere near as important as state funds in securing the survival of these two established parties. The allocation criteria are also extremely generous in Denmark, meaning it is very easy for small parties to access state funds. These two countries are good representations of the more extreme ends of the spectrum of party reliance on public-private income (a diverse case studies approach (Seawright & Gerring, 2008)), and studying them should allow for capturing the range of opinions that citizens in very different party funding systems may have about state party funding.

In order to study these opinions comprehensively, and given the lack of dialogue between the party funding and public opinion literatures in the past, I collected both observational and experimental survey data. Since we are currently in the dark about citizens' levels of support for state party funding relative to other sources (sub-research question one) as well as which considerations relate to their support for state party funding (sub-research question two), it is necessary to collect large-n, in-depth survey data. To study whether positive narratives about state party funding increase support for the policy (sub-research questions three and four), I collect experimental data to clearly isolate the cause (information) and the effect (support for the policy). Therefore, in this dissertation, I combine the advantages of observational and experimental survey data to provide thorough substantive insights into the question of what citizens think about state party funding.

The first major survey I conducted was observational, fielded by YouGov in an online panel in December 2020, in Denmark and the UK ($n \approx 2,000$ in each country). The data from this survey is used to test H1 and H2.1-2.6. Based on past survey measures and arguments in the literature for and against each of the three major funding streams, I develop novel indices to measure attitudes towards state funding, big donor funding, and grassroots funding. I examine the distribution of support for each funding source, and test whether the differences in means are statistically significant. Then, grounded in the cartel and public utility theories, I develop survey items to measure the considerations about party representation, party competition and party regulation, which I

theorise should relate to support or opposition for state party funding. I analyse these results using correlation analysis to test for significant relationships in the expected direction between these considerations and support or opposition for state party funding.

The second survey I conducted was experimental, also fielded by YouGov in an online panel in June 2021, in Denmark and the UK ($n \approx 1,100$ in each country). This survey contained two experiments designed to test H3.1-3.2, and H4. The first experiment tested the effects of the worthiness and fallibility frames upon support for state party funding. The “worthiness” treatment group received a text containing arguments about how state funding is necessary to support the essential work of parties in democracy. The “fallibility” treatment group received a similarly constructed text containing arguments about how state funding is necessary to reduce the scourge of big donors in politics.

Within the same survey, the second experiment tested the effects of policy facts upon support for state party funding. The treatment groups each received a text containing raw, policy-specific information about the different types of conditions that could be attached to state funds. The “membership” treatment group read a paragraph explaining that parties could receive more state funds if they had a greater number of members with more voting rights. The “diversity” treatment group read a paragraph explaining that parties could receive more state funds if they had more candidates and conducted more outreach work with people from different types of backgrounds. Finally, the “vouchers” treatment group read a paragraph explaining that parties could receive more state funds if they collected these funds directly from citizens (as vouchers). I analysed the results by measuring the differences in mean support for state party funding between the control and treatment groups. Table 1.1 summarises the four sub-research questions, their corresponding hypotheses and the data I use to test them.

Table 1.1: Summary of Sub-RQs, Hypotheses, and Data

| Sub-RQ | Hypothesis | Data |
|---|---|--|
| 1. How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding? | H1: Citizens prefer state funding to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding | Observational survey data in Denmark and the UK, $n \approx 2,000$ in each country |
| 2. Which considerations relate to citizens' support for state party funding? | <p>H2.1. The consideration that parties are bad (good) representatives is negatively (positively) correlated with support</p> <p>H2.2. The consideration that parties (never) often collude to hoard state resources is (positively) negatively correlated with support</p> <p>H2.3. The consideration that parties are (not) essential for democracy is (negatively) positively correlated with support</p> <p>H2.4. The consideration that state funds benefit large, established (small, new) parties is negatively (positively) correlated with support</p> <p>H2.5. The consideration that the state should (not) regulate party finance is (negatively) positively correlated with support</p> <p>H2.6. Opposition to (support for) big donors is positively (negatively) correlated with support</p> | Observational survey data in Denmark and the UK, $n \approx 2,000$ in each country |
| 3. How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens' support for the policy? | <p>H3.1: Both the worthiness and fallibility frames increase citizens' support for state party funding</p> <p>H3.2: The fallibility frame is more effective than the worthiness frame at increasing support for state party funding</p> | Experimental survey data in Denmark and the UK, $n \approx 1,100$ in each country |
| 4. How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect support for the policy? | H4: Policy facts about attaching party-citizen linking conditions to state funds increases citizens' support for state party funding | Experimental survey data in Denmark and the UK, $n \approx 1,100$ in each country |

Key findings

The hypothesis that citizens support state funding to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding (H1), was supported. The three indices of support for state party funding, big donor funding, and grassroots funding, proved to be valid and reliable. I found that state funding is perceived as significantly more desirable than big donor funding, and significantly less desirable than grassroots funding. This finding is robust to country effects. These preferences show that it is not the case that people just want to see any change to the party funding status quo. Rather, the results show that no matter what type of party funding system people live in, they always evaluate state funding as fairer than big donor funding. These findings indicate that citizens' preferences for how parties should be funded match with the preferences found in the literature. Furthermore, Brits seem to have significantly stronger attitudes than Danes, speaking perhaps to the comparatively greater level of salience of party funding as an issue in the British context.

The set of hypotheses about which considerations relate to support for state party funding (H2.1-H2.6) were mostly supported. I anticipated that citizens' considerations of party representation, competition and regulation would be correlated with their support or opposition for state party funding in the direction we would expect based on the dominant system-level perspectives of the cartel party theory and the public utility view. This is indeed largely what I found. As expected, I found that perceptions that state funding benefits large and established parties, that parties are poor representatives, and that parties collude to hoard state resources, are related to opposition to state party funding. Also as expected, perceptions that state funding benefits small and new parties, that parties are essential for democracy, are all related to support for state party funding. Opposition towards big donors is also related to support for state funding, but seemingly only in the UK. The findings show that the cartel and public utility perspectives provide strong explanatory leverage for conceptualising and measuring citizens' attitudes towards state party funding. This speaks to citizens' ability to form meaningful opinions about state party funding, at least in the sense that their considerations on the topic are largely in line with scholars' arguments for and against the policy.

The hypothesis that both worthiness and fallibility frames increase support for state party funding (H3.1), was supported. I found strong evidence that both frames are indeed effective in increasing support for state party funding, and in fact the effect sizes are substantially large. The frames increase support by 15-20%, relative to the control group. The fallibility frame had consistently larger effect sizes, but the differences were not significantly distinguishable from the worthiness treatment group, so the hypothesis that the fallibility

frame is more effective than the worthiness frame (H3.2) was not supported. However, moderator analysis revealed that the fallibility frame did have substantial effects amongst people with high anti-establishment attitudes and low trust in parties in the UK. Amongst the high anti-establishment sub-group in the UK, the fallibility frame resulted in a very large substantive increase in support of 37%, almost levelling out the independent negative effects of anti-establishment attitudes upon support for state party funding. It is notable that in both sub-groups (those with high anti-establishment attitudes and low trust in parties) the worthiness frame was still effective. This means that in the UK, even amongst people with very negative attitudes towards parties and the establishment, arguing that state party funding is necessary to facilitate all the good work parties do in democracy increases support for the policy.

The fourth hypothesis, that providing policy facts about attaching conditions to state funds increases support for state party funding, was not supported. Counter to my expectations, I did not find evidence that explaining the party-citizen linking conditions that could be attached to state funds increased support for state party funding, relative to providing only general information that conditions would be attached. The results of the manipulation check question indicate that the treatment may not have been strong enough to induce an effect, likely explaining the null results.

Contributions

This dissertation makes three contributions to the literatures on party funding and public opinion. The first contribution is theoretical. In Chapters Two and Three, I demonstrate the disconnect between the two literatures, highlighting what each field misses out on by not engaging more intensively with the other. The party funding literature has so far kept the debate about state party funding at the system level, focusing mainly on how this policy affects parties' behaviour. In doing so, it overlooks a key determinant of representation quality, namely, citizens' perspectives. The public opinion literature, meanwhile, has so far largely ignored the fundamental policy issue of party funding. It therefore misses out on the system-level theories from the party funding literature about how this pillar of party organisation shapes the quality of representation, and may ultimately shape citizens' political attitudes. My dissertation advances the case that these two fields can and should speak more directly to each other, to better understand the democratic consequences of how we finance politics.

The second contribution is methodological. I have developed original, valid and reliable indices of public support for the three major sources of party funds, and original survey measures of the considerations that may be relevant

to citizens when they think about state party funding. I have also designed survey experiments with vignette treatments to manipulate different types of information about state party funding. My use of survey experiments is quite novel in the field of party funding in general, and these are the very first survey experiments that specifically test the effects of information about state party funding. I designed these survey measures and experiments with the intention of making them as comparative as possible. As such, future researchers can easily utilise the measures and experimental designs to systematically compare considerations about, and support for, state party funding across many more countries.

The third contribution is empirical. Through hypothesis-testing, I demonstrate that citizens' preferences for, and considerations about, state party funding are distributed as we should expect based on normative arguments in the party politics literature, and that these opinions are not fixed but can be shifted through exposure to arguments. This shows that citizens are not unmovable in their cynicism, a conclusion that challenges some conventional wisdom on party funding. Whilst citizens may not be familiar with the minutiae of how party funding works, my research shows that their preferences between grassroots, big donor, and state funding match normative preferences in the party politics literature. Their considerations about party representation, competition and regulation also relate to their support for state party funding in ways that are consistent with what we would expect based on dominant system-level perspectives in the literature. This may already be of some comfort to those who fear that party funding reform will always be met with public rancour. It echoes the arguments from Bowler and Donovan's US study that there may be "some space in American politics not only for discussions about reforming (regulating) campaign finance, but that there may also be space for promoting information [on the topic]" (2016, p. 289). My findings suggest that this space is also available in the UK and in Denmark.

As a further empirical contribution, I experimentally test which types of information could fill this space most effectively. I find that framing the issue both in terms of state party funding's ability to reduce big donor influence, and in terms of its ability to support parties' essential democratic work, is very effective in increasing support for the policy, a finding that holds across donor- and state- reliant cases. Furthermore, in the UK only, the frames are especially effective amongst people with very negative attitudes towards parties. These findings are an essential addition to debates about whether and how state funding should be expanded, a debate that is particularly pressing in the UK given the widespread public perceptions of sleaze. Attempts at reform have so far been "hamstrung by elite anxiety regarding public opinion of either the introduction of significant state subsidy or further increasing state subsidies"

(Power, 2020, p. 197). Despite frequent appeals from party finance experts and the CSPL to cap donations and increase state subsidies, British elites have been extremely reluctant to follow these recommendations for fear of attracting public ire and stoking public dissatisfaction with parties. My findings show that framing the issue of state party funding as a cure to the scourge of big donors could be a very effective way of getting the electorate onside with the expansion of state funding, and that even arguments about state funding supporting parties' value to democracy are effective.

Structure of dissertation

In this chapter, I have motivated the research question of “What do citizens think about state party funding?” and summarised the dissertation. In Chapter Two, I situate the research more squarely between the two literatures of party politics and public opinion, by looking at past studies that have previously also seen the need to link these fields. I review these studies to show what we can learn from them, and pinpoint the questions that remain unanswered. In Chapter Three, I develop a theoretical framework grounded in key system-level perspectives in the party politics literature, coupled with established insights from the public opinion literature, to derive my hypotheses. Chapter Four discusses the methodological reflections behind my research design choices, specifically the steps I took to achieve measurement validity, internal validity and external validity. In this chapter, I also introduce the two case studies of Denmark and the UK and explain my reasons for selecting these specific countries as representations of state- and donor-reliant systems.

In Chapter Five, I discuss how I operationalised key concepts to answer the two descriptive sub-research questions. I test the related hypotheses and present the empirical findings about citizens' support for state funding relative to other sources of party funding, and about which considerations relate to this support. In Chapter Six, I explain how I designed the two survey experiments, and introduce the treatment vignettes. I then present the main experimental findings about how information affects citizens' support for state party funding. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I engage in a concluding discussion about what we can actually learn from these empirical findings and why they matter. I discuss how the findings to a large extent support my main overarching claims; that citizens hold distinct preferences and opinions about state party funding that align well with normative positions in the party politics literature, and that providing citizens with information can increase their support for state party funding. Ultimately, the dissertation shows the importance of bringing citizens' perspectives more into the heart of academic and policy debates on how democracies should choose to finance their political parties.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In the previous chapter, I proposed that to answer the question “What do citizens think about state party funding”, it is necessary to link the two literatures of party politics and public opinion. In this chapter, I review the handful of important studies that *have* connected these two fields. I show that despite the findings that have emerged from previous studies on public opinion on party funding, our empirical picture is still very sparse and scattered. So far, descriptive studies have focused on single countries and primarily on perceptions of big donor funding (Avkiran et al., 2016; Nwokora, 2015; Persily & Lammie, 2004; Primo & Milyo, 2020; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011). All of these studies come from the Anglosphere where parties are mostly donor-reliant. This means we do not have observational survey data describing and comparing citizens’ attitudes towards different sources of funding in different party funding systems, nor probing their considerations about *state* party funding. I discuss the main findings from these studies and the remaining gaps, in order to demonstrate the need for answers to the first two sub-research questions: “How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?” And “Which considerations relate to citizens’ support for state party funding?”

Finally, I discuss the few studies that have asked how state party funding may *cause* changes in public opinion. I demonstrate that many of these studies have relied on observational research designs and data, resulting in mixed findings and an inability to make valid causal inferences. I also show that experimental work on the kinds of arguments that might affect people’s opinions on party funding is in its infancy. There has been no experimental work conducted on how information may affect support for *state* funding of parties, and hardly any experimental work on party funding in general conducted outside the US. I therefore explain the need to answer the third and fourth sub-research questions: “How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?” And “How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?” In short, this Chapter provides the reader with an understanding of why it is necessary to theorise (Chapter Three), apply methodological tools in a comparative way (Chapter Four), and provide new empirical findings (Chapters Five and Six) in order to answer the overarching research question of “What do citizens think about state party funding?”

Connecting system-level and individual-level analyses

To paraphrase Nassmacher (2001), democracy requires elections, elections require campaigns, and campaigns require money. As such, “money is the fuel of party politics” (Bértoa et al., 2014, p. 356). The party politics literature is rich with system-level theories and empirical studies that teach us how money fundamentally affects the ways in which parties compete, organise and represent. Within this literature, there is near unanimous consensus that grassroots funding (small donations and membership fees) is the normatively ideal and most “widely esteemed” way of financing parties (Nassmacher, 2009, p. 193). This point is made consistently, especially in comparisons between modern parties and the grassroots-funded “mass party” (Duverger, 1954). Despite its being now largely extinct, there remains a “tendency to set up the mass-party model as the standard against which everything should be judged” (Katz & Mair, 1995, pp. 5-6).

From a funding perspective, the reason for this idolisation is clear. When parties are reliant on ordinary citizens for the majority of their funds, it provides a financial incentive for parties to represent citizens’ interests as intensely as possible. Furthermore, when a sufficient number of citizens provide enough of their own funds to adequately support parties, it demonstrates a high level of citizen engagement and participation in politics. This is not to say that grassroots funding is an unproblematic source of funds; it has its own “ambivalences and contradictions” (Nassmacher, 2009, p. 198). Yet, since party reliance on grassroots funding does in many ways both reflect and promote strong linkages between parties and citizens (Dalton et al., 2011), it is usually perceived as the most ideal source of the three main realistic sources of party funds; grassroots, state and big donor funding.

However, in the last few decades, party membership has declined globally and significantly (Kölln, 2015a; van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012). Consequently, grassroots funds now make up only a minority of revenue for most parties across Europe. The advent of new communication channels between parties and citizens, and the erosion of traditional social cleavages, are major contributing factors of this partisan de-alignment (Dalton et al., 2011; Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Katz & Mair, 1995; Kitschelt, 2000; Koole, 1996). This leaves parties with two alternative sources of funding: the state and big donors. Of these two sources, the dominant preference that emerges from the majority of the party politics literature is state funding. The reason for this is that at the system level, parties’ financial reliance on the state has effects that most scholars consider to be more democratically legitimate or desirable than the effects of parties’ financial reliance on big donors. Arguments in favour of

state funding over big donor funding broadly come down to the principle of equality, in two categories: equality among political contestants (parties/candidates) and equality among citizens (Scarrow, 2018).

Firstly, levelling the playing field between political contestants is the primary aim of party finance laws (Kölln, 2016). Scarrow explains that “there are two complementary strategies for doing this: first, providing public resources to assist competitors in conveying their messages; second, restricting competitors’ use of their own or fundraised resources for campaign purposes” (2018, p. 106). The regulations surrounding how much state funding is available and the types of restrictions in place on privately fundraised income all determine which types of parties can compete in elections. When state funding is easy to access, it can foster new party entry; when it is not, it can privilege established parties and block new entrants (Katz & Mair, 1995).

Empirically, we observe that most European states have in fact set the eligibility threshold for state funds low enough that any serious party contender has a reasonable chance of funding their bid for electoral competition (Nassmacher, 2009). Several cross-sectional studies have found that rather than petrifying party systems, state funding allows smaller parties who would not have been able to compete otherwise to enter the arena (Casal Bértoa & Spirova, 2019; Piccio & van Biezen, 2018; Pierre, Svåsand, & Widfeldt, 2000). Conversely, when political contestants are required to raise often enormous sums of private money to be able to compete in elections, this tends to shut out smaller or newer competitors who are unable to meet this demand (Boatright, 2018). Since such cases are empirically found in majoritarian systems (the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), larger parties that are already advantaged by the electoral system benefit again by being far more able than smaller parties to court big donations from wealthy networks. This means that the types of political viewpoints and preferences that are able to be heard in the public sphere during election campaigns are likely to be those that receive backing from corporations or affluent individuals (Lessig, 2015).

Secondly, donor-reliant party systems are argued to result in political inequality among citizens to a greater extent than state-reliant party systems. “Citizens” in this context also includes corporations and interest groups who are often given the same status as “legal persons” (Scarrow, 2018, p. 114). This inequality between citizens stems from the fact that party donors receive far more access to politicians than ordinary citizens do (Gilens, 2012). If the preferences of these donors differ markedly from the preferences of constituents, as Gilens’ research in the US indicates that they do, (Gilens, 2009, 2012; Gilens & Page, 2014), this leads to substantial distortions in representation. Because these distortions can be so systematic that they severely undermine

the democratic principle of equality, many scholars think of them as constituting “institutional corruption” (Lessig, 2015; Thompson, 2018; Warren, 2004, 2006a, 2006b), even if the specific party funding practices are entirely legal. A related concern is that donor-reliant systems are more prone to corruption in its more typical application, namely the abuse of public office for private gain (Rose-Ackerman, 1999, p. 91). This includes illegal quid pro quo arrangements between donors and politicians.

Conversely, where the twin strategy of capping donations and providing state funding *have* been pursued, political equality between citizens is likely to be enhanced. This is because parties have a reduced need to “target their fundraising appeals to wealthier prospects” (Scarrow, 2018, p. 112), and are instead freer to engage with, listen to and respond to citizens’, rather than donors’, preferences. In most countries, state funds are allocated to parties based on the number of votes they receive. Parties are already highly vote-seeking (Strom, 1990), and tying funds to the vote should only increase their incentive to respond to citizens’ needs (Kitschelt, 2000, p. 168). Substantial per-vote subsidies should therefore result in higher degrees of political equality amongst citizens compared to systems where parties are incentivised to respond to the concentrated preferences of an elite few for their survival. This should decrease the occurrence of corrupt practices, and one study has even found empirical evidence that it does (Gerring et al., 2019).

Of course, not everyone argues that state-financed parties are responsive to citizens, indeed the cartel theory argues quite the opposite, claiming that parties’ increased financial reliance on the state has led to a severing of ties between parties and citizens (Katz & Mair, 1995). The first important thing to note is that this criticism of Katz and Mair’s is based on a comparison between the state-funded “cartel” party, and the *mass* party; not between state-funded and donor-funded parties. However, this latter comparison is now the more pressing one, since state- and donor- reliant parties are by far more prevalent than mass parties in modern politics. Therefore, whilst state party funding is certainly not a panacea, the dominant system-level perspective in the party politics literature is that it is far preferable for parties to be reliant on the state than to be reliant on big donors.

These system-level perspectives just discussed demonstrate how funding, as a crucial determinant of parties’ chances of surviving and thriving within an electoral system, shape the quality of representation citizens receive. In the words of Sartori, “parties are channels of expression. That is to say, parties belong, first and foremost, to the means of representation: They are an instrument, or an agency, for *representing* the people by *expressing* their demands” (2005a, p. 24). Sartori’s definition emphasises that parties function above all to represent citizens. Indeed, political theorists teach us that representation is

a “fundamentally relational” concept: “the most plausible normative criterion available for evaluating the quality of representation is the *congruence of citizens’ views of how representatives should act with representatives’ actual actions*” (Wolkenstein & Wrátil, 2021, p. 868, original emphasis). Others have put this idea in more straightforward terms: “Unless mass views have some place in the shaping of policy, all the talk about democracy is nonsense” (Key, 1961, p. 7). Such perspectives hold firmly that the interplay between policy-making and public opinion is at the core of democracy; the relationship between the two defines representation.

The implication of this relational view is that the quality of representation cannot be understood by exclusively looking parties’ actions; rather, comparing these actions with citizens’ desires of what these actions *should be*, are critical. It follows that we cannot have a complete picture of how funding affects parties’ representative behaviour by only considering system-level theories; this is a necessary but not sufficient factor. Instead, we can only fully understand the connections between funding and representation by incorporating citizens’ perceptions of party funding. So although state party funding is often used as an instrument to restore party legitimacy (Bértoa et al., 2014), to date we are unable to examine whether and how these supposed effects on legitimacy actually take place. Currently, our ability to do this is limited by theoretical and empirical disconnects between the party funding and public opinion literatures.

Now, having pointed out why it is important to connect these two literatures, I turn to the handful of studies that *have* previously brought insights from the public opinion field to the study of party funding. I review what we have learned so far from these studies, and indicate the remaining gaps in knowledge that I address in this dissertation. I discuss three groups of relevant studies. Firstly, those that have used existing observational survey data to study the dynamics between party funding regulations and citizens’ political attitudes. Secondly, those that have conducted original observational surveys to directly measure citizens’ opinions on party funding. Thirdly, those that have studied the effects of information about party funding upon citizens’ political attitudes and policy evaluations.

State party funding and political attitudes

The first group of studies analyses the dynamics between party funding and public opinion by using existing observational survey data. These studies theorise about how system-level party funding regulations (including the level of party financial dependency on the state) affect broad political attitudes such as trust, corruption perceptions, and political efficacy. The measurements of

the independent variables often come from political finance or party organisational databases such as the IDEA's Political Finance Database or the Political Party Database Project (Poguntke et al., 2016), and the measurements of the dependent variables from large-scale social science surveys like the European Social Survey (ESS) or the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES).

For instance, Bértoa et al. (2014) studied the effects of state funding upon perceptions of party corruption in Europe and Latin America. They theorised that strong limitations on private contributions, as well as high financial dependency on the state, should reduce perceptions of corruption, because “parties relying on public subsidies will have less need for private funding – hence being less open to corrupt practices” (Bértoa et al., 2014, p. 362). However, their results show no consistent relationship between party finance regulations and lower corruption perceptions. May (2018) analysed the relationship between parties' financial dependency on the state and citizens' levels of political trust in Denmark, Germany, the UK and the Netherlands, theorising that increasing state party funding should correspond to increasing levels of trust. Using longitudinal data, she found that trust was positively correlated with increasing public funding over time, but that there was no inverse relationship between trust and private funding as expected. Finally, Razzuoli and Lobo (2017) find a positive relationship between party dependency on the state and voters' feelings of political efficacy, and suggest their findings show that state funding enhances citizens' sense that parties are responsive to their preferences.

Whilst they provide interesting insights, these studies suffer from three major shortcomings. Firstly, they face the paradox that political finance regulations are often enacted *in response* to corruption scandals, which have possibly already increased corruption perceptions and depressed trust and efficacy. As such, it is not surprising that these studies often show associations running counter to the anticipated direction (Avkiran et al., 2016, p. 967). Secondly, these analyses suffer from the omitted variable bias, as they are unable to account for all factors that could possibly be affecting the complex attitudes of trust, efficacy and corruption perceptions independently of party finance regulations. In reality, “disaffection with the workings of a party funding regime and perceptions of corruption within a party funding regime are baked into a much larger cake” (Power, 2020, p. 191), and these other ingredients can never be fully accounted for in an observational design. In other words, whether or not real-world changes in party funding regulations *cause* any consequent changes in political attitudes cannot be confidently established in such studies. The third problem with these studies is that they do not measure citizens' *awareness of* or *attitudes towards* party funding, meaning the anticipated

mechanisms through which party funding regulations should affect political attitudes are invisible.

The second group of relevant studies have examined these mechanisms of public awareness of and attitudes towards party funding more explicitly. For example, a qualitative study in the UK utilised deliberative focus groups to examine the types of considerations citizens have when thinking of party funding (UK Electoral Commission, 2006). The study reveals a deep and widespread loathing of the perceived influence of big donors upon British politics. The findings demonstrate that the public suspects political donations are given with the expectation of favourable policy outcomes, and that perceptions of donor influence are inter-connected with negative perceptions of party representation. Participant quotes capture these anti-donor sentiments:

They don't do it just for altruistic reasons do they? They always do it because there's some kind of benefits for them ... No company in its right mind is going to give money away for no reason (p. 49).

Whether or not something underhand is actually going on, people think that there must be, and I think if you just stopped this [private funding] completely then you'd dispel that, certainly (p. 51).

You have a party influenced by business rather than influenced by people that they're representing (p. 50).

This finding of widespread scepticism towards big donors has been consistently replicated in the British context. A survey by the Electoral Reform Society found that “75% of the public believe big donors have too much influence on political parties, 65% believe that party donors can effectively buy honours, and 61% believe that the system of party funding is corrupt and should be changed” (Garland, 2015, p. 4). The same findings are apparent in academic studies. VanHeerde-Hudson and Fisher found that the majority of their survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that “despite recent allegations of corruption, on balance UK party finance is clean” (2011, p. 50). The finding of strong scepticism also emerges very clearly in Australia, where Nwokora (2015) finds that citizens tend to be driven more by scepticism of elites than by partisanship when forming political finance opinions. 20.5% of his respondents thought that the party finance system “is broken and needs to be replaced” and 73% agreed that it “has some problems and needs to be changed” (2015, p. 90). Only 6.6% answered that “it is alright the way it is and should not be changed”.

Similarly in the US, a long history of public opinion polls show widespread, cross-partisan disdain for big donors in politics. For instance, a 2016 survey asked respondents about various motives an elected official might have for voting for a policy the public does not support, and whether these motives are

a) corrupt and b) common. The motive “because of a promise to a contributor” was seen by 75.6% as corrupt and by 62% as common, and the motive “to benefit a favoured special interest group” was seen by 74.6% as corrupt and by 69% as common (Primo & Milyo, 2020, p. 86). None of these actions are deemed by law as corrupt, perhaps indicating that legal conceptions of corruption are “not political enough” and “fail to capture views of corruption used in public conversations about elections and representation” (Warren 2006, cited in Bowler & Donovan, 2016, p. 273). Indeed, perceptions of special interests having “bought” the two major parties is at the core of many peoples’ dissatisfaction with politics in the US. “It matters little to them whether these special interests are on the left or the right; the important point is that they are different from ordinary people and they usually get their way” (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002, p. 105).

There is therefore substantial evidence that citizens in donor-reliant countries are extremely sceptical towards the role of big donors in politics. Some of this scepticism is undoubtedly due to the fact that the issue of party funding is not generally salient, and citizens are exposed to narratives and arguments about party funding almost exclusively when a scandal emerges (vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011, p. 42). As such, most people’s immediate considerations on the topic relate to excess, abuse, or corruption. When issues are low-salience, people often use party cues as heuristics (Ciuk & Yost, 2016); in lieu of other information, they follow their party’s line on the topic. There is some evidence that citizens adopt such an approach with regards to party funding, for example as mentioned in the Introduction, British and US citizens correctly identify that Labour/Democrats receive more money from trade unions and Conservatives/Republicans receive more from corporations (Bowler & Donovan, 2016, p. 283; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011, p. 48). This indicates that people are able to effectively use partisan cues to think about party funding, at least when it comes to these broad distinctions. However, unlike most political issues, party funding is an issue centred directly on parties’ interests rather than citizens’ interests (Nwokora, 2015, p. 74). Because of this, most major parties prefer to keep the issue off the public agenda. The public therefore cannot easily identify their preferred party’s stance on political finance, and so there are no clear partisan cues to function as a shortcut and help citizens form more fine-grained opinions on the topic. This means that we cannot necessarily predict public opinion on party funding by using a partisan lens.

Party funding is thus an issue characterised by high scepticism and low salience, with no clear partisan issue ownership for citizens to follow. VanHeerde-Hudson and Fisher find that the low salience of party funding except

in times of crisis not only means that citizens are highly sceptical of party funding systems, but also that they demonstrate low levels of knowledge about how these systems work. This leads citizens to over-estimate the size of donations and the amounts parties spend (vanHeerde-Hudson, 2011; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011), and it can result in contradictory preferences. For instance, there is “widespread public support for caps on voluntary donations – a clear and effective limit on party income – while simultaneously the public support limiting/prohibiting state funding” (vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011, p. 44).

The extent to which British citizens support public, as opposed to private, party funding has been widely debated. At one time, the public were firmly against state intervention in party funding; they adhered more to the principle of “voluntarism in party income” (Clift & Fisher, 2005, p. 244), namely that parties should be responsible for their own fundraising and citizens should only contribute voluntarily, rather than being forced to contribute through taxes. Koss (2011) suggested that the tide may be changing in the UK, away from a public concern with the principle of voluntarism in party income and towards a more reluctant support for state funding. This suggestion is based on some of the polls I cited above, which show levels of contempt for donor influence in the UK increasing since the 1990s. The suggestion is also based on British focus group studies in which state funding was found to be the preferred option to state funding (such as the study by the UK Electoral Commission, 2006, also discussed above).

However, existing survey questions directly measuring support for state party funding show mixed results. In a 2017 IPSOS survey (cited in Ignazi, 2017, p. 226), 64% of British citizens said it is wrong to fund political parties by means of public money and 13% of people said it is right. Conversely, another British study asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement “a state funded political system would be fairer than the one we currently have”, to which 57% of respondent agreed and only 7% disagreed (Electoral Reform Society, 2016). This suggests that people oppose state funding only until it is presented as an alternative to big donor funding. The divergent conclusions presented by these two studies emphasise the importance of developing valid survey measures of the concept of support for state party funding. The lack of convergence in their results also highlights the need for digging deeper into respondents’ reasons for supporting or opposing state party funding.

In summary, from past studies we have learned that party funding is a low salience issue – citizens are only exposed to the topic in times of crisis. Connectedly, it is a high scepticism issue – citizens in donor-reliant systems are very hostile to big donor funding and perceived donor influence. Furthermore,

there are mixed findings as to whether state funding is preferred as an alternative in donor-reliant systems, and we have very limited empirical insights on the topic at all from the context of *state*-reliant systems. We already have a wealth of insights from the system-level literature about how parties' reliance upon grassroots, state, and big donor funding affects representation. Yet, if we are to fully understand these dynamics, we need greater empirical clarity on citizens' levels of support for these three sources, and on which factors they find most relevant when they are evaluating their support for state party funding. Therefore, I pose my first two sub-research questions, which are descriptive in nature:

1. How much do people support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?
2. Which considerations relate to citizens' support for state party funding?

Effects of information upon state party funding

Describing public opinion on state party funding in a comparative fashion will fill the empirical gaps discussed above, and serve to move forward normative discussions on how parties should be funded in democracies. To further deepen our understanding on this topic, it is also important to study how citizens' respond to *information* about state party funding. Which arguments might increase their support for the policy? Survey experiments are an obvious methodological candidate for answering this question, as well as for avoiding the issues of endogeneity and confounders encountered in some of the observational studies mentioned above. The use of survey experiments has dramatically increased in social sciences in recent years due to their ability to "combine experiments' causal power with the generalizability of population-based samples" (Mullinix, Leeper, Druckman, & Freese, 2015, p. 109). However, the rise of the survey experiment has so far mostly by-passed the field of party funding.

The survey experiments that do exist in the field have focused exclusively on what types of arguments or information can affect citizens' perceptions of and attitudes towards donor influence in politics. For instance, Sances (2013) manipulated information about how US candidates are funded. He found that when the identity of the donor was concealed from respondents, increasing the amount donated to a candidate depressed trust in government. Conversely, when the identity was revealed, trust in government was unaffected and respondents were better able to place candidates along ideological lines. These findings speak in favour of strict donor transparency requirements, and if the finding were to hold true in the European context it could have implications in, for instance, Denmark, a country with very lax donation disclosure

laws long criticized by the Council of Europe's anti-corruption group (GRECO, 2018). Though I do not focus on transparency requirements in my dissertation, this is just one example of the potential gains from expanding US survey experiments on party funding into other contexts.

Also in the US, Bowler and Donovan pose the question of whether or not people “reason systematically” about money in politics (2016, pp. 274-275). They studied how varying funding factors in their stimulus material affected corruption perceptions, and found that rather than having a blanket attitude of cynicism towards campaign finance, people are able to make distinctions when judging how political finance regulations affect corruption. For instance, they can reason about how the source of donations (trade union vs business) benefits their chosen party (Democrat or Republican), about whether money from individuals or groups is more corrupting, and about how the money is spent. As the authors conclude:

These distinctions are important in that they reveal that many in the public reason about political institutions in the same manner as elites do. They are also important because they reflect that cynicism about campaign money is not monolithic; people appear to make distinctions about how corrupting campaign money is depending on how much is raised and spent, by whom, and how is it spent (Bowler & Donovan, 2016, p. 289)

These findings highlight the value of surveys and survey experiments on party funding, because they suggest that despite the high scepticism and low salience of the issue, the public can reason and weigh arguments for and against different ways of funding politics, and that they can update their preferences in the face of new information.

Finally, Avkiran et al. (2016) conducted a survey experiment study on Australian students using fictitious news articles about the campaign finance system in Liechtenstein, which was purposely chosen due to its low international political salience and therefore low risk of people having pre-conceived notions about the political finance system in Liechtenstein. They presented two texts manipulating the strength of Liechtenstein’s donation restrictions, and found that when restrictions are described as being strong, it significantly reduces corruption perceptions, but has no effects upon trust. Given the established relationship between corruption perceptions and trust (Uslaner, 2017; van der Meer, 2010; Zmerli & van der Meer, 2017), why did this information only affect one dependent variable and not the other? These results show the complexities of disentangling the relationships between perceptions of party funding and broader political attitudes, further underscoring the difficulties of using observational designs to establish causal links between state party

funding regulations and public opinion (such as those cited earlier in the chapter by Bértoa et al., 2014; May, 2018; Razzuoli & Lobo, 2017).

Reviewing these past experimental studies answers some questions, but raises many others. The studies teach us that informing citizens about restrictions to big donors can be effective in improving attitudes, and that citizens can sometimes reason systematically about party funding. However, various gaps remain. Previous studies have been US-centric, and focused on information about donors. No party funding survey experiments have manipulated information about state funding, nor have any been conducted in state-reliant countries. However, it is possible that the same arguments could be received very differently depending on the setting. We know from the public opinion literature that frames are one way of presenting information to shift opinion (i.e. Busby et al., 2018; Chong & Druckman, 2007a, 2007b; Druckman, 2010; Leeper & Slothuus, 2018; Slothuus, 2008), and providing detailed policy facts are another (i.e. Bendz & Oskarson, 2020; Gilens, 2001). But, we do not yet know which frames and which facts about state party funding may increase citizens' support for the policy. To fill these gaps, I pose the third and fourth sub-research questions:

1. How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens' support for the policy?
2. How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect citizens' support for the policy?

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have shown that a dominant normative stance in the party politics literature is that state-reliant party systems promote higher quality representation than the alternative of big donor-reliant party systems. This is because it facilitates greater equality between parties by generally allowing smaller competitors to compete, and greater equality between citizens by decreasing the relative power of wealthy donors. However, despite the importance of funding for representation, we still do not have a clear understanding of how *citizens* perceive the topic of state party funding. Yet, to obtain a full understanding of how funding impacts representation, it is critical that we also analyse the attitudes of citizens towards the policy of state party funding. Otherwise, we are missing an essential component of the debate on the legitimacy of state party funding – citizens' voices. While the debate about which normative position the state-financed party should occupy rages at the system-level of analysis, so far there has been little effort to puzzle out the consequences of this debate for public opinion.

I demonstrated in this chapter how others have attempted to shine a light on this missing component, by studying public opinion on party funding. From these studies, we have gained many valuable insights. We have learned that party funding is only salient in times of crisis, meaning there is almost certainly a negativity bias in how the public perceives the issue. However, there is also some evidence that citizens are able to make broad accurate inferences and reason about the issue. This indicates that public opinion on party funding may be more coherent than sometimes assumed, and that citizens may be able to update their preferences after receiving information about state party funding.

So far, we are unable to determine whether this is the case because of significant methodological and empirical gaps, which I fill in the upcoming chapters. To begin with, we need better measures of attitudes towards state, big donor and grassroots funding that can be applied in contexts with different funding systems. As this chapter has demonstrated, while we already have some insights into perceptions of and attitudes towards party funding in the UK, the US, and Australia, surveys on the topic are mostly focused on attitudes towards donor funding. From these studies, we know that citizens are opposed to donor funding because of perceived donor influence, but we do not know to what extent they support or oppose the alternative, state party funding. Outside of the Anglosphere, there is a lack of data even on attitudes towards donor funding, let alone state funding, of political parties. This leaves us in the dark about citizens' levels of support for state party funding, and which types of considerations may be correlated with this support. I therefore pose my first two sub-research questions: "How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?" and "Which considerations relate to citizens' support for state party funding?"

Finally, the study of how information about state party funding may affect public opinion is virtually non-existent. In the US, where survey experiments on campaign finance have been conducted, they have so far exclusively focused on studying information about big donors, and the potential of using survey experiments to understand how different types of information about state funding can affect support for this policy has not been explored. As such, I pose my third and fourth sub-research questions: "How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens' support for the policy?", and "How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect citizens' support for the policy?" The purpose of this chapter has been to identify the gaps in the literature that have motivated my choice of these four sub-research questions. In the next chapter, I develop a theoretical framework and testable hypotheses to answer these questions.

Chapter Three: Theory and Hypotheses

In this chapter, I bring major insights from the public opinion field to bear on system-level theories in the party politics literature. This allows me to develop theoretically grounded expectations of what citizens think about state party funding. Ultimately, this theoretical framework provides the basis for my two core claims. Firstly, I claim that citizens hold distinct preferences and considerations about state party funding that align well with normative positions in the party politics literature. Secondly, I claim that providing citizens with arguments in favour of state party funding can be effective in increasing their support for the policy. The chapter is structured in order of the four sub-research questions, beginning with the descriptive questions before moving onto the explanatory questions. The first sub-research question is “How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?” To answer this question, I summarise the reasons behind the main normative preferences between grassroots, state and donor funding found in the literature. I hypothesise that if citizens do hold preferences in line with the views held by most scholars in the field, they should prefer state funding to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding (H1).

The second sub-research question is “Which considerations relate to citizens’ support for state party funding?” To predict potential answers to this question, I draw on key arguments from two dominant system-level perspectives about state party funding: the cartel theory (Katz & Mair, 1995), and the public utility view (van Biezen, 2004) (which has its roots in the cartel theory). Both are functionalist perspectives; they conceive of parties as a crucial link between citizens and government, fulfilling important functions and social purposes (Saalfeld & Strøm, 2014). Both recognise that parties have become increasingly entangled with the state, and are interested in the democratic consequences of this entanglement. However, each perspective places varying degrees of weight on positive and negative considerations about state party funding. The cartel theory (Katz & Mair, 1995) highlights the potential risks of state funding for parties; that it may privilege established parties, ossify party competition, and decrease party representativeness. On the other hand, the public utility view (van Biezen, 2004) is more emphatic about the potential benefits of state party funding; that it may support smaller parties, promote regulation of parties, support the essential work of parties, and reduce donor influence. In this Chapter, I consider how these pro and con arguments may be viewed from the perspective of citizens, rather than scholars, and in doing

so I develop six hypotheses about which considerations may relate to support for state party funding (H2.1-H2.6).

After theorising about how these different perspectives in the literature may align with actual public opinion, I then consider how information could be employed as a tool for increasing support for state party funding. Here I develop my causal arguments to answer sub-research question three, which is “How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?” I first make the case that, when attempting to frame the issue of state party funding in a positive manner in order to increase support, the two strongest arguments relate to party worthiness and fallibility (Scarrow, 2006). Scarrow argues that parties provide an essential service to citizens and to democracy, and therefore they are worthy of being funded by taxpayer money (the “worthiness” argument). Parties are also vulnerable to the temptation of representing the interests of big donors over ordinary citizens (the “fallibility” argument). I show that these two arguments are the most salient arguments for state funding both in the academic literature and in governmental reports on party funding. This motivates my argument that these are the strongest possible frames to use for communicators aiming to increase support for state party funding. Based on this theoretical work, I hypothesise that both worthiness and fallibility frames will increase support for state party funding (H3.1). Furthermore, based on the knowledge that party funding is salient only in times of crisis (e.g. vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011), I expect the fallibility frame to be more effective than the worthiness frame (H3.2), since it taps into peoples’ sceptical considerations about parties and party funding, which are likely to be more prevalent than their positive considerations about parties’ essential role in democracy.

The fourth and final sub-research question is “How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?” I theorise that in addition to framing the issue of state party funding, another way of using arguments to increase citizens’ support for the policy is through the use of policy facts. I argue that informing citizens about party-citizen linking conditions attached to state party funds, and providing policy-specific facts about how these conditions would work in practice, could increase support. The party-citizen linking conditions that I theorise should have positive effects on support for state funding are based on real-world conditions attached to state funds, implemented as policy tools in many countries. The conditions are designed to bring parties and citizens closer together by inducing parties to behave in more accessible, inclusive ways, which are traits citizens want parties to aspire to (Dommett, 2020; Dommett & Temple, 2019). I theorise about the effects of providing policy-specific information about three conditions at-

tached to state funds for parties; 1) one requiring parties to expand and empower their membership base, 2) one requiring parties to diversify, and 3) one requiring parties to collect the money directly from citizens in the form of vouchers. I hypothesise that providing policy facts about all three of these conditions being attached to state funds will increase support for state party funding (H4).

Preferences for grassroots, state and donor funding

The first sub-research question of this dissertation is “How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?” Thus far, the extent to which citizens’ preferences align with scholars’ normative preferences for the three main sources of party funding (grassroots, big donors, and the state), remains unclear. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, the dominant normative position in the party funding literature is that grassroots funding is the ideal way of funding political parties. When parties are financially reliant on citizens, they are more incentivised to be responsive to their preferences and needs. When citizens contribute financially to parties, it is revered as a valuable mode of political participation (Nassmacher, 2009, p. 193). The position that grassroots funding is the normatively ideal source of funds resonates very clearly throughout the plethora of articles and books in the party politics literature extolling the virtues of the “mass party” as the most desirable party archetype (e.g. Katz & Mair, 1995; Koole, 1996; Sartori, 2005b).

Although the mass party has mostly disappeared, and with it the possibility of parties being able to rely mostly on grassroots funds for their income, there is still an implicit assumption that this is the way citizens would prefer their parties to be funded. Of the British case, Koss says that “generally, all sources of party income apart from small donations and membership dues are suspected to exert illicit influence” (2011, p. 176). This sentiment is also evident in the US where political candidates are increasingly rejecting big donors and accepting primarily, or even exclusively, small donations (e.g. Bernie Sanders, Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez). Similarly in 2020, presidential candidates Trump and Biden both tried to target their fundraising efforts towards micro-donors, to add legitimacy to their campaigns. Such strategies reflect the assumption that citizens, like scholars, consider grassroots funding to be the normatively ideal way of financing politics. This theme also arose in the aforementioned British focus group study on party funding, where the authors wrote that there was “an assumption that the best way for parties to command public support was by gaining funds principally from the grassroots of membership or other

individual local supporters” (UK Electoral Commission, 2006, p. 81). However, there is no survey data confirming this assumption at the aggregate level nor in a comparative fashion.

Given the reality that parties can no longer rely on grassroots funds, state funding is seen by most scholars as the *better alternative* to big donor funding; the lesser of two evils. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, this mainly comes down to reasons of equality; state funding allows for a greater number of parties to compete in elections on a leveller playing field, and for more equal representation of citizens’ interests than big donor funding does (e.g. Scarrow, 2018). However, it is not clear that the public should necessarily share these preferences. The public opinion field tells us that citizens sometimes fail in forming “preferences that many would find normatively appropriate” (Druckman, 2014, p. 467). Druckman argues that whether or not citizens do hold normatively appropriate preferences matters for how we “assess opinions *and* how we study [government] responsiveness” (2014, p. 467). This is important in regards to the study of party funding because given citizens’ high levels of scepticism on the issue, there are legitimate questions about the extent to which governments should even be listening to public opinion about party funding. Knowing more about the extent to which citizens’ preferences on the three funding sources chime with scholars’ preferences will inform this debate. Based on the preceding theoretical discussion of the preferences between grassroots, state and big donor funding in the party politics literature, I expect that if citizens’ views align with these normative positions:

H1: Citizens prefer state funding to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding

Considerations related to support for state party funding

It is already important to know about citizens’ preferences on state funding in relation to the other two funding sources, but it will be even more informative to pair these findings with an understanding of the *considerations* people might have in mind when evaluating the extent to which they support or oppose state party funding. Hence, the second sub-research question of this dissertation is “Which considerations relate to support for state party funding?” There are several reasons why answering this question is important. As suggested by Druckman’s quote in the previous section, if people have meaningful considerations about state party funding, there is all the more reason for governments to be responsive to their preferences on the topic. Moreover, knowing which factors people consider relevant and important in regards to state

party funding can illuminate the types of regulations around party funding people might like to see. There are myriad regulations surrounding the policy of state party funding that can have significant impacts on how state funding shapes party representation (Scarrow, 2004, 2007, 2018), and knowing which goals citizens would like these regulations to achieve will be helpful for legislators and advocates of state funding interested in designing policies in line with citizens' preferences.

However, a long line of public opinion research tells us that citizens do not usually spend very much time thinking about politics, and they certainly do not walk around with fixed attitudes towards most political issues (Lupia, 2016; Zaller, 1992). A *consideration* is defined as "any reason that might induce an individual to decide a political issue one way or the other" (Zaller, 1992, p. 40), and indeed, citizens may not have any pre-existing considerations at all about state party funding. Of course, most citizens have not already considered the vast range of arguments for and against state party funding in the way that scholars have done. This would be unlikely to be true of any policy issue, let alone one like party funding which is mostly non-salient. However, considerations can be *made* salient to citizens by, for example, presenting them in the form of survey questions (Zaller, 1992). Given how under-studied the topic of public opinion on state party funding is, it is not immediately clear how to go about the daunting task of measuring all of the possible considerations citizens might have on the topic. An examination of the considerations held by party funding *scholars* offers a promising starting point.

The two dominant system-level perspectives I analyse here are the cartel theory and the public utility view. Some scholars view the migration of parties to the state as a signal of parties' abandonment of citizens and thus as real threat to democracy, a concern articulated in Katz and Mair's famous cartel theory (1995). Others view it more as a legitimisation of parties' role as "an essential public good for democracy" (Piccio & van Biezen, 2018, p. 68), as epitomised in van Biezen's 2004 conception of parties as public utilities. Whilst the cartel and public utility perspectives will be presented at times as opposing views, this should not be interpreted too strictly (indeed they are fundamentally in agreement). Rather, they are juxtaposed in order to demonstrate the wide range of positive and negative considerations that citizens may have about state-financed parties. I discuss the two theoretical perspectives in relation to three central concepts: party representation, party competition and party regulation.

State funding and party representation

Parties exist to represent citizens (Sartori, 2005a), and state party funding exists to ensure parties have the capacity to fulfil this role (Corduwener, 2020; van Biezen, 2004; van Biezen & Kopecký, 2014). However, it is precisely parties' claim to be the guardians of representation that Katz and Mair say is now "open to challenge" (2009, p. 759). This challenge is the result of seismic developments in party organisation. Katz and Mair (1995, 2009, 2018) describe shifts in the relative importance of the three faces of party organisation; the party in public office (parliamentary branch), the party in local office (on the ground), and the party in central office (headquarters). They argue that the parliamentary branch has, over time, been increasingly prioritised at the expense of the party on the ground and party headquarters. They argue that these developments entail a weakening of the links between parties and citizens, since it is the latter two party faces that are most intimately connected with civil society. Katz and Mair view the way state funds are distributed to and within parties as an indication of the elevation of the party in public office:

The fact that the process of state subvention was often initially limited to the parliamentary fractions of the parties, that the fractions themselves often continue to receive the greater share of the total subsidy, and that it is in parliament that the final decisions are taken as to the levels and types of subsidy to be made available, all suggest that the increasing availability of state aid is one of the factors operating to the potential advantage of those in control of public office (Katz & Mair, 2018, p. 55).

From the cartel theory's perspective, then, state party funding was introduced by and for the benefit of the party in public office, to the detriment of the party in central office and the party on the ground.

These developments have profound implications for the quality of representation parties provide to citizens. According to the cartel theory, a negative consequence of the privileging of the party in public office (driven and reinforced by state funding) is that parties have evolved from agents representing citizens to mere polity-governing bodies. They argue that changes in party organisation (again, of which state funding is an integral indicator) have led to a shift towards parties focusing on polity management and as a result, "[parties] cease to be effective channels of communication from civil society to the state" (Katz & Mair, 1995, p. 23). Parties' *modus operandi* has become not genuinely defending the interests of the citizens that elected them and fighting for change on their behalf, but rather defending the interests of the political establishment. Party MPs, usually career politicians who increasingly resemble each other, are responsible for managing the needs of a large and diverse

modern polity as cost-effectively and efficiently as possible. Parties in the central office are now staffed by sleek communication professionals, rather than passionate activists and change-makers. The objective of these professional party staff is to sell the policies developed by the party in public office to the electorate. In many ways the system runs like clockwork, but the risk is that “unless parties can represent as well as govern, it may turn out to be more and more difficult for them to legitimize their command of governmental institutions and appropriation of public resources” (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 760).

The advancement I make in this dissertation is to think about how the insights from these system-level arguments about the effects of state party funding can be applied to the question of how *citizens* think about state party funding. If citizens, like Katz and Mair, perceive that parties are prioritising the pursuit of enriching themselves and cementing their positions of power, at the expense of their pursuit of representing citizens’ interests, this is a problem for the legitimacy of state funding. It would reflect concerns that parties have become “strong thanks to party control over state resources”, but “distrusted and kept at a distance by public opinion for their detachment from ordinary citizens and their greedy attitude towards public resources” (Ignazi, 2014, p. 161). Citizens who feel unrepresented are likely to be unhappy with the returns on their investment, and to perceive parties as unworthy of sequestering their tax money. If citizens feel ignored, marginalised, and un-prioritised by the party they support, or by the party system more broadly, they may perceive that “parties are ‘feeding at the public trough’ without actually adding much value in return” (Katz & Mair, 2018, p. 174). If this is the case, they are unlikely to support the policy of state party funding.

Yet, a key critique of the cartel theory is that, even if parties are coming to identify more with the state, this does not mean that they are simultaneously distancing themselves from citizens. “If the state overlaps more and more with society, and parties overlap with the state (as Katz and Mair suggest), one cannot simply conclude that parties are completely isolated from society” (Koole, 1996, p. 513). Koole argues that citizens’ lives are increasingly contextualised by a reliance upon the state; for education, for healthcare, for community programs. Why should their context for engaging with parties be any different, and why should they think it strange that parties operate within the state apparatus? From this point of view, there is no reason why citizens should perceive parties’ reliance on the state, or on state funding, as inherently signalling a decrease in the quality of representation they receive. On the contrary, people who feel that parties do a good job of representing citizens may see the value in their investment and the worth in funding parties with state money. If so, there should be a relationship between considerations about the quality

of representation, and support for state party funding. This brings us to the first hypothesis for this sub-question:

H2.1. The consideration that parties are bad (good) representatives is negatively (positively) correlated with support for state party funding

In the original cartel theory paper, Katz and Mair frequently highlight the theme of “collusion” over state resources, for instance: “colluding parties become agents of the state and employ the resources of the state (the party state) to ensure their own collective survival” (1995, p. 5). They argue that state-dependent parties have created conditions which are “ideal for the formation of a cartel, in which all the parties share in resources and in which all survive” (Katz & Mair, 1995, p. 16). This “collusion” aspect of the cartelization process is fundamental to the theory. It holds that parties concertedly create and maintain the conditions for their own financial enrichment through state resources; that they exercise their power to “colonize the state and drain its resources for their own activities” (Ignazi, 2014, p. 166). This implies that politicians from different parties are actively conspiring together to hoard state resources.

Given the difficulty parties frequently have agreeing on policies that directly impact people’s lives, citizens may find it galling that opposing parties are able to reach a compromise only when it relates to their own financial interests. This collusion need not be particularly sinister to have negative effects; rather, parties’ “mutual awareness of shared interests, and their sense of all being in the same boat and relying on the same sorts of resources” (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 757) leads them naturally, perhaps not even consciously or overtly, to adopt the same sorts of preferences when it comes to allocation of state funds. “Cooperating” has positive connotations, while “collusion” has negative ones, and as Katz and Mair later pointed out, there is only a small bridge between the two (2009, p. 756). Nevertheless, whether colluding or cooperating, the perception that parties work together to funnel tax money into their coffers seems unlikely to warm citizens to the policy of state party funding. The second hypothesis is therefore:

H2.2. The consideration that parties (never) often collude to hoard state resources is (positively) negatively correlated with support for state party funding.

Even if citizens do view parties as unrepresentative, greedy colluders, it is very possible that they *nonetheless* consider them vital to the functioning of a healthy democracy. That parties are generally perceived as poor but essential representatives is nicely encapsulated in Dalton and Weldon’s finding that, across all thirteen established democracies included in their analysis, the vast

majority of citizens agreed with the statement that “parties are necessary”, but disagreed with the statement that “parties care what citizens think” (2005, p. 934). An academic study linking normative political theory with the party politics literature makes the same conclusion about the necessity of parties: “Parties increase predictability and the transparency of policy outcomes, [which] in turn facilitates better accountability between voters and their representatives” (Kölln, 2015b). Despite their shortcomings, parties still offer voters “a certain context for political orientation, and a channel to voice approval and dissatisfaction” (Koole, 1996, pp. 513-514). Of course, parties also see themselves as necessary to the functioning of democracy, which was one of the main reasons they implemented state funding as part of a set of regulations institutionalising themselves as permanent democratic actors in the first place (Corduwener, 2020). Citizens, scholars and parties themselves see no viable alternative to representation except through the means of political parties.

Van Biezen’s public utility view recognises this continued social contribution of parties, and holds that the “gradual legitimisation of the role of public money in contemporary democratic politics should be understood in the context of the increasing recognition of political parties themselves as inevitable and desirable institutions” (2004, p. 704). She argues that “public funding has also served to encourage a particular conception of democracy and political parties, by which parties are increasingly seen as an essential public good for democracy” (van Biezen, 2004, p. 702). When parties began to flounder from their loss of grassroots funds, the state stepped in to offer support and protection (Power, 2020, p. 30). This is much the same as when states stepped in to bail out banks during the 2008 global financial crisis. Parties, like banks, are seen as too big to fail. Therefore, even citizens who do not think that parties do a good job of representation, may even hate parties, could still see them as necessary for democracy and even necessary enough to warrant securing their survival through state funds. This leads me to my third hypothesis:

H2.3. The consideration that parties are (not) essential for democracy is (negatively) positively correlated with support for state party funding

State funding and party competition

Whereas it used to be common for parties to remain permanently in opposition, in modern politics most relevant parties “have enjoyed periods of office in national governments and now orient themselves as a matter of course to the occupation of public office” (Katz & Mair, 2018, p. 56). In other words, it is assumed by most parties (except perhaps niche parties), that they will, at some point, have the opportunity to govern. On the flipside, it is also assumed by most parties that they will, at some point, be thrust onto the opposition

benches. Given this scenario, all parties have a shared incentive to ensure that, whether in or out of government, they have adequate access to state funds. They accept that, in exchange for themselves having such access, they must tolerate other parties having it as well, as they will soon find the shoe on the other foot. They also have a shared incentive to limit any outside challenges that may upset this agreement and disturb the equilibrium. As a result, Katz and Mair argue that “political parties increasingly function like cartels, employing the resources of the state to limit political competition and ensure their own electoral success” (2009, p. 753). They argue that established parties band together to hoard state resources, blocking new challenger parties from accessing these resources and making it more difficult for them to compete.

If this is the case, then state funding could result in the diminishment of party competition, and an eventual ossification of the party system (Katz & Mair, 1995).

However, there is substantial evidence against the claim that state funding has ossified party competition. Empirically, scholars observe that most European states have set the threshold for state funding eligibility low enough that any serious party contender has a reasonable chance of funding their bid for electoral competition (Nassmacher, 2009). Rather than petrifying party systems, state funding usually allows smaller parties that would not have been able to compete otherwise to enter the arena (Casal Bértoa & Spirova, 2019; Piccio & van Biezen, 2018; Pierre et al., 2000), and new parties rely on state funds to a greater extent than older parties (van Biezen & Kopecký, 2017). The public utility view sees the ability of state funds to “facilitate a more equal level playing field by enabling new, small and less resourceful parties to compete on a more equitable basis with the dominant and financially privileged ones” (van Biezen, 2004, p. 707) as one of its major advantages.

Whilst the cartel theory stresses the risk of state funding advantaging large parties, and the public utility view emphasises its potential to advantage smaller parties, inherent in both of these positions is the normative stance that it is objectively fairer if state funding regulations are designed not to privilege established parties but to support smaller parties. Should we expect citizens to agree? There is evidence that although citizens obviously want their party to win at elections, they also very much value procedural fairness (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). A recent survey experiment showed that even voters of larger parties value proportionality in electoral systems, and that being informed about disproportionality even when their party wins decreases their overall satisfaction with voting rules (Plescia, Blais, & Högström, 2020). Citizens are able to weigh winner-loser considerations against more fundamental considerations of the fairness of electoral rules. It is reasonable to anticipate, then, that if state funding is perceived as supporting small and new parties this

will be positively evaluated, whilst if it is perceived as privileging large and established parties this will be negatively evaluated. As such, my fourth hypothesis is:

H2.4. The consideration that state funds benefit large, established (small, new) parties is negatively (positively) correlated with support for state party funding

State funding and party regulation

Accompanying the expansion of state funding for parties is the expansion of party finance regulations; the two usually go hand in hand (Gerring et al., 2019). Whilst these regulations restrict parties in numerous ways, ultimately, it is of course parties themselves that create them. Katz and Mair see this process in a critical light. They worry that parties use their governing powers to “write their own salary checks” (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 756), but, at the same time as they are paying themselves handsomely from the public purse, they are also writing a web of regulations around themselves that they must abide to for this access. In doing so they cement themselves deeper and deeper into the state. Katz and Mair therefore perceive increased regulation as part of the problem, since it intensifies the entanglement between parties and the state, driving parties further into the arms of the state and away from their constituents. That it is parties working together to agree on regulations that benefit all of them relates to their concerns about party collusion. From this perspective, increased regulation of party finance may be undesirable. However, the public utility view argues that part of the reason parties have created such onerous frameworks around party finance is to legitimise their claim over public resources. They need strict regulations to show that the state is working “to guarantee the accountability of parties and the transparency of party financing through legislation and public control” (van Biezen, 2004, pp. 703-704).

It is not obvious how citizens should think about this. Clift and Fisher discuss the term “voluntarism” in party funding, “a laissez faire approach to political finance characterised by reliance upon voluntary support for political parties rather than state aid” (Clift & Fisher, 2005, p. 4). This principle has been historically important at least to the British public (Koss, 2011), and perhaps implies that people do not *want* the state to be involved in parties’ finances. It could be that the autonomy of political parties is valued by the public, and that state funding would be *less* supported if it comes with strings attached. On the other hand, accountability is also a strongly held principle for citizens in democracies (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2016; Krishnarajan & Jensen, 2021). With political parties being the least trusted political institution in Europe (Jakobsen & Listhaug, 2018), it seems more likely that citizens value the

principle of accountability over party autonomy. Based on this, my fifth hypothesis is:

H2.5: The consideration that the state should (not) regulate party finance is positively (negatively) correlated with support for state party funding

Finally, the cartel theory, in its critique of modern parties' financial reliance on the state, compares state-reliant parties unfavourably with the mass party. In other words, it demonstrates that parties' embeddedness in the state is less desirable than parties' embeddedness with ordinary citizens, and that the former is increasingly characterising modern parties at the expense of the latter. When compared with the mass party, the state-financed party is indeed less able to stimulate citizen participation in politics and foster strong relationships between parties and citizens (Ignazi, 2014, 2017; Katz & Mair, 1995; Kitschelt, 2000; Koole, 1996). Whilst this is certainly true, what is largely omitted from the cartel theory is that the realistic alternative to parties being financially married to the state in modern democracies is parties being instead married to big donors. As I have demonstrated throughout the dissertation so far, reducing donor influence is one of the most important justifications in favour of state party funding, if not the most important. Reducing donor influence was already a justification for introducing subsidies as far back as the 1920s, when parties began to view themselves as public rather than private organisations (Corduwener, 2020, p. 53). This is now one of the major goals of party finance regulation, which in various ways aims to limit the influence of "plutocratic" private funds (Nassmacher, 2009). A primary method of achieving this is through increasing state party funding.

The public utility perspective is more reflective on this point; van Biezen, too, compares the state-funded party with the mass party, but also spends time comparing state-reliant and donor-reliant parties. She recognises that "the desire to restrict the influence of private money and to limit its potential for distortion of the democratic process" is one of the key legitimising factors of state funding (van Biezen, 2004, p. 707). The public utility perspective highlights that "public funding of parties is necessary ... to insulate parties from pressures from wealthy donors" (Piccio & van Biezen, 2018). If citizens also see state funding as a way of reducing donor funding, and if their preferences are indeed that state funding is the lesser of these two evils (as expected in my very first hypothesis), then there should be an inverse relationship between support for big donor funding, and support for state party funding. My final hypothesis of this section is therefore:

H2.6: Opposition to (support for) big donors is positively (negatively) correlated with support for state party funding

In summary, I expect citizens to support state funding more than big donor funding but less than grassroots funding, and, based on the cartel and public utility perspectives, I developed six hypotheses about which considerations might be related to citizens' support for state party funding. In the next section, I theorise answers to my explanatory questions, about the causal effects of information upon support for state party funding.

Effects of information on support state party funding

It is clear by now that state party funding is a policy that profoundly affects the ways parties behave and thus citizens' experiences of democracy, whether they are aware of this or not. If citizens accept that parties are a "necessary evil" (Dalton & Weldon, 2005), yet they despise big donors, then perhaps they also need to come to terms with state funding of parties being a necessary evil. Political communication "helps individuals affected by a policy to recognise that they are affected, and how they are affected" (Druckman, 2014, p. 481). As such, it is important to study how information could be employed to help citizens recognise that state funding is beneficial for the quality of representation they receive, and perhaps to update their support for the policy accordingly.

There is a wealth of evidence from the public opinion literature that exposing citizens to persuasive information can significantly alter their political opinions. Public opinion scholars study these effects in myriad ways. For instance, this literature has shown conclusively that the political actors (e.g. parties, candidates) said to be endorsing an argument has significant effects on how citizens think about an issue (Bisgaard & Slothuus, 2018; Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1980; Kinder, 1998; Leeper & Slothuus, 2014; Nicholson, 2012). In the case of state party funding, however, parties do not *have* particularly clear positions, and as such, citizens are unlikely to be able to use partisan cues as a shortcut to knowledge. Instead of manipulating partisan cues, I therefore focus on the effects of two other ways of providing citizens with persuasive argumentation. Firstly, I consider how the issue of state party funding can be *framed* in a way that is most likely to increase support. Secondly, I explore how providing citizens with *policy facts* about state party funding could increase support.

Both framing and providing policy facts are ways of making different considerations about an issue more or less salient, in other words, engaging in persuasion. State party funding, like most political issues, is highly complex and contains many relevant pro and con considerations, as the theoretical discussion of the cartel and public utility perspectives demonstrated. Therefore,

those interested in communicating about the policy of state party funding must make choices about which considerations to highlight (Lupia, 2016). As discussed in Chapter Two, it is likely that if citizens have any existing considerations at all about state party funding, they are negative ones. But, what would happen in a world where arguments *for* state party funding were introduced? Moreover, which arguments should these be? In this section, I explain the theoretical reasoning behind my choices of using two frames (‘worthiness’ and ‘fallibility’) and providing citizens with policy facts about attaching party-citizen linking conditions to state funds.

Effects of framing the issue of state party funding

Framing is the “psychological emphasis or weighting of subsets of issue-relevant considerations” (Leeper & Slothuus, 2018), recalling Zaller’s definition of a consideration being “any reason that might induce an individual to decide a political issue one way or the other” (1992, p. 40). Framing an issue can lead to overall attitude or opinion change because it “causes individuals to focus on those considerations when constructing their opinions...[and] induces an individual to alter the weight—in an automatic fashion and/or more deliberately—that he or she attaches to an attribute” (Druckman, 2014, p. 474). Ultimately, frames are powerful ways of supplying “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning” to an issue (Gamson & Modigliani, cited in Kinder, 2007).

A pertinent question, then, is which central story line about state party funding is most compelling to the public. As the previous discussion of the public utility view demonstrates, there are several important arguments in favour of state party funding. For instance, it can level the playing field between large and small parties, and it tends to come hand in hand with stricter regulation of parties’ finances. However, I argue that the other two considerations I discussed from the public utility view, that state funding supports the essential work of parties, and that it reduces donor influence, are the two most important justifications for state party funding. I borrow Scarrow’s terminology of “worthiness” and “fallibility” as shorthand for these two dominant arguments in favour of state party funding. She says that there are two major justifications for state party funding, “one of which emphasises the worthiness of political parties, the other of which emphasises their fallibility” (Scarrow, 2006, p. 621). State funding emphasises the *worthiness* of parties because it sends a message that parties exist to provide a service to citizens; that they are essential democratic actors. On the other hand, it also emphasises the *fallibility* of parties because by providing parties with public funds, we recognise that

they are vulnerable to the temptation of succumbing to the allure of big donors, potentially making politics less representative of ordinary citizens. Each framing emphasises a different reason for supporting state funding, and taps into different considerations about parties themselves.

The worthiness justification depends on emphasising all of the important roles parties fulfil in democracies. Organising and structuring elections, recruiting qualified candidates, campaigning and informing citizens about different policy options, aggregating interests from many different groups, and ensuring these interests are represented and implemented as policy – all would be nigh on impossible without political parties (Diamond & Gunther, 2001). Worthiness justifications provoke individuals to perform the difficult task of imagining a democratic society functioning without parties. Arguments about party worthiness nudge citizens into summoning these available considerations about the critical tasks that parties fulfil and the utility they provide to society writ large.

Conversely, the fallibility justification depends on emphasising the privileged position that parties and party elites occupy. Arguments in favour of state funding which rest on the perils of party dependency on big donors point to the hypocrisy of parties, reminding us that their public claims to represent citizens are frequently undermined by the pursuance of their own personal or political gain. Fallibility arguments tap into public hostility towards parties and encourage citizens to think that whether or not they are enamoured with the idea of state funding, it is better than allowing wealthy donors to hold sway over the democratic process. As discussed, there is strong evidence that at least in the Anglosphere, hostility towards both big donors and parties is prevalent. Fallibility arguments hit on perceptions of parties (particularly established parties) as being out of touch, corrupt and elitist, concerned more with their own enrichment than with enriching the lives of the citizens they are supposed to represent. The fallibility frame therefore positions state funding as the lesser of two evils.

These academic justifications of worthiness and fallibility are consistent with the real-world justifications used by legislators and advocates who support state party funding. In Denmark, a government report on financing of political parties (Danish Ministry of Justice, 2015) emphasises both the important historical and organisational role that parties play in democracy, and the need to ensure political equality and minimise big donor influence through party finance regulation. It is taken for granted in this report that given the important role parties play in Danish democracy, they should get and will continue to get most of their funding from the state. This is an indication that the status quo of generous state party funding is not up for discussion in the Dan-

ish parliament. In the UK, the Electoral Reform Society and the CSPL frequently highlight first and foremost the same two themes of parties' essentialness to democracy, and "ending the big donor culture", as the two key arguments in favour of expanding state party funding.²

The combination of justifications from scholars, and justifications from MPs and experts advocating state funding, lends support to the proposition that these two key arguments of worthiness and fallibility are the ones with the best chance of increasing support for state party funding. Of course, this is not the entire universe of positive arguments for state party funding that could be tested. Nor does testing the effects of these two frames provide insights into how they would fare if pitted against *negative* arguments about state party funding in a competitive environment, as would certainly be the case in the real world (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). However, given that this is the very first study about whether and to what extent framing information on state party funding can increase support for the policy, it is first essential to see whether the two strongest positive arguments for state party funding can even have any effects on increasing support in an issue area characterised by scepticism.

Survey research has demonstrated that both types of considerations, about parties' inherent worthiness and fallibility, are already very prevalent; most people perceive parties as necessary for democracy (Dalton & Weldon, 2005; Holmberg, 2003), *and* most people see parties as untrustworthy (Jakobsen & Listhaug, 2018; Uslaner, 2017; Zmerli & van der Meer, 2017). Frames are strongest when they emphasise considerations that are already accessible and available to citizens (Chong & Druckman, 2007a, 2007b), because when frames emphasise easily accessible considerations, it reduces the level of cognitive effort required for people to receive them and respond to them. There is therefore scope for these two frames, which tap into widely held notions of parties' essentialness *and* their corruptibility, to both be effective in increasing support for state party funding. Therefore, the first hypothesis for the framing experiment is:

H3.1: Both worthiness and fallibility frames increase support for state party funding.

Another interesting question is whether we should expect one frame to be stronger than the other. In Chapter Two, I discussed the strong empirical evidence pointing to discontent with, and widespread scepticism towards, party funding regimes in donor-reliant countries (e.g. Nwokora, 2015; Primo &

² References to the ERS and CSPL reports cited in footnote 1.

Milyo, 2020; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011). In the UK, there is also evidence that the media selectively reports only the largest donations parties receive (vanHeerde-Hudson, 2011). Furthermore, from Power's (2020) interviews with elites in Denmark and the UK, we learned that political elites believe that public opinion on party funding is overly sceptical, and that the public perceives corruption as being far more rife than it actually is. Based on this, I expect that arguments tapping into parties' greed and corruptibility are more likely to take root with respondents, since these are the types of arguments they are likely to already be the most familiar with in the context of party funding. Accordingly, the second hypothesis of the framing experiment is:

H3.2: The fallibility frame is more effective than the worthiness frame.

Effects of providing policy facts about state party funding

In the previous section, I theorised about how framing the issue of state party funding could increase support for the policy. Another way of making considerations about an issue more or less salient is by providing raw policy facts. "Policy facts are among the most relevant forms of knowledge in a democracy" (Barabas & Jerit, 2009, p. 73), as even citizens who are generally politically knowledgeable can arrive at preferences different to those they would have had if they had more policy-specific information (Gilens, 2001). Indeed, there is evidence that policy-specific information can affect citizens' policy judgments and levels of support for policies compared to people who are less informed of policy facts (Barabas & Jerit, 2009; Bendz & Oskarson, 2020; Gilens, 2001). There is therefore good reason to expect that providing citizens with positive policy facts about state funding could increase their support for the policy.

The challenge is in selecting *which* policy facts would be likely to increase citizens' support for state party funding. As I have alluded to throughout the dissertation, party funding is a highly complex policy area. There is a huge range of related policy instruments, including but not limited to eligibility thresholds for access to state funds, the level of subsidised media access offered to parties, which parties are recipients of direct and indirect state funding, limits on private fundraising, and spending regulations (Clift & Fisher, 2005; Gerring et al., 2019; IDEA, 2014b, 2021; Nassmacher, 2009; Scarrow, 2018; Smulders & Maddens, 2019). All of these factors can be more or less important in shaping party behaviour. Such an array of relevant policies offers many facts to choose from when exposing citizens to policy-specific information about state party funding.

In theorising about the types of policy facts that might be particularly likely to increase support for state party funding, I begin by considering the types of changes citizens would like to see from parties. This offers promising inroads into determining which type of party finance policies are likely to increase citizen support for state party funding. In this exercise, I was inspired by focus group and survey work conducted in the UK. In Dommett's book *The Reimagined Party* (2020), she conducted a survey and focus groups with British citizens to find out how people want parties to better fulfil their role as the linking mechanism between citizens and government. Some of her main findings (see Chapter Five, Dommett, 2020) are that people want parties to be more deliberative, inclusive and accessible:

- “Over half of respondents think it is very important for members to have the power to discuss (58%) or propose (55%) new ideas”.
- “People want parties to be inclusive by incorporating a range of different voices and ideas. However, parties are currently seen to be closed and dogmatically partisan”.
- “People want parties to be accessible, providing a range of different ways for people to get involved. However, parties are currently seen to be accessible to only a few”.

These findings indicate that people want parties to listen to their members rather than only the party elite, to include a range of diverse voices, and to be accessible to many. So, how can state party funding policies be relevant when it comes to achieving these desired outcomes? There is in fact a set of state party funding policies that have the explicit intention of requiring or even forcing parties to behave in such a way, namely, attaching what I term “party-citizen linking conditions” to state funds. As discussed, state provision of funds to political parties may have many benefits in and of itself, particularly when it comes to equalising political competition and representation, and reducing party corruption (Gerring et al., 2019; Nassmacher, 2009; Scarrow, 2018). Indirectly, these benefits may strengthen the links between citizens and parties and improve the image of parties in the eyes of citizens. Yet, attaching cleverly designed conditions to these state funds could offer an even more direct route to improving party-citizen links and party legitimacy.

Although such conditions are not particularly widespread in practice, where they do exist, the hoped-for effect is an improvement in the participatory and representative links between parties and citizens, and a subsequent bolstering of parties' reputation. The potential of conditioning public funds for parties is generally under-appreciated in the party funding literature, yet the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), extolls the potentials of such conditions (see for instance Ohman, 2018). Considering the

dependence of European parties on state funds, in attaching conditions “policy makers have an important instrument at their disposal to influence the behaviour of the recipients of these subsidies” (Feo & Piccio, 2020, p. 904). Attaching conditions to the state funds parties need to survive could be a powerful means of incentivising them to make certain changes.

Table 3.1: Conditions Attached to State Party Funds around the World

| Type of condition | Aim | Policy | Countries |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Gender-targeted public funding (GTPF) | To promote the inclusion of women in politics | Public funding earmarked for women’s promotion activities, linked to % of women candidates | 30+ countries globally, only a handful in Europe (Italy, France, Ireland, Romania) |
| Youth outreach | To promote the inclusion of other under-represented groups in politics | Parties get more money the more members they have in their youth wing | The Netherlands |
| Membership | To ensure parties have an active membership base | Parties must have (for instance) 1000 members with voting and deliberative rights | The Netherlands, Lithuania, Slovakia |
| Matching | To encourage parties to collect small donations | State matches small donations at a set ratio | Germany, some US states |
| Vouchers | To encourage parties to collect small donations | Candidates/parties collect state funds directly from citizens in the form of vouchers | Seattle, US |
| Human rights | To make sure parties uphold basic democratic norms | Party must adhere to principles of European Convention on Human Rights to receive public funds | Belgium |

Source: IDEA Political Finance Database 2021

Table 3.1 shows some of the political finance conditions already implemented, and their main aims. Parties’ access to state funds can be made conditional on membership numbers (i.e. the Netherlands, Lithuania and Slovakia), spending the money on programs that encourage participation of women and young people (i.e. Ireland and several Latin American countries), collecting small donations (i.e. Germany and some US states), or collecting the state funds directly from citizens (i.e. Seattle, US). These are all different ways of trying to

achieve the same aim: keeping parties anchored in society and connected to the citizens they are charged with representing. In the UK, the Neill Report recognised the potential of such conditions, saying that “a further argument in favour of state funding ... is that, paradoxically, state aid can be used as a means of increasing the involvement of private individuals in the political parties and in the financing of them” (Neill, 1998, p. 91). However, in neither the UK nor Denmark are any such conditions in place.

There has been very little academic research into either the adoption of, or the effects of, these conditions (for an exception see Feo & Piccio in 2020, who conducted a study on the impacts of gender-targeted public funding in Italy). There is scant theoretical work about these conditions and their effects on party behaviour even at the system level, let alone the potential effects of these conditions on public opinion. Yet, given their potential for re-orienting parties towards civil society, it is important to study how citizens might respond to them. The more positively citizens respond, the more expansive these conditions might become in practice. Attaching conditions could be a way for governments in countries like the UK to increase state party funding without it looking like “an establishment stitch-up” (Power, 2020, p. 191), because they would be putting restrictions on themselves to further the goal of deepening party connections with citizens. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it is likely that citizens are more concerned with holding parties accountable than upholding party autonomy. As such, if state funding is promoted as a way of increasing parties’ accountability, it may well make it more popular. Looking at the table above, apart from the human rights condition, all of these conditions can be classed as having a strong ‘party-citizen linking’ dimension. That is, their aim is explicitly to encourage parties to connect more intensively with more citizens.

These conditions are all manners of using party finance as a method of bringing parties and citizens closer together, and in this way they aim to encourage the “mass party” ideal within the bounds of modern political structures and realities. The reason that grassroots funding is normatively ideal is because it means that both sides of the party-citizen relationship are functioning well; it means that citizens are actively involved in the financing of their parties, and it means that parties are financially reliant on their citizens. Since as we know grassroots funds are no longer a realistic option for parties, the policy tool of attaching party-citizen linking to state funds is an innovative way of achieving the ideal democratic effects of grassroots funding without the practical problem of citizens being unwilling or unable to give up their own funds. While such conditions are potentially very powerful, it is almost certain that most people are completely unaware of them, even in countries where they are in place. Given the indications from recent research (Dommett, 2020;

Dommett & Temple, 2019) that citizens want to see more inclusive, diverse, and accessible parties, it seems plausible that telling them there are conditions attached to state funds for parties designed to achieve exactly these goals, would be received positively.

The conditions in Table 3.1 can be grouped into three broad categories. Specifically, the conditions require parties to 1) empower their members, 2) include a diversity of opinions and preferences, and 3) collect their money directly from citizens. If legislators know which types of conditions are most effective in increasing support for state party funding, this could help them to make policies that are more in line with citizen preferences by implementing such conditions when providing state funds to parties. In the following pages, I provide more detail about how these conditions work in practice, and why informing citizens of how they work should increase support for state party funding.

Membership Condition

Requiring parties to have an active membership base is one way of making sure they stay embedded in society. There are two main techniques for achieving this through attaching conditions to state funding; one is to require parties to have a certain *number* of members, and one is to require parties to give these members certain *rights*. Thus, one is about expanding the membership base, and one is about empowering the existing members. Of course, both could simultaneously be requirements, with parties incentivised to have both a broad and empowered membership. There are difficulties associated with each element. Regarding increasing membership *numbers*, parties would of course like more members. However, since the 1980s, party membership has declined by about 40% in Denmark and 70% in the UK (van Biezen et al., 2012, p. 34), following the global trend (Kölln, 2015a). Parties already pursue multiple strategies to try to retain and recruit members (Kosiara-Pedersen et al., 2017), and they do not need further incentives to do so, since it is citizens who are reluctant, not parties. Therefore, requiring parties to expand their membership base to achieve more state funds may be unrealistically demanding. In terms of increasing public support for state party funding, though, it might be an effective piece of information. The reason that parties *are* still chasing members despite the difficulties is of course that having many members enhances party legitimacy, since it is a sign that the party is still able to connect with and inspire people, and that people trust the party enough to financially support them.

Anticipating public opinion on state funding being conditional on parties giving their members more *rights*, on the other hand, is a little trickier. Whilst

Dommett (2020) found that the majority of citizens want members to have the power to propose and discuss ideas, she also found that only 32% wanted members to have the power to *vote* on decisions. This means there are some limits on the levels of empowerment average citizens (who are mostly non-party members) want to see party members have. This is likely because members are perceived as being more extreme than the average electorate. There is mixed evidence as to whether this is the case; some studies find party members are actually quite representative of the population on most demographic measures, including ideology (Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010), whilst others find party members are indeed more extreme than non-member party supporters (Poletti, Webb, & Bale, 2019). People may be wary of parties privileging the opinions of more extremist members over the more moderate preferences of their broader supporters.

In studying how people may respond to the information that conditions on party membership are attached to state funds, I could vary these two dimensions; membership *numbers* versus membership *rights*. However, there are design related trade-offs; firstly, that this would require two treatment groups and therefore a reduction of the sample size in each group. Secondly, that the differences between the two dimensions may not be strong enough to actually create variance on the independent variable. In designing the treatment, therefore, I decided to combine these two dimensions and inform respondents in the “members” condition about both types of possible requirements. On balance, despite the possibility that people may see members as more extreme than regular supporters, I still expect that the information will increase support for state party funding for all respondents, given the legitimacy that comes from parties having a broad and empowered membership base.

Diversity Condition

Diversity conditions attached to state funds aim to increase the demographic range of people parties recruit and interact with in order to make them more inclusive of a wider set of policy preferences. Political parties (like many other organisations, both public and private) have a diversity problem: the demographics of the people that compose them are generally unrepresentative of the demographics of the wider population (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). This diversity gap poses a problem for citizens’ attitudes towards parties. “Minority representation strengthens representational links, fosters more positive attitudes toward government, and encourages political participation” (Banducci, Donovan, & Karp, 2004, p. 534), and as such, improving the diversity of political parties can have positive effects on people’s evaluations of parties and representativeness. As Dommett’s (2020; Dommett & Temple, 2019) work

shows at least in the British context, people do want parties to be more diverse and inclusive of a wider range of policy views. It is possible that the extent to which information about diversity conditions would improve support for state funding is dependent on the type of diversity being promoted (e.g. gender or ethnicity), and the individual-level predispositions and attributes of the receiver of the information. Examining these factors in-depth is outside the scope of the dissertation, and as such, in order to avoid operationalising concepts such as race and ethnicity in the experiment and thus risk confounding the treatment, I tried to describe the condition more neutrally, as one that would make parties engage with people from a range of different backgrounds.

Vouchers Condition

The “Vouchers” condition is based on a program being run in Seattle since 2017, called the Democracy Vouchers program. The Democracy Vouchers program works through the regulated distribution of state money directly to citizens in the form of vouchers, which can be used only as a donation to the candidate of their choice. Participating candidates must agree not to accept large private donations, and all the time and energy they would otherwise spend courting these large donations is instead oriented towards fundraising from citizens. The program induces parties to be financially reliant on citizens, without the practical problem of citizens’ unwillingness to give up their personal money to parties. It also balances the playing field between affluent and non-affluent citizens and restricts the influence that wealthy donors can exert upon the political process. The idea of such a program has been advocated by campaign finance scholars in the US for a long time (Ackerman & Ayres, 2001; Lessig, 2015). Gilens (2012, p. 249) called it “amongst the most intriguing suggestions” to reduce political inequality, but there have been limited systematic studies of its effects in Seattle or its potential outside of that context. The program receives very high public support (indeed, it was implemented based on a vote among local Seattle residents) (BERK Consulting, 2018). The program’s radical approach for connecting parties with citizens may hold appeal for citizens outside the US as well. In summary, based on the above discussion of the theoretical effects that providing information about these three conditions may have, my fourth and final hypothesis is:

H4: Providing policy facts about attaching party-citizen linking conditions to state funds increases citizens’ support for state party funding.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have advanced a theoretical framework for how we can try to understand what citizens think about state party funding by bringing together the two disjointed fields of party politics and public opinion. I first posited that if citizens are able to hold distinct preferences about party funding sources that are consistent with normative positions in the literature, they should prefer state funding to big donor funding but not to grassroots funding (H1). Second, based on the system-level cartel and public utility perspectives, I developed expectations about how citizens' considerations of party representation, competition, and regulation should relate to their support or opposition to state party funding (H2.1-H2.6).

I also theorised about which frames could be effective in increasing support for state party funding. I hypothesised that both worthiness and fallibility frames should increase support for state party funding (H3.1), and that the fallibility frame should be more effective than the worthiness frame (H3.2). Finally, I theorised about the potential effects of providing citizens with policy facts about party-citizen linking conditions being attached to state funds. The conditions I expect to be most likely to increase support for the policy are conditions designed to make parties 1) broaden and empower their membership base; 2) enhance their diversity; and 3) collect the state funds directly from citizens in the form of vouchers. I expect that providing citizens with information about how these conditions work should increase their support for the policy of state party funding (H4). Now, having outlined the theory behind my hypotheses in this chapter, the following chapter will discuss the main methodological deliberations underlying the research designs I use to test these hypotheses.

Chapter Four: Research Design

This chapter outlines the research designs used to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter Three and to ultimately answer the dissertation's overarching research question, "What do citizens think about state party funding?" The question itself determines the methodological choices I make in the research design process. As the question specifies, the unit of analysis is citizens. This means that I must choose methods that allow me to make inferences about large populations of people. Inference-making is the "process of using facts we know to learn about the facts we do not know" (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, p. 46), and in this dissertation, I pursue both descriptive and causal inference to test my hypotheses.

The first hypothesis is that citizens prefer state funding to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding (H1). The second set of hypotheses concern which considerations correlate with citizens' support for state party funding (H2.1-H2.6). Testing these hypotheses requires a methodological approach that allows me to make descriptive inferences as I am seeking to *describe* the preferences and considerations of broad populations of citizens. The third and fourth hypotheses are about how exposing citizens to frames and policy facts in favour of state party funding can change their support for state party funding (H3.1-H3.2, and H4). Testing these hypotheses requires a methodological approach that allows me to make causal inferences, as I am seeking to explain how information *affects* citizens' opinions.

This chapter explains the methodological choices I make in deciding how to test these hypotheses, and in doing so highlights the main methodological contributions of this dissertation. I use the phrase "methodological contributions" not in the sense that I create new methodological innovations, but in the sense that I apply well-established methods to a topic they have not been applied to before. However, there are specific *measurement* innovations in the development of new survey questions. I start the chapter by discussing why I choose to use surveys as opposed to other methods of finding out what citizens think. Following this discussion, I structure the rest of the chapter around three methodological contributions. Firstly, I discuss how I strive to achieve measurement validity when designing new survey questions about public opinion on state party funding. This is mostly relevant to the descriptive survey, and this survey questionnaire will be introduced in depth in Chapter Five. Secondly, I explain the steps I take to attain internal validity in the survey experiments. The treatment vignettes themselves will be introduced at length in

Chapter Six. Thirdly, I outline how I develop *comparative* survey measures and vignettes, and discuss how I enhance external validity, a topic highly relevant to both surveys. In this section, I also discuss case selection and generalisability. The chapter ends with a section on the limitations of the research design.

Why surveys?

To begin with, I discuss why I choose to design my own survey questionnaire to test the dissertation's descriptive hypotheses, rather than using existing survey data or other methods of understanding what citizens think about an issue, such as focus groups or interviews. A requirement for testing both of the descriptive hypotheses is to choose a method that allows me to directly observe and measure citizens' support for, and considerations about, state party funding, and to make inferences to the larger populations of the UK and Denmark. To explain my decision process regarding which method to use to meet these requirements, I begin by looking at the methodological approaches taken by other scholars who have aimed to bridge the gap between the party funding and public opinion literatures. While many of these studies were referenced in Chapter Two, here I will offer a deeper exploration of the methods they employed so as to indicate both how my own methods have been informed by the existing work, but also to show how the approach taken in answering the research questions of this dissertation differs.

One effective methodological approach for directly observing citizens' opinions is to conduct focus groups. A focus group is a "research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (Morgan, 1996, p. 130). An excellent example of this approach in the field of party funding is the study conducted by the UK Electoral Commission (2006), introduced in Chapter Two. The study consisted of day-long workshops with 25-30 participants in five cities across the UK, with the purpose of finding out what citizens think about party funding. The major advantage of focus groups is that they allow researchers to "get at the substance of what people say" (Cyr, 2019, p. 2). Because group interaction is a key feature of focus groups, this method can reveal people's thought processes by prompting them to think deeply about an issue and deliberate about it with their peers.

The Electoral Commission's study provides many fascinating insights about participants' views on party funding, including on state party funding. Through repeated deliberation and exposure to information about state party funding, guided by the researcher, respondents reached conclusions that are directly relevant for my research question. Participants largely agreed that a state-funded system would be fairer than the current system of big donors and

that increasing state funding could reduce donor influence. Furthermore, “there was a commonly-expressed feeling that the public at large would support public funding of parties if the argument for it was made to them in these terms” (UK Electoral Commission, 2006, p. 43). This is exactly what I study in the framing survey experiment. The study even prompted participants to think about most of the considerations that I have derived from the cartel and public utility views (considerations about how state funding relates to party representation, competition, and regulation). As such, the use of focus groups as exemplified in this study would certainly facilitate the direct observation of citizens’ views on state party funding.

However, in focus group research, “substance is more important than quantifying the data for statistical purposes” (Cyr, 2019, p. 2). The major disadvantage of focus groups is that as a trade-off for gaining these rich insights into the minds of participants, the number of participants must be quite small. For instance, the sample size of the Electoral Commission’s study was approximately 100. But, studying descriptive statistics (describing the size and distribution of opinions), and analytic statistics (measuring how two or more variables are related) (Groves et al., 2009, p. 2), requires larger sample sizes. Generally speaking, the larger the sample size, the lower the sampling error (Groves et al., 2009). While there is no hard and fast rule, sample sizes of around 1,000 usually produce results with an acceptable sampling error of approximately 3% (David & Sutton, 2012, p. 235). The costs, in terms of both time and money, involved with conducting focus groups, or for that matter individual interviews at an even higher cost, with over 1,000 citizens, made the approaches of focus groups or interviews unfeasible for my purposes.

An option that does meet the criteria of large sample sizes is to use already available survey datasets. In Chapter Two, I discussed several articles that took this approach (Bértoa et al., 2014; May, 2018; Razzuoli & Lobo, 2017) to study whether party financial dependency on the state has had the intended positive effects on political attitudes. Bértoa et al. (2014) studied whether the financial dependency of political parties on the state reduced perceived party corruption, using survey data on citizens’ corruption perceptions from Transparency International’s Global Corruption Barometer. Similarly, May (2018) used survey data from Eurobarometer to study whether such financial dependency improved citizens’ trust in parliament. Finally, Razzuoli and Costa Lobo (2017) studied whether state party funding improved citizens’ perceptions of party responsiveness, using survey data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). All three of these studies were designed to study the dynamics between state party funding and public opinion by utilising pre-existing datasets. An advantage of the methodological approach taken by these

authors is that since they draw on global surveys, they are able to test hypothesised relationships between state party funding and public opinion across a large number of countries and a large number of citizens. For instance, Bértoa et al.'s (2014) study contained public opinion data from citizens in 37 European and Latin American countries. This approach is therefore suitable for making inferences to large populations and different settings.

However, the major drawback of these global surveys as concerns my dissertation is that they do not contain direct measures of opinions on state party funding. Notably, as a result of this limitation, the aforementioned studies are not able to disentangle whether any of the hypothesised effects of state funding on citizens' attitudes come from changes in party behaviour, from citizens' *perceptions* of party behaviour, citizens' normative attitudes towards party funding, or some combination of these factors. These elements may well be interrelated but without explicit and valid measures of citizens' opinions of state party funding, we have no way of knowing which elements hold more weight, or if and how they are related. These types of distinctions are important not only for the sake of advancing the academic state of the art, but also because there are real-world policy implications. If the policy of state party funding has positive effects on citizens' political attitudes through the mechanism of improved party behaviour, then it may be less urgent to involve citizens in public debates about the policy. On the other hand, if the assumed positive effects of state party funding can only be achieved via the mechanism of citizens' *awareness* of the policy, then it may be very important to increase citizen involvement, for instance, by trying to expose them to arguments in favour of state funding. Given the above methodological trade-offs, ultimately I choose to design and conduct original surveys containing direct measures of public opinion about state party funding.

Designing survey measures of public opinion on state party funding

The first methodological contribution of this dissertation is the design of novel survey measures of public opinion on state party funding (measurement innovations). In this section, I explain the strategies I follow to try to ensure that these survey measures were as valid as possible. In Chapter Five, I introduce the specific question wordings from the observational survey and discuss how I operationalised each underlying theoretical concept from Chapter Three. For now, in this upcoming section, I explain my broader reflections about measurement validity, which are relevant for both the descriptive survey and the

experimental survey. In this discussion, I draw on the survey methodology literature (i.e. David & Sutton, 2012; Groves et al., 2009; Krosnick & Presser, 2010; Marsden & Wright, 2010).

Measurement validity

“Validity means correctness: the variable actually measures what it is supposed to measure” (DeBell, 2013, p. 399). There are many important deliberations to go through when trying to design a valid survey measure. As the survey methodology literature explains, when answering survey questions, respondents go through a four-stage process:

First, they must interpret the question and deduce its intent. Next, they must search their memories for relevant information, and then integrate whatever information comes to mind into a single judgment. Finally, they must translate the judgment into a response, by selecting one of the alternatives offered by the question (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, p. 265).

When respondents carry out all four of these steps in a thorough manner, this is called “optimising”. A measure that encourages optimising is likely to be more valid than one that does not, as it should be better able to capture respondents’ genuine opinions. Conversely, “satisficing” is when the respondent either completes these steps less thoroughly, or in more extreme cases skips them entirely by, for instance, randomly clicking response options without reading the question. This decreases the validity of the survey measure. In designing the survey questions, I aim to encourage optimising rather than satisficing responses to improve measurement validity.

Krosnick and Presser (2010) summarise conventional wisdom in the survey literature about how to achieve optimising responses. They say that a major factor driving satisficing responses is respondent fatigue; if the question is too long or jargon-filled, respondents are likely to become quickly bored or tired and not make the cognitive effort to answer the question properly (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, pp. 264-265). They therefore advise keeping the question simple enough to ease standardised interpretation, that is, all respondents understanding the question in the same way. At the same time, it is important to use specific and concrete, as opposed to general and abstract, question wording (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, p. 264). In some cases, I face a tension between the principles of keeping the questions short and simple, as well as concrete and specific, because the low salience of state party funding means that I often have to provide some basic level of information for the question to be comprehensible to the respondent. In designing the questions, I therefore try to strike a balance between making the question long and verbose enough to convey all

the necessary information, and making the question short and simply worded enough to avoid respondent fatigue.

Response options also matter for the optimisation of responses and overall validity of survey measures. Krosnick and Presser's (2010, pp. 271-275) research on the ideal number of points to include in response scales concluded that overall, there is evidence that there are gains in validity and reliability from using a five- or seven-point scale compared to scales with fewer points, but that after five or seven points these gains level off. I opt for five-point scales for most questions, aiming to give respondents a meaningful range of options to choose between, without over-burdening them by making them read too many options. I also add a neutral midpoint for most questions, which allows people who genuinely do not have a preference to state so explicitly rather than being forced to pick a moderate opinion that they do not actually hold (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, p. 282). Furthermore, for most questions, I include a "don't know" (DK) option. This is because sometimes people do not know what they think when faced with a survey item, particularly on low salience issues on which they may not have pre-existing considerations, and in these cases, being forced to pick an option may not accurately capture their opinion. For these reasons, including both neutral and DK options should improve the overall validity of my measures.³

The survey methodology literature encourages researchers to review past questions from earlier surveys before designing new ones. "This is partly a matter of efficiency — there is little sense in reinventing the wheel — and partly a matter of expertise: the design of questions and questionnaires is an art as well as a science and some previous questions are likely to have been crafted by skilful artisans or those with many resources to develop and test items" (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, pp. 298-299). As such, wherever possible, I base my questions on past survey items that have been widely validated in national or international surveys.⁴ When I introduce the questions in the following chapter, I explain exactly which past questions I use and how and why I adapt them. An advantage of basing new questions on past ones is that it allows for a comparison, to see whether the new measure performs as expected (David

³ In the analyses, there is a trade-off between reducing the item validity by coding DKs as neutral, and reducing the number of observations by dropping DKs entirely. My approach to this is that in the main analyses, I drop the DKs rather than coding them as neutral (since these may constitute substantively different responses), but I re-run the analyses with the DKs coded as neutral as robustness checks, and include these results in the Appendix. None of the results change substantively.

⁴ The surveys I mainly rely upon for this are the European Social Survey (ESS), the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), the British Election Study (BES) and the Danish National Election Study (DNES).

& Sutton, 2012, p. 268). For instance, since many past surveys have measured attitudes towards big donors in the UK and found them to be consistently negative, it would be a bad sign for the validity of my measure if I instead found positive attitudes towards big donors.

Whilst I base many of my survey questions on past questions that have aimed to measure the same or similar concepts, given the novelty of some of the concepts I aim to measure, by necessity I create many original survey items. There are several concepts of interest based on my theoretical discussion (Chapter Three) that to my knowledge have not ever been measured in surveys before, including support for grassroots funding, type of party benefiting from state funds, party collusion over state resources, and regulation of party finance. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, most past survey measures of support for state party funding have some shortcomings (I will return to this point in Chapter Five, when I introduce the questions I use to measure support for state party funding). Therefore, to measure all of these concepts, I design entirely new questions. To guide me in this endeavour, I conduct a qualitative pre-test among 114 respondents in Denmark.

The purpose of conducting the qualitative pre-test is to observe people's unfiltered opinions about state party funding. In the main quantitative survey, I make the considerations from the cartel and public utility theories salient to citizens by providing them in the form of survey questions and treatment texts. However, with this qualitative survey, I also gain insights into whether these considerations occur to citizens naturally, without them being provided by a researcher. In this pre-test, after providing a short description of how state party funding works in Denmark, I ask respondents whether they support or oppose the policy, why they think others may support it, and why they think others may oppose it. The questions are open-ended to allow respondents to "formulate an answer in their own words" (Groves et al., 2009, p. 169). The survey therefore sheds light on the considerations (positive and negative) that are *available* to citizens on this topic, meaning that the consideration is already stored in people's minds (Chong & Druckman, 2007a, 2007b). In this section, I briefly present some of the main findings from this pre-test,⁵ to show how they inform the design of the survey measures.

To analyse the responses, I use a deductive coding approach, meaning I had firm pre-existing theoretical considerations from the cartel and public utility perspectives, and I observe whether or not these considerations arise in individuals' textual responses (David & Sutton, 2012). In line with hypotheses 2.1-

⁵ The survey questions, translated responses, coding scheme and frequency tables are all available in Appendix One.

2.6 developed in Chapter Three, my theoretical expectations regarding citizens' positive considerations of state funding are that it is seen as supporting parties' essential democratic work; reducing donor influence; supporting small parties; and promoting the regulation of parties' finances. My expectations regarding citizens' negative considerations are that parties do not represent citizens well enough to deserve state funding; that they collude to hoard state resources; and that state funding privileges established parties. In the qualitative data, I observe that all of these themes arise, except two: party collusion over state resources, and state funding promoting the regulation of party finance. Therefore, when designing the quantitative survey items to measure these two constructs, I remain conscious of the possibility that respondents may not already be familiar with the themes, so I try to provide a little more information and context to make these particular survey questions more accessible and intelligible.

The pre-test also allows me to observe which considerations about state party funding arise that I did *not* derive from the cartel and public utility perspectives. This is essential because, in testing H2.1-H2.6, I correlate the theoretical considerations about state party funding with support for state party funding. It means that in creating the questions to measure support for state party funding, I cannot base the wording on any of the considerations from these two perspectives, since this would run the risk of endogeneity. For instance, if I try to measure support for state funding by asking whether respondents agree that party finances should be regulated by the state, it would not make sense then to test whether considerations about the regulation of party finances are correlated with support for state funding. Therefore, to help me decide on the wording for the measure of support for state party funding, I use inductive coding to identify themes generated not from theory but from the qualitative responses themselves (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). In addition to the theoretical considerations from the cartel and public utility views, the theme that arises most clearly is a concern about excess, specifically about wasting too much taxpayer money by providing parties with state funds. I accordingly use this idea when creating the index to measure support for state party funding.

An unintended advantage of the pre-test was that it provides even more motivation for the selection of the worthiness and fallibility frames as being the strongest arguments in favour of state party funding. When asked to write whether or not they support state party funding, and why they think others may support it, two themes are very clearly dominant: party worthiness and fallibility. The most frequently cited reason to support state party funding was that it is better than parties relying on big donors (fallibility), and the second

most frequently cited reason was that parties perform essential tasks in democracy and so they need money to fulfil these tasks (worthiness). It is validating to see that the two major arguments in favour of state party funding which I identify from the academic literature and from policy-makers are also clearly available at least to a small sample of citizens. If considerations of worthiness and fallibility are already present in people's minds, it means that any experimental effects of these arguments in favour of state party funding are more likely to resonate outside of an artificial survey experience.

Designing experiments testing effects of information about state party funding

My second methodological contribution is the design of the first survey experiments testing the effects of information about state party funding on support for the policy. To test the dissertations' causal hypotheses, I need to be able to isolate the cause (argument in favour of state party funding) and effect (support for state party funding). The best way of achieving this result in any field is to conduct an experiment, and in the field of public opinion, this often means conducting a survey experiment. The practice of survey experiments has advanced dramatically in recent years, because they allow the researcher to draw on the advantages of both surveys and experiments (Druckman, 2020; Druckman, Green, Kuklinski, & Lupia, 2011; Morton & Williams, 2010; Mutz, 2011; Mutz & Kim, 2020). For survey researchers, conducting experiments provides "a means of establishing causal inference that is unmatched by any large-scale survey data collection effort, no matter how extensive" (Mutz, 2011, p. 8). This is because in experiments, participants are randomly assigned to control or treatment groups, giving the researcher the ability to make strong causal inferences. For experimental researchers, conducting population-based survey experiments (rather than, say, lab experiments on a small sample of students), offers *external validity*, meaning that the findings can be generalised to a broader population. External validity is important for both of my surveys, and I will discuss it towards the end of this chapter. For now, I focus on how I achieve internal validity in designing the survey experiments.

Internal validity

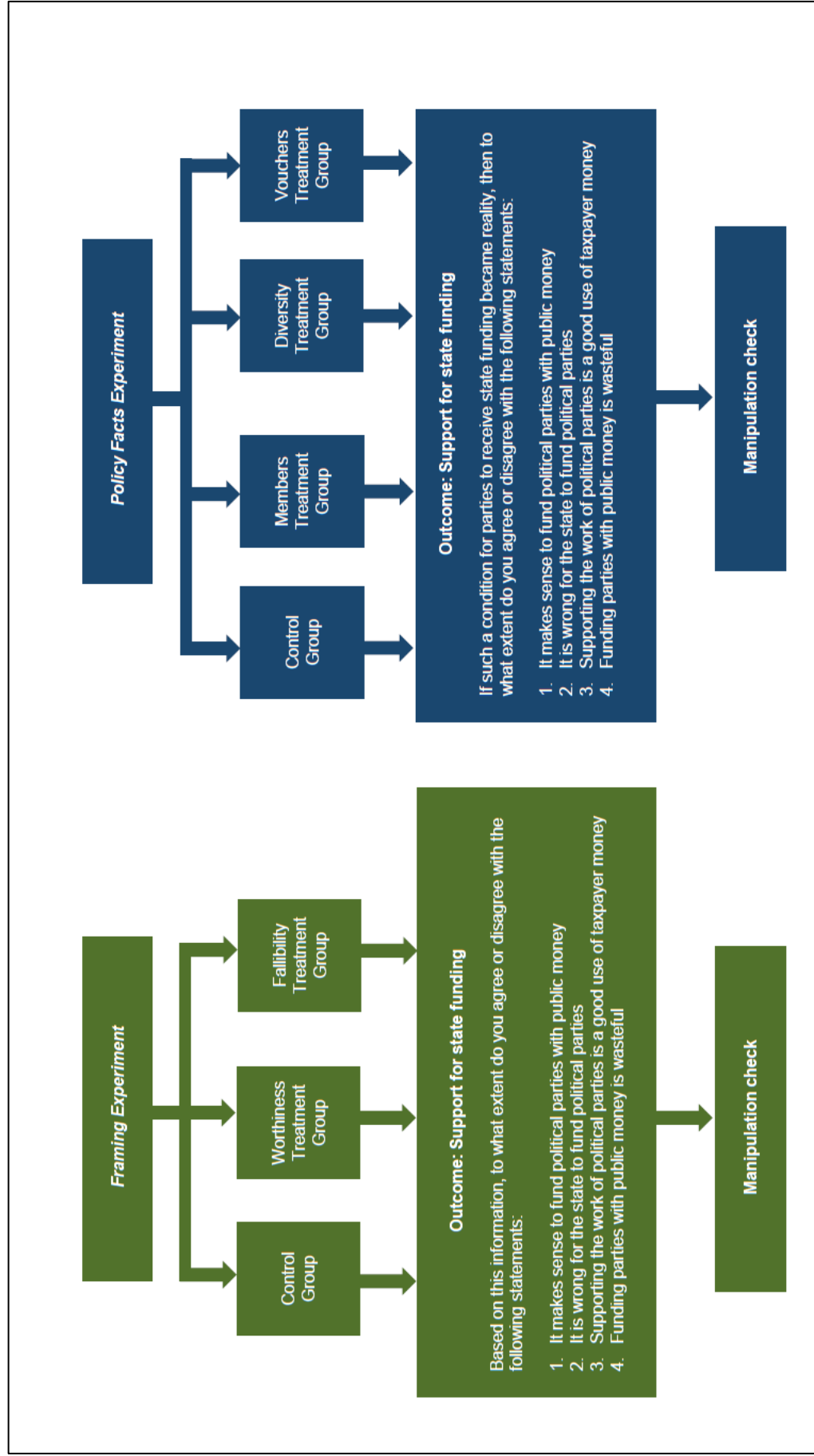
A survey experiment is internally valid if the experimenter can be confident that changes in the dependent variable are attributable to the experimental manipulations (McDermott, 2011).

In survey experiments, these manipulations often come in the form of vignettes. Vignette treatments are used to "evaluate what difference it makes

when the actual object of study or judgment, or the context in which that object appears, is systematically changed in some way” (Mutz, 2011, p. 54). In my case, the objects of study are arguments in favour of state party funding. Using textual vignettes, I advance the case for state party funding on grounds of party worthiness and fallibility in the first experiment, and on the grounds of the various party-citizen linking conditions attached to state funds in the second experiment (the vignettes themselves will be introduced in Chapter Six, when I discuss the experiments at length). To ensure that any observed effects are indeed the result of exposure to these vignettes, I take four steps.

Firstly, within each experiment, I make sure that the treatment vignettes are similarly constructed and that the primary differences between them represents my intended manipulation, and not for example the length, wording or syntax of the text. As a result, I can be more confident that any observed effects are the result of changes in the information provided about state party funding, rather than any other factor. Secondly, the vignettes themselves are intentionally relatively lengthy because, given the lack of salience of the issue of state party funding, tweaking a single sentence in each treatment may not be sufficient to stimulate an effect. The trade-off with length, as noted earlier, is risking respondent fatigue. I mitigate this risk by keeping the rest of the survey very short at approximately five minutes. I also set a pause on the treatment screens so respondents cannot skip to the next question until after 20 seconds have passed, which hopefully prompts a fuller absorption of the treatments. Thirdly, to measure whether the treatments *are* received in the way I hope, I include manipulation check questions following respondents’ exposure to the treatments (Mutz & Kim, 2020, p. 9). Fourthly, to avoid spillover effects, I also randomise the order in which respondents receive the experiments (Gaines, Kuklinski, & Quirk, 2007). Figure 4.1 shows a flowchart visualising the experimental set-up.

Figure 4.1: Experiment Flowchart



Comparative research designs

My third methodological contribution is that the research is designed to be comparative. In this section, I firstly explain why it is important to take a comparative approach to this topic. I then discuss case selection and justify why I choose the UK as an example of a donor-reliant system and Denmark as an example of a state-reliant system. I also explore how these different party funding systems may manifest in the media environment, to think about the types of information about party funding that citizens may be exposed to in each country. Finally, I discuss the survey samples drawn from each of these two broader populations, and the steps I took to improve external validity.

Case selection

Party funding scholars have long pointed to the field's "shortage in comparative approaches" (Nassmacher, 2009, p. 27). The tendency of party funding research to use single case studies has led some to lament that our insights on the topic are "not systematically comparative" (Hopkin, 2004, p. 628). Although research into party funding has expanded in the past decade, there is still a "relative dearth in the literature" when it comes to comparative approaches (Power, 2020, p. 10). This problem is amplified in the case of *public opinion* on party funding, which already constitutes only a fraction of the entire field. Of the existing studies of public opinion of party funding, the overwhelming majority are single case studies either in the UK (Electoral Reform Society, 2016; UK Electoral Commission, 2006; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011), the US (Bowler & Donovan, 2016; Donovan & Bowler, 2019; Persily & Lammie, 2004; Primo & Milyo, 2020), or Australia (Avkiran et al., 2016; Nwokora, 2015). Power's (2020) notable exception, also comparing Denmark and the UK, uses elite interviews as the main data source, therefore providing valuable insights into *elite* perceptions of public opinion on party funding. However, we still lack in-depth comparative survey data for actual public opinion on party funding. Furthermore, since the vast majority of past survey studies come from donor-reliant systems, our capacity to make scientifically grounded comparative statements about how public opinion on party funding differs across party funding systems is essentially non-existent.

In Europe, state funds now comprise the lion's share of income for most political parties. Across countries, party funding systems vary significantly in terms of how generous they are with state funds as well as the extent to which party freedoms are restricted in exchange for state funds (Hopkin, 2004, p. 635). Within countries, there are significant differences between how funding regulations affect parties depending on their size and ideology. For instance,

far-right and left socialist parties tend to rely more on state funds than more moderate party families (Poguntke et al., 2016, p. 664). Despite these differences, it is clear that on average, most parties in Europe are reliant on state funds for their existence. Figure 4.2 demonstrates this dependency, showing that the average percentage of income for European parties coming from state funds is 67%. The figure shows that in some countries, parties are very reliant on state funds (state-reliant); in others, hardly at all (donor-reliant). I use the terms “state-reliant” and “donor-reliant” throughout the dissertation to highlight the fundamental difference between these two types of systems.

Figure 4.2: Party Dependency on State Funds in Europe



Note: Data based on 2007-2011 figures.⁶

Source: IDEA Handbook on Political Finance (2014a, p. 224).

To achieve variation on the dimension of state party funding, I choose two cases representing on the one hand, a donor-reliant party funding system and on the other a state-reliant party funding system; a diverse cases approach (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 300). As Figure 4.2 demonstrates, the UK and Denmark represent divergent party funding systems. Denmark is representa-

⁶ The data for Germany in Figure 4.2 is perhaps a little misleading. As many other analyses do, it relies on accounts of total, rather than central, party income. This is because Germany is the only country in Europe where total party data is comprehensively available as far back to the 1980s. In fact, when using the central party data which is a more accurate comparison (since the best available data from most other countries is at the central level), German parties are dependent on state funds to a degree comparable with Denmark and the other Nordic countries.

tive of a larger group of European countries that receive the bulk of their income from the state, whereas the UK is an outlier in Europe due to its minimal provision of state funding for parties. It is representative of a smaller group of other countries with similarly limited levels of state funding and dominance of big donors, including the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.⁷ Focusing on the UK and Denmark thus allows me to capture the range of attitudes that citizens in party funding systems anywhere between these two extremes may hold.

Party funding in the UK and Denmark

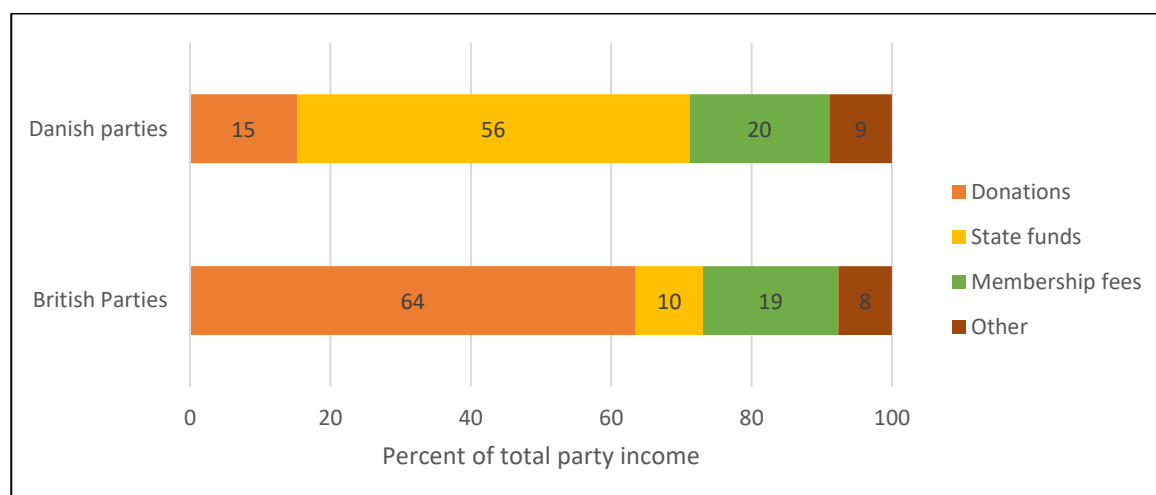
To paint a more detailed picture of the differences between the systems of state party funding in the UK and Denmark, I analyse British and Danish parties' financial accounts from 2002 (the year reporting became mandatory in the UK) until 2019, publicly available on the Electoral Commission's and Danish Parliament's websites. Figure 4.3 shows the income from donations, state funds, and membership fees averaged across all parties⁸ and all years⁹. The figure demonstrates clearly that in Denmark, state funds are the dominant source of party revenue at an average of 56% of total income, whilst in the UK private donations make up 64% of total party income. British parties are potentially able to access three pools of direct public funding: the Policy Development Grant, Short Money, and Cranborne Money. However, these public funds make up on average only 10% of total party income.

⁷ Canada's previously extensive state party funding system was slashed in 2015, when the per-vote subsidy was terminated (CBC News, 2015).

⁸ In the UK, parties included in the analysis are Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party, United Kingdom Independence Party, and the Greens. In Denmark, parties included in the analysis are the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne), the Liberals (Venstre), the Social Liberals (Radikale Venstre), the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti), the Conservative People's Party (Det Konservative Folkeparti), the Socialist People's Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti), the Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten), the Christian Democrats (Kristendemokraterne), the Liberal Alliance, and the Alternative (Alternativet).

⁹ Spreadsheets with the calculations used to generate Figures 4.3 to 4.5 are available on request.

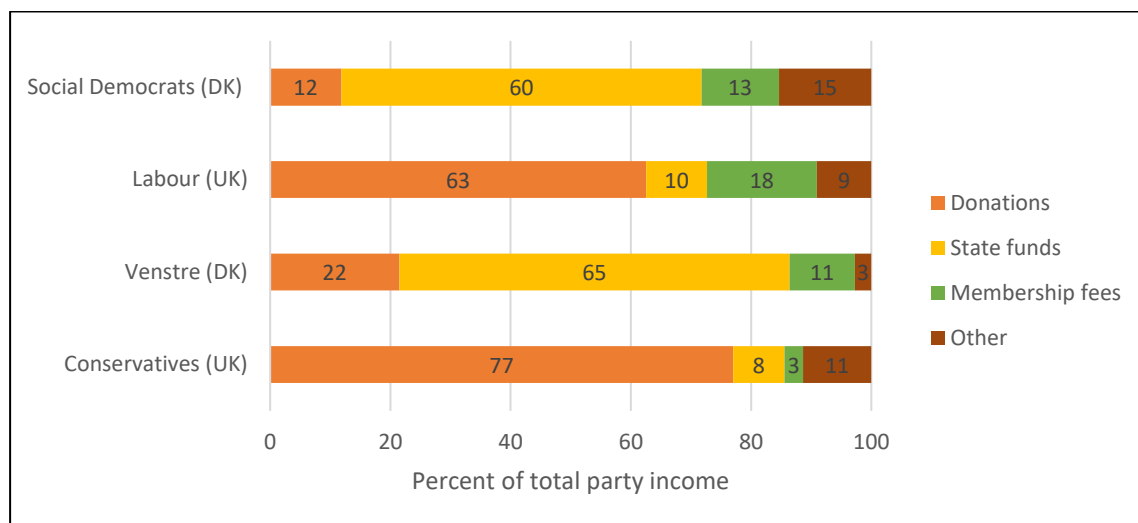
Figure 4.3: Funding Profiles of All Parties in Denmark and the UK



Note: Data is averaged across all parties listed in footnote 8, and averaged across yearly observations from 2002-2019.

The fact that Danish parties are mostly reliant on the state is not to say that there is no privileged access or influence in Denmark. There are still strong ties between Danish parties and the business elite, and indeed Denmark is considered to be a corporatist political culture (Binderkrantz & Christiansen, 2015; Binderkrantz & Pedersen, 2019; Rasmussen & Lindeboom, 2013). However, analysing the account of the two major Danish parties shows that even with these connections, donations are nowhere near as important for party survival as state funds. Figure 4.4 shows that from 2002-2019, the Social Democrats and the Liberals (Venstre) relied on state funds for 60 and 65% of their income, respectively, even higher than the average across all Danish parties of 56%. Conversely, in the UK, the two major British parties rely on private donors for the majority of their income; this source constitutes 63% of Labour's total income and 77% of the Conservatives'. The analysis shows that differences in party funding systems are more important for the financial profile of parties than the size or the type of party. Although the Conservatives and the Liberals belong to the same conservative party family, and Labour and the Social Democrats belong to the same social democratic party family, the two major British parties are far more alike each other in their reliance on big donors whilst the two major Danish parties closely mirror each other's reliance on the state.

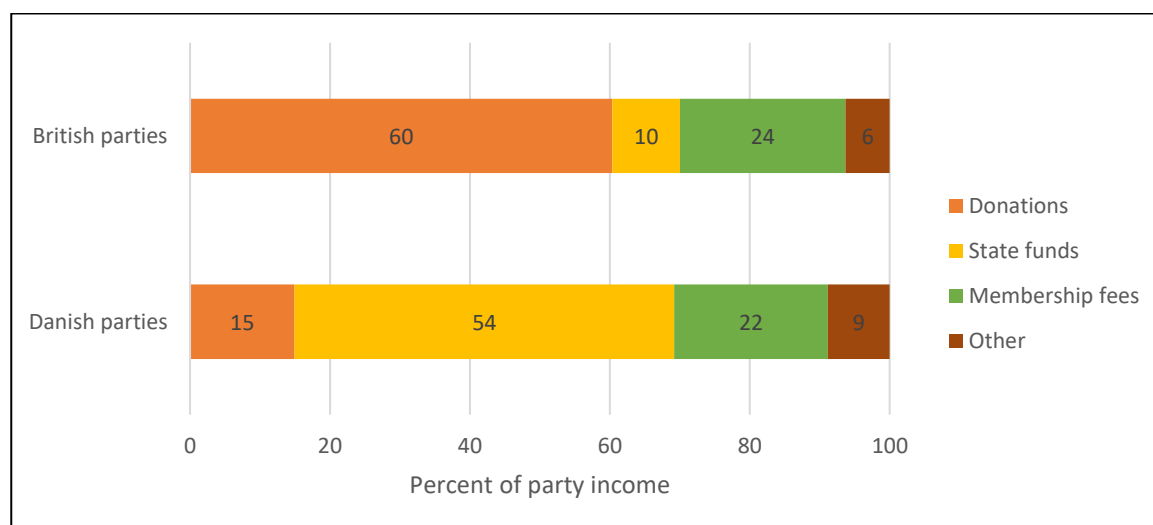
Figure 4.4: Funding Profiles of the Major Parties in Denmark and the UK



Note: Data is averaged across yearly observations from 2002-2019.

The extent to which small or new parties are able to access state funds in comparison to the major parties also differs markedly between the two countries. Denmark is one of the countries where party finance law has been most effective in encouraging greater similarity in financial conditions amongst parties (Köln, 2016). It has the lowest threshold for access to subsidies of any European country, as it allows parties to access public funds after winning a mere 1000 votes (Power, 2020, p. 79). Figure 4.5 shows that on average, smaller Danish parties rely on the state for 54% of their total income, compared to 22% from membership fees and 15% from private donations. In the UK, although small opposition parties are theoretically able to access state funds (indeed most state funding is reserved only for opposition parties), they are structurally disadvantaged when it comes to receiving access. They can only start receiving state funds when they gain two seats (or one seat plus 150,000 votes) in parliament (Kelly, 2021), which is very difficult for them to do given the first-past-the-post electoral system. The figure shows that smaller British parties are mostly reliant on private contributions (60%), receive only 10% of their funds from the state, and are on average more reliant on membership fees than the two major parties.

Figure 4.5: Funding Profiles of the Small Parties in Denmark and the UK



Note: This analysis includes all parties listed in footnote 8, minus the Conservatives and Labour in the UK, and minus the Liberals and Social Democrats in Denmark. Data is averaged across yearly observations from 2002-2019.

Information environments

To give an impression of how these different party funding systems manifest themselves in the public discourse, in this section I highlight some illustrative cases of media coverage to give a sense of how the debate is different or similar in the two countries. Taking a brief look at the types of scandals that have hit the press provides an overview of the narratives citizens in both countries may have already been exposed to, and therefore the considerations that they may have in mind when they are considering party funding in general and state party funding specifically.

The British public is very familiar with stories about the “big donor culture” (Kelly, 2011). Headlines about party donors receiving special privileges, and politicians abusing public money for personal gain, are well known to the public. The passing of the last set of major party funding reforms, the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA), was a response to public outcry over expenses scandals and parties’ reliance on large foreign donations in the late 1990s (Ewing, 2007, p. 87). As part of the reforms, small amounts of state funding were made available, and some restrictions on spending and transparency requirements were introduced (Ewing, 2007; Power, 2020). However, close relationships between donors and politicians, and media reporting on these relationships, persist.

Standout examples include the “Cash-For-Honours” scandal of 2006-2007, when it emerged that high value Labour party donors had been promised honours or peerages in the House of Lords. The Panama Papers scandal of 2016

revealed how MPs and former Prime Ministers used their connections with party donors to hide money in offshore accounts (BBC News, 2021). Headlines about the Conservative government handing public contracts to their donors during the Covid-19 pandemic have been rife since 2020 (e.g. Pegg, 2021). As if these incidences were not enough in and of themselves to damage public confidence, there is also a sampling bias in the British media; coverage is skewed towards reporting only the very largest of donations, leading people to think that political donations are even bigger than they actually are (vanHeerde-Hudson, 2011). These examples serve to highlight that the image of public representatives acting on behalf of themselves and their donors, rather than citizens, is firmly established in the British public discourse around party funding and corruption. This point is also frequently made in the literature on British party funding (Ewing, 2007; Koss, 2011; Power, 2020; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011).

However, it is not only donor funding that is associated with corruption; the British public has also long been exposed to stories about politicians abusing *public* funds for private gain. In 2009, the UK was rocked by a scandal over MPs' expenses (vanHeerde-Hudson, 2014), which revolved around MPs claiming public money to fund expensive maintenance costs on their second homes (memorably, one MP claimed the bill for cleaning a moat around his country estate (Stone, 2015)). A BBC documentary ten years later defined the scandal as significantly eroding public confidence in politicians, positing that it even "helped to drive the processes behind Brexit itself" (Power, 2020, p. 16). An academic study on the impact of the scandal on public opinion, however, showed that rather than fundamentally altering the landscape of cynicism towards parties and party funding, the scandal "confirmed what people already suspected or thought they knew all along" (Allen & Birch, 2014, p. 134). It is very possible that although the issue of MPs' expenses is quite separate from the policy of state *party* funding, people make associations with such scandals when considering state party funding.

All of this means that both public and private funds are associated with corruption in the British discourse. Koss (2011, pp. 172-177) argues that in the wake of big donor scandals such as those mentioned above, the scale of public opinion is increasingly tipping in favour of state funding. However, the policy of state party funding as being a remedy to big donor culture does not appear to be a highly salient issue. As discussed in the Introduction Chapter, the two major British parties benefit from the existing donor-based system and thus prefer to keep the issue of party funding reform off the public agenda. The Green Party, the Liberal Democrats, and Plaid Cymru have previously advocated for increasing state funding during parliamentary debates (Green Party

Manifesto, 2021; Neill, 1998), but the parties do not campaign on party funding as a primary policy platform. This makes it very difficult for British citizens to know what the stance of their preferred party is in regards to party funding, and thus to use partisan cues as a heuristic. The only considerations they are able to access come from an information environment rife with negative arguments about the influence of big donors, and about MPs' abuse of state funds. Positive messages about state party funding are unlikely to have filtered through into the wider party funding narrative.

In Denmark, party funding scandals are largely associated with state party funding. There are two issues at play here. The first regards whether the Danish state funding system is too permissible; whether funding very small parties (or even, individual candidates) who do not pass the already low threshold for representation in parliament is too generous (discussed, for instance, in a radio interview with Kosiara-Pedersen, 2021). The second is that state funding is used to support far-right parties, which many consider anti-democratic: the media has questioned the legitimacy of significant amounts of taxpayer money going to fund parties like Stram Kurs (in English "Hard Line", a niche radical right party) (DR News, 2019; TV2 News, 2019). There have also been episodes relating to how parties spend public money. In Denmark, the only criteria for how parties must spend their state funds is that it must be spent on "political purposes", which is extremely vague, and has been regularly criticized by GRECO (2018). Thus, when the Liberals were revealed to have spent €20,000 on clothing for former Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen to wear whilst campaigning, it was technically legal under the framework of "political purposes", but was publicly disapproved of and mocked (Power, 2020, p. 178).

Denmark has also been criticised for its lax regulations on donor transparency; the threshold at which donors are forced to reveal their identity is relatively high, meaning journalists and thus the public often do not have the ability to see where the money is coming from. This allows the major parties to court donations through "Business Clubs", where for an annual fee donors can lunch with party elites (Power, 2020, p. 170). In the case of the Social Democrats,¹⁰ the annual fee is set at 15,000 Danish kroner, important since the disclosure threshold is 20,000 kroner, meaning these Business Clubs can escape the public eye in party accounts. The Red-Green Alliance has campaigned on this issue, through "social media interventions, signatures and proposals in parliament" (interview with Red-Green Alliance MP, in Power, 2020, p. 184), resulting in some media and parliamentary debate. However, Koss argues that

¹⁰ The only party to agree to discuss Business Clubs in Power's elite interviews in Denmark, but as he stresses, certainly not the only party to have Business Clubs.

in Sweden and Germany the public are nowhere near as invested in the discourse around party funding as the British public (Koss, 2011, p. 172); the same seems likely to be true in Denmark. Certainly, we know that parties are perceived much more negatively in the UK than they are in Denmark, for instance, Transparency International's 2013 Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) shows the percentage of people who think parties are "corrupt or extremely corrupt" is 66% in the UK, compared to 30% in Denmark (GCB, cited in Power, 2020, p. 144). The above discussion demonstrates that in both Denmark and the UK, the media narratives surrounding both private and public funding are likely to be exclusively negative. However, corruption perceptions are likely to be higher, and party funding as an issue more salient, in the UK than in Denmark. I now turn to a discussion of external validity, beginning with how I expect the findings from the UK and Denmark to generalise to other countries.

External validity

External validity refers to how similar a study's "setting, participants, measures and treatments" are to the situation to which it is being generalised (Mutz, 2011, p. 141). In this section, I discuss my considerations about external validity around these four dimensions. Firstly, I do expect my findings to generalise to some other settings. As with all case study research, the cases of Denmark and the UK are asked to "perform a heroic role: to stand for (represent) a population of cases that is often much larger than the case itself" (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 294). Of course, without having collected data in any other countries, any claims I make about generalisability are tentative. As discussed, the main reason for selecting these two cases was that they are representative of state- and donor-reliant systems. The British findings are important in and of themselves because the UK is such a prominent case in the field of party funding. However, they might also generalise to other established democracies with similarly low levels of state party funding, such as the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Two, there are studies at least from the US and Australia suggesting that attitudes towards party funding in these contexts are similar to attitudes in the UK on the dimension of scepticism towards big donors influencing politics.

I expect the Danish findings to travel well to other Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland), and perhaps also to Germany, Belgium, and Austria, countries where parties are also mostly state-reliant (Bértoa et al., 2014, pp. 374-375) and with quite similar political institutions and party systems. However, I would be more cautious about claiming the Danish findings should generalise to countries outside of Northern Europe, even in countries

where parties are financially reliant on the state, such as Portugal, Spain, Greece, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Mexico and Uruguay (Bértoa et al., 2014, pp. 374-375). There are surely many important institutional and social factors, which could affect the dynamics between party funding and public opinion, that I have not taken into account in this research. In sum, I do expect the British findings to generalise, at least to some extent, to the US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and the Danish findings to generalise, also at least to some extent, to other Northern European countries.

The next dimension of external validity is to do with the participants of the study. As much as possible, I want my findings to be generalisable from the surveys samples to the broader populations of adult citizens in Denmark and the UK. This means that ideally, “the selected sample is not biased by either over- or under-representing different sections of the population” (David & Sutton, 2012, p. 227). The best way to achieve this is through probability sampling, where each person in a given population has an equal chance of being selected. However, most survey experiments today use non-probability samples, which are sufficient for the purposes of causal inference, and incur lower costs in terms of both time and money (Mullinix et al., 2015; Mutz & Kim, 2020). As Mutz and Kim explain, “for the purposes of simply establishing causality, this is a perfectly respectable and low-cost means of advancing knowledge. If an effect can be substantiated in a given sample, one can be sure the causal effect exists in at least some segment of the population” (2020, p. 5).

When it comes to descriptive inferences, however, one is not trying to establish the presence of an effect, but to describe the opinions of a large population. This means the sample should be as representative as possible. Given the greater importance of reducing the sampling error in the descriptive study, I conduct this survey on a sample of approximately 2,000 participants in each country, compared to approximately 1,100 in each country in the experimental survey (as mentioned earlier, 1,000 is still a sufficient sample size to achieve an acceptable sampling error of plus or minus 3%). To further enhance representativeness, I conduct the surveys through the survey company YouGov, which has access to more representative online panels than commonly used crowdsourcing platforms such as MTurk (Krupnikov, Nam, & Style, 2021).

YouGov uses a quota sampling strategy: participants opt into their online panel, and from this panel YouGov selects a sub-sample that is representative of the broader population on the key dimensions. The target sample demographics are derived from census data, large scale random probability surveys, and election results, to ensure a high degree of representativeness (Twyman, 2008; YouGov, 2021). The survey samples YouGov drew for my

studies were representative on the dimensions of age, gender, and region.¹¹ To examine whether the samples are representative on other important dimensions, I compared levels of education amongst the survey sample with a population estimate of education amongst the target populations (see Table 4.1). I also compared the distributions of partisanship in the samples against partisanship in the population, based on polls taken at the time the survey was conducted (December 2020) (see Table 4.2) which are themselves based on a representative sample.

Table 4.1: Levels of Education in the Samples Compared to Target Populations

| Variable | YouGov Sample (%) | Population Estimate (%) |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>UK</i> | | |
| Secondary education | 29 | 36 |
| Further education | 10 | 19 |
| Higher education | 57 | 47 |
| Not stated | 2 | 0 |
| <i>Denmark</i> | | |
| Secondary education | 17 | 35 |
| Further education | 23 | 34 |
| Higher education | 59 | 30 |
| Not stated | 1 | 1 |

Note: Sources for population estimates are the UK Department of Education website (<https://www.gov.uk/education>) and Statistics Denmark (<https://www.dst.dk>). Secondary education includes primary and secondary school. Further education includes all levels of vocational training. Higher education includes all university-level degrees.

Table 4.1 shows that the survey samples in both countries are substantially more educated than the general population, for instance, in Denmark 59% of the sample has completed some form of higher education compared to 30% of the actual population. Table 4.2 shows that the distribution of partisanship is quite well matched in both populations, although in the UK Conservative voters are slightly under-represented. In sum, the survey samples are highly representative on the dimensions of age, gender and region, over-educated compared to the general population, but fairly representative in terms of partisanship. In the analysis of the observational survey data in Chapter Five, all

¹¹ See Tables A2.1 and A2.2 in the Appendix, which show that the samples very closely match the population on these three dimensions.

results remain robust to weighting by the variables of gender, age, region, education, and partisanship.

Table 4.2: Partisanship in the Samples Compared to the Target Populations

| Vote intention | YouGov Sample (%) | Population Estimate (%) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>UK</i> | | |
| Conservatives | 32 | 39 |
| Labour | 39 | 38 |
| Liberal Democrats | 9 | 7 |
| Greens | 8 | 5 |
| Scottish National Party | 5 | 5 |
| Brexit Party | 6 | 3 |
| Plaid Cymru | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Denmark</i> | | |
| Social Democrats | 29 | 31 |
| Liberals | 14 | 18 |
| Conservative People's Party | 12 | 10 |
| Red-Green Alliance | 10 | 8 |
| Socialist People's Party | 7 | 8 |
| Social Liberals | 5 | 6 |
| New Right | 11 | 6 |
| Danish People's Party | 6 | 6 |
| Liberal Alliance | 3 | 3 |
| The Alternative | 1 | 1 |
| Christian Democrats | 1 | 1 |
| Hard Line | 1 | 1 |
| Vegan Party | 1 | 1 |

Notes: Population estimates from Poll of Polls (<https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/>). The categories of “other”, “another party/a candidate from another party”, “will not vote”, “have never voted”, and “prefer not to answer” are excluded, but were provided as response options in the survey. In the UK, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was also provided as a response option, but data for this party was not included in the Poll of Polls so it is excluded from the table. 1% of the survey sample voted for the DUP.

Whilst generalisability of participants is a commonly discussed form of external validity, Mutz (2011) argues that the generalisability of measures is an important but often overlooked dimension of external validity. The measures

have to capture the same concepts for both Danish and British respondents, sometimes a challenge given extensive differences between the countries' party funding systems. Because of this, I often use questions and arguments about the idea of state party funding, rather than about the reality of the party funding system in the respondent's country – attitude questions rather than knowledge questions. Knowledge questions would measure how citizens think their country's party funding system actually functions; for example, vanHeerde-Hudson and Fisher asked respondents to estimate the national expenditure of the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats (2011, p. 46). In contrast, an attitude question might be about how citizens think their country's party funding system *should* function; for example, in the same survey, vanHeerde-Hudson and Fisher asked respondents whether there should be a limit on how much any one person can donate to a political party (2011, p. 50). Whereas the second question would make sense in a survey conducted in any country, the first one would not. I make sure that if I do use knowledge questions, I design them not to be context-dependent so that responses are comparable across the two countries.

I also designed the treatments in the experiments (namely, arguments in favour of state party funding) to be externally valid. Mutz explains that two forms of realism are relevant here: “External realism” refers to whether what happens in the experiment appears real to the subject, whereas “mundane realism” refers to whether the experimental situation resembles situations encountered in the real world” (Mutz, 2011, p. 141). A previous experimental survey about the effects of information about donor restrictions described the fictional party finance system of Liechtenstein, chosen because respondents are very unlikely to have any knowledge of how party finance actually works in Liechtenstein, thus limiting priming effects (Avkiran et al., 2016). I choose not to follow this trend or use a fictional country in the vignettes, because I do not want to remove any sense of investment or emotion a respondent might have when responding to the treatment. British and Danish respondents may respond very similarly if presented with a scenario about party funding in Liechtenstein, since the party funding system there in no way affects their experience of democracy. A fictional vignette could therefore lead me to overlook real differences that I seek to capture, should they exist, between what citizens in state- versus donor-reliant systems think about state party funding. In the experiment, I therefore keep respondents in the political context within which they actually live. To further enhance external realism, I pose the texts as opinion pieces from journalists to make it feel more like the real world and increase user engagement (Lupia, 2013; Morton & Williams, 2010). Furthermore, to enhance mundane realism i.e. the chance that the experimental scenario may actually occur in the real world, I base the texts on actual statements made by

public figures advocating for state party funding in the UK (as I will explain in more detail in Chapter Six). All of these steps should enhance the generalisability validity of the treatments.

Finally, Mutz explains that the outcome measure should also be externally valid. This means that a study's findings should "generalize across different operationalizations of the same concept" behind the dependent variable (Mutz, 2011, p. 146). Throughout the dissertation, the main outcome of interest is *support for state party funding*. To make sure that my measurement of this concept is not dependent on one operationalisation, I included four questions to measure support for state party funding. This way, I can statistically test whether the findings change substantially based on the wording of the survey question, or whether they hold across multiple operationalisations of the concept. In the latter case, according to Mutz's perspective on external validity, my findings are more likely to be generalisable. In sum, by designing comparative measures and treatment vignettes, I open up new possibilities for future researchers to use and adapt these measures and texts in order to make descriptive and causal inferences about state party funding upon a much larger sample of countries with different party funding systems.

Limitations of research design

Despite the steps taken to ensure measurement validity, internal validity, and external validity, my research designs are naturally subject to some limitations. As mentioned, the samples are non-probability rather than probability samples. This is the norm in survey research in political science given time and financial restraints prohibiting face-to-face interviews with subjects drawn from a high quality sampling frame (Krupnikov et al., 2021), and I have used YouGov rather than a cheaper alternative to enhance the representativeness of my samples. The samples are therefore representative on the important demographic dimensions of age, gender and region. I also weighted on the variables of partisanship and education, and as mentioned, the results remain robust. But, I cannot guarantee the samples are representative on other dimensions of, for instance, social class and ethnicity (David & Sutton, 2012, p. 232).

Another limitation is the lack of extensive pre-testing. I discussed the qualitative pre-test I conducted and explained how it helped me to design my survey items to increase measurement validity. However, in an ideal world, I would have also run a pre-test of some of the new survey questions I designed with the help of this initial test, to be even more certain that they were understood by respondents in the way that I intended. The same applies for the vignettes in the survey experiments, which I would have liked to pre-test more

extensively. The reasons for not conducting more thorough pre-tests in both cases were simply time and financial restrictions. However, I did conduct informal pre-tests of the new state party funding questions as well as the vignettes. I sent them to a convenience sample consisting of personal contacts from each country and asked them to provide comments and feedback, and to answer the manipulation checks after reading the treatment texts. In some cases, they responded that the wording was unclear or too academic, so I altered the text accordingly to try to make it as accessible and jargon-free as possible in the final versions.

Chapter summary

This chapter has highlighted the three methodological contributions of the dissertation. The first is the design of original and valid survey measures of public opinion on state party funding. I introduce the questions themselves in the next chapter. The second is the design of internally valid survey experiments measuring the effects of information on support for state party funding. I present these experiment designs and treatment vignettes in more detail in Chapter Six. Finally, the third contribution is that these measures and vignettes are designed to be comparative, so they can be comparable across Denmark and the UK in my study but also so that, in the future, they can be easily applied across different populations and settings.

Chapter Five: Describing Public Opinion on State Party Funding

In this dissertation, I have identified major gaps in our collective knowledge stemming from the disconnect between the literatures of party funding and public opinion. One gap is that we do not know how much citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding. Another is that we do not know which considerations relate to citizens' support for state party funding. To fill in these gaps, I conducted an observational survey¹² on 2,048 citizens in Denmark and 2,027 citizens in the UK, fielded in December 2020 (total $n = 4,075$). In this chapter, I introduce the survey questions and analyse the responses to answer the dissertation's two descriptive sub-research questions.

The first question is "How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?" I begin by discussing how I operationalise the core concepts behind this question, as based on the theoretical arguments in Chapter Three and the methodological deliberations discussed in Chapter Four. The three core concepts are support for state funding, support for big donor funding, and support for grassroots funding. I explain how I develop the indices of support for each funding source, and how I test and find support for the validity and reliability of these measures. Next, I present the empirical findings. They show that state party funding is significantly more supported than big donor funding, and significantly less supported than grassroots funding, supporting my first hypothesis. Subsequent between-country analysis shows that these results hold across the two countries, but that attitudes are stronger in the UK than in Denmark.

The second question is "Which considerations relate to citizens' support for state party funding?" Again, I begin with a discussion of how I operationalise the core concepts. Based on the hypotheses developed in Chapter Three, the core concepts are party representation, party collusion over state resources, parties as essential to democracy, type of party benefiting from state funding, regulation of party finance, and opposition to big donor funding. Next, I present the distributions of the variables before formally testing the six hypotheses (H2.1-H2.6) through correlation analyses. I find that for the most part, people's considerations about party representation, competition and regulation do correlate with their support for state party funding, as we would expect

¹² The full survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix Two.

based on the cartel theory and the public utility perspective. The considerations that parties are good representatives, that parties do not often collude to hoard state resources, that parties are essential to democracy, and that state funds benefit small and new parties, are all positively and significantly related with support for state party funding. People who share these considerations are more likely to support state party funding. On the flipside, this means that considerations that parties are *not* good representatives, that they do frequently collude to hoard state resources, that they are not essential to democracy, and that state funds benefit large and established parties, are negatively and significantly related to support for state party funding. People who share these considerations are more likely to oppose state party funding.

Towards the end of the chapter, I also explore the responses to supplementary questions in the survey, which do not form part of the main hypotheses but serve to provide further texture and nuance to the central results. I find that people in both Denmark and the UK are able to quite accurately determine how reliant their parties actually are on the three main sources of income. When faced with questions posing state funding and donor funding as a trade-off, they are significantly more likely to choose state funding. In exploring potential covariates of support for state party funding, I find that people who trust in parties, perceive parties as responsive, are politically interested, and are more left-leaning, are significantly more likely to support the policy of providing parties with state funds. Finally, I analyse responses to questions about support or opposition to different categories of big donors, and find that people in both countries are significantly more likely to support restricting donations from organisations rather than individuals. In the concluding discussion (Chapter Seven), I provide substantive interpretations of what we can learn from these findings.

How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?

Operationalising support for state, big donor, and grassroots funding

The first sub-research question posed in this dissertation is “How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?” In Chapter Three, I developed the hypothesis that citizens prefer state funding to big donor funding but not to grassroots funding. To compare citizens’ preferences for each of these three funding sources, I need measures of three main concepts: support for state funding, support for big donor funding, and support for grassroots funding. To operationalise these concepts, I generate three

indices, constructed by averaging across multiple survey questions about the same concept. I use key arguments about each funding source from the party funding literature to make sure that the measures closely align with scholars' positive and negative theoretical considerations about them. I use four questions per index, enough to be able to measure the underlying latent (unobservable) variables in as reliable and valid a way as possible, but not too many that it would overburden respondents (Krosnick & Presser, 2010; Silber, Roßmann, & Gummer, 2018). I use a mixture of positively and negatively worded items to avoid leading respondents in one way or another. Respondents also received the statements in a randomised order, to reduce the likelihood of response order effects (Groves et al., 2009, p. 171). In all cases, response options are "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neither agree nor disagree", "agree", "strongly agree", and "don't know". I will now introduce the statements I used to measure support for each funding source.

Support for state party funding

The index measuring support for state party funding is my main dependent variable throughout the dissertation. Because it is such an important measure, these are the very first questions contained in the survey, since this way respondents are at their most alert when answering them (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). As discussed in Chapter Four, in choosing the statements that would best capture the concept of support for state party funding, I am limited in my ability to use important substantive arguments from the literature about state party funding. The reason for this is that these are the very arguments that I measure in order to test hypotheses 2.1-2.6. Since I use the index of support for state party funding as a dependent variable in these tests, I could not use any positive or negative statements directly derived from the cartel or public utility views when creating this index. Otherwise, there would be a risk of endogeneity. As such, I based the statements on adaptations of previous survey questions plus insights gained from the qualitative survey (discussed in the previous chapter).

In Chapter Two, I mentioned some of the existing survey measures of support for state funding. I aim to improve on these measures in creating the new index. One question that has been used to measure support for state party funding (Nwokora, 2015), on an Australian sample, was:

Parties and elections should be funded only using public money (i.e. trade unions and businesses should not be allowed to contribute to the funding of parties and elections). (Currently private institutions, such as trade unions and businesses, can contribute to funding of parties and elections). Please tell us whether you agree with this statement.

This question is double-barrelled, as it could be capturing either support for public funding of parties, or opposition to trade unions and businesses contributing to parties and elections. This is an example of why it is important to measure support for each of the three main funding sources *separately*, so that we can compare them relative to each other. The response options to this question are “yes”, “no”, and “can’t say”, which does not allow for a measure of the strength of support or opposition to state funding. The same problem of limited response options arises in an IPSOS 2017 survey, which asked respondents in eight European countries:¹³ “Do you think it is right or wrong to fund political parties by means of public money?” (cited in Ignazi, 2017, p. 226). The results showed that the vast majority of respondents in all countries answered “wrong” to this question. Yet, “because policymaking involves trade-offs, knowing what people want...is often not enough. Also important is knowing what they want the most and what they want the least” (Cavaillé, Chen, & Van der Straeten, 2022, p. 2). There is then an important distinction between *attitude direction* and *attitude strength* (Howe & Krosnick, 2017). These terms are conceptually similar to what some scholars call *preference direction* and *preference intensity* (Baranski, Haas, & Morton, 2020). There may be policy implications based not only on the direction of attitudes towards state party funding (opposition versus support), but also how intense these attitudes are compared to respondents’ attitudes towards the other two sources of funds.

Based on the above reflections, it follows that it is important to have measures of support for state funding that do not also blur in attitudes towards big donors or other sources of funding, and that it is important to have response options that allow for the measurement of attitude strength. The wording of the IPSOS question cited above perfectly captures what I want to measure, namely support for state party funding. Therefore, I adapt the wording of the question “Do you think it is right or wrong to fund political parties by means of public money?” from a binary question (right versus wrong) to a more general statement. I also come up with a similar but slightly distinct way of re-stating this question. The IPSOS measure is about the rightness or wrongness, the principle, of state funding. It could be that someone thinks state funding is wrong, but upon balancing whatever alternative considerations they may have, they agree that it still makes sense to fund parties. Therefore, I develop Items 1 and 2 below about the extent to which state funding *makes sense*, and the extent to which it is *wrong*.

¹³ Belgium, Poland, Sweden, Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain and Spain.

Finally, I am inspired by the responses in my qualitative survey, specifically, considerations about state party funding that occurred which were *not* explicitly part of the theoretical arguments I had derived from the cartel and public utility perspectives. These themes mostly relate to the theme of wasting taxpayer money.¹⁴ I include two items to measure attitudes towards the idea of spending tax money on parties (Items 3 and 4 below). I provide a response scale of five points (plus a DK option), to measure attitude strength. To standardise understandings of “state party funding”, I also very briefly defined the concept for respondents them:

In many countries, including [the UK/Denmark], the state provides public money directly to political parties. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. It makes sense to fund political parties with public money
2. It is wrong for the state to fund political parties
3. Supporting the work of political parties is a good use of taxpayer money
4. Funding parties with public money is wasteful

Support for big donor funding

Of all three funding sources, citizens’ levels of support for big donor funding is the one that has received the most attention in past survey research. Therefore, I am able to design the statements I use for this index by drawing much more explicitly on items used in previous surveys. The British Election Study (Fieldhouse, Green, Evans, Mellon, & Prosser, 2016) has measured attitudes towards big donors by asking, “How often do you think politicians do special favours for people and organisations who give very large contributions to their party?” I slightly adapt the wording of this BES question for Item 1. I remove the phrase “people and organisations who give very large contributions” in favour of the simpler term “big donors”.¹⁵ Based on arguments especially from scholars of institutional corruption (e.g. Thompson, 2018) that the type of favours that are most problematic for democratic representation are *policy* favours, rather than personal favours, I also specify this in the statement. For Item 2, I borrow Nassmacher’s wording: “the search for funds may induce a candidate to listen more to those who give from his or her campaign than to those who vote for a candidate” (Nassmacher, 1992, p. 153). This wording of

¹⁴ Coded as the theme “Excess” in Appendix Table A1.1.

¹⁵ I also include a separate question to disentangle attitudes towards different *types* of big donors (corporations, very wealthy individuals, interest groups and trade unions), which I will discuss later in this chapter.

politicians “listening” more or less to donors than citizens is intuitive to understand and grasp.

For Item 3, I adapt the Electoral Reform Society’s (2016) question, which asked to what extent people agree with the statement that “Big donors have too much influence on political parties”, to be more of an attitude than a knowledge question. The reason is that if I use this exact question in Denmark, it could easily be the case that respondents would strongly disagree that big donors have too much influence on political parties. But, this would not necessarily mean that they agree with the principle of donors being able to influence politics, only that they do not think donors at present *do* influence politics in Denmark. I would not be able to disentangle these two possible explanations. As such, I settle on a statement about the importance of avoiding donor influence to ease comparison across countries (Item 3 below). Finally, I present a positively worded statement about big donors for more balance. The main arguments in favour of big donors are usually made on the grounds that money is a form of political speech, and any restrictions on political contributions therefore violate freedom of speech (Primo & Milyo, 2020; Samples, 2006). I try to capture this argument that people and organisations should be unrestricted in their ability to donate to political parties in Item 4 below:

There is some debate about the extent to which big donors should be financially involved in politics. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. Big donors receive policy favours from parties in return for their donations
2. Politicians listen more to their supporters that give big donations than to their non-donating supporters
3. It is very important to avoid the influence of big donors on the political process
4. Big donors should be allowed to donate as much money as they want to a political party

Support for grassroots funding

To my knowledge, there are no survey questions that explicitly measure attitudes towards grassroots funding, rather, it is usually just assumed that this is citizens’ preferred source of party income. This assumption is often displayed when scholars speak of citizens’ contradictory opinions on party funding. For instance: “Parties and their activities are regarded as necessary, but the voter is unwilling to support them, and, at the same time, does not like alternative ways of financing parties, especially those involving ‘private’ funds that might create links with interest groups (and lead to corrupt practices) and by public

funding from his taxes” (Linz, 2002, p. 307). This contains the implicit argument that people do not like “alternative” ways of funding parties other than voter support, but they *do* like parties to be funded by voters. Although we know that people are mostly unwilling to financially support parties themselves,¹⁶ we do not have firm evidence that they prefer parties to be funded by small donors and members, because the concept of support for grassroots funding has not been directly measured.

I therefore cannot rely on past survey measures in designing the index of support for grassroots funding, and as such, I exclusively use the core arguments in the party funding literature about grassroots funding. I discussed these arguments in Chapters Two and Three. The main reasons that scholars perceive grassroots funding to be citizens’ ideal source of party funding is that it reflects and promotes strong links between parties and citizens (Dalton et al., 2011; Nassmacher, 1992, 2009). It is generally perceived as good for democracy for parties to be financially dependent on their supporters, as it intensifies their incentive to represent their political needs and preferences, and ensures they remain “anchored in civil society” (Katz & Mair, 1995, p. 11). Furthermore, supporting the work of parties through small financial contributions is a revered mode of citizen political participation (Nassmacher, 2009, p. 193), generally also perceived as good for democracy. Offering small financial contributions may make citizens feel that they are a part of the political party they support, that they are invested in its activities, and that they have a stake in its success or failure. To measure citizen support for grassroots party funding, I try to translate all of these ideas into easily understandable, balanced survey items. I also introduce the concept of “grassroots funding”, so that respondents knew what I meant by this phrase:

A party often tries to collect financial support from its “grassroots” supporters, via small donations and/or membership fees. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. Parties should be financially independent of their members and supporters
2. It is important that members and supporters have a financial stake in their chosen party
3. Parties should not be obligated to collect grassroots funds

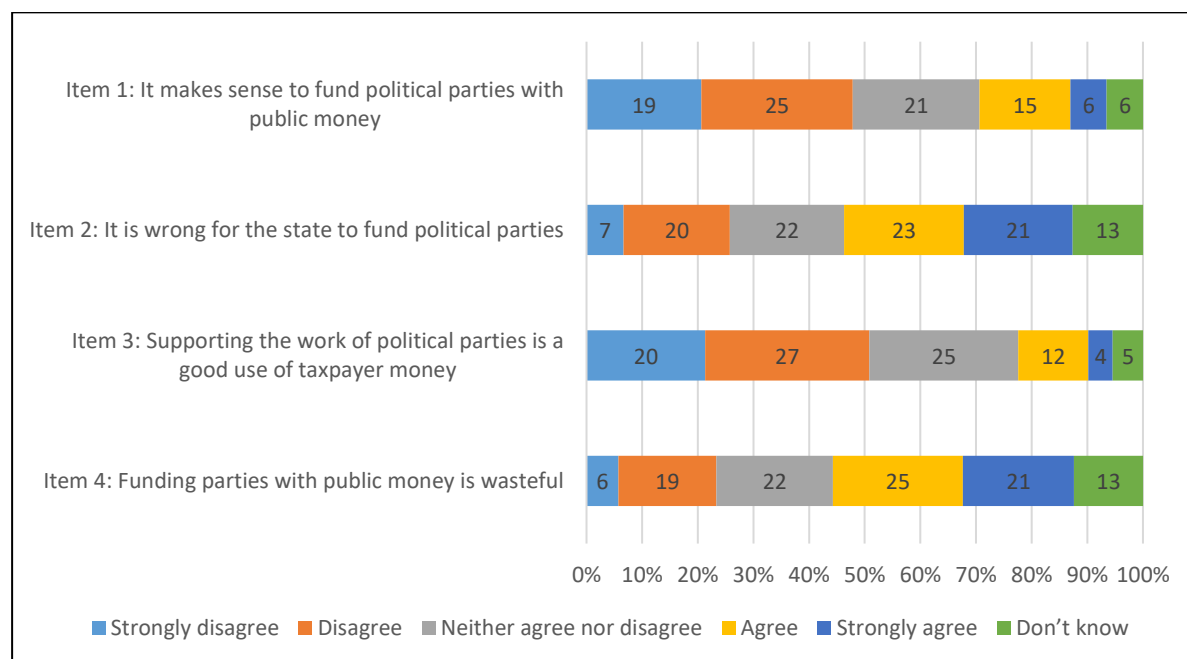
¹⁶ As evidenced by declining party membership numbers (Köln, 2015a; van Biezen et al., 2012). There is also some supportive survey evidence, such as responses to a question in a Spanish survey: ‘What would you do if the party for which you have most sympathy, or that is closer to your own ideas, asks you to contribute economically to some activity proper to the party?’ To this question, only 22 per cent responded that they would probably contribute (Linz, 2002, p. 307).

4. Encouraging parties to collect small donations and membership fees is a good way to make sure they stay connected to their regular supporters

Responses to index items

Before analysing the indices and testing how reliable they are, it is informative to first look at individuals' raw responses to the individual survey items. This provides some initial insights into citizens' attitudes towards the three funding sources and some face validity for the measures themselves, before a more formal analysis of my hypotheses (and a between-country analysis). Figure 5.1 displays the responses to the questions about state party funding across the two countries. It shows that respondents are more likely to agree or strongly agree with the two negatively worded statements, Items 2 and 4 (it is wrong for the state to fund political parties, and funding parties with public money is wasteful). They are more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the two positively worded statements, Items 1 and 3 (that it makes sense to fund parties with public money, and that supporting the work of political parties is a good use of taxpayer money). This suggests that more people oppose than support state party funding. We can also see that across all four items, people are more likely to choose agree than strongly agree, and disagree than strongly disagree. This indicates that attitudes towards state party funding are not particularly strong.

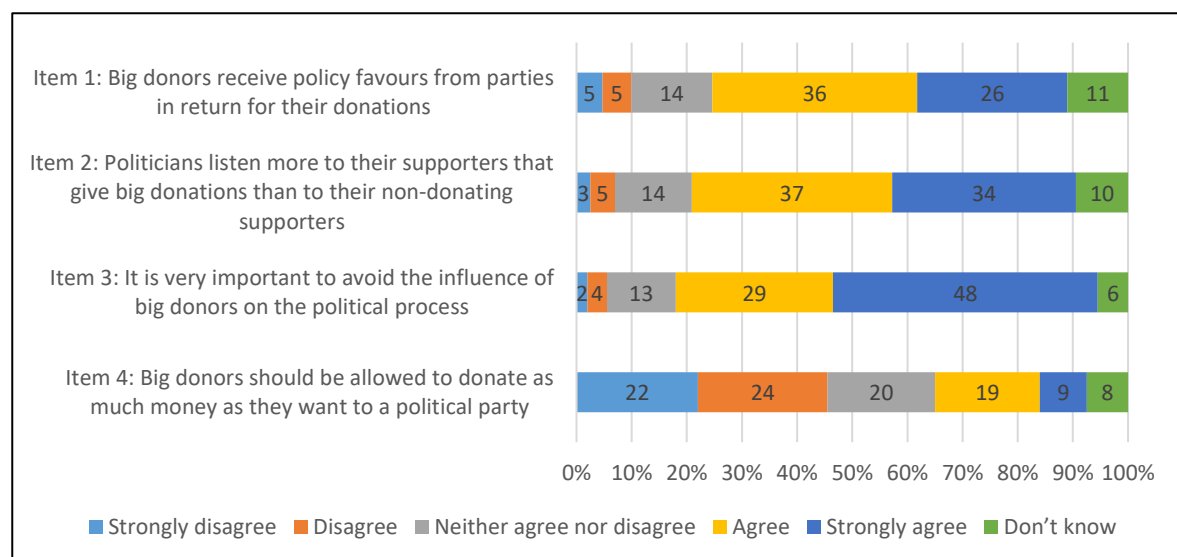
Figure 5.1: Responses to Measures of Support for State Funding



Next, Figure 5.2 shows the responses to the questions measuring support for big donor funding, again across both countries. It is immediately clear from

the bar charts that attitudes towards big donors are much stronger than they are towards state party funding. “Strongly agree” was the modal response (48%) to Item 3 (it is very important to avoid the influence of big donors on the political process). Attitudes lean heavily towards opposition, rather than support for, big donors. The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the negatively worded statements, Items 1-3. People were most likely to disagree with Item 4 (big donors should be allowed to donate as much as they want to political parties), and people clearly had less intense feelings towards this item, as we can see from the far more varied responses to Item 4 compared to the other items. Perhaps respondents are simply not used to thinking about big donors in a positive light and therefore had fewer accessible considerations about the idea of money as free speech, which I was trying to measure with this question. That the responses to this item are more spread out than the responses to the other items indicates that although Item 4 is thematically similar to the others, it may be tapping into a different underlying element of the concept of support for big donor funding. I test for this in the coming section, when I explore the dimensionality of the indices.

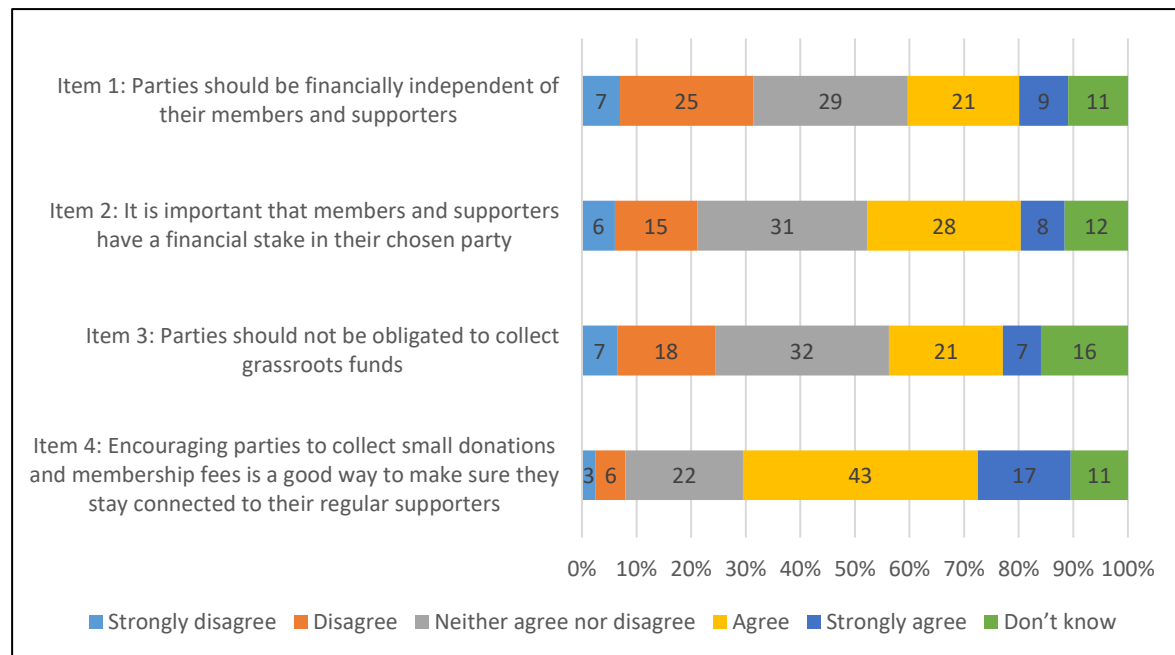
Figure 5.2: Responses to Measures of Support for Big Donor Funding



Lastly, Figure 5.3 shows the responses to the questions measuring support for grassroots funding across the two countries. These responses are more moderate and evenly distributed between the negative and positively worded statements than the responses to the questions about state and big donor funding; in fact, “neither agree nor disagree” was the modal category for three of the four items. This indicates that attitudes towards grassroots funding are weaker than attitudes towards state and donor funding. However, attitudes do appear to be skewed more towards the positive direction, especially in Item 4,

to which 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that encouraging parties to collect small donations and membership fees is a good way to make sure they stay connected to their regular supporters. Furthermore, 36% of respondents agreed with Item 2 (that it is important that members and supporters have a financial stake in their chosen party), compared to 21% who disagreed.

Figure 5.3: Responses to Measures of Support for Grassroots Funding



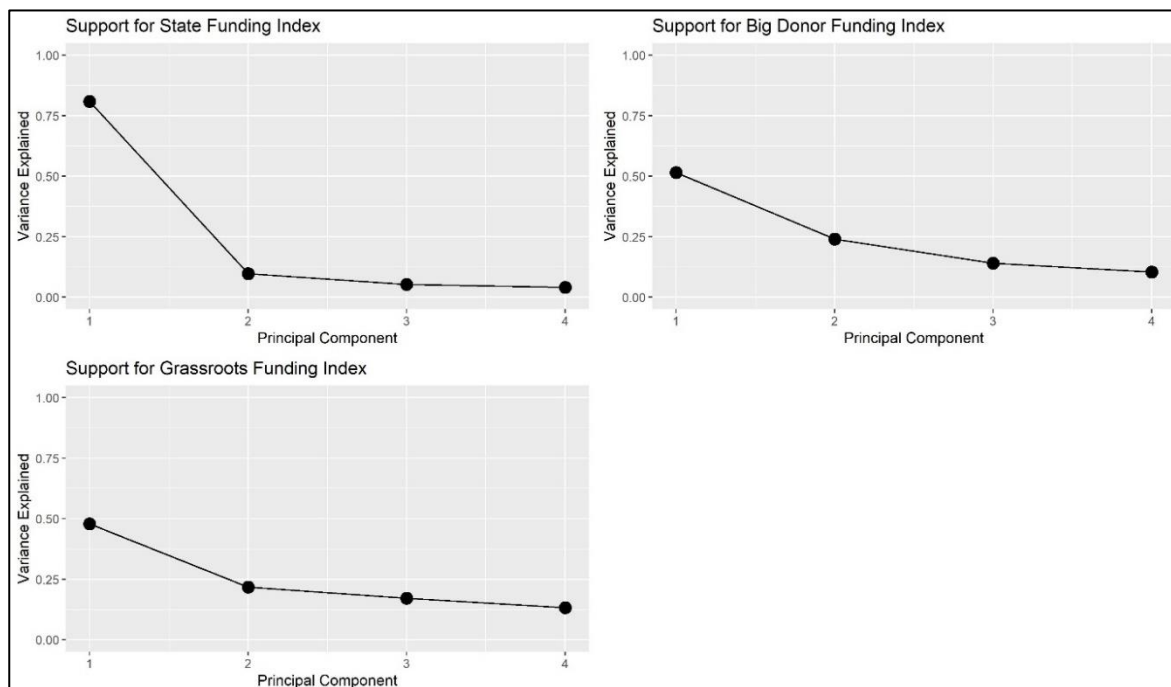
Assessing the indices

The next step is to assess the reliability and validity of these measures of support for state, big donor and grassroots funding. “Reliability means consistency: repeating a procedure should produce the same result. Validity means correctness: the variable actually measures what it is supposed to measure” (DeBell, 2013, p. 399). Since I have no expectation that individuals’ preferences for the three sources should differ between the two countries, I test the indices on data pooled across the two countries ($n = 4,075$)¹⁷. To examine how valid the indices are, I conduct principal component analysis (PCA) and factor analysis (FA). These are both methods of evaluating how many dimensions are in the indices, in other words whether the items within them seem to be measuring the same concept. The plots in Figure 5.4 show how much variance is explained by each principal component of the data. The first component in the state funding index explains around 80% of the vari-

¹⁷ I also conduct the same tests on the indices in each country, and the results are robust. See Figure A2.2 and Tables A2.4 and A2.5 in the Appendix.

ance in the data, and around 50% for the donor funding and grassroots indices. In all cases, the drop-off is most substantial after the first component, suggesting there is only one dimension in each index.

Figure 5.4: Dimensionality of Indices



Note: The Y-axes show the variance explained by each principal component, where 0.00 = 0%, and 1.00 = 100%.

Based on these results, I conduct factor analyses extracting one factor for each index. Factor analysis examines whether covariation between variables can be explained by the existence of one or more latent variables by producing a factor loading score, a score of how much each item is “influenced by the same underlying latent construct” (Watkins, 2018, p. 227). A high factor loading score is desirable as it indicates unidimensionality, meaning that the items all seem to be measuring the same concept. The results show that all four items in the state funding index are highly correlated with one factor, indicated by factor loading scores of 0.8 or 0.9. The models for the other two indices show moderate to strong correlations, between 0.5 and 0.8.¹⁸ These tests reveal that all of the indices seem to be unidimensional, and that the support for state funding index loads especially high onto one factor. This is important, as it shows that the items within each index all measure one strong underlying dimension.

To assess the reliability of the indices, I calculate Cronbach’s alpha (α) and inter-item correlations. These are both estimates of internal consistency, or

¹⁸ Figure A2.1 in the Appendix visualises these factor loadings.

the strength of association between each item (Silber et al., 2018, p. 276). There are no concrete thresholds for acceptability, but Cronbach's alphas above 0.6 and inter-item correlation scores of 0.3 are usually considered to be acceptable cut-offs in the social sciences (DeBell, 2013; Field, 2018). All three indices reach these thresholds (see Table 5.1). To probe the robustness of these results, I also conduct item discrimination tests. These tests (results in Appendix) show that dropping items does not improve the reliability of any of the indices. It means that if the same set of questions were to be asked again in a future survey, they should produce the same results. Therefore, the results of the PCA and FA demonstrate that the indices are valid, and the internal consistency and item-discrimination tests indicate that they are also reliable.

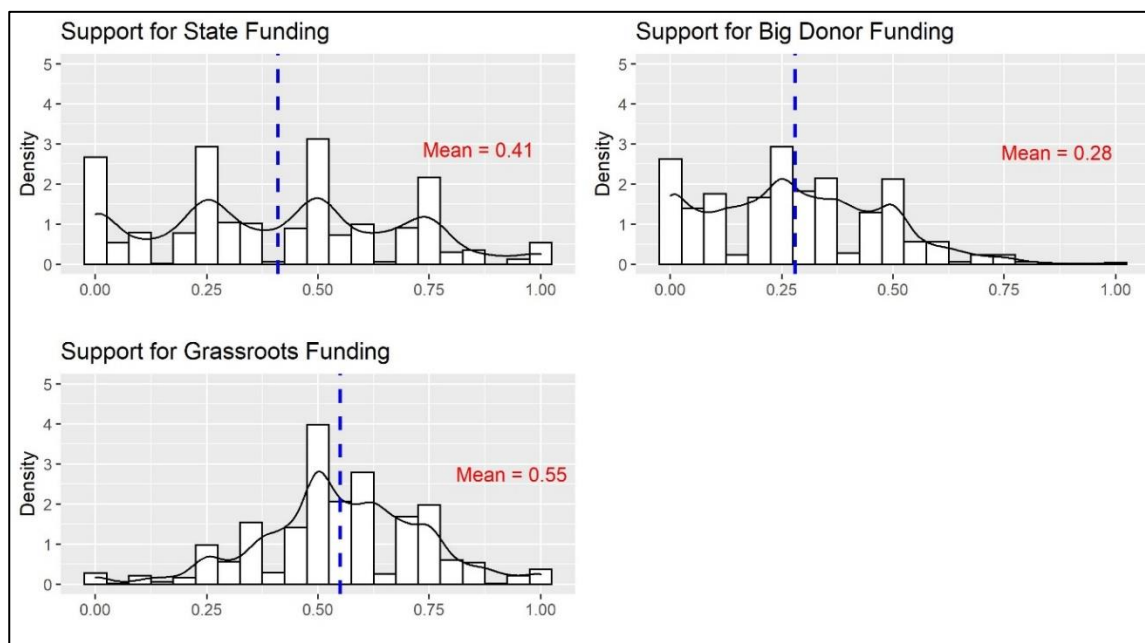
Table 5.1: Tests of Indices' Internal Consistency

| Index of support for: | Cronbach's α | Inter-item correlation |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| State party funding | 0.92 | 0.75 |
| Big donor funding | 0.67 | 0.35 |
| Grassroots funding | 0.63 | 0.30 |

Formally testing hypothesis one

Before testing the indices, I normalise the items within each index. I firstly code the DKs as missing, and then flip and rescale the items so that for all of them, a score of 0 indicates opposition and 1 indicates support for the funding source. This eases comparison and substantive interpretation of the results. I then aggregate the indices by averaging across all responses to create an overall index of support for each of the three sources of party funds. Figure 5.5 shows the distributions of citizens' preferences for party funding. Each index is scaled 0-1, where 0 indicates opposition and 1 indicates support.

Figure 5.5: Distributions of Support for State, Big Donor and Grassroots Funding



Note: The dashed line represents the mean. The x-axes are scaled from 0 (opposition) to 1 (support). The data is pooled across countries.

The tail of the density curve demonstrates the direction of the preference. It is skewed towards the right for the big donor funding and the state funding indices, indicating opposition to these sources, and to the left for the grassroots funding index, indicating support for this source. Yet, as we can see from the height of the bars and the shape of the density curve, attitudes towards big donor funding appear much more intensely negative than attitudes towards the other two sources. Most of the observations are clustered towards the left end of the x-axis (opposition), and there is a clear peak at the very low support level of 0.25. Comparatively, the data for the state funding index is much more dispersed as there are four peaks, indicating less intense attitudes towards state funding. The grassroots funding index has a clear peak exactly in the middle of the scale, at 0.5, and the data is closer to a normal distribution than the other two sources. This indicates that attitudes towards grassroots funding are not particularly strong but on average somewhere between neutral and supportive. This all fits in nicely with the descriptive discussion above, based on the raw responses to the survey items (Figures 5.1-5.3).

The conclusion that state funding is more supported than big donor funding is further supported by looking at the means. Figure 5.5. shows that the lowest mean level of support is for big donor funding is 0.28, followed by state funding at 0.41, and then grassroots funding at 0.55. In fact, grassroots funding is the only funding stream where the mean is above the neutral midpoint of 0.5, meaning that it receives support rather than opposition. The mean level of

support for state funding is almost exactly in the middle of the other two sources; it is 13 percentage points more popular than big donor funding, and 14 percentage points less popular than grassroots funding. Furthermore, not only is grassroots funding the most supported, it is almost *twice* as supported as big donor funding. For the party politics literature, which has always assumed that grassroots funding is the public's preference, this is now quantifiable proof of how much more popular it is than the other two sources. To test whether these means are significantly different, I used two-sided t-tests. They reveal that mean support for state funding is significantly higher than mean support for big donor funding, and significantly lower than mean support for grassroots funding. The p-value for each test is < 0.001 , meaning the differences are statistically significant.¹⁹ This supports hypothesis one: Citizens prefer state party funding to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding.

I also explore whether this hypothesis holds between Denmark and the UK. I had no concrete *ex ante* between-country hypotheses as regards my descriptive research questions, so these analyses are more exploratory than hypotheses-testing, meant to provide as much comparative insight as possible. Table 5.2 shows the mean levels of support for each funding source in each country, and the results of t-tests measuring the differences in means. It reveals that the ordering of preferences between each funding source is exactly the same in each country: Grassroots funding is most supported, followed by state funding, and big donor funding is the least supported. This means that hypothesis one holds in both a state- and a donor-reliant system.

However, the table also reveals interesting differences in the two samples' mean levels of support for each funding source, as Brits are significantly more likely than Danes to oppose state funding, oppose big donor funding, and support grassroots funding. Brits oppose big donor funding 8 percentage points more than Danes, and they support grassroots funding 7 percentage points more than Danes. Mean levels of support for state funding between the two countries is much closer together, with only 2 percentage points separating the means, a small but still statistically significant difference. Overall, the between-country analysis shows that attitudes towards party funding are stronger in the UK than they are in Denmark. This suggests that Koss's (2011, p. 172) argument that the British public is more invested in party funding discussions than the publics of Sweden and Germany can be extended to Denmark. The between-country analysis shows that regardless of which party funding system they live in, citizens prefer state funding to big donor funding but not to grassroots funding.

¹⁹ Results robust to coding DKs as neutral: See Table A2.6 in Appendix.

Table 5.2: Differences in Mean Support for Funding Sources (Between Countries)

| Index | Mean, UK | Mean, Denmark | Difference in means |
|--------------------|------------|---------------|---------------------|
| State funding | 0.40 (.27) | 0.42 (.27) | .02** |
| Big donor funding | 0.24 (.19) | 0.32 (.19) | .08*** |
| Grassroots funding | 0.59 (.18) | 0.52 (.19) | .07*** |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Standard deviations in parentheses. DKs coded as missing.

How much weight should policy-makers give these preferences? In his study of *elite* opinions on party funding in Denmark and the UK, Power found that political elites in both countries believe (or purport to believe) that public opinion on about party funding is mistaken (2020, p. 201). If public opinion is mistaken on this topic, it makes it easier for elites to ignore citizens' preferences altogether and act according to their own strategic motives. Certainly, some of the studies cited in Chapter Two indicate that citizens are not knowledgeable about the details of how party funding systems work (vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011). Notwithstanding, it is still possible that citizens are aware of the broad strokes of how their parties are funded – that they are able to get a general sense of which funding source is most dominant in their party system, and how much they support or oppose this mode of funding. As Power puts it: “Whilst the public might have little idea of the nitty-gritty of policy details ... they can make relative judgements on when there is too much or too little of something” (2020, p. 145). If the public's relative judgments align with scholars' relative judgments, it is all the more reason for governments concerned with building legitimate political institutions and policies to be responsive to these preferences.

To probe whether citizens' preferences between the three sources of party funding are paired with accurate or inaccurate relative judgments about how parties *are* funded, I included a knowledge question in the survey, which asked respondents to estimate how much, as a percentage of total income, parties in their country rely on each of the three main funding sources.²⁰ I compare the responses with the empirical reality of how parties in each country are actually funded (based on the analyses of parties' financial accounts discussed in Chapter Four). The results show that citizens are able to determine the broad strokes of how their parties are funded. Danes correctly identify that their parties are mostly funded by state money (perceived to constitute 46% of total party income, compared to the actual proportion of 58%), while Brits

²⁰ See Figures A2.3 and A2.4 in the Appendix for the response distributions.

correctly identify that their parties are mostly funded by big donors (perceived to constitute 49% of party income, compared to the actual proportion of 64%). Each set of respondents identified with surprising accuracy the amount of money parties receive on average from the grassroots (about 20% in both countries). These results lend more credence to the idea of taking citizens' preferences between the three funding sources seriously, because it shows that these opinions are formed with at least some level of basic knowledge on party funding.

Which considerations relate to support for state party funding?

So far, I have found compelling support for this dissertation's first hypothesis that citizens prefer state funding to big donor funding but not to grassroots funding. The second goal of designing and conducting the descriptive survey was to answer the second sub-research question "Which considerations relate to citizens' support for state party funding?" To answer this question, I need to operationalise the core concepts from the cartel and public utility's arguments about state party funding. In this section, I briefly recap the theoretical argument behind each hypothesis, identify the core concepts, and explain how I operationalise them in the survey.

Operationalisation of core concepts

Hypothesis 2.1 is that the consideration that parties are bad (good) representatives is negatively (positively) correlated with support for state party funding. This hypothesis is based on the cartel party theory, in which Katz and Mair (1995) argue that the closer parties become to the state, the less representative parties are of citizens. In short, they argue that financial dependence on the state diminishes the representative links between parties and citizens. The core concept here is *party representation*.

The concept of *party representation* has been operationalised in many different ways in global and national surveys. For instance, the 2016 Australian National Election Study asked citizens: "In general, do you feel that the people in government are too often interested in looking after themselves, or do you feel that they can be trusted to do the right thing nearly all the time?" And "Would you say the government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?" (McAllister, Pietsch, Bean, Gibson, & Makkai, 2017). Both questions could potentially be used to measure party representation. There are two reasons I do not choose either of these options. Firstly, the wording "the government" may compel

people to think of the current governing party, rather than parties in general. This introduces a degree of partisan reasoning that is not central to the public utility or the cartel perspectives, which theorise more about the representativeness (rather than the ideology) of parties as a species. Secondly, a question like the latter would not necessarily align with Katz and Mair's argument. They do not argue that parties have become poorer representatives because they are run by a few big interests, but rather that they have become poorer representatives because they *share a common interest* in ensuring their mutual survival through co-opting the state and its resources. In sum, I needed a measure of party representation that did not make people think of one particular party, and did not ask about "big interests".

I found such an item in Dommett's previously discussed focus group and survey work (2020, 2019) in which she studies people's perceptions of political parties. She asks: "How well do you think parties in the UK represent the people who voted for them?" A strength of this question is that it asks about how well parties represent their voters, rather than how well they represent the country. This is important, because the question of how governing parties manage the tension between representing those who vote for them as well as those who did not vote for them, is one of the most difficult questions facing parties and party scholars today (Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2012). Therefore, a question like "How representative do you think parties are?" could be blurry. I would be unsure whether citizens are thinking of how parties represent their voters, or the whole population of the country. On the other hand, a question like "How well do you think parties represent the country?" may not be valid either – for instance, people may think parties represent the country badly, but represent the party's own voters very well. Therefore, I copy Dommett's survey measure, but I change the wording from "how well" to "how good" because this translates smoother into Danish, making the measures more comparable between the two countries. The final question used to measure considerations about party representation read:

How good do you think parties in [country] are at representing the people who voted for them?

Response options: (1) Very bad, (2) Quite bad, (3) Neither good nor bad, (4) Quite good, (5) Very good, (6) Don't know

Hypothesis 2.2 is that the consideration that parties (never) often collude to hoard state resources is (positively) negatively correlated with support for state party funding. This is based on a central argument of the cartel theory (Katz & Mair, 1995), that parties collude together to hoard state resources. Some party politics scholars have argued that perceived collusion is directly connected to public perceptions of party illegitimacy, claiming that parties are

“kept at a distance by public opinion for their...greedy attitude towards public resources” (Ignazi, 2014, p. 161). If citizens see parties being unable to reach agreement on the political issues that affect their own lives but able to compromise and work together to enrich themselves, they could be more likely to perceive state funding of parties as unfair. The core concept here is *party collusion over state resources*.

I learned from my qualitative pre-test that considerations about *party collusion over state resources* are not immediately available to many respondents when they are asked to think about state party funding. As such, I want to provide sufficient information or an example of the idea of parties colluding to increase their access to state resources to give them some reference point, as the concept may not be an intuitive one for people to grasp. Again, there are no existing survey questions that aim to measure this concept directly. I firstly consider general items about party convergence, a closely related concept that is also part of Katz and Mair’s argument. They argue that in the process of collusion and cartelisation, parties increasingly come to resemble each other in financial as well as policy profiles, making it more difficult for voters to see a substantial difference between parties. This concept of policy convergence is captured in measures such as the CSES’s question asking people to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statement “Who is in power can make a big difference” (The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, 2018). The reason I do not choose such a question is firstly, that it taps into perceptions of party representation, for which I already have a more direct measure. Secondly, I want to get more directly at the concept of parties colluding *over state resources*, specifically. As such, I create a new question that clearly measures considerations about parties increasing their own access to state resources:

How often do you think political parties in [country] introduce legislation to increase their own party’s access to public funds?

Response options: (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often, (5) Very often, (6) Don’t know

Hypothesis 2.3 is that the consideration that parties are (not) essential for democracy is (negatively) positively correlated with support for state party funding. As seen from the public utility view, state funding promotes the image of parties as fulfilling necessary democratic functions, providing a utility to society and to citizens. Van Biezen (2004) argues that parties see themselves as essential to democracy, which they have used as a key justification for increasing their own state funds substantially. The core concept here is *parties as essential to democracy*.

The qualitative pre-test showed that the theme of *parties as essential to democracy* does occur to citizens when they are asked to think about reasons for

supporting state party funding; respondents mentioned that parties need money to communicate with people and to run in election campaigns, amongst other activities.²¹ The choice of this survey measure is quite straightforward, since the CSES has asked about this concept for years with the question: “Some people say that political parties are necessary to make our political system work in [country]. Others think that political parties are not needed in [country]. Using this scale, (where ONE means that political parties are necessary to make our political system work, and FIVE means that political parties are not needed in [country]), where would you place yourself?” (The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, 2018). I adapt the question slightly to match more precisely the wording in van Biezen’s (2004) public utility article (“essential” rather than “necessary”, “democracy” rather than “political system”). I also adapt the response options to make them more consistent with the response options used in the rest of the survey, thus enhancing the overall survey experience for the respondent:

Some people say that political parties are essential for democracy in [country]. Others think that political parties are not needed in [country]. To what extent do you agree with the statement that parties are essential for democracy?

Response options: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree, (6) Don’t know

Hypothesis 2.4 is that the consideration that state funding benefits large, established (small, new) parties is negatively (positively) correlated with support for state party funding. Implicit in both the cartel and the public utility perspectives is the normative stance that it is more desirable for state party funding to be distributed to support small and new parties, rather than to privilege established parties. The core concept here is *type of party benefiting from state funding*. The concept of *type of party benefiting from state funding* has not been operationalised as a survey question before. From the qualitative pre-test, I learned that considerations about the type of party benefiting from state funding are already available to citizens without prompting. Some respondents had expressed opposition to state funding because they saw it as benefiting the same large established parties. Some expressed support because they saw state funding as supporting small and new parties. Others expressed opposition because they saw state funding as being *too* supportive of small and new parties (recalling that the pre-test was conducted in Denmark only, not in the UK). It suggests that citizens do already make connections be-

²¹ A reminder for the reader that all of these qualitative responses are available in Appendix One.

tween the type of party they see as benefiting from state funds, and their support for the policy. Since small parties are not always new, and large parties are not always established, I include two survey questions so that it is clear what each question is measuring, to improve validity:

Do you think that public funding benefits small or large parties?

Response options: (1) Benefits small parties much more than large parties, (2) Benefits small parties slightly more than large parties, (3) Benefits small and large parties equally, (4) Benefits large parties slightly more than small parties, (5) Benefits large parties much more than small parties, (6) Don't know

Do you think that public funding benefits new or established parties?

Response options: (1) Benefits new parties much more than established parties, (2) Benefits new parties slightly more than established parties, (3) Benefits new and established parties equally, (4) Benefits established parties slightly more than new parties, (5) Benefits established parties much more than new parties, (6) Don't know

Hypothesis 2.5 is that the consideration that the state should (not) regulate party finance is (negatively) positively correlated with support for state party funding. The public utility view argues that the state involvement in party financing that comes hand in hand with state provision of public funds is a reason to support state party funding. Van Biezen points out that this enhanced oversight is intended to “guarantee the accountability of parties and the transparency of party financing” (2004, pp. 703-704). The core concept here is *regulation of party finance*.

The concept of *regulation of party finance* has been indirectly operationalised before. The Eurobarometer (2017) asked respondents to what extent they agree that the financing of political parties is transparent and sufficiently supervised (a statement with which only 31% of Danes and 33% of Brits agreed) (cited in Power, 2020, p. 182). The problem with this question for my purposes is that it does not connect transparency and supervision over party finances with state party funding. I know from the qualitative pre-test that regulation of party finances is not a consideration that occurs organically when citizens are asked to think about state party funding. As such, I want to make this link explicit for respondents by providing some very brief background information:

When states provide parties with public money, the condition is that parties must accept a degree of state regulation. This includes, for example, an obligation for parties to make their financial accounts transparent and open to the public. Based on this description, to what extent do you think the state should regulate the finances of political parties?

Response options: (1) Not at all, (2) To a small degree, (3) To some degree, (4) To a high degree, (5) To a very high degree, (6) Don't know.

Hypothesis 2.6 is that opposition to (support for) big donor funding is positively (negatively) correlated with support for state party funding. Of course, as I have demonstrated throughout the dissertation so far, reducing donor influence is one of the most important justifications in favour of state party funding, if not the most important. This is an argument used consistently by party funding scholars, policy-makers and electoral reform groups in donor-reliant party funding systems. It is also one of the arguments in favour of state party funding contained in the public utility perspective (van Biezen, 2004). The core concept here is *support for big donor funding*, and to measure it I simply use the index of support for big donor funding developed earlier in the chapter. Table 5.3 summarises the six hypotheses, the connected core concepts, and the survey measures used to operationalise them.

Table 5-3: Operationalisation of Core Concepts in H2.1-H2.6

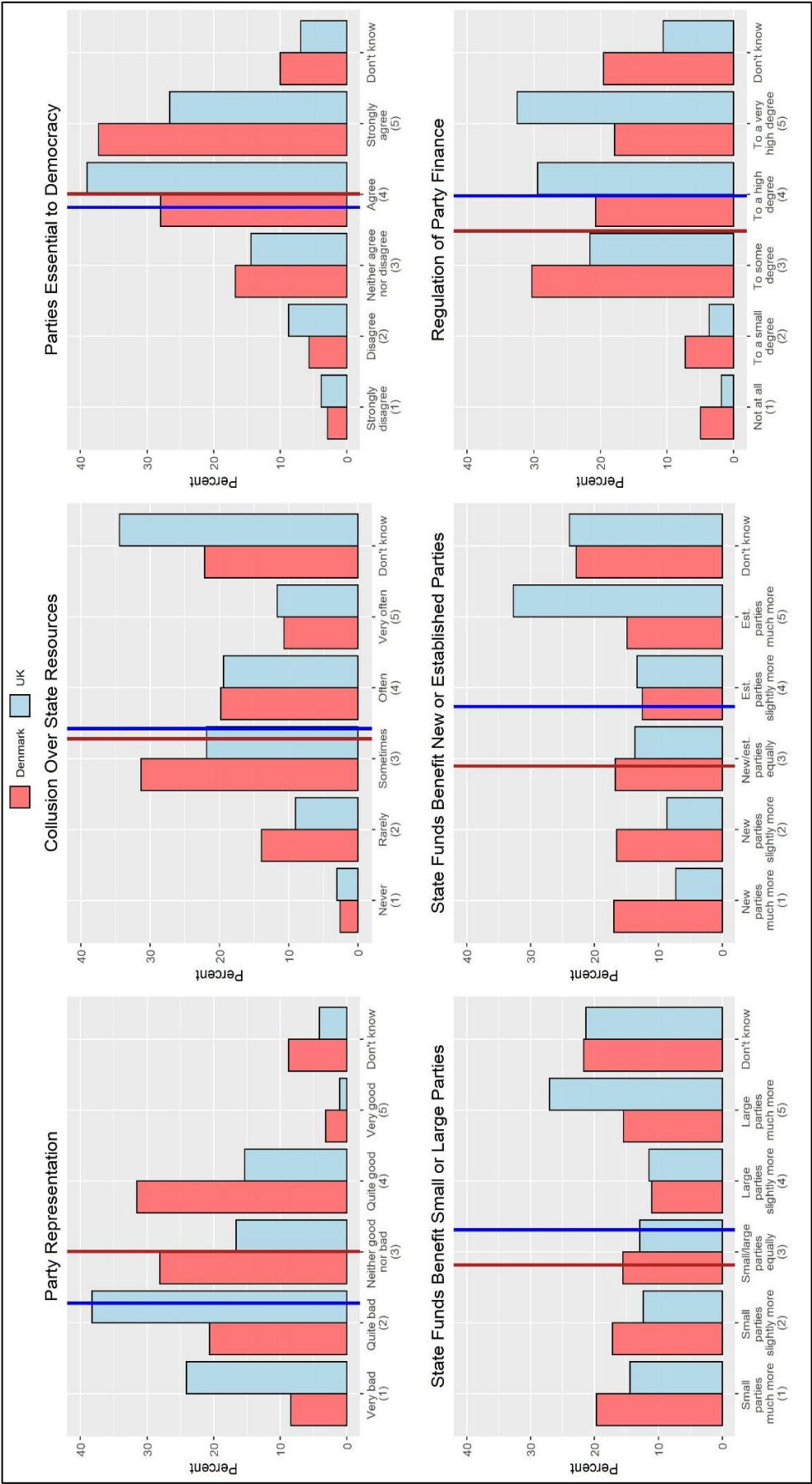
| Hypothesis | Core concept | Survey question |
|---|--|---|
| H2.1: The consideration that parties are bad (good) representatives is negatively (positively) correlated with support for state party funding | Party representation | How good do you think parties in [country] are at representing the people who voted for them? |
| H2.2: The consideration that parties (never) often collude to hoard state resources is (positively) negatively correlated with support for state party funding | Party collusion over state resources | How often do you think political parties in [country] introduce legislation to increase their own party's access to public funds? |
| H2.3: The consideration that parties are (not) essential for democracy is (negatively) positively correlated with support for state party funding | Parties as essential for democracy | Some people say that political parties are essential for democracy in [country]. Others think that political parties are not needed in [country]. To what extent do you agree with the statement that parties are essential for democracy? |
| H2.4: The consideration that state funds benefit large, established (small, new) parties is negatively (positively) correlated with support for state party funding | Type of party benefitting from state funds | <i>Measure one: Small or large parties</i> Do you think that public funding benefits small or large parties? |
| | Type of party benefitting from state funds | <i>Measure two: New or established parties</i> Do you think that public funding benefits new or established parties? |
| H2.5: The consideration that the state should (not) regulate party finance is (negatively) positively correlated with support for state party funding | Regulation of party finance | When states provide parties with public money, the condition is that parties must accept a degree of state regulation. This includes, for example, an obligation for parties to make their financial accounts transparent and open to the public. Based on this description, to what extent do you think the state should regulate the finances of political parties? |
| H2.6: Opposition to (support for) big donors is positively (negatively) correlated with support | Support for big donor funding | Index of support for big donor funding |

Distributions of the variables

Before formally testing the six hypotheses, I present the distributions of these key variables in Figure 5.6 (except the distribution of support for big donor funding, since that was presented earlier in the chapter). I present the responses in each country to get a clear look at the similar and different tendencies. The plot titled “Party Representation” demonstrates that few people – less than 5% of respondents in each country – think that parties are “very good” representatives. In Denmark, the bars show that the responses are distributed more towards the consideration that parties are good representatives, whereas the reverse is true in the UK. In Denmark, the mean response is exactly in the middle at 3, showing that Danes have more neutral attitudes towards party representation than Brits, who are more decidedly negative with a lower mean of 2.3. The mean lines are visibly far apart, indicating a substantial difference in perceptions of the quality of representation between the two countries. This difference is indeed statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Looking at the plot “Collusion Over State Resources”, immediately striking is that a very high proportion of respondents answered “don’t know” to the question how often parties work together to increase their own access to state resources. This supports the qualitative findings suggesting that this is not a prevalent consideration. Among the other response options, the most common response was the neutral option “sometimes”, chosen by 20-30% of respondents in each country. The means of the two countries are 3.3 in Denmark and 3.4 in the UK, showing that responses veered more towards the pessimistic answers that parties “often” or “very often” collude over state resources. Despite the means being close together, the difference between them is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), and this holds whether DKs are coded as missing or as neutral (though significance drops to 0.04). The significant difference suggests that British respondents are more likely to consider that parties collude over state resources than Danish respondents.

Figure 5.6: Distributions of Considerations Hypothesised to Relate to Support for State Party Funding



Notes: The red bars are the Danish responses, and the blue bars are the British responses. The thick red line indicates the mean response in Denmark, and the thick blue line indicates the mean response in the UK. The X-axes show the response options, and the Y-axes show the percentage of respondents who selected each one.

The top right plot in Figure 5.6 shows very clearly that respondents think that parties are essential to democracy. Across countries, 65-67% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. It means that amongst the survey sample, whilst only a minority of people think parties are good representatives, a vast majority think they are essential for democracy. This chimes very well with past survey findings (Dalton & Weldon, 2005; Holmberg, 2003) and speaks to the validity of the measures. As indicated by the bars, which show that the modal answer for Danes was strongly agree, whilst for Brits it was agree, attitudes are stronger in Denmark. The means are not very far apart (4 compared to 3.8 in the UK), however the difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) meaning that Danes are more likely than Brits to think that parties are essential to democracy.

The two plots displaying considerations about the type of parties benefiting from state funding show large between-country differences. By far the most opted for responses in the UK were that large and established parties benefit much more from state funds than small and new parties. The reverse is true in Denmark, where although the modal response to both questions was “don’t know”, the respondents that did choose an answer were more likely to think that small and new parties benefited more from state funds. The means between the two countries are quite far apart in both plots and the differences between them are statistically significant in the case of both questions ($p < 0.001$). As discussed in Chapter Four, in the UK it is very difficult for small and new parties to access state funds whilst in Denmark it is very easy, so these perceptions do reflect the empirical reality. It is possible that respondents’ general knowledge of their country’s party system (a traditionally two party system in the UK versus a multiparty system in Denmark) allows them to make accurate inferences to the type of party that benefits most from state funds.

In the final plot, “Regulation of Party Finance”, we can see that most people think that it is highly desirable for the state to regulate party finance. British respondents seem to have stronger opinions on this than Danes (the difference in means is statistically significant, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that whilst citizens do see parties as necessary, and we know from the findings presented earlier in this chapter that state funding is preferred to big donor funding as a means of keeping them afloat, they nevertheless want these state funds to be highly regulated.

Formally testing hypotheses 2.1-2.6

Already by looking at the distributions of these considerations, we gained some descriptive insights into how citizens think about state party funding.

Now, I move into more formal testing of the six hypotheses about which considerations relate to support for state party funding, using bivariate correlation tests. I correlate each variable measuring a consideration (variable one), with the index of support for state party funding (variable two). In the following presentation of results, I report two values for each correlation test: 1) Spearman's ranked correlation coefficient (ρ),²² to show the strength and direction of the relationship; and 2) the p-value, to show the level of statistical significance of the relationship. I present the results of the analyses with DKs coded as missing, but all results are robust to coding DKs as neutral.²³ I present the results of the correlations across- and between- countries. In line with Cohen (1992), I consider the relationship weak if the correlation coefficient is around 0.1, moderate if it is around 0.3, and strong if it is around 0.5. Since it is not a causal research design, I cannot say whether the considerations are the *reasons* citizens have for forming their support on state party funding, or if they are post-hoc rationalisations. Either way, the results illuminate which considerations may be more or less relevant to citizens when evaluating state party funding.

H2.1 is that the consideration that parties are bad (good) representatives is negatively (positively) correlated with support for state party funding. If the hypothesis is correct, we should see a positive relationship between the variables of party representation and support for state party funding, and this is indeed what I find. Across countries, there is a moderate positive relationship with a coefficient of 0.28, significant at the < 0.001 level. The relationship is weaker in the UK than in Denmark (0.21 compared to 0.37), but still significant at the < 0.001 level. It means that if parties are perceived as doing a poor job of representing citizens, the idea of providing them with state funds is more likely to be opposed. Put another way, the more effectively parties are perceived to represent their voters' interests, the more legitimate their use of public funds appears.

H2.2 is that the consideration that parties (never) often collude to hoard state resources is (positively) negatively correlated with support for state party funding. I expected a negative relationship between the collusion variable and support for state party funding, and I do find there is a moderate to strong negative relationship across countries. The coefficient is -0.40, and it is significant to the < 0.001 level. The relationship is stronger in Denmark than in the

²² I used Spearman's rather than Pearson's correlation method because the variables are ordinal.

²³ In the Appendix, Table A2.8 shows the number of observations for each variables with DKs coded as missing, and Table A2.9 summarises the correlations with DKs coded as neutral.

UK (-0.47 compared to -0.31). H2.2 is therefore supported, as people who perceive parties as frequently colluding to hoard state resources are significantly less likely to support the idea of state party funding for parties. However, the high number of “don’t know” responses to this question indicates that perceptions of collusion are not as prevalent as we might expect based on the cartel party theory (Katz & Mair, 1995, 2018) and scholars who have argued that perceptions of parties being greedy over state resources is a major driver of public disillusion in parties (Ignazi, 2014, 2017). As mentioned, this is further supported by the fact that in the qualitative pre-test, not one person mentioned collusion as a reason to oppose state funding.

H2.3 is that the consideration that parties are (not) essential for democracy is (negatively) positively correlated with support for state party funding. There is a positive correlation between the consideration that parties are essential for democracy, and state party funding. Across countries, the coefficient is 0.17, and it is 0.15 in the UK and 0.18 in Denmark. In all cases, the relationships are significant to the < 0.001 level. It indicates that there is a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between considering parties to be essential for democracy, and supporting state party funding.

H2.4 is that the consideration that state funding benefits large, established (small, new) parties, is negatively (positively) correlated with support for state party funding. There is indeed a negative relationship between the perception of large parties benefiting more from public funds, and support for state funding of parties. Stated conversely, there is a positive relationship between the perception of small parties benefiting more than large parties from public funds, and support for state funding of parties. The coefficient across countries and in the UK is -0.18, and it is -0.17 in Denmark. Consistently, there is a negative relationship between perceptions of established parties benefiting more than new parties, and support for state party funding ($\rho = -0.15$ in the pooled data, -0.14 in the UK and -0.13 in Denmark). These relationships are quite weak, but they are all significant ($p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 2.4 is therefore supported.

H2.5 is that the consideration that the state should (not) regulate party finance is (negatively) positively correlated with support for state party funding. For the hypothesis to gain support, there should be a positive relationship between the variable *regulation of party finance* and support for state party funding. Across countries, the coefficient is 0.00, in the UK, 0.04, and in Denmark, -0.01. It shows there is essentially no relationship between the two variables, and indeed none of the correlations are statistically significant. This is the only hypothesis where the results change based on whether DKs are coded as missing or neutral. When they are coded as neutral, in the pooled data and in the British data the relationship reaches significance ($p < 0.05$),

though the coefficients remain extremely small, less than 0.05. This tells us that if there is a relationship between considerations about regulation of party finance and support for state party funding, it is extremely weak. As demonstrated in Figure 5.6, people tend to be in favour of a high degree of state regulation of party finances. But the correlation tests show that this is preference is not connected to their support for state party funding. H2.5 is therefore not supported.

H2.6 is that opposition to (support for) big donor funding is positively (negatively) correlated with support for state party funding. To test the hypothesis, I correlate the two indices measuring support for state party funding and big donor funding, expecting a negative relationship between the two. There is no significant relationship across the countries, though the sign is negative. Between countries, results differ. In the UK, there is as expected a significant, though quite weak, negative relationship ($\rho = -0.12$, $p < 0.001$). In Denmark, the coefficient is positive ($\rho = 0.05$). The fact that it is so low that it nearly reaches zero suggests that there is no relationship between the two variables. However, the p-value does indicate statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). On the surface, this would suggest that in Denmark, the more opposed one is to big donors contributing to political parties, the more opposed one also is to state funding of parties, indicating general opposition to parties receiving any funding. This would align with the perception in the literature that citizens' opinions on party funding are shaped mainly by scepticism.

However, since we know from past studies (cited in Chapter Four) that Danes have more positive attitudes towards political institutions than Brits, it would seem unusual if this were the case in Denmark and not the UK. Perhaps more importantly, the evidence found in testing hypothesis one showed that Brits are even more sceptical towards both state and big donor funding than Danes, and that Danes do have clear preferences for state funding over big donor funding. One possible reason the anticipated inverse relationship between support for big donor funding and support for state funding was not found in Denmark is that Brits more easily identify state funding as a *solution* to big donor funding, perhaps due to the higher level of visibility of the issue of party funding in the UK. This might be why opposition to big donor funding is related to support for state party funding in the UK, whilst there is no relationship between the two measures in Denmark, although people do support state funding more than big donor funding. Perhaps the connection between increased state funding and decreased big donor funding is not as explicit for Danish respondents as it is in for British respondents.

To investigate this speculation a little further, I analyse the responses to two additional survey measures I had included in the survey which make the idea of an inverse relationship between the two funding sources more explicit. The

questions posed a *trade-off* between state and big donor funding. I asked respondents to what extent they disagreed or agreed with these two statements:²⁴

1. The state should strictly limit the amount of money political parties are allowed to receive from big donors, even if that means providing them with more public funds
2. The state should strictly limit the amount of money political parties are allowed to receive from public funds, even if that means leaving parties open to big donor influence

Respondents in each country were significantly ($p < 0.001$) more likely to agree with the first trade-off statement than with the second statement. The more strongly respondents agree with trade-off statement one, in which state funding is the preferred option, the more likely they are to support state funding. In keeping with this, the more respondents agree with statement two in which big donor funding is the preferred option, the less likely they are to support state funding (these two relationships hold in across- and between- country analysis, and are in all cases significant to the < 0.001 level). This is a more informal way of testing the hypothesis that opposition to big donor funding is positively correlated with support for state party funding, because it shows that there is a connection between preferring state over donor funding, and supporting state funding. Taken together, the results show that H2.6 is supported in the UK. The alternative hypothesis, that there is no relationship between opposition to big donor funding and support for state party funding, cannot be falsified in Denmark. However, responses to the trade-off questions do provide some evidence that such a relationship also exists in Denmark, at least when the connection between an increase in state funds implying a decrease in donor influence is made explicit. Table 5.4 summarises the main correlations and support for the six hypotheses.

²⁴ The statements were inspired by the literature on public opinion on government spending. This literature frequently asks respondents to choose whether they would like to see increased government spending in one policy area, even if it means less spending in another policy area, i.e. it forces a choice between two potentially uncomfortable options. For instance, ‘The government should increase spending on education, even if that implies higher taxes’ (Busemeyer & Garritzmman, 2017, p. 877).

Table 5.4: Summary of Main Correlations (H2.1-H2.6)

| | Variable | Expected direction of relationship | Rho, p-value (across countries) | Rho, p-value (UK) | Rho, p-value (Denmark) | Hypothesis supported? |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| H2.1 | Representation | + | 0.28*** | 0.21*** | 0.37*** | Yes |
| H2.2 | Collusion | - | -0.40*** | -0.31*** | -0.47*** | Yes |
| H2.3 | Essential | + | 0.17*** | 0.15*** | 0.18*** | Yes |
| H2.4 | Small/large | - | -0.18*** | -0.18*** | -0.17*** | Yes |
| H2.4 | New/established | - | -0.15*** | -0.14*** | -0.13*** | Yes |
| H2.5 | Regulation | + | 0.00 | 0.04 | -0.01 | No |
| H2.6 | Support for big donor funding | - | -0.02 | -0.12*** | 0.05* | Partially |

Note: Expected direction of relationship refers to relationship of the specified variable with the measure of support for state party funding.

Exploring covariates

So far, I have tested the six hypotheses derived from the cartel theory (Katz & Mair, 1995) and the public utility view (van Biezen, 2004). However, to take advantage of the opportunity of collecting the first comparative survey data on public opinion on state party funding, I also included several additional measures of political attitudes that I anticipated may be correlated with support for state party funding. These expectations are quite exploratory; given the lack of attention paid to citizens' opinions on state party funding in the past, there is very limited theory to go on in terms of which individual-level variables may relate to support for state party funding. The decision to include these additional variables was to help me to contextualise my main findings, and add more empirical knowledge to the field.

The first loose expectation is that conservative voters should be less likely than liberal voters to support state party funding, since conservative voters are in general less supportive of government spending. This is a well-established ideological division (Jacoby, 1994, 2000; Rudolph & Evans, 2005), and I do not see any theoretical reason why this should be different in the case of government spending on parties. The core concept here is *partisanship*. My next expectation is that people who have generally positive political attitudes are more likely to perceive parties as public utilities worthy of receiving state funds. People who think that parties listen to them and can be trusted to represent their interests seem far more likely to support the idea of parties as actually providing some utility to the public, and as such to support the idea of

these parties receiving money. There is some supportive evidence of this, for example a finding that political trust is positively related to citizens' perceptions of parties as being necessary for democracy (Holmberg, 2003). The core concept is *trust in parties*.

Two other variables which often correlate with political trust are perceived responsiveness (similar but distinct from the concept of external efficacy, see (Esaiasson, Kölln, & Turper, 2015)), and political interest (Uslaner, 2017; van der Meer, 2010). The concept of perceived responsiveness relates to the extent to which specific political actors are “perceived to keep track of changes in public sentiments and (2) are perceived to decide accordingly” (Esaiasson et al., 2015, p. 434). Since I am interested in the specific actor of political parties, I include a measure of *perceived party responsiveness*. Finally, I want to capture the concept of *political interest*. The expectation is that the more interested people are in politics, the more likely they are to be cognisant of the demands placed on parties and the work parties do in society, and thus to see more utility in political parties.

Operationalising the covariates

To operationalise the four concepts *partisanship*, *trust in parties*, *perceived party responsiveness*, and *political interest*, I draw on the many past survey items which have previously measured these concepts or very similar concepts. To measure partisanship, I copy the Danish National Election Study's (Møller Hansen, 2015) question, “If there were an election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?” Respondents could choose from a list of parties in each country, and a DK option was provided as well as “prefer not to say”, “will not vote” and “have never voted”, to allow for a full range of genuine responses. I code the response on a scale of left to right based on CHES data (Jolly et al., 2022), where 0 is left and 10 is right.

For the other measures of *trust in parties*, *perceived party responsiveness*, and *political interest*, I stick as much as possible with the wording of standardised items frequently used in the ESS, the DNES and the CSES (European Social Survey, 2018; Møller Hansen, 2015; The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, 2018). However, trust and perceived responsiveness are usually measured as broader political attitudes, whereas I want to more concretely measure attitudes towards *parties*, rather than other political institutions. As such, I slightly adapt the wording to make the measures more party-specific. For these three questions, I did not include a DK response option. As discussed in Chapter Four, including a DK option allows people who genuinely do not know the answer to be able to make a more accurate choice, improving

measurement validity. However, the risk in the other direction is that including such a filter may “go too far and discourage people who do have information with which to generate a meaningful answer from expressing it” (Krosnick & Presser, 2010, p. 297). I judged that for these questions on general political attitudes it was best not to include a DK option, as most people can probably settle on a meaningful answer about whether they trust parties and see parties as responsive, and whether they are interested in politics. This is because trust in parties, perceived party responsiveness, and political interest measure deeper and more enduring attitudes (Glynn, Herbst, O’Keefe, Shapiro, & Lindeman, 2004) than some of the considerations I measured earlier, for which I did include a DK option. The final questions were:

Trust in parties: How much trust would you say that you have in political parties in [country]? Try to think of parties in general, rather than any particular party.

Response options: (1) Absolutely none, (2) Very little, (3) Neither a little nor a lot, (4) Quite a lot, (5) A great deal

Perceived party responsiveness: How much influence do you think that political parties in [country] enable people like you to have on their policy programs?

Response options: (1) Absolutely none, (2) Very little, (3) Neither a little nor a lot, (4) Quite a lot, (5) A great deal

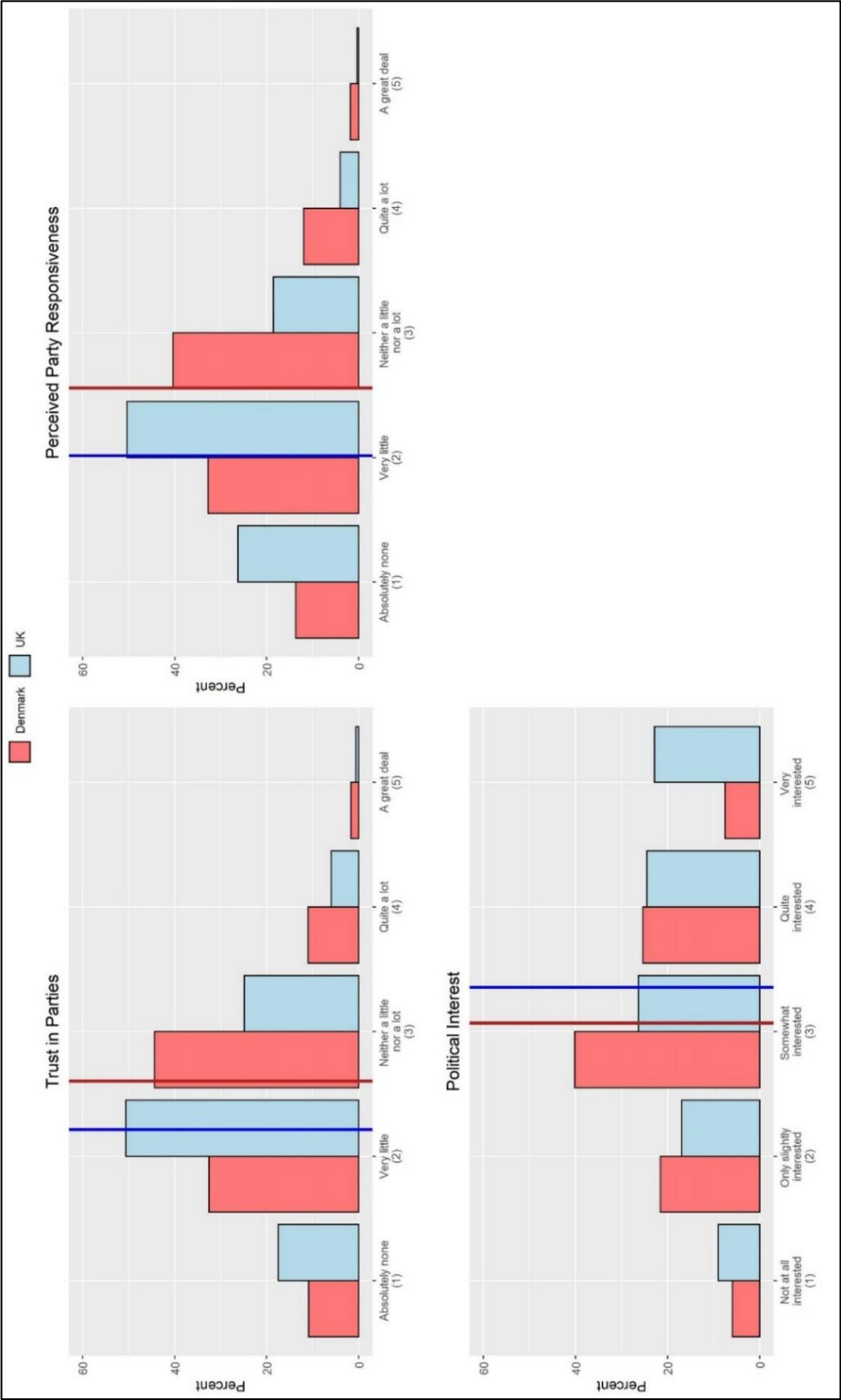
Political interest: How interested are you in politics?

Response options: (1) Not at all interested, (2) Only slightly interested, (3) Somewhat interested, (4) Quite interested, (5) Very interested

Analysing the covariates

Figure 5.7 presents the distributions of the three potential covariates of political interest, perceived party responsiveness, and trust in parties, for both countries. The figures show that attitudes towards parties are not stellar in either country; the mean level of trust in parties and perceived party responsiveness is firmly below the neutral mid-point of 3 in each country, and the bars are very low around the response options of 4 and especially 5, which are the options indicating quite a lot or a great deal of trust and perceived party responsiveness. This indicates that most people do not trust parties and do not think parties allow people like them to influence their policy programs.

Figure 5.7: Distributions of Potential Covariates



Note: The red bars are the Danish responses, and the blue bars are the British responses. The thick red line indicates the mean response in Denmark, and the thick blue line indicates the mean response in the UK. The X-axes show the response options, and the Y-axes show the percentage of respondents who selected each one.

However, attitudes towards parties are substantially *more* positive in Denmark than in the UK, as we can see from the distance between the mean lines. Despite their more negative attitudes towards parties, Brits self-report higher levels of political interest (3.4) than Danes (3). T-tests show that these differences between trust in parties in each country, perceived party responsiveness in each country, and political interest in each country are all statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

I now test for the expected positive relationships between the variables of trust in parties, perceived party responsiveness, and political interest, and support for state party funding. The coefficients of the relationship between trust and support are 0.31 in the pooled data, 0.25 in the UK, and 0.36 in Denmark. Between perceived party responsiveness and support, the coefficients are 0.27 in the pooled data, 0.18 in the UK, and 0.36 in Denmark. Finally, between political interest and support, the coefficients are 0.18 in the pooled data, 0.23 in the UK and 0.13 in Denmark. These are all weak to moderate relationships, and in all cases the relationships are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This shows that as expected, the more positive people's attitudes towards parties, and the more politically interested they are, the more likely they are to support state party funding.

Next, I explore the relationship between partisanship and support for state party funding. Table 5.5 shows levels of support broken down by partisanship. An interesting observation already from these summary statistics is that in both countries, supporters of far-right parties (the Brexit Party in the UK, and the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) and the New Right (Nye Borgerlige, NB) in Denmark) show the lowest levels of support for state party funding out of all partisans. This aligns with recent reiterations of the cartel theory, in which Katz and Mair (2018) argue that the wave of success of far-right parties across Europe is partly due to their public opposition to mainstream parties' excessive use of public resources. The lower support for state funding demonstrated by far-right partisans could indicate the success of this strategy. I probed this a little more by examining whether far-right supporters were more likely to see parties as colluding over state resources, as measured by the variable of collusion discussed earlier. Indeed, the highest mean levels of collusion perceptions are found in the same far-right voter sub-groups; Brexit Party voters in the UK, and DF and NB voters in Denmark. These findings validate Katz and Mair's (2018) argument. The fact that supporters of far-right parties are less supportive than other voters of state party funding is somewhat ironic, since far-right parties across Europe are much more dependent upon the state for their resources than any other party family (Bichay, 2020; Poguntke et al., 2016, p. 664).

Table 5.5: Mean Levels of Support for State Party Funding by Partisanship

| Vote intention | CHES left-right classification | Mean support for state party funding |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>UK</i> | | |
| Liberal Democrats | 4.2 | 0.48 (0.26) |
| Labour | 1.9 | 0.46 (0.27) |
| Greens | 2.0 | 0.45 (0.30) |
| Scottish National Party | 3.5 | 0.40 (0.29) |
| Conservatives | 7.1 | 0.37 (0.25) |
| Plaid Cymru | 3.1 | 0.33 (0.26) |
| Brexit Party | 8.2 | 0.26 (0.25) |
| <i>Denmark</i> | | |
| The Alternative | 2.5 | 0.70 (0.26) |
| Social Liberals | 5.1 | 0.56 (0.23) |
| Red-Green Alliance | 1.0 | 0.55 (0.28) |
| Socialist People's Party | 2.6 | 0.52 (0.31) |
| Social Democrats | 4.0 | 0.44 (0.26) |
| Liberals | 6.6 | 0.44 (0.27) |
| Conservative People's Party | 7.1 | 0.39 (0.27) |
| Liberal Alliance | 8.0 | 0.39 (0.27) |
| New Right | 9.0 | 0.30 (0.27) |
| Danish People's Party | 6.9 | 0.28 (0.24) |

Notes: Table ordered by final column in each country, showing highest to lowest support. The column “Left-right” is based on the 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) variable “position of the party in terms of its overall ideological stance”, where 0 is left and 10 is right. The parties of the The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) in the UK, and the Christian Democrats, Hard Line, and the Vegan Party in Denmark, were also provided as response options, but data for these parties were not included the CHES. Standard deviations in parentheses.

To formally test the expectation that left-leaning voters are more likely to support state party funding, I create a continuous measure of partisanship in each country. In the UK, the variable runs from 1.9 (Labour) to 8.2 (Brexit Party), and in Denmark it runs from 1 (Read-Green Alliance) to 9 (the New Right). I then conduct a correlation analysis in which I expect a negative relationship between the measure of partisanship and support for state party funding. In

both countries, there is indeed a negative relationship between the two variables. In Denmark, the coefficient is -0.25 and in the UK it is -0.18. These relationships are weak to moderate, and significant ($p < 0.001$). These findings show that left-leaning voters are more likely to support state party funding, and right-leaning voters are more likely to oppose it. It means that the general phenomenon of conservative voters being more opposed to government spending than liberal voters also applies to government spending on political parties.

Finally, I explore one more avenue of inquiry related to partisanship, which is how much people support different categories of big donors, and whether this differs based on partisanship. The question relates to the debate about state party funding, because whether or not trade unions should be subject to the same restrictions as other big donors is hotly debated in both Denmark and the UK, whenever party funding reform arises as an issue (Power, 2020). The issue is that on the one hand, trade unions do function as other big donors since they often exercise influence and have “blackmail potential” (Nassmacher, 2009, pp. 248-249), and yet on the other they represent workers’, rather than business elites’, interests. I want to probe whether citizens think that trade unions should be subject to the same restrictions as other donors, or whether they treat all big donors synonymously, and whether this differs by partisanship. To do so, I included a question in the survey, which asked respondents to what extent they agreed that donations should be banned from a) corporations, b) very wealthy individuals, c) interest groups, and d) trade unions. I then test for significance between the mean levels of support for banning each type of donor between and within countries. The results are useful for informing us on the types of restrictions citizens might like, or not like, to see on different types of big donors, and thus for helping to design regulations that may come in tandem with expansion of state funding in donor-reliant systems.

Table 5.6: Support for Banning Different Categories of Big Donors (Within Countries)

| Support for banning ... | Support for banning ... | Difference in means |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>UK</i> | | |
| Corporations: 0.63 | Wealthy individuals: 0.53 | 0.10*** |
| Wealthy individuals: 0.53 | Interest groups: 0.58 | 0.05*** |
| Interest groups: 0.58 | Trade unions: 0.55 | 0.03** |
| Corporations: 0.63 | Trade unions: 0.55 | 0.08*** |
| Trade unions: 0.55 | Wealthy individuals: 0.53 | 0.02 |
| <i>Denmark</i> | | |
| Corporations: 0.53 | Wealthy individuals: 0.50 | 0.03*** |
| Wealthy individuals: 0.50 | Interest groups: 0.54 | 0.04*** |
| Interest groups: 0.54 | Trade unions: 0.59 | 0.05*** |
| Corporations: 0.53 | Trade unions: 0.59 | 0.06*** |
| Trade unions: 0.59 | Wealthy individuals: 0.50 | 0.09*** |

Notes: Figures are the mean levels of support for banning each category of donor, scaled 0-1, where 0 indicates opposition to banning the donor, and 1 indicates support for banning the donor. DKs coded as missing.

Table 5.7: Support for Banning Different Categories of Big Donors (Between Countries)

| Support for banning | UK | Denmark | Difference in means |
|---------------------|------|---------|---------------------|
| Corporations | 0.63 | 0.53 | 0.10*** |
| Wealthy individuals | 0.53 | 0.50 | 0.03*** |
| Interest groups | 0.58 | 0.54 | 0.04*** |
| Trade unions | 0.55 | 0.59 | 0.04*** |

Notes: Figures are the mean levels of support for banning each category of donor, scaled 0-1, where 0 indicates opposition to banning the donor, and 1 indicates support for banning the donor. DKs coded as missing.

There are some interesting findings from this analysis. As Tables 5.6 and 5.7 display, both within- and between- countries, respondents on average supported banning donations from all four categories (since all means are 0.50 or higher). However, Table 5.6 shows that in each country, respondents were significantly *less* likely to support banning donations from individuals than from the other three categories. Table 5.7 shows the differences between the countries. In the UK, the public are most strongly opposed to corporate donors, as

support for banning this category of donor reaches the highest mean support of all categories at 0.63. However, in Denmark, trade unions receive the highest mean level of opposition, at 0.59. We already know from past research (Bowler & Donovan, 2016; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011) that attitudes towards trade unions versus corporate donors are likely to run along partisan lines. Citizens in the UK/US can determine that trade unions benefit Labour/Democrats whilst business donors benefit Conservatives/Republicans. To test whether these findings replicate on my British data, and whether or not the findings travel to Denmark, I looked at how much voters of the two major parties in each country support banning donations to political parties from the four categories.

Table 5.8 shows that voters of the major conservative parties (the Conservatives in the UK and the Liberals in Denmark) are significantly more likely to support banning trade unions donations than voters of the major social democratic parties (Labour in the UK and Social Democrats in Denmark). Conversely, Labour and Social Democrat voters are significantly more likely to support banning donations from corporations and wealthy individuals than Conservative and Liberal voters are. This replicates and extends the findings from previous studies that voters of major centre-left parties do correctly perceive that trade union donations benefit their party, whilst voters of major centre-right parties also correctly perceive that their party benefits from ties with corporations and wealthy individuals. However, it is also interesting to note that Social Democrat voters on average do support banning all type of donations, including trade union donations, whilst in the UK trade union donations are the only category of donors Labour voters do *not* want to see restrictions on. Perhaps this indicates that the ties between Labour and trade unions are more pronounced or salient in the UK, than the ties between Social Democrats and trade unions are in Denmark.

Table 5.8: Support for Banning Different Categories of Big Donors (By Partisanship)

| UK | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| Support for banning ... | Conservatives (n= 487) | Labour (n = 604) | Difference |
| Corporations | 0.57 | 0.66 | 0.09*** |
| Wealthy individuals | 0.43 | 0.60 | 0.17*** |
| Interest groups | 0.57 | 0.56 | 0.01 |
| Trade unions | 0.63 | 0.44 | 0.19*** |
| Denmark | | | |
| Support for banning... | Liberals (n= 217) | Social Democrats (n = 459) | Difference |
| Corporations | 0.43 | 0.55 | 0.12*** |
| Wealthy individuals | 0.42 | 0.53 | 0.11*** |
| Interest groups | 0.47 | 0.55 | 0.08** |
| Trade unions | 0.60 | 0.53 | 0.07** |

Note: Figures are the mean levels of support for banning each category of donor, scaled 0-1, where 0 indicates opposition to banning the donor, and 1 indicates support for banning the donor. DKs coded as missing.

There are two main implications from the findings about attitudes towards different categories of big donors. One is that in debates about party funding reform, it does matter which type of donor is perceived as being restricted. In each country, on average, attitudes are in the direction of support for banning donations from trade unions, corporations, interest groups, and wealthy individuals. Respondents are particularly in favour of banning corporations in the UK and trade unions in Denmark (even though Social Democrat voters make up a large portion of my Danish survey sample). Other than this, the attitudes are, for the most part, not particularly strong, since they hover around the neutral midpoint of 0.5 however the question itself is quite strongly worded; perhaps asking about “restricting” rather than “banning” would have yielded stronger responses. The second implication is that in both countries, there is significantly less support for placing restrictions on individual donors than for placing restrictions on organisations. It could mean that reforms aiming at reducing the influence of individual donors might be less popular than reforms targeting larger organisations like corporations, trade unions, and interest groups. This is potentially useful information for the design of reforms accompanying state funding.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I explained how I designed valid and reliable measures of support for the three major funding sources and of considerations related to state party funding. All of these measures are designed to be comprehensible and meaningful to citizens in both donor-reliant and state-reliant party funding systems. In posing these questions to 4,075 citizens across the UK and Denmark, I collected observational data to analyse the dissertation's two descriptive hypotheses. I found that regardless of which type of party funding system citizens live in, they prefer state funding to big donor funding (but not to grassroots funding). This supports my first hypothesis, and shows that citizens' preferences align with normative preferences in the literature.

In testing H2.1-H2.6, I found that people who see parties as poor representatives, as often colluding to hoard state resources, and state funding as privileging large and established parties, are less likely to support state party funding. On the other hand, those who perceive parties as good representatives, as essential to democracy, and state funding as supporting small and new parties, are more likely to support state funding. Those who oppose big donor funding are significantly more likely to support state party funding, at least in the UK, and there was tentative support for this hypothesis in Denmark. These findings show that when reasoning around their support for state party funding, citizens and scholars find the same types of factors relevant and important to consider. Furthermore, those who trust parties, see parties as responsive, are politically interested, and are left leaning, are also more likely to support the policy. In the next chapter, I turn to the part of my research that focuses on making causal inferences about how information affects support for state party funding. In Chapter Seven, I engage in a concluding discussion about what the descriptive findings presented in this chapter, together with the experimental findings presented in the following chapter, can teach us about public opinion on state party funding.

Chapter Six: Effects of Information about State Party Funding

Chapter Five showed that citizens oppose both major sources of party funds (big donor and state funding), echoing previous findings that citizens are sceptical towards the issue of party funding (e.g. Nwokora, 2015; vanHeerde-Hudson & Fisher, 2011). However, regardless of which type of party funding system they live in, they have a very clear preference for state funding as the lesser of these two evils. Furthermore, their attitudes towards state funding are clearly not *only* shaped by scepticism; rather, they relate quite consistently with their wider considerations about party representation, competition and regulation. The findings show that citizens' opinions on state party funding are meaningful at least in the sense that they align well with the literature. This further motivates the idea that there is space to incorporate citizens more in debates about party funding. If citizens *were* more involved in or exposed to these conversations, how would they respond to different narratives and stories about state party funding?

The findings from Chapter Five provide some encouragement for the expectation that both worthiness and fallibility frames may be effective in increasing support for the policy. There is a positive relationship between citizens' perceptions of parties as essential, and support for state party funding. This suggests that making considerations of parties' worthiness more salient could possibly improve support for the policy. In the UK, there was a clear inverse relationship between opposition to big donor funding and support for state party funding, and there were some indications of the same relationship in Denmark, implying that making considerations of parties' fallibility more salient could improve support for the policy. The descriptive findings are also encouraging for the policy facts experiment. Citizens clearly prefer parties to be oriented towards the grassroots for their financing, and the vast majority would like to see a very high degree of state regulation of party finance. However, the desire for regulation of party finances was not connected to support for state funding, which could indicate that citizens do not join these two particular dots. Making the argument that state funding comes with increased regulation more explicitly, as I aim to do in the policy facts experiment, could therefore be well received by respondents.

So far, these are just speculations. To make causal inferences, I exposed citizens to these different types of arguments about state party funding and test how this exposure affects their support for the policy. In doing so, I answer the

third and fourth sub-research questions of this dissertation: “How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?” And, “How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?” As discussed in Chapter Four, I answer these questions through the use of two survey experiments contained in one short survey.²⁵ All respondents (n in Denmark = 1,103, n in the UK = 1,108, overall n = 2,211) participated in both experiments, and received them in a randomised order. I will now present the designs, the treatment texts, and the empirical findings of each experiment, in order. I start with experiment one, in which I find that both worthiness and fallibility frames are effective in increasing support for state party funding, supporting my hypothesis. I then turn to experiment two, where I find that my hypothesis that providing citizens with policy facts about party-citizen linking conditions being attached to state funds was not supported, likely due to ineffectual treatments. Finally, I analyse moderator effects in the framing experiment, and find that both frames (especially the fallibility frame) are particularly effective in increasing support for state party funding amongst people with high anti-establishment attitudes and low trust in parties.

Experiment One: Framing the issue of state party funding

In Chapter Three, I theorised that framing the issue of state party funding by making the themes of party worthiness and fallibility salient will increase support for state party funding. As discussed in that chapter, a major insight from the public opinion field is that emphasising one aspect of an issue over others can have significant effects on overall support for a policy. The choice of the frames of “worthiness” and “fallibility” is based on Scarrow’s terminology, when she says that there are two main justifications for state party funding; “one of which emphasises the worthiness of political parties, the other of which emphasises their fallibility” (2006, p. 621). She argues that state funding emphasises the *worthiness* of parties because it sends a message that parties exist to provide a service to citizens; that they are essential democratic actors. It also emphasises the *fallibility* of parties because by providing parties with public funds, we recognise that they are vulnerable to the temptation of succumbing to the allure of big donors, potentially making politics less representative of average citizens. Both arguments are of course also central to van Biezen’s (2004) public utility view. Based on these theoretical arguments, in Chapter Three I developed the hypothesis that both worthiness and fallibility

²⁵ The full survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix Three.

frames increase support for state party funding (H3.1). Since we know that citizens are sceptical towards party funding as an issue area, I further hypothesised that the fallibility frame will be more effective than the worthiness frame (H3.2), since it taps into pre-existing negative considerations about parties and party funding which are likely more prevalent than the positive considerations provoked by the worthiness frame.

Experiment design

To test these expectations, I design a survey experiment containing three experimental groups. In this experiment, the independent variable I am interested in manipulating is the frame (the pro- state party funding argument used), and the dependent variable is support for state party funding. The counterfactual is that no frame is used. I want to test whether framing the issue of state party funding as one of party worthiness or fallibility increases support relative to when the issue is presented neutrally, without making one consideration or another more salient. The control group therefore receive no frame. All groups (the control and the two treatment groups) read a short neutral text:

Now, we would like to ask for your general thoughts on whether or not providing political parties with state funding is a good idea. Some people strongly oppose the policy of providing parties with state funding, while others strongly support this policy.

The control group then proceed straight to the measurement of the dependent variable. The two treatment groups, however, are first exposed to texts arguing in favour of state funding of parties. In designing these texts, I draw from statements made by a British MP arguing in favour of state party funding in parliamentary proceedings. This enhances the external validity of my treatments, as the wordings are based on statements from actual politicians, and as such, it is more likely that citizens may encounter similarly worded arguments in a real world debate about state party funding (what Mutz (2011, p. 141) terms “mundane realism”, as mentioned in Chapter Four). In particular, I borrow from statements in the Neill Report (1998), which highlight the two themes of worthiness and fallibility as arguments in favour of increasing state funding. Martin Linton MP argued:

Without reform, we might see the development of either ‘a slum democracy’, in which the parties would be poorly staffed and unable to prepare themselves adequately for the task of running the country, or ‘a sleaze democracy’, in which the parties were “forced into an unhealthy reliance on funding from private individuals (Neill Report, 1998, p. 91).

I utilise these wordings and the ideas of “sleaze” and “slum” democracies in the treatment texts, because they are engaging ways of operationalising the main theoretical ideas of worthiness and fallibility. Hopefully, they help to keep the respondents’ attention on the text and encourage absorption of the treatments. I also try to keep the treatment texts very close to the theoretical arguments about these two ideas (discussed in Chapter Three) to enhance their validity. I also construct the two treatment texts in very similar ways to each other. The first paragraph of each text begins with a statement about political parties. The second statement begins with the phrase “the principal argument in favour of providing parties with state funding ...”, and the final paragraph states “without sufficient state funding, we risk the development of a slum/sleaze democracy ...”. By keeping the texts similar, I can be confident I am not varying anything other than the substantive arguments.

The *worthiness* treatment group received this text:

Political parties are essential to democracy. They contribute substantially to the making of public policy. They offer voters alternative policies and candidates to choose from at elections. Above all, political parties are the main means through which ordinary citizens can, and do, become involved in the democratic process. In short, political parties perform functions that are crucial to a strong democracy.

The principal argument in favour of providing parties with state funding is that it enables them to perform these essential functions more fully and effectively. Modern parties face, on the one hand, falling incomes from traditional sources like membership fees, and on the other, rising costs of campaigning and policy research. In order for them to be able to meet these challenges, clearly they must be properly funded.

Without sufficient state funding, we risk the development of ‘a slum democracy’, in which parties are poorly staffed and unable to prepare themselves adequately for the task of running the country. By providing parties with state funding, we recognise that no modern democracy can exist without them.

The *fallibility* treatment group received this text:

Political parties are over-reliant on big donors. While parties usually maintain that they do not give any special favours to their donors, the connection between donations and political influence is obvious. Whether these donors are corporations or wealthy individuals, there is a clear risk that they could use their financial might to sway parties’ decision-making. In short, parties could listen more to the rich and powerful than to ordinary citizens.

The principal argument in favour of providing parties with state funding is that it would ‘purify’ the political process by removing big money from politics. With state funding, parties become no longer reliant upon large donors and, being no longer reliant upon them, become immune from any temptation to grant them

privileged access to top politicians or unwarranted influence over policy, contracts or honours.

Without sufficient state funding, we risk the development of ‘a sleaze democracy’, in which the parties have an unhealthy reliance on funding from the top 1%. By providing parties with state funding, we recognise that protecting the integrity of the democratic process is worth a few pounds/kroner.

This final line, that “protecting the integrity of the democratic process is worth a few (dollars)”, is taken from an interview with former New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger in which he argued in favour of state party funding (Taranaki Daily News, 2019), which expands the treatment’s mundane realism outside the British context. After reading these texts, respondents in the treatment groups were directed towards measurement of the dependent variable. For the dependent variable, I use the same measure of support for state party funding as in the descriptive survey, since it proved to be a highly reliable measure. However, I introduce it in a slightly different fashion to make it more natural in this survey. In the descriptive survey, the questions about support for state party funding were placed at the very start, and were thus introduced as “In many countries, including the UK/Denmark, the state provides public money directly to political parties. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:”. In this experiment however, the respondents have of course just read a text about state party funding, so it would not make sense to introduce it in the same way. Rather, I introduce it as: “Based on this information, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements”, and as a reminder the statements were:

1. It is wrong for the state to fund political parties
2. It makes sense to fund political parties with public money
3. Funding parties with public money is wasteful
4. Supporting the work of political parties is a good use of taxpayer money

After this question, respondents answered a manipulation check question, so that I am able to analyse whether the manipulation of the independent variable was successful. Since in each text I am manipulating the argument in favour of state party funding, I want to measure whether respondents in each treatment group understood that an argument *in favour* of state party funding was being made, relative to the control group which received unframed (neutral) information:

Was the position taken in the text you read that the state should or should not fund political parties?

Response options: (1) Definitely should not, (2) Should not, (3) Unclear, (4) Should, (5) Definitely should, (6) Don't know.

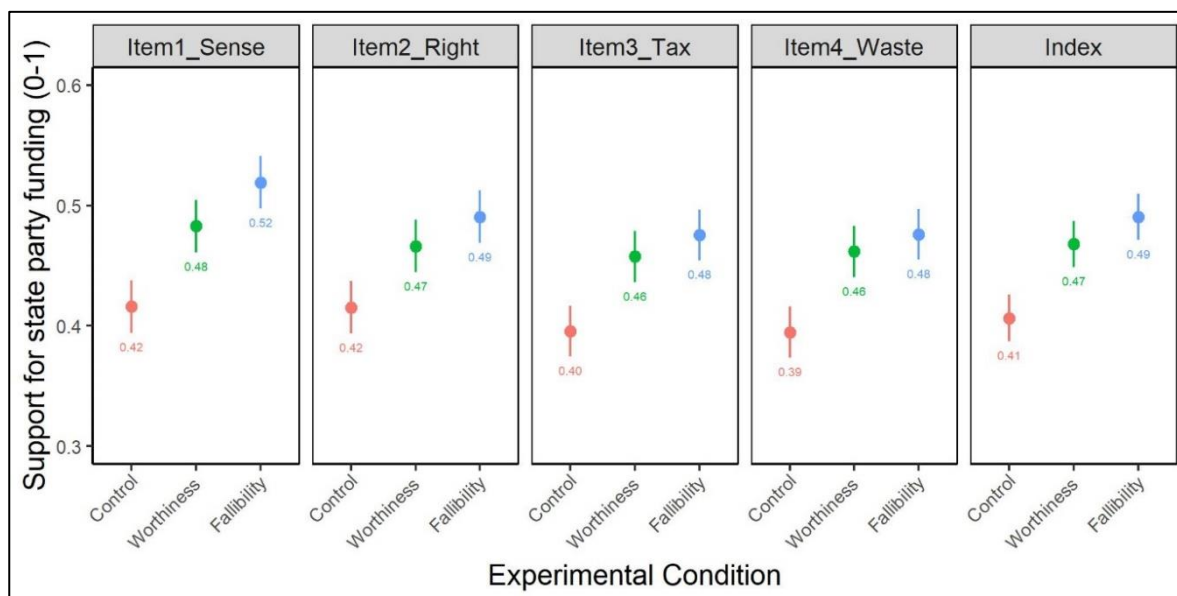
Findings

I begin by looking at the responses to the manipulation check question to see whether the treatments worked as intended. The results are encouraging. Only 26% of the control group answered that the text they read argued that the state should or definitely should fund parties, compared to 61% in the fallibility group and 60% in the worthiness group. These differences are statistically significant. The manipulation check thus clearly shows that the treated respondents received the two manipulations as intended. Therefore, I proceed to the analysis of results.

The first hypothesis is that both worthiness and fallibility frames increase support for state party funding (H3.1). I begin by testing the hypothesis on the data pooled across countries, and then I move onto a between-country analysis. Figure 6.1 shows the effects of the treatments upon mean support for state party funding. The mean level of support as measured by the index (far-right panel) is 0.41 in the control group, 0.47 in the worthiness group, and 0.49 in the fallibility group. This is a difference of 0.06 between the control and the worthiness group, and 0.08 between the control and the fallibility group. The figure also suggests that these differences are statistically significant, since the error bars from the treatment groups do not overlap with those of the control group. This is confirmed by t-tests which show that the differences in mean support between the control group and the two treatment groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

The size of these effects can be more intuitively understood by calculating their percentage increase. Again focusing on the effects on the overall index of support for state party funding, we observe that the worthiness frame increases support by 15% compared to the control group (from a mean of 0.41 to 0.47), and the fallibility frame by 20% (from a mean of 0.41 to 0.49). As the figure shows, across all four items of the index, exposure to the treatment vignettes shifted opinion in the direction of support for state party funding. The fact that the effects hold across all index items means that they were not driven by random statistical noise or by the wording of one or another item. There is therefore strong support for H3.1: that both worthiness and fallibility frames increase support for state party funding.

Figure 6.1: Effects of Frames on Mean Support for State Funding (Across Countries)



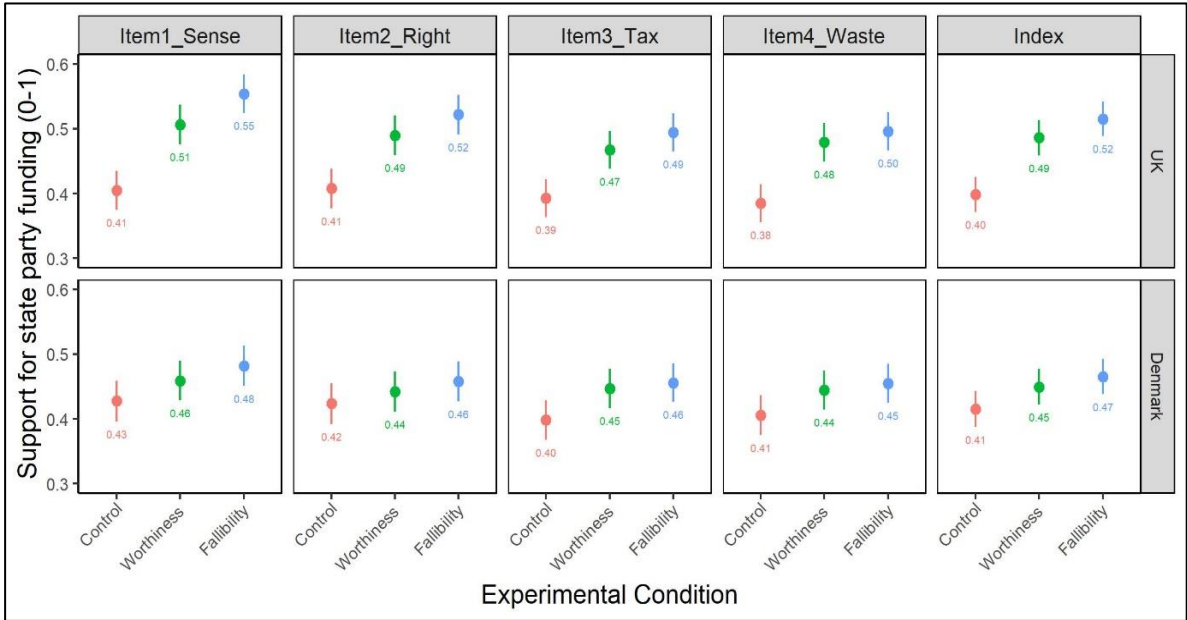
Note: Number of observations in the control group is 692, in the worthiness group it is 702, and in the fallibility group it is 706. Each item (and the final index) of support for state party funding is scaled 0-1, where 0 is oppose and 1 is support. Data is pooled across countries. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

The second hypothesis is that the fallibility frame is *more* effective than the worthiness frame. Figure 6.1 shows that across all four items and the final index, those in the fallibility group reported a higher mean level of support than those in the worthiness group. However, the confidence intervals between the two treatment groups overlap to a large extent, in all of the panels. Indeed, a t-test confirms that the difference in means between the worthiness and fallibility groups is not statistically significant. This means that although the fallibility frame does have larger effect sizes, H3.2 is not supported.

I then explore whether these effects hold at the country-level. This is interesting because, if there is one frame that is clearly stronger in both a donor-reliant and a state-reliant system, the implication is that all advocates of state funding should use that frame in their communication. However, if one frame is stronger in Denmark and the other in the UK, then the implication is that communication on this issue should be tailored to fit the context. To explore whether there are differences between countries, I took the same steps as above using the individual country datasets. Figure 6.2 shows that in the UK, the mean level of support (as measured by the index) is 0.40 in the control group, 0.49 in the worthiness group, and 0.52 in the fallibility group. In Denmark, the mean is 0.42 in the control group, 0.45 in the worthiness group, and 0.47 in the fallibility group. Incidentally, the means in the control groups in each country are exactly the same as the mean levels of support for state party

funding that I found in my descriptive survey; this is reassuring and speaks to the robustness of those findings.

Figure 6.2: Effects of Frames on Mean Support for State Funding (Between Countries)



Note: Number of observations in the control groups are 357 in the UK and 335 in Denmark, in the worthiness groups they are 353 in the UK and 349 in Denmark, and in the fallibility group they are 358 in the UK and 348 in Denmark. Each item (and the final index) of support for state party funding is scaled 0-1, where 0 is oppose and 1 is support. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

There are key similarities between the two countries. In both countries, the two frames shift support for state funding in a positive direction, and, the fallibility frame has larger effects in each country. However, just like in the pooled data, the differences between the two treatment groups are not statistically significant in either country. It means that the findings are robust to country effects: both frames work, and the fallibility frame has larger effect sizes than the worthiness frame, but, the differences between the two are not significant. However, there are also interesting differences between the countries. Figure 6.2 shows that support for state funding is higher in the British fallibility group than in the Danish fallibility group. In the UK, the fallibility frame increases the index of support by 0.12. Substantively, this increase from 0.40 in the control group to 0.52 in the fallibility group means that informing British respondents that state funding is necessary to reduce donor influence shifts support upwards by 30%. In Denmark, the fallibility framing increases support by 0.05, from a mean of 0.42 in the control group to 0.47 in the fallibility treatment group, corresponding to an increase of 11.9%. The effects of the fallibility treatment upon support for state funding are significant at the <

0.001 level in the UK, and in Denmark they are also significant, but less so, with a p-value of 0.012. This indicates that the fallibility frame is even more effective in the UK than it is in Denmark.

When it comes to the worthiness frame, the mean is lower in the Danish worthiness treatment group than in the British worthiness group. The difference between the worthiness group and the control group does not reach significance in Denmark ($p = 0.085$), but this difference is significant in the UK. An increase of 0.40 in the control group to 0.49 in the worthiness group in the UK corresponds to a 22.5% increase in support for state party funding, whilst an increase from 0.42 to 0.45 in the same groups in Denmark translates to a substantive 7.1% increase in support for the policy. As such, although the worthiness frame moves opinion in the same direction in Denmark, its effects are much larger in the UK. Both frames therefore have larger effects on support in the UK than they do in Denmark.

In summary, the results of the experiment support H3.1. Both the fallibility and worthiness frames do significantly increase support for state party funding. The effects are particularly pronounced in the British case. The effects of the fallibility frame are consistently larger than the worthiness frame, but the differences between the two frames are not significant, so H3.2 is not supported.²⁶ I provide substantive interpretations of what we can learn from these results and why they matter in the following concluding discussion in the following chapter. First, I turn to the second survey experiment about how policy facts may increase support for state party funding.

Experiment Two: Providing policy facts about state party funding

In Chapter Three, I pointed to evidence from the public opinion literature which shows that providing people with policy specific facts can influence their levels of support for the policy (e.g. Gilens, 2001). To see whether this is also the case for the issue of state party funding, I theorised about which policy facts relating to state party funding would be likely to increase citizens' support for this policy. Then, based on survey and focus group work showing the types of changes people would like to see from political parties (Dommett, 2020; Dommett & Temple, 2019), I developed the hypothesis that providing people with policy facts about attaching party-citizen linking conditions to state party funds would increase their support for the policy (H4).

²⁶ These findings are all robust to coding DKs as neutral: See Figures A3.1 and A3.2 in the Appendix. They are also robust to experiment order fixed effects: See Table A3.1 in the Appendix.

I focused on three types of conditions (already implemented as policies around the world), which aim to incentivise the types of changes citizens would like to see from parties. As a brief re-cap of the theoretical arguments, I argued firstly, that making state funds conditional on parties expanding and empowering their membership base should increase support for the policy, since citizens want to see parties listen more to their members. Secondly, making state funds conditional on parties diversifying (both their candidates and the citizens they reach out to), should increase support for the policy, since people want to see parties including a wider range of opinions and preferences. Finally, making state funds conditional on parties collecting the funds directly from citizens in the form of vouchers should increase support for the policy, since citizens want parties to be accessible to the many and not just the few. Based on these theoretical arguments, I hypothesised that informing citizens about all three of these conditions should be effective in increasing support for state party funding.

Experiment design

To test the hypothesis, I conduct a second survey experiment with four experimental conditions. Three of these are treatment groups, and one is a control group. The three treatment groups received information about state funding conditions intended to make parties more dependent on their members (Members Treatment), to make parties more diverse (Diversity Treatment), and to make parties collect state funds directly from citizens (Vouchers Treatment). In this experiment, I want to examine whether the policy-specific information about how each of these conditions link parties and citizens together is effective relative to more general information that some conditions would be attached to state funds, but with no policy facts about how these conditions would work (the counterfactual scenario). Therefore, the control group received vague information that conditions would be attached to state funds, but no explanation of what these conditions are or how they would work in practice.

In designing the treatments, the aim is to provide enough facts about how these conditions work for the respondent to gain a clear understanding of the policy facts, but not too much information that might overload the respondent and stop them from reading and absorbing the treatment. Before measurement of the dependent variable, the respondents in the control group read the following text, which contains no detailed information about what the conditions are or how they would work:

In recent years, it has become clear that parties are seen as out of touch with people's day-to-day lives. They are often criticized for not doing enough to get

citizens involved in politics. The question is: how can we get parties to re-connect with citizens?

One policy proposal currently being debated relates to the public funding of parties. The proposal is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they would have to live up to certain conditions designed to make parties more accessible to regular people, and more inclusive of a wide range of people.

Some people say that attaching such conditions to public funds would be a bad idea, because parties should not be told how to behave. But, others support the idea. They say that it would force parties to engage with more citizens, making them better able to represent public concerns and preferences.

The respondents in each treatment group read the exact same text as above, but with one extra paragraph (inserted between the second and third paragraphs above):

Members treatment group: One idea on the table for achieving this is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they must have a large and strong membership base of interested citizens. Specifically, the state would require that parties have a certain number of ordinary citizens registered as fee-paying members, who have regular opportunities to make their voices heard by discussing and voting on important party decisions.

Diversity treatment group: One idea on the table for achieving this is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they must engage with a mix of people from all walks of life. Specifically, the state would require that parties have a certain percentage of MPs from politically under-represented backgrounds, and that the party uses a certain amount of the money they receive on outreach programs, such as workshops and forums with people from disadvantaged communities.

Vouchers treatment group: One idea on the table for achieving this is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they must collect the funds directly from individual citizens. Specifically, the state would give each voter a special £10/100 kroner voucher that can only be used as a donation to any of the political parties. Each party would then try to convince voters to spend their vouchers on them rather than on their competitors, or not at all.

After reading these texts, all respondents were directed to the measurement of the dependent variable. To enhance the natural flow and overall survey experience, the questions measuring support for state party funding were introduced after the treatment vignettes as: “If such a condition for parties to receive state funding became reality, then to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...”, before the four items about support for state party funding:

1. It is wrong for the state to fund political parties
2. It makes sense to fund political parties with public money
3. Funding parties with public money is wasteful
4. Supporting the work of political parties is a good use of taxpayer money

I also included a manipulation check question after the measurement of the dependent variable in this experiment. What I am manipulating is the policy-specific information of how attaching conditions to state funds would make parties more connected to ordinary citizens. To measure whether the treatment worked as intended, respondents in all groups received the manipulation check question:

Was the position taken in the text that attaching specific conditions to state funds would make parties more or less connected to ordinary citizens?

Response options: (1) Much less connected, (2) Less connected, (3) Unclear, (4) More connected, (5) Much more connected, (6) Don't know

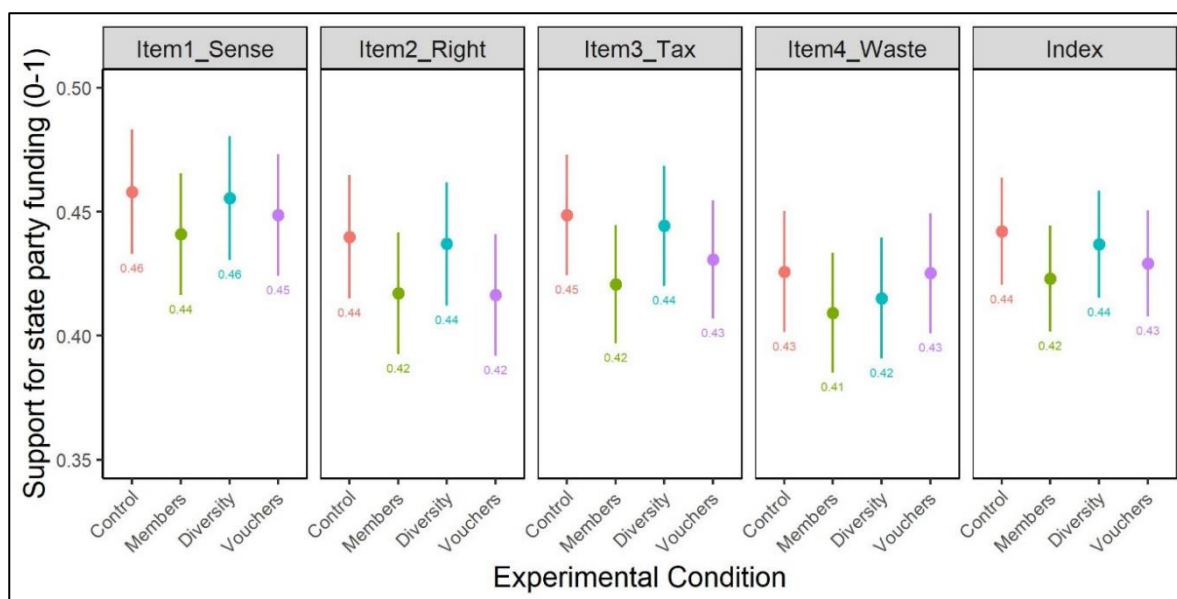
Findings

Again, I begin by looking at the responses to the manipulation check to see whether the treatments were effective. 47% of respondents in the control group answered that based on the text they read, attaching specific conditions to state funds would make parties more or much more connected to ordinary citizens. In the three treatment groups, this figure was 50-51%. There is no significant difference in responses to the manipulation check question from the control group and from any of the treatment groups. It shows that the treatment vignettes were probably not strong enough compared to the control vignette. After conducting the survey, I reflected that perhaps I could have chosen a better wording of the manipulation check. What I am actually manipulating in the experiment is *details of the policy facts* about how the party-citizen linking condition could work – not whether the condition was supposed to make parties more or less connected to ordinary citizens. So the manipulation check shows the treatment was not successful, but then again the manipulation check question may not be the best indication in this case. With this caveat in mind, I turn to the results.

Beginning with the pooled analysis, Figure 6.3 shows that the means are 0.44 in the control group, 0.42 in the members treatment group, 0.44 in the diversity treatment group, and 0.43 in the vouchers treatment group. These means range from 0.42 to 0.44 so the maximum difference is 0.02, much smaller than the differences between treatment groups in the first experiment.

Since across all four index items, all of the confidence intervals from the treatment groups overlap with those from the control group, it shows that there are no statistically significant effects of the policy facts conditions. Furthermore, there are no significant differences between any of the treatment groups, indicating that it is not the case that any one condition is significantly more or less popular than another. Contrary to my expectations, it seems that providing policy-specific information about attaching party-citizen linking conditions to state funds is not effective in improving support for the policy. In comparison to the control group, the three treatment groups in which participants received detailed information about the type of condition did not display significantly more support for state funding than the control group. In fact, all of the point estimates are *lower* (though again, not significantly lower, than the control), and as such are in the opposite direction to what I had expected. This means that my hypothesis (H4) is not supported.

Figure 6.3: Effects of Policy Facts on Mean Support for State Party Funding (Across Countries)



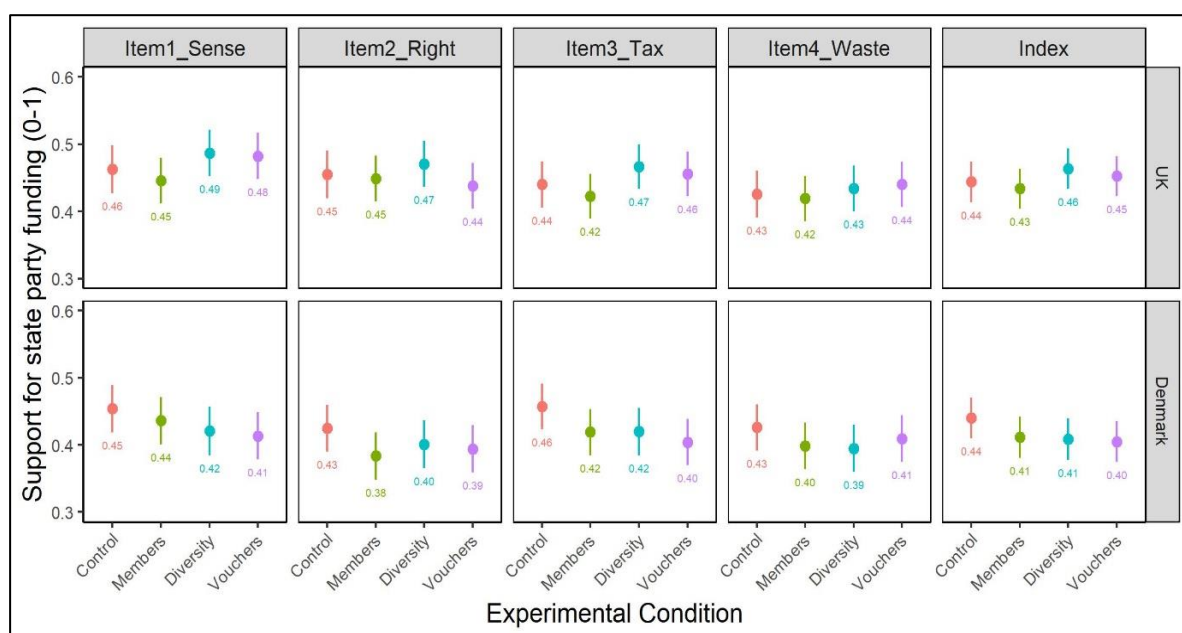
Note: Number of observations in the control group is 518, in the members group it is 530, in the diversity group 518, and in the vouchers group 531. Each item (and the final index) of support for state party funding is scaled 0-1, where 0 is oppose and 1 is support. Data is pooled across countries. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

To probe further whether the respondents in the control group in this experiment were in a way also “treated”, as suspected from the results of the manipulation check, I compared the difference in means between the two control groups from each experiment. This way, I could see whether receiving the information that there would be party-citizen linking conditions attached to

state funds but with no details of these conditions (the control group from experiment 2) was effective in increasing support compared to receiving the neutral information that some people support whilst some oppose state party funding (the control group from experiment 1). Given the randomised order of the two experiments, I included only those who received the control texts first ($n = 597$), to make sure I was not measuring spill-over effects from one experiment to another. However, I did not find a statistically significant difference between these groups.

In this experiment, I had not hypothesised any differences in effects between the two countries. Nonetheless, I still explored how the effects looked in each country to see if that could shed any light on the null results. Figure 6.4 plots the average mean support for state funding by treatment group in each country. It shows that the means are all quite close together within each country, and the confidence intervals all overlap. T-tests confirm that there are no significant effects of the treatments on any items nor the index in any experimental condition in either country. This between-country analysis still upholds the null findings for H4.

Figure 6.4: Effects of Policy Facts on Mean Support for State Party Funding (Between Countries)



Note: Number of observations in the control groups are 271 in the UK and 279 in Denmark, in the members groups they are 279 in the UK and 274 in Denmark, in the diversity group they are 279 in the UK and 275 in Denmark, and in the vouchers group they are 279 in the UK and 275 in Denmark. Each item (and the final index) of support for state party funding is scaled 0-1, where 0 is oppose and 1 is support. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

It is interesting to note that all of the means in the treatment groups are *lower* than the control in Denmark. It could suggest that the negative estimates in

the pooled dataset are driven by the Danish results, and that in the Danish context, telling people the specific details of how attaching party-citizen linking conditions would work might actually be *less* effective than telling them more generally that such conditions would be attached. I tried to further disentangle whether these effects were present by running a t-test between the Danish control group and a group with all three Danish treatment groups combined, to see whether it was simply the fact of receiving any detail at all about conditions being attached (regardless of what it was) that decreased support. The difference between treated and untreated groups approached but did not reach .05, the conventional threshold of statistical significance (the p value was = 0.07). Also interesting to note is that in the UK, across nearly all items of the index, the diversity conditions have the highest means, perhaps suggesting that the diversity condition is the most popular out of all the conditions, in the British context. But again, the difference between the treatment groups and control group are not statistically significant, so this is speculation.

On reflection, a major limitation in the design of this experiment was that I did not include a group which receives no information at all about the party-citizen linking conditions. The control group still received general information that conditions would be attached to state funds to encourage parties to be more accessible and inclusive, so in this sense, they were still “treated”. Based on the results, I can say confidently that detailed, policy-specific facts about the conditions are not effective compared to general information that unspecified conditions will be attached to state funds. However, it could still very well be the case that both general and policy-specific information about attaching conditions to state funds is effective in increasing support for state party funding, compared to receiving no information at all about party-citizen linking conditions. A cleaner design would have a control group that received no information. In this experiment, however, the hypothesis that policy facts about party-citizen linking conditions increase support for state party funding was not supported.

Moderating variables

In addition to the main experimental findings, I want to see whether the treatment effects depended on any individual-level attitudes. I have some expectations as to how respondents’ broader political attitudes may moderate how they interpret information about state party funding. As in the descriptive study, these are only loose expectations and so the analysis is more exploratory. I consider several variables that may moderate (strengthen or weaken) how respondents are affected by the treatment texts. These variables are: trust in parties, political interest, anti-establishment attitudes, party attachment,

partisanship, and economic left-right placement. In this section, I explain why I selected these variables and how I operationalised them in the survey, before presenting the results of moderator analysis. Given that only the framing experiment was successful, I only discuss the moderator variables in relation to this experiment.

Selection and operationalization

Since in the descriptive study I found that people with more positive attitudes towards parties are more likely to see them as essential for democracy, I thought that such people would be more affected by the worthiness frame, which provokes considerations about parties' democratic utility. Therefore, I measured the concept of *trust in parties* again using the same question as in the descriptive survey. I did not include a measure of perceived party responsiveness this time, purely because it was important to keep the survey short (to not overburden respondents, as discussed in Chapter Four). I replaced it with a new measure of *party attachment* based on a study (Holmberg, 2003) which found that those with strong party attachments are significantly more likely to see parties as necessary for democracy. I expected that party attachment would also strengthen the effects of the worthiness frame. The measure of party attachment is based on the standard ESS item (European Social Survey, 2018) (see Table 6.1, which summarises all survey questions used to measure the moderator variables). Next, from the public opinion literature, we know that people who are politically interested typically are more likely to have the cognitive capacities to "receive" new information (Zaller, 1992). Accordingly, I expected that political interest should strengthen (increase) the effects of the frames. Again, I used the same measure of political interest as in the descriptive survey.

In this experimental survey, I also wanted to operationalise the concept of *anti-establishment attitudes*. The reason is that the types of considerations that the fallibility frame provokes are that parties are inherently corrupt, untrustworthy and represent their own elite interests instead of "the people's" interests. The vast literature on populism clearly shows that support for anti-establishment parties derives in some part from distrust of party elites and a perception that mainstream parties are corrupt (Bakker, Jolly, & Polk, 2020; Hameleers & de Vreese, 2020; Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018). As such, I expect the fallibility frame is more likely to be effective on individuals with strong anti-establishment attitudes. I measure this concept using an index developed by experts in the populism literature (Hameleers & de Vreese, 2020).

Finally, I expected that people who are more politically conservative are more likely to support ties between the business community and parties. This may mean that the fallibility frame is less likely to be effective on conservative voters, since the idea of big donors being connected to politics is possibly less off-putting to them than to more left-leaning voters. I explore this idea by using two measures. Firstly, there is an in-built measure of the concept of *partisanship* in the party attachment question referred to above, since the question asks people *which* party they feel close to (see Table 6.1). I again coded these parties using the CHES measure of party ideology. In the upcoming analysis, I do not present the moderating effects of partisanship using this variable since in the end, about half of the samples in each country responded “no” to the question of whether they felt attached to a party. This meant the remaining sample, which selected a party they felt close to, was not sufficiently powered. Luckily, I also included one more question, with which I aimed to measure the concept of *economic left-right placement*. The reason is that the partisanship measure cannot capture the ideological reasons why a person votes for a party. It is possible for instance that someone votes for a right-leaning party because they support their stance on immigration, rather than because they support ties between the business community and politics. So I included a more direct measure of respondents’ *economic* left-right placement, which is an index developed by a welfare attitudes expert (Svallfors, 2012), and used in the ESS in 2008. Table 6.1 shows the exact wording of all the measures of moderating variables.

Table 6.1: Operationalisation of Potential Moderator Variables

| Concept | Survey measure | Response options |
|---|---|--|
| Trust in parties | How much trust would you say that you have in political parties in [Denmark/the UK]? Try to think of parties in general, rather than any particular party. | 1. Absolutely none, 2. Very little, 3. Neither a little nor a lot, 4. Quite a lot, 5. A great deal |
| Political interest | How interested are you in politics? | 1. Not at all interested, 2. Only slightly interested, 3. Somewhat interested, 4. Quite interested, 5. Very interested |
| Anti-establishment attitudes (Index of four statements) | To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? People have different opinions about political parties, and there are no right or wrong answers: 1. The people instead of political parties should make our most important policy decisions 2. Political parties are corrupt 3. Political parties make decisions that harm the interests of the ordinary people 4. The ordinary people should have more influence in political decision making than corporations that only want to make profits. | 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neither agree nor disagree, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree, Don't know |
| Party attachment | Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the others? (If yes): Which party do you feel closer to? | 1. Yes, 2. No, Prefer not to answer, Don't know. List of parties in the UK/Denmark |
| Economic left right position | Many social benefits and services are paid for by taxes. If the government <i>had</i> to choose between increasing taxes and spending more on social benefits and services, <i>or</i> decreasing taxes and spending less on social benefits and services, which should they do? | 1. Decrease taxes a lot and spend much less on social benefits and services, 2. Decrease taxes a bit and spend a bit less on social benefits and services, 3. Increase taxes a bit and spend a bit more on social benefits and services, 4. Increase taxes a lot and spend much more on social benefits and services. Don't know |

Findings

To analyse the effects of these variables, I ran linear regression models in which I interacted the moderator variable with the fallibility and worthiness treatment groups. Table 6.2 displays these results. I begin by investigating the relationship between each of my moderating variables and my main outcome of interest (support for state party funding). These associations can be seen in the row titled “moderator” in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2: Moderating Effects

| | Dependent variable: | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | Index of Support for State Funding | | | | |
| | (1) Anti-Est | (2) Trust | (3) Interest | (4) Attachment | (5) Econ-LR |
| Fallibility | -0.007 (0.040) | 0.142*** (0.029) | 0.104*** (0.030) | -0.060 (0.081) | 0.061* (0.032) |
| Worthiness | 0.023 (0.040) | 0.054* (0.029) | 0.034 (0.031) | 0.074 (0.081) | 0.019 (0.031) |
| Moderator | -0.242*** (0.047) | 0.314*** (0.044) | 0.136*** (0.035) | 0.042* (0.022) | 0.212*** (0.037) |
| Fallibility*Moderator | 0.159** (0.065) | -0.148** (0.063) | -0.035 (0.048) | -0.007 (0.031) | 0.040 (0.051) |
| Worthiness*Moderator | 0.060 (0.065) | -0.002 (0.063) | 0.052 (0.049) | 0.016 (0.031) | 0.082 (0.051) |
| Observations | 1,983 | 2,100 | 2,100 | 1,902 | 1,876 |
| R ² | 0.040 | 0.069 | 0.043 | 0.029 | 0.094 |

Note: OLS regression results. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Standard deviations are in parentheses. DKs are coded as missing.

Starting with anti-establishment attitudes (column 1), we observe a statistically significant negative relationship. This means that when respondents are not exposed to a frame (the control group), those with higher anti-establishment attitudes are significantly less likely to support state party funding. Moving onto trust and political interests (columns 2 and 3) in the same row, there are significant positive relationships between trusting parties and being politically interested, and supporting state party funding. This speaks to the robustness of the same findings in Chapter Five.

Looking at the new variable of party attachment (a binary measure of responses to the question “Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the others?, where 0 = no and 1 = yes), we can see (in column 4) that there is a weak but significant relationship between feeling attached to a party and supporting state party funding, as expected. Finally, I turn to economic left-right placement (column 5). This is a different measure of left-right placement than I used in the first survey, where I looked specifically at partisanship, and found that people who intend to vote for a more left-wing party are more likely to support state funding. The regression table shows a positive relationship between being economically left-leaning²⁷ and supporting state party funding, in the control group. This finding shows that even with these two different ways of measuring left-right placement (partisanship, and economic left-right placement), there exists a positive relationship between being left-leaning and supporting state party funding.

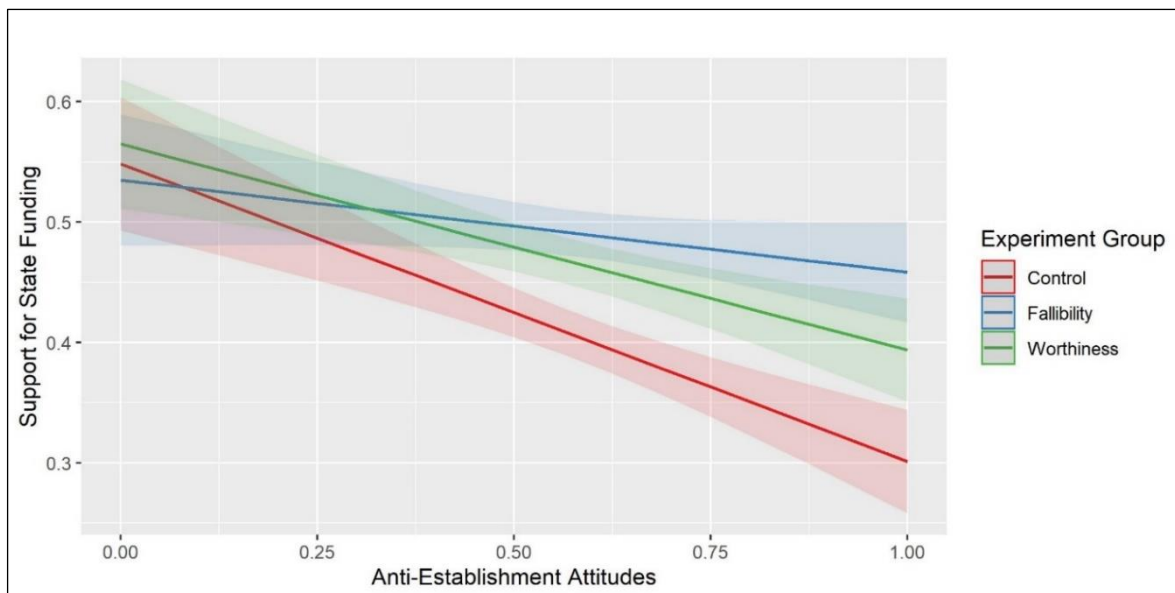
Next, I examine how each of these variables moderates the effects of my two treatments (these are the effects shown in the two rows titled “fallibility*moderator” and “worthiness*moderator”). Here, we firstly observe that the fallibility frame has a stronger effect on support for state party funding among individuals with higher anti-establishment attitudes. This means that the argument that state funding is necessary to reduce donor influence (fallibility frame) increases support for state funding amongst people who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that people instead of parties should make decisions, that parties are corrupt, that parties make decisions that hurt ordinary people, and that ordinary people should have more influence in decision-making than profit-oriented corporations (i.e. those with high anti-establishment attitudes), more than it increases support amongst people who *disagreed* with these statements (i.e. those with low anti-establishment attitudes).

Figure 6.5 visualises these effects. It shows that amongst people with low anti-establishment attitudes, support for state party funding is roughly the same (between 0.5 and 0.6 on the 0-1 scale of support), no matter which treatment group they are in. But, when anti-establishment attitudes start to become stronger (between 0.25 and 0.5 on the x-axis), the frames start to take effect. Among people with higher anti-establishment attitudes, both frames are effective in increasing support for state party funding relative to the control group. We also observe that the slope of the fallibility frame (the blue line) is particularly flat. In this group, even amongst people with very high anti-establishment attitudes (between 0.75 and 1 on the x-axis), those who were in the fallibility treatment group support state party funding at a mean of about 0.45, compared to a mean of 0.54 for those in the same treatment group with

²⁷ The variable “Econ-LR” is coded so that 0 is right and 1 is left.

low anti-establishment attitudes. Whereas, in the control group, support is about 0.55 for those with low anti-establishment attitudes but only 0.3 for those with high anti-establishment attitudes. This shows the power of the fallibility frame, as it actually almost levels out the independent effects of anti-establishment attitudes on support for state party funding.

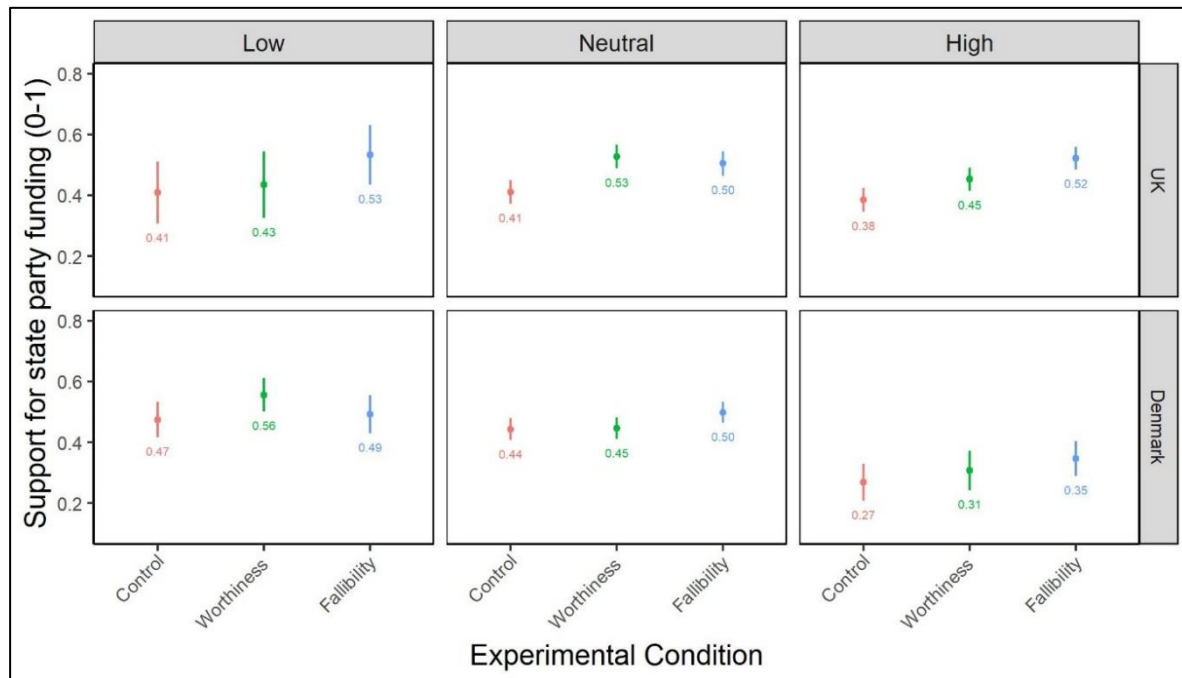
Figure 6.5: Moderating Effects of Anti-Establishment Attitudes



Notes: The anti-establishment attitudes variable is an index scaled 0-1, where 0 is low and 1 is high. Support for state party funding is scale 0-1, where 0 is oppose and 1 is support. 95% confidence intervals displayed. Data is pooled across countries.

To understand these effects more, I create a categorical variable distinguishing between those with high anti-establishment attitudes (people who scored > 0.66 on the anti-establishment index), neutral (people who scored between 0.34 and 0.65 on the index) and low anti-establishment attitudes (people who scored < 0.33 on the anti-establishment index). I explore the effects between countries. Figure 6.6 shows the average effects of each frame amongst respondents in all three groups. The first thing to note is that the distribution of respondents among each group is substantially different between countries: in the UK, there are only 72 people categorised as having low anti-establishment attitudes while 533 are categorised as high, compared with 227 low and 207 high in Denmark. Clearly, anti-establishment attitudes are much stronger in the UK than in Denmark, as we would expect based on past studies (cited in Chapter Four).

Figure 6.6: Effects of Frames on Support for State Funding, Within Anti-Establishment Sub-Groups



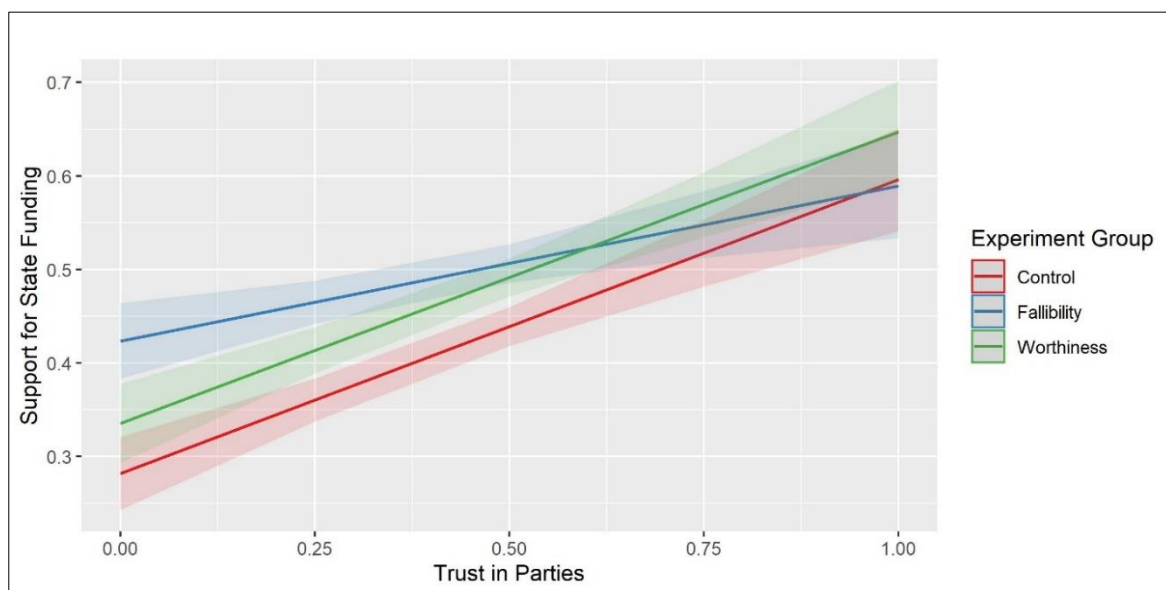
Notes: The number of observations within the low anti-establishment attitudes group is 72 in the UK and 227 in Denmark. Within the neutral groups, there are 503 respondents in the UK and 669 in Denmark. In the high anti-establishment attitude groups, there are 553 respondents in the UK and 207 in Denmark. Point estimates are the mean level of support for state party funding, coded 0-1 with 1 being support. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

We can see that in both countries, amongst respondents with low anti-establishment attitudes (i.e. those who do *not* see parties as corrupt), the error bars in all three groups overlap, indicating that the frames have no effect amongst this sub-group. T-tests confirm there are no significant differences between the control and treatment groups in the low anti-establishment sub-groups. The figure also shows that any moderating effects seem to be driven mostly by the UK. Within the “neutral” and “high” anti-establishment sub-groups, the means between the control and treatment groups are further apart in the UK than in Denmark, and the confidence intervals are smaller. T-tests confirm that the frames only have a significant effect amongst these sub-groups in the UK, and not at all in Denmark. In the UK, both frames are effective amongst those with neutral and high anti-establishment attitudes. Amongst those with neutral anti-establishment attitudes, the worthiness frame increases support from 0.41 to 0.53, a substantial increase of 30%, and the fallibility from 0.41 to 0.50, a 22% increase. Amongst those with high anti-establishment attitudes, support climbs from 0.38 in the control group to 0.45 in the worthiness group (an 18% increase), and to 0.52 in the fallibility group (a huge 37% increase).

It is interesting to note that (again only in the UK) the worthiness frame still increases support amongst respondents with high anti-establishment attitudes, since presumably positive considerations about parties' essential role in democracy are less salient to this sub-group compared to more negative considerations. The fallibility frame is indeed *more* effective than the worthiness frame amongst those with high anti-establishment attitudes (the difference between the two treatment groups is statistically significant in this sub-group only, $p < 0.05$). Nonetheless, it suggests that even amongst the most sceptical voters, reminding or provoking people to think about the useful functions parties fulfil in democracies is effective in increasing their support for state party funding.

The regression table (Table 6.2) also showed that the fallibility frame is *less* effective amongst those with high trust in parties. These effects are visualised in Figure 6.7. The figure shows that amongst those with high trust, the level of support for state party funding is roughly the same (between 0.6 and 0.65) no matter whether we look at the control or treatment groups. However, the frames start to become effective as trust decreases (effects begin around 0.50 on the x-axis), and towards the very low levels of trust (between 0 and 0.25 on the x-axis), it looks as though only the fallibility frame is effective. The fallibility frame ceases to be effective once people have more moderate levels of trust. We also observe that the levels of support for state funding within each group are still quite far apart depending on if there is high or low trust. For instance, in the fallibility group, support for state funding is only about 0.4 for those with very low trust, but is 0.6 for those with very high trust. The slope is much steeper for the worthiness group, however; support is 0.34 for people with low trust exposed to the worthiness frame, and 0.65 for people exposed to the same frame with high trust. The fallibility frame is therefore more able to stifle the negative effects of low trust on support for state funding, but it still does not wipe out the independent effects of trust.

Figure 6.7: Moderating Effects of Trust in Parties

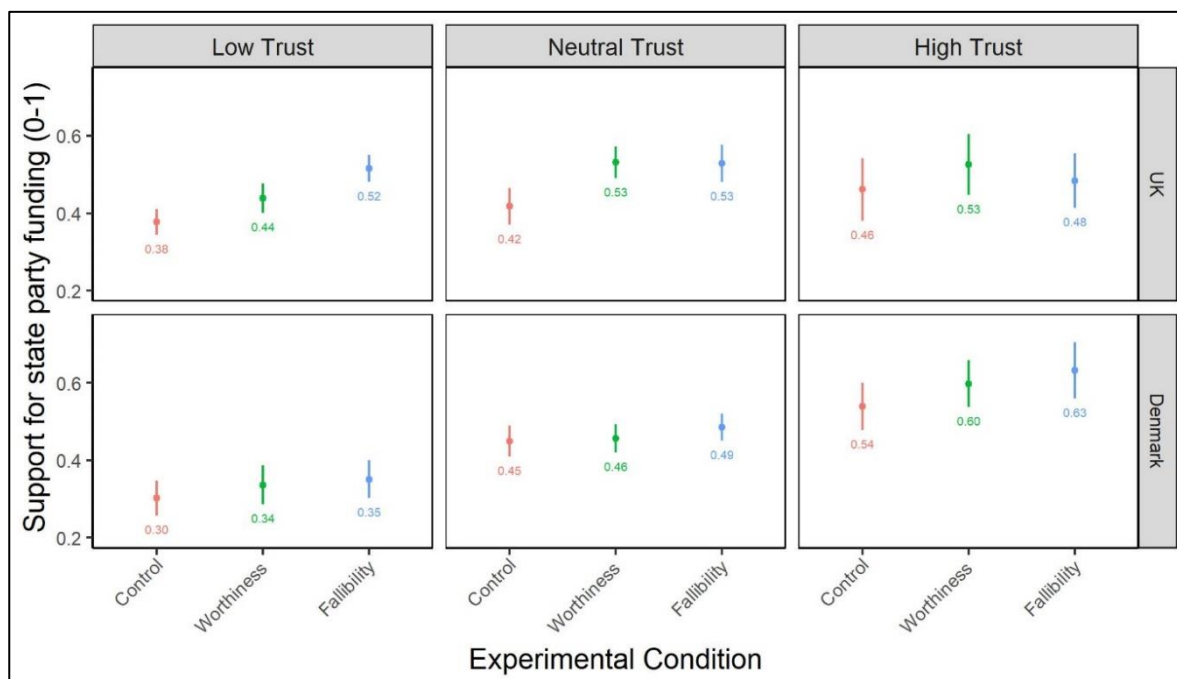


Note: The trust variable is scaled 0-1, where 0 is absolutely no trust, and 1 is a great deal of trust in parties. Support for state party funding is scale 0-1, where 0 is oppose and 1 is support. 95% confidence intervals displayed. Data is pooled across countries.

To disentangle these effects more, I look at the effects of each frame within the sub-groups of high trust (those who have either “quite a lot” or “a great deal” of trust in parties), neutral trust (those who have “neither a little nor a lot” of trust in parties) and low trust (those who have “very little” or “absolutely no” trust in parties). Again, the responses are distributed very differently between countries. Low trust is by far the modal category in the UK (605 respondents) whilst in Denmark it is neutral (571 respondents).

Figure 6.8 shows that again, effects seem to be present especially or only in the UK, and, there appear to be no effects of the frames within the sub-group of “high trust”, in either country, since the error bars overlap a great deal. The direction of the effects are the same in both countries; in all sub-groups, those in the treatment groups report higher mean levels of support than those in the control group. However in Denmark, the differences are not statistically significant, meaning that in Denmark, the effects of the frames upon support for state party funding are not moderated by trust.

Figure 6.8: Effects of Frames on Support for State Funding, Within Trust Sub-Groups



Note: The number of observations within the low trust group is 605 in the UK and 342 in Denmark. Within the neutral groups, there are 375 respondents in the UK and 571 in Denmark. In the high trust groups, there are 128 respondents in the UK and 190 in Denmark. Point estimates are the mean level of support for state party funding, coded 0-1 with 1 being support. 95% confidence intervals displayed.

In the UK, amongst those with low trust, the fallibility frame increases support from 0.38 to 0.52, a substantive increase of 37%. In the same sub-group, the worthiness frame increases support from 0.38 to 0.44, substantially a 16% increase. In this sub-group, the differences between the control and fallibility group, and the control and worthiness group, are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), however, the fallibility frame is significantly *more* effective than the worthiness frame ($p < 0.01$). In the neutral sub-group, both frames have the exact same effect on support, each increasing support from 0.42 in the control to 0.53, a substantive increase of 26%. These results confirm that the frames are not effective in increasing support for state party funding amongst those who already have high trust in parties, but they *do* work amongst those with neutral and low trust in the UK. The argument that state funding is required to cure the scourge of big donors is especially effective amongst low-trusting citizens in the UK.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented the design and findings from the first survey experiments testing effects of information upon support for state party funding. The main empirical findings are that exposing citizens to the arguments that state funding is necessary in order to reduce donor influence, *and* that state funding is necessary to support parties' essential work in democracies, is effective in increasing their support for state party funding. Furthermore, the analysis of moderator effects revealed that in the UK, these effects are particularly strong amongst people with high anti-establishment attitudes, and low trust in parties. In the following chapter, I offer more substantive interpretations of the descriptive findings from Chapter Five and the experimental findings from this chapter. I talk about what we can learn concretely from these findings and why they matter, as well how the results open pathways for future research.

Chapter Seven: Concluding Discussion

“Democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties” (Schattschneider, 1942, p. 1). Parties fulfil functions that are essential to the linking of citizens and government; they structure debates, organise elections, select candidates, mobilise voters, offer voters policy choices, and enact policy programs (Dalton et al., 2011). To carry out all of these tasks, funding is essential. Yet, parties face a dilemma when it comes to funding. On the one hand, if they raise money only from the normatively desirable source of grassroots funding, citizens’ reluctance to financially support parties will leave them too under-funded to perform the representative functions demanded of them in modern democracies. On the other hand, not only may the two alternative sources of funding (big donors and the state) each have their own negative effects on party behaviour (e.g. Gilens, 2012; Hopkin, 2004; Katz & Mair, 1995), both have been assumed to be unpopular with citizens. The debate about the democratic consequences of providing parties with state funding is still alive and well amongst policy-makers and scholars. However, citizens’ perspectives on this important policy instrument have so far been under-examined in the party politics literature.

In this dissertation, I posed the overarching research question: “What do citizens think about state party funding?” In Chapter Two, I narrowed this question down into four sub-research questions by pinpointing major gaps in our knowledge about state party funding. We did not know much about citizens’ relative preferences for the three major sources of party funding, nor which considerations relate to their support of state party funding. We also did not know how different arguments and types of information could affect support for state party funding. Furthermore, the few insights we did have on these questions came from single case studies, leaving us unable to compare how citizens in state- and donor-reliant systems think about the topic of state party funding. Arising from these gaps, I posed the sub-research questions:

1. How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?
2. Which considerations relate to citizens’ support for state party funding?
3. How does framing the issue of state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?
4. How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect citizens’ support for the policy?

To answer these questions, I developed theoretically grounded hypotheses (Chapter Three) by combining major insights about opinion-formation processes from the public opinion literature with theoretical arguments about the system-level effects of state party funding from the party politics literature. To test these hypotheses, I developed reliable and valid survey measures of support for, and considerations about, state party funding, and designed new internally valid experiments about state party funding (Chapter Four). With these methodological tools, I conducted one observational survey and two survey experiments in both Denmark and the UK. In this chapter, I first summarise the main empirical findings of this dissertation (from Chapters Five and Six), grouping them into three categories: 1) citizens' preferences between funding sources, 2) the considerations correlating with support for state funding, and 3) the effects of information on support for state party funding. After re-capping the main findings, I discuss why they are important for the literatures of party politics and public opinion. Next, I point to some potential policy implications, before finally discussing limitations of the dissertation and pathways for future research. The overall aim of this chapter is to demonstrate what we have learned from the dissertation's research, and why it matters.

Summary of main empirical contributions

1. Citizens' preferences between big donor, state and grassroots funding

The first sub-research question I posed was “How much do citizens support state funding relative to other sources of party funding?” My hypothesis was that citizens prefer state party funding to big donor funding, but not to grassroots funding. I found strong empirical support for this hypothesis. The analysis across countries showed that grassroots funding is by far the most popular source of party funding, with a mean level of support of 0.55 (on a scale where 0 was oppose and 1 was support). In comparison, state funding was clearly the more popular of the two remaining sources, receiving a mean support of 0.41 compared to 0.28 for big donor funding. The differences between all three means were statistically significant. It shows that state funding is not supported, since the mean did not exceed the neutral midpoint of 0.5, but that it is clearly *more* supported than big donor funding. Exploring the data between countries led to more insights. The hypothesis is robust to country effects, since the order of preferences (first grassroots, then state, then big donor funding) is the same in each country. However, there are also some interesting differences; the mean levels of support for all funding sources were much closer together in Denmark, and Brits were significantly more likely than

Danes to support grassroots funding, oppose big donor funding, and oppose state funding. This between-country analysis showed that Brits have significantly stronger attitudes towards the party funding sources than Danes, suggesting the issue of party funding is more salient in the UK. Additionally, I found that respondents in each country were able to accurately predict how reliant their parties are on each of the three main sources of funds. In summary, the answer to this sub-research question is that citizens support state funding significantly more than big donor funding, but significantly less than grassroots funding.

2. Considerations relating to support for state party funding

The second sub-research question was “Which considerations relate to citizens’ support for state party funding?” Based on two prominent system-level perspectives, the cartel party theory and the public utility view, I developed six hypotheses about how citizens’ considerations on party representation, competition and regulation might be correlated with their support for state party funding. I found strong support for the hypotheses that considerations of parties being good representatives, not colluding to increase their own access to state resources, being essential to democracy, and of state funds as benefiting small and new parties, are all significantly and positively related to support for state party funding. Conversely, this means that considerations of parties being poor representatives, often colluding to hoard state resources, being unessential to democracy, and of state funds as benefiting large and established parties, are all significantly and *negatively* related to support for state party funding.

There was weaker support for the other two hypotheses, that a desire for state regulation of party finance should be related to support for state funding, and that opposition to big donor funding should be related to support for state party funding. The latter hypothesis garnered support only in the UK, and there was some grounds for thinking the relationship may also exist in Denmark but that the connection between state funding and reduced donor influence is less explicit for Danish respondents. This possibly owes to the lower salience of the issue in Denmark compared to the UK. I also explored how people’s broader attitudes towards parties and politics may relate to their support for the policy, and found that people who are left-leaning, trust parties, perceive parties as responsive, and are politically interested, are significantly more likely to support state party funding. Furthermore, my findings replicate previous British findings that Labour voters are more supportive of trade union donors and Conservative voters more supportive of business elite donors, and extends these findings to Denmark by showing that the same distinction

exists between Social Democrat and Liberal voters. In summary, the answer to this sub-research question is that considerations about parties' representativeness, collusion over state resources, essentialness to democracy, and the type of parties benefiting from state funds, are all significantly correlated with support for state party funding in the direction would expect based on the literature.

3. Effects of information upon support for state party funding

The third sub-research question was "How does framing the issue of state party funding affect support for the policy?" I hypothesised that exposing citizens to worthiness and fallibility frames could increase their support for state party funding, and this hypothesis gained strong empirical support. Presenting citizens with the argument that state funding reduces the influence of big donors and minimizes "sleaze" in democracies (fallibility framing) significantly increased support for state party funding. In fact, the effect sizes were substantial; respondents who were exposed to this frame reported a mean level of support for state funding 20% higher than those in the control group. Presenting citizens with the argument that state funding supports the essential work of parties in democracies and prevents them from becoming too poor to fulfil their functions (worthiness framing), increased support by 15%. The findings were robust to country fixed effects, showing that these arguments are effective no matter whether citizens live in a state- or a donor-reliant party funding system. The answer to this sub-research question is therefore that both worthiness and fallibility frames are effective in increasing support for state party funding. An analysis of moderator effects yielded further interesting findings, namely that in the UK, the frames are even more effective in increasing support amongst respondents with high anti-establishment attitudes, and low levels of trust in parties. Both frames were effective, but the fallibility frame more so than the worthiness frame, amongst both of these sub-groups.

The fourth and final sub-research question was "How does providing policy facts about state party funding affect support for the policy?" I designed a survey experiment with the intention of testing whether providing citizens with policy facts about party-citizen linking conditions attached to state funds increases support. Unfortunately, I did not find the effects I had hoped for with this experiment. Upon reflection and analysis of the results to the manipulation check question (discussed in Chapter Six), it seems that the reason for this is that the treatment vignette was not strong enough compared to the text the control group read - in short, that the treatment was ineffective. In response to this sub-research question, I can confidently say that policy facts

about three specific party-citizen linking conditions (membership-based, diversity-based, and vouchers-based) attached to state funds are ineffective at increasing support relative to the more general information that some conditions would be attached. However, I cannot say that this policy-specific information about party-citizen linking conditions is ineffective compared to no information, nor even that providing the more general information that state funds would be given with strings attached (but not specifying what the strings are), is ineffective. This would require a different experimental design with a more neutral control group.

Contribution to scholarly literature

In Chapter One, I stated the two overarching claims I set out to investigate in this dissertation. Firstly, I claimed that citizens hold distinct preferences and considerations about state party funding that align well with normative positions in the party politics literature. Secondly, I claimed that providing citizens with arguments in favour of state party funding can be effective in increasing their support for the policy. To explore the veracity of these claims throughout the dissertation, I bridged two literatures that had previously remained quite separate, the party politics and public opinion literatures. The party politics literature has provided rich insights into how party funding affects the ways in which parties organize themselves, compete against each other, and represent citizens (e.g. Katz & Mair, 1995; Poguntke et al., 2016; Scarrow, 2007; van Biezen & Rashkova, 2014). This literature has been interested in the question of the democratic consequences of state party funding for decades. There is no doubt that Western European parties are becoming more entangled with the state, and that state funding for parties is a key indicator of this process. But, “the final issue that preoccupies contemporary scholars is how we should evaluate these developments normatively” (Corduwener, 2020, p. 43). Such evaluations have so far omitted the angle of public opinion, a crucial element in determining the legitimacy of the policy of providing parties with taxpayer money. The major contribution of this dissertation has been to bring citizens’ views to the heart of the analysis on state party funding, by connecting major theories and insights from these two important literatures. In this section, I discuss to what extent these arguments were substantiated by my findings, and why this is a contribution to the literature.

Firstly, the results show that citizens’ preferences between grassroots, state and big donor funding are entirely in line with normative preferences in the literature. This is good evidence that when it comes to evaluating how they would like their parties to be funded, citizens *are* able to form “preferences that many would find normatively appropriate” (Druckman, 2014, p. 467). In

the party politics literature, it has long been assumed that citizens would be much happier with their parties getting money from small donors and members than from either the state or big donors. This assumption pops up in many texts about party politics and party funding (for concrete examples, see Koss, 2011, p. 176; Linz, 2002, p. 307). But so far, the assumption had never been put to the test. I have now provided empirical support for the long-standing claim that grassroots funding is citizens' preferred source, and evidence that it is in fact twice as popular as big donor funding. Within this literature, the cartel party theory (Katz & Mair, 1995, 2009, 2018), in its nuanced discussions of the changing nature of parties over the years, has provided important theoretical knowledge about the potential negative system-level effects of cartel parties compared to mass parties. My findings show that citizens agree with Katz and Mair; they do not support state funding. However, if forced to choose, state funding easily wins their support over big donor funding. Furthermore, these findings hold true no matter which type of party funding system citizens live in. Now, in theorising about and empirically studying the relative advantages and disadvantages of the three major sources of party funds, scholars can draw on these findings to incorporate the important dimension of citizens' preferences.

Secondly, the results show that citizens' considerations about party representation, competition and regulation correlate to a large extent with their support for state party funding in the direction we would expect based on dominant system-level theories in the literature. I hope that the theoretical exercise of drawing out the main considerations for and against state party funding from Katz and Mair's (1995, 2009) cartel party theory and van Biezen's (2004) public utility article, and theorising about how these pros and cons may be seen from *citizens'* perspectives, has been useful in itself, since without knowing whether their arguments comport with actual public opinion, we are missing a vital piece of the puzzle when discussing how state party funding affects representation. My findings provide empirical indications that citizens' opinion-formation on the issue of state party funding is consistently related to their considerations about how well parties perform their representative functions, how essential they are to democracy, whether they actively collude over state resources, and how state funding affects party competition. This signifies that citizens' opinions on state party funding are meaningful, at least in the sense that they largely conform to theoretical arguments in the literature.

An important example of the relevance of these findings for the literature is that it matters to citizens *which* parties are seen as benefitting from state funds. As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the argument that state funds should be distributed to support smaller parties rather than entrench larger

ones is dominant in the party funding literature (Casas-Zamora, 2005; Katz & Mair, 2009, 2018; Mendilow, 1992; Nassmacher, 2009; Piccio & van Biezen, 2018; Scarrow, 2018). Now based on my findings, we know that citizens also support state party funding significantly more when it is perceived to benefit small, new parties more than large, established parties. The prevalence of which type of party is seen as benefiting from subsidies does differ depending on the context; Danes perceive state funds as benefiting small and new parties, while Brits perceive it as privileging large and established parties. In both cases, these perceptions accurately reflect the empirical reality, further speaking to citizens' ability to make broadly sensible inferences about party funding.

Finally, the findings from the framing experiment show that citizens' scepticism when it comes to money in politics is not unshakeable, but rather they are able to update their preferences and opinions according to new information. This echoes the conclusions of a campaign finance survey experiment in the US (Bowler & Donovan, 2016), which found that providing information about restrictions on big donors does affect citizens' evaluations of how corrupting money in politics is. It shows that the same is true in the European context; that there is space to improve citizens' attitudes towards party funding. That the effects of both the worthiness and fallibility frames were larger in the UK than in Denmark is also enlightening. It shows that although British citizens have more intense anti-big donor *and* anti-state funding sentiments than Danes, they are more susceptible to arguments in favour of providing parties with state money, whether these arguments highlight the good in parties (worthiness) or the bad (fallibility). Perhaps this reflects that the issue is more salient in the UK than in Denmark, as when issues are more salient people are better able to process new information about the topic (Ciuk & Yost, 2016). Or, perhaps there were some pre-treatment effects in Denmark, in the sense that people already support state funding significantly more than they do in the UK, so the frames were less able to shift opinion. The moderator analysis shows that the effects of the fallibility frame were strengthened in the British case, by the high level of anti-establishment attitudes, and the low levels of trust in parties. In the case of the sub-group with high anti-establishment attitudes, the effects were particularly striking; the fallibility frame increased mean support for state party funding by 37%, compared to when no frame is applied. The fallibility frame therefore nearly closed the gap between levels of support for state party funding amongst those with low versus high anti-establishment attitudes. This means that arguing in favour of state party funding on the grounds that it reduces donor influence is especially likely to increase support for the policy amongst the very people who are most cynical towards parties. Ultimately, it shows that communicating about state funding is a) more urgent in the UK than in Denmark because of the comparatively

higher scepticism and b) more likely to be effective in the UK than in Denmark because of the comparatively higher salience.

Party funding in general and state party funding specifically are under-studied but important objects of public opinion. Throughout the dissertation, I have demonstrated that public opinion on state party funding is shaped by the effects of state funding upon party behaviour (understood through the party politics literature) and by traditional opinion formation processes (understood through the public opinion literature). Linking the two literatures generates new theoretical and empirical avenues that can expand the debate about the democratic consequences of state party funding. Since party funding is such an important predictor of the quality of democratic representation, these findings deepen our understanding of how citizens on the receiving end of this representation perceive the issue. The findings show that the fields of public opinion and party politics can be enhanced by speaking more directly to each other.

Policy implications

Perhaps the most obvious policy implication comes from the finding that citizens, no matter whether they live in a donor- or a state-reliant party funding system, clearly see the state as the lesser of two evils compared to big donors. This is support for the idea that if policy-makers in donor-reliant party systems want to design democratic institutions in line with citizens' preferences, they should be using the wide range of tools from the party finance toolkit in an effort to decrease party dependence on big donors. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, 92% of countries now provide some level of state funding to parties (Scarrow, 2018, p. 106). But, the regulations accompanying state funding vary significantly from country to country, and have profound effects on parties' level of reliance on state versus big donor funds. There is a huge range of political finance policy instruments on offer to decrease the extent to which parties must rely on donor funds. Some of the most powerful ones include expanding the amount of state funding offered to parties, capping the size of private contributions parties are allowed to receive, capping spending to avoid an arms race of expenditure during campaigns, and establishing strong enforcement bodies and mechanisms to ensure these regulations are followed (IDEA, 2021). Which combination of tools should be applied is highly context-specific (Nassmacher, 2009).

My findings suggest that one specific tool which policy-makers concerned with reflecting citizen preferences in their party funding regulations should use is to set the threshold of eligibility for parties to access state funds relatively low. The results clearly showed that citizens are more likely to

support state funding when they see it as supporting small and new parties, and less likely to support state funding when they see it as benefiting large and established parties. When state funds are apportioned based on seats won, it is generally harder for small parties to access them than if state funds are apportioned based on votes won (Scarrow, 2018, p. 107). The IDEA Political Finance Database (IDEA, 2021) shows that globally, 18% of countries still distribute state funds based on share of *seats* at previous election, and 33% require parties to gain representation in the elected body before they can access state funds (the UK is included in this latter category). This is compared to 38% of countries who distribute funds by share of votes received at the last election (including Denmark), and 17% of countries where parties receive state funds merely for registering as a political party. The balance between being too generous with state funds and risking wasting public money on non-serious or dangerous niche candidates or parties on the one hand, and between being too restrictive with state funds and risk stifling new parties and preferences emerging, is a difficult one. A country's electoral system is also a highly relevant consideration in determining what the threshold should be, so again, the mixture and design of these policies is context-specific. But from a public opinion standpoint, my findings show very clearly what citizens' preferences are on which types of party that should benefit the most from state funds; smaller, newer parties.

There are also policy implications from the finding that citizens would prefer parties to be oriented towards the grassroots for their funding. It is probably not in the power of policy-makers operating within the constraints of modern political institutions and societies to increase citizens' willingness to contribute financially to the party they support. However, it is in their power to provide financial incentives for parties to build stronger relationships with citizens. Despite the null findings of the policy facts experiment, the finding of the popularity of grassroots funding amongst citizens still speaks in favour of the potential of party-citizen linking conditions to improve relationships between parties and citizens, and perhaps ultimately to improve support for state funding.

Finally, from the correlational analyses, it emerged that if parties are perceived as being good representatives, as being essential for democracy, as being responsive, and as being trustworthy, they are significantly more likely to also be perceived as being worthy of receiving state funds. Of course the reverse of all these statements is also true; if parties are *not* perceived as representative, essential, responsive or trustworthy, they are significantly *less* likely to be perceived as worthy recipients of public money. This presents a difficult dilemma for advocates of state party funding in countries like the UK, where attitudes towards parties are on the whole quite negative. One survey

by the Global Corruption Barometer found that 90% of British respondents considered that government was somewhat to entirely run by big entities acting in their own best interests, compared with 54% of Danes (GCB cited in Power, 2020, p. 181). In Chapter One, I discussed the calls in the UK and other donor-reliant party systems for governments to increase state party funding as a way of cleaning up politics and improving public confidence in political parties. But although big donor funding is plainly unpopular, British elites fear electoral damage if parties were to advocate for a substantial increase in their own access to public money (Power, 2020, p. 30). If public support is desired or required in order to push ahead with reforms, the reality of negative attitudes towards parties will make this a difficult feat to achieve, since my results show that negative attitudes relate to lower support for state party funding. As such, the descriptive findings further confirmed the importance of understanding how to *argue* for state party funding.

My experimental findings show that although indeed, most people *do* oppose the idea of state funding for parties, attitudes can be shifted in a positive direction by arguing that state funding is necessary to reduce donor influence, *and* that state funding is necessary to support the essential work of parties in democracies. In the UK, these frames are especially effective amongst people with negative political attitudes (low trust in parties and high anti-establishment attitudes). For instance, in the absence of any frame, individuals with low anti-establishment attitudes are substantially more likely to support state party funding than those with high anti-establishment attitudes. However, adding a fallibility frame nearly closes the gap between these two groups and results in a similar level of support for the policy, regardless of an individual's views on the establishment.

These findings illuminate how best to communicate the policy of state party funding, especially in the British context. The key to overcoming the unpopularity of state party funding is to present the argument that it is better than the alternative of the far more detested big donor funding. The findings provide strong quantitative support for the sentiment arising from the Electoral Commission's focus group studies, that "there was a commonly-expressed feeling that the public at large would support public funding of parties if the argument for it was made to them in these terms" (UK Electoral Commission, 2006, p. 43). It seems that at an aggregate level, the public is indeed significantly more likely to support state party funding if it is argued for on grounds of reducing donor influence. Policy-makers and electoral reform advocates who wish to increase public support for state party funding, whether this be in a state-reliant or a donor-reliant party system, should harness the central messages that state funding reduces the influence of vested interests on the political process, and that it facilitates parties fulfilling their representative functions. Both

communication strategies are effective in increasing support for state party funding.

Limitations and pathways for future research

There are three main limitations in the research design, due to 1) the small number of case studies, 2) the failure of the treatments in the second survey experiment, and 3) the lack of a competitive environment for the framing experiment. I will discuss each in turn. Firstly, there are only two case studies included. In Chapter Four, I discussed why I expect the Danish findings to generalise to other Northern European countries with state-reliant parties, and similar political institutions and party systems. I also expect that the British findings should generalise to other countries with donor-reliant party funding regimes, particularly the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. However, without collecting data in these countries I cannot make strong statements about whether these findings generalise as I imagine.

It also unclear to what extent the findings would travel to countries outside of Northern Europe or the Anglosphere. Party funding is obviously not only an important issue in established Western democracies. For instance, the policy of attaching gender-targeted conditions to state funds, a policy which as I discussed in Chapter Three has the potential to increase party diversity and promote gender equality in politics, is most widely implemented in Latin America (Ohman, 2018). Studying citizens' opinions of these conditions in a context like this where the policies are actually in place would be very enlightening. In short, whilst this is the first in-depth, comparative study of citizens' attitudes towards state party funding, we are still lacking a larger-n comparative approach. Future studies could therefore more thoroughly probe the generalisability of the findings by including more countries in the analysis. I have designed the survey questions and treatment vignettes in this dissertation to be easily transferrable to other settings, which will hopefully assist in this endeavour.

Secondly, the fact that the treatments seemed to be ineffectual in the policy facts experiment meant that I could not properly test whether providing people with details about party-citizen linking conditions increases support for state party funding. These types of conditions are a way of regulating party finance; they make parties do something, live up to some standard, in exchange for their access to taxpayer money. The descriptive findings showed that people *do* want to see extensive state regulation of party finance. However, this proved to be either unrelated or at best only very weakly related to their support for state party funding (H2.5 was not supported). It implies that citizens do not make the same connection between state party funding and

increased regulation of party finances that scholars make. Bértoa et al. (2014, p. 358) argued that “the introduction of public funding entails the establishment of a system of public accountability and control over the political parties’ financial activities, which, in turn, is beneficial for increasing parties’ legitimacy in the public eye”. My findings imply that the presumed benefits to parties’ legitimacy of this increased regulation have not materialised as hoped.²⁸ This implies that the increased level of regulation that tends to come along with increased state funding is not a salient positive consideration for citizens when they evaluate the issue of state party funding.

A future avenue of exploration could therefore be whether exposing citizens to the argument that state funding comes with increased regulation could increase support for state party funding, and whether the types of regulations or conditions matter to citizens. The null findings from the survey experiment should not be taken as evidence of the unpopularity of such state funding conditions, or the inability of citizens to process or respond to policy facts on the topic. Indeed, this set of policy instruments has great potential for inducing in parties the types of changes that citizens would like to see, and ultimately improving party legitimacy. In Chapter Three, I argued that informing citizens that in order to receive state funds, parties would be required to a) expand and empower their membership base, b) be more diverse, and c) collect the money directly from citizens, should improve their support for state funding. Alas, the experiment I designed did not allow me to properly test these expectations, as the experimental treatments did not work as intended. But, I hope that future research will continue exploring this, and, more generally, I hope that the arguments presented in that chapter will prompt party politics scholars to more deeply examine the potential of these types of conditions.

Finally, in the framing experiment, only *pro* state party funding frames are employed. In the real world, citizens face a competitive information environment that encourages individuals to weigh pro and con considerations against each other (Chong & Druckman, 2007a, p. 639). I do not test con arguments, nor do I test the entire universe of pro arguments that could be used – for instance, I do not employ frames or facts arguing that state funding benefits smaller and newer parties. The use of only positive frames and facts – rather than multiple positive arguments competing against multiple negative arguments – reduces external validity, since in the real world citizens will not be only exposed to positive arguments. Furthermore, of course in the real world the issue of party funding is more or less salient compared to other issues, and

²⁸ This is also supported by the results of my qualitative pre-test, which showed that the theme of “Regulation” was not mentioned at all by respondents as reason to support state funding (see Table A1.3 in Appendix).

could be *made* more or less salient compared to other issues in experimental designs. Since these are the first survey experiments on state party funding, they were designed to show whether or not pro-state funding frames and policy facts could be effective in moving public opinion. Considering citizens' high levels of scepticism towards the topic of party funding, it was certainly not a given that even strong arguments in favour of state party funding will be able to move them in favour of providing parties with taxpayer money. However, now that we know that frames *can* shift opinion on this topic, future research can explore how these positive arguments fare in more competitive environments.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have argued that we need to go beyond the inertia of simply accepting that citizens are uninformed and impossible to please on the subject of party funding, and think more carefully about the conditions under which state party funding may be perceived by citizens as legitimate or illegitimate. "A key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens" (Dahl, 1971, p. 1), and to facilitate this responsiveness, it is crucial that citizens' perspectives are brought forth in debates about the democratic consequences of any given policy. The core of my research is to add the perspective of citizens to the debate about the democratic consequences of state party funding. Party funding is an extremely important policy area that can have substantial effects on party behaviour and consequently, the quality of the representation that citizens experience. It is therefore necessary to shine a light on how party funding and political attitudes may be interconnected.

Citizens and scholars share the same normative preferences about the three main sources of party funding; they prefer grassroots funding most of all, but state funding is perceived as significantly more desirable than big donor funding. Citizens' considerations about party representation, competition and regulation are for the most part correlated with their support for state funding in ways that are consistent with what we would expect from dominant system-level theoretical perspectives. Finally, they do update their preferences when exposed to arguments in favour of the policy of providing parties with state money, and these arguments are especially effective at increasing support amongst citizens in donor-reliant systems with negative attitudes towards parties.

In this dissertation, I have shown that public opinion on party funding might be more meaningful than it is sometimes assumed to be, signifying that there could be advantages to making an effort to involve citizens more directly

in debates about how to fund politics. The findings pave the way for future research to more deeply connect the two literatures of party politics and public opinion, and to think about how we can communicate in ways that improve support for state party funding. Doing so could be beneficial for both the quality of representation, and citizens' confidence in political parties and democracy.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Qualitative Pre-Test

Table A1.1: Coding Scheme

| Code | Label | Themes |
|------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | SUPPORT | Responses that plainly say they think state funding is a good idea. Responses where they do not state it clearly, but based on their reasoning and responses to the other two questions, I judge that they are mostly in support of it. |
| 2 | OPPOSE | Responses that plainly say they think state funding is a bad idea. Responses where they do not state it clearly, but based on their reasoning and responses to the other two questions, I judge that they are mostly in opposition to it. |
| 3 | PRO: DONOR INFLUENCE | Stops big donors dominating politics/allows non-wealthy parties and candidates to compete/better than US system/better than letting lobbyists fund politics |
| 4 | PRO: PARTIES ESSENTIAL | State funding is good for democracy/parties are good for democracy in general/ State funding is based on connection with voters/ electoral competition is expensive so it is fine that the state funds it |
| 5 | PRO: SMALL/NEW PARTIES | Supports small parties, fosters party competition and diversity/the distribution is fair |
| 6 | PRO: REGULATION | State funding results in more transparency/accountability |
| 7 | CON: UNREPRESENTATIVE | Parties should self-finance, Parties are not connected enough to citizens |
| 8 | CON: COLLUSION | Collusion or convergence of main parties and their policies |
| 9 | CON: ESTABLISHED PARTIES PRIVILEGED | Privileges established parties over smaller parties/ distribution is unfair |
| 10 | CON: EXCESS | Waste of taxpayer money/diverts public money from essential services, Parties are able to access public money without restriction/ The amount is too high/ already too much money in politics, |

| | | |
|----|------------------------------------|--|
| | | Parties spend too much money/should be more restrictions on how parties can spend money |
| 11 | CON: TOO MANY PARTIES | There are too many parties/ Only parties represented in Folketinget should receive public money/it is too easy for parties to get money |
| 12 | CON: SUPPORT PARTIES DISAGREE WITH | Tax money goes to support parties they don't agree with/ Far-right parties receive too much money |
| | Non-response options | |
| 13 | DON'T KNOW | Respondent states that they do not know. I also code don't know for those respondents for which a support/oppose position is not discernible |
| 14 | NO OPINION | Respondent states that they have not thought about this issue and do not have an opinion on it |
| 15 | NA | Blank, nonsensical, half sentences etc. |

Table A1.2: Frequency of Support/Oppose Responses

| Labels | Count |
|--------------|------------|
| OPPOSE | 48 |
| SUPPORT | 38 |
| DON'T KNOW | 7 |
| NO OPINION | 5 |
| NA | 16 |
| Total | 114 |

Table A1.3: Frequency of Positive Considerations

| Category | Count |
|-------------------|-----------|
| DONOR INFLUENCE | 30 |
| PARTIES ESSENTIAL | 19 |
| SMALL/NEW PARTIES | 15 |
| REGULATION | 0 |
| Total | 64 |

Table A1.4: Frequency of Negative Considerations

| Category | Count |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| EXCESS | 55 |
| UNREPRESENTATIVE | 29 |
| ESTABLISHED PARTIES PRIVILEGED | 15 |
| TOO MANY PARTIES | 14 |
| SUPPORT PARTIES DISAGREE WITH | 6 |
| COLLUSION | 0 |
| Total | 119 |

Note: Categories in bold are those derived from the cartel party theory (deductive coding) and those not in bold are derived from the responses themselves (inductive coding).

Survey questions and translated responses

Q1: In Denmark, political parties have the right to receive state party funding for the purpose of sharing political information (for example in election campaigns), salaries to staff and political work. Every party receives 33.5 kroner per vote they received in the last election. For example, a party with 8% of the vote and 16 seats in Parliament receives about 11 million kroner per year. Based on this information, do you think that state party funding is a good or a bad idea? Please write as many thoughts and considerations as you can come up with, and feel free to use key words.

Both. It is absurd that Stram Kurs get as much money as they do when they use them to spread hate propaganda

They must find sponsorships themselves

They earn enough already

I find it difficult to answer. In a way, it's ok, since politics should not only be for the richest

It is given according to voter support, so that is quite alright

It's definitely a bad idea, it means I'm helping parties I do not sympathize with

It's a bad idea

It's a bad idea. The amount per vote must be significantly less, in the order of DKK 1 per vote. Parties that get very few votes should have no support. In other words, a minimum number of votes is required before you get a kr per vote. For example, 20,000 votes

It is a good idea because it supports the democratic process and enables new parties to gain a foothold

It is a good idea, but I do not think that parties that do not enter the Folketing should get the money

It's a really bad idea, some parties get no influence at all so therefore they should have no money either

That is too much public support

It's too easy for them to make money. They need to earn money just like the rest of us

It is really bad, they should get less

It's completely fine

This is a ridiculous amount of money that goes to almost the same parties every year. There should be a maximum limit for how much they can get and it should be considered whether the party would be able to sustain themselves financially

It's just over the top. The money can be used better elsewhere. The parties must be able to capture the vote without expensive election videos and full-page advertisements. Or, are they not good enough?

It is a lot of money. The money can be used in other areas. For example, for the elderly and children, hospitals. Public party support needs to be cut back a bit

It's ok

It's ok but can quickly become a lot of money

It's crazy that they should have so much money

That's ok, as long as it's the same for all parties

It is important that they have the opportunity to present their policy

It seems grotesque, but compared to the American system, where the strong money gets the power, it is still a more promising system. But, our system supports the consideration of "go into politics, because you will be financially secure" Disgusting!

I do not have enough information to assess that

This can make it difficult for small and new parties to compete with the large and well-established parties

It sounds like a good idea, but it is important to ensure that money is spent efficiently, if not amount should be abolished in order to motivate

Bad

Bad idea

Bad idea. They become comfortable. They should start by getting members to do the groundwork

Bad idea. The money can be spent on something better

Bad idea

Bad idea. They should self-finance

A bad idea

A good idea, if it only went to parties that are elected to the Folketing.

Great idea, how else are they going to make money?

Bad to spend money on this. That money could help many in Denmark. The parties must find other solutions

The distribution is poor. Everyone should receive the same and not very much. Only to cover a certain number of pamphlets, and election posters should be banned.

Good

Good idea

Good idea - rather that kind of "state aid" than support from lobbyists

Good idea that creates opportunity for diversity of political parties. The more parties the better the democratic process. Everyone needs to be heard, even those we do not like. Multiple parties increase the possibility of openness in the power apparatus and make it harder to hide its intentions. It ensures democracy.

Good idea for parties that are elected. Parties that do not get a sufficient number of votes should get another, and lower financial support

Good idea, especially if it replaced private party support.

Good idea. Maybe you could, for example, graduate. The first 10% at a higher rate than the following.

Halve the support

Have no attitude towards it

Have no opinion about it

Have no opinion about it

The idea is a great way to support a political party

Not a good idea. Oddly distributed in relation to the great work all parties do

No attitude on that

I do not understand why there are no cuts in party support when everyone else has to save

I do not immediately see other solutions for the individual parties to get finances for their election campaign, etc., however, I think it should be reduced

I believe that all parties should have state financial support corresponding to the work being done and the role being filled. Election campaigns I think should be paid by another account so that all parties have equal opportunities in an election

I do not believe that parties should have public support.

I do not quite see the point in it, because the big parties should have enough money and the small ones probably do not need them

I think the public party support is too high

I think it is a good idea with public party support. Then parties are supported "equally"

I think they are large sums

I do not like public support.

I do not think parties that do not get enough votes should have money

I think that is a lot of money

I think public support for the parties is OK. After all, they must have money, and it is better with public funds than if they were financed by private. However, I think it is too easy to run with a new party which can then also receive the support

I think it is hard. On the one hand, I think it's a lot of money that could be used for something else. But most of all, I really think it's important, it's because it reduces the need for the parties to go out and raise capital, for example, private companies, which will then require some specific positions on the part of the party.

Could be a bad idea

Could well be put down a bit. For example, an election campaign is almost exclusively broadcast on television and it costs nothing

Less would be fine, there are too many spin doctors and other close supporters for too high a salary

Public party support is fine, private party support should be illegal.

Public party support contributes to the parties that are strongest receiving great support, while the weak parties receive much less support. This makes it difficult for smaller parties to "break through". My suggestion is to do as the co-tax, where e.g. those who are best get 30kr. per vote, while the most disadvantaged receive DKK 35. per vote. Overall, public party support is a good idea to ensure that it is not only people with rich connections who can win seats, but that purpose can be further strengthened, e.g. with the above measures.

Ok with public party support, but it can be halved

Parties that do not get into parliament must have nothing!

Party support is a good idea, but the distribution key of favoring large parties may not be optimal

Wasted money if the party does not stand to enter the parliament, what about those who did not enter - why should they have public support

I think it sounds like a lot of money they get in support. Money that could have been spent on other more sensible things

The system should be more evenly distributed

I think the amount could be reduced. It is incredible how much money is spent on election posters, pamphlets and other unnecessary things in an election campaign. In addition, politicians get a large salary and pension so maybe they should pay some of it themselves.

On the surface a good idea, so that there are funds for information to the citizens

Don't know what I can say. It is a lot of money!

Both, but a waste of money to MPs who already earn well even when they retire

It is a very bad idea - taxpayers should not have to finance parties - it gives a great advantage to the big parties at the expense of the smaller parties

Good idea

Good idea, as it would otherwise easily end up with a huge distortion of which parties could run election campaigns.

Yes it is OK. It is important that it is open to everyone where money comes from

Only the parties that get in should have the support

Ok

Ok with party support but more limitation in what they may be used for, and control of this.

Q2: Some people support state party funding. What do you think their reasons for that might be? Please write as many thoughts and considerations as you can come up with, and feel free to use key words.

All parties can receive party support and the parties represent the population. If the support is not public but only based on private donations, it can result in inequality

That they see an advantage in the fact that the parties do not have to have financial ties to the business community

That it provides an opportunity for even small parties that do not have rich backers to campaign

That it makes the parties politically independent, because they do not have to pick up the money in the private business world or from various donors

That it is not business money, that should be crucial

They are scared of lobbyists

There would otherwise be a big difference in private contributions and thus the parties' ability to 'advertise' and work on equal terms

They are probably politically active

They care a lot about politics

They probably think that it is necessary for democracy. If there is no public support, private individuals can buy the political power

They must be independent of interest groups and companies

They want to make money on the support, it was meant to support parties to get in with some seats

Those who are members of parties

There can be many reasons for both selfish personal and selfless ideological. Allows for personal gain. Ensures greater diversity of parties

They are the ones who get a lot of money out of it and therefore have a lot to lose

It is expensive to run a party apparatus.

It is a democratic distribution of money.

It is a way to ensure that everyone can stand for election to the Folketing. In theory a good thing but in practice just the same parties shovelling money in election year after election year

That's a little hard to answer

It is probably a good idea, that has its advantages and disadvantages, if there are many good advantages then it has the right to exist

It is manageable

I haven't thought about it

I have no idea

It costs to campaign

It ensures that not only parties with strong voters who can support with donations can carry out their political work

It will probably make many things easier

Bad idea

Otherwise they don't get paid

Otherwise it would only be rich people who get into parliament

Many parties wouldn't exist if they don't get support

Because they can make themselves independent of private contributions

Because it's easy

Because not everyone has the same amount of money to run campaigns

Because parties with low financial support, but good ideas, also have the opportunity for seats in parliament. It also gives the people's voices direct monetary influence in politics, regardless of their background or economic situation

Free information of what the parties stand for

Transparency and equality

Incestuous culture and selfish lust

I do not think that some of my tax dollars should go to parties with which I may disagree

Cannot respond on behalf of others. Do not think I am against, but only that the amount is too large

Equal opportunities for all parties

Equality, everyone must have an opportunity and not be stopped by finances

Many seats / votes are a lot of money and provide more opportunities in connection with election campaigns etc.

Less risk of corruption when it is not private funds. Our political system is everyone's interest in a democracy, so it's ok that we all help pay

Nepotism

Precisely because the liberalist tendency should not take over, and where the powerful get power - see the USA and Italy! Countries without any visions and perspectives for their people - other than personal power!

Because in a democracy everyone should be heard

Stability

Then it is not only the wealthy who can be involved in politics

Supporters of party support have not been out in private

Trust

To avoid lobbyism

Their parties have a hard time getting others to support financially - the big parties get a huge amount

To strengthen democracy, so that everyone can run without having a lot of money

It provides equal opportunities, makes parties independent of eg companies

Idiots

I am opposed to public support

Even those who are not supported by organizations have the opportunity to make informative material

Belief in democracy, opportunity for paid party work, less corruption

Q3. Some people oppose state party funding. What do you think their reasons for that might be? Please write as many thoughts and considerations as you can come up with, and feel free to use key words.

That they do not trust the politicians

That the big parties get more economic benefits

That they think it's a lot of money, and that it is insane that some "indifferent" protest party can get a share of the money even if they do not even get into the Folketing. Secondly, one could also argue that the parties must reduce the number of employees and/or raise the fees from their members if they lack money

That the funds can be used better and that the parties should manage themselves.

That the parties themselves must obtain the money for the election campaign. It is easier for the right-wing parties

That the money could be used better in other places

That the state fund votes

They are generally opposed to public support

They are probably worried that too many small parties will gain a foothold

They are supporters of the free market

They may think that the parties should sponsor themselves or find private sponsors

They may not think that the money is being spent in the best way. There can be a kind of politician fatigue. There can be a resistance to all the worthless quarrels

They probably think it's a waste of tax dollars

They probably think that politicians are expensive enough

The smaller parties do not have the same opportunities in relation to the daily political work as there is not the same opportunity for hiring staff. Unfair competition in elections

They have to take care of it themselves if they want to get in

They probably see many disadvantages that they do not like

The strongest parties get the most support. Smaller parties receive the least support. It's odd. The support comes from taxpayers' pockets

The strongest will survive

They support small parties that do not get that much. The traditionally large parties sit in power from election to election. The elections are flowing together as a party with many votes can buy itself into votes in the next election. Money should not play a role in politics

They think it's too much money

They do not want independent parties. That the number of parties is limited. It is not the taxpayers who have to pay for parties they do not agree with. It is becoming more difficult to 'control' a political party with its own donations

It is then disgusting that some people deliberately go after the political career, as it provides an opportunity to get the trunk down in the big treasure chest!

It is a bad idea to support parties that you completely disagree with

There is a lot of money spent on this which could be used better in other areas.

It's a lot of money that goes into something unnecessary (or so I believe)

There are probably those who believe that there should be absolutely no public support - that is, equal to the United States

It's a waste of money

It is state controlled

Selfishness, stinginess

Is the parties' own problem

People who generally want a smaller state and are fine with capitalism and money controlling everything

Too much wasted money

Because they then support parties they are directly opposed to

Because you then via the tax will pay to parties you do not agree with

Because you know the money could be spent on others

General public support

The reason is probably that some people are generally against public support

The reason may be that they want to work more seriously for the cause

High taxes, everyone has to fend for themselves, the public sector should not have to pay, why should you pay via the tax to parties with which you do not agree

I do not think they should have such high support, and what do they use the money for, is there a budget?

Cannot respond on behalf of others. I think it's ok with public support, however, the amount is too large

Capitalists and liberals

The country has other things to spend money on

You do not get anything for your money in relation to parties that line up but have no influence. Large parties get more than small ones

It's a lot of money

People are inherently greedy and selfish and will use every penny they can get even if they do not need it

Jealousy

Maybe the money can go to something else

Nepotism

Some are just against all public support

Cheap. Not interested in minorities

Public support for a party you do not agree with has a negative effect.

The parties should be more in touch with their grassroots movements and be able to gather (financial) support there

The money can be used in another way

The money can be used on something better

Society pays the cost

As I wrote before, there are some parties where I think they are not at all interested in getting into parliament

Everyone has to work to make money, not get it gifted

That money can benefit elsewhere in our society

The best policy will win in all circumstances, we also include parties / people like Stram course / Paludan

It is not the task of the tax authorities

No taxpayer should have to pay for a political party

Lack of insight / narrow-mindedness

The money can be used better elsewhere in society

Selfishness, do not believe in democracy, lack of sense of reality

Waste of citizens' money

Appendix 2: Supplementary Information for Chapter Five

Table A2.1: Gender, Age and Region in the British Sample Compared to Target Population (Per cent)

| Variable | YouGov Sample | | Population Estimate |
|--------------------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| | Unweighted | Weighted | |
| Gender | | | |
| Female | 52.1 | 51.2 | 50.6 |
| Male | 47.9 | 48.8 | 49.4 |
| Age | | | |
| 18-34 | 24.0 | 28.3 | 28.0 |
| 35-54 | 33.8 | 33.7 | 33.0 |
| 55-69 | 24.5 | 21.6 | 22.0 |
| 70+ | 17.7 | 16.4 | 17.0 |
| Region | | | |
| North East | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.0 |
| North West | 11.0 | 11.0 | 11.0 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 8.4 | 8.2 | 8.2 |
| East Midlands | 7.3 | 7.3 | 7.3 |
| West Midlands | 8.1 | 8.8 | 8.8 |
| East of England | 9.4 | 9.3 | 9.3 |
| London | 12.9 | 13.1 | 13.4 |
| South East | 13.9 | 13.7 | 13.7 |
| South West | 8.7 | 8.6 | 8.4 |
| Wales | 4.9 | 4.8 | 4.7 |
| Scotland | 8.5 | 8.4 | 8.1 |
| Northern Ireland | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.8 |

* Population estimates from Office for National Statistics, available at:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

Table A2.2: Gender, Age and Region in the Danish Sample Compared to Target Population (Per cent)

| Variable | YouGov Sample | | Population Estimate |
|-------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| | Unweighted | Weighted | |
| Gender | | | |
| Female | 51.0 | 50.6 | 50.2 |
| Male | 49.0 | 49.4 | 49.7 |
| Age | | | |
| 18-34 | 26.9 | 27.4 | 27.4 |
| 35-54 | 32.6 | 32.6 | 31.6 |
| 55-69 | 22.8 | 22.4 | 22.6 |
| 70+ | 17.8 | 17.5 | 18.2 |
| Region | | | |
| Hovedstaden | 31.9 | 31.7 | 31.7 |
| Sjælland | 14.3 | 14.5 | 14.3 |
| Syddanmark | 20.7 | 21.1 | 21.0 |
| Midtjylland | 22.7 | 22.6 | 22.8 |
| Nordjylland | 10.4 | 10.2 | 10.1 |

* Population estimates from Statistics Denmark, available at: <https://www.dst.dk>

Full survey questionnaire

Introductory text

In this survey, we are interested in your opinions on political parties, and particularly on how parties are funded. Your answers will be used to help researchers understand the role that citizens think money should play in their political system.

We begin with some questions about your thoughts on the public funding of parties.

Support for state party funding

[Q1] In many countries, including the UK/Denmark, the state provides public money directly to political parties. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. It makes sense to fund political parties with public money
2. It is wrong for the state to fund political parties
3. Supporting the work of political parties is a good use of taxpayer money
4. Funding parties with public money is wasteful

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

Collusion

[Q2] How often do you think political parties in the UK/Denmark introduce legislation to increase their own party's access to public funds?

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very often
6. Don't know

[Q3] And what do you think political parties spend most of their public funds on?
Please enter the first one or two thoughts that come to mind.

Support for big donor funding

[Q4] There is some debate about the extent to which big donors should be financially involved in politics. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. Big donors should be allowed to donate as much money as they want to a political party
2. It is very important to avoid the influence of big donors on the political process
3. Politicians listen more to their supporters that give big donations than to their non-donating supporters
4. Big donors receive policy favours from parties in return for their donations

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

Support for banning different categories of big donors

[Q5] Big donors fall into several different categories. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. Corporations should be banned from donating to political parties
2. Very wealthy individuals should be banned from donating to political parties
3. Interest groups should be banned from donating to political parties
4. Trade unions should be banned from donating to political parties

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

Trade-off between big donor and state funding

[Q6] Policy-makers face some trade-offs when deciding how to regulate public funds and big donors in politics. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. The state should strictly limit the amount of money political parties are allowed to receive from big donors, even if that means providing them with more public funds
2. The state should strictly limit the amount of money political parties are allowed to receive from public funds, even if that means leaving parties open to big donor influence

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

Support for grassroots funding

[Q7] A party often tries to collect financial support from its 'grassroots' supporters, via small donations and/or membership fees. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

1. Encouraging parties to collect small donations and membership fees is a good way to make sure they stay connected to their regular supporters
2. Parties should not be obligated to collect grassroots funds
3. It is important that members and supporters have a financial stake in their chosen party
4. Parties should be financially independent of their members and supporters

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

Actual vs perceived party funding

[Q8] If you had to guess, how much of their total income do you think political parties in the UK/Denmark generally receive from each of the three main funding sources just discussed?

1. Public funds
2. Big donors
3. Grassroots funds

Scale:

0-100%

Don't know

Regulation of party finances

[Q9] When states provide parties with public money, the condition is that parties must accept a degree of state regulation. This includes, for example, an obligation for parties to make their financial accounts transparent and open to the public. Based on this description, to what extent do you think the state should regulate the finances of political parties?

1. Not at all
2. To a small degree
3. To some degree
4. To a high degree
5. To a very high degree
6. Don't know

Text

Now we would like to ask you what types of political parties you think benefit the most from access to public funds.

Small or large parties

[Q10] Do you think that public funding benefits small or large parties?

1. Benefits small parties much more than large parties
2. Benefits small parties slightly more than large parties
3. Benefits small and large parties equally
4. Benefits large parties slightly more than small parties
5. Benefits large parties much more than small parties
6. Don't know

New or established parties

[Q11] Do you think that public funding benefits new or established parties?

1. Benefits new parties much more than established parties
2. Benefits new parties slightly more than established parties
3. Benefits new and established parties equally
4. Benefits established parties slightly more than new parties
5. Benefits established parties much more than new parties
6. Don't know

Text

Now we would like to ask you a few questions about the role you believe that political parties currently play in the UK/Denmark's democracy.

Parties as essential to democracy

[Q12] Some people say that political parties are essential for democracy in the UK/Denmark. Others think that political parties are not needed in the UK/Denmark. To what extent do you agree with the statement that parties are essential for democracy?

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

[Q13] In order to carry out their tasks, political parties need to cover the costs of a number of activities. If you had a say in making the budget of a hypothetical political party in the UK/Denmark, on which activities would you like to see spending increased and on which activities would you like to see spending reduced?

1. Holding public forums to hear citizen concerns
2. Recruiting and training politicians
3. Informing and educating the public about policy issues
4. Selling policies through 'spin doctors' and the media
5. Researching new creative solutions to societal problems
6. Producing posters and pamphlets

Scale:

1. Greatly decreased
2. Slightly decreased
3. Kept the same
4. Slightly increased
5. Greatly increased
6. Don't know

[Q14] How important is it that parties receive enough public funding to make sure they can carry out their tasks?

1. Not at all important
2. Slightly important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Quite important
5. Very important
6. Don't know

Party representation

[Q15] How good do you think parties in the UK/Denmark are at representing the people who voted for them?

1. Very bad
2. Quite bad
3. Neither good or bad
4. Quite good
5. Very good
6. Don't know

Trust in parties

[Q16] How much trust would you say that you have in political parties in the UK/Denmark? Try to think of parties in general, rather than any particular party.

1. Absolutely none
2. Very little
3. Neither a little nor a lot
4. Quite a lot
5. A great deal

Perceived party responsiveness

[Q17] How much influence do you think that political parties in the UK/Denmark enable people like you to have on their policy programs?

1. Absolutely none
2. Very little
3. Neither a little nor a lot
4. Quite a lot
5. A great deal

Political interest

[Q18] How interested are you in politics?

1. Not at all interested
2. Only slightly interested
3. Somewhat interested
4. Quite interested
5. Very interested

Vote intention

[Q19] If there were an election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

British response options:

1. Conservatives
2. Labour
3. Liberal Democrats
4. Brexit Party

5. Greens
6. Scottish National Party
7. Plaid Cymru
8. Democratic Unionist Party
9. Another party/ a candidate from another party
10. Will not vote
11. Have never voted
12. Don't want to answer
13. Don't know

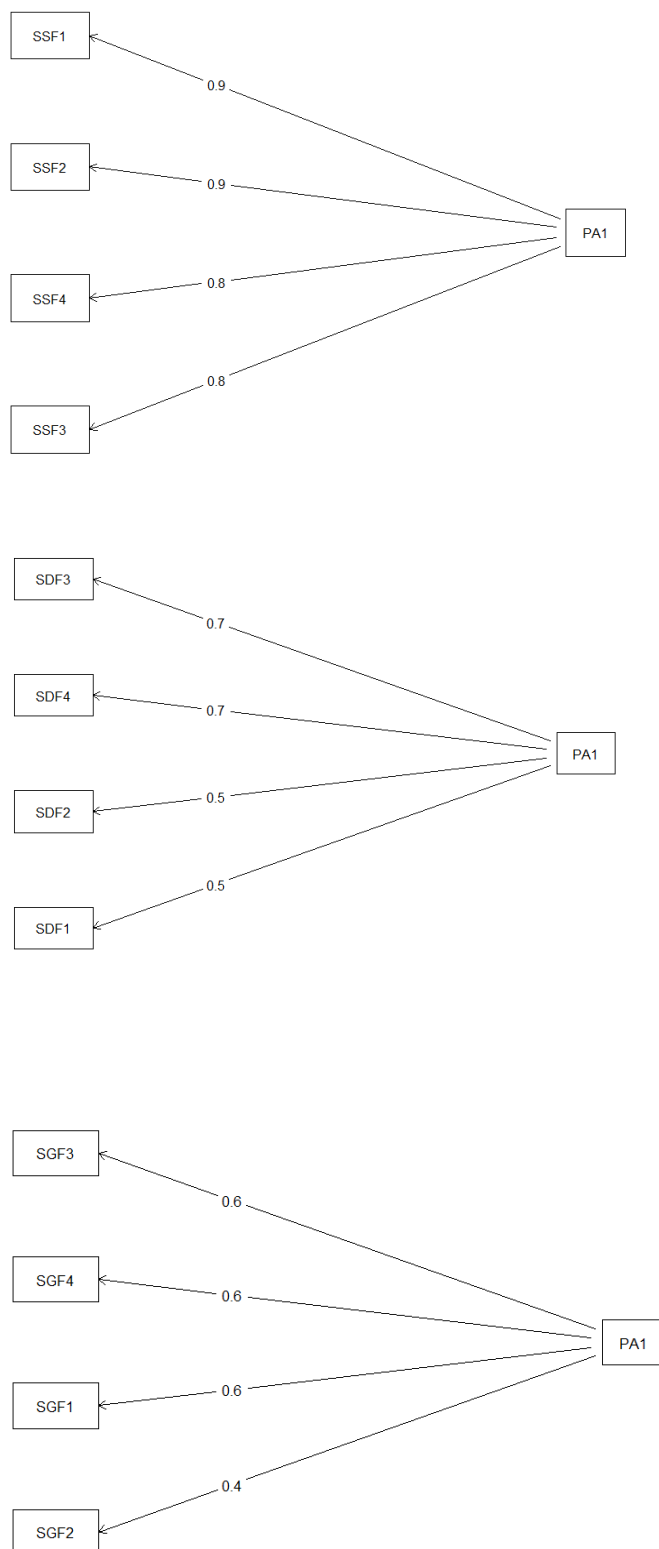
Danish response options:

1. A: Socialdemokratiet
2. B: Radikale Venstre
3. C: Det Konservative Folkeparti
4. D: Nye Borgerlige
5. F: Socialistisk Folkeparti
6. I: Liberal Alliance
7. K: Kristendemokraterne
8. O: Dansk Folkeparti
9. P: Stram Kurs/Hard Line
10. V: Venstre
11. Ø: Enhedslisten
12. Å: Alternativet
13. G: Veganerpartiet
14. Andet parti/Kandidat uden for partierne
15. Vil ikke stemme
16. Har ikke stemmeret
17. Vil ikke svare
18. Ved ikke

Outro text

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Figure A2.1: Indices' Factor Loadings



* SSF = Support for State Funding, SDF = Support for Donor Funding, SGD = Support for Grassroots Funding.

Table A2.3: Item Discrimination Tests

| Big donor index | α if item deleted | Grassroots index | α if item deleted |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Item 1 | 0.66 | Item 1 | 0.55 |
| Item 2 | 0.60 | Item 2 | 0.61 |
| Item 3 | 0.57 | Item 3 | 0.55 |
| Item 4 | 0.57 | Item 4 | |

Notes: Data pooled across countries.

Table A2.4: Cronbach's Alpha and Inter-Item Correlations

| Index | Country | Cronbach's alpha | Inter-item correlation |
|------------|---------|------------------|------------------------|
| State | UK | 0.92 | .74 |
| State | Denmark | 0.92 | .75 |
| Big donors | UK | 0.65 | .34 |
| Big donors | Denmark | 0.65 | .33 |
| Grassroots | UK | 0.64 | .31 |
| Grassroots | Denmark | 0.59 | .27 |

The index of support for grassroots funding in Denmark is very slightly below the conventionally accepted cut-offs of 0.60 for Cronbach's alpha and 0.30 for the inter-item correlation score. I therefore conducted inter-item discrimination tests on the four items within the grassroots funding index in Denmark, to see whether dropping one item increased the Cronbach's alpha above 0.59. As Table A2.5 shows, it did not, so I kept all the items in the analysis.

Table A2.5: Item Discrimination Tests on Grassroots Index in Denmark

| | α if item deleted |
|--------|--------------------------|
| Item 1 | 0.530 |
| Item 2 | 0.577 |
| Item 3 | 0.509 |
| Item 4 | |

Figure A2.2: Dimensionality of Indices (Between Countries)

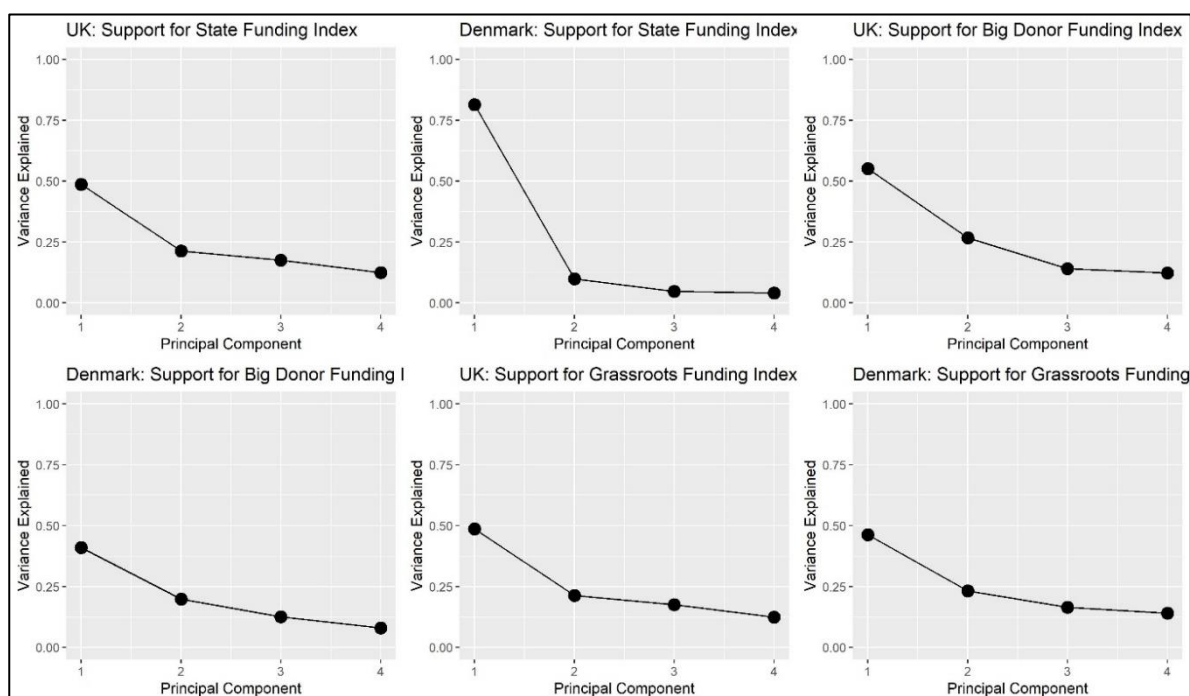


Table A2.6: Difference in Means Support for State, Big Donor and Grassroots Funding, with DKs as Neutral (Across Countries)

| Index 1: Mean | Index 2: Mean | Difference |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| State: 0.40 (0.28) | Big donors: 0.28 (0.22) | 0.12*** |
| State: 0.40 (0.28) | Grassroots: 0.54 (0.17) | 0.14*** |
| Grassroots: 0.54 (0.17) | Big donors: 0.28 (0.22) | 0.26*** |

Note: *** $p < 0.001$. All indices scaled 0-1, where 0 = oppose and 1 = support. DKs coded as 0.5. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Table A2.7: Difference in Means Support for State, Big Donor and Grassroots Funding, with DKs as Neutral (Between Countries)

| Index | Mean, UK | Mean, Denmark | Difference |
|------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| State | 0.39 (0.28) | 0.42 (0.28) | 0.03** |
| Big donors | 0.22 (0.21) | 0.34 (0.21) | 0.12*** |
| Grassroots | 0.58 (0.18) | 0.52 (0.16) | 0.06*** |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. All indices scaled 0-1, where 0 = oppose and 1 = support. DKs coded as 0.5. Standard deviations in parentheses.

Table A2.8: Number of Observations in Each Variable with DKs Excluded

| Variable | UK (n = 2,027) | Denmark (n = 2,048) |
|---|----------------|---------------------|
| Party representation | 1943 | 1870 |
| Party collusion over state resources | 1326 | 1597 |
| Parties as essential for democracy | 1886 | 1844 |
| Type of party benefitting from state funds (small or large) | 1593 | 1606 |
| Type of party benefitting from state funds (new or established) | 1540 | 1583 |
| Regulation of party finance | 1812 | 1651 |
| Partisanship | 1531 | 1540 |
| Trust in parties | 2027 | 2048 |
| Perceived party responsiveness | 2027 | 2048 |
| Political interest | 2027 | 2048 |

Table A2.9: Summary of Main Correlations (H2.1-H2.6) with DKs as neutral

| Variable correlated with support for state party funding | Expected direction of relationship | Rho, p-value (across countries) | Rho, p-value (UK) | Rho, p-value (Denmark) |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Representation | + | 0.27*** | 0.20*** | 0.36*** |
| Collusion | - | -0.34*** | -0.25*** | -0.42*** |
| Essential | + | 0.18*** | 0.14*** | 0.17*** |
| Small/large | - | -0.17*** | -0.16*** | -0.17*** |
| New/established | - | -0.12*** | -0.10*** | -0.13*** |
| Regulation | + | 0.04* | 0.07** | 0.02 |
| Support for big donor funding | - | 0.07* | -0.11*** | 0.05* |

Figure A2.3: Actual vs Perceived Party Funding in the UK

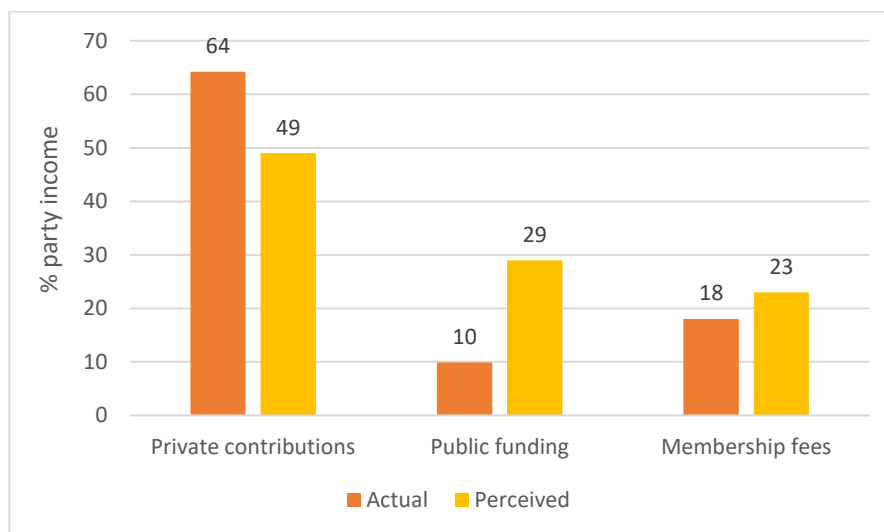
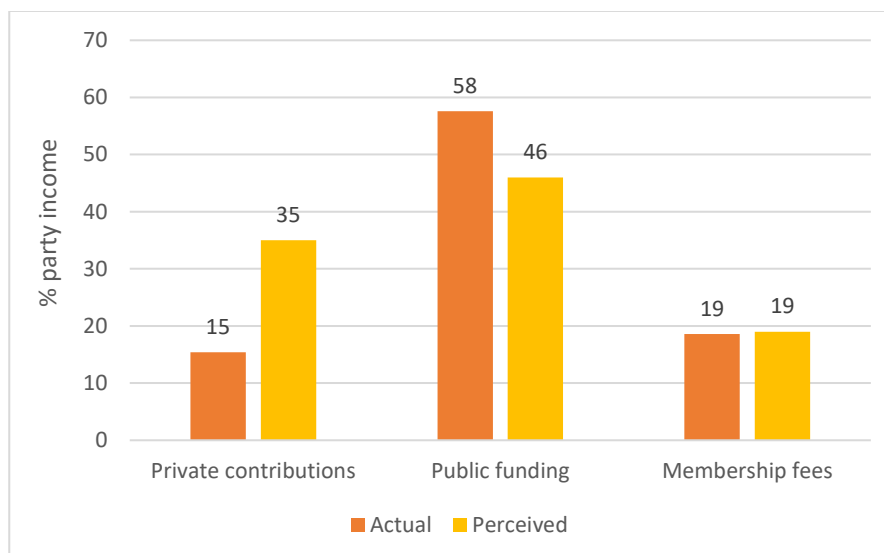


Figure A2.4: Actual vs Perceived Party Funding in Denmark



Appendix 3: Supplementary Information for Chapter Six

Full survey questionnaire

Introduction

Welcome to this short survey! The aim of this study is to research how people understand texts about political issues. Recently, there has been some discussion about the topic of state funding for political parties, so we will ask you to read some material on this topic. But first, we would like you to answer some general questions about politics.

Anti-establishment attitudes

[Q1] To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? People have different opinions about political parties, and there are no right or wrong answers.

1. The people instead of political parties should make our most important policy decisions.
2. Political parties are corrupt.
3. Political parties make decisions that harm the interests of the ordinary people.
4. The ordinary people should have more influence in political decision making than corporations that only want to make profits.

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don't know

Economic left-right placement

[Q2] Many social benefits and services are paid for by taxes. If the government *had* to choose between increasing taxes and spending more on social benefits and services, *or* decreasing taxes and spending less on social benefits and services, which should they do?

1. Decrease taxes a lot and spend much less on social benefits and services
2. Decrease taxes a bit and spend a bit less on social benefits and services
3. Increase taxes a bit and spend a bit more on social benefits and services

4. Increase taxes a lot and spend much more on social benefits and services
5. Don't know

Political interest

[Q3] How interested are you in politics?

Scale:

1. Not at all interested
2. Only slightly interested
3. Somewhat interested
4. Quite interested
5. Very interested

Party attachment

[Q4] Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the other parties?

Scale:

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to answer
4. Don't know

Partisanship

[Q4a] Which party do you feel closer to?

British response options:

1. Conservatives
2. Labour
3. Liberal Democrats
4. Brexit Party
5. Greens
6. Scottish National Party
7. Plaid Cymru
8. Democratic Unionist Party
9. Another party/ a candidate from another party
10. Prefer not to answer
11. Don't know

Danish response options:

1. A: Socialdemokratiet
2. B: Radikale Venstre
3. C: Det Konservative Folkeparti
4. D: Nye Borgerlige
5. F: Socialistisk Folkeparti

6. G: Veganerpartiet
7. I: Liberal Alliance
8. K: Kristendemokraterne
9. O: Dansk Folkeparti
10. P: Stram Kurs
11. V: Venstre
12. Ø: Enhedslisten
13. Å: Alternativet
14. Andet parti/Kandidat uden for partierne
15. Ønsker ikke at svare
16. Ved ikke

Degree of party attachment

[Q5] How close do you feel to this party? Do you feel that you are ...

Scale:

1. Not at all close
2. Not close
3. Quite close
4. Very close
5. Don't know

Trust in parties

[Q6] How much trust would you say that you have in political parties in the UK/Denmark?

Scale:

1. Absolutely none
2. Very little
3. Neither a little nor a lot
4. Quite a lot
5. A great deal

#Experiment 1: Worthiness and Fallibility Frames

#Introduction

Text

Now, we would like to ask for your general thoughts on whether or not providing political parties with state funding is a good idea. Some people strongly oppose the policy of providing parties with state funding, while others strongly support this policy.

Split sample: randomly assign to one of the three groups:

1. Go to Control group
2. Go to Treatment1
3. Go to Treatment2

#Control group

[Straight to measurement of dependent variable]

#Treatment group 1: Worthiness frame

[Intro text]: **In the following we show you an extract from an opinion piece. The writer argues in favour of providing parties with state funding, on the basis that parties are essential to democracy. Please read the text carefully, as you will be asked questions about it afterwards.**

[Main text]: Political parties are essential to democracy. They contribute substantially to the making of public policy. They offer voters alternative policies and candidates to choose from at elections. Above all, political parties are the main means through which ordinary citizens can, and do, become involved in the democratic process. In short, political parties perform functions that are crucial to a strong democracy.

The principal argument in favour of providing parties with state funding is that it enables them to perform these essential functions more fully and effectively. Modern parties face, on the one hand, falling incomes from traditional sources like membership fees, and on the other, rising costs of campaigning and policy research. In order for them to be able to meet these challenges, clearly they must be properly funded.

Without sufficient state funding, we risk the development of ‘a slum democracy’, in which parties are poorly staffed and unable to prepare themselves adequately for the task of running the country. By providing parties with state funding, we recognise that no modern democracy can exist without them.

#Treatment group 2: Fallibility frame

[Intro text]: **In the following we show you an extract from an opinion piece. The writer argues in favour of providing parties with state funding, on the basis that it prevents big donors from influencing politics. Please read the text carefully, as you will be asked questions about it afterwards.**

[Main text]: Political parties are over-reliant on big donors. While parties usually maintain that they do not give any special favours to their donors, the connection between donations and political influence is obvious. Whether these donors are corporations or wealthy individuals, there is a clear risk that they could use their financial might to sway parties’ decision-making. In short, parties could listen more to the rich and powerful than to ordinary citizens.

The principal argument in favour of providing parties with state funding is that it would ‘purify’ the political process by removing big money from politics. With state funding, parties become no longer reliant upon large donors and, being no longer reliant upon them, become immune from any temptation to grant them privileged access to top politicians or unwarranted influence over policy, contracts or honours.

Without sufficient state funding, we risk the development of ‘a sleaze democracy’, in which the parties have an unhealthy reliance on funding from the top 1%. By providing parties with state funding, we recognise that protecting the integrity of the democratic process is worth a few pounds.

Randomize statement order – however keep same order the panellist is shown in Q7b

[Q7a] Based on this information, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. It makes sense to fund political parties with public money.
2. It is wrong for the state to fund political parties.
3. Supporting the work of political parties is a good use of taxpayer money.
4. Funding parties with public money is wasteful.

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
6. Don’t know

#Manipulation check

[Q8a] Was the position taken in the text you read that the state should or should not fund political parties?

Scale:

1. Definitely should not
 2. Should not
 3. Unclear
 4. Should
 5. Definitely should
 6. Don’t know
-

#Experiment 2: Information about Grassroots Conditions

#Introduction

Text

We would now like to hear your view on a proposal that has recently been discussed in the debate on state funding for political parties. Please read the following text carefully, as you will be asked questions about it afterwards.

Split sample: randomly assign to one of the three groups:

1. Go to Control group
2. Go to Treatment1
3. Go to Treatment2
4. Go to Treatment3

#Control group

In recent years, it has become clear that parties are seen as out of touch with people's day-to-day lives. They are often criticized for not doing enough to get citizens involved in politics. The question is: how can we get parties to re-connect with citizens?

One policy proposal currently being debated relates to the public funding of parties. The proposal is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they would have to live up to certain conditions designed to make parties more accessible to regular people, and more inclusive of a wide range of people.

Some people say that attaching such conditions to public funds would be a bad idea, because parties should not be told how to behave. But, others support the idea. They say that it would force parties to engage with more citizens, making them better able to represent public concerns and preferences.

#Treatment group 1: Members

In recent years, it has become clear that parties are seen as out of touch with people's day-to-day lives. They are often criticized for not doing enough to get citizens involved in politics. The question is: how can we get parties to re-connect with citizens?

One policy proposal currently being debated relates to the public funding of parties. The proposal is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they would have to live up to certain conditions designed to make parties more accessible to regular people, and more inclusive of a wide range of people.

One idea on the table for achieving this is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they must have a large and strong membership base of interested citizens. Specifically, the state would require that parties have a certain number of ordinary citizens registered as fee-paying members, who have regular opportunities to make their voices heard by discussing and voting on important party decisions.

Some people say that attaching such conditions to public funds would be a bad idea, because parties should not be told how to behave. But, others support the idea. They

say that it would force parties to engage with more citizens, making them better able to represent public concerns and preferences.

#Treatment group 2: Diversity

In recent years, it has become clear that parties are seen as out of touch with people's day-to-day lives. They are often criticized for not doing enough to get citizens involved in politics. The question is: how can we get parties to re-connect with citizens?

One policy proposal currently being debated relates to the public funding of parties. The proposal is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they would have to live up to certain conditions designed to make parties more accessible to regular people, and more inclusive of a wide range of people.

One idea on the table for achieving this is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they must engage with a mix of people from all walks of life. Specifically, the state would require that parties have a certain percentage of MPs from politically under-represented backgrounds, and that the party uses a certain amount of the money they receive on outreach programs, such as workshops and forums with people from disadvantaged communities.

Some people say that attaching such conditions to public funds would be a bad idea, because parties should not be told how to behave. But, others support the idea. They say that it would force parties to engage with more citizens, making them better able to represent public concerns and preferences.

#Treatment group 3: Democracy Vouchers

In recent years, it has become clear that parties are seen as out of touch with people's day-to-day lives. They are often criticized for not doing enough to get citizens involved in politics. The question is: how can we get parties to re-connect with citizens?

One policy proposal currently being debated relates to the public funding of parties. The proposal is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they would have to live up to certain conditions designed to make parties more accessible to regular people, and more inclusive of a wide range of people.

One idea on the table for achieving this is that in order for parties to receive state funds, they must collect the funds directly from individual citizens. Specifically, the state would give each voter a special £10 voucher that can only be used as a donation to any of the political parties. Each party would then try to convince voters to spend their vouchers on them rather than on their competitors, or not at all.

Some people say that attaching such conditions to public funds would be a bad idea, because parties should not be told how to behave. But, others support the idea. They say that it would force parties to engage with more citizens, making them better able to represent public concerns and preferences.

Randomize statement order – however keep same order the panellist is shown in Q7b

[Q7b] If such a condition for parties to receive state funding became reality, then to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. It makes sense to fund political parties with public money.
2. It is wrong for the state to fund political parties.
3. Supporting the work of political parties is a good use of taxpayer money.
4. Funding parties with public money is wasteful.

Scale:

1. Strongly disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Neither agree nor disagree
 4. Agree
 5. Strongly agree
 6. Don't know
-

#Manipulation check

[Q8b] Was the position taken in the text that attaching specific conditions to state funds would make parties more or less connected to ordinary citizens?

Scale:

1. Much less connected
 2. Less connected
 3. Unclear
 4. More connected
 5. Much more connected
 6. Don't know
-

#Outro text

Thank you very much for participating in this survey!

Please note that the texts presented in this survey are condensed versions of arguments sometimes heard in debates about the state funding of parties. Based on these arguments, we created texts to find out what citizens think about this topic.

If you have any comments about this survey, please feel free to write them below.

[Open text box]

Table A3.1: Effects of Frames on Support for State Funding, with Country and Experiment Order Fixed Effects

| | <i>Dependent variable:</i> | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Support for State Funding | | | |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Fallibility | 0.084*** (0.014) | 0.084*** (0.014) | 0.084*** (0.014) | 0.084*** (0.014) |
| Worthiness | 0.061*** (0.014) | 0.062*** (0.014) | 0.061*** (0.014) | 0.061*** (0.014) |
| Country FE | | X | | X |
| Order FE | | | X | X |
| Observations | 2,100 | 2,100 | 2,100 | 2,100 |
| R ² | 0.018 | 0.020 | 0.019 | 0.021 |

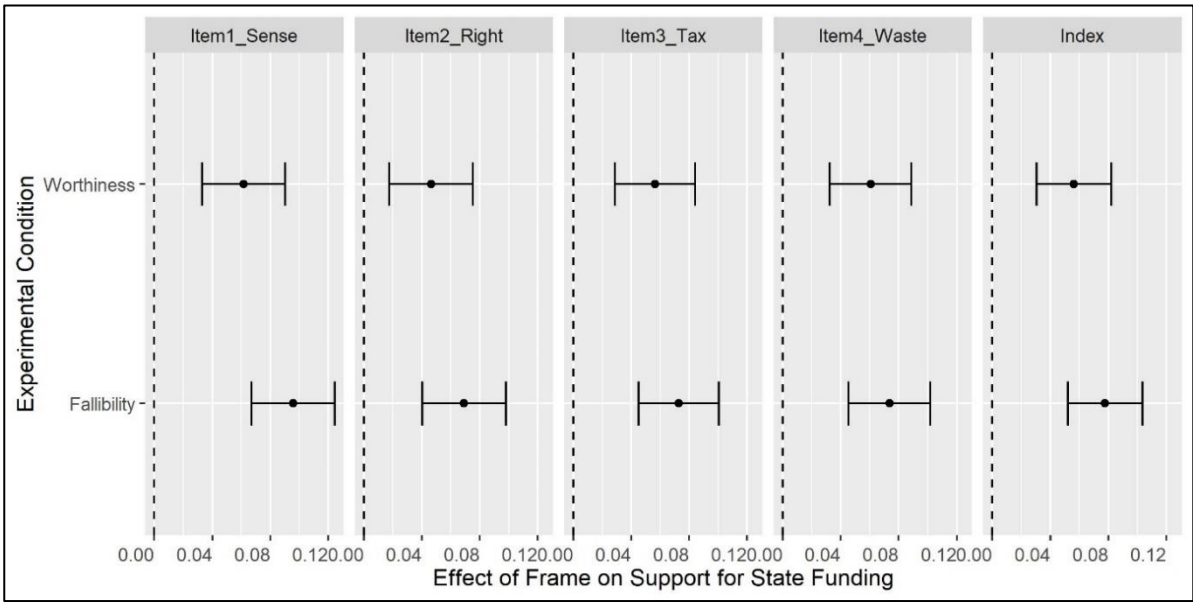
Notes: ***p < 0.001.

Table A3.2: Moderator effects with DKs as neutral

| | <i>Dependent variable:</i> | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | Support for State Funding | | | | |
| | Anti-Est | Trust | Interest | Attachment | Econ-LR |
| Fallibility | -0.020 (0.038) | 0.139*** (0.027) | 0.088*** (0.028) | -0.052 (0.077) | 0.051* (0.029) |
| Worthiness | 0.014 (0.037) | 0.053* (0.027) | 0.027 (0.028) | 0.086 (0.077) | 0.009 (0.029) |
| Moderator | -0.244*** (0.044) | 0.302*** (0.041) | 0.111*** (0.033) | 0.036* (0.020) | 0.204*** (0.034) |
| Fallibility*Moderator | 0.173*** (0.061) | -0.156*** (0.059) | -0.018 (0.045) | -0.003 (0.029) | 0.042 (0.048) |
| Worthiness*Moderator | 0.073 (0.061) | -0.011 (0.059) | 0.056 (0.046) | 0.018 (0.029) | 0.086* (0.048) |
| Observations | 2,211 | 2,211 | 2,211 | 1,244 | 2,211 |
| R ² | 0.038 | 0.065 | 0.037 | 0.023 | 0.086 |

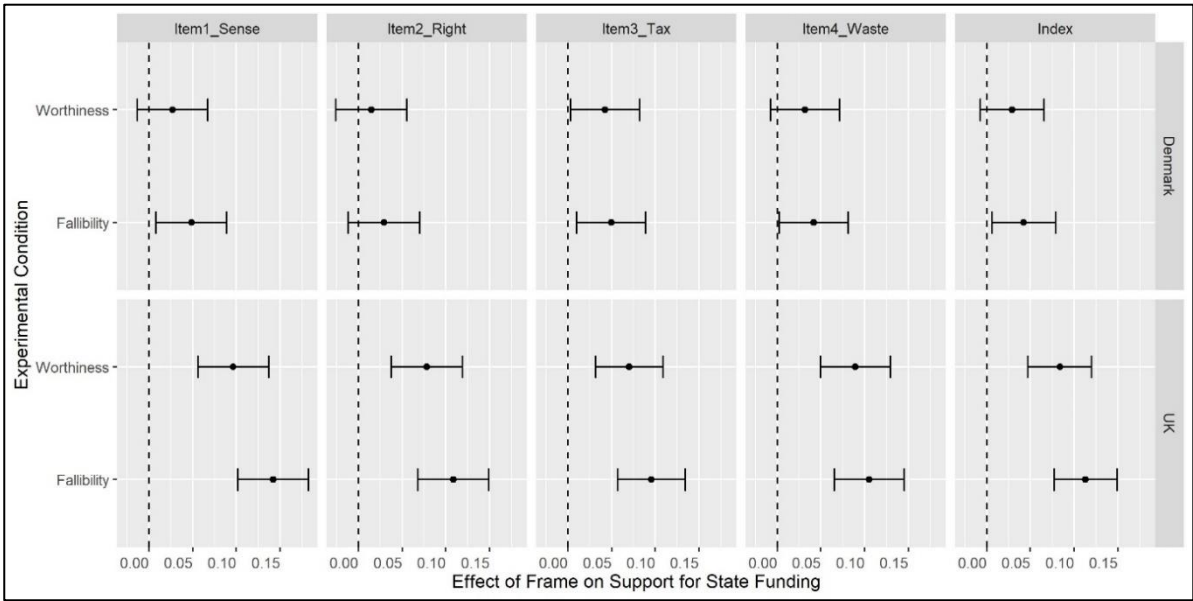
Notes: OLS regression results. *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Figure A3.1: Effects of Frames with DKs as Neutral (Across Countries)



Notes: Figure shows the size of the effects of each frame on mean support for state party funding, scaled 0-1, when DKs are coded as neutral.

Figure A3.2: Effects of Frames with DKs as Neutral (Between Countries)



Notes: Figure shows the size of the effects of each frame on mean support for state party funding, scaled 0-1, when DKs are coded as neutral.

English Summary

Democracies need parties, and parties need money; but, where should this money come from? The question has been tackled by many scholars in the party politics literature. From this literature, we know that although it would be ideal for parties to rely on small donations and membership fees for their income as this promotes strong ties between parties and citizens, unfortunately, this is not a realistic option for modern parties. Given this reality, there are two alternatives: state funding and big donor funding. The party politics literature has also informed us that given this choice, state funding is most likely the “cleaner” option that promotes the highest quality of representation. But, what do citizens think about state party funding? That is the research question of this dissertation.

To answer this question, I link the literatures of party politics and public opinion. These fields have been theoretically and empirically disparate for some time, resulting in each missing out on valuable insights from the other. Using these literatures, I theorise about how much citizens may support state funding in relation to other sources of party funds, which considerations may relate to their support or opposition to state party funding, and which types of arguments and information may increase their support for the policy. I conduct two surveys on citizens in the UK and Denmark to test my theoretical expectations.

The findings show that regardless of whether citizens live in a donor- or a state-reliant party system, they prefer state funding to big donor funding. Citizens’ considerations about party representation, competition, and regulation are also meaningfully correlated with their support for state funding. Furthermore, survey experiments reveal that the way information about the policy is framed matters a great deal. Exposing citizens to the arguments that state funding reduces party reliance on big donors, and that state funding supports the essential work of parties in democracies, significantly increases their support for state party funding.

The research has important implications. The findings allow policy-makers to design party funding regulations that are more in line with citizens’ normative preferences. They provide advocates of state party funding with insights about how to frame communication on the issue. Finally, to scholarly discussions of the legitimacy and desirability of state party funding, they add the missing puzzle piece: citizens’ perspectives.

Dansk Resumé

Demokratier har brug for partier, og partier har brug for penge, men hvor skal disse penge komme fra? Spørgsmålet er blevet behandlet af mange forskere i den partipolitiske litteratur. Fra denne litteratur ved vi, at selvom det ville være ideelt for partier at stole på små donationer og medlemskontingenter for deres indkomst, da dette fremmer stærke bånd mellem partier og borgere, er dette desværre ikke en realistisk mulighed for moderne partier. I lyset af denne virkelighed er der to alternativer: statsstøtte og bidrag fra store donorer. Ifølge den partipolitiske litteratur er statsstøtte højst sandsynligt den "rene" mulighed, der fremmer den højeste kvalitet af repræsentation. Men hvad synes borgerne om statslig finansiering? Det er denne afhandlings forskningsspørgsmål.

For at besvare dette spørgsmål forbinder jeg litteraturen om partipolitisk og litteraturen om den offentlige mening. Disse felter har været teoretisk og empirisk adskilt og er derfor gået glip af værdifuld indsigt fra hinanden. Ved hjælp af disse litteraturer teoretiserer jeg om, hvor mange borgere kan foretrække statsstøtte i forhold til andre kilder til partimidler, hvilke meninger der kan relatere sig til deres støtte eller modstand mod statslig partifinansiering, og hvilke typer af argumenter og informationer der kan øge deres støtte til politik. Jeg gennemfører to undersøgelser om borgere i Storbritannien og Danmark for at teste mine teoretiske forventninger.

Resultaterne viser, at uanset om borgerne lever i et donor- eller et statsafhængigt partisystem, foretrækker de statsstøtte frem for store donorer. Borgernes overvejelser om partirepræsentation, konkurrence og regulering er også meningsfuldt korreleret med deres støtte til statsstøtte. Desuden viser survey-eksperimenter, at det har stor betydning, hvordan information om politikken udformes. Argumenter om, at statsfinansiering reducerer partiernes afhængighed af store donorer, og at statsfinansiering understøtter det væsentlige arbejde for partier i demokratier, øger borgernes støtte til statspartifinansiering markant.

Denne forskning har vigtige implikationer. Resultaterne gør det muligt for politiske beslutningstagere at udforme bestemmelser om partifinansiering, der er mere i overensstemmelse med borgernes normative præferencer. De giver fortalere for statspartifinansiering indsigt i, hvordan man kan udforme kommunikation om spørgsmålet. Endelig tilføjer de den manglende brik i puslespillet i videnskabelige diskussioner om statsstøttens konsekvenser for repræsentationen: borgernes perspektiver.