Who is willing to participate, and how? Dissatisfied democrats, stealth democrats and populists in the UK

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Abstract

This article draws on a new survey of British citizens to test the hypothesis that there are two quite distinctive types of attitude prevalent among those who are 'disaffected' with politics, the 'dissatisfied democratic' and 'stealth democratic' orientations, the former being more widespread in the UK. While neither manifests a high level of trust for the political elite, the dissatisfied democratic citizen is politically interested, efficacious and desires greater political participation, while the contrary is generally true of the stealth democrat. However, although stealth democrats are unwilling to engage in most forms of participation or deliberation, they are ambiguous about direct democracy, which can be attributed to the populist nature of stealth democratic attitudes.

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Introduction[1]

The world's established democracies are replete with talk of political alienation and apathy on the part of citizens. The blame for this state of affairs has been laid at the door of various culprits, including politicians, political parties and other major institutions and processes of representative democracy, the mass media, and occasionally even on the citizens themselves. Putative solutions to the problem tend to depend on where critics apportion the principal source of blame: those who regard the shortcomings of representative democracy per se as central to the problem are inclined to argue that the answer lies in institutional innovations that will bring significant new forms of political participation for ordinary citizens; those who are more inclined to blame the impact of the media, consumerist culture or the failure of the public to understand the nature of politics, see more potential in recourse to better regulation of the media or improved civic education. This article seeks to shed light on the viability of proposals for greater participation in the UK by analysing the attitudes of citizens towards mainstream forms of participation, deliberative democracy and referendums. It argues that there is a fundamental difference of outlook between two quite different types of disaffected citizen, and that one of these types – which has been referred to as 'stealth democratic' elsewhere in the literature – is essentially populist in orientation. While reforms designed to enhance political participation may well meet the aspirations of some citizens, it is not so clear that they will work for these populist stealth democrats. This leaves a considerable challenge for researchers and institutional designers.

1 I am grateful for very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper by Tim Bale, Sabina Avdagic, Lee Savage, Emilie van Haute, Jean-Benoit Pilet and Matt Wall. Sole responsibility for the article lies with me, of course.

The Intellectual Context

There is now a considerable body of evidence attesting to popular dissatisfaction with the political process and its major institutions and actors in the world's established liberal democracies. In the case of Britain, a particular crescendo of complaint and protest about politicians erupted in the context of the Westminster expenses scandals in 2009, though more general evidence of political alienation has been apparent for far longer – and across a wide array of political systems. Much, though not all, is directed at parties and incorporates various forms of anti-party sentiment (thus, parties are widely held to be self-interested, untrustworthy, corrupt, ineffective and increasingly irrelevant). Similarly, public trust in politicians is consistently low.

Of course, especially in the light of the scandals over MPs expenses, some of this negativity can reasonably be seen as deserved. But bad faith, and self-regarding or corrupt behaviour by politicians is, in reality, nothing new. Why, then, is it only in recent years that anti-party sentiment and citizen disaffection has become so pronounced? Various explanations can be found in the literature. Russell Dalton (2004), for instance, rejects country-specific explanations and points to two general trends. The first is rising expectations of government among citizens, especially the young, the better educated, the more affluent, and the post-materialist, who, partly because they believe in democracy, are also the most inclined to criticise. While these are the very groups that have most directly benefited from the spread of affluence, their expectations have increased the most, as has their tendency to criticise political elites, institutions and processes. Yet they do not represent a threat to democracy per se; on the contrary, these 'dissatisfied democrats' are driven by a passion for the democratic creed that fosters disillusionment with the way current political processes operate. A second general source of decreasing political support is the growing complexity of contemporary political agendas and mobilisation. New debates over environmental quality, social norms, lifestyle choices, multiculturalism, and other social

and cultural issues have led to the triumph of interest articulation over interest aggregation. In such fluid, multidimensional policy space it is very difficult for governments to satisfy most of the people most of the time. Moreover the mobilization of 'dissatisfied democrats' makes aggregation more difficult still and provokes a demand for reform that goes beyond tinkering with the core institutions of representative democracy (parties, elections, parliaments) to an increase in direct public involvement in the political process. This in turn threatens to exacerbate the imbalance between the ever-growing clamour of articulated interests and the need for institutions that can effectively channel divergent demands into coherent and effective policy programmes.

In fact, there is widespread interest in participatory democracy in general, and in various forms of deliberative or 'dialogic' democracy in particular (see, eg, Pateman, 1970; 2012; Bessette 1980; Cohen 1989; Fishkin 1991; Nino 1996; Ackerman & Fishkin 2004). These are often favoured as solutions to the problem of political alienation, and enthusiasm extends beyond political theorists: In the UK, The Power Inquiry (2006) advocated more participation, among other things, and commissioned James Fishkin to run its own deliberative exercise in January 2010. The British government's own Green Paper, *The Governance of Britain* (CM7170 2007), proposed use of citizen juries in local politics and the White Paper *Communities in Control* (CM7247 2008) advocated the spread of participatory budgeting in local government. At European level, too, there is significant official interest in the potential of participation through e-democracy (Council of Europe 2009). However, there is of course a long tradition of democratic theory, going back to Schumpeter and Weber, which is generally sceptical of the supposed benefits of participatory democracy, and which casts doubt on the claim that it would work better than 'actually existing democracy' (see Bellamy 2007: 161-3). The most striking contribution in recent years has been made by John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse (2002) in their research on American voters. Drawing on findings from focus groups and surveys, they sternly rebuff the participationist claims, arguing that people:

> *...do not want to make political decisions themselves; they do not want to provide much input to those who are assigned to make these decisions; and they would rather not know the details of the decision-making process…This does not mean that people think no mechanism for government accountability is necessary; they just do not want the mechanism to come into play except in unusual circumstances.*

As Clive James (2009) might put it, democracy is '...that political system that leaves me free not to care about it.' Hibbing and Theiss-Morse summarise the orientations of American citizens as a preference for some kind of 'stealth' arrangement, whereby citizens know that democracy exists, but expect it to be barely visible on a routine basis – an attitude that they describe as naïve and unfeasible. The upshot of their Stealth Democracy study is that the authors criticise both the naïveté of popular attitudes towards politics, and the insistence of some observers that participatory democracy provides the solution to its current discontents. The alleged benefits of participatory - especially deliberative - democracy are portrayed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse as 'wishful thinking', and they point out that research tends to reveal that it only works under very limited conditions. 'Deliberation will not work in the real world of politics where people are different and where tough, zero-sum decisions must be made…real deliberation is quite likely to make them hopping mad or encourage them to suffer silently because of a reluctance to voice their own opinions in the discussion' (2002: 207). They cite a variety of research evidence to debunk three of the major claims of the participationists: that deliberative and participatory democracy produces better decision-making (actually, the most powerful personalities often dominate, whether or not they are the best-informed or most rational); that it enhances the legitimacy of the political system (in fact, face-to-face conflict just exacerbates people's anger and resentment (Morrell 1999); and that it leads to personal development (again, it just exacerbates the sense of powerlessness, inadequacy and marginalization of the weakest participants). Indeed, Diana Mutz (2006) has gone so far as to argue that high-intensity deliberation around political differences can actually reduce the inclination of many people to participate in politics, because of the desire to avoid

conflict. Not surprisingly perhaps, and borrowing from the terminology of principal-agent analysis, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse found that citizens (the principals) prefer to guard against their agents' (politicians and parties) presumed tendency to shirk, not through 'police-patrol' oversight – direct, continuous and proactive – but through 'fire-alarm' oversight – mediated, episodic and reactive (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984). Like Schudson's 'monitorial' citizens, they are watchful and engaged in surveying the political scene rather than gathering information intensely, 'poised for action if action is required' (Schudson 1999: 8).

That said, recent research from the USA now suggests that the pessimism of writers like Hibbing, Theiss-Morse and Mutz may be exaggerated. Using a blend of experimental and survey designs, Neblo et al (2009) have investigated American voters' hypothetical willingness to deliberate and their actual behaviour in response to a real invitation to deliberate with their member of Congress, and found that willingness to deliberate in the US is much more widespread than expected, and that it is precisely the demographic groups that are least likely to participate in traditional partisan politics – and therefore those whom we would expect to express the stealth democracy perspective - who are actually most interested in deliberative participation. However, these findings depend crucially on the particular form of deliberation between citizens and elected representatives that is implemented. Similarly, Bengtsson and Mattila (2009) have found that in Finland people with less education, with less political knowledge and those who feel that the political system does not respond to their needs – again, those we might expect to have 'stealth democratic' attitudes – are actually most likely to want greater use of direct democracy in their political system. Of course, it can be argued that direct or referendum democracy is not at all the same thing as deliberative democracy or high-intensity participation. On the contrary, it has often been regarded as compatible with a populist outlook in which charismatic leaders have direct relationships with the masses, and thereby largely bypass the institutions of representative democracy.

I believe that derive at least two major hypotheses may be derived from this literature which

merit empirical testing. **The first (H1) holds that there are two quite different types of attitude among people who are 'disaffected' with politics: a 'dissatisfied democratic' orientation (likely to be associated with higher social status, well-educated, active and articulate devotees of a vision of highly engaged citizens), and a 'stealth democratic' orientation (likely to be associated with lower social status, less educated, more inactive individuals who have little interest in politics, are largely absorbed by private concerns, and only consent to participate in order to keep untrustworthy elites in check)**. **The second (H2) is that deliberative participation would at best only be effective in respect of those who fit the dissatisfied democratic profile, but would be counter-productive with respect to those of stealth democratic orientation.** While the former may chafe at the participatory limitations of traditional forms of representative democracy, and might thrive in a more participative environment, the latter could actually be more vulnerable to political marginalization, for they are less likely to take to direct and active engagement. They have traditionally depended on parties as key interlocutors and tribunes of their social group interests, but their parties (typically of social democratic or labour hue) have often lost this role through strategic adaptation. Without representative parties that express their social identities and serve as communities of political learning, as was once the case, these citizens retreat into a disaffected and alienated take on politics. These feelings will only be exacerbated by evidence of 'feather-bedding' by self-interested politicians and parties (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse: 121-124).

The implications of the research findings into these issues should be important for the reforms that the political elites who attempt to respond to the problem of democratic disconnect devise. New forms of radical participatory democracy may not be the answer that some envisage them to be; reforming existing systems of representative democracy may be of far greater import, since few citizens are likely to care for more demanding levels of political involvement. However, we cannot be sure of this until

the empirical research is done. This article constitutes an attempt to test the first of the hypotheses set out above in a British context through the analysis of a specially commissioned dataset pertaining to samples of British citizens.

A simple typology of citizen orientations towards politics

The main source of data on which the analysis reported in this article draws is an internet survey of British citizens conducted in the summer of 2011. This produced a representative sample of the adult population weighted by the major demographic factors and by electoral turnout, so that 65% of the sample voted in the 2010 general election, reflecting exactly the actual turnout. This was done in order to ensure that we did not over- or under-sample those who might be inclined to participate in political activity.[2]

We start the analysis by trying to gauge the presence of 'dissatisfied democrats' and 'stealth democrats' in the British electorate through a simple cross-tabulation of just two variables: trust in politicians and interest in politics. By definition, both of these groups should be regarded as having low trust in politicians, but I conceive of them as differing crucially in terms of their interest in politics: while dissatisfied democrats are generally engaged by and interested in politics, stealth democrats are the very opposite. If we reduce the number of categories in each of these key variables to just two – high and low – then it should be noted that logically we generate two further analytical classes in our simple

2 A targeted quota sampling method was used as opposed to random probability sampling. An iterative process was used in order to ensure the data are in the correct proportions for each of the major demographics. This achieved a nationally representative sample, with data weighted to the profile of all adults aged 18+ taking into account age, gender, social class, region, political party identification, newspaper readership and election turnout in May 2010. Target percentages were derived from three sources: Census data; the National Readership survey (a random probability survey comprising 34,000 random face-to-face interviews conducted annually); and (for party identity) YouGov estimates. The latter were derived from an analysis of more than 80,000 responses to YouGov surveys at, or shortly after, the May 2010 general election, when respondents were asked both (i) whether they generally thought of themselves as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, etc. (party identity); and (ii) which party they would support, or had supported, in the 2010 general election. Data were weighted to May 2010 party identity wherever this information is available. The weights used for party identity are consistent with the outcome of the 2010 general election. The final weighted sample size was 1355.

typology: respondents with high political interest and high political trust (whom I would refer to as 'civic enthusiasts') and those with high trust but low interest (whom I call 'contented democrats'). Table 1 reports the distribution of our sample between these four analytical classes: clearly, the high trust categories are almost residual in size, amounting to less than 10% of the total, while the two low-trust types in which we are principally interested in this article absorb most of our cases. The dissatisfied democrats outnumber the stealth democrats by two-to-one.

Table 1: A simple typology of democratic orientations

		Trust in Politicians	
		High Trust	Low Trust
Interest in Politics	High Interest	Civic Enthusiasts (7.4%)	Dissatisfied Democrats (62.1%)
	Low Interest	Contented Democrats (1.1%)	Stealth Democrats (29.4%)

Cramer's v = .116 (.000), n=997

Table 2: Social and political attributes of democratic orientation groups

Social or Political Attribute	Civic Enthusiasts	Contented Democrats	Dissatisfied Democrats	Stealth Democrats	N (sig)
Average Age	46	47	50	45	1355 (.000)
% graduates	37.3	22.2	40.1	26.1	905 (.000)
% social class ABC1	57.5	70	58.7	53.1	993 (.125)
% earning £40,000+	25.9	14.3	31.4	22.6	722 (.094)
% female	41.9	45.5	46.8	64.5	997 (.000)
Mean position on left-right scale (5=left-wing, 25=right-wing)	11.8	15.1	10.3	10.6	944 (.000)
Mean position on liberty-authority scale (6=authoritarian, 30=liberal)	13.4	13.8	13.4	12.7	926 (.302)
% with no partisan id.	9.5	33.3	19.2	45.1	998 (.000)
% very strong partisans	26.4	0	14.8	3.2	872 (.000)
% saying parties important for representation	90.4	90.9	64	37.5	996 (.000)
% claiming good understanding of politics	93.2	45.5	74.7	24.5	998 (.000)
% claiming to be well-informed about politics	85.3	72.7	70.8	16.7	1000 (.000)
% voted in 2010 election	85.1	36.4	74.2	46.8	997 (.000)
% saying voters should have direct say in law-making	56.7	45.5	61.8	55.6	988 (.035)
% saying political elites should be left to govern	71.2	72.7	18.6	16.4	995 (.000)

NOTE: Significance levels refer to Chi-square significances for the cross-tabulations from which these figures are derived, or from the ANOVA significances from which averages and scale means are derived.

H1 states an expectation that the dissatisfied democratic orientation will be associated with higher social status and levels of education, and support for a politically active citizenry, while the stealth democratic orientation will be associated with lower social status and education, and low interest in or engagement with politics. Table 2 provides some basic evidence that suggests these expectations are largely correct. Two-fifths of dissatisfied democrats are graduates compared to just a quarter of stealth

democrats, while 58% of dissatisfied democrats are from the non-manual occupational classes ABC1 (53% of stealth democrats); not surprisingly, the former are generally higher earners than the latter. It is interesting to observe – although it formed no part of the hypothesis – that the stealth democrats are a far more female group than the dissatisfied democrats (or indeed, than either of the two high-trust categories of respondent). On average, they are virtually indistinguishable from dissatisfied democrats in terms of left-right ideology, although they are little less socially liberal.[3] In almost all respects relating to respondent's engagement in political activity or sense of political efficacy, moreover, the stealth democrats score lower than the dissatisfied democrats – sometimes very considerably so. Thus, they are far more likely to lack a partisan identification, or a very strong sense of partisanship even when they do claim some party affinity, and far less inclined to regard political parties as important to representing people's interests. They are much less likely to claim that they have a good understanding of political issues or to be well-informed about politics, and barely half as likely to have turned out to vote at the last general election. Even so, they are only a little less inclined than dissatisfied democrats to agree that citizens should 'have a direct say' in making laws, and neither group shows much appetite for leaving politicians, civil servants or interest groups alone to make political decisions. This last point confirms that both stealth and dissatisfied democrats lack trust in political elites, but it seems clear that in many other respects the two groups differ quite notably.

Models of dissatisfied democracy and stealth democracy

This is but a simple initial exploration of the evidence that bears upon H1. It is important to build more sophisticated and robust measures of stealth and dissatisfied democratic orientations and we can do this through the construction of attitudinal scales that draw on a variety of indicators relevant to the

3 Left-right ideology and social liberalism-authoritarianism are measured by standard additive scales first devised by Heath et al (1993). The former has a theoretical range running from 5 (left-wing) to 25 (right-wing), with a scale mean of 11.1; Cronbach's Alpha = .868, which confirms the reliability of this measure. The latter has a range running from 6 (socially authoritarian) to 30 (socially liberal) and a scale mean of 13.5: Alpha = .767.

underlying concepts. These scales can then be used in multivariate analysis, both as dependent and independent variables: that is, we can deploy them in order first to confirm their demographic and attitudinal predictors, and then to gauge their own causal influence on attitudes towards various forms of political participation.

The stealth democracy index is an additive scale based on 12 attitudinal items that capture the various elements of the concept as I conceive of it. These items include 4 statements with which respondents were asked to agree or disagree that were originally devised by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse themselves: 'Politicians would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action on important problems'; 'What people call "compromise" in politics is really just selling out one's principles'; 'Do you think that the Government would run better or worse if decisions were left up to non-elected independent experts or would it make no difference?'; and 'Do you think that the Government would run better or worse if decisions were left up to successful business people or would it make no difference?' On their own, these items produce a rather low reliability score (Cronbach's Alpha = .557), and do not in any case, I would argue, capture the full nature of the 'stealth democracy' idea as I have set it out here. That is, they do not directly tap into people's sense of trust in political elites and actors, nor their sense of political interest or personal political efficacy. When Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's original index is supplemented with a further 8 items that capture these elements[4] it produces an additive scale with a far more acceptable Alpha score of .755. The scale has a theoretical range of 12-60, with the top end representing a high stealth orientation; the mean score of our sample on this scale is 39.4, which places British citizens slightly closer to the high stealth democracy pole overall.

4 The additional items comprising the stealth democracy index are: I trust the government to act in the best interests of the country; In general, I tend to trust politicians; In general those who are currently involved in decision-making for the country, such as politicians, parties, civil servants and interest groups, are best placed to make these decisions; When people like me get involved in politics, they really can change the way that the country is run; I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics; I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people; To what extent, if at all, do you believe you can influence decisions affecting the country as a whole? How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics?

Dissatisfied democratic orientation is measured similarly, this time through an additive scale based on responses to five questions which seek to capture how far people show a combination of high political interest and efficacy (contrary to stealth democrats), and low trust in elites (similarly to stealth democrats).[5] This scale produces an Alpha reliability score of .690 with a theoretical range running from 5 (indicating a low dissatisfied democracy orientation) to 25 (high dissatisfied democracy orientation) and a mean of exactly 17.4, suggesting that our sample has a fairly high dissatisfied democracy orientation overall. Given my argument that stealth democratic and dissatisfied democratic orientations are fundamentally different types of criticism of the political system today, we would not generally expect respondents to score highly on *both* of these scales. Empirically, this is broadly confirmed by the simple bivariate correlation of -.531 (.000) between the two indices: stealth and dissatisfied democracy orientations are certainly significantly and inversely related to one another. However, this is not a perfect association. A simple test is offered by a cross-tabulation in which each scale is split half-way along into low and high categories; this reveals that 60% of the sample conform exactly to the hypothesized combinations of either a high stealth/low dissatisfied democratic orientation (26.1% of total) *or* a high dissatisfied/low stealth democratic orientation (33.1%). While very few respondents (just 2.5% in fact) manage to return low scores on both indices, a significant minority (38.3%) do score highly on both. Overall, there are more respondents (71.3%) who can be categorized in the high dissatisfied democracy category than in the high stealth democracy category (64.4%), so it can be inferred that the former type is more widespread among British citizens.

What of the demographic and ideological correlates of these two indices? Ordinary least squares

5 The dissatisfied democracy scale items are derived from responses to: I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics; I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people; I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country; In general, I tend to trust politicians; How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics?

models can verify the accuracy of H1, as reported in Table 3. These are simple models including the major demographic factors, along with measures of basic ideological orientation, and a 'conflict avoidance index' which Mutz (2006) argues is of widespread relevance, in that many people dislike politics because of their instinctive desire to avoid the conflict and noise that surrounds it. This is likely to be pertinent because stealth democrats, with their low interest in politics and disdain for politicians, can be expected to be generally conflict-avoidant, while dissatisfied democrats, with their interest in engagement and debate, are more likely to accept the inevitability of political conflict.[6] We can immediately see that, where they are significant, each of the independent variables connects with the two dependent variables in inverse ways. That is, conflict-avoidance relates positively to stealth democracy, but negatively to dissatisfied democracy; those on the left ideologically are more likely to have stealth democratic orientations, while those on the right are more likely to have a dissatisfied democratic profile; women are significantly more likely to be stealth democratic, while men are more likely to be dissatisfied democratic; those of lower occupational class are more likely to be stealth democrats, while those of higher occupational class are more likely to be dissatisfied democrats; and those who score highly on stealth democracy are likely to have left full-time education relatively early, while those scoring highly on dissatisfied democracy will have stayed in education longer. In addition, stealth democrats are more likely to be social authoritarians than social liberals, while the older a respondent is, the more likely they are to be dissatisfied democrats. In short, stealth democrats are generally left of centre, socially authoritarian, female, lower social grade, less well-educated, and conflict-avoidant; dissatisfied democrats are the opposite on most of these counts. All of this is

6 The conflict avoidance index is an additive scale comprised of the following statements: I would rather not justify my political beliefs to someone who disagrees with me; I do not take it personally when someone disagrees with my political views; When I'm in a group, I often go along with what the majority decides is best, even if it is not what I want personally; When I'm in a group, I stand my ground even if everyone else disagrees with me; When people argue about politics, I often feel uncomfortable; I have no problem revealing my political beliefs, even to someone who would disagree with me. The scale has a theoretical range running from 6 (low conflict-avoidance) to 30 (high conflict-avoidance), with a scale mean of 17.7, suggesting that the majority of our sample are actually not overly concerned to avoid conflict. The reliability of the index is confirmed by a high Alpha score of .743.

consistent with the expectations set out in H1.[7]

Table 3: OLS Models of Stealth Democratic and Dissatisfied Democratic Orientations

Independent variable	Standardized coefficients (significance)	
	Stealth democracy	Dissatisfied democracy
Conflict avoidance	.132 (.000)	-.371 (.000)
Left-Right ideology	-.129 (.000)	.098 (.000)
Liberty-Authority ideology	-.128 (.000)	n.s.
Age	n.s.	.116 (.000)
Gender	.133 (.000)	-.176 (.000)
Social grade	.082 (.005)	-.052 (.057)
Terminal age of education	-.163 (.000)	.213 (.000)
Adjusted R2 for model	.150 (n=1173)	.257 (n=1174)

Stealth democracy, dissatisfied democracy and political participation

But what does all this signify for attitudes towards political participation? As a general rule, we would expect dissatisfied democrats, with their 'passion for the democratic creed', to be far keener on all forms of political participation than stealth democrats, although the latter should not be thought of as entirely averse to participation: at the very least they should feel driven to participate if they regard it as a possible means of keeping the political elites that they mistrust 'honest'. But what do we mean by 'participation'? In this article, I will distinguish between three main variants of participation: deliberative democracy, 'orthodox' participation, and referendum democracy. It is common for theorists of deliberative democracy to argue that it is not simply synonymous with 'participatory democracy'; rather, it is a particular form of participation which entails the active engagement of participants in reasoned political discussion. As Carole Pateman (2012: 8) says of deliberative democracy, 'individuals

7 Analysis of residual diagnostics confirms that none of the key assumptions of OLS (linearity, homoscedasticity, no multicollinearity or autcorrelation) are violated in any of the models reported in this article. Details available from author on request.

should always be prepared to defend their moral and political arguments and claims with reasons, and be prepared to deliberate with others about the reasons they provide'. In addition, it is important and interesting to distinguish referendum democracy as a particular type in its own right because of its significance for populist and demagogic forms of politics. Government by direct democracy can be a way of bypassing the normal channels of representative politics without requiring much active involvement of ordinary citizens beyond a simple yes or no vote on a matter of policy. It is a favourite device of the anti-establishment populist organizations (including UKIP and the BNP in the UK) which contend that mainstream parties somehow betray the people they are supposed to represent. By contrast, there are many forms of participation that we might regard as part and parcel of the now 'orthodox' repertoire of activity in representative democracy, especially party and electoral politics, and interest group activity. In this article, each of these three variants of political participation – deliberative democracy, referendum democracy and 'orthodox' (representative) participation – is tested as a dependent variable. More precisely, the respondents' hypothetical willingness to deliberate or participate, and their general preference for direct democracy, are regressed on explanatory models that incorporate stealth democratic orientation, dissatisfied democratic orientation, tendency to avoid conflict and the main ideological and demographic variables.[8] The purpose is to further bolster the

8 Willingness to participate in 'orthodox' ways in the political system is measured by an additive scale constructed from the following attitudinal questions: Would you be willing to: Vote in a local, national or European election? Become a member of a political party? Hold office in a local or national pressure group or organization? Hold local or national party office? Contact a local councillor, members of a devolved assembly, MP or MEP about an issue of concern to you? Sign a public petition regarding a national or local political issue? Take part in a public demonstration about an issue of concern to you? Donate money to a party or other political organization? Write a letter to a newspaper editor? Take an active part in a political campaign about an issue of concern to you? Campaign on behalf of a candidate for local, national, devolved or European election? Be a candidate for an elective post at local, devolved, UK or European levels? Go to a political meeting? Boycott or buy certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons? The scale has a theoretical range running from 14 (low willingness to participate) to 28 (high willingness to participate), with a scale mean of 17.82 (confirming the general unwillingness of respondents to participate). Alpha = .861, indicating good reliability. Willingness to deliberate is measured by a variable called 'willingdeliberate' which is a scale derived loosely from the work of Neblo et al (2010). It is constructed from pooled responses to four slightly different variants of a question about hypothetical willingness to take part in deliberative exercises that were asked of different randomly selected sub-samples of the data set. These variants asked respondents: If you were ever to have the chance of participating in a one-day session where citizens discuss important issues with their local MPs or councillors (for/without a £30 reward), how interested do you think you would be? If you were ever to have the chance of participating in a one-hour online session where citizens discuss important issues with their local MPs or councillors (for/without a £30 reward), how interested do you think you would be? Respondents answering

testing of H1. To this point in the argument, I have sought to demonstrate that stealth democratic and dissatisfied democratic orientations do indeed exist in the electorate, but have done so without checking if these basic attitudinal profiles have their corollaries, as one would imagine they should, in feelings about political participation. It is to be expected that those who score highly on the dissatisfied democracy scale will be eager to take part in any form of political participation, whether it is part and parcel of the normal process of representative democracy, direct democracy or deliberative in nature; by contrast, we would clearly expect those registering high scores on the stealth democracy scale to be far less willing to declare a preference for either orthodox or deliberative political participation. However, it is not so certain that they would be opposed to direct democracy, for there is much in the stealth democratic profile which is intrinsically populist. The stealth democrat is not greatly interested in politics, has little understanding of or patience with its inherent messiness, complexity, adversarialism and frequent need for apparently sub-optimal compromises, and has low regard for political elites in general: while s/he might not have much inclination to get involved in political activity, it is quite conceivable that political actors who hold such views would be drawn to the idea that the ordinary and virtuous people should be able to take decision-making power out of the hands of elites through recourse to referendums.

One would expect that those who are highly conflict-avoidant would generally be disinclined to engage in political activity that involves face-to-face interaction or is plainly adversarial. These considerations would lead one to hypothesize that respondents scoring highly on the conflict-avoidance index will generally score low on willingness to deliberate or undertake orthodox political participation. Attitude towards referendum democracy is harder to predict: on the one hand, a

'very interested' to any of these variants of the questions were coded 4, while those answering 'quite interested' were coded 3, those opting for 'not very interested' were coded 2, and those for 'not at all interested' were coded 1. The scale mean is 2.75 (n=1209). Orientation towards direct democracy is measured by response to the statement: 'Referendums are a good way to decide important political questions', where 5 = strongly agree, 4 = tend to agree, 3 = neither agree/nor disagree, 2 = tend to disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree (scale mean = 3.67, n=1223).

referendum campaign could be adversarial and conflictual; on the other hand, there is little need for direct engagement with others. It is possible for citizens to spectate without participating until the moment of visiting the polling booth. My somewhat tentative hypothesis, then, would be for a less strongly negative relationship between conflict avoidance and referendum democracy than between conflict-avoidance and the other forms of participation. Finally, while I have no clear expectations about the relationships between left-right ideology or liberty-authority and any of these forms of participation, I include them in the models along with the demographic variables in order to control for their effects: without such controls, there is a risk of over-estimating the impact of stealth and dissatisfied democratic attitudes on one or more forms of political participation.

Table 4 reports the results of these three models of political participation. Close examination reveals that the expectations set out in the previous paragraph are largely borne out. The higher a respondent's stealth orientation, the less they are willing to deliberate or participate – but, as hypothesized, the situation is different with regard to referendum democracy. In fact, the relationship between stealth and direct democracy is non-significant, but even this makes for a substantively interesting contrast with the other two forms of participation. There is clearly a degree of ambiguity about the stealth democratic attitude towards direct democracy, which suggests there is something to the argument that stealth democracy carries undertones of populism. By contrast, the higher a respondent's score on the dissatisfied democracy index, the more willing they are to deliberate, participate, or rate referendums highly. These are are all significant relationships. And the more a respondent prefers to avoid conflict, the less they wish to deliberate, participate or favour referendums – all significant relationships (though only at the 10% level for the last of these). Moreover, as predicted, conflict-avoidance does indeed relate less weakly to referendums than to either deliberation or participation.

Table 4: OLS Models of Different Forms of Political Participation

Independent variable	Standardized coefficients (significance)		
	Deliberative democracy	Orthodox participation	Referendum democracy
Stealth democracy	-.140 (.000)	-.205 (.000)	n.s
Dissatisfied dem.	.255 (.000)	.294 (.000)	.226 (.000)
Conflict avoidance	-.179 (.000)	-.231(.000)	-.053 (.086)
Left-Right Ideology	n.s	n.s.	n.s.
Liberty-Authority ideology	n.s	.086 (.000)	-.275 (.000)
Age	-.060 (.048)	.060 (.020)	n.s
Gender	n.s.	n.s.	n.s
Social grade	-.085 (.004)	-.114 (.000)	n.s
Terminal age of education	n.s	.090 (.001)	n.s
Adjusted R2 for model	.216 (n=1103)	.406 (n=1174)	.124 (n=1173)

What of the ideological and demographic predictors? While these are not of central interest in this paper, it is important to control for their influence, of course. None of them is universally significant across all three of the models; indeed, neither left-right ideology nor gender is significant for any of them. The remaining factors are significant for at least one of the models, however. Thus, orthodox participation is positively associated with social liberalism, while a preference for direct democracy is associated with social authoritarianism (a further indication of the populist connotations of referendums). Older respondents are more likely to score highly on the orthodox participation index, but lower on deliberative democracy; occupational class makes no difference to referendum attitudes, but the lower a respondent's class, the less likely they are either to want to deliberate or participate; and while education does not impact significantly on attitude towards direct democracy or deliberation, it does makes respondents significantly more likely to favour orthodox participation. None of these findings should be cause for surprise. In particular, it has long been known that social class and education are positive correlates of political participation, so we would certainly expect to find that higher class and better educated individuals are generally keener on participating, even when holding

all other factors constant.

Is it possible that the particular form of deliberation could change the findings regarding willingness to deliberate? 'Deliberation' is a broad term which takes in a host of different forms of political engagement and it is conceivable that people would be more interested in some types of deliberative exercise than others. Adapting an idea first devised by Neblo and his colleagues (2010), it is possible to go some way towards investigating this proposition through a simple experiment. The sample was split into four randomly selected sub-samples, each of which was asked a slightly different version of the question about their willingness to participate in deliberative consultations with elected representatives. The basic form of the question directed to respondents was 'If you were ever to have the chance of participating in a session where citizens discuss important issues with their local MPs or councillors, how interested do you think you would be?' However, while half of the respondents were asked a version of the question that suggested such sessions would last for a full-day (implicitly through face-to-face interaction), the other half were given a version that proposed a model of engagement involving a one-hour online interaction. Moreover, each half was further sub-divided between those who were offered a payment of £30 for their participation, and those to whom no mention of financial inducement was made. We can use the separate responses of the four sub-samples to gauge whether these variations make a significant difference to the willingness of citizens to deliberate with their elected representatives. Table 5 reports the simple frequency counts across the four variant sub-samples on these questions, and suggests two basic conclusions. First, the financial incentive helps! About two-thirds of respondents are willing to take part in deliberative exercises, whether face-to-face or online, if they are paid a small inducement to do so (Variants A & C). Second, if a financial reward is not provided, then the one-hour online variant (Variant D) is a little more likely to attract participants than the all-day encounter (Variant C) with elected representatives.

Table 5: Impact of variations in exercise on willingness to deliberate

	Variant A		Variant B		Variant C		Variant D	
Very interested	25.9	= 67.0	11	= 45.0	29.4	= 65.2	10.9	= 52.4
Quite interested	41.1		34		35.8		41.5	
Not very interested	11.6	= 29.7	11.6	= 40.7	8.4	= 26.8	11.8	= 36.4
Not at all interested	18.1		29.1		18.4		24.6	
Don't know	3.3	n=305	14.3	n=325	8.1	n=360	11.2	n=365

Variant A: If you were ever to have the chance of participating in a one-day session where citizens discuss important issues with their local MPs or councillors for a £30 reward, how interested do you think you would be?

Variant B: If you were ever to have the chance of participating in a one-day session where citizens discuss important issues with their local MPs or councillors, how interested do you think you would be?

Variant C: If you were ever to have the chance of participating in a one-hour online session where citizens discuss important issues with their local MPs or councillors for a £30 reward, how interested do you think you would be?

Variant D: If you were ever to have the chance of participating in a one-hour online session where citizens discuss important issues with their local MPs or councillors, how interested do you think you would be?

Table 6: OLS Models of Willingness to Participate in Different Variants of Deliberation

Independent variable	Standardized coefficients (significance)			
	Variant A	Variant B	Variant C	Variant D
Stealth democracy	n.s	-.151 (.010)	-.104 (.071)	-.185 (.005)
Dissatisfied democracy	.356 (.000)	.327 (.000)	.262 (.000)	.169 (.012)
Conflict avoidance	-.106 (.095)	-.169 (.002)	-.277 (.000)	-.166 (.005)
Left-Right Ideology	n.s	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Liberty-Authority ideology	n.s	n.s	n.s.	n.s.
Age	-.192 (.006)	n.s	-.131 (.018)	n.s.
Gender	n.s.	-.096 (.069)	n.s.	n.s.
Social grade	n.s.	n.s	-.111 (.032)	n.s.
Terminal age of education	n.s.	n.s	n.s.	n.s.
Adjusted R2 for model	.193 (n=254)	.338 (n=281)	.281(n=321)	.148 (n=317)

What difference, if any, do these variations in the way the deliberative exercise is framed make to the results of the OLS model of a respondent's willingness to deliberate? Table 6 confirms that the effect of stealth democratic orientation is weakest when financial inducements are offered: indeed, it becomes completely non-significant for Variant A (the full-day face-to-face scenario) and is only significant at the 10% level for Variant C (the one-hour online scenario). When payment is not offered, the stealth democratic mindset constitutes a slightly greater obstacle to deliberative engagement. All this suggests that money might be a way through which those who generally prefer not to participate could be persuaded to take part in civic and political life - a somewhat cynical but powerful message for policy-makers to consider. Finally, we should note that dissatisfied democratic orientation and conflict-avoidance remain significant under any of the four scenarios, while left-right and liberty-authority ideological orientations lose any significant impact when the model is disaggregated in this way, as does education.

Discussion: Implications for the potential of deliberative democracy

The findings reported here constitute broad confirmation of H1, which simply states that there are two quite different types of attitude prevalent among citizens who are ‘disaffected’ with politics: the ‘dissatisfied democrat’ and ‘stealth democrat’ orientations. The presence of the former is greater than that of the latter in the British adult population, and we have seen that the demographic and attitudinal correlates of these two distinctive orientations towards democracy differ notably, and that while the former are enthusiasts for all forms of political participation, the latter are far less keen. That said, stealth democrats are more ambiguous about the idea of direct democracy. To this extent, the British sample resembles the Finnish data reported by Bengtsson and Mattila, who noted that many people 'prefer simultaneously both more direct democracy and more stealth democracy' (2009: 1045). While they concede that these things are 'perhaps not logically mutually exclusive', they argue that direct

democracy and stealth democracy clearly represent different democratic ideals insofar as one 'stresses direct citizen involvement while the other puts emphasis on efficiency and expert decision-making'. Although this is true, I would suggest that it understates the extent to which direct democracy and stealth democracy are logically compatible, since both are pertinent to the populist world-view. It is not referendums that stealth democrats shy away from so much as other forms of political participation, both mainstream and deliberative.

It should be noted that the findings reported in this article do not carry any direct ramifications for the second hypothesis referred to, that deliberative participation would at best only be effective in respect of the dissatisfied democrats, but would be counter-productive with respect to the stealth democrats. Investigation of H2 is a matter for further research, but it is may be useful to conclude with a few reflections on the question. It is important to note that proponents of deliberative democracy might well concede that H1 could hold without accepting that H2 must follow. They can acknowledge the current empirical reality of the unwillingness of many citizens, especially those of lower socio-economic class and educational experience, to countenance political engagement, while maintaining that this owes something to the mobilizational shortcomings of existing systems of representative democracy. It is only when such citizens, the argument goes, are actually presented with the opportunity to take part in meaningful political deliberation that they become inspired to develop political interest, knowledge and a new sense of political efficacy. It is the deliberative experience that generates civic commitment and activism. While the evidence in support of such a contention is somewhat mixed (Delli Carpini et al 2004), there is undoubtedly some that is favourable: '...ordinary citizens, given some information and time for discussion in groups of diverse opinions, are quite capable of understanding complex, and sometimes technical, issues and reaching pertinent conclusions about significant public matters' (Pateman 2012: 9; see also Fournier et al 2011 for an interesting recent illustration of this point). It is

not the purpose of this article to engage seriously with such claims, although it is interesting to note that some of the findings from exploratory work I previously conducted with colleagues is consistent with them. This was a pilot study involving focus group deliberations by participants who had been selected according to our hypothesized profiles of stealth and dissatisfied democrats. Although the findings were necessarily tentative, we concluded that 'there is no obvious sign that those we defined as stealth democrats derived any less enjoyment from the deliberative exercise than their dissatisfied democrat counterparts, nor that their sense of political efficacy or self-confidence suffered for the experience... those we designated stealth democrats do not appear to have been turned off from political participation by their experience in these focus group exercises' (Webb et al 2010: 43). It is clear, then, that the major questions that remain in respect of this field of scholarship concern the identification of forms of deliberation that will work and articulate successfully with existing institutions in 'the real world of democracy'.

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