

EXPLORING POLITICAL DISAPPOINTMENT

Ben Seyd, University of Kent

Paper for EPOP annual conference, Lancaster, 13th-15th Sept 2013

Researchers interested in citizens' attitudes to government and politics devote much of their efforts to examining outcome measures of those attitudes, such as levels of trust and efficacy. They devote less effort to examining judgements that may give rise to these outcomes. This paper explores the nature of one such judgement, namely political disappointment. Disappointment is defined as the negative balance between citizens' expectations of government and politicians and their perceptions of what these actors actually deliver. Using data from two UK surveys, this paper quantifies levels of political disappointment, and examines whether particular social groups are more prone to disappointment than others and thus which type of factors might explain disappointment. It also considers whether the nature, and correlates, of disappointment vary depending on whether citizens are evaluating policy outcomes or political conduct.

This is a draft version only and not to be cited without permission; comments are very welcome.

Ben Seyd
University of Kent
Canterbury, UK
E: B.J.Seyd@kent.ac.uk
W: <https://sites.google.com/site/benseyd/>

One of the features, it is said, of the way that citizens relate to governments is *disappointment*. That is, citizens come to expect certain outputs from politics, or certain qualities of behaviour among its protagonists, yet perceive that governments and politicians fall short of these standards, resulting in feelings of let-down or disappointment. Disappointment can be defined in terms of thwarted expectations; the discrepancy between what someone expects from politics and what they perceive they actually get. Many recent studies have identified a pervasive disappointment among citizens of western democracies, and attributed declining levels of trust and satisfaction with political institutions to a sense of thwarted expectations among members of the public. Yet we know rather little about disappointment as a phenomenon. What does disappointment consist of and where does it derive from? Which groups within the population are more disappointed with politics than others? And why?

A number of studies have taken disappointment as their subject, identifying the syndrome as a particular pathology of modern politics. Contemporary political systems, it is argued, encourage citizens to register multiple, and often conflicting, demands on governments, yet deny politicians many of the tools by which to respond to these demands. As a result, citizens feel a sense of disappointment which, over time, easily translates into frustration with political institutions or with the political system as a whole (eg. Russell, 2005; Power Inquiry, 2006; Stoker, 2006; Flinders, 2009; Flinders and Kelso, 2011).¹ Other studies have taken up the theme of frustration, examining the impact that citizens' unfulfilled expectations have on such outcomes as trust in government or satisfaction with the democratic system (King, 2000; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002: esp 44-48; Dalton, 2004: 143-54; Norris, 2011).² Yet the first set of studies, which devotes much of its attention to explaining the rise of political disappointment, is largely assertive, with little in the way of empirical analysis to back up claims about which types of citizens are particularly prone to feelings of disappointment, and which type of conditions give rise to these feelings. The second set of studies does extend to empirical analysis, but the focus is largely on the effect that unmet expectations have on wider feelings about the political system, such as trust and satisfaction. The empirical analysis rarely extends to exploring political disappointment itself.

This paper seeks to help fill this gap in our understanding of political disappointment. Disappointment is a phenomenon worthy of study in its own right. If we believe politicians should be responsive to public demands – by acting on citizens' preferences and desires – then a well-functioning political system will contain few citizens nursing unmet expectations and thus manifesting disappointment.³ Political disappointment might thus be treated as a pathology of a representative political system, and thus as meriting analysis on its own terms quite apart from any wider consequences it might have (which, as just noted, extend to such significant 'outputs' as levels of political trust and satisfaction among

¹ The thesis that citizens' expectations and demands were outpacing the ability of the political system to respond first received widespread attention in the 1970s, in the form of numerous arguments about political 'overload' (eg. Brittan, 1975; Crozier et al, 1975; King, 1975).

² The role of heightened expectations, that run ahead of perceived performance, has also been suggested as a reason for declining public satisfaction with particular government agencies, such as the National Health Service in the UK (Appleby and Alvarez Rosete, 2003).

³ Assuming, of course, that citizens' preferences are not excessive or unrealistic, in which case politicians may do well to ignore them.

citizens). In this paper, I first discuss political disappointment, and explore its measurement. I then present the data – from two surveys conducted in Britain – which enable some empirical evidence to be brought to bear on the phenomenon. The empirical analysis itself focuses primarily on the identity of the politically disappointed, namely the social groups that manifest particularly high levels of disappointment. As explained more fully below, I use the distributions of disappointment among social groups to seek to draw inferences about which factors drive citizens' feelings that the political system is falling short of their expectations.

Besides this core focus, the analysis also addresses two other key issues which help to improve our understanding of political disappointment. The first issue relates to the nature of the phenomenon; in particular whether political disappointment differs depending on whether citizens are evaluating policy outcomes (what governments do) or political behaviour (how politicians act). Citizens may well hold different expectations of what governments should do than of the way politicians should act; their perceptions of actual performance may similarly vary between the two areas. We might therefore expect levels of disappointment with government policy to differ from levels of disappointment with political behaviour, and this paper tests for such differences. The second issue to be explored relates to the causes of the phenomenon; in particular whether disappointment arises equally from two component elements, namely expectations and performance judgements, or primarily from one of these elements alone. The paper therefore considers the relative impact on disappointment of the expectations citizens set of politicians and of the judgements by which their performance is assessed.

In sum, this paper attempts to shed some light on political disappointment by focusing on three core tasks: to map political disappointment and to examine its distribution across social groups; to consider whether disappointment varies in its policy or behavioural forms; and to examine whether disappointment is primarily a product of high expectations of politicians or, alternatively, of low evaluations of their performance.

The nature of political disappointment

Disappointment is defined as a condition that arises when a desire or expectation fails to be met. Political disappointment arises when expectations are made of a political agent – either an individual actor or a collective body such as a government – which the agent is seen as failing to respond to. Disappointment is not straightforward to measure. In principle, we could ask someone how disappointed they are with another person or organisation, but disappointment is a complex state to make direct reference to in the body of a survey item. Matters are not helped by the absence of any direct antonym for disappointment to serve as a helpful reference for respondents. For these reasons, employing a direct measure is not ideal. Instead, it is preferable to measure disappointment indirectly by reference to its two component elements: expectations, on the one hand, and judgements about actual performance, on the other. Disappointment is then measured by comparing levels of perceived performance to levels of expectations; in particular the condition is manifested if performance is seen to fall below, or to fail to meet, the standards established by the expectations.

To date, empirical research on the twin components of disappointment has, unsurprisingly, been devoted to perceptions of performance or delivery.⁴ Less effort has been devoted to considering the role of expectations. Granted, some studies have explored the kind of expectations the public holds of politicians and their behaviour (Graham et al, 2002; Birch and Allen, 2010). Other studies have examined the impact of perceptions and information about service provision on popular expectations (James, 2011). A third set of studies has examined the role of expectations in qualifying perceptions, and thus in shaping levels of trust and satisfaction in public services (Seyd, 2011, and references therein; Curtice and Heath, 2012). But we have few other studies devoted to measuring and exploring what citizens expect of politicians and political actors. In part, of course, this reflects the paucity of appropriate data; relatively few surveys ask respondents what they expect of public services and political actors.⁵ Yet in the absence of such data, consideration of expectations rests more on supposition than on empirical evidence.

In conceptual terms, there are two principal ways in which we might think about expectations (Oliver, 1997: 70; Spreng and Page, 2003). The first relates to an anticipatory judgement; a belief that an actor or body *will* deliver a particular outcome or manifest a particular quality. The second relates to a normative or desirability judgement; a belief that a particular outcome *should* be delivered. Citizens' expectations of politics and politicians may, in theory, be either anticipatory or normative, and empirical analyses have measured both forms. For instance, MORI's 'Delivery Index' measures expectations in anticipatory form, by asking respondents whether they judge government policies as likely to improve the quality of public services.⁶ Other studies have operationalised expectations in the normative sense, asking citizens to identify a set of ideal outcomes or qualities (eg. Kimball and Patterson, 1997; James, 2009; Ipsos MORI, 2010; Poister and Thomas, 2011).

Thus, disappointment might reflect a disjuncture between (a) what someone believes they are likely to receive (anticipatory expectation) or believes they should receive (desirability expectation) and (b) what they perceive they actually receive. Disappointment may arise because actual outcomes do not match anticipated outcomes. But someone may also experience disappointment because actual outcomes fall short of some ideal.⁷ The limited

⁴ Some studies of performance analyse a 'perceptions gap' (Laycock, 2009), defined as the discrepancy between perceptions of a public service and experience of that service. The gap analysed in this paper similarly involves perceptions of performance, yet uses expectations as the baseline referent.

⁵ Maybe for good reasons. If citizens generally lack well-formed views on political issues, and 'construct' preferences as much as 'revealing' them when they respond to survey questions, then one might wonder about the robustness of perceptions of political performance, let alone professed expectations. On the other hand, since expectations are not necessarily grounded in any objective reality, citizens may find it cognitively simpler to express expectations than to assess levels of political performance.

⁶ The results are strikingly negative; of the 35 surveys conducted by MORI between June 2001 and January 2011 on which this measure was fielded, on only three has the balance of opinion on the effect of government policy been positive (see 'Delivery Index', available on the MORI website).

⁷ This is particularly likely to be the case with evaluation of politicians or governments, with whom citizens may be unfamiliar and of whom they may lack knowledge. In this situation, it may be difficult for citizens to form clear anticipatory judgements about what these actors are likely to deliver; instead, they may fall back on a simpler judgement about what they would desire these actors to deliver.

data available to us in Britain mean that, for this analysis at least, we are restricted to measuring expectations in terms of desired outcomes rather than anticipated ones.

Explanations of political disappointment

Why might people be disappointed with politics? This is not a straightforward question to answer. For a start, many potential explanations emphasise factors relating to the performance of politicians (in terms of economic conditions or the state of public services, say). Yet in this paper's operationalisation of disappointment, performance is already included as one of the core components, and thus cannot also appear as a potential predictor variable.⁸ Instead, we have to move further down the 'funnel of causality' (Campbell et al, 1960: 24-37), to identify some basic features of citizens – such as their social positions – rather than their perceptions, which might provide clues as to why some citizens are more disappointed than others.

A further complication is that many of the factors deemed by empirical studies to affect the expectations gap seem better suited to explaining *anticipatory*, rather than *desired*, forms of expectations. That is, the factors more readily shape the extent to which citizens believe an outcome will be delivered than the extent to which citizens would like an outcome to be delivered. In principle, there seems rather little reason to expect desired or normative expectations to differ systematically between different groups within the population. However, it remains possible to identify distinctive social groups that might hold different normative expectations of politicians, and who might also form rather different evaluations of their performance.

In particular, citizens who are politically informed and knowledgeable should be more aware of the constraints under which political actors operate, and thus less prone to inflated and unrealistic expectations of what those actors are likely to deliver (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2005; for a different set of hypotheses about the impact of demographic factors on expectations, see James, 2011: 1424-25). We might therefore expect to find lower levels of political disappointment among people who are highly educated, who manifest a high degree of political interest and who are politically engaged. On the other hand, certain social groups may be particularly prone to 'look to' government as the provider of various goods and services (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2005). For these groups, expectations about the role of government may be higher than for other groups. Along these lines, we might plausibly anticipate higher expectations among the elderly, and among those located within the lower socio-economic bands. If we assume that these groups are no more prone than other groups to judge government performance in positive terms, we should find higher levels of disappointment among the elderly and the more socially disadvantaged groups than among their younger and more socially advantaged counterparts.

⁸ In their analysis of the expectations gap for the US president, Jenkins-Smith et al (2005) do include as explanatory variables such performance perceptions as sociotropic and egocentric economic evaluations. However, their operationalisation of disappointment (which they term the 'expectations gap') adopts a very general perceptual measure, namely how the incumbent president is rated on four qualities. Given the generality of this measure, it is possible to include performance perceptions as independent variables; but even here, doubts remain about the conceptual independence of presidential performance evaluations (the dependent variable) and evaluations of the state of the economy (the independent variable).

A different set of factors may serve to depress perceptions of political performance, and thus to increase levels of disappointment. In particular, readers of newspapers (notably the tabloid press) that devote much of their attention to the foibles, faults and failures of politicians might be expected to judge political performance more negatively than readers of other newspapers (the broadsheet press), and thus to manifest higher levels of political disappointment. Partisan factors might also have a role in shaping disappointment; in particular, we would expect supporters of incumbent parties to judge government performance more positively than supporters of parties outside government, and thus to manifest lower levels of disappointment.

Data

To explore political disappointment, we need data that cover people's expectations of politicians and their perceptions of how well politicians have delivered. Unfortunately, analysts in Britain are not confronted with an abundance of such data. But two high quality domestic surveys have included within their coverage items that measure both citizen's expectations of politicians and their perceptions of political performance. These surveys are the 'British Social Attitudes' (BSA) and the 'Attitudes Towards Conduct in Public Life', sponsored by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL). The annual BSA survey has, since 1985, incorporated questions that ask respondents whether they view the government as having the responsibility for delivering various public goods. It has also occasionally posed follow up questions that ask respondents whether they perceive governments to have delivered these goods. The CSPL survey has, in each of its waves (2004, 2006, 2008 and 2011), asked respondents for their expectations about standards of conduct among politicians and public office holders, and then about whether they think politicians actually manifest such behavioural qualities.

The virtue of drawing on both these surveys is that it enables us to explore disappointment in both its policy and behavioural guises. To allow such comparison, it makes sense to draw on waves from each survey that are conducted as close to one another as possible. I have therefore selected the 2002 BSA survey and the 2004 CSPL survey (technical details of these surveys are provided in Appendix 1). While these are the most proximate surveys containing the required information⁹, their rather different fieldwork dates mean their data are not wholly comparable. The two surveys also measure expectations and performance in somewhat different ways. For example, the BSA survey asks about expectations and performance perceptions in relation to government, while the CSPL survey asks these questions in relation to MPs and government ministers. Then there are differences in the framing of expectations. The CSPL survey frames expectations in terms of desirable qualities ("How important is it that MPs and government ministers ...?"), while the BSA survey frames expectations less normatively in terms of responsibilities ("Do you think it should or should not be the government's responsibility to ...?"). Normative expectations are akin to valence judgements; few will dispute that each form of behaviour is desirable, the issue being just how desirable each form of behaviour is judged to be. Couched in terms of

⁹ The BSA surveys conducted in exactly the same years as the CSPL surveys – namely 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2011 – either do not contain measures of government expectations, or else contain few performance perceptions which can be set against analogous expectations to compute a measure of disappointment. The 2002 BSA survey is the best suited to comparison with the CSPL survey.

responsibilities, expectations are more akin to spatial judgements, since the question poses respondents with a genuine choice over whether they believe government has a responsibility for delivering particular policy outcomes. Thus, we are likely to find rather higher expectations when it comes to desirable forms of political behaviour (CSPL survey) than when it comes to government responsibility for policy outcomes (BSA survey). This may lead to rather higher levels of disappointment in its behavioural guise than in its policy guise. But since this analysis is primarily interested in which types of people are more or less likely to be disappointed, these anticipated variations are unlikely to be problematic.

Results

We begin by examining what people expect of government and politicians, and how they perceive the performance of these actors. Expectations of policy performance are gauged by the BSA survey which asks respondents whether they think governments have a responsibility to deliver various policy outcomes. Expectations of political conduct are gauged by the CSPL survey which asks respondents how important they deem various forms of behaviour among MPs and government ministers. When it comes to expectations, the distributions show that, while not all aspects of policy performance and political conduct are equally prioritised by citizens, overall the public places great store on politicians delivering certain policy outcomes (Table 1a) and manifesting certain behavioural qualities (Table 1b); the mean scores for all the outputs and qualities fall towards the 'high expectations' end of the scale.

Table 1a - Expectations of politicians (policy outcomes)

Government responsibility:	Level of expectation (%)				Mean*	N
	<i>Should not be</i>		<i>Should be</i>			
	<i>Definitely</i>	<i>Probably</i>	<i>Probably</i>	<i>Definitely</i>		
Provide healthcare for the sick	0	1	12	88	3.86	1860
Provide decent standard of living for elderly	0	1	17	81	3.80	1866
Keep prices under control	1	4	40	56	3.51	1832
Provide a job for everyone who wants one	7	15	43	36	3.07	1786

* Mean score based on 1=definitely should not be, and 4=definitely should be

The table excludes those who did not answer the question and those who answered 'cannot choose'. The level of non-respondents ranged from 7.4% of the total (in the case of 'provide a job') to 3.2% (in the case of 'standard of living for the elderly').

Question wording: "On the whole, do you think it should or should not be the government's responsibility to ...?"

Source: *British Social Attitudes 2002*

Table 1b - Expectations of politicians (behaviour)

They should:	Importance of attribute (%)				Mean*	N
	<i>Not at all/ not very</i>	<i>Quite</i>	<i>Very</i>	<i>Extremely</i>		
(Not) Take bribes	2	2	8	88	4.81	1094
Tell the truth	1	5	18	77	4.72	1094
Make sure that public money is used wisely	1	3	23	73	4.68	1095

(Not) Use their power for their own personal gain	4	6	19	72	4.57	1093
Be dedicated to doing a good job for the public	1	5	32	63	4.57	1095
Be competent at their jobs	1	8	34	59	4.51	1094
Own up when they make mistakes	2	11	32	55	4.41	1095
Be in touch with what the public thinks is important	2	11	32	55	4.40	1094
Explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	3	16	37	44	4.22	1093
Set a good example for others in their private lives	14	26	29	31	3.76	1094

* Mean score based on 1=not at all important, and 5=extremely important

The table excludes those who answered 'don't know' to the question, amounting to less than 1 per cent for any behaviour.

Question wording: "How important is it that MPs and government ministers do these things?"

Source: *Standards in Public Life Survey 2003-4*

Performance against these expectations is measured by how successful government is seen to be in delivering policy outcomes (BSA survey) and by how many government ministers are seen to manifest virtuous forms of behaviour (CSPL survey).¹⁰ In terms of policy outcomes (Table 2a), performance is judged fairly negatively; only in relation to one policy outcome – providing adequate employment – do as many people judge government to be successful as unsuccessful; on all the other policy outcomes, the aggregate judgement is that government is unsuccessful.¹¹ Assessed performance in relation to political conduct is rather more mixed (Table 2b), with performance on half the standards judged in positive terms (mean score >3.0), but on the other standards in negative terms (mean score <3.0).

Table 2a – Performance of politicians (policy outcomes)

Government performance:	Degree of government success (%)					Mean*	N
	Unsuccessful			Successful			
	Very	Fairly	Neither	Fairly	Very		
Everyone who wants a job has one	8	24	30	36	2	3.01	1827
Prices are kept under control	11	28	24	33	4	2.92	1828
Everyone has good access to adequate healthcare	15	28	21	34	2	2.80	1847
All elderly people have a decent standard of living	23	34	22	19	2	2.42	1850

* Mean score based on 1=very unsuccessful, and 5=very successful

The table excludes those who did not answer the question and those who answered 'cannot choose'. The level of non-respondents ranged from 5.2% of the total (in the case of 'provide a job' and 'keep prices under control') to 4.1% (in the case of 'standard of living for the elderly').

¹⁰ The CSPL survey asks respondents to assess the performance separately of both MPs and government ministers. The results show little variation between these actors in perceived performance. Given this, and since the performance of government ministers tends to be rather more poorly rated than that of MPs – thus increasing the level of disappointment – I opt to measure performance in relation to government ministers alone.

¹¹ And even on employment, would evaluations be quite as rosy today, with the unemployment rate at 7.8%, as they were in July 2002 when unemployment was at 5.2%?

Question wording: "Irrespective of whether you think it ought to be the government's responsibility, how successful do you think governments have been in recent years at ensuring that ...?"

Source: *British Social Attitudes 2002*

Table 2b – Performance of politicians (behaviour)

They actually do/are:	Proportion of ministers manifesting attribute (%)						N
	<i>None</i>	<i>Few</i>	<i>Half</i>	<i>Most</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Mean*</i>	
Take bribes	16	65	10	8	1	3.86	1063
Dedicated to doing a good job for the public	3	20	35	37	5	3.20	1093
Competent at their jobs	2	20	38	37	3	3.19	1084
Use power for their own personal gain	4	43	19	26	8	3.11	1083
Set a good example for others in their private lives	4	26	29	38	3	3.09	1083
Make sure that public money is used wisely	8	31	34	24	4	2.86	1090
Explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	9	35	27	25	4	2.80	1085
Tell the truth	8	34	31	25	2	2.79	1093
In touch with what public thinks is important	9	33	36	20	2	2.74	1091
Own up when they make mistakes	19	54	18	8	2	2.21	1090

* Mean score based on 1=none, and 5=all (the scores for 'Use power for personal gain' and 'Take bribes' are reversed).

The table excludes those who answered 'don't know' to the question, amounting to less than 3.5 per cent for any behaviour.

Question wording: "How many government ministers actually do these things?"

Source: *Standards in Public Life Survey 2003-4*

Since expectations outweigh perceptions of delivery, it is not surprising that disappointment is prevalent. When it comes to policy outcomes (Table 3a), there are high levels of disappointment on some policy areas (notably providing a decent standard of living for the elderly, with a mean score of 1.38) although rather lower levels on others (notably providing a job for all, with a mean score of 0.06). A similar picture is true when it comes to assessments of politicians' behaviour (Table 3b). Here, there is substantial disappointment with some aspects of politicians' conduct (eg. in relation to owning up to mistakes, with a mean disappointment score of 2.20), but rather less disappointment elsewhere (eg. in relation to setting an example in one's private life, with a mean score of 0.67). Overall, however, on no policy outcome or standard of conduct do perceptions outweigh expectations, which means that on all of the measures the basic picture is one of public disappointment with politicians.

Table 3a – Disappointment with politicians (policy outcomes)

	<i>Contented/satisfied</i>				<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Disappointed</i>		<i>Mean*</i>	<i>N</i>
	<i>-4</i>	<i>-3</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>		
Provide decent standard of living for elderly	0	<1	1	7	21	20	30	22	1.38	1827
Provide healthcare for the sick	0	<1	<1	7	33	20	26	14	1.07	1826
Keep prices under control	0	1	3	20	27	21	19	9	0.59	1785
Provide a job for everyone who wants one	0	3	9	23	31	18	12	4	0.06	1742

* Mean score based on -4=contented (expectations<performance) to +3=disappointed (expectations>performance).

Table 3b – Disappointment with politicians (behaviour)

	<i>Contented/satisfied</i>				<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disappointed</i>				<i>Mean*</i>	<i>N</i>
	<i>-4</i>	<i>-3</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>		
Own up when they make mistakes	0	<1	<1	2	7	16	29	35	12	2.20	1088
Tell the truth	0	<1	<1	2	8	26	29	28	6	1.93	1090
Make sure that public money is used wisely	0	<1	<1	2	10	25	32	25	6	1.82	1088
In touch with what public thinks important	0	<1	<1	4	13	27	28	22	6	1.66	1088
Use power for their own personal gain	0	1	1	4	13	38	19	19	6	1.46	1081
Explain the reasons for actions and decisions	0	<1	1	8	19	24	25	19	5	1.42	1081
Dedicated to doing a good job for the public	0	<1	1	3	18	35	26	15	2	1.37	1091
Competent at their jobs	0	0	<1	4	19	34	29	13	1	1.32	1081
Take bribes	<1	1	1	3	19	59	10	6	1	0.95	1061
Set a good example for others in private lives	<1	1	6	15	22	24	18	11	2	0.67	1081

* Mean score based on -4=contented (expectations < perceptions) and +4=disappointed (expectations > perceptions).

Having laid out the basic picture of public expectations and perceptions of politicians, and thus levels of political disappointment, we can now investigate more closely the nature of these judgements. I start by examining whether there is any structure to the judgements just reported, with similarities between the type of expectations and performance perceptions expressed. We can explore whether any such structure exists by running a series of principal component analyses to test the relationships between the responses that people offer to the different measures. The results suggest a fairly strong structure to popular attitudes (the full results are in Appendix 2). When it comes to policy outcomes, the various expectations and performance assessments – and thus disappointment – are closely correlated, loading onto single factors or dimensions.¹² When it comes to behavioural standards, people's judgements fall onto two dimensions, rather than onto one. The first dimension is defined by judgements on all the standards bar two, namely those relating to whether politicians are seen to take bribes and to make personal gain from holding public office, the responses to which load more heavily onto a second dimension.¹³ Since

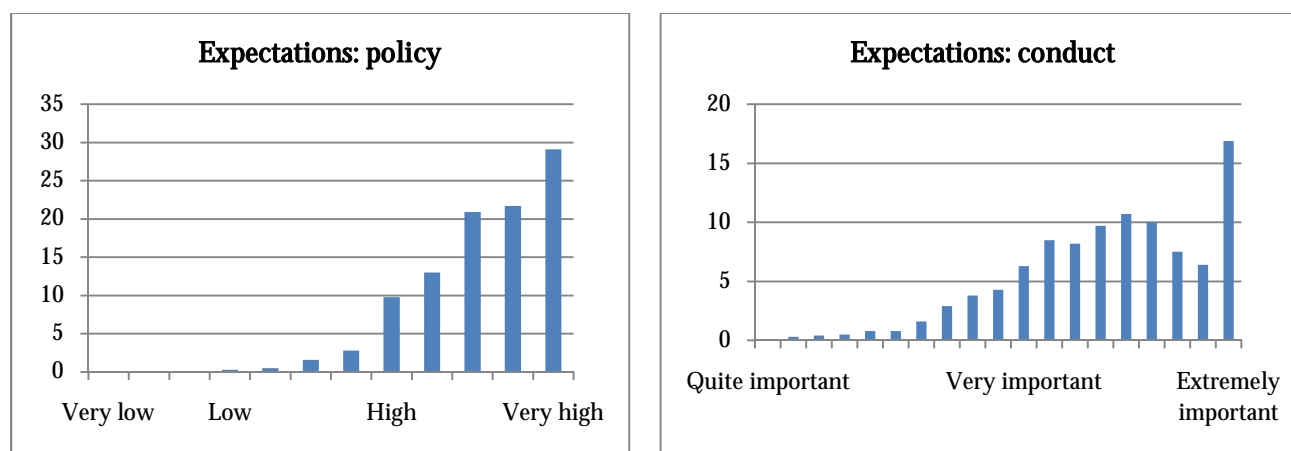
¹² On policy outcomes, there are four items for expectations and performance perceptions, and thus for disappointment. Responses to each item load onto a single dimension, with correlations generally at the level of 0.7 or above.

¹³ This separate dimension may reflect question direction issues, since the questions on 'bribes' and 'personal gain' were worded in a manner that define a negative aspect of political conduct, while all the other standards were worded to define a virtuous forms of conduct. Alternatively, the dimensionality may indicate that people do distinguish between general forms of political conduct and forms of conduct that relate specifically to aspects of financial misconduct. The PCA of the expectations items shows one measure ('use public money wisely') that loads slightly more heavily onto the second dimension than onto the first, and a second measure ('competent at their jobs') that loads only slightly less heavily onto the second dimension than onto the first. When it comes to forms of political behaviour, there is thus no clear and well defined structure to public expectations. This

judgements on most of the behavioural standards load fairly strongly onto the first dimension, I retain these judgements in measuring expectations, performance and disappointment, omitting the measures that relate to taking bribes and making personal gain.

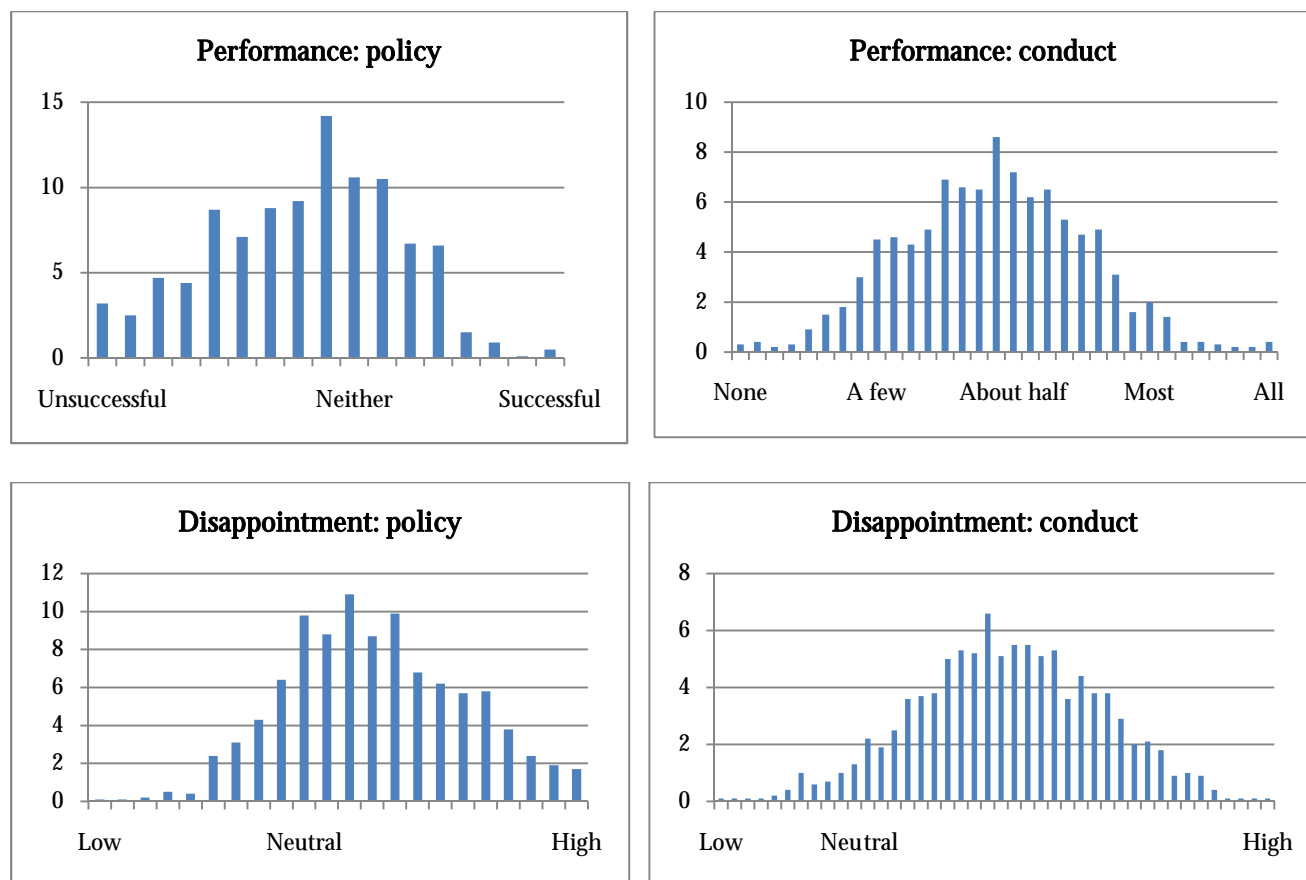
Given this structure to public attitudes, I then form three sets of scales to form summative measures of people's expectations, perceptions and levels of disappointment, with separate scales in each case for policy outcomes and for political conduct. Most of the scales show solid reliability, again indicating that people's expectations and performance perceptions are general in nature rather than being particular to certain areas of policy or process.¹⁴ Using these scales for descriptive purposes, we can see that, while expectations of policy outcomes and political conduct follow slightly different distributions, the basic feature of both sets of expectations is the sharp skew towards the high expectations end of the distribution (first row of Fig 1). Judgements about actual performance, however, are much less skewed, although perceptions tend to be rather more heavily distributed on the negative side of the spectrum (second row of Fig 1). When we combine expectations and performance, the dominant picture is one of disappointment, across both policy outcomes and political conduct. Relatively few people appear to the left of the 'neutral' point, indicating overall content with politicians; far more appear to the right of the neutral point, indicating disappointment (third row of Fig 1).

Fig 1: Distribution of expectations, performance and disappointment for both (a) policy outcomes and (b) political conduct



may reflect the rather generalised nature of expectations themselves. When it comes to a more precise form of assessment – how well politicians have performed – the measures 'use public money wisely' and 'competent at their job' load straightforwardly onto the first dimension. It seems reasonable, then, to treat evaluations of 'public money' and 'competence' as falling onto the first dimension for expectations, performance perceptions and disappointment.

¹⁴ The scale reliabilities are: Expectations of policy performance (4 items) $\alpha=0.614$; Expectations of political conduct (8 items) $\alpha=0.767$; Perceptions of policy performance (4 items) $\alpha=0.770$; Perceptions of political conduct (8 items) $\alpha=0.854$; Disappointment on policy performance (4 items) $\alpha=0.752$; Disappointment on political conduct (8 items) $\alpha=0.845$.



For each graph, the vertical axis represents the proportion of respondents falling into each category.

Having quantified the distribution of the three core variables – expectations, performance assessments and disappointment – I can now move on to test for any variations among specific population sub-groups. In Table 4, I show mean levels of expectations, performance assessments and disappointment according to sub-groupings that reflect the hypothesised causal effects identified earlier, namely (a) political information (measured by: political interest, education level and degree of political engagement), (b) media exposure (newspaper readership), (c) demands on the political system manifested through material status (social class) and requirements for state support (age) and (d) partisanship (party support). I also show the results for one further demographic sub-group, namely gender.

The picture in Table 4 shows variations between some social groups in expectations, performance perceptions and disappointment, with these differences being consistent across policy outcomes or political conduct. As anticipated, disappointment is highest among those citizens who are less well informed about politics (the less interested, less well educated and less politically engaged), and among those who are more prone to make demands on the state (the lower social class groups). However, falling into a social group seen as likely to be demanding of government does not appear to consistently serve as a trigger to disappointment. The elderly (those aged over 65) may have high expectations of politicians, but they also perceive those politicians to be performing well – in both cases relative to other age groups – meaning that their level of disappointment is no higher than that among other age groups, and in the case of policy outputs is actually somewhat lower. When it comes to the sources of political information, we find that readers of broadsheet newspapers

Table 4: Mean levels of expectations, performance perceptions and disappointment, by sub-group

	<i>Political conduct</i>			<i>Policy outcomes</i>		
	<i>High expect</i>	<i>High perform</i>	<i>Disappoint</i>	<i>High expect</i>	<i>High perform</i>	<i>Disappoint</i>
<i>Information</i>						
Political interest						
Low	4.50	2.61	1.88	3.61	2.57	1.07
High	4.42	2.85	1.57	3.48	3.03	0.47
Education						
Below HE	4.42	2.86	1.56	3.60	2.76	0.85
HE and above	4.29	2.96	1.35	3.37	2.97	0.41
Political engagement						
Low	4.40	2.88	1.52	3.59	2.83	0.79
High	4.14	2.93	1.23	3.53	2.92	0.61
<i>Media exposure</i>						
Read no paper	4.42	2.84	1.58	3.58	2.80	0.79
Read tabloid	4.46	2.89	1.56	3.64	2.71	0.95
Read mid-market	4.40	2.78	1.60	3.57	2.66	0.91
Read broadsheet	4.26	2.96	1.33	3.34	3.07	0.28
<i>Demands on system</i>						
Manual	4.45	2.80	1.64	3.65	2.76	0.90
Intermediate	4.42	2.80	1.62	3.62	2.77	0.87
Professional	4.37	2.95	1.43	3.43	2.85	0.60
Age group: 18-24	4.42	2.94	1.48	3.60	2.73	0.88
25-34	4.33	2.86	1.47	3.53	2.73	0.81
35-44	4.40	2.89	1.51	3.55	2.75	0.81
45-54	4.39	2.81	1.59	3.51	2.64	0.90
55-64	4.52	2.78	1.74	3.58	2.83	0.75
65+	4.42	2.87	1.52	3.62	3.04	0.60
<i>Partisanship</i>						
Close to no party	4.43	2.82	1.61	3.60	2.62	1.01
Close to Con	4.44	2.76	1.68	3.47	2.66	0.81
Close to LDs	4.39	2.92	1.46	3.54	2.80	0.75
Close to other	4.53	2.41	2.12	3.58	2.60	1.01
Close to Lab	4.33	3.03	1.31	3.62	2.94	0.69
<i>Demographics</i>						
Male	4.34	2.90	1.44	3.53	2.85	0.68
Female	4.48	2.81	1.66	3.59	2.75	0.86

Note: Since expectations and disappointment are measured on different scales for policy outcomes and political conduct, the figures for policy/conduct are not directly comparable.

tend to be less disappointed than readers of other types of newspaper, because their expectations are more restrained and because their perceptions of performance rather higher. But there is no evidence that disappointment is particularly induced by tabloid or middle-market newspapers, on account of their negative coverage of politicians; disappointment levels are no higher among readers of these forms of newspaper than among people who read no newspaper at all. Finally, women appear to be rather more

disappointed than men, because they have both higher expectations of politicians and lower perceptions of political performance.

A multivariate analysis allows us to estimate the effects on expectations, performance and disappointment of each of our hypothesised causal variables, controlling for the effects of the others. I treat the measures of expectations, performance and disappointment as ordinal in nature, and so estimate the model using an ordinal logistic function. The results suggest that, contrary to the bivariate picture, not all the hypothesised factors shape political disappointment, and that these factors have different effects depending on whether disappointment arises from judgements relating to policy outcomes or behavioural qualities (Table 5).

A lack of political information – measured by low political interest and low levels of education – is associated with higher levels of disappointment, but only disappointment with the policy achievements of politicians, not with their conduct. And even here, the hypothesised linkages are not particularly evident. I had surmised that information would primarily affect disappointment by dampening down expectations, rather than by increasing evaluations of performance. While this appears to be the case for education (compared with those who are well-educated, the poorly educated have significantly higher expectations), it does not hold for political interest, where among those professing little interest, it is poor perceived performance, and not higher expectations, that appears to drive disappointment. When it comes to media exposure, we find that newspaper readership does appear to shape levels of policy disappointment; compared to broadsheet readers, readers of other forms of newspaper have significantly higher levels of disappointment. However, this effect may be primarily due to the type of person that reads a broadsheet newspaper, and not to the diet of news presented in tabloid and mid-market newspapers. This conclusion is suggested by the finding that, compared to broadsheet readers, levels of disappointment are higher not only among tabloid and mid-market newspaper readers, but also among those reading no newspaper at all. And when it comes to the conduct of politicians, readers of tabloid or mid-market newspapers are no more disappointed than broadsheet readers; while the former hold higher expectations of politicians' conduct than do broadsheet readers, their performance ratings are, contrary to the causal hypothesis, no lower and consequently their disappointment levels do not significantly vary from those of their broadsheet reading counterparts.

Material status does shape disappointment, but again not consistently and not always in the anticipated manner. People within the lower social classes are, in line with hypotheses, more likely to express positive expectations of governments' policy responsibilities than those among the higher social classes. But this does not translate into higher rates of policy disappointment; only manual workers are more disappointed in policy terms than professionals (and even here the coefficient is only significant at the 5 per cent level).¹⁵ Disappointment is, contrary to the hypothesis, more consistently in evidence among the lower social groups when it comes to political conduct. Nor does another supposedly demanding group – the elderly – manifest particularly high rates of political disappointment. In fact, they show lower rates of policy disappointment than younger age

¹⁵ Other research has found that, except in particularly deprived neighbourhoods, there are minimal differences between social classes in levels of thwarted expectations concerning public services (Duffy, 2000: 31-32).

Table 5: Multivariate model predicting expectations, performance and disappointment

	<i>Political conduct</i>			<i>Policy outcomes</i>		
	<i>High expect</i>	<i>High perform</i>	<i>Disappoint</i>	<i>High expect</i>	<i>High perform</i>	<i>Disappoint</i>
<i>Informed citizens</i>						
Lack of pol interest	-0.13	0.05	-0.09	0.01	-0.14**	0.13*
Education < HE level (Education > HE)	0.24	-0.10	0.19	0.47**	-0.30	0.45**
Low political engagement	0.08	0.19*	-0.11	0.05	0.09*	-0.07
<i>Media exposure</i>						
Read none	0.51**	-0.22	0.33	0.68**	-0.35	0.66**
Read tabloid	0.68**	0.04	0.24	0.71**	-0.59**	0.83**
Read mid-market (Read broadsheet)	0.21	-0.35	0.37	0.48*	-0.66**	0.81**
<i>Material status</i>						
Never worked	-0.54	-0.51	0.04	-	-	-
Manual	0.11	-0.55**	0.55**	0.50**	-0.18	0.35*
Intermediate (Professional)	0.11	-0.50**	0.42*	0.38**	-0.06	0.10
Age group: 18-24	-0.17	0.02	0.00	-0.40	-0.91**	0.59**
25-34	-0.44	-0.34	0.08	-0.49**	-0.96**	0.61**
35-44	-0.13	-0.29	0.23	-0.24	-0.84**	0.61**
45-54	-0.25	-0.29	0.20	-0.29	-1.12**	0.85**
55-64	0.20	-0.38	0.47	-0.02	-0.55**	0.39**
(Age group: 65+)						
<i>Partisanship</i>						
Close to no party	0.34	-0.53**	0.53**	-0.10	-0.38*	0.35*
Close to Con	0.60*	-0.75**	0.82**	-0.60**	-0.63**	0.25*
Close to Lib Dems	0.08	-0.33	0.21	-0.13	-0.35**	0.29
Close to other party (Close to Lab)	1.23*	-1.66**	1.90**	-0.10	-0.45	0.42
<i>Demographics</i>						
Male (Female)	-0.67**	0.11	-0.49*	-0.25*	0.20	-0.26*
R-square	0.09	0.07	0.10	0.11	0.09	0.09
N	679	658	657	1264	1280	1208

Coefficient significant at the *5% level, **1% level.

For categorical predictor variables, the reference category appears in brackets.

groups, principally on account of their more favourable judgements of government policy performance.¹⁶ Unsurprisingly, supporters of the Conservative party tend to judge

¹⁶ This finding has been mirrored in other research, which has shown that performance evaluations of public services, and thus satisfaction with those services, are much higher among the elderly (Duffy, 2000: 28-31).

performance more negatively than Labour supporters, contributing to higher levels of disappointment. The same is true of those that support no political party; evidently disappointment is not simply a reflection of the direction of one's partisanship. Finally, men manifest lower levels of disappointment than women, on account of the lower expectations they hold rather than because of more lukewarm performance assessments.

As a last element of the exercise, we can assess whether political disappointment is triggered primarily by high expectations or by low performance perceptions by introducing a term for each, separately, into the model of disappointment. The results suggest that disappointment is primarily triggered by perceptions of poor political performance rather than by inflated expectations about what politicians should achieve or about how they should behave. The size of the coefficients for the performance terms in models of both policy disappointment and behavioural disappointment are greater than those for the expectations terms, while the degree of variance explained in the dependent variable also increases by rather more. Thus, introducing terms for low performance perceptions increases the variance explained in the policy disappointment model to 0.85 and in the conduct model to 0.74; the effect of introducing a term for high expectations is to raise the explained variance in the policy disappointment model to 0.33 and in the conduct model to 0.45. Thus, while political disappointment is a function both of high expectations of what politicians should achieve, and of negative perceptions of what politicians actually deliver, it is the latter that appears to be the primary stimulant to disappointment.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper opened by noting that the degree of thwarted expectations – political disappointment – among citizens is a phenomenon worth studying, both due to its prominence among discussions of the ‘pathologies’ of modern politics, and due to its role in shaping levels of democratic satisfaction and trust. The analysis presented here is one of the first attempts to shed some empirical light on the phenomenon. The results suggest that disappointment may, indeed, be considered a pathology of politics today; although levels of disappointment vary depending on the particular policy outcome or behavioural quality being reviewed, the basic – if hardly surprising – picture is that political performance is seen to fall some way short of citizens' expectations. Disappointment, both with the policy outcomes that politicians are seen to deliver and with the standards of their actions, is widespread among British citizens.

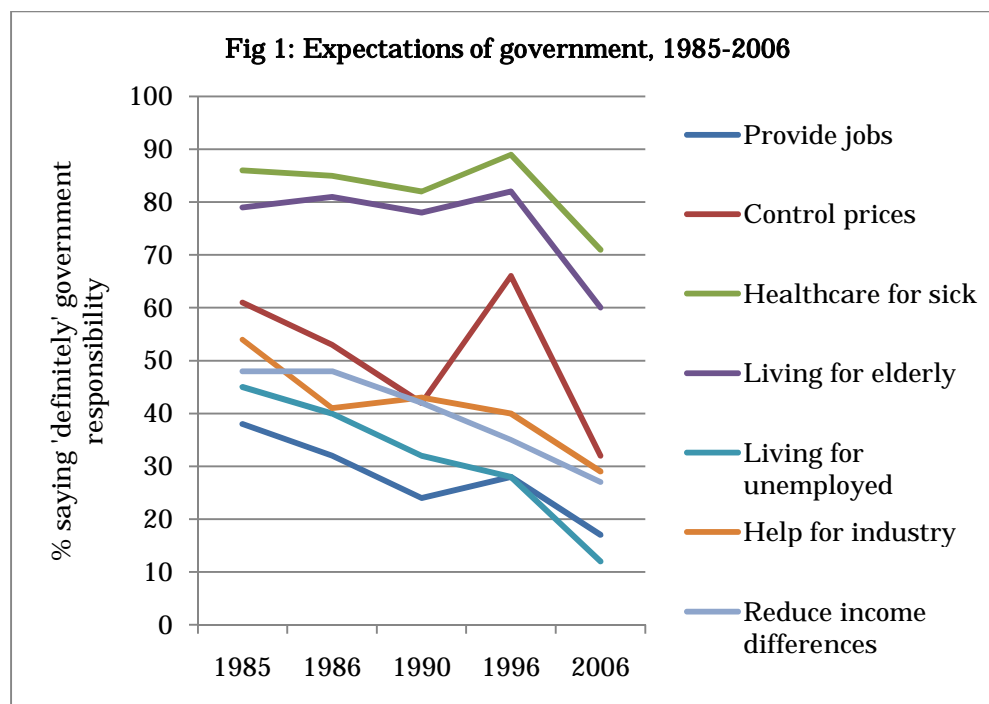
Yet that disappointment is not evenly distributed. Some groups within society are more politically disappointed than others. The guiding assumption was that disappointment would be higher among groups more prone to inflated expectations (namely the less politically informed and those likely to ‘look to’ government for support) and among groups primed to perceive political performance in negative terms (namely those consuming more critical elements of the written media). The results show that disappointment is not explicable quite so neatly. Those citizens within the population with lower levels of political information do tend to be more disappointed, but not straightforwardly because their expectations are naively high. While some social groups ‘look to’ government for policy outcomes (lower social class groups being an example), others (such as the elderly) do not. And while people who read tabloid and mid-market newspapers do appear more disappointed than people who read broadsheet papers, it is not clear that this arises from

the negative diet of the news consumed. If this was the case, why would people who don't read newspapers be similarly prone to disappointment?

Although this paper has explored whether there are variations in disappointment in its policy guise as opposed to its procedural guise, it is not clear that any marked and systematic variations have been identified. True, there were rather more variations between social groups in levels of disappointment when this was measured in policy terms than when it was measured in behavioural terms. But this was anticipated in the hypotheses; variations in levels of political information and in social class and age are more likely to shape expectations and performance perceptions of governments' policy outputs than politicians' behaviour. Moreover, the variations were not that great. It would be difficult to argue that disappointment with policy outputs comprised a wholly different *genus* to disappointment with political behaviour.

If political disappointment does have a specific root or cause, it appears to rest more with negative perceptions of policy performance and political conduct than it does with expectations of what politicians should deliver and of how they should behave. Policy makers concerned to limit levels of political disappointment can certainly find part of the cure in dampening down citizens' expectations of politicians, but a larger portion of the remedy lies in raising delivery, or at least the perceptions of delivery.

This point relates to one final comment, which touches on the reasons for any changes in levels of disappointment among citizens in Britain in recent decades. A common claim within the literature on public attitudes is that citizens' expectations of government have risen, often outstripping politicians' ability to deliver (and hence driving growing disillusion with, and distrust of, political actors and institutions). Some date the increase in expectations to social changes that arose in the 1970s (eg. King, 1975), while others suggest that disappointment is of more recent hue, triggered by the activities of the media among others (eg. Russell, 2005). We have already seen some evidence to support the latter claim, that disappointment may be partly inspired by the media. The former claim, that disappointment is a longer term phenomenon, primarily the product of rising expectations, is trickier to evaluate due to the lack of appropriate longitudinal data. However, we can get some idea of the dynamics of public expectations by looking at the BSA survey series which, as noted above, since 1985 has periodically asked respondents questions on the government's responsibility for various policy outcomes. The results provide little succour to the thesis that disappointment has grown due to rising expectations (Fig 1). True, expectations of what government should deliver are often high (very high in the case of welfare, notably providing adequate health care to the sick and a standard of living for the poor). But over time, the proportion of the population judging it the government's responsibility to deliver various policy outcomes has declined not increased.



Source: British Social Attitudes

Since Britons appear to expect rather less today of their government than thirty years back, it seems unlikely that levels of disappointment have increased markedly; for this to have occurred, perceptions of government performance would have had to have fallen substantially. Unfortunately, we cannot as readily assess performance ratings over time as we have done expectations, since there are less data that enable us to assess policy delivery against expectations. But we do have data from the early 1970s which allow us to draw some comparison about trends in political disappointment over a thirty year period. The survey drawn on is the Political Action Study (PAS), which was conducted in 1973-74. The results of the PAS and BSA are not wholly comparable, since the wording of the questions used were not identical.¹⁷ But the wordings are pretty close, and since I am interested in the differences within each survey (between policy expectations and assessments of policy performance), minor question variations between the surveys are arguably not fatal.

Only three policy areas were covered in both 1973-74 and 2002: providing support for the elderly, providing adequate healthcare and providing full employment. In the case of providing jobs, the level of disappointment was lower in 2002 than in 1973 (mean disappointment of 0.07 in 2002 against 0.91 in 1973), largely because expectations of the government's role in stimulating employment have declined substantially. But in the cases of provision for the elderly and healthcare, levels of disappointment were higher in 2002 than in 1973 (elderly: mean disappointment of 0.73 in 1973, and of 1.38 in 2002; healthcare:

¹⁷ The BSA survey probed respondents for their expectations by asking them whether they thought it should be "the government's responsibility to ...", while the PAS asked respondents "how much responsibility government has for dealing with ...". Delivery was measured on the BSA survey by asking respondents "how successful governments have been in recent years in ensuring ...", while the PAS asked respondents "how well government has been doing in handling ...".

mean disappointment of 0.58 in 1973, and of 1.07 in 2002).¹⁸ Yet this increase in disappointment has less to do with rising expectations of government (although expectations were slightly higher in 2002 than in 1973), than with sharply lower perceptions of government delivery. If there is more disappointment today than in the past – and we should be cautious here, given the limited scope of the data available to us – then this appears to spring more from a critical public attitude towards government performance than from growing expectations about what government should deliver. In sum, if there is one reason why citizens in Britain today are politically disappointed, and why they are more disappointed today than three decades ago, this reason lies in the perceived failure of politicians to deliver. Whether politicians can combat citizen disappointment by raising their levels of performance – and convincing citizens that they have done so – is another matter.

¹⁸ The disappointment figures from 2002 differ very slightly from those reported in Table 3a. This is because perceptions of government policy delivery were measured on a five point scale in the 2002 BSA but on a four point scale in the 1973 PAS. To provide comparability between the two sets of data, I have collapsed the top two response options to the questions on policy delivery in the 2002 BSA (government has been ‘fairly successful’ or ‘very successful’) into a single category, thus creating a four point response scale.

- Appleby, John and Arturo Alvarez Rosete (2003) 'The NHS: Keeping Up with Public Expectations?', in Alison Park et al, eds, *British Social Attitudes, the 20th Report: Continuity and Change Over Two Decades*, London: Sage.
- Birch, Sarah and Nicholas Allen (2010) 'How Honest Do Politicians Need to Be?', *Political Quarterly*, 81:1, 49-56
- Brittan, Samuel (1975) 'The Economic Contradictions of Democracy', *British Journal of Political Science*, 5:2, 129-59.
- Campbell, Angus et al (1960) *The American Voter*, New York: John Wiley and Sons
- Crozier, Michael et al (1975), *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission*, New York: Oxford University Press
- Curtice, John and Oliver Heath (2012) 'Does Choice Deliver? Public Satisfaction with the Health Service', *Political Studies*, 60:3, 484-503.
- Dalton, Russell J (2004) *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, New York: Oxford University Press
- Duffy, Bobby (2000) 'Satisfaction and Expectations: Attitudes to Public Services in Deprived Areas', *CASE Paper 45*, London School of Economics: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion
- Flinders, Matthew (2009) 'Bridging the Gap: Revitalising Politics and the Politics of Public Expectations', *Representation*, 45:3, 337-47
- Flinders, Matthew and Alexandra Kelso (2011) 'Mind the Gap: Political Analysis, Public Expectations and the Parliamentary Decline Thesis', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 13:2, 249-68.
- Graham, Jenny et al (2002) *Guiding Principles: Public Attitudes Towards Conduct in Public Life*. London: National Centre for Social Research.
- Hayward, Bruce et al (2004) *Survey of Public Attitudes Towards Conduct in Public Life: Final Draft Report*, London: BMRB International (downloaded from: <http://www.public-standards.gov.uk/our-work/public-attitude-surveys/>)
- Hibbing, John and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse (2002) *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government Should Work*, New York: Cambridge University Press
- Ipsos MORI (2010) 'What do People Want, Need and Expect from Public Services?', report for 2020 Public Services Trust, London: Royal Society of Arts
- James, Oliver (2009) 'Evaluating Approaches to Citizen Satisfaction with Local Public Services', *Journal of Public Administration Theory and Research*, 19:1, 107-23
- James, Oliver (2011) 'Managing Citizens' Expectations of Public Service Performance: Evidence from Observation and Experimentation in Local Government', *Public Administration*, 89:4, 1419-1435
- Jenkins-Smith, Hank C et al (2005) 'Micro- and Macrolevel Models of the Presidential Expectations Gap', *Journal of Politics*, 67:3, 690-715
- Kimball, David C and Samuel C Patterson (1997) 'Living Up to Expectations: Public Attitudes Towards Congress', *Journal of Politics*, 59:3, 701-28
- King, Anthony (1975) 'Overload: Problems of Governing in the 1970s', *Political Studies*, 23:2-3, 284-96.
- King, Anthony (2000) 'Distrust of Government: Explaining American Exceptionalism', in Susan J Pharr and Robert D Putnam, eds, *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Laycock, Samantha (2009) 'Experience versus Perceptions: Accounting for the NHS "Perception Gap"', *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 19:4, 449-72

- Norris, Pippa (2011) *Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited*, New York: Cambridge University Press
- Oliver, Richard L. (1997) *Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Consumer*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Park, Alison et al (2003) *British Social Attitudes, the 20th Report: Continuity and Change over Two Decades*, London: Sage
- Poister, Theodore H. and John Clayton Thomas (2011) 'The Effect of Expectations and Expectancy Confirmation/Disconfirmation on Motorists' Satisfaction with State Highways', *Journal of Public Administration Theory and Research*, 21:4, 601-17
- Power Inquiry (2006) *Power to the People: The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Britain's Democracy*, York: York Publishing Distribution
- Russell, Meg (2005) *Must Politics Disappoint?* London: Fabian Society
- Seyd, Ben (2011) 'An Expectations-Disconfirmation Model of Political Trust', paper presented at the annual Elections, Parties and Public Opinion conference, Exeter, 9th-11th September
- Spreng, Richard A and Thomas J Page (2003) 'A Test of Alternative Measures of Disconfirmation', *Decision Sciences*, 34:1, 31-62
- Stoker, Gerry (2006) *Why Politics Matters: Making Democracy Work*, Basingstoke: Palgrave

Appendix 1: Technical details of the surveys

British Social Attitudes survey, 2002

The BSA survey employed a multi-stage stratified random sample of people aged 18 years and over across Great Britain. The fieldwork was conducted between June and September 2002, with interviews conducted face to face. The total number of respondents to the main survey was 3435 (a response rate of 60.9%); the questions on government responsibility and performance were fielded on two of the self-completion questionnaires, to which 1911 people responded. Further details are available in Park et al, 2003: Appendix 1.

Standards of Conduct in Public Life survey, 2003-4

The CSPL survey employed a multi-stage stratified random sample of people aged 18 years and over across Great Britain. The fieldwork was conducted between November 2003 and March 2004, with interviews conducted face to face at home. The total number of respondents was 1097, representing a response rate of 53.7%. Further details are available in Hayward et al, 2004.

Appendix 2: The structure of attitudes – principal components analysis

(a) Policy outcomes

	Expectations	Performance	Disappointment
Government responsibility to:			
Provide a job for everyone who wants one	.568	.736	.701
Keep prices under control	.711	.746	.756
Provide healthcare for the sick	.778	.815	.800
Provide a decent standard of living for elderly	.798	.779	.777
Eigenvalue	2.07	2.37	2.31
Proportion of variance explained	51.77%	59.24%	57.64%

(b) Behaviour: expectations

	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
Should be dedicated to public good	.600	-
Not use power for personal gain	-	.754
Not take bribes	-	.833
Should own up to mistakes	.662	-
Should explain actions	.739	-
Should set good example in private	.554	-
Should tell truth	.519	-
Should use public money wisely	.452	.468
Should be in touch with public	.694	-
Should be competent	.452	.424
Eigenvalue	3.41	1.21
Proportion of variance explained	34.10%	12.11%

Dimensions only weakly correlated, so treated as orthogonal; varimax rotation used.

Behaviour: performance

	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
Ministers are dedicated to public good	.740	-
Ministers take bribes	-	.836
Ministers make personal gain	-	.804
Ministers own up to mistakes	.648	-
Ministers explain their decisions	.655	-
Ministers set good example in private	.596	-
Ministers tell the truth	.714	-
Minister use public money wisely	.747	-
Ministers are in touch with public	.718	-
Ministers are competent	.709	-
Eigenvalue	4.36	1.13
Proportion of variance explained	43.56%	11.30%

Dimensions only weakly correlated, so treated as orthogonal; varimax rotation used.

Behaviour: disappointment

	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
Dedicated to public good	.735	-
Use power for personal gain	-	.776
Take bribes	-	.846
Own up to mistakes	.661	-
Explain actions	.680	-
Set good example in private	.561	-
Tell truth	.724	-
Use public money wisely	.713	-
In touch with public	.723	-
Competent	.670	-
Eigenvalue	4.32	1.05
Proportion of variance explained	43.18%	10.475%

Dimensions moderately correlated, but treated as orthogonal; varimax rotation used.