After the 2009 expenses scandal: British process evaluations in context

Nicholas Allen
Royal Holloway, University of London
nicholas.allen@rhul.ac.uk

Sarah Birch
University of Essex
bircsi@essex.ac.uk

This paper replicates and extends Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s innovative study of American attitudes towards governmental processes. It adapts their measures of attitudes in ‘process space’—the domain of how government works—and ‘policy space’—the domain of social conditions and policy outcomes and outputs—and utilises them in an online survey of British citizens. The paper compares British and American preferences and beliefs about what government does and how democratic processes function, and it examines the significance of Britons’ policy and process evaluations as a predictor of government approval, respondents’ willingness to comply with laws and respondents’ belief that voting is a duty. It finds mixed support for the importance of process evaluations but considerable support for the importance of citizens’ evaluations of politicians’ honesty and integrity. Politicians who want to bolster support for democratic norms should consider improving their own conduct rather than promising political reforms.

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This paper replicates and extends Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s (2001) innovative study of public attitudes towards governmental processes. Their study developed a framework that distinguished between attitudes in ‘process space’—the domain of how government works—and ‘policy space’—the domain of social conditions, policy outcomes and policy outputs. Drawing on a representative survey of the American public, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse found significant differences in aggregate-level patterns of policy and process evaluations. They also found that process evaluations were an important component of citizens’ attitudes towards democracy.

Replication is central to the task of generating empirical generalisations (King 1995). By adapting Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s measures and applying them to a second liberal democracy, the United Kingdom, we can begin to test the generalisability of their findings. Using data from an online survey fielded in March 2011, this paper investigates British citizens’ preferences for and beliefs about what government does and how democratic processes function; and, following Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, it examines how policy and process evaluations influence government approval and respondents’ willingness to comply with the law. At the same time, the paper goes further and examines the potential effect of policy and process evaluations on respondents’ beliefs that voting is a duty. It also explores the importance of popular evaluations of politicians’ honesty and integrity, a conceptually important component of ‘process space’ and an empirically important component of public opinion in many liberal democracies, including Britain (Norris 2011, 175-6).

In addition to replicating an existing study, this paper aims to provide original insight into contemporary British public opinion. It sheds light on the nature and
The significance of UK citizens’ preferences for, and beliefs about, their own role in the democratic process, a topic that has been largely neglected in the academic literature. The neglect is perhaps understandable. Policy considerations usually dominate day-to-day politics, and while politicians may obsess about the minutiae of democratic processes, most citizens do not. Yet, citizens do have general expectations about the way politics should operate, and they are often dissatisfied with it in practice. Occasionally, this dissatisfaction erupts into the mainstream, as occurred in Britain in the wake of the 2009 parliamentary expenses scandal, when large numbers of MPs were widely thought to have been milking their official allowances (Heath, 2011).

The application of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s framework to British public opinion is especially timely in the wake of that scandal. Many politicians responded to the allegations by bemoaning the centralised and exclusive nature of UK democracy and by promising democratic reforms. The incoming Coalition Government’s agenda, for example, included proposals for voting reform, the creation of an elected House of Lords, the trialling of primary elections and the greater use of referendums, recall elections and other direct-democratic devices (HM Government 2010). Ideas about popular empowerment also underpinned the ‘Big Society’, the Coalition’s umbrella policy for ‘putting more power in people’s hands’ and transferring power from Whitehall to local communities (Pattie and Johnston 2011). It was never clear, however, whether citizens shared politicians’ enthusiasm for reform and empowerment. This paper does not explore in detail citizens’ attitudes to specific reforms or the Big Society, but it does investigate, in general terms, levels of support for the wider ethos of empowering the people vis-à-vis politicians and officialdom.

This paper proceeds as follows. The first section examines the concept of policy and process space in greater depth and reports the findings from Hibbing and
Theiss-Morse’s study. The second section describes the nature of policy and process space in the British political context. The third section examines the distinctiveness of policy and process preferences in Britain and the gaps, if any, between preferences and perceived realities. The fourth section examines the significance of process evaluations as predictors of other expressed attitudes towards politics. The final section discusses the findings and their implications.

Policy space, process space and orientations towards government

Few doubt that the character of political processes can influence citizens’ orientations towards their governments and governing institutions. For most students of public opinion, however, political processes are more important for what they do than what they are: outcomes and outputs, rather than the intrinsic features of the processes themselves, are generally thought to matter most. Typifying this orthodoxy, Popkin (1991, 99) observes, ‘Voters generally care about ends, not means; they judge government by results and are generally ignorant of or indifferent about the methods by which the results are achieved.’

Citizens’ orientations towards government are conventionally understood as a compound of individuals’ beliefs about, attachments to and evaluations of different levels or objects of political support. Following Easton (1965, 1975), these levels can be arranged along a continuum, with diffuse or general support for the political community at one end, through support for the political regime—the basic framework for governing the country—to specific support for the political authorities—actual office holders and the government of the day—at the other end. Easton’s three-fold categorisation of objects has since been refined into a five-fold framework that distinguishes between: (i) citizens’ support for the political community, or the extent
of a basic attachment to the nation; (ii) support for the regime principles, or the degree of commitment to the ideal of democracy; (iii) support for regime performance, or satisfaction with the way the political system functions in practice; (iv) support for regime institutions such as parliaments and the police; and (v) support for specific political actors or authorities (Norris 1999: 9-12). This revised formulation effectively breaks down Easton’s ‘political regime’ the ideas that underpin it, its performance and its constituent institutions.

Government outputs and policy outcomes—or more accurately, citizens’ evaluations of government outputs and policy outcomes—have been shown to affect attitudes towards various different levels or objects of political support. At the level of political actors, for example, policy preferences are central to Downs’ (1957) economic model of democracy, in which preferences shape the interactions and behaviours of voters and parties. Other studies have shown how preferences shape vote choice (Enelow and Hinich 1984) and how, over the long term, policymakers try to anticipate citizens’ preferences in a process of ‘dynamic representation’ (Stimson et al. 1995). Moving along Easton’s continuum to the level of the regime, research suggests that discrepancies between citizens’ policy preferences and perceptions of actors’ positions may fuel distrust in government (Miller 1974). Or, as Citrin (1974, 974) observes, ‘policy-related discontent is a source of political cynicism’. More recent cross-national evidence suggests that parties’ policy offerings can even affect citizens’ satisfaction with democracy (Ezrow and Xezonakis, forthcoming). When party systems result in policy choices that are closer to the median voter, levels of satisfaction increase.

Policy-related evaluations need not always be positional, however. As Stokes (1963) famously argued, some issues are ‘valenced’ rather than positional: that is,
they relate to a policy output or social outcome that is (almost) universally desired, such as economic prosperity or the absence of crime. Few voters would choose poverty or more crime; so at elections, they form judgements about which actors are best able to deliver the desired outcomes. Although the distinction between position and valence issues has its problems—in practice, there are often trade-offs between apparently universally desired things—it provides a further dimension to the relationship between citizens’ policy evaluations and their support for different levels of government. Most obviously, at the level of political authorities and actors, governments that perform well on more-or-less universally desired outcomes tend to be rewarded at subsequent elections (Clarke et al. 2004; 2009). At the same time, performance evaluations can shape the reputation of political institutions and (Anderson and Guillory 1997, 72). Indeed, recent research suggests that economic performance can be critical in affecting levels of public support for liberal democracy in both transition and established democracies (Kotzian, 2011).

Compared with the vast literature on the nature and consequences of policy preferences and evaluations, there has been surprisingly little empirical research into the question of how citizens want their government to run and the significance of their preferences (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001, 145). The relative paucity of empirical research also stands in marked contrast to the abundant normative theoretical literature on how political processes should run. Direct and participatory forms of democracy, for example, are popular among theorists (see, inter alia, Bachrach 1969; Barber 1984; Budge 1996; Cook and Morgan 1971; Pateman 1970), but do people really want them? On the basis of anecdotal evidence, most people probably have a clearer sense of what they want government to do than how it does it; protests about social outcomes, such as healthcare reform, civil rights and wars, are rarely matched
in frequency or scale by protests in favour of voting or constitutional reform. Nevertheless, individuals almost certainly have some sense of how they want government to function, even if this sense is only as vague as wanting institutions to be open or politicians to listen. Citizens’ evaluations of processes are certainly an important aspect of public opinion, even if they do not always have immediate electoral consequences. As Weatherford (1992, 149) notes, the long-term legitimacy of political objects and authorities can be undermined by ‘problems with representational linkages (access and responsiveness) or with the elite policy making process (procedural irregularity and distributive fairness)’.

With some exceptions, studies of process evaluations have tended to relate respondents’ judgements to attitudes towards regime principles, performance and institutions (Norris 1999). In a study of feelings about the US Congress, for example, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995) found that the adversarial nature of congressional politics, inequities in interest-group influence and the professionalization of politics helped explain the institution’s unpopularity among the public. In a later study, Kimball and Patterson (1997) found that ‘expectation-perception discrepancies’ around the conduct of congressmen negatively affect popular evaluations of Congress. Respondents generally wanted honest, community-minded representatives; they felt their legislators were likely to be partisan, career-oriented, lawyers.

In addition to the conduct of their politicians, process evaluations can be linked to a number of other ideals or principles, including access, responsiveness, fairness, involvement and ethical propriety. In one recent study of American voters, Dyck and Baldassare (2009) found evidence that those who supported the inclusive and participatory ideals of direct democracy were more likely to vote in favour of ballot measures regardless of the policy content. Other studies have demonstrated that
citizens’ perceptions of procedural justice can influence others attitudes and behaviours (Tyler and Blader 2003). Citizens’ willingness to comply with governmental institutions and laws, for instance, may be affected by such perceptions (Tyler 1990). Citizens’ sense of access to the political system even appears to influence their satisfaction with democracy. In a comparison of voters in majoritarian and consensus-style democracies (Lijphart 1999), Anderson and Guillory (1997) found that supporters of winning parties were consistently more satisfied with democracy than supporters of losing parties, but the discrepancy between winners and losers was greater in majoritarian systems (cf. Anderson et al. 2005). Democratic satisfaction in turn appears to condition interest in politics and propensity to protest (Norris 2011, 225). Finally, research has established a link between perceptions of procedural integrity and behaviour. Birch’s (2010) analysis of cross-national survey data has show that perceptions of electoral misconduct are negatively associated with citizens’ propensity to vote.¹

Guided by the assumption that process matters, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse sought in their 2001 study to develop better measures of Americans’ process evaluations and their effects. At the core of their study was a questionnaire that included questions about respondents’ process and policy preferences. Policy preferences were measured by asking respondents how they would rate their political views on a seven-point scale, with 1 defined as ‘extremely liberal’ and 7 defined as ‘extremely conservative’. Respondents were further asked how they would rate ‘the recent policies of the national government in Washington’. Figure 1 compares respondents’ ratings of their own political views (mean score of 4.4) with perceptions of recent government policies (mean score of 4). As can be seen, both lines are more-or-less normally distributed. Although respondents were slightly skewed towards the
conservative side in terms of their own self-evaluated preferences, the majority located themselves in the middle of the spectrum. Perceived policy outputs were a little more liberal at the aggregate level, perhaps reflecting Clinton’s presidency at the time the survey was fielded, but the difference was ‘remarkably small’ (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2001, 146).

Figure 1 about here

The conservative-liberal labels obviously reflect the study’s American context. The American context is also reflected in Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s conceptual focus on the importance of political participation as the core dimension of process space. From the tradition of New England town meetings, through to the Progressive-Era advocacy of direct democracy and the spread of referendums and initiatives, American political life has been greatly influenced by the ideals of participatory democracy. Yet, American politics, and especially the framing of the Constitution, have also been greatly influenced by Burkean ideas of representative government and elite-led deliberation (King, forthcoming). Accordingly, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse conceptualised their spectrum of process preferences as having, at one end, a strong commitment to participatory democracy, which they termed ‘direct democrat’, and a commitment to representative, division-of-labour or Schumpeterian democracy, which they labelled ‘institutional democrat’, at the other end. The spectrum they posed was ‘unavoidably crude’, but as a basic measure of popular attitudes towards citizens’ role in decision making, it was ‘an appropriate place to start’ (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001, 148).
To measure Americans’ process preferences and perception, respondents were asked to rate their own views about how government should work using a seven-point scale, where 1 meant ‘ordinary people making all decisions on their own’ and 7 meant ‘elected officials and bureaucrats making all the decisions on their own’. Respondents were then asked how they thought the national government in Washington actually worked. Figure 2 compares respondents’ ratings of their own views with perceptions of how the government in Washington actually works. As with policy preferences, process preferences were again normally distributed (mean score of 4), suggesting that Americans were not ‘wide-eyed democrats’ (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2001, 148). Americans did not want to make many political decisions on their own without the involvement of elected officials and bureaucrats. Nevertheless, there was an obvious aggregate-level gap between process preferences and perceptions: many Americans perceived current processes to be dominated by elected officials and bureaucrats, more so than they ideally wanted (mean score of 5.4).

The final element in Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s study was to analyse the significance of American citizens’ attitudes towards policy and governmental processes and to test their premise that process evaluations were ‘an important, free standing variable that has serious implications for the health of democracy’ (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001, 147). Controlling for other demographic and attitudinal factors, they examined whether process and policy evaluations (in both cases measured by subtracting respondents’ perceptions of recent government policy and the reality of governmental processes on the relevant 1-7 scale from their own self-
placements) affected respondents’ expressed approval of the federal government and also respondents’ expressed willingness to obey the law, even when it went against what they thought was right. Their results suggest that perceived policy gaps were a significant driver of government approval (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001, 151). Moreover, the results also suggest found that perceived process gaps were a significant driver of both government approval and respondents’ apparent readiness to comply with the law.

**Policy and process in Britain**

The chief purpose of this paper is to examine contemporary British public opinion by replicating Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s study and extending it to include integrity evaluations. But before doing that, it is helpful to know something about the policy and process context.

In terms of ‘policy space’, the obvious British analogue to the liberal-conservative spectrum found in American politics is the left-right continuum. Left-wing policies in Britain are conventionally associated with greater state activity, much like liberal programmes in the United States. They tend to entail higher levels of taxation and expenditure, and are usually meant to achieve greater political, social and economic equality. Right-wing policies, the analogue of conservative principles, are conventionally associated with less state activity, lowers levels of taxation and lower levels of public spending. Political parties are the most obvious organisational manifestation of these different policy goals. Since 1945, Labour has been the main British party of the left, the Conservatives of the right, and the Liberals, later the Liberal Democrats, have usually been somewhere in between (Webb 2000).
There are, of course, other issue dimensions in British politics. Amongst voters, there are generally reckoned to be two core dimensions of political beliefs: the left-right scale, which can be understood as relating to equality; and the liberal- or libertarian-authoritarian scale, which can be interpreted as being concerned with the extent of personal freedom (Evans et al. 1996, 94-95). Then there are issues potentially outside of these core concerns, such as Europe, political devolution and the environment. For some people, in some instances, such issues may come to be seen as the most important in political terms. Yet, the political meaning of all preferences is, to a large extent, structured by party competition, and, over the long haul, most issues in British politics have come to be incorporated into a dominant left-right dimension of competition (Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006). The specific meaning of left and right thus changes over time. Crucially, however, meanings are tied to other actors in the political system, specifically political parties and governments, and the defining issue at most elections is the scope of government activity, specifically whether it should do more and tax and spend more, or whether it should do less and tax and spend less (Bartle et al. 2011, 259). In this respect, public opinion in Britain resembles that of the United States, insofar as the electorate has preferences for more or less government activity (Stimson 1991).

The issue of government activity was certainly dominant at the 2010 election, thanks, in part, to the aftermath of the financial crisis (Moran et al. 2011). All major parties were agreed that the structural deficit in the nation’s finances was a problem that required cuts in public spending and increases in taxation; but they disagreed over how quickly the deficit would be reduced. In the event, the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition made cutting the deficit its chief priority (HM Government 2010, 15). Debates about government activity continued to dominate the political agenda in
the months after the general election. As the Coalition pressed ahead with its plans and the cuts began to bite, opposition to the measures increased. In March 2011, over a quarter of a million people took to the streets of London in an ‘anti-cuts’ march. The government’s poll ratings slipped, while support for the Liberal Democrats collapsed, a reflection, no doubt, of their erstwhile supporters’ sense of betrayal at the party’s membership of an expenditure-slashing coalition.

In terms of ‘process space’, ‘direct’ and ‘institutional’ democratic norms require no British analogue, but there is less systemic tension between them in Britain than in the United States, not least because ‘institutional’ norms have dominated in the UK to an overwhelming degree. Historically, British political processes permitted the people a very limited role in decision making (King 2007, 54-55). Burkean ideas of trusteeship dominated the practice of representation at Westminster, and British democracy amounted to little more than a Schumpeterian model of a ‘competitive struggle for the people’s vote’ (Schumpeter 1947, 269). There was certainly no tradition of radical or participatory democracy akin to that found in the United States. This exclusive nature of British democracy was arguably compounded by its majoritarian tendencies. In between general elections, single-party governments were generally able to monopolise the wielding of political power. It is no coincidence that Lijphart (1999) took Britain’s political system as the constitutional archetype of a majoritarian model of democracy.

Recent years have seen some chipping away at the exclusivity of British political processes. New Labour’s programme of constitutional reform, including devolution to Scotland and Wales, the creation of an operationally independent central bank and House of Lords reform, have led to the emergence of consensus-style politics in the periphery of the political system (Flinders and Curry 2008). And, of
course, the existence of a peace-time coalition government further weakens the system’s majoritarian credentials, at least for the time being. Perhaps more importantly, ideas about popular sovereignty and support for greater citizen participation have found increased resonance across the political system (Bogdanor 2009; Marquand 2008). Referendums and others forms of direct democracy are now an infrequent but established feature of national and especially regional and local politics. Compared with fifty years ago, the people themselves are also called upon more frequently to choose their representatives, whether for the European Parliament, for regional assemblies in Scotland, Wales and London, or, in a few places, for directly elected mayors.

Even more recently, the 2009 expenses scandal prompted many politicians to promise further rounds of political reform that would empower the people. Thus David Cameron in his May 2009 ‘fixing broken politics’ speech argued: ‘We need a massive, sweeping, radical redistribution of power… from the powerful to the powerless— from the political elite to the man and woman in the street.’ Not surprisingly, such rhetoric in the past has tended to exceed greatly measures that actually increase the people’s role in political decision making (Allen and Mirwaldt 2010). Nevertheless, in the wake of the 2010 general election, political reform, including voting reform, the greater use of local and national referenda, more directly-elected mayors, open primary elections for selecting parliamentary candidates, a predominantly elected House of Lords and even recall elections for erring MPs, was a central component of the coalition agreement. Unveiling the programme, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg argued: ‘This government is going to transform our politics so the state has far less control over you, and you have far more control over
the state. This government is going to break up concentrations of power and hand power back to people…’

In a neat stroke of fate, the government’s commitment to empowering the people fitted with the straightened times of austerity. Cameron’s flagship ‘Big Society’ agenda was ostensibly about ‘recasting’ the relationship between people and the state (HM Government 2010, 8) by encouraging individuals to volunteer and community groups and charities to get more involved in the delivery of public services. In the process, government would come to do less. Political opponents were quick to paint the Big Society as nothing more than gloss and spin to cover sweeping cuts in public expenditure. Nevertheless, many of its proponents seemed fully committed to its decentralising ethos.

**Hypotheses, data and measures**

In order to examine the nature of process preferences and evaluations in Britain, we adapted and extended Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s questions and included them in an online representative survey of the British public. The survey was administered by YouGov between 21 March and 22 March 2011. The sample included 1,382 adult respondents from across Britain. ²

Our hypotheses are informed by the findings of the original study, as well as by our own hypotheses and by the particular context of British politics. Our first hypothesis, H1, is simply that the distribution of expressed policy preferences will be broadly similar to that in the United States, with most Britons tending to regard their views as centrist. We do not, however, expect expressed policy perceptions to be similarly distributed. As seen, the Coalition Government’s deficit-reduction policies are highly controversial, and we expect this to be reflected in popular judgements
about the nature of contemporary policies. Therefore, our second hypothesis, H2, is that, at the aggregate level, respondents will perceive current policy output to be somewhat to the right of them.

To measure both policy preferences and perceptions, we adapted the question Hibbing and Theiss-Morse asked, substituting ‘left’ and ‘right’ for ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ respectively. Respondents were presented with the following question:

> In politics, people sometimes talk about parties and politicians as being on the left or right. Using the 1-7 scale, where the end marked 1 means left and the end marked 7 means right, where would you place… [yourself] [the government’s recent policies]

Ideally, respondents would have been presented with a variety of questions to measure their policy preferences. Single-item measures are necessarily limited: they conflate multi-faceted topics and are more likely to be affected by ‘idiosyncratic interpretations’ (Evans at al. 1996, 94). Moreover, doubts have long been expressed about respondents’ cognitive sophistication and their abilities to think about abstract terms such as ‘left’ and ‘right’ (Butler and Stokes 1974, 329). Nevertheless, the nature of the exercise requires respondents to identify both their own ideological positions and the position of recent government policies, and it is unlikely that respondents would have had sufficient knowledge of government policies to be able to make such judgements across a range of specific issues (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

Our third and fourth hypotheses concern the nature of British process preferences and perceptions. Given their respective democratic traditions, we might expect, all things being equal, for British respondents to be less enthusiastic about
direct democracy than American respondents. However, the measure used by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, which is the basis of the question included in our survey, addresses the ideal extent of popular involvement in political decision making; it does not refer explicitly to the institutions of direct democracy. We therefore expect British public opinion to be broadly similar in terms of the distribution of preferences for involvement in political decision making (or, more accurately, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we have no reason to think it would be any different). Thus our third hypothesis, H3, is that aggregate-level process preferences in Britain will be broadly similar in both distribution and balance to those in America. At the same, Britain’s democratic institutions are markedly different to those in the US, and there is no comparable history of direct democracy. Thus our fourth hypothesis, H4, is that British respondents will perceive office holders and officials to dominate decision making to a greater degree than in the United States.

To measure process preferences and perceptions, we adapted the question asked by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse as follows:

Some people say that what we need in this country is for ordinary people to make political decisions for themselves about what needs to be done and how. Others say ordinary people are too busy and should instead allow elected politicians and officials to make all political decisions. Still others say a combination would be best. Imagine a seven-point scale with 1 being ordinary people making all decisions on their own and 7 being elected politicians and officials making all the decisions on their own, while 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 indicate in-between opinions on the two extremes. Which number from 1 to 7 best
represents… [How you think the system of governing Britain should work?]

[How you think the system of governing Britain actually does work?]

Again, we acknowledge the limitations of a single-item measure. However, since we wish to follow as closely as possible the original study, the limitations are unavoidable.

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s study was not just about describing policy and process preferences and perceptions, however; it was also about measuring the significance of policy and process evaluations. Likewise, we seek to examine the consequences of British respondents’ policy and process satisfaction—measured as the absolute gap between the preferred and perceived policies and workings of government respectively, which could range from 0 to 6—on respondents’ approval for different political objects.

Our fifth hypothesis, H5, echoes the expectations of the American study, in that we expect process satisfaction to be a significant predictor of government approval. Our dependent variable is responses to the question: ‘Do you approve or disapprove of the Government’s record to date?’, where respondents could answer simply ‘approve’ or ‘disapprove’.3 Our sixth hypothesis, H6, also echoes the expectations of the American study, in that we expect process satisfaction to be a significant predictor of respondents’ tendency to comply with the law. Such attitudes are, of course, central to a democratic regime’s authority and have implications for the viability of future policy (Tyler, 1990).

Our seventh hypothesis, H7, goes further than the American study by introducing an additional dependent variable: respondents’ attitudes towards voting as a civic duty. A duty to vote arguably reflects a sense of attachment towards the
highest political level or object of support, the national community. As Butt and Curtice (2010, 2) note,

A voter may feel that as someone who enjoys the rights and freedoms of being a British citizen they have an obligation to their fellow citizens at election time to exercise the right to vote that comes with citizenship. Doing so expresses their sense of commitment to their country and its democracy.

A sense of duty is also practically important. Amidst concerns about declining turnout, a sense of duty to vote has also been shown to affect individuals’ propensity to participate in elections (Clarke et al. 2009; Jones and Hudson 2000). In line with the expected relationship between process evaluations and compliance, we expect process satisfaction to have a positive effect on respondents’ belief that voting is a duty.

The last two dependent variables—compliance with the law and duty to vote—were measured by asking respondents to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: ‘People should obey the law, even if it goes against what they think is right’; and ‘It is every citizen’s duty to vote in an election’. The response options for both items ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Our analyses of the impact of policy and process evaluations on expressed government approval, compliance with the law and duty to vote control for a number of standard demographic and attitudinal variables, including age, gender, education and party identification (see the Appendix for details on variable construction). Our selection of controls largely mirrors those included in Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s study. However, we were unable to include a measure of political knowledge in our
questionnaire, so we instead included interest in politics, which has been shown to relate to levels of system support in previous studies (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Almond and Verba 1965; Weatherford 1991).

We also include, as an additional control, respondents’ evaluations of politicians’ standards of honesty and integrity, something that Hibbing and Theiss-Morse did not include in their analysis. There are two reasons for this, one conjunctural and the other theoretical. Under the shadow of the 2009 MP expenses scandal in Britain, integrity evaluations might be expected to have a significant effect on citizens’ other expressed attitudes towards the political system. Even two years after the scandal, a clear majority of respondents rated their politicians’ as having fairly low or low standards of integrity, as Figure 3 shows.

Figure 3 about here

On a more theoretical level, there is reason to believe that citizens’ evaluations of their leaders are affected to a considerable extent by how the latter discharge their duties, in addition to the institutions that structure their actions and the policy outputs that result from their efforts (Allen and Birch 2011; Johnston 1986; Redlawsk and McCann 2005). It is only one step from evaluations of politicians as a class to approval of the system of government and willingness to adhere to the norms embodied in that system by obeying the law and adhering to civic norms of participation.

These seven hypotheses are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 about here.
Findings

Figure 4 presents in graphic form Britons’ responses in 2011 to the two policy-space questions. The solid line represents respondents’ self-placement on the left-right continuum; the dotted line represents respondents’ placement of the government’s recent policies on the same continuum. The distribution of respondents’ self-placement was as expected and upholds H1: most people placed themselves somewhere in the middle of the ideological spectrum, much as they did in Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s study, with 68 per cent locating themselves at 3, 4 or 5 on the seven-point scale. In terms of the mean placement, British public preferences were, at 4.0, dead centre (and slightly to the ‘left’ of the mean American location at 4.4, see Table 2). Respondents with more extreme self-perceived views were in a minority.

The distribution of respondents’ policy perceptions also upholds H2. As expected, most people placed recent government-policy output more towards the right, with a mean score of 5.3 on the seven-point scale. In the American study, the distributions of policy preferences and perceptions were remarkably similar. As Table 2 shows, the mean perceived output (4.0) was significantly (p < 0.01) but only narrowly to the left of the mean preferred output (4.4). The difference between the mean British preference (4.0) and perceived output (5.3) is statistically significant (p < 0.001) but it is also more substantial. At a time when the coalition government is making cuts to public expenditure, most people perceive government policy to be to the right of their own views.5
Table 2 about here

Figure 5 presents responses to the questions about process preferences and perceptions. As with Figure 4, the solid line represents popular preferences, in this case whether respondents think political decisions should be taken by the public or by elected politicians and officials, and the dotted line represents perceptions of how things actually are. By and large, the data accord with expectations. In line with evidence from the United States, the distribution of process preferences was largely balanced, with most respondents locating their own preferences somewhere in the middle. The mean location for British process preferences was 4.1, and fully 78 per cent of British respondents registered a preference at 3, 4 or 5 on the seven-point scale. Only a small proportion of people wanted ordinary people to make all the decisions—just 12 per cent opted for 1 or 2 on the scale. Echoing Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s (2001, 149) conclusions about American attitudes, British people also ‘definitely want elected officials to be involved in decision making and do not want governmental institutions to go away’. H3 is thus upheld.

The data also uphold H4, in that they suggest that British respondents perceive politicians and officials to dominate political decision making in Britain to an even greater degree than in the United States. No fewer than 77 per cent of respondents located the perceived reality of political process at 6 or 7 on the scale, compared with a mere 55 per cent in the United States. Moreover, the mean perception score of 6.1 was
further to the representative or ‘institutional’ democracy end of the spectrum than the mean American score of 5.4. It was also significantly (p < 0.001) and substantially different to the mean preference score of 4.1. Many respondents, it seems, do not feel as involved in political decision making that they would like. Britons do not appear to be hyper-democrats in any way, but they do think that governmental processes are overly dominated by politicians.\textsuperscript{6}

We now turn to the matter of how significant British policy and process evaluations are in terms of their effect on other attitudes. In particular, we seek to establish whether Britons’ satisfaction with political processes affects other political values in the way that Americans’ satisfaction did. To answer these questions, the present study tests several empirical models that seek, as far as possible, to replicate those developed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse.

The first sets of models, reported in Table 3, test the significance of policy- and process gaps as predictors of expressed approval of the way the government has been doing its job. The question used for the dependent variable (see above) differs in wording from that used in the American study, but it essentially taps support for the government of the day i.e. for specific political actors or authorities. The question also differs in terms of the response categories: in the American study, respondents’ could give an answer on a 4-point scale that ranged from strongly disapprove (1) to strongly approve (4); in the present study, respondents could only answer ‘approve’ or ‘disapprove’. As a result, whereas Hibbing and Theiss-Morse used OLS to test their model, we are obliged to use logistic regression. The dependent variable is whether or not respondents approve of the government’s record to date (coded 0 if they disapproved and 1 if they approved).
Four models are presented in Table 3 (rather than the single model tested by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse). Each model introduces an additional bloc of variables on the basis of assumptions about the most likely causal ordering (Davis 1985). For example, demographic variables are likely to precede long-term psychological attachments to political parties, which in turn are likely to come before evaluations about policy and process outputs. The final bloc of variables introduced covers judgements about outcomes. In the absence of any obvious theory to guide us, we assume that these follow judgements about outputs.

The first model (A), which is presented in column two, includes age, gender, ethnicity, education, income and interest in politics as the explanatory variables. Of these, age, gender and education are significant and positively signed; being older, male and better educated are likely to result in higher levels of approval. The second model (B) adds long-term partisan attachments to the factors included in the first model. Age and gender remain significant—education ceases to be—and three of the party identification variables are significant. Not surprisingly, being a Conservative party identifier is significant and positively related to approving of the government’s record, whereas being a Labour identifier is significant and negatively related to government approval. Those who identify with other parties are also less likely to approve of the government’s record. Curiously, having an attachment to the Liberal Democrats was not a significant predictor of government approval. This finding probably reflects the ambivalence in many Liberal Democrat supporters’ minds towards their party being in coalition with the Conservatives.
Model C introduces the policy and process satisfaction measures. Of the earlier variables, only gender and identifying with either the Tory party or Labour remain significant. At the same time, and in line with Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s findings, both perceived policy gaps and perceived process gaps are significant predictors of government approval. The negative coefficient for both variables indicates that the larger the gap between preference and perception, the less likely respondents are to approve of the government’s record. The fact that the coefficient for perceived policy gap has a greater magnitude and higher level of significance than that for perceived process gap suggests that policy evaluations exert a greater influence on support for the government’s recent policies than process evaluations, again in line with Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s findings.

The final column (Model D) introduces an additional bloc of explanatory factors, including judgements about politicians’ integrity and economic evaluations. Once these controls are added, we find that respondents’ policy evaluations remain a significant predictor of their support for the government’s record, but process evaluations cease to be significant. Age again becomes significant, while Conservative party identifiers remained significantly more likely to approve of the government’s record, and Labour identifiers significantly more likely to disapprove. The analysis also shows that respondents’ evaluations of politicians’ standards of honesty and integrity—but not judgements about the economy—have a significant effect on expressed support for the government. The positive signs indicate that the more honest politicians are thought to be, the more likely respondents are to approve of the government’s recent policies.

On the basis of these findings, it seems that British process evaluations in 2011 are not as robust a predictor of government approval as American evaluations in
1998. Once additional controls are introduced, the effects wash out. It would, of course, be intriguing to know whether American’s judgements about the integrity of the politicians—a factor that Hibbing and Theiss-Morse did not control for—would have similarly washed out the apparent impact of process satisfaction.

The next set of models, reported in Table 4, seek to explain respondents’ willingness to comply with the law, again by introducing the same blocs of explanatory variables. On this occasion, the question wording for the dependent variable is virtually identical to that used by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, but respondents were presented with five response categories rather than four. Ordered logit is used to test the various models.

Table 4 about here

Model A again controls for demographic variables only. Age is the only significant predictor of attitudes towards the law; the older the respondent, the more likely they were to agree that ‘people should obey the law, even if it goes against what they think is right’. Model B introduces party identification to the analysis. Age continues to be significant, but of the new factors, only a sense of identification with the Conservative party proved significant.

Model C introduces policy and process evaluations to the mix. Age and Conservative party ID remain significant. Neither of the new variables is significant, unlike what Hibbing and Theiss-Morse found in their model of American attitudes.

Model D, reported in the last column, introduces the final bloc of controls. Age remains a significant predictor of respondents’ tendency to feel bound to follow the law, as does being a Conservative party identifier. Of the new variables,
evaluations of politicians’ standards of honesty and integrity is a strong and significant predictor of expressed opinion towards compliance—the more honest politicians are thought to be, the more duty-bound respondents feel to comply with the law. Legislators may want to take note. Neither personal nor national economic conditions proves significant.

The final set of models, reported in Table 5, concern support for the statement that ‘It is every citizen’s duty to vote in an election’. Respondents were again presented with five response categories. These analyses take the present study beyond Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s by relating their measures of policy and process satisfaction to an indicator of diffuse support for the norms of the democratic system and, arguably, the wider political community. Once again, the same blocs of variables are introduced in the same order. Model A includes only demographic variables. Of these, only age and interest in politics were significant. In line with other research (Butt and Curtice 2010), the older the respondent, the more likely they were to agree with that sentiment. Respondents who reported being more interested in politics were also considerably more likely to agree. The introduction of the party identification variables in Model B does little to affect the significance of the demographic variables. Age and interest in politics remain significant, and being a Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat identifier are all significantly and positively related to believing it is a duty to vote.

Table 5 about here

The same variables remain significant with the inclusion of perceived policy and process gaps (Model C). Neither of the latter is significant, however. The final
column (Model D) introduces the last bloc of variables. Those factors that were significant in Model C remain significant, and of the new variables, perceptions of politicians’ honesty are strongly significant, as are evaluations of the national economy. Somewhat counter-intuitively, those who thought that the national financial situation had got a lot better over the last year were less likely to agree that it was a duty to vote. Somewhat more intuitively, those who judged their politicians’ honesty more favourably were more inclined to believe it a duty to vote. Yet, there seems little evidence to suggest that process evaluations and judgements about way the political system works affects citizens’ belief in voting as civic duty.

In summary, there is limited support for H5, whilst neither H6 nor H7 is upheld. Process evaluations do have some effect on government approval. They do not have a significant effect on support for compliance or respondents’ belief in a duty to vote in any of the models tested.

**Discussion**

This paper reports attempts to replicate and extend a study of American attitudes and the significance of process evaluations using similar survey instruments and original British data. In the process of testing the generalisability of the original study’s findings, the paper has addressed three substantive questions. First, how do British citizens’ preferences about government policy and the workings of government processes compare with their perceptions of the realities of both? Second, how do preferences and perceptions in Britain compare with preferences in the United States, a country with very different democratic institutions and traditions? Third, do policy and process evaluations—the gaps between preferences and perceptions—affect respondents’ support for other political objects in Britain?
In answer to the first question, the findings suggest that, at the aggregate level, British citizens are balanced in both their preferences for policy and process. When asked to locate their preferences on a seven-point scale, the majority did so by placing themselves in or very close to the middle. When it comes to perceived reality, however, policy outputs are very obviously to the right, while governmental processes are judged to be dominated by elected politicians and officials at the expense of ordinary people.

In answer to the second question, the findings suggest that there are basic similarities in the distribution of British policy and process preferences compared with those recorded in the United States. If American respondents were generally balanced in both respects when surveyed in 1998, so too were British respondents in 2011. Yet the findings also suggest intriguing differences in the distribution of policy and process perceptions in the two countries. At the aggregate level, perceived policy output was more obviously out of line with British preferences than it was with American preferences. This finding almost certainly reflects the UK public’s response to the Coalition Government’s austerity programme. Meanwhile, the distribution of perceptions of political processes in Britain resembled those in the United States more closely, although Britons’ perceptions also probably reflected the relative dearth of direct-democratic practices in their country. It may be that British responses also reflect a greater sense of disconnect with politicians.

In answer to the third question, the evidence surrounding the significance of British policy and process evaluations—or at least the measures adapted from Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s study—is mixed. Because it was a significant predictor of both government approval and beliefs about complying with the law, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001, 151) in their study were able to conclude emphatically that ‘process
matters’ even when policy evaluations do not. The evidence from this study suggests that process evaluations may matter but in different ways and at different times. In our analysis of government approval, the significance of process satisfaction was washed out once additional controls for politicians’ perceived integrity were added. In our analysis of attitudes towards legal compliance and belief in voting as a civic duty, process evaluations were never significant.

There is much stronger evidence surrounding the importance of respondents’ evaluations of their elected politicians’ honesty and integrity. Such evaluations were significant predictors of all three dependent variables, even after controlling for all other factors. These findings have both practical and conceptual significance. On the one hand, it sends an important signal to lawmakers that, whilst they may alight upon political reform as a solution to citizens’ apparent detachment from politics, it is just as important that they modify their own behaviour. It is probably easier said than done, but politicians need to take responsibility individually and collectively for their conduct and how it is perceived. On the other hand, these findings suggest that a full account of citizens’ judgements about political processes needs to go beyond preferences for and perceptions of popular participation. Judgements about the integrity and honesty of politicians are judgements about the integrity of a country’s political processes and the people who work them. If policy space is multi-dimensional, so process space is too. Whilst Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s study did not fully address integrity as a feature of American’s judgements about process space, any future study should probably do so.

As with any attempted replication, it is perhaps disappointing that the present study was unable to confirm unambiguously the relevance and general validity of the original study’s conclusions. A moment’s reflection suggests three possible factors
that may explain why. One factor may be differences in the survey instruments used and in the specifications of the models. Something may have been lost in translation in the necessary adaptation of the original questions and response categories, likewise with the empirical analyses. A second factor may be the different spatial context: it could simply be that popular ideas about political processes are different in Britain and the United States and that these ideas are more significant in the latter. The United States is rare if not unique amongst established democracies for its tradition of populism, and it may well be that it is something of an outlier in terms of the significance of its citizens’ process evaluations.

A third and intriguing factor concerns the temporal context. It could be that beliefs and evaluations about political processes are a second-order consideration for most people most of the time, and their salience depends on how contented people are with their material interests. When the times are good, people may start caring more about means and about how governments work; when the times are bad, citizens revert to caring first and foremost about ends (Popkin, 1991, 99). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s survey was conducted in a period of ‘economic accomplishment’ in the United States and amidst sustained levels of growth, low unemployment and low inflation (Frankel and Orszag 2002, 1). The British survey was conducted during far less favourable economic conditions and at a time when the Coalition Government’s austerity measures were beginning to bite. In much the same way that economic development, educations and prosperity are thought to promote a greater interest in ‘post-materialist’ and quality-of-life concerns (Inglehart 1971; 1977), process evaluations may be less important a factor in most people’s minds than policy concerns when the economic times are bad.
For the time being, it is unfortunately not possible to do more than speculate about these factors given that they derive from a comparison of just two cases. Further research, better measures (covering additional dimensions) and data from across time and space are needed if we are to understand more fully the nature of citizens’ process evaluations and those contextual factors that affect their relevance. Even in the absence of this additional evidence, however, it remains clear that Britons in 2011, like Americans in the late 1990s, feel that ordinary people are not as involved in political processes and decision making as they would like. Only time will tell whether or not current talk of political reform translates into concrete measures and a closing of the gap between what people want and their perceived reality.
Notes

1 We are concerned here with values and perceptions of democratic processes, but it is also worth noting that objective democratic process performance also affects regime support (Norris, 2011: chap. 10).

2 YouGov administers online surveys to panellists recruited on the Internet. The data are weighted to reflect the demographic characteristics of the entire adult population. Concerns have been expressed on-line surveys because respondents tend to over-represent citizens who are politically knowledgeable and engaged. A number of studies have assuaged many of these concerns; indeed, Internet surveys have some methodological advantages over face-to-face surveys, which suffer from increasingly high non-response rates (Sanders et al. 2007; Twyman 2008).

3 The question wording in the American study was: ‘Now, please tell me if you strongly approve, approve, disapprove or strongly disapprove of the way different entities have been handling their job lately. How about… the federal government?

4 The variables in their model included: age; income; race; education; external political efficacy; political knowledge; party identification; personal financial condition; country’s financial condition; perceived policy gap; and perceived process gap (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001, 151). We exclude external efficacy from our analysis on the basis that the measures for process evaluations and efficacy are conceptually very close. If people perceive that government institutions do not allow them to have affect decision-making, then they are bound to have low perceptions of efficacy. In this sense the relationship between the two variables might even be said to be tautological, even if they were found to be distinct empirically in the US case.
Further evidence of this is provided by simply subtracting individuals’ perceptions from their self-placements. The mean gap in policy space (with a theoretical range between -6 [too right] and 6 [too left]) is -1.34.

After subtracting individuals’ perceptions from their self-placements, the mean gap in process space (with a theoretical range between -6 [too ‘institutional’] and 6 [too ‘direct’]) is -2.02.
References


Pattie, Charles and Ron Johnston (2011) ‘How Big is the Big Society?’, Parliamentary Affairs, 64(3), 403-424


Figure 1: American policy attitudes
Figure 2: American process attitudes
Figure 3: Perceptions of politicians’ standards of honesty and integrity

Q: Overall, how would you rate the standards of honesty and integrity of election politicians in Britain today?

- Very high: 0.5
- Fairly high: 10.6
- Neither high nor low: 28.6
- Fairly low: 35.5
- Very low: 21.0
- Don't know: 3.7
Figure 4: British policy attitudes
Figure 5: British process attitudes
Table 1: Summary of hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis (H)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>The distribution of expressed policy preferences will be broadly similar in Great Briton and the United States, with most Britons tending to regard their views as centrist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>On aggregate, British respondents will perceive current policy output to be somewhat to the right of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>On aggregate, process preferences in Britain will be broadly similar in both distribution and balance to those in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>British respondents will perceive office holders and officials to dominate decision making to a greater degree than in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>Process satisfaction will be a significant predictor of government approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>Process satisfaction will be a significant predictor of respondents’ tendency to comply with the law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7</td>
<td>Process satisfaction will be a significant predictor of respondents’ belief that voting is a duty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Mean policy and process preference and perception scores in Britain and the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean preferred</th>
<th>Mean perceived</th>
<th>Mean gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US policy</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US process</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK policy</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK process</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Difference of means between ‘preferred’ and ‘perceived’ were all statistically significant (p<.001).
Table 3: Logistic regression: predicting approval of government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model A</th>
<th>Model B</th>
<th>Model C</th>
<th>Model D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.518 (.440)*****</td>
<td>-2.266 (.534)*****</td>
<td>-2.629 (.830)</td>
<td>-3.852 (1.133)****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.021 (.006)*****</td>
<td>.010 (.007)</td>
<td>.012 (.010)</td>
<td>.018 (.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.333 (.161)*</td>
<td>.574 (.209)**</td>
<td>.687 (.292)*</td>
<td>.609 (.312)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>-.270 (.299)</td>
<td>-.458 (.388)</td>
<td>-.304 (.474)</td>
<td>-.346 (.505)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.164 (.064)*</td>
<td>.143 (.079)</td>
<td>.025 (.108)</td>
<td>-.054 (.112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.046 (.025)</td>
<td>.028 (.032)</td>
<td>.059 (.042)</td>
<td>.070 (.046)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in politics</td>
<td>.038 (.107)</td>
<td>.173 (.138)</td>
<td>.404 (.214)</td>
<td>.300 (.226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative party ID</td>
<td>1.852 (.251)*****</td>
<td>1.477 (.368)*****</td>
<td>1.109 (.397)****</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour ID</td>
<td>-2.107 (.306)*****</td>
<td>-1.776 (.433)*****</td>
<td>-2.077 (.480)*****</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat ID</td>
<td>-.567 (.304)</td>
<td>-.411 (.434)</td>
<td>-.599 (.477)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other party ID</td>
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<td>-2.134 (1.613)</td>
<td>-2.364 (1.670)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived policy gap</td>
<td>-1.143 (.135)*****</td>
<td>-1.064 (.142)*****</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived process gap</td>
<td>-.244 (.106)*</td>
<td>-.027 (.115)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians’ integrity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.936 (.179)*****</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal financial condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.064 (.183)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National financial condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.299 (.178)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox &amp; Snell R2</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>.503</td>
<td>.534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% correct</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Party identification reference category is ‘no identification’. Standard errors in brackets. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.
Table 4: Ordered logit: predicting expressed opinions about compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model A</th>
<th>Model B</th>
<th>Model C</th>
<th>Model D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.015 (.004)**</td>
<td>.012 (.004)**</td>
<td>.013 (.005)**</td>
<td>.010 (.005)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.143 (.130)</td>
<td>.140 (.131)</td>
<td>.139 (.131)</td>
<td>.252 (.136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
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<td>-.285 (.242)</td>
<td>-.289 (.242)</td>
<td>-.317 (.244)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.026 (.052)</td>
<td>.016 (.052)</td>
<td>.020 (.052)</td>
<td>-.004 (.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.021 (.020)</td>
<td>.015 (.020)</td>
<td>.015 (.020)</td>
<td>.008 (.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in politics</td>
<td>.057 (.083)</td>
<td>.011 (.085)</td>
<td>.029 (.088)</td>
<td>-.095 (.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative party ID</td>
<td></td>
<td>.716 (.188)**</td>
<td>.690 (.189)**</td>
<td>.564 (.197)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour ID</td>
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<td>.307 (.184)</td>
<td>.245 (.190)</td>
<td>.250 (.230)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat ID</td>
<td>.252 (.176)</td>
<td>.299 (.222)</td>
<td>.089 (.375)</td>
<td>.014 (.045)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other party ID</td>
<td>.272 (.221)</td>
<td>-.021 (.365)</td>
<td>-.020 (.043)</td>
<td>.334 (.075)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived policy gap</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.040 (.041)</td>
<td>-.020 (.043)</td>
<td>.040 (.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived process gap</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.025 (.042)</td>
<td>.014 (.045)</td>
<td>.060 (.089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians’ integrity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.334 (.075)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal financial condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.040 (.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National financial condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.060 (.089)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nagelkerke R2  | .022 | .042 | .044 | .066 |
N                | 876  | 876  | 876  | 848  |

Note: Party identification reference category is ‘no identification’. Cut points omitted. Standard errors in brackets. * p<0.05; **p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.
Table 5: Ordered logit: Predicting expressed opinions about duty to vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model A</th>
<th>Model B</th>
<th>Model C</th>
<th>Model D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>.019 (.005)***</td>
<td>.020 (.005)***</td>
<td>.016 (.005)**</td>
</tr>
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<td>-.189 (.135)</td>
<td>-.197 (.135)</td>
<td>-.158 (.141)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.091 (.156)</td>
<td>.194 (.256)</td>
<td>.121 (.259)</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>.100 (.054)</td>
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<td>.116 (.055)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>-.016 (.021)</td>
<td>-.014 (.021)</td>
<td>-.016 (.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in politics</td>
<td>.744 (.088)***</td>
<td>.670 (.089)***</td>
<td>.691 (.092)***</td>
<td>.593 (.096)***</td>
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<td>.512 (.188)***</td>
<td>.348 (.197)***</td>
<td>.348 (.197)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour ID</td>
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<td>1.032 (.189)***</td>
<td>.874 (.195)***</td>
<td>.874 (.195)***</td>
</tr>
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<td>Liberal Democrat ID</td>
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<td>.749 (.227)**</td>
<td>.728 (.237)***</td>
<td>.728 (.237)***</td>
</tr>
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<td>.089 (.366)</td>
<td>.111 (.376)</td>
<td>.111 (.376)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived policy gap</td>
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<td>-.052 (.045)</td>
<td>-.024 (.046)</td>
<td>-.024 (.046)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived process gap</td>
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<td>-.024 (.046)</td>
<td>.265 (.079)***</td>
<td>.265 (.079)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians’ integrity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal financial condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.127 (.081)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National financial condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.213 (.088)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nagelkerke R2  | .131          | .166          | .167          | .173          |
N               | 879           | 879           | 879           | 850           |

Note: Party identification reference category is ‘no identification’. Cut points omitted. Standard errors in brackets. * p<0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.
Appendix: variable construction

Dependent variables

**Government approval:** coded 0 = ‘disapprove, 1 = ‘approve’ in response to the question: ‘Do you approve or disapprove of the Government’s record to date?’

**Compliance:** a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’ in response to the statement: ‘People should obey the law, even if it goes against what they think is right’.

**Duty to vote:** a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’ in response to the statement: ‘It is every citizen’s duty to vote in an election’.

Independent variables

**Age:** Age in years.

**Gender:** coded 0 = female, 1 = male.

**Ethnic minority:** coded 0 = White British, 1 = other.

**Education – age completed:** this variable was constructed on the basis of replies to the following question: ‘At what age did you finish full-time education?’

0 = 15 years, 1 = 16, 2 = 17-18, 3=19, 4 = 20 plus (those still in full-time education were counted as 4)

**Income:** The BCCAP asked the following question: ‘What is your gross household income?’ Respondents were asked to tick one of a number of boxes designating five thousand pound increments. Responses to this question were used to create a 15-point scale, ranging from ‘under 5,000 per year’ (1) to ‘150,000 and over’.

**Party identification:** The BCCAP asked ‘Generally speaking do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?’ Responses to this question were used to create the following dummy variables:

- **Labour party identification:** 0 = does not identify with Labour, 1 = does identify
- **Conservative party identification:** 0 = does not identify with the Conservatives, 1 = does identify
- **Liberal Democrat Party identification:** 0 = does not identify with the Liberal Democrats, 1 = does identify
- **Other party identification:** 0 = does not identify with another party, 1 = does identify

Respondents who reported no partisan identification were treated as the reference category.
Interest in politics: a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = ‘not at all interested’ to 4 = ‘very interested’ in response to the statement: ‘How interested, if at all, are you in politics in general?’

Politicians’ integrity: a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = ‘very low’ to 5 = ‘very high’ in response to the question: ‘Overall, how would you rate the standards of honesty and integrity of elected politicians in Britain today?’

Personal financial condition: a 5-point scale coded 1 = ‘got a lot worse’ to 5 = ‘got a lot better’ for the question: ‘How does the financial situation of your household now compare with what it was 12 months ago? Has it…’

National financial condition: a 5-point scale coded 1 = ‘got a lot worse’ to 5 = ‘got a lot better’ for the question: ‘How do you think the general economic situation in this country has changed over the last 12 months? Has it: …’

Perceived policy gap: Measured by taking the absolute value of respondents’ self-placement on the ideology scale minus their perceptions of the recent policies of the national government—‘In politics, people sometimes talk about parties and politicians as being on the left or right. Using the 1-7 scale, where the end marked 1 means left and the end marked 7 means right, where would you place… yourself… the governments’ recent policies.’

Perceived process gap: Measured by taking the absolute value of respondents’ self-placement on the process scale minus their perception of the system for governing Britain—‘Some people say that what we need in this country is for ordinary people to make political decisions for themselves about what needs to be done and how. Others say ordinary people are too busy and should instead allow elected politicians and officials to make all political decisions. Still others say a combination would be best. Imagine a seven-point scale with 1 being ordinary people making all decisions on their own and 7 being elected politicians and officials making all the decisions on their own, while 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 indicate in-between opinions on the two extremes. Which number from 1 to 7 best represents… How you think the system of governing Britain should work?… How you think the system of governing Britain actually does work?’