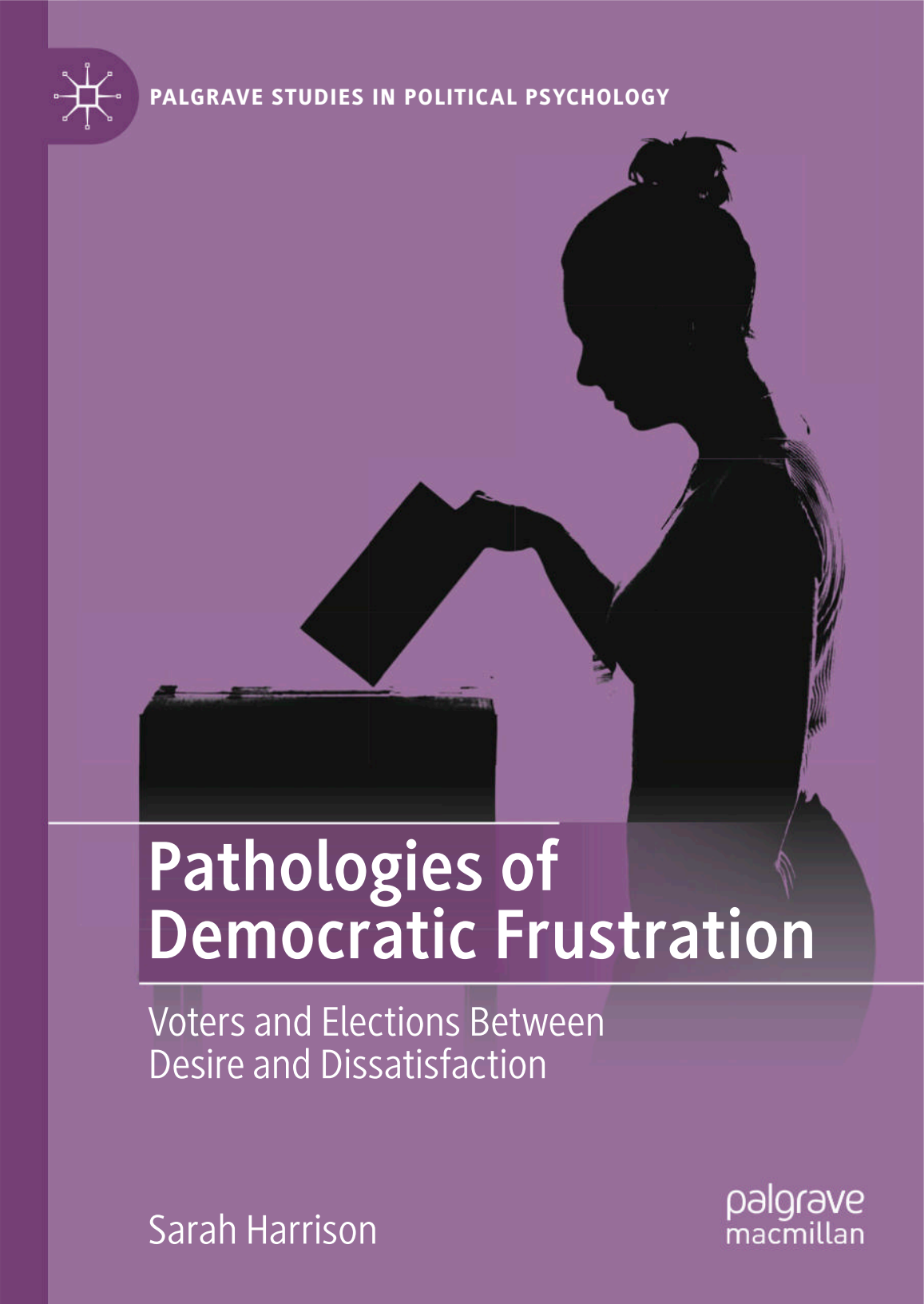
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Pathologies of Democratic Frustration
Voters and Elections Between Desire and Dissatisfaction
Sarah Harrison
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CHAPTER 1

Anatomy of Democratic Frustration

What Is Pathologies of Democratic Frustration About?

Sometimes, people use a word so perpetually that one stops hearing it. How often has a husband or a wife, a friend, a parent realised—too late—that for months or for years, their spouse, their friend, their child had used words repeatedly that were telling them almost literally about the worry, the problem, or the crisis that they were experiencing but that they had failed to properly hear it and missed the obvious. They heard that there was a problem of course, they knew that there was a discomfort or indeed a "crisis", but often, the human brain is content with approximation or jumps at interpretation and displacement. Indeed, it is typically wired in such a way as to intuitively project its own connotations over the words of others instead of hearing them literally in their unique, very specific meaning.

Take frustration, for instance. Often people will tell us that something makes them feel frustrated, and we will simply hear that they are disappointed or unhappy. Yet, there is much more in the concept of frustration than mere unhappiness or even disappointment, and someone who tells us that they feel frustrated about a situation gives us a lot more information about their feelings and the structure of their emotions than the mere dissatisfaction that it entails.

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One does not usually feel frustrated that they broke a leg, but they will likely feel frustrated that they cannot walk. They rarely talk of frustration when they catch a cold, but often do when they did not pass their exams, especially if they have a feeling that they could have worked harder for them. In other words, whilst dissatisfaction and negativity are inherent components of frustration, they are not sufficient to constitute it.

Crucially, as we will see in pages to come, as much as dissatisfaction, frustration requires the existence of a strong, almost irresistible desire which is unmet. The reason one may feel frustrated about being stuck home with a cast on their leg is that they very much desire being able to walk instead and can envision exactly how wonderful and exciting life would be if they were able to enjoy a walk in the sun. The reason they may feel frustrated about having failed their exam is that they retrospectively realise everything that they would have been able to do had in the past weeks and so desire that they had. Furthermore, in both cases, the frustration is not only related to dissatisfaction as an external phenomenon and desire of it, but often entails an element of self-blame which makes frustration pertain to the very definition of one's own identity.

As it happens, as many scholars of democratic crises know, "frustration" is one of the words that citizens of democratic states use most frequently and spontaneously to describe their feelings vis-à-vis the perceived dysfunctional nature of their political systems, personnel, and outcomes and what they do or do not get out of them. This book, quite simply, is about listening to this claim, to citizens' statement that democracy so often leaves them frustrated. This book is about taking that idea seriously and at face value, and exploring the details of what it involves systematically, analytically, and empirically, across four major democracies (US, UK, Australia, and South Africa) at the start of the 2020s, before it is potentially too late.[1]

As we will see throughout the book, looking at a model of "true" democratic frustration as an alternative to models of democratic dissatisfaction is, in fact, a complete change of perspective on the crisis between citizens and their democratic systems for at least three reasons.

First, whilst dissatisfaction models predominantly focus on what is seen as negative or dysfunctional in political systems, the democratic frustration

[1] This book is based on research supported by the European Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council. Grant references: ERC ELHO Age of Hostility Advanced Grant: 788304 and ESRC First and Foremost Standard Grant: ES/5000100/1.

model puts desire at the heart of the democratic crisis. This does not merely mean that there is a "gap" between what citizens expect and what they feel they get from political systems, but rather that desire acts as a multiplier of the perceived effects of that very democratic gap.

A direct consequence of that is a second key difference: a shift from the perspective that understanding democratic crisis is an institution-centric quest to the idea that it requires a profound and careful understanding of behavioural phenomena and the psychology of contemporary democratic citizens. Thus, whilst dissatisfaction theories predominantly see perceptions of democratic systems as the "object" of citizens' dissatisfaction, the democratic frustration model addresses and encompasses theories of identity and involves an element of emotional appetite and self-blame in democratic crisis. It also speaks to how citizens appropriate the concept and institution of democracy, how it works and ought to work, what it brings them, and the perpetually evolving understanding of what it means to them in the first place. In other words, democratic frustration puts citizens themselves, their perceptions of their own role and contribution, at the heart of their systemic dissatisfaction and therefore underlines a critical introspective component in citizens' democratic disenchantment.

Third, whilst dissatisfaction can be conceived as a largely conscious phenomenon, frustration is by nature largely subconscious. This means that there is an inherent mismatch between the true object of a person's frustration and what they perceive it to be. In turn, this implies that researchers will need to rely on a combination of different instruments if we are to understand whether citizens genuinely are democratically frustrated and what this entails. Given the potential displacement of the purported object of democratic dissatisfaction as well as of the way democracies effectively function, it makes it even more arduous to understand whether democratic frustration can ever be resolved or whether it is instead condemned to perpetually move the goal post. That issue of a potentially perpetually "moving target" raises a critical question for this book about the very nature of the dynamics of democratic frustration. This final point relates to a critical component of the present book, the systematic dissection of the dynamics of frustration.

All those elements taken together have a further consequence. The combination of the roles of desire, introspection, and subconscious mechanisms crucially means that the people most likely to feel democratically frustrated are not quite the same as those simply expressing systemic dissatisfaction. This change in nature of the main victims of

unfulfilling democratic systems also consequently entails an equally fundamental change in the remedies that can patch processes of democratic frustration and return democratic political processes to their original essence: bringing to citizens a sense of efficacy, fulfilment, and democratic resolution.

The ambition of *Pathologies of Democratic Frustration* is thus simple. In the next few chapters, I will assess whether the major crisis that virtually all major consolidated and emerging democratic systems are facing at the moment is a case of democratic frustration or not, and the implications of such a diagnosis for our understanding of—and potential reactions to—those crises. This first means understanding what this would involve conceptually by looking at the psychological phenomenon of frustration and applying those psychological insights to democratic attitudes, whilst contrasting them to other existing models of democratic dissatisfaction. It then entails defining how we could capture and measure the phenomenon of democratic frustration, its components as highlighted above, and its possible dimensions. I will then empirically apply this model in the context of four major contemporary democracies to test the nature, dimensions, determinants, dynamics, cycle, and consequences of democratic frustration and even evaluate some of the responses which could be used to mitigate it. This quest will rely on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, static, and dynamic, observational, narrative, and experimental methods including survey, panel study, in-depth interviews, and experiments.

This first chapter will delve into greater detail in the concept of democratic frustration as well as the nature of the democratic crises which contemporary political systems seem to be facing and how compatible they may be with democratic frustration theory.

Paradoxes of Democratic Crises

Democracy is in crisis, or so it is widely thought to be. Low levels of voter turnout are often attributed to prevalent disillusionment among citizens, widespread apathy, or a lack of efficacy. The rise of extremist and populist parties has been unprecedented in many countries. Populist forces such as the *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* PiS (Law and Justice Party) and *Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej* SO (Self Defence) in Poland and in Hungary *Fidesz—Magyar Polgári Szövetség* (Hungarian Civic Alliance) have dominated national politics for much of the recent decade, whilst

in Germany and Spain, parties such as the *Alternative für Deutschland*—AfD (Alternative for Germany) and the Spanish far right party, *Vox*, have emerged in systems where populist parties used to be virtually absent. In the meantime, electoral victories for Donald Trump in 2016 in the US and Brexit in the British referendum on European Union membership conducted the same year were frequently referred to as populist victories. Conversely, mass protest movements, from Extinction Rebellion or anti-Brexit marches to the Hong Kong uprising against China's increasing control, the Yellow Vest movement in France, or violent protests in Greece and Chile have rocked many streets, sometimes peacefully and sometimes violently. In short, contemporary democracies are confronted with a very serious issue: citizens are increasingly disillusioned and disappointed by their democratic institutions, personnel, and outcomes.

Much of political science has referred to those historical trends as dissatisfaction, protest, or even apathy. However, as I shall show, one concept often comes to characterise this phenomenon in the words of citizens themselves: frustration. Nevertheless, whilst such frustration is widely acknowledged (e.g. Brooks, 1985; Kim, 2018; Sorensen, 1982) this book suggests that those claims of frustration have not really be taken at face value. To say it differently, the vocabulary of frustration is frequently used in the literature, but often as though it was interchangeable with dissatisfaction, or merely adding some sort of sulking attitude to it. Scientifically, such an equivalent is simply not tenable. Indeed, in psychological terms, "frustration" has a rather specific nature, which makes the strength of an existing desire as central to it as an individual's sense that it is unfulfilled. The book proposes to correct this misconception and reinterpret contemporary democratic crises under the democratic adaptation of the psychological concept of frustration. Indeed, crucially, reinterpreting current democratic crises under the prism of frustration also has specific potential consequences, notably in the forms of withdrawal, anger, and aggression that can be usefully translated in political behaviour terms to characterise key pathologies of democratic frustration in contemporary societies.

This book thus theorises the concept of democratic frustration and explains how it can be mapped compared to other frequently used measures of democratic unhappiness such as apathy (or indifference), cynicism, and criticality. It suggests that democratic frustration comprises of three important dimensions: ideological, institutional, and political and

operationalises the concept and its dimensions based on an interaction between democratic desire and perceived delivery deficit (the difference between standards and perceived outcomes), along the (implicitly interactive) lines of the psychological definition of frustration as an unsatisfied desire. The model I develop in this book assesses how widespread democratic frustration is compared to some alternative combinations of desire and perceived delivery deficit, and how robust it is over time using both multi-waves experiments and a panel study in real-life historical context.

The Psychological Concept of Frustration

Etymologically, frustration stems from the Latin *frustra*, which means "in vain". The psychology and psychiatry literatures offer several seminal definitions, which all articulate a similar mismatch between desire and reality. The psychological concept of frustration is based on a "failure to satisfy a motive" (Underwood, 1949). Conversely, Jeronimus and Laceulle (2017) define frustration as "a key negative emotion that roots in disappointment […] and can be defined as irritable distress after a wish collided with an unyielding reality". A sense of frustration is reported when an individual is prevented from attaining a certain objective or goal. Frustration is thus sourced from a failure to satisfy a conscious or indeed (and more often) subconscious desire. That centrality of desire is of critical importance because it suggests that an individual will not feel frustrated about something that they do not care about—or to go a little further, that the potential for frustration increases the more one cares (or indeed obsesses) about something.

That role of desire as the cornerstone of frustration is emphasised by Lacan (1994) who redefined the psychoanalytical concept of frustration and its relationship to desire through three layers: symbolic, imaginary, and real. Those layers or depths of frustration are further supported by the findings of Chen and Vansteenkiste et al. (2015) which summarise the relationship between need and frustration by explaining that a need is either satisfied or frustrated. They also echo earlier research by Britt and Janus (1940) who identified that "the frustrating situation is analysed in terms of barrier or obstruction, and of interference with goal-attainment and of reward expectation". In all cases, the corresponding "level" of satisfaction or frustration is thus directly related to the strength of the need or desire, which sits at the heart of my operational model of democratic frustration.

The satisfaction deficit is thus only one of the two components of frustration alongside desire, so that frustration practically works as an interaction between the two as follows:

$$\text{Democratic frustration} = \text{Desire} * \text{Perceived delivery deficit}$$

that is:

$$\text{Democratic frustration} = \text{Desire} * [\text{Standard} - \text{Perceived Delivery}]$$

Beyond psychology, the link between desire and frustration has also been noted in arts. For instance, Smuts (2008) in "the desire-frustration theory of suspense" discusses how Hitchcock and Truffaut intuitively went against traditional aesthetic models to create suspense. Unlike most of their predecessors, they chose to "seed information" which generates a desire on the part of the spectator which can then be more effectively frustrated.

Research in criminology, organisational behaviour, and communication have also found frustration to be influenced by psychological (Berkowitz, 1989; Blair, 2010; Crosby, 1976; Rosensweig, 1944), sociological (Berkowitz, 1962; Fox & Spector, 1999), and socialisation determinants (Crossman, Sullivan et al., 2009; Lockwood & Roll, 1980; Perlman, Luna et al., 2014), in addition to specific stimuli (Kulik & Brown, 1979; Maslow, 1941). There is an important subconscious element to its expression (Yuan et al., 2015), which, crucially, is often displaced away from its direct source, which, in turn, thus risks leading us to endemic misdiagnosis.

Thus, according to the psychology literature, frustration must be treated as a naturally endogenous and largely subconscious variable, with psychological, social, experiential, and contextual sources, and multiple emotional, attitudinal, and behavioural consequences. Conversely, the model of democratic frustration developed throughout this book focuses on those very democratic desires and aspirations that remain unfulfilled, as much as on the more traditional question of the perceptions of delivery deficit itself. In that sense, the paradox of citizens' democratic frustration (as opposed to criticality or disengagement) will stem from necessarily strong democratic desire and standards which will be unfulfilled as opposed to being compatible with a lack of appetite or interest. Indeed, frustration requires a powerful desire, and its characterisation lies at the heart of understanding the frustration itself and what solutions can

be proposed that would reconcile desire and perceived delivery gap if such mitigation is conceivable at all given the nature, which we will soon discuss of the relationship between the three inherent and endogenous components of frustration: desire, standards, and perceived delivery.

As democratic frustration necessarily implies that people care and desire democracy and that there is a mismatch between expectation and perceived reality, it indeed assumes the simultaneous existence and variation of desire, standards, and perceived delivery rather than solely focusing on the latter (as the vast majority of models of democratic dissatisfactions do) whilst implicitly assuming the former two to be constant. Using psychology insights, the democratic frustration model can then inform the conceptualisation, causality, and pathologies of frustration and link them to the realities observed by the political behaviour literature on such elements as the crisis of participation and populism, so as to reassess the nature, dimensions, causes, and consequences of democratic frustration.

Mapping Democratic Frustration vis-à-vis Other Models of Democratic Crises

The crisis of democracies has of course been a key focus of attention in the political behaviour literature. Authors have seen it as symptomatic of the distrust (Bertsou, 2016) and cynicism of citizens towards political systems, institutions, and social elites (Capella & Jamieson, 1996; de Vreese, 2004; Kaase et al., 1996; Mishler & Rose, 1997; Newton, 2001; Seligman, 1997). A growing sense of dissatisfaction (Norris, 1999, 2011; Torcal & Montero, 2006) has accompanied a decline in turnout (Franklin, 2004; LeDuc et al., 1996) and party and union memberships (Katz & Mair, 1994; Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Scarrow, 1996) in parallel to a resurgence of populist and extremist behaviour (Harrison & Bruter, 2011; van der Brug et al., 2000) and mass protest movements. A sense of powerlessness, inefficacy (Kimberlee, 2002), and cynicism and alienation (Buckingham, 2000) alongside a lack of interest (Dalton & Welzel, 2015) have been found as key factors to—or perhaps, more accurately, rather key interpretations of—such crisis behaviour. The labels used and phenomena described may sometimes be confusing referring to dissatisfaction, distrust, or even apathy all of which have different theoretical implications. All, however, have something in common, a primary focus on the "object" of the crisis (democratic systems, institutions, or elites) rather than on the "subject" of it (what internal desire, appetite, or vision

is not really being satisfied), which makes them different from and largely incompatible in angle and scope with a frustration approach.

The literature also shows that the democratic crisis may sometimes particularly affect some categories of citizens. This is notably the case of young people, who are often vocal in their criticism of how democracy works, sometimes opting for non-electoral forms of participation (Dalton, 2008; García-Albacete, 2014; Martin, 2012; Norris, 2011). Young people in France also signalled a form of democratic frustration during the Presidential Election in 2017. The top two ballot choices for young people aged 18–29 were Mélenchon and Macron. "La France Insoumise" ("France Unbent") and "En Marche" ("Ahead!") both of which advocated "new ways" of doing politics with a promise to overhaul existing power structures. That tendency was further confirmed in 2022. Conversely, there has been ample evidence that both economically deprived and ethnic minority populations have lower turnouts than average (Franklin, 2004) and lower trust in democratic institutions (Fennema & Tillie, 1999; Fieldhouse & Cutts, 2008). Conversely, unemployment has been found to be a source of democratic marginalisation (Jordahl, 2006; Laslier et al., 2003) across many political systems.

The idea of a democratic deficit—or democratic under-delivery—often implicitly (and less frequently explicitly) underlines the importance of citizens' expectations in the literature. For instance, Norris (2011) points out that the perceived delivery of electoral democracy often "lags behind" citizens' expectations. Similarly, Ferrin and Kriesi (2016) offer an important contribution that deals with which substantive democratic values or conceptions of democracy (such as aspects of liberal democracy vs social democracy including the rule of law, freedom of the press, and direct democratic participation) are being prioritised by nations and citizens. This, in turn, leads them to assess what citizens from 29 European countries favour (what they call "normative conceptions of democracy") and which of those they believe their democratic systems deliver. The idea is that there are competing conceptions of democracy that different citizens may favour and that which such conceptions they favour will influence how they evaluate democracy. They use European Social Survey data and are interested in differences across which countries have citizens (dis)satisfied with democracy, as well as sociological differences in terms of (dis)satisfaction notably in terms of socio-economic status. This model of democratic satisfaction is based on substantive conceptions (or values) of democracy and aims to explain why people hold different conceptions

of democracy (in the tradition of Dahl), notably liberal, social, and participatory in Ferrin's and Kriesi's model. By contrast, the model I propose within this book shows how democratic frustration will produce different behavioural reactions depending on whether it is combined with specific democratic desire or an absence thereof and is more in the tradition of Eulau and Karps (1977).

This, however, remains fundamentally different from a frustration model, and like the other approaches discussed above, "Object" (or institution) centric. This means notably that in the Ferrin and Kriesi model as in the other ones being discussed, there is a central understanding that democratic crises are, at most, a gap between what is expected and what is delivered (the very notion of the "delivery deficit gap" in my model, which this book depicts as only one of the two components of democratic frustration), and therefore that any such democratic dissatisfaction is inherently fixable as long as the system moves closer to the citizens' expectations. This is a notion, which frustration models cannot agree with simply because part of the essence of frustration, as discussed earlier, is its objective displacement as well as the path dependency between the components of frustration that stems from the centrality of desire in the notion.

Fundamentally, this book argues that democratic desire is entirely unrelated to normative conceptions of democracy. Instead, it expects that this democratic desire will be grounded in functions which reflect insights from theories of representation and of what people really want to "get" out of democracy such as a sense of congruence, a sense of control, a sense of acceptability, and a sense of resolution. Those fold into three main dimensions: ideological, institutional, and political. For each of these dimensions, I measure the "standard" (which is how well democracies should really perform), the "perceived delivery" (how well democracies perform in practice), and the desire (effectively how much people care, how much it means to them). The operationalisation of frustration is then the interaction (or product) of the desire with the perceived delivery gap (i.e. the standard minus the perceived delivery).

The perceived delivery gap is thus only one of the two components of the frustration (the other being the desire), and importantly, it mirrors something which we know exists and is important from the psychology literature. Frustration is a state and a pathology, and as citizens describe themselves spontaneously as democratically frustrated, this book simply

assesses the extent to which some citizens indeed match the psychological definition of frustration and its operationalisation in their own relationship to democracy. It can then also evaluate whether the difference between those "democratically frustrated citizens" (in the psychological sense of the term) and other dissatisfied (but not frustrated psychologically speaking) citizens explains the variations of behavioural reactions that we observe in democracies in crisis in everyday life.

In short, most existing measures of democratic disengagement tend to focus on the perception of the "delivery" and implicitly assume political desire (and often democratic standards) to be constant or irrelevant. By contrast, the concept of democratic frustration is understood as the **interaction** between democratic desire which varies across individuals, time, and countries, and the difference between democratic standards and assessments of democratic delivery, both of which will be equally subject to both individual-level and system-level variations as well as temporal dynamics. Thus, both democratic desire and assessments of the gap between the delivery of the democratic system and a citizen's standards can vary together or independently. The interactive element means that those with higher desire will care more about perceived delivery deficit, to create a sense of democratic frustration. Consequently, there can be no frustration without a delivery gap, but equally no frustration without an inherent democratic desire, which will come to "weight" the democratic delivery gap to create frustration.

Whilst neither democratic desire nor standards tend to be systematically present in existing research on crises of democracy, the two elements do not have the same status here. As mentioned, a few existing models acknowledge the implicit existence of unfulfilled democratic desire, even though most don't. Empirically, however, many models focus on perceived democratic delivery or delivery deficit, without systematically and explicitly measuring the specific standards that citizens hold when it comes to democratic processes, personnel, and outcomes. Implicitly, those standards are treated as though they were constant or irrelevant. When it comes to democratic desire, however, it is typically ignored both analytically and empirically. Yet, from a psychological point of view, variations in desire and standards are at the heart of frustration, which so many citizens refer to when it comes to their democratic experience (Bruter & Harrison, 2020). Furthermore, this depicts citizens as surprisingly passive, unreactive, and dare we say uncritical within the context of democratic systems supposed to be built around their needs and to provide them

with control. At face value, those references to frustration also tend to differ in substance when it comes to the types of democratic functions which they relate to. Let us now turn to those potential dimensions of democratic frustration.

Dimensions of Democratic Frustration

To explore dimensions of frustration, we need to start from the diversity of the relationship that each citizen may have with their democratic system. Specific categories of individuals may be more susceptible to (and differently affected by) frustration than others, and the taxonomy of frustration relates those variations to emotive elements (Lazar et al., 2006; Rosensweig, 1944; Shorkey & Crocker, 1981). At the same time, however, beyond the question of "how much" there is the equally important issue of "what", that is, the diverse nature of the objects that frustration may relate to. If such a thing as democratic frustration exists, it thus becomes essential to consider what could be its dimensions, and to do this, we consider the different ways in which citizens are known to ascribe functions to democracy and elections.

There is an abundant body of democratic theory literature, which informs us of the various potential functions of elections (Dahl, 2013; Dennis, 1970; Katz, 1997; Mayo, 1960; Sartori, 1965) as well as the bases through which citizens may derive a sense of democratic representation (Eulau & Karps, 1977; Miller & Stokes, 1963; Przeworski et al., 1999), legitimacy (Gibson & Caldeira, 1995), and accountability (Berry & Howell, 2007). Whilst this literature uncovers multiple discrete components of democracy and potential criteria to evaluate its quality, it is possible to understand them as emphasising three important dimensions that occur recurrently. The first is ideological congruence, which can give citizens the impression that their substantive preferences are represented by the system and the elites that are part of it (notably Eulau & Karps, 1977; Miller & Stokes, 1963; Rosema, 2004). The second dimension pertains to the importance of institutional processes, transparency, and effectiveness (for instance, Gibson & Caldeira, 1995; Przeworski et al., 1999), which can give citizens a sense of well-functioning democratic frameworks. Finally, a third dimension relates to the perceptions of political trustworthiness (Bertsou, 2016) and integrity of democratic elites. Based on those three components, we thus derive three possible dimensions of democratic desire, standards, delivery, and ultimately frustration:

- **Ideological**—this dimension pertains to the perception of a congruent offer to reflect a citizen's substantive preferences and provide him/her with a range of ideological options which he/she perceives as fit for purpose.
- **Institutional**—this second dimension relates to the perceived existence of adequate processes capable of effectively and transparently achieving democratic linkage, and providing efficacious, resilient, accountable, and fair system structure.
- **Political**—the third and final dimension encapsulates questions of agency, political personnel morality, and the integrity of their behaviour, ethos, motivations, and democratic service including a genuine will to put public interest at the heart of their action.

In sum, the ideological dimension relates to the democratic frustration people might experience if they feel that the existing political parties do not match their preferences. For example, in two-party systems if citizens do not feel like the parties competing for their vote truly represent their political interests, they may feel more frustrated than they would do if they had a diverse choice of parties such as in multiparty systems.

Conversely, however, if citizens feel that each of the many parties competing for their vote is mixing key ideological elements that they agree and disagree with, then the ideological offer of the system may feel confusing and frustrating. Whilst the dimension pertains to the democratic system as a whole, it is clear that political parties (or candidates depending on the system) will likely play a central role in ideological frustration. The institutional dimension stems from the democratic frustration citizens may feel if they believe that the system has inadequate democratic processes especially if the reality of decision-making, communication, and accountability mechanisms within the institutions does not fully meet their standards of what a democratic system should deliver. This time, and despite the dimension being once again conceived holistically, the crystallising focus of institutional frustration is likely to pertain to constitutional and design elements rather than individuals or parties. Finally, the political dimension corresponds to the democratic frustration which may arise when citizens are suspicious of the behaviour and ethos of politicians and political parties. When it comes to this dimension, the integrity of their motivations and democratic service is often in question and could arise in relation to questions of morality, honesty, or the purity of their intentions. Indeed, with regard to the political dimension, it is

political leaders—individually or collectively—who are likely to be at the heart of a sense of frustration.

It is worth noting that the description above implies that to an extent, the three dimensions of frustration will thus also differ in their primary object, parties for the ideological dimension, institutions for the institutional dimension, and people (the actual persons making up the elites) for the political dimension, a distinction noted in various works on democratic dissatisfaction (see, for example, Bertsou, 2016, on the difference between distrust in Parliament as an institutions and in actual parties).

Each of those components of democratic frustration is thus first a source of potential democratic "value" for citizens and may thus form a more or less important part of what I have labelled their "democratic desire". It is also secondly a potential basis of evaluation and perceived shortfall of delivery. In other words, citizens will hold certain (and heterogeneous) standards regarding how well they would expect a democratic system to minimally perform to be acceptable. There will conversely be variation in their evaluation of the ability of their own democratic system—institutions, parties, and elites—to deliver in practice. As such, each of the two constitutive components of democratic frustration as defined in the previous section will vary across individuals, systems, and time within each of those three fundamental dimensions.

All in all, the nature of democratic frustration as we have defined it thus has two important features summarised in Fig. 1.1. The first is that democratic frustration is not a directly measurable single item but rather a latent reality which stems from a product between two different and equally important measures: democratic desire (what citizens need and want to get from their democracies) and a hypothetical democratic delivery deficit (i.e. the shortfall between their democratic standards—their expectation as to how a normally functioning democracy should fare—and their actual assessment of the democratic delivery of the system they live within). The second critical feature is that those components (democratic desire, standards, and delivery) and the frustration which they interact to combine will be iterated along three different substantive dimensions: ideological, institutional, and political. In the next section, we will map some of the attitudinal and behavioural consequences which the thus defined democratic frustration and its inherent components and dimensions may have.

In the rest of this chapter, we will explore how to analytically model this concept of democratic frustration in all of its complexity, its three