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EFFECTS OF NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE CAMPAIGNING ON SWEDISH VOTERS'

Experimental evidence from a real election
campaign context

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Abstract

It is often presumed that negative campaigning has negative effects on the electorate. For example, this campaign strategy is presumed to suppress political participation, decrease trust in politicians and contribute to cynicism. Although far from all studies find support for these presumptions, there are empirical evidence suggesting that negativity decrease political efficacy, trust in government, and overall public mood. However, there is an absence of studies focusing on the effect of negative campaigning on Swedish voters'. Instead, almost all empirical knowledge is based on American citizens'. Since the political system, the campaign traditions and the electorate diverge substantially in the two countries, the external validity of those studies can be questionable. Consequently, the aim of this study is to undertake the first examination about the effects of negative campaigning on Swedish voters'.

This study examines two effects of negative campaigning, as compared to the effects of positive campaigning: Political participation and trust in politicians. These effects are studied within a Swedish context, using an experiment that is conducted in the midst of an ongoing election campaign.

The empirical findings do not support the notion that negative campaigning suppresses political participation. However, *positive campaigning* appears to have a demobilizing effect for voters' with low political knowledge. For highly knowledgeable voters', positive campaigning does by contrast seem to stimulate participation. Furthermore, the findings suggest that negative television advertisements, as well as positive television advertisements, decrease trust in politicians.

Keywords: Negative campaigning, positive campaigning, election campaign, experiment, political participation, trust in politicians

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1. Introduction

*"Earlier this spring LO released the film 'Reinfelds Sverige', that with suggestive pictures shows a cold and unhuman society that is said to be a result of eight years of conservative/liberal politics. Facts are left out and other things are biased, in order to really underline the lack of empathy of the prime minister and the entire bourgeois. This is a miserable development that neither favouring trust in politician, nor give the voters' a fair picture about the different alternatives that exist in politics."*¹

The above quote is an extract from the editorial page of Göteborgs-Posten (GP) which is one of the largest newspapers in Sweden. The quote illustrates the fact that negative campaigning is a current topic of public debate. Furthermore, the quote also illustrates that it is often presumed that negative campaigns have devastating effects on the electorate. E.g., negativity as a campaign strategy is presumed to decrease the trust in politicians, suppress political participation and contribute to cynicism.² Although far from all studies support these presumptions, there are empirical evidence suggesting that negativity does lower the voters' feelings of political efficacy, trust in government, and perhaps overall public mood.³ However, it is important to note that the research field of negative campaigning also have found some positive effects of negative campaign strategies. For example negative campaigns tend to stimulate knowledge about the election and be more memorable than positive campaigns. Furthermore, at present there are no reliable, or clear-cut, evidences that negative campaigning depresses voter turnout.⁴

Unfortunately there is no universal definition of negative campaigning. However, all the definitions in the literature share one main characteristic: The focus is on criticizing the political opponent rather than promoting your own politics. The concept of negative campaigning is often associated with American presidential campaigns. However, the campaign strategy is not exclusively an American phenomenon. Negative campaign messages have also been common in for example Swedish election campaigns during a long period of time.⁵ The opposite of negative campaigning is *positive campaigning*. In a positive campaign message, the main focus is on the party's or candidate's own politics (what the sponsor want to achieve or did achieve) instead of the weaknesses of the opponent.⁶

This study examines two effects of negative campaigning, as compared to the effects of positive campaigning: *Political participation* and *trust in politicians*. Those effects are studied within a Swedish context, using an experiment that was conducted in the midst of an ongoing election campaign.

1.1 Research problem

Although there are several presumptions within the public debate, as well as empirical studies, concerning the effects of negative campaigning there is an absence of studies focusing on Swedish voters'. Instead, almost all empirical knowledge is based on American citizens and the studies are conducted in a US setting. However, since the political system, the campaign traditions and the electorate differ substantially in the two countries, I find it difficult to draw conclusion about Swedish

¹ Editorial page (2014, 17 August) "Sluta kasta smuts på motståndaren" Göteborgs-Posten. (My translation from Swedish).

² Pinkleton et al. (2002), 13.

³ Lau et al. (2007), 1176.

⁴ Lau et al. (2007), 1178.

⁵ Ekengren Oscarsson, Henrik (2009, 21 of May) "Höjer negative campaigning valdeltagandet?" [Blog post].

⁶ Brooks & Geer (2007), 331.

voters' based exclusively on American studies. Consequently, there is an urgent need to expand the validity of the findings outside the US context.

Let me provide some concrete examples of how Swedish politics differs from the political landscape of the US. Firstly, there are empirical evidences suggesting that the level of negative campaigning is considerably higher in two-party systems, such as the US, than in multiparty party systems, such as Sweden⁷. Additionally, the Swedish political system has a tradition of a consensus culture and there are quite some shared views between the political parties (e.g. regarding characteristics of the Swedish welfare state).⁸ However, in the US, there is a substantial polarization between the Democrats and the Republicans, as well as their party supporters.⁹ This polarization appears to increase in the US which is illustrated in the following quote by the political scientist Lena Wängnerud:

“Several investigations indicate that it was more common with cooperation across party boundaries previously. It is not only the health reform that is at risk, but also a more harsh tone ripple outwards the states and to several issues, for example how much are to be spent on schools and how much are to be spent on prison officers.”¹⁰

It is fairly easy to find concrete examples of the harsh tone that Wängnerud refers to. For example, Mitt Romney accused Barack Obama for *falsehood* and *dishonesty*¹¹ during the election campaign 2012. Furthermore, one of Barack Obama's television advertisements, during the same election campaign, was also substantially negative:

“Mitt Romney made 20 million dollars in 2010 but paid only 14 % in taxes – probably less than you. Now he has a plan of giving millionaires another tax break and raises taxes on middle class families by up to 2000 dollars per year. Mitt Romney's middle class tax increase: He pays less, you pay more.”¹²

This kind of harsh tone, personal attacks and serious accusations are far away from what the Swedish voters' are accustomed in. Let me make a comparison: During the Swedish election campaign of 2014 the liberal/conservative alliance released a highly debated television advertisement where the following statement was made:

“Since the left/green parties have failed to reach agreements before the election, they will have difficulties doing that after the election as well. That means that you will get something else than you were looking for. Additionally, they cannot show how they are going to pay for everything they promise. It will cost. More than it is worth.”

Even though the advertisement from the alliance did not include any personal attacks on individual politicians (as opposed to Obama's advertisement), and even if it was free from any direct accusations of for example falsehood or dishonesty (as opposed to Romney's statements about Obama), the advertisement from the alliance provoked strong reactions on discussion forums in newspapers as well as on social media:

⁷ Walter (2013), 54.

⁸ Ljunggren, Stig-Björn (2015, 30 January) Den svenska modellen som välfärdssystem [Blog post].

⁹ Wängnerud, Lena (2010, 7 February) "Polarisering av amerikansk politik" [Blog post].

¹⁰ Wängnerud, Lena (2010, 7 February) "Polarisering av amerikansk politik" [Blog post].

¹¹ Interview with Mitt Romney [fox news] (2012, 16 July) [Video clip].

¹² Obama for America TV ad [stretch] (2012, 10 August) [Video clip].

“This is a clear example on an election campaign that sometimes appears to be more about portraying the opponent as an incompetent alternative of government than about present concrete policy proposals. An election campaign where the debating atmosphere is a panorama of mudslinging.”¹³

“Nonetheless does the alliance in their advertisement say a bit about HOW they are going to create more jobs and what that mean for me as a voter. Not a bit. I think it is a pity and a waste with our time.”¹⁴

Is it possible that the strong reactions against the relatively decent campaign advertisement are an indication of a widespread intolerance towards negative campaigning within the Swedish electorate? It might be that the Swedish voters' are more suspicious and alienated toward negative campaign messages than American citizens because of the tradition of consensus, and consequently feel less comfortable with negativity. On the other hand, it might also be that the Swedish electorate is *less* sensitive to negative campaign messages: Negative campaigns in Sweden is more often issue-based and targeted against parties instead of trait-based targeted against persons (which the advertisement from the alliance is a concrete example of), and issue attacks is more often considered legitimate than personal attacks are.¹⁵ Furthermore, the level of political knowledge is somewhat higher in Sweden¹⁶ than in the US, and previous research suggests that citizens who are less aware and knowledgeable of politics become more cynical, and that the trust for politicians decreases, when the media report about politics as a game or a strategy.¹⁷ In other words, there are theoretical arguments for expectations on both sides: That Swedish voters' are *less* sensitive to negative campaigning versus *more* sensitive to negative campaigning than American voters'. What I view as most probable will be discussed in the fourth chapter, where the hypotheses of this thesis are formulated. However, the main point that I want to highlight here is that I find the external validity of previous (American) studies uncertain since there clearly are relevant differences between two countries. Therefore, it is plausible to expect that negative campaigning might have different effects on the Swedish electorate than on the American electorate. Consequently, the aim of this study is to undertake the first examination about the effects of negative campaigning on Swedish voters'.

1.2 Thesis outline

The thesis is structured as follows: In the next chapter the central theories and hypotheses within the research field, effects of negative campaigning, are presented. Thereafter, the *third* chapter summarizes the findings from previous research: What conclusions about the effects of negative campaigning have the scholars reached so far? In the *fourth* chapter the research question and the hypotheses are formulated. Thereafter, the methodological approach is discussed in the *fifth* chapter. In the *sixth* chapter the empirical results are presented and analysed. In the *seventh* chapter follows a discussion about the results: What are the implications from a democratic point of view? Finally, the *eight* chapter summarizes the central findings, discuss the theoretical and empirical implications of the results and make suggestions for further research.

¹³ Johansson, Lizz (2014, 29 July) “Alliansens tårdfilm speglar debatten.” LT.

¹⁴ Olsson, Monica (2014, 2 August) “Kom till saken.” [Blog post].

¹⁵ Walter (2013), 45.

¹⁶ Grönlund & Milner (2006), 396.

¹⁷ Schuck et al. (2013), 287.

2. Theoretical framework: Is negative campaigning good or bad for democracy?

The literature distinguishes between two different types of effects of negative campaigning: The *direct electoral effects* and the *systemic effects*. The direct electoral effects concern the impact on a specific election and include effects such as affect for the target of negative campaigning, affect for the attacker/sponsor and the intention or probability of voting for the attacker and the targeted. The systemic effects deal with broader, and more long-termed, effects such as actual or intended voter turnout, sense of political efficacy, trust in government, and overall public mood.¹⁸ In this thesis I make the demarcation to neither discuss the theoretical framework, nor study the direct electoral effects. Indeed, it is an interesting question whether negativity favours the attacker, the target or neither of them. However, that question is beyond the purpose of this study. Instead this thesis focuses on systemic effects which I view as even more interesting, since those effects are essential from a democratic perspective.

2.1 Does negative campaigning demobilize or stimulate the electorate?

During a long period of time the unchallenged belief was that negative campaigning has devastating consequences for the democracy: The presumption was that negativity undermines political efficiency, citizens' trust in government and consequently has a demobilizing effect by suppressing political participation and engagement.¹⁹ Those claims are the main characteristics for the *demobilization hypothesis*, developed by the researchers Ansolabehere and Iyengar.²⁰ In their book "*Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate*" from 1995, they presented three different theoretical arguments/explanations in line with the demobilization hypothesis: 1) Firstly, they claimed that negativity might discourage supporters of the candidate (or party) who is attacked. The presumption is that the supporters of the candidate/ party under attack will be less likely to vote since they become more skeptical to "their" candidate/party. 2) Secondly, negative campaigning might also make the electorate disentranced with both candidates. According to this presumption, there is a backlash effect against the attacker, as well as fallout for the targeted of the attack. 3) Thirdly, the authors also claimed that negative campaigns might demobilize the electorate since the campaign strategy results in cynicism and reduce the power of civil duty. This explanation led to the hypothesis that exposure to negative campaigns might not only decrease voter turnout, but also the sense of political efficacy and make the electorate view politicians as uncivil and untrustworthy.²¹ Ansolabehere and Iyengar presented substantial empirical evidence in line with their hypotheses (the main results will be discussed in the following chapter) and consequently it became an established knowledge that negative campaigning demobilizes the voters' and turns them off.²²

However, in the end of the 1990s some scholars started to challenge the demobilization hypothesis, arguing that negativity might on the contrary have a stimulating and mobilizing effect on the voters: *The stimulation hypothesis*.²³ Finkel and Geer are two of the researchers who have presented theoretical arguments in line with this opposing hypothesis. The authors highlighted three theoretical arguments: 1) Negative campaigning is likely to stimulate political participation and engagement by

¹⁸ Lau et al. (2007), 1178.

¹⁹ Lau et al. (2007), 1176.

²⁰ Freedman et al. (1999), Lau & Brown(2009), 298.

²¹ Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995), 109-110.

²² Ekengren Oscarsson, Henrik (2009, 21 May) "Höjer negative campaigning valdeltagandet?" [Blog post].

²³ Freedman et al. (1999), 1189.

offering the voters a substantial amount of policy and retrospective performance information.²⁴ Since more knowledgeable voters are more likely to participate, the increase of information should mobilize the electorate. 2) Negative information is given more weight in information processing and empirical evidence shows that people are more likely to recall specific policy proposals when they are exposed to negative advertising. Thus, negative campaigning might be more likely to provide information which can help the electorate to distinguish the differences between the political alternatives. Consequently, negative campaigns may help the electorate in feeling more confident about their voting choice and increase their involvement in political campaigns.²⁵ 3) Negative campaigns might create stronger emotional reactions than positive campaigns. The authors claimed that these reactions could stimulate participation by arousing the electorate's enthusiasm for the preferred candidate or party and increase the degree to which the voters' care about the election. Furthermore, the emotional reaction may increase some individuals' anxiety-level, which may stimulate further learning about the parties or candidates in order to enable more informed decision making.²⁶

As the above section infers, the main controversy concerning the effects of negative campaigning appears to lie between proponents of the demobilization hypothesis and the supporters of the stimulation hypothesis. Although, the research field have moved toward a more complex picture of the effects of negative campaigning, and while most scholars appear to have a more nuanced view point, the opposing hypotheses are still present in the literature. Consequently, the results of this study will later be discussed in the light of the demobilization hypothesis and the stimulation hypothesis: Does the examination of effects on Swedish voters' provide most support in line with the demobilization hypothesis or the stimulation hypothesis?

2.2 Potential moderating factors: Completing the picture

As already mentioned, the research field of negative campaigning have moved toward a more complex account of effects. Most researchers presume that the effects are not uniform, and that they depend on the circumstances. E.g., the effects of negative campaigning might vary depending on the characteristic of the voter in question. The characteristic (also called moderating factor) which probably is the most studied is the difference between partisans and political independents.²⁷ A partisan is a person who has a feeling of loyalty, attachment and identification with a party. As the name indicates, a political independent (also called non-partisan) is the opposite of a partisan. Ansolabehere and Iyengar are two of many scholars who have presumed that negative campaigns are likely to produce larger disenchantment for independents than for partisan. The explanation is that independents have weaker ties to the electoral process:

“Negative advertisements appeal to the nonpartisan voter because they resonate with the already negative view that Independents have of American politicians, government and the political parties...The problem is that campaign advertising is not bringing the Independents voter back to the parties...it is actually driving people away from the electoral process.”²⁸

Partisans are by contrast likely to be more resistant to negative messages of the opposition, and reinforced when their own candidate or party goes negative.²⁹ In other words, the authors claim that

²⁴ Finkel & Geer. (1998), 577.

²⁵ Finkel & Geer (1998), 577.

²⁶ Finkel & Geer (1998), 577.

²⁷ Brooks & Geer (2007) Ansolabeheres & Iyengar (1995) Lau et al. (2007) among others.

²⁸ Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995), 98.

²⁹ Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995), 110.

partisans are likely to be *mobilized* by negativity whereas independents are likely to be *demobilized* by the same message. In my opinion, it is reasonable to expect that negative campaigning produces larger dissatisfaction among independents since they are not socialized in the political system in the same way as partisans. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that it might be an oversimplification to claim that all independents have “a negative view” on politics.

Furthermore, less knowledgeable individuals are presumed to be more sensitive to negative campaigning than well informed voters'. The explanation is that campaign advertisements offers individuals who are not that involved in politics a costless way of learning about the political alternatives. However highly knowledgeable voters are unlikely to change attitudes because of a campaign advertisement since that message is just one of many of their sources of information.³⁰ Thus, knowledgeable voters are expected to be more resistant to negative campaigns. Additionally, they are in general more certain about their intention to participate and about their vote choices, and therefore these things are not easily changed by a campaign message.³¹ For the same reasons voters' with a high political *interest* are also expected to be more resistant to negative campaigning than those who do not find politics interesting.³²

In short, it can be stated that partisans as well as voters' with substantial political knowledge and interest are more likely to hold persistent attitudes toward political issues or actors. Thus, many scholars expect that the effects for those voters differ from independents and those who are low on political knowledge and interest. Consequently, I will systematically test the presumptions that those factors moderate the effects of negative campaigning later in this thesis.

2.3 Potential effects of different types of negativity

Furthermore, different *types* and magnitude of negativity might produce different effects³³. For example, uncivil negative messages, that are inflammatory, divisive and gratuitous,³⁴ are often expected to have different effects than negative messages that are more civil in tone. Let me illustrate the difference between uncivil and civil negativity with a concrete example: Suppose that the Swedish Minister of Education, Gustav Fridolin, states “*The principal explanation to the declining PISA result is that the alliance government have reduced the number of teaching jobs in the Swedish school.*” This is a typical negative but *civil* campaign message. However, if the statement were made more inflammatory by stating “*The principal explanation to the declining PISA results is that the **careless and incompetent** alliance government has reduced the number of teaching jobs in the Swedish school*” it is a negative and *uncivil* message. The reason is that the additional words, *careless* and *incompetent*, make the same message far more inflammatory by describing the alliance government in harsher terms.

Khan and Kenny are two of the researchers who claim that uncivil negativity is likely to produce different effects than civil negativity does. More specifically, they argue that civil negativity is helpful and likely to stimulates participation, whereas uncivil negativity is likely to result in alienated voters' and consequently suppress political participation³⁵.

³⁰ Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995), 77.

³¹ Stevens et al. (2008), 528.

³² Schuck et al. (2013), 288, Lau et al (2007), 1184.

³³ Brooks & Geer (2007) Fridkin & Kenney (2004), among others.

³⁴ Brooks & Geer (2007), 331.

³⁵ Khan & Kenney (1999), 878.

Further, there is one other central distinction between different types of negative campaigning, namely issue/policy-based attacks and trait/personal-based attacks. In issue-based attacks the focus is on criticizing the plans or policies of the opponent. In trait-based attacks the focus is on criticizing the traits of the opponent: In other words, questioning his or her integrity or competence.³⁶ Let me illustrate the difference with an example once again. Suppose that Fridolin states “*Jan Björklund has failed to reverse the negative trend in the Swedish school because he have been focusing on the wrong reforms.*” That is an issue-based negative message. However, if Fridolin states “*Jan Björklund has, as opposed to me, no practical experiences of teaching and that is one explanation why he has failed to reverse the negative trend in the Swedish school*” it is a trait-based negative message.

Several scholars have argued that trait-based attacks in general are viewed as more illegitimate than issue-based attacks³⁷. The principal explanation is that trait-based attacks are presumed to be viewed as irrelevant and unfair by the electorate. Consequently, trait-based negativity might turn people off from political engagement.

3. Previous research

In the latest decades there has been a substantial expansion within the research field of negative campaigning in quantitative as well as qualitative terms.³⁸ In a meta-analysis made by Lau et al., the authors used the findings from 111 (mostly American) studies about the effects of negative campaigning as the basic data for their analysis³⁹. So in what direction did the findings point at? Does negative campaigning appear to be good or bad for democracy? Does it stimulate or depress voter turnout? And are there empirical evidence showing that the effects differ depending on the characteristics of the voter in question? Noticeably there are many questions to answer. However, I make no claim to provide a comprehensive literature review of all the studied effects of negative campaigning in this chapter. Instead the focus will be on four of the systemic effects: *Voter turnout*, *political efficacy*, *trust on government* and *public mood*. The reason for focusing on these effects is that they are the ones with the closest connection to the effects that this thesis examines: *Political participation* and *trust in politicians*. Thus, the findings of this thesis can be discussed in relation to what previous research tells us about the effects on voter turnout, political efficacy, trust in government and public mood. Furthermore, this chapter will in short present the empirical findings regarding the potential moderating factors *partisanship*, *political knowledge* and *political interest*, since these factors also will be examined in this thesis. Finally, this chapter will briefly present the findings concerning how different *types* of negativity affect the voters⁴⁰.

3.1 Systemic effects of negative campaigning

Voter turnout is probably the most studied systemic effect of negative campaigning. Ansolabehere and Iyengar examined this effect with experiments in their work “*Going Negative*” and found that the effect of viewing a negative advertisement instead of a positive advertisement decreases intentions to vote by nearly five percentage points.⁴⁰ However, twelve years later Lau et al., in their meta-analysis, investigated if negative campaigning depresses voter turnout by analyzing findings from 57 different studies, and the results showed to vary to a large extent. Several of the studies did provide statistically

³⁶ Walter(2013), 45.

³⁷ Min (2004), Roddy & Garramone (1988) Thorson et al. (1991).

³⁸ Lau et al. (2007), 1177.

³⁹ Lau et al. (2007), 1178.

⁴⁰ Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995), 112.

significant effects, yet the results pointed to different directions: About half of the studies were in line with the demobilizing hypothesis, indicating that negativity suppresses voter turnout. The other half were by contrast in line with the stimulation hypothesis, suggesting that negativity mobilizes the electorate. When Lau et al. combined all the 57 findings into a single analysis, they found that the mean unadjusted effect is -.07 (ns) and when adjusting for sampling error and measurement reliability the mean turned slightly positive (.02) - not significantly different from 0.⁴¹ Consequently, the authors saw that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected and concluded that:

“It follows that the research literature provides no general support for the hypothesis that negative political campaigning depresses voter turnout. If anything, negative campaigning more frequently appears to have a slight mobilizing effect.”⁴²

One might ask why many of the studies that examine the effect on voter turnout provides significant results but in different directions. Khan et al. offers numerous of possible explanations: The mixed results might be due to different research designs (experiments or observations of real campaigns), different data material (responses to surveys or election results), the source of the negative message (an advertisement from a political party or candidate or a message from the media) and on the type of campaign (presidential or not).⁴³ In my opinion those explanations are plausible. Although the results of empirical studies should not be due to methodological concerns in the ideal world, that is unfortunately not always the case in practice. Also, I think that the recently presented moderating factors, and the different types of negativity can be a contributing explanation the contradictory results.

Political efficacy is another systemic effect that several researchers have been studying. It should be noted that there are two different types of political efficacy: *Internal efficacy* and *external efficacy*. Internal efficacy is understood as an individual's belief that he or she, with his or her different competence and resources, can influence political events.⁴⁴ In other words, internal efficacy could be understood as an individual's political confidence to participate and influence the political sphere. External efficacy concerns the individual's beliefs about the responsiveness of the governmental authorities and institutions⁴⁵ - In other words, the belief that essential political actors and institutions are attentive to the citizens. Some of the studies have been focusing on internal efficacy⁴⁶, other on external efficacy⁴⁷ and some have investigated both⁴⁸. As opposed to the effect on voter turnout, the effect on political efficacy point in the same direction: Negative campaigns slightly decrease the voters' feeling of political efficacy⁴⁹ (internal as well as external).

Furthermore, the effects of negative campaigning on *trust in government* have been studied by many scholars. This effect is similar to external efficacy besides the focus on the government. In the meta-analysis by Lau et al. the authors show that the effects on trust in government are negative and that the results are consistent. In other words, negative campaigns appear to significantly decrease the voters' trust in government.

⁴¹ Lau et al. (2007), 1184.

⁴² Lau et al. (2007), 1184.

⁴³ Khan et al. (1999), 878.

⁴⁴ Pinkleton et al. (2002), 15.

⁴⁵ Pinkleton et al. (2002), 15.

⁴⁶ Thorson et al. (2000) & Freedman et al. (1999) among others.

⁴⁷ Craig & Kane (2000), Goldstein (1997) among others.

⁴⁸ Jackson et al. (2005) & Rahn & Hirshorn (1999).

⁴⁹ Lau et al (2007), 1184.

Public mood is another effect that has been studied. The definition of public mood is a “diffuse affective state, having distinct positive and negative components that people experience because of their membership in a particular political community.”⁵⁰ An example of public mood could for example be the emotional impact a Swedish citizen experiences if Sweden won the FIFA world cup. The reason why public mood have been studied from a political scientist perspective is that it has shown to affect a range of political attitudes.⁵¹ E.g., it influences an individuals’ belief whether the political community in question could achieve its goals or not. Also, public mood have showed to predict how people perceive threats to the political community. Finally, there seems to be a link between public mood and other effects that have been discussed above: For example, external efficacy is associated with positive public mood, whereas mistrust in government is linked to negative public mood.⁵² So how does negative campaign affect the public mood? The overall findings from the literature suggest that the negative campaign strategy slightly lower the voter’s feeling of public mood.⁵³

Ansolabehere & Iyengar made the following conclusion in their work “*Going negative*”, after having presented their findings:

*“Whatever its causes, negative politics generates disillusionment and distrust among the public. Attack advertisements resonate with the popular belief that government fails, that elected officials are out of touch and quite corrupt, and that voting is a hollow act. The end result: lower turnout and lower trust in government, regardless of which party rules.”*⁵⁴

Twenty years later, and several studies after, the statement above appear to be an oversimplification. Indeed, the research literature still point toward some problematic systemic effects of negative campaigning: Decreasing feelings of political efficacy, lower trust in government and public mood. However, it should be pointed out that the effects are rather small. Furthermore, when combining the results of several studies, there is no reliable evidence that support Ansolabehere & Iyengar claim that negative campaigning depress voter turnout.

3.2 Moderating factors: Completing the picture

Previous research supports the claim that different personal characteristics moderate the effects of negative campaigns. To start with, Lau et al., Ansolabeheres & Iyengar and Brooks among others present findings that negative campaigns stimulate partisans to vote, whereas it turns independents off on voting.⁵⁵ In other words, the empirical findings regarding this moderating factor appear to be fairly consistent. However, Brooks has claimed that there might be a need to make finer graduations when investigating this factor:

*“...perhaps “pure” Independents, who are truly in the middle of the road and less connected to the political system, respond differently to negativity than “leaning” Independents, who are often more engaged in the political system to start with.”*⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Rahn & Hirshorn. (1999), 388.

⁵¹ Leshner & Thorson (2000), 265.

⁵² Leshler & Thorson (2000), 265.

⁵³ Rahn & Hishorn (1999), Leshner & Thorson(2000), Lau et al. (2007).

⁵⁴ Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995),147-148.

⁵⁵ Lau et al (2007) 1185, Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995), 14, Brooks (2010), 319.

⁵⁶ Brooks (2006), 694.

I think that Brooks has a valid argument. As already stated I believe it to be an oversimplification to simply divide the independents from the partisans, and presume that all the independents are the same so to speak. In order to really understand the moderating effect of partisanship it would be beneficial to study whether the main difference lies between all kind of independents and participants, or between the independents who are the most disconnected to the political system and the partisans.

Additionally, there are empirical evidences suggesting that the level of knowledge and interest moderates the effects of negative campaigning: As expected, voters' who are poorly informed and uninterested in politics are more sensitive to negative campaigns than others.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Schunk et al. also present empirical findings showing that citizens' who are less interested or aware of politics become more *cynical* when the media report about politics as a game or a strategy.⁵⁸ Although Schunk et al's. study is not exclusively about negative campaigning, it is plausible that cynicism can be a possible effect for voters' with a low political knowledge and interest when exposed to negative campaigns.

3.3 Effects of different types of negativity

Regarding the divide between uncivil and civil negativity, there are empirical findings suggesting that there are different effects. Khan and Kenney in their work found that civil negativity does not suppress voter turnout, but as the amount of uncivil attacks increases, the voters' become more likely to abstain from voting: Especially political independents, voters' low on political knowledge and voters' with low political interest.⁵⁹ In a later research conducted by Brooks, she provided evidence showing that uncivil and civil negativity might have different effects on different voters'. More specifically, there are a substantial gender differences in reactions to incivility: Men are disproportionately mobilized by negative campaigning as compared to woman. This implies that men are significantly more likely to vote as the proportion of negativity increases. Women, by contrast, appear to be less likely to go to the polls when they are exposed to uncivil negativity. However, when the tone is negative but civil the effects on women and men are more similar.⁶⁰

Furthermore, some studies also point at a difference between issue/policy-based attacks and personality/trait-based attacks. Min has suggested that while the first slightly stimulate voter turnout, the second significantly depresses participation.⁶¹ However, it is important to note that not all studies have found this effect. Finkel et al., as opposed to Min, have suggested that trait-based negativity has a slightly mobilizing effect and that issue-based negativity demobilize the electorate somewhat.⁶² Min has explained this inconsistency by referring to the fact that the studies use different dichotomies: Finkel et al. uses *issue* versus *traits* and Min uses the *policy* versus *personality* dichotomy. According to Min, his definition is preferable since it is more explicit and easier to define clearly.⁶³ However, I am not fully convinced that this explains the inconsistency, since other studies use the issue and trait dichotomy but still get similar results as Min.⁶⁴ Thus, more research appear to be needed in order to explain what causes this inconsistency and sort out what the effect is on trait-based versus issue-based negativity.

⁵⁷ Khan & Kenney (1999), 877.

⁵⁸ Schuck et al. (2013), 287.

⁵⁹ Khan et al. (1999), 876.

⁶⁰ Brooks (2010), 328.

⁶¹ Min (2004), 95.

⁶² Finkel & Geer (1998), 590.

⁶³ Min (2004), 100.

⁶⁴ Roddy & Garramone (1988) Thorson et al. (1991).

3.4 Demobilization or stimulation?

So are the empirical findings presented above in line with the *demobilization hypothesis* or the *stimulation hypothesis*? My answer would be that the findings suggest that the reality (concerning American voters') lie somewhere in between the opposing hypotheses, and that the answer depends on voter characteristics and the context. The proponents of the demobilizing hypothesis appear to be correct in the claims that negativity undermines political efficiency, citizens' trust in government and public mood. However, as opposed to what the proponents of the demobilizing hypothesis presume, there are no reliable evidences that these effects result in lower voter turnout. Furthermore, my own analysis of the literature is that the proponents of the hypothesis expect quite large effects.

Ansolabehere & Iyengar have for example stated that "*We would even go so far as to say that negative advertisements may pose a serious antidemocratic threat.*"⁶⁵ However, the findings illustrate quite modest effects. Also, it should not be overlooked that research suggests that negative campaigns also stimulate knowledge about the current campaign as well as memorability. These results are in line with the stimulation hypothesis, since the proponents claim that people are more likely to recall information when they are exposed to negative campaign messages. However, the foundation of the stimulation hypothesis is the presumption that these effects will result in increased turnout. Yet, at present there are no powerful evidence showing that negative campaigning neither depress, nor stimulate voter turnout for the electorate in general (although we have seen that some moderating factors appear to play an important part).

Nevertheless, I would like to remind the reader that the previously discussed research is not necessarily valid for Swedish voters'. Consequently, it is time to pay attention to the Swedish voters' and the context of Swedish election campaigns. In the next chapter we will turn to the research questions and hypotheses that this study aims to answer. However, before doing that I would like to end this chapter with a justification of the decision to examine the effects on *political participation* and *trust in politicians*. Firstly, why did I choose to investigate trust in politicians instead of for example trust in government? As mentioned, trust in government is an effect that several scholars have been focusing on. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that the anchoring in previous research would have been more explicit with an examination of that effect. However, I find it interesting to investigate whether negative campaigning affects the trust in *all* politicians and not exclusively the trust for those who are in charge. Besides, trust in politicians is not only closely tied to trust in government, but also external efficacy and public mood. Thus, the results can be analyzed in the light of the findings on trust in government as well as external efficacy and public mood.

As previously stated, voter turnout is the systemic effect that appears most popular to study. Consequently, it would have been interesting with results based on Swedish voters'. However, the data that has been used in this study was not appropriate in order to conduct an examination of the effect on voter turnout.⁶⁶ Fortunately, voting is not the only form of participation that is important from a democratic perspective. At present there is an increasing diversity of different types of political activism in western societies'.⁶⁷ Consequently, in my opinion there are valid reasons to examine other forms of political participation (which is being done in this study), instead of exclusively focusing on the most traditional form of political participation, voter turnout. Additionally, other forms of political participation and exposure to election campaigns also tend to increase the propensity to vote.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995), 9.

⁶⁶ 98, 7 percent of the respondents in the E-panel, that this study is based on, reported that they had voted. Thus I considered that there would not be enough variation to analyze in the dependent variable, voter turnout in order to provide interesting analyzes.

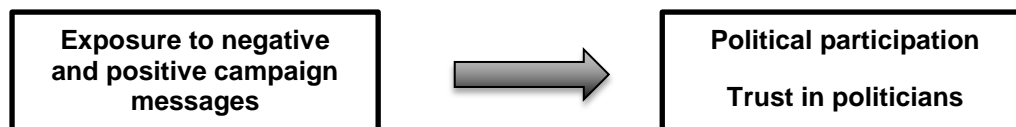
⁶⁷ Dalton (2009) 59.

⁶⁸ Biliska (2012), 1.

4. Research question and hypotheses

The focal relationship examined in this study is described in Figure 1. The general research question is: *What effects does negative campaigning, and positive campaigning, have on Swedish voters' political participation and trust in politicians?*

Figure 1. Focal relationship



Before presenting the hypotheses it should be added that that this study does not offer a comprehensive examination of political participation. To be more accurate, it is *campaign specific participation connected to the political parties* that is examined in this study⁶⁹. However, for the sake of simplicity the effect is called political participation.

Continuing to the hypotheses, I firstly expect that exposure to negative campaigning will suppress political participation for the Swedish electorate. Indeed, the overall findings from previous research point toward a null effect on voter turnout and since voter turnout is one form of political participation it could be argued that it would be more logical to expect a null effect on participation than a decreasing effect. However, I view the theoretical arguments that Swedish voters' should be *more* sensitive to negative messages than American citizens', (discussed in the introduction) as more powerful than the arguments that Swedish voters' are *less* sensitive. I basically presume that Swedish voters are highly suspicious and alienated toward negative campaigning because of the tradition of consensus. Hence, they will feel uncomfortable with negative campaign messages which will result in demobilization, demonstrated in a decreased participation.

Since negative campaigning is the opposite of positive campaigning, and since the two campaign types will be compared in the analysis, I find it relevant to provide a proper examination about the effects of positive campaigning as well. So will positivity, as opposed to negativity, stimulate political participation? Or will it not produce any effect? The majority of the previous studies do not tell us much about the effect of positive campaigning (which explains the absence of a review over research about positive campaigning in previous chapters). However, based on the few studies that report the effects of positive campaigning on political participation, I do *not* expect it to produce any significant effect. In Garramone et al's. experimental study, the author illustrated that there were no significant difference on intended voter turnout between those who were exposed to positive campaigns and the control group who were not exposed to any campaign message.⁷⁰ Therefore, I expect that the null effect will also apply on other forms of political participation, for Swedish voters, as well. Furthermore, previous research has found that positive campaigning is *less* memorable and attracts *less* attention than negative campaigning⁷¹: That is also a cause that contributes to my expectation about the null effect of positive campaign messages.

⁶⁹ This examination of this variable is based on a question item which includes the following statements, among others: 1) Did you read any election brochure or similar printed material from any party? 2) Did you visit any homepage of the political parties' webpages? A more detailed description of the operationalization follows in the next chapter.

⁷⁰ Atkin et al. (1990), 307.

⁷¹ Brians & Wattenberg (1996), Lau et al. (2007) among others.

Main hypothesis 1a: Negative campaign messages will suppress Swedish voters' political participation.

Main hypothesis 1b: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect on Swedish voters' political participation.

However, I do not presume that the effect size will be equally large among all groups of voters. As already explained, there are findings showing that negative campaign messages may *stimulate* partisans whereas it *turns other voters' of on voting*: E.g. political independents, those who are poorly informed and those who have a small political interest. It is reasonable to presume that those personal characteristics are relevant for Swedish voters', regarding other forms of participation as well. Thus, I expect to see interaction effects of partisanship, political knowledge, and political interest: More specifically I expect political participation to decrease more for political independents, for voters' who are low on political knowledge and for voters' who have low political interest when exposed to negative campaigning. Concerning positive campaigning, I do not expect it to produce any effect for any voter group.

Hypothesis 1c: Negative campaign messages will suppress political participation more for political independents as compare to partisans.

Hypothesis 1d: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither political independents, nor partisans.

Hypothesis 1e: Negative campaign messages will suppress political participation more for voters' who are low on political knowledge as compared to highly knowledgeable voters'.

Hypothesis 1f: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither voters' who are low on political knowledge, nor highly knowledgeable voters'.

Hypothesis 1g: Negative campaign messages will suppress political participation more for voters' with a small political interest as compared highly interested voters'.

Hypothesis 1h: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither voters' with a small political interest, nor highly interested voters.

Based on previous studies, I also expect negative campaigns to decrease Swedish voters' trust in (Swedish) politicians. As stated above, the overall findings of the closely related effects, trust in government, external efficacy and public mood suggest that exposure to negativity has a decreasing effect. Thus, it is plausible to expect a decreasing effect on trust in politicians as well: Especially among Swedish voters who I expect to be suspicious, alienated and uncomfortable with negative campaigns.

Continuing to the effect of positive campaigning on trust in politicians, null effects are expected here as well. Alike the literature that focuses on participation, the literature that focuses on trust do not tell much about the effect of positive messages. However, one study by Pinkleton et al. demonstrated a null effect of positive campaigning on cynicism.⁷² Although cynicism is not precisely the same thing as absence of trust in politicians (cynicism is broader based since it refers to mistrust toward the whole

⁷² Pinkleton et al. (2002), 18.

political system⁷³) it can be viewed as closely related. Consequently, I presume that there will not be any effect of positive campaigning on trust in politicians. Besides, the fact that previous studies suggest that positive campaigning is *less* memorable and attracts *less* attention than negative campaigning is another reason to expect null effects.

Main hypothesis 2a: *Negative campaign messages will decrease Swedish voters' trust in politicians.*

Main hypothesis 2b: *Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect on Swedish voters' trust in politicians.*

However, just as regarding political participation, I imagine that trust in politicians will decrease more for independents and voters' who have a relatively low political interest and knowledge. As already mentioned, there are indications that partisans, knowledgeable voters' and politically interested voters' are in general more resistant to negative campaigning than others.

Hypothesis 2c: *Negative campaign messages will decrease trust in politicians more for political independents as compared to partisans.*

Hypothesis 2d: *Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither political independents, nor partisans.*

Hypothesis 2e: *Negative campaign messages will decrease trust in politicians more for voters' who are low on political knowledge as compared to highly knowledgeable voters'.*

Hypothesis 2f: *Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither voters' who are low on political knowledge, nor highly knowledgeable voters'.*

Hypothesis 2g: *Negative campaign messages will decrease trust in politicians more for voters' with a small political interest as compared to voters' with a high political interest.*

Hypothesis 2h: *Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither voters' with a small political interest, nor highly interested voters'.*

All of the hypotheses above are asymmetric in the sense that I expect that there will be effects of negative campaign messages but not any effects of positive campaign messages. The asymmetry is illustrated in figure 2 and figure 3 below.

⁷³ Pinkleton et al. (2002), 15.

Figure 2. Expected effect on political participation

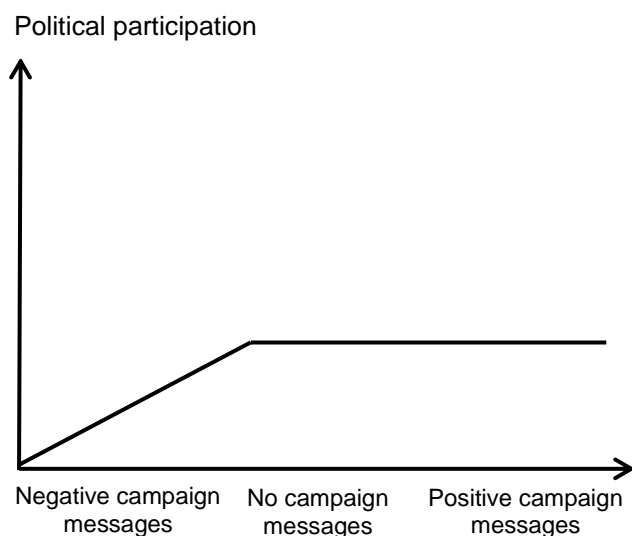
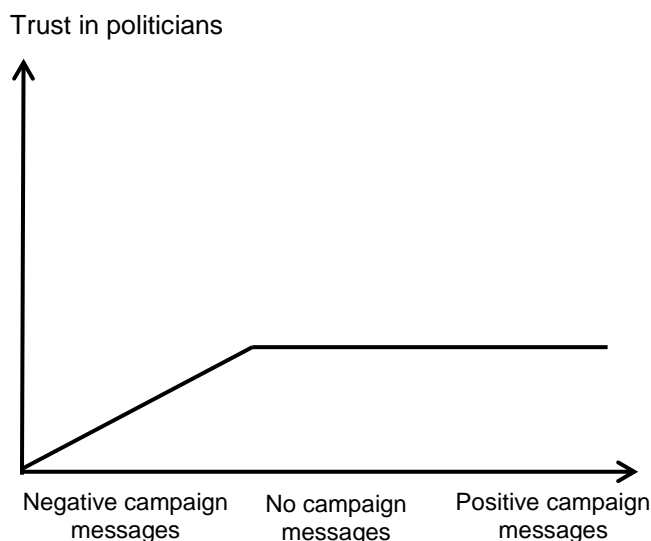


Figure 3. Expected effect on trust in politicians



5. Methodological approach

5.1 Testing the effects with an experiment

In order to answer the research question and to test the hypotheses above, an experimental design have been used as the methodological tool. The principal reason is that the experimental design provides good opportunities to make causal inferences.⁷⁴ In other words, it offers good opportunities to study what *effects* negative and positive campaigning *causes* by manipulating the independent variable (what campaign messages that are provided to the respondents) and by randomizing the participants to treatments and control groups. That the participants are randomized implies that everybody has an equal chance to end up in the different treatment and control groups: A good basis for assuming that the respondents in the treatment groups behaves as the respondents in the control group would have behaved if they receive the same treatment (and vice versa). Consequently, the treatment effect can be appropriately estimated by comparing the outcome in the treatment groups with the outcome in the control group⁷⁵: If any difference on political participation or trust in politicians is identified, then one can be confident that the difference is due to a variance in the independent variable.⁷⁶

Continuing to the study of this thesis, a data set based on surveys from the *2014 Internet Campaign panel* (the E-panel) have been used. The E-panel is a part of the Citizens Panel (SW: Medborgarpanelen), and consist of a seven wave online panel study.⁷⁷ It was conducted by researchers at the University of Gothenburg, in connection to the elections 2014, and the data that is used in this thesis have never been analysed before.⁷⁸

In one of the surveys that was carried out one week before the parliamentary, regional and civil elections, the respondents were randomly assigned into four experimental groups. Those groups was exposed to different television advertisements from political parties, from their election campaigns

⁷⁴ Field (2013), 358.

⁷⁵ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 17.

⁷⁶ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011,) 147-

⁷⁷ Boije & Dahlberg, (2015), 1.

⁷⁸ Shehata, Adam, E-mail conversation, 2015, 6 of January.

2014: Group A was exposed to two positive advertisements, group B viewed one positive and one negative advertisement, group C was also exposed to one positive and one negative advertisement and group D was exposed to two negative advertisements⁷⁹ (more detailed information about the advertisements follows in the Material section below).

There are clear advantages connected to the decision to use the data set from the E-panel: Firstly, I believe that the experiment from the E-panel had good prerequisites to engage the respondents and make them pay attention since they were exposed to real campaign advertisements during an ongoing election campaign. This is a merit since engagement, curiosity and attention is likely to ensure that the effects occurring in the experiment mimic the effects that occur in the real world.⁸⁰ Consequently, such experimental realism is powerful from an internal, as well as an external point of view.⁸¹ If experimental effects can be obtained during a real time campaign experience, we are more certain that they also would produce similar effects also in a non-experimental setting.

Secondly, the data set includes substantially more respondents (N=2664) than I would be able to gather with my own resources. The large sample is an advantage since it increases the statistical power of the results. In other words, the probability to identify a significant effect that exists in the real world increases with a large sample.⁸²

Finally, I would like to end this section by emphasizing one weakness that is typical for the experimental design, and discuss the implications of the weakness for this study. The weakness in question is that the findings from an experiment are not likely to be a perfect reflection of the real world. Why that is the case is being explained in the following quote:

“...the observational and experimental results should not be the same unless everyone in the real world is exposed to campaign ads, or there is no difference in the effects of exposure to these ads between those who do and those who do not experience them in real life. The experiments conducted by Ansolabehere et al. (1999), in other words, almost certainly estimate the potential, not the actual, treatment effect.”⁸³

With the above quote in mind, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the experiment of this study should be completed with observational studies in order to increase the external validity. However, as mentioned the fact that the experiment was conducted during a real election campaign makes it probable to expect that potential effects that occur in the experiment also are likely to occur in the real world. Furthermore, the “noise” from the election campaign (with all the political information and propaganda that the voters’ are exposed to) gives a realistic backdrop for the experiment. Most voters’ were very probable exposed to campaign advertisements in the real world. Hence, if effects of exposure to two television advertisements can be identified under such circumstances, those effects are very likely to occur in the real world as well. This implies that the advantage of using an experimental design in this study significantly outweigh the disadvantages.

⁷⁹ See appendix A for extracts of the experimental survey, and appendix B for the transcription of the television ads.

⁸⁰ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 34.

⁸¹ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 34-35.

⁸² Sundell, Anders (2012, 11 of November) ” Guide: Statistisk ”power” och urvalsstorlek i experimentell design” [Blog post].

⁸³ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011) 451.

5.2 Participants

The panelists in the E-panel were recruited through two different sources: About 50 percent of the respondents came from the website of the largest newspaper in Sweden, Dagens Nyheter (DN), through pop-up advertisements. All visitors of dn.se were offered to join the E-panel by answering a recruitment questionnaire, accepting an agreement and sign up to the panel by submitting their email address.

The remaining 50 percent that were assigned to the E-panel were present participants of the existing Citizens Panel⁸⁴ at the University of Gothenburg. Since the respondents participated in the E-panel on a voluntarily basis, they were not randomly selected in the strict sense and therefore one could make the objection that this study does *not* have an optimal sample. However, in my opinion the sample of the study is preferable to for example a sample of university students (which is the sample of many previous studies).⁸⁵ The problem with such samples is explained in the following quote:

“One potential weakness is that in many cases, experiments studying attitude change used samples of undergraduate students. Although many laboratory experiments replicate when conducted with representative samples (e.g., Krosnick, Visser, and Holbrook 2000), there are many important ways in which college undergraduates are different from a generally representative sample (e.g., they tend to be more homogenous in terms of socioeconomic status, education, age, and often race and ethnicity).”⁸⁶

The principal problem with an unrepresentative sample is that it makes it more difficult to generalize the results with confidence, something that many experimental scholars struggle with. Admittedly, the sample of this study is not a perfect reflection of the Swedish population either. Of the participants', 31 percent were between 18-40 years, 38 percent between 41-60 years and 29 percent between 61-87 years (M=50, 7 Median=51, SD= 15, 9) there were 63 percent men and 37 percent women. 62 percent had a bachelor degree or higher. One might note that especially the high educational level is not representative and I have to agree. However, since the panelists were recruited from a general population, the validity of the experimental findings are, at least, supposed to enjoy more external validity than e.g. samples of university students.

Finally, the advantage of the large sample deserves to be underlined: A total of 2664 respondents completed the experimental survey - that is a substantially larger sample than the sample of several previous experimental studies.⁸⁷

5.3 Material

As mentioned before, the material of the study consists of four television advertisements from political parties, from their election campaign 2014. Group A was exposed to one positive advertisement from the social democrats (SW: Socialdemokraterna) and one positive advertisement from the liberal party (SW: Folkpartiet). Group B was exposed to the same positive advertisement from the social democrats and a negative advertisement from the alliance of the four liberal/conservative parties in the Swedish parliament (SW: Alliansen). Group C was exposed to the same positive advertisement as group A from the liberal party and a negative advertisement from the social democrats. Finally group D was

⁸⁴ Boije & Dahlberg (2015), 3.

⁸⁵ Lau et al. (2007), 1187-1205.

⁸⁶ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 149.

⁸⁷ Brader (2005), Shen & Wu. (2002), Schultz & Parker. (1997) among others.

exposed to the negative advertisement from the liberal/conservative alliance and the negative advertisement from the social democrats.

One advantage of the experimental design is that all the four groups viewed advertisements from both “sides”: One advertisement from a party more to the left and one advertisement from a party/parties more to the right. Consequently, the risk that it is political attitudes, rather than different campaign strategies, that causes the potential effects decreases.

Furthermore, the experimental design offers good opportunities to test the hypotheses formulated in the previous chapter. If the hypotheses are correct, the respondents in group A should rate higher on political participation and trust in government than group D. Group C and D should in turn be placed somewhere in between group A and D.

Although the experiment created by the researchers provides good opportunities to test the hypotheses, it could have been strengthened further by including a control group with respondents who was not exposed to any television advertisement at all. If a particular treatment group can be compared with a control group as well as the other treatment groups, the estimation of the treatment effect appears more comprehensive. Suppose that the respondents in group A, who was exposed to positive advertisements exclusively, will show to have significantly higher trust in politicians than the respondents in group D who solely was exposed to negative advertisements. Then it can be stated that exposure to positive and negative campaigns have different effects. However, we still cannot know whether the respondents in group A would have higher, lower or the same trust in politicians if they were not exposed to any advertisement at all: Such a conclusion can only be drawn by comparing the potential difference with a control group.

Even if the experimental survey unfortunately not was designed with a control group, there were indeed respondents who could not watch the films due to different kinds of technical problems. Since those respondents still answered the questions that this study uses as indicators of trust in politicians and political participation, I created an “artificial” control group out of them. It is important to note that this group is not a control group in the strict sense since no randomization of them was made. However, this group can be regarded as a control group, given that the respondents share the same characteristics with the respondents in the treatment groups. Consequently, the randomization check presented in the following section includes the “artificial” control group as well. Finally, it should be noted that the control group is smaller than the treatment groups (N= 98 respondents as compared to N= 638, N= 639 and N= 641). However, my assessment is that the control group is sufficiently large to qualify for inclusion in the experiment.

After viewing the advertisements, the participants were asked to complete the survey by answering some more questions. One battery of questions is an appropriate indicator for trust in politicians. Another battery of questions, that were included in the panel wave one week after the experimental survey, is a suitable indicator for political participation (see next section for more detailed descriptions of the operationalizations of the dependent variables). Hence, this thesis uses the material conducted from the E-panel in order to make a post-test experiment about effects of negative and positive campaigns on political participation trust in politicians.

5.4 Operationalization of the dependent variables

It has already been explained how the independent variable, exposure to negative and positive campaign messages, was operationalized. However, not much has been said about how the dependent variables *political participation* and *trust in politicians* were operationalized. In order to measure political participation an index based on the following battery of questions was constructed⁸⁸: 1) Did you read any election brochure or similar printed material from any party? 2) Did you visit any homepage of the political parties' webpages? 3) Did you participate in any election meeting or some other event arranged by a political party? 4) Were you in personal contact with any election worker in your workplace? 5) Did you look at any television advertisement or film clip from the parties through the Internet? 6) Did you take part in the information from the parties through social media on internet such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram? 7) Did you take part in results from opinion polls? There were three possible answers on each of the questions: "Yes, several times", "Yes, occasionally" and "No".⁸⁹

Regarding the operationalization of political participation, it might be objected that some of the questions can be said to measure consumption of campaign messages rather than political participation (e.g. the question about reading election brochures). This is a question concerning what should be counted as participation or not. However, if one thinks that some of the questions are measuring campaign consumption rather than participation, it should be noted that there is empirical evidence which shows that attention to campaign communication is closely associated with political participation, even under control for social background and political attitudes. This implies that those who consume different types of campaign communications prove consistently more politically active.⁹⁰ Hence, I do not view it as problematic to combine these questions with the more clear-cut participation questions (e.g. the question about participation in election meetings).

The second dependent variable, trust in politicians, was operationalized by constructing an additive index based on the following statements from the experimental survey: 1) Swedish politicians do their best in order to improve for the average man. 2) Politicians are just interested in getting people's votes but not of their opinions. 3) Those who are in the parliament do not take much account to what the average man thinks. 4) Swedish politicians make good on their election pledges most of the time. There were five possible answers on every statement ranging from "Do not Assent at all" to "Assent Completely"⁹¹. For statement 2 and 3, the answers were reversed in order to create the additive index. Using similar questions in order to measure trust in politicians is a recognized strategy.⁹² Thus, the external validity should be appropriate.

Finally, I would like to underline the advantage that both of the dependent variables have been operationalized by constructing composite indexes. The reason is that a composite index makes up for random variation in separate questions.⁹³ Consequently, an index provides a more valid measurement than just using one question as an indicator.

⁸⁸ The battery of questions was raised in the panel step one week after the experimental survey was carried out. This is an advantage since it makes it possible to ensure that a potential effect does not only exist right after the experiment but also persists for at least one week.

⁸⁹ Appendix C.

⁹⁰ Norris (2002) 139-140.

⁹¹ Appendix D.

⁹² Shehata, Adam, meeting, 9 of December 2015.

⁹³ Sundell, Anders (2012, 28 of April) "Guide: Konstruera ett index från flera variabler." [Blog post].

5.5 Operationalization of the potential moderating factors

Partisanship was operationalized by using two questions raised in the panel step one week before the experimental survey. This is an advantage from a causal point of view: One cannot reasonably make the objection that partisanship has been affected by the experiment rather than the other way around.

The first question that was asked was: What party do you like the most? and the second question was a follow-up question, asking: Do you consider yourself being a convinced supporters of that party.⁹⁴ A dichotomous partisanship-variable was made out of these two questions: The respondents who answered “Do not know/do not want to answer” on the first question was categorized as independents together with the respondents who answered “No” on the follow-up question. The respondents who answered “Yes, very convinced” and “Yes, somewhat convinced” on the follow-up question was in turn categorized as partisans.

It should be noted that in American studies, partisanship is usually measured by using the following serie of questions: Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent or what? Would you call yourself a strong Republican (Democrat) or a not very strong Republican (Democrat)? Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?⁹⁵ A seven point scale is then provided from this series of questions: Strong Democrat, weak Democrat, independent leaning toward the Democrats, independent not leaning toward a party, independent leaning toward the Republicans, weak Republican and strong Republican. However, this operationalization cannot be applied on a country with a multipartysystem. Let me explain why: In a two-party system like the one in the US it is reasonable to take only the two major parties into account. This enables the possibility to provide the seven-point scale as a measure of partisanship. Yet, in a multipartysystem, with more than two relevant parties, it is difficult to mention the names of all the parties in the question wording (imagine Sweden that has eight different parties in the parliament). This can be seen as a disadvantage since a variable on a seven point scale would enable a more fine graded analysis than a dichotomous variable. However, the present operationalization is the best that could be provided on a Swedish context and with the data at hand.

Political knowledge is frequently operationalized by measuring the respondents' ability to provide correct answers to fact-based questions.⁹⁶ Consequently, this potential moderating factor was operationalized by constructing an index based on a battery of fact based statements such as: “A party must get 6 percent of the votes in order to get seats in the Swedish parliament”, and a battery of questions that measures knowledge about well-known politicians party belonging⁹⁷. The combination of these two types of fact questions provided a fine graded knowledge-index, ranging from 0 (no correct answers) to 1 (all answers correct).

It should be noted that one weakness with the battery of fact based statements from the E-panel is that the respondents might have cheated when answering - e.g. by Googling the correct answer. In order to ensure that the respondents did not cheat while picking the answers, but instead based their answers on previous knowledge, the time period for answering could have been restricted (so that the respondents would not have enough time for Googeling the right answer). Another possible way could have been to use timestamps: If it would prove that some respondents were taking very long time to answer, that would be a reason to suspect that the respondents might have cheated. Consequently, those respondents could have been excluded from the statistical analysis. However, these are not optimal

⁹⁴ Appendix E.

⁹⁵ Thomassen & Rosema (2006), 5-6

⁹⁶ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 171.

⁹⁷ Appendix F.

solutions in order to identify cheaters since the vast majority of the questions that are appropriate to ask in a survey can be Googled up in an instant⁹⁸.

Although it appears difficult to determine whether cheating have been taking place or not in surveys, it is reasonable to expect that the problem decreases the more knowledge questions the respondents are urged to answer: Understandably it takes more time and energy to Google 20 answers than to just Google a single one. Thus, it is an advantage that over 20 questions that measures political knowledge are included in the same survey from the E-panel.

Political interest could simply have been operationalized by using the following question from the E-panel: How interested are you in general in politics? However, I see a substantial risk that some individuals are likely to report political interest because they view it as socially desirable. Such answers would result in so called *social desirability bias*: Biases that are caused by the fact that respondents give answers that they view as socially desirable.⁹⁹

In order to avoid a social desirability bias, an index of questions that can be viewed as indirect indicators of political interest, was composed. The respondents were asked: Which of the following election program in radio and TV have you been exposed to the past week? The question also refers to if you have been taking part of the transmissions through the Internet. Thereafter, different programs were listed and there were 4 possible answers: “Yes in full”, “Yes partly”, “No” and “Do not know/ Do not remember”¹⁰⁰. Finally, it should be noted that these questions were asked before the experiment which ensures that the experiment did not affect the interest.

5.6 Research ethics

Experiments are often being criticized for the practice of denying a “known good” to some of the experimental group/ groups. E.g., to intentionally improve the educational level of some children, in order to compare them with other children appear unethical, given the general belief in the positive externalities related to schooling.¹⁰¹ Fortunately it is very unlikely that similar ethical problems appeared when conducting the experiment that this study is based on. Suppose that exposure to the positive advertisements exclusively is the “better treatment”. Even if that is the case, it would be far-fetched to expect that exposure to those advertisements would have any long-lasting effects on the respondents’ personal life situation that can be compared with the potential effects of additional years of schooling.

Furthermore, experiments might produce unintended effects (also called second-order consequences).¹⁰² Suppose for example that exposure to negative campaign advertisements decreases political participation as well as trust in politicians. If that would be the case, the researchers can be

⁹⁸ Elias Markstedt wrote a paper 2014 about how knowledge is, and should be, measured in the Citizens Panel at the University of Gothenburg, and he states:

“...imagine searching for the number of MPs in the Swedish riksdag, a fact found in a matter of seconds, which also makes it practically impossible to discern “googlers” from “non-googlers.”

In other word, to Google up the right answer does not add many seconds to the timestamp. Hence, there is no guarantee that timestamps would have been a helpful instrument in order to ensure that no cheaters were included in the analysis. The fact that the right answers usually can be Googled up quickly, result in that cheaters might also get around a potential time restriction.

⁹⁹ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 143.

¹⁰⁰ Appendix G.

¹⁰¹ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 495.

¹⁰² Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 496

said to unintentionally contribute to those effects when conducting the experiment, by spreading the negative advertisements. The question is then, can that be ethical defensible? In my opinion that might have been questionable if the advertisements were fictional (at least if the participants were not debriefed afterwards). However, the advertisements in the experiment of the E-panel are real and were showed on television several times a day during the election period. Thus, I consider the experiment to be ethical defensible: To prevent individuals from information from the real world, neither can be, nor should be a part of the scientists' responsibility.

Finally, one could make the objection that the panelists were not debriefed about the experiment afterwards.¹⁰³ That can be viewed as slightly problematic since it is an ethical code to "*provide participants with accurate and appropriate information about the nature of the experiment or study.*"¹⁰⁴ Thus, from an ethical perspective it would have been beneficial to debrief the respondents. However, I think that debriefing would have been more essential if the experiment involved manipulated treatments (e.g. fictional campaign advertisements). Furthermore, it might be noted that approval of an agreement was a precondition for participate in the E-panel. This agreement included a description about the Citizens Panel, instructions for deregistering and management of information¹⁰⁵

In sum, it can be stated with some self-assurance that it is very unlikely that the experiment have produced any actual damage. However, from an ethical point of view it would have been profitable with some debriefing of the respondents.

6. Results

6.1 Randomization- and manipulation checks

Before analysing the results, a randomization check was conducted in order to control that there were no differences, apart from different manipulations, between the groups. The result showed that there were no significant differences, on a 95 percent level, due to age (, 939), education (, 166), partisanship (, 300), political knowledge (, 641) or political interest (, 991). However, there was a significant difference due to gender (, 000). When studying the gender difference in close, by comparing the separate groups with Tukey HSD, it became clear that there were significantly more women in the "artificial" control group as compared to the treatment groups. This indicate that there was a covariation between gender and the reporting of technical difficulties watching the films. However, it should also be reminded that in five of six cases the artificial control group did not differ from the treatment groups. Thus, my assessment is that this group can be regarded as an actual control group. Yet, the risk that the findings are due to the gender difference between the groups needed to be excluded, and therefore gender is controlled for in all the regression analyses of this study.

Secondly, a manipulation check was also conducted before analysing the results. This was made by comparing how the different groups answered five manipulation questions. The results showed that there were significant differences between the groups regarding all of the manipulation questions. Furthermore, the *between group differences* was in the expected direction: The respondents who viewed negative advertisements stated that the ad gave a more negative picture of the *opposing parties*, the *policies of the opposing parties* and the *state of Sweden* than the respondents who viewed positive advertisements. Additionally, the respondents who viewed positive advertisements stated that the advertisement gave a more positive picture of the *own party*, and the *own policies*. Thus, it can be

¹⁰³ Boije, Edvin, E-mail conversation, 2015, 16 of April.

¹⁰⁴ Gilston (2015).

¹⁰⁵ The participation agreement of the Citizens panel (SW: Medborgarpanelens deltagaravtal).

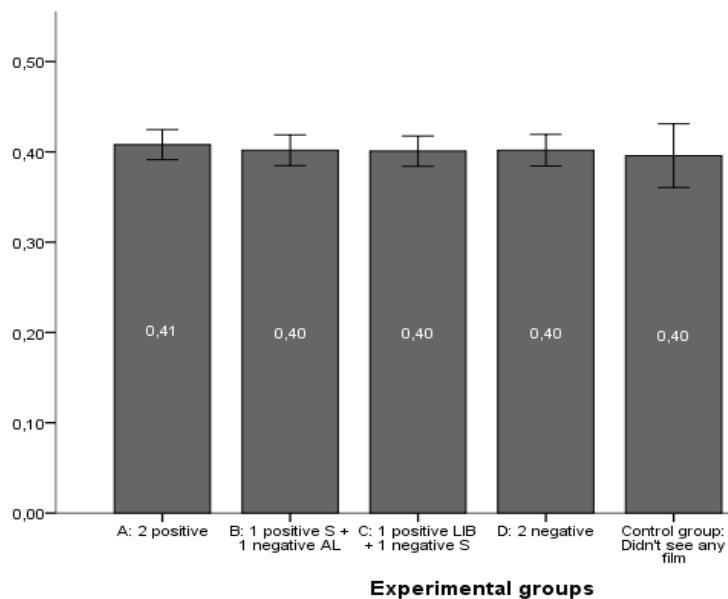
concluded that the manipulation of the independent variable had the intended effect. In other words, the negative advertisements was actually perceived as more negative than the positive advertisements.

6.2 Effect of negative and positive campaigning on political participation

It has become time to clarify if main hypotheses 1a and 1b are supported by the empirical results: Do exposure to negative campaign messages suppress Swedish voters' political participation (hypothesis 1 a), whereas positive messages do not produce any effect? (Hypothesis 1b)

The ANOVA analysis provided no evidence for hypothesis 1a since no significant differences were detected. Although group A, where the respondents was exposed to two positive advertisements, rates slightly higher on political participation than group D, where the respondents was exposed to two negative advertisements (,4080 as compared to ,4018 on a scale ranging from 0-1) the difference is far from being statistically significant. Group B, had the same participation-rating as group D (,4018) and group C had an even lower rating than group D (,4009). Finally, the control group, where the respondents did not view any of the films had the lowest rating (,3958) Yet, none of these differences are significant. The insignificant difference between group A and the other groups provides support for hypothesis 1b: Positive campaign messages did not produce any effect on political participation. Figure 4 illustrates the remarkably small differences between the groups.

Figure 4. Mean results of political participation with 95 % CI error bars



It can also be noted that the insignificant results persisted when comparing the differences between the separate groups with Tukey HDS - These results are discussed more in the conclusions.

Although no evidence for the first main hypothesis were found, it can still be the case that there are significant effects for respondents with certain characteristics. Does partisanship, political knowledge or political interest moderates the relationship between exposure to negative or positive messages and political participation? In order to test if there are any interaction effects due to these factors, regression analyses were performed which is illustrated in table 1 and table 2 below.

Table 1. Regression analysis with interaction effects: Negative messages

	Dependent variable: Political participation				
	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Exposure to negative messages (Group D)	-,001 (.010)	-,009 (.013)	,006 (.021)	,091 (.168)	-,015 (.365)
Gender (Woman)		,026* (.011)	,032*** (.010)	,057** (.020)	,035*** (.010)
Gender * Exposure to negative messages		,025 (.022)		,	
Partisanship (Partisan)			,056*** (.013)		
Partisanship * Exposure to negative messages			,008 (.023)		
Political knowledge (0-1)				-,009 (.103)	
Political knowledge * Exposure to negative messages				-,065 (.184)	
Political interest (0-1)					,152*** (.021)
Political interest* Exposure to negative messages					,043 (.044)
Intercept	,403*** (.005)	,391*** (.006)	,345*** (.011)	,384*** (.099)	,350*** (.009)
Adjusted R ²	,000	,004	,018	,016	,043
N	2445	2068	1943	475	1863

Note: * p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001***. Unstandardized B-coefficients, standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable *Political participation* is measured on a scale from 0 to 1 (0 = low political participation, 1 = high political participation). The same scale applies to the variables *Political knowledge* (0= low political knowledge, 1= high political knowledge), and *Political interest* (0= low political knowledge, 1= high political knowledge). *Partisanship* is a dichotomous variable (0= Independent 1= Partisan). *Exposure to negative messages* is a dummy coding out of group D. Since gender was not equally distributed in the experimental groups, gender is controlled for in model 2, 3 and 4 See Regression Diagnostic s in Appendix H.

Model 0 in table 1 illustrates the effect on political participation for the respondents in group D, who were exposed to two negative advertisements. The table illustrates that there was no significant difference between the respondents in group D and the respondents in the other groups. Furthermore, Model 0 shows that the predicted value of a respondent who was not a part of group D have a participation level of 0,403 (on a scale ranging from 0-1).

In model 1, the focus is on the relationship between negative messages, participation and gender. Firstly, it may be observed that the female respondents rated slightly higher on participation. However, model 1 demonstrates that gender does not moderate the relationship between exposure to negative messages and participation.

Model 2 demonstrates the examination of the potential interaction effect of partisanship. Once again there is no significant interaction effect. Thus, it can be noted that there is no empirical support suggesting that negative messages decreases participation more among independents than among partisans (hypothesis 1c).

Considering political knowledge in model 3, there is no significant interaction effect of this factor either. Henceforth, there is no support for the presumption that negative messages suppress participation more for voters' with low political knowledge than for well-informed voters' (hypothesis 1e).

Lastly, model 4 illustrates that political interest does not interact with the focal relationship. Thus, no evidence in line with the expectation that negative messages suppress participation more for voters' low on political interest as compared to interested voters (hypothesis 1g).

Table 2. Regression analysis with interaction effects: Positive messages

	Dependent variable: Political participation				
	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Exposure to positive messages (Group A)	,007 (.010)	,020 (.013)	,002 (.023)	-,422* (.178)	-,003 (.016)
Gender (Woman)		,041*** (.011)	,032** (.010)	,055** (.020)	,035*** (.010)
Gender * Exposure to positive messages		-,039 (.022)			
Partisanship (Partisan)			,055*** (0,12)		
Partisanship * Exposure to positive messages			,006 (.026)		
Political knowledge (0-1)				-,159 (.101)	
Political knowledge * Exposure to positive messages				,466* (.189)	
Political interest (0-1)					,149*** (.021)
Political interest* Exposure to positive messages					,049 (.043)
Intercept	,401*** (.005)	,384*** (.0006)	,346*** (.011)	,514*** (.097)	,347*** (.009)
Adjusted R ²	,000	,005	,018	,023	,043
N	2445	2068	1943	475	1863

Note: The results are conducted, and structured, in the same way as the results in table 1. *Exposure to positive campaigning* is a dummy coding out of group A. See Regression Diagnostics in Appendix G.

Model 0 in table 2 illustrates the effect on political participation for the respondents in group A, who was exposed to two positive television advertisements. The table shows that no significant effect could be identified. Model 0 also shows that the predicted value of a respondent who was not included in group A have a participation level of ,401.

Model 1 demonstrates that there is no significant interaction effect of gender, regarding the relationship exposure to positive campaign messages and political participation.

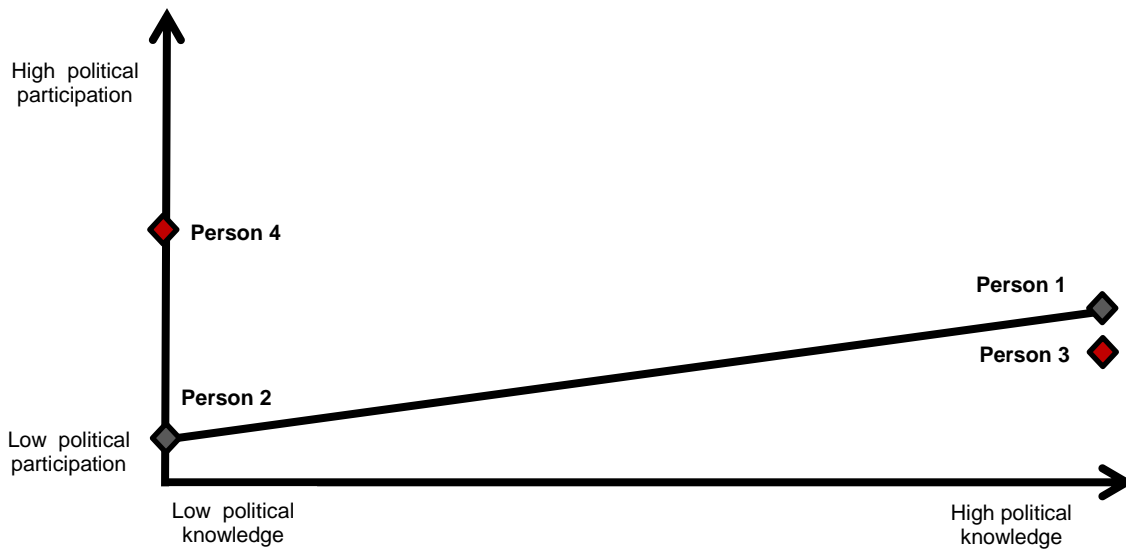
Model 2 illustrates that there were no significant difference between the respondents who were independents and partisans regarding political participation when it comes to exposure to positive messages either. Consequently, hypothesis 1d is supported.

In model 3, a significant interaction effect can be observed, indicating that there is a difference between those with high political knowledge and those with low knowledge. Thus, it can be noted that hypothesis 1 f, with the presumption that positive messages will not produce any effect for neither of the voter groups, is not supported. In order to interpret this finding, and understand the table in detail, I calculated a predicted value of political participation for four fictional persons, following the steps below:

- 1) Firstly, four fictional persons, who differs in regard to exposure to positive campaign messages and political knowledge, was made up:
 - ❖ Person 1: Exposure to the positive ads (value 1), high political knowledge (value 1).
 - ❖ Person 2: Exposed to the positive ads (value 1), low political knowledge (value 0).
 - ❖ Person 3: No exposure to the positive ads (value 0), high political knowledge (value 1).
 - ❖ Person 4: No exposure to the positive ads (value 0), low political knowledge (value 0).
- 2) Thereafter the interaction effect of the fictional persons was calculated, using following formula: The political knowledge-level of the person*Exposure/ no exposure to the positive campaign messages.
- 3) The predicted values on participation could then be calculated, using the following formula: Intercept+coefficient for exposure to positive messages*the persons value on exposure to positive messages+coefficient for political knowledge*the persons value on political knowledge+coefficient for the interaction effect*the interaction effect for the person= predicted value of political participation.

The results are demonstrated in figure 5 below. Person 1, with a high political knowledge, have a significantly higher predicted value on political participation than person 2, who is a person with low political knowledge (.399 as compared to .092). Furthermore, person 2 also have a substantially lower predicted value than person 4, who share the low knowledge but have not been exposed to the negative advertisements (.092 as compared to .514). Person 2 also have a clearly lower predicted value than a respondent who were not included in group A, without taking knowledge into account (.092 as compared to the intercept in model, table 2: .401). Therefore, the analysis indicates that positive campaign messages is likely to suppress political participation for voters' with low political knowledge. Regarding highly knowledgeable voters', positive messages do not suppress participation. Instead, it appears to have a slightly mobilizing effect. This conclusion can be drawn since person 1 has a higher predicted value than person 3 (.399, as compared to .355) who share the high knowledge level, but who was not exposed to positive campaign messages.

Figure 5. The interaction effect of political knowledge



Continuing to model 4 in table 2, the absence of a significant interaction effect of political interest is demonstrated.

Finally, the results presented above are summarized in table 3, with the hypotheses as the basis.

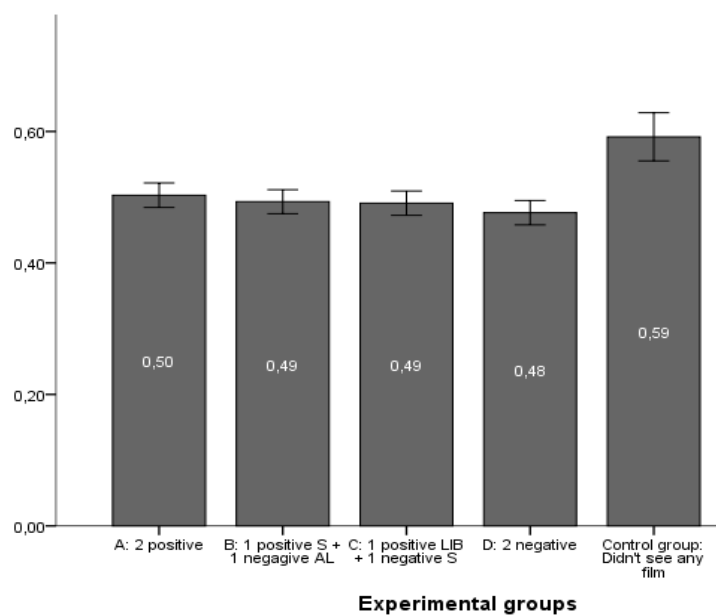
Table 3. Summary of the results: Effects on Political Participation

Hypothesis	Supported?	Hypothesis	Supported?
Main hypothesis 1a: Negative campaign messages will suppress Swedish voters' political participation.	No, the ANOVA analysis showed no significant differences between the respondents who were exposed to negative ads and the other groups.	Hypothesis 1e: Negative campaign messages will suppress political participation more for voters' who are low on political knowledge as compared to highly knowledgeable voters'.	No, the regression analysis did not find any evidence for that.
Main Hypothesis 1b: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect on Swedish voters' trust in politicians.	Yes, the ANOVA analysis showed no significant differences between the respondents who were exposed to positive ads and the other groups.	Hypothesis 1f: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither voters' who are low on political knowledge, nor highly knowledgeable voters'.	No, exposure to positive campaign messages had a demobilizing effect for the respondents with low knowledge, whereas highly knowledgeable voters' were mobilized .
Hypothesis 1 c: Negative campaign messages will suppress political participation more for political independents as compared to partisans.	No, the regression analysis did not find any significant proves for that.	Hypothesis 1g: Negative campaign messages will suppress political participation more for voters' with a small political interest as compared highly interested voters'.	No, no significant interaction effect was identified.
Hypothesis 1d: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither political independents, nor partisans.	Yes, the regression analysis showed no significant differences between the groups.	Hypothesis 1h: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither voters' with a small political interest, nor highly interested voters.	Yes, the regression analysis showed no significant differences between the groups.

6.3 Effect of negative and positive campaigning on trust in politicians

Continuing with the second main hypotheses of this study: Does negative campaign messages decrease Swedish voters' trust in politicians, whereas positive campaign messages do not produce any effect? The results from the ANOVA-analysis indicated that there are some evidence in line with the first main hypothesis: Group D showed up a lower rate on trust in politicians than the other treatment groups (,4764 on a scale ranging from 0-1). Furthermore, Group A had the highest rate as compared to the other treatment groups (,5031). Group B and C was rated somewhere in between group A and group D (Group B: ,4931. Group C: ,4909). Somewhat surprisingly, the control group had the highest rate of all the groups (,5918). Hence, the substantive difference occurred between those who were exposed to some campaign message and those who were not. This is an interesting finding that will be discussed more in the following chapters.

Figure 6. Mean results of trust in politicians with a 95 % CI error bars



When comparing the variance between separate groups with Tukey HDS, it becomes clear that the differences between the treatment groups are not significant. However, the control group has a significantly higher trust-rate than all the other groups¹⁰⁶. Thus, *main hypothesis 2a* is supported: The analysis demonstrates that trust in politicians is likely to decrease for those who are exposed to negative campaigning. However, the analysis indicates that trust in politicians is likely to decrease also for those who are exposed to positive campaign messages. Thus, no support was found for *main hypothesis 2b*.

The question is then whether there any factors that moderate the focal relationship between *exposure to negative and positive campaigning* and *trust in politicians*? In order to examine that, regression analyses were performed once again. Those are illustrated in table 4 and 5.

Table 4. Regression analysis with interaction effects: Negative messages

	Dependent variable: Trust in politicians				
	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Exposure to negative messages (Group D)	-,024* (.011)	-,013 (.015)	-,023 (.023)	,014 (.200)	-,013 (.018)
Gender (Woman)		,029* (.012)	,024* (.011)	,001 (.023)	,032** (.011)
Gender * Exposure to negative messages		-,024 (.024)			
Partisanship (Partisan)			,035* (.014)		
Partisanship * Exposure to negative messages			,018 (.025)		
Political knowledge (0-1)				,053 (.113)	
Political knowledge * Exposure to negative messages				-,046 (.211)	
Political interest (0-1)					,108*** (.024)
Political interest* Exposure to negative messages					-,014 (.051)
Intercept	,501*** (.005)	,487*** (.007)	,463*** (.013)	,449*** (.108)	,457*** (.010)
Adjusted R ²	,002	,003	,007	,003	,015
N	4561	2148	2001	502	1854

Note: * p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001***. Unstandardized B-coefficients, standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable *Trust in politicians* is measured on a scale from 0 to 1 (0 = low political participation, 1 = high political participation). The same scale applies to the variables *Political knowledge* (0= low political knowledge, 1= high political knowledge) and *Political interest* (0= low political knowledge, 1= high political knowledge). *Partisanship* is a dichotomous variable (0= Independent, 1= Partisan). *Exposure to negative messages* is a dummy coding out of group D. Since gender was not equally distributed in the experimental groups, gender is controlled for in model 2, 3 and 4 See Regression Diagnostics in Appendix H.

Model 0 in table 4 illustrates the effect of negative campaign messages on trust in politicians. A significant difference can be observed, probably due to the significant difference as compared to the control group. Model 0 also shows that the predicted trust rate of a respondent who was not a part of group D is ,501 (on a scale ranging from 0-1).

When studying model 1, it can be noted that there is no significant interaction effect due to gender although the female respondents reported a slightly higher trust in politicians than the male.

As shown in model 2, there is no significant interaction effect of partisanship. Thus, there is no support for the expectation that negative campaigning decreases trust in politicians more for independents then for partisans (hypothesis 2c).

Turning to political knowledge in model 3, no evidence is found that suggests that voters' with a small political knowledge differs from highly knowledgeable voters'. Thus, there is no support for hypothesis 2e.

Finally, in model 4 point demonstrates an absence of interaction effect of political interest. Consequently, no empirical support for hypothesis 2g can be found either.

Table 5. Regression analysis with interaction effects: Positive messages

	Dependent variable: Trust in politicians				
	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Exposure to positive messages (Group A)	,011 (.011)	,019 (.015)	,015 (.022)	-,005 (.192)	,014 (.018)
Gender (Woman)		,028* (.012)	,024* (.011)	-,001 (.023)	,032* (.011)
Gender * Exposure to positive messages		-,019 (.024)			
Partisanship (Partisan)			,044** (.014)		
Partisanship * Exposure to positive messages			-,025 (.028)		
Political knowledge (0-1)				,064 (.111)	
Political knowledge * Exposure to positive messages				-,113 (.219)	
Political interest (0-1)					,111*** (.024)
Political interest* Exposure to positive messages					-,024 (.048)
Intercept	,492*** (.005)	,480*** (.007)	,450*** (.012)	,431*** (.107)	,451*** (.010)
Adjusted R ²	,000	,002	,007	-,007	,015
N	2561	2148	2001	502	1854

Note: The results are conducted, and structured, in the same way as the results in table 4. Exposure to positive messages is a dummy coding out of group A. See Regression Diagnostics in Appendix H.

In table 5, Model 0 demonstrates an absence of a significant effect of positive messages on trust in politicians. Additionally, the model demonstrates that the perceived value for a person who was not a part of group A is ,492.

Model 1 shows that there does not appear to be any significant interaction effect due to gender, regarding the relationship.









Continuing to model 2, again an absence of an interaction effect of partisanship is illustrated. Hence, hypothesis 2d is supported.

In Model 3, an insignificant interaction effect of political knowledge can be observed. Consequently, hypothesis 2f is supported as well.

In model 4, it is demonstrated that there is no significant interaction effect due to political interest either. Consequently, hypothesis 2h is supported.

Finally, the results concerning the relationship between exposure to negative and positive campaign messages and trust in politicians are summarized in table 6 below.

Table 6. Summary of the results: Effects on Trust in politicians

Hypothesis	Supported?	Hypothesis?	Supported?
Main hypothesis 2a: Negative campaign messages will decrease Swedish voters' trust in politicians.	 Yes, the ANOVA analysis showed that the respondents who were exposed to negative messages had a significantly lower trust-rate than the control group.	Hypothesis 2e: Negative campaign messages will decrease trust in politicians more for voters' who are low on political knowledge as compared to highly knowledgeable voters'.	 No, the regression analysis did not find any significant proves for that.
Main hypothesis 2b: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect on Swedish voters' trust in government.	 No, the ANOVA analysis demonstrated significant differences between group A and the control group.	Hypothesis 2f: Positive campaign messages will produce any effect for neither voters' who are low on political knowledge, nor highly knowledgeable voters'.	 Yes, the regression analysis showed no significant differences between the groups.
Hypothesis 2c: Negative campaign messages will decrease trust in politicians more for political independents as compared to partisans.	 No, the regression analysis showed no significant differences between the two voter groups.	Hypothesis 2g: Negative campaign messages will decrease trust in politicians more for voters' with a small political interest as compared to voters' with a high political interest.	 No, the regression analysis did not find any significant evidence for that.
Hypothesis 2d: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither political independents, nor partisans.	 Yes, the regression analysis showed no significant differences between the groups.	Hypothesis 2h: Positive campaign messages will not produce any effect for neither voters' with a small political interest, nor highly interested voters'.	 Yes, the regression analysis showed no significant differences between the two voter groups.

7. Discussion: Is negative and positive campaigning good or bad for Swedish democracy?

The findings from this study indicate that there are surprisingly small effects of negative campaigning on Swedish voters'. Regarding political participation, no significant effect was found, neither for the respondents' in general, nor the respondents with certain characteristics. Hence, this study has not found any evidence that the classical democratic ideal of citizens' participation is neither threatened, nor stimulated, by negative campaigning.

Regarding the effect of *positive* campaigning on political participation, the analysis found no significant effect for the respondents' in general. However, one of the regression analyses indicated that positive messages rather *suppress* participation for voters' with a low political knowledge, while it has a slightly mobilizing effect on highly knowledgeable voters'. Thus, positive campaigning appears to contribute to a fragmentation of the Swedish electorate: When exposed to positive messages, those who already are knowledgeable are likely to participate more, whereas the participation for voters' with low knowledge is likely to decrease. It might be viewed as a worrisome finding, given that one values the democratic ideal of political equality.

Continuing to the effects on trust in politicians, the control group of the experimental study showed up a significantly higher trust rate than all of the treatment groups. Hence, the analysis indicated that negative, as well as positive campaigning, decreases Swedish voters' trust in politicians. If the citizens' do not trust the ones who have the responsibility to represent their interest, that might indeed be problematic for a representative democracy. However, one should avoid drawing to large conclusions based on this finding since it cannot be excluded that the result might be due to the studied campaign channel, *television advertisements* rather than the actual campaigning. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Finally, it can be noted that no support has been found neither in line with the mobilizing hypothesis, nor the stimulating hypothesis, concerning political participation: Negative campaigning does not appear to neither suppress, not stimulate, participation. As a matter of fact, the study indicates that there seems to be larger effects of positive campaigning on political participation, since one significant interaction effect was found. However, the fact that the ANOVA analysis showed that negative messages decreases trust in politicians, provides some support to the demobilization hypothesis. Yet, once again it has to be underlined that the decreasing effect applies not only on negative messages, but also on positive messages. Hence, negative as well as positive television advertisements appear to decrease trust in politicians.

8. Conclusions

8.1 Summary of the central findings

In the introduction it was stated that it is often being presumed that negative campaigns have devastating effects on the electorate. The picture that is painted within the public debate is fairly simple: It is often stated that negativity for example decrease trust in politicians, suppress voter turnout and contributes to cynicism. Yet, despite these presumptions, there have until now been an absence of empirical evidence focusing on Swedish voters'. Thus, the aim of this study was to expand the research field of negative campaigning by examining two potential effects on Swedish voters: Political participation and trust in politicians. Furthermore, I found it important to also examine the potential effects of positive campaigning since that campaign strategy is the opposite of negative campaigning.

Based on previous studies, and my own theoretical arguments, I expected negative campaigning to suppress Swedish voters' political participation (Main hypothesis 1a) as well as trust in politicians (Main hypothesis 2a), whereas I did *not* expect any effect of positive campaigning (Main hypothesis 1b and main hypothesis 2b). In order to test the hypotheses, an experiment from a real campaign context, was used as the methodological tool. More specifically, the study was conducted by using the data set from an experimental survey from the E-panel of 2014: A data set with results that have not been analyzed before.

The analysis demonstrated remarkably small and insignificant differences between the experimental groups regarding political participation. Consequently, no support for main hypothesis 1a was founded. These findings are in line with previous research, suggesting that there is no reliable evidence that negative campaigning affects voter turnout. Nevertheless, it came as a slight surprise to me: My expectation was that Swedish voters', who are used to a political landscape characterized by a tradition of a consensus culture, would be more suspicious toward negative campaigning as compared to American voters', and consequently show up a decreasing level of participation.

Although the null effect on political participation, the second ANOVA-analysis indicated that negative campaigning, as well as positive campaigning, decrease Swedish voters' trust in politicians. Hence, the analysis provided support for main hypothesis 2a, whereas main hypothesis 2b, which presumed a null effect of positive messages, was not supported. The fact that the analysis indicated that negative campaigning have a decreasing effect on trust in politicians is in line with previous research, suggesting that negative campaigning is likely to decrease the trust in government, political efficacy and public mood. However, the fact that *positive campaigning* also appear to have a decreasing effect on trust in politicians is a more surprising finding. As mentioned, previous research suggest that positive messages are less memorable than negative messages, and therefore positive messages is likely to produce less of an effect. Yet, the finding from this study indicates that positive messages also can affect the voters'. Furthermore, the fact that the analysis suggests that *positive message* can produce a *negative effect* on trust in politicians is an even more interesting finding that will be discussed in the following section.

Based on previous research, I also presumed that negative campaigning would decrease political participation and trust in politicians more for voters' with certain characteristics: Political independents (hypotheses 1c and 2c), voters' low on political knowledge (hypotheses 1e and 2e) and voters low on political interest (hypotheses 1g and 2g). Regarding positive campaigning I did not expect any significant interaction effect (hypotheses 1d, 2d, 1f, 2f, 1h and 2h).

No support was found for the presumptions that partisanship, political knowledge or political interest would moderate the effect of negative campaigning, neither regarding political participation, nor trust in politicians. Those are interesting findings, speaking against previous research as well as my own expectations.

Neither did partisanship or political interest moderate the effect of *positive campaigning* on political participation or trust in politicians. However, the analysis identified one interaction effect of political knowledge: Positive messages appear to stimulate participation for highly knowledgeable voters', whereas the same message appears to demobilize voters' with low political knowledge.

8.2 Proposals for further research

The fact that no moderating factors regarding negative campaigning were found in this study is a surprise since many previous studies have identified significant interaction effects. However, the absence of interaction effects do not, with complete confidence, proves that Swedish voters' react in more similar ways than American voters, regardless of their personal characteristics. For example, one explanation for the weak results might be due to the *type* of studied negativity. It might be that we would have seen greater effects, especially for voters with certain characteristics, if the advertisements for example were more uncivil in the tone or if the negative message was targeted against individual politicians rather than political parties and political issues. Consequently, a suggestion for further research is to study the effect of different types of negativity on a Swedish setting.

Additionally, a potential interaction effect of partisanship might have been easier to detect with a finely graded scale than with a dichotomous variable: It might be that some independents react differently than partisans, but that the analysis of this study could not detect that since all independents were lumped together so to speak. Thus, I call for research that develop a finely graded partisan-scale, and undertake the examination of partisanship on that scale.

Furthermore, the fact that negative, as well as positive, campaign messages appear to decrease trust in politicians, is indeed an interesting finding that deserves further examination. Is it possible that Swedish voters' basically do not like election campaigns? May it be that they are getting the feeling

that politicians try to brainwash them with propaganda so to speak, and consequently the voters' becomes distrustful? That seems unlikely since previous research has showed that Swedish voters' trust in politicians *increase* during election years¹⁰⁷. Could it then instead be that the result is due to the *campaign channel* rather than the actual campaigning? It might be that Swedish voters' are not comfortable with television advertising since it is a relatively new phenomenon in Sweden, and therefore the trust level decrease. May be the outcome would be different if a material that are more familiar to the Swedish electorate, e.g. text advertisements or posters, were used in the experiment? The relationship between trust in politicians and the potential different impact of different campaign channels is certainly an interesting topic for further research.

Also, I request more research that complements the examinations about the effects of negative campaigning with in depth examinations about the effects of positive campaigning: This study has found two significant effects of positive campaigning, while only one effect of negative campaigning. Thus, it is about time to conduct accurate research that examines the effects of positive campaigning. Maybe it is not enough to state that positive campaigning attracts less attention, is less memorable and consequently is likely to produce less of an effect than negative campaigning?

I would like to end this thesis by mentioning some methodological improvements that researchers should strive for. Firstly, experiments typically vary from real world attitude formation since messages is picked up by the respondents over a much shorter period of time.¹⁰⁸ This is the case regarding the experiment of this study as well: The respondents were exposed to the campaign advertisements during a couple of minutes, whereas information is often achieved, and attitudes formed, over months or even years, out in the real world.¹⁰⁹ Hence, it is often claimed that potential attitude change from experiments might not reflect the kind of change that persists over time. In order to avoid this problem, researchers should aim to measure the dependent variables a while after conducting the experiment.

Finally, I would like to underline that replication across different subjects, situations and time periods are key-factors in order to increase the generalizability of the results¹¹⁰. Thus, more studies are required in order to be able to claim that the findings of this study can be generalized to the Swedish population, with complete confidence. However, this study has provided the first empirical evidence based on a Swedish setting. Hopefully, this is just the starting point.

¹⁰⁷ Bergström et al. (Eds.) (2012), 127.

¹⁰⁸ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 148.

¹⁰⁹ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 148.

¹¹⁰ Druckman et al. (Eds.) (2011), 37.

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Appendix A: Extracts from experimental survey

W6Q13

De flesta svenska politiska partierna använder numera tv-reklam som en del av valkampanjen. I följande sektion kommer vi be dig att titta på två av dessa och därefter svara på några frågor som handlar om politisk tv-reklam.

1P



I vilken utsträckning skulle du säga att Socialdemokraternas reklamfilm ger en positiv eller negativ bild av...

	Mycket positiv	Ganska positiv	Varken positiv eller negativ	Ganska negativ	Mycket negativ
Den egna politiken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det egna partiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regeringens politik	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regeringspartierna	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tillståndet i Sverige	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

W6Q15

2P



Och i vilken utsträckning skulle du säga att Folkpartiets reklamfilm ger en positiv eller negativ bild av...

	Mycket positiv	Ganska positiv	Varken positiv eller negativ	Ganska negativ	Mycket negativ
Den egna politiken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det egna partiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regeringens politik	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regeringspartierna	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tillståndet i Sverige	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

W6Q19



Och i vilken utsträckning skulle du säga att Alliansens reklamfilm ger en positiv eller negativ bild av...

	Mycket positiv	Ganska positiv	Varken positiv eller negativ	Ganska negativ	Mycket negativ
Den egna politiken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det egna partiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regeringens politik	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regeringspartierna	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tillståndet i Sverige	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

W6Q23



Och i vilken utsträckning skulle du säga att Socialdemokraternas reklamfilm ger en positiv eller negativ bild av...

	Mycket positiv	Ganska positiv	Varken positiv eller negativ	Ganska negativ	Mycket negativ
Den egna politiken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det egna partiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regeringens politik	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regeringspartierna	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tillståndet i Sverige	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix B: Transcription of the television advertisements (my translation to English)

Positive advertisement from the social democrats:

Stefan Löfven, party leader: Sweden should be a country where everybody can feel belief in the future. Therefore, we should invest in work, internship or education for all youths within 90 days. Vote for the social democrats.

Positive advertisement from the liberal party:

Jan Björklund, party leader: My future started here at Parkskolan in Skene. Margareta gave the most important thing that a teacher can give. She opened up new doors for us who were kids of textile workers. I want to give the same opportunity to everybody who grows up in Sweden. That is why I feel a great engagement for the school.

Negative advertisement from the social democrats:

A young girl: My mom is a nurse. I want to be a doctor and work with her when I have grown up. She tells me that I have to study and be a good student. Natural science is fun but math is difficult. Philip is getting help from a man who is coming home to them. My mom tells me that we cannot afford that. I am wondering how things will go for me. Stefan Löfven, party leader: Sweden should be a country where everybody can feel belief in the future. Together we can make a better Sweden. For everybody. Vote for the social democrats.

Negative advertisement from the liberal/ conservative alliance:

A “commercial voice”: Soon an election is coming up. Will it be the alliance again? Or are you considering something else? Since the left/green parties have failed to reach agreements before the election, they will have difficulties doing that after the election as well. That means that you will get something else than you were looking for. Additionally, they cannot show how they are going to pay for everything they promise. It will cost. More than it is worth. The alliance is sticking together and promising more work. How do you choose?

Appendix C: Operationalization of political participation

W7Q19 Inför årets val till riksdagsvalet:

	Ja, flera gånger (1)	Ja, någon enstaka gång (2)	Nej (3)
Läste du någon valbroschyr eller liknande trycksak från något parti? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Besökte du något av partiernas hemsidor? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Var du på något valmöte eller annat arrangemang som anordnats av något parti? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fick du något personligt besök i din bostad av något parti? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blev du uppringd av något parti? (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Var du i personlig kontakt med någon valarbetare på din arbetsplats? (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Såg du något av partiernas reklamslag på TV? (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tog du del av någon reklamfilm eller filmklipp från partierna via internet? (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tog du del av information från partierna via sociala medier på internet så som Facebook, Twitter eller Instagram? (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tog du del av resultat från opinionsundersökningar? (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Note: Question 4, 5 and 7 were excluded when creating the index since those questions do not concern events that the respondent can be said to control.

Appendix D: Operationalization of trust in politicians

W6Q30 I vilken utsträckning instämmer du i följande påståenden om svenska politiker?

	Instämmer inte alls1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	Instämmer helt5 (5)
Svenska politiker gör sitt bästa för att förbättra för vanliga människor (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Politiker är bara intresserade av folks röster men inte av deras åsikter (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De som sitter i riksdagen tar inte mycket hänsyn till vad vanligt folk tycker och tänker (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Svenska politiker håller oftast sina vallöften (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix E: Operationalization of partisanship

W5Q5 Vilket parti tycker du bäst om idag?

- Vänsterpartiet (1)
- Socialdemokraterna (2)
- Centerpartiet (3)
- Folkpartiet (4)
- Moderaterna (5)
- Kristdemokraterna (6)
- Miljöpartiet (7)
- Sverigedemokraterna (8)
- Feministiskt initiativ (9)
- Annat parti (10) _____
- Vet inte/vill inte svara (11)

W5Q6 Anser du dig vara en övertygad anhängare av detta parti?

- Ja, mycket övertygad (1)
- Ja, något övertygad (2)
- Nej (3)

Appendix F: Operationalization of political knowledge

W6Q60 Här kommer några påståenden. Kan du för vart och ett av dem säga om det är riktigt eller felaktigt?

	Riktigt (1)	Felaktigt (2)	Vet inte (3)
Sjukersättningen från försäkringskassan är idag 90 procent av lönen från den första sjukdagen. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sveriges riksdag har 349 ledamöter. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Den öppna arbetslösheten i Sverige är mindre än 5 procent. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Riksbankens styrränta är för närvarande högre än 4 procent. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spanien är medlem i EU (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Under valperioden 2010 – 2014 har Sverige haft en borgerlig fyrpartiregering. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ett parti måste få minst 6 procent av rösterna för att komma in i Sveriges riksdag. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spärren för att bli invald i riksdagen på personröster är 5 procent av partiets väljare i en valkrets. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Betyg i skolan får tidigast ges på höstterminen i årskurs 8. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eurons värde är idag högre än 10 kronor. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

W6Q61 Här är en lista på namn på olika personer. Kan du tala om vilket parti som var och en av dem tillhör?

	V (1)	S (2)	C (3)	FP (4)	M (5)	KD (6)	MP (7)	SD (8)	FI (9)	Övrigt parti (10)	Vet ej (11)
Anders Borg? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lena Ek? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Birgitta Ohlsson? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Magdalena Andersson? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maria Larsson? (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Björn Söder? (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rossana Dinamarca? (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mikael Damberg? (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anna Kindberg Batra? (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anders Wallner? (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix G: Operationalization of political interest

W6Q4 Vilka av nedanstående valprogram i radio och TV har du tagit del av den gångna veckan? Frågan gäller även om du tagit del av sändningarna via internet.

	Ja, i sin helhet (1)	Ja, delvis (2)	Nej (3)	Vet inte/kommer inte ihåg (4)
Utfrågningen av Stefan Löfven i SVT, söndagen 31/8, kl 20.00 (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utfrågningen av Jonas Sjöstedt i SVT, tisdagen 2/9, kl 20.00 (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expressens partiledardebatt onsdagen 3/9 kl 19:00 (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utfrågningen av Jimmie Åkesson i SVT 26/8 (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Statsministerduellen mellan Fredrik Reinfeldt och Stefan Löfven i P1, fredagen 5/9, kl 16.00 (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Statsministerduell mellan Fredrik Reinfeldt och Stefan Löfven i SVT, söndagen 7/9 kl 20.00 (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix H: Regression Diagnostic

Linearity

Exposure to positive and negative campaign messages gender, and partisanship were dichotomous variables. This makes it difficult to check these variables for linearity. However, the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables were tested. Furthermore, the relationship between the interaction variables and the dependent variables were examined.

Table 1 and 2:

* Political Knowledge - Political Participation: A cubic line and a quadratic line proved to be slightly better fits than a linear line (cubic $R^2=,060$) (quadratic $R^2=,056$) (linear $R^2=,047$) However, no major conclusions should be drawn since the differences are very modest.

* Political Interest - Political Participation: A cubic and a quadratic line suited the relationship slightly better than a linear line here as well (cubic $R^2=,059$) (quadratic $R^2=,056$) (linear $R^2=,055$). However, once again the differences are very small and therefore no major conclusions should be drawn.

*The interaction effect of political knowledge – Political participation, negative messages: A linear line, a quadratic line and a cubic line suited the relationship to the same extend ($R^2=,002$).

*The interaction effect of political interest – Political participation, negative messages: A linear line, a quadratic line and a cubic line suited the relationship to the same extend ($R^2=,012$).

*The interaction effect of political knowledge – Political participation, positive messages: A linear line and a quadratic line suited the relationship to the same extend (linear and quadratic line $R^2=,012$).

* The interaction effect of political interest – Political participation, positive messages: A linear line and a cubic line suited the relationship to the same extend (linear and quadratic line $R^2=,012$).

Table 4 and 5:

* Political Knowledge - Trust in Politicians: A linear line, a quadratic line and a cubic line suited the relationship to the same extend ($R^2=,001$).

* Political Interest - Trust in Politicians: A linear line, a quadratic line and a cubic line suited the relationship to the same extend ($R^2=,012$).

*The interaction effect of political knowledge – Trust in politicians, negative messages: A cubic and a quadratic line suited the relationship marginally better than a linear line (cubic $R^2=,002$) (quadratic $R^2=,002$) (linear $R^2=,001$). However, the differences are very small and all the R^2 values are very low. Thus, no major conclusions should be drawn.

* The interaction effect of political interest – Trust in politicians, negative messages: A linear line, a quadratic line and a cubic line suited the relationship to the same extend ($R^2=,012$).

*The interaction effect of political knowledge – Trust in politicians, positive messages: A linear line and a quadratic line suited the relationship to the same extend (linear and quadratic line $R^2=,012$).

* The interaction effect of political interest – Trust in politicians, positive messages: A cubic and a suited the relationship slightly better than a linear line (cubic $R^2=,003$) (linear $R^2=,001$). However, the difference is very small and both the R^2 values very low. Therefore, no major conclusions should be drawn.

In summary it can be stated that there were some problems with linearity since the linear line was not always the most appropriate fit and since low R^2 values showed up in general. However, not of the other lines offered a substantially better fit.

Multicollinearity

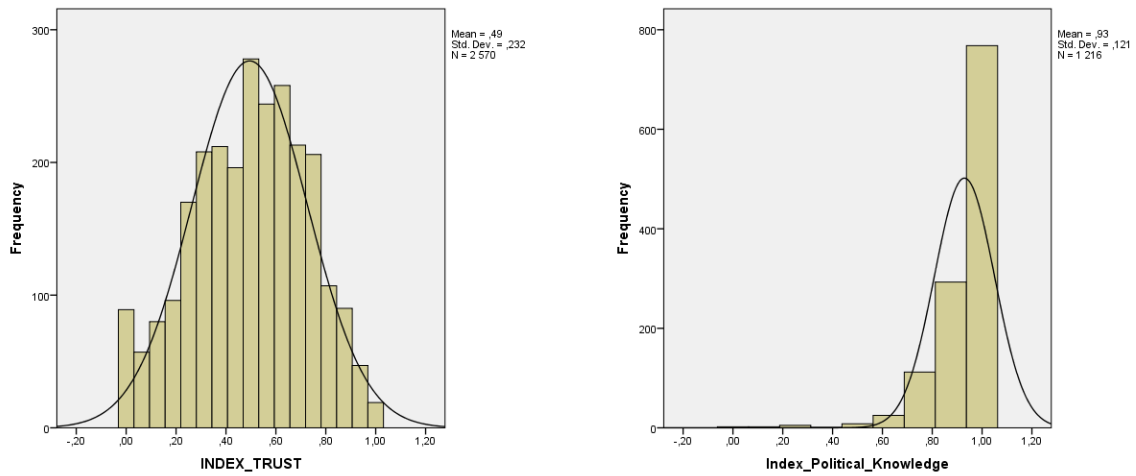
There were no problems with multicollinearity.

Table 1 and 2: VIF values were clearly under the critical value 5 (all values $<1,052$) and tolerance values were clearly over ,2 (all values $>,951$)

Table 4 and 5: VIF values were clearly under the critical value 5 (all values $<1,066$) and tolerance values were clearly over ,2 (all values $>,938$)

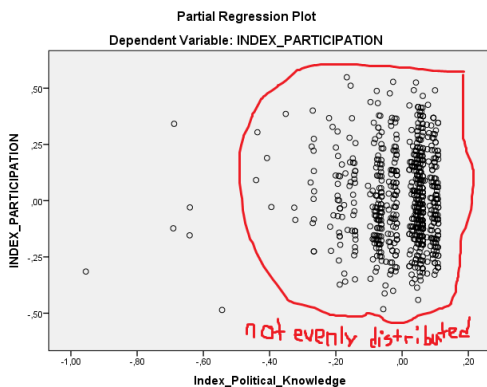
Error terms

The histograms showed that the error-terms were fairly evenly distributed – the histogram to the left is an illustrative example of that. However, the error-terms on political knowledge were far from evenly distributed: As the histogram to the right illustrates the large majority of the respondents were highly knowledgeable.



Furthermore, the error terms were homoscedastic and evenly distributed across the regression line (both with political participation and trust in politicians as the dependent variable). Yet, political knowledge was an exception here as well which the partial regression plot below illustrates.

There was not much of autocorrelation. The Durbin-Watson values were 2,054 for trust in politicians and 2,036 for political participation, which is between the appropriate values 1, 5-2, 5.



Extreme cases

No influential extreme cases: All standardized DFBeta values were within the critical values -2 to 2 (political participation= all values between -.053 and .256, trust in politicians= all values between -.023 and .131).