# FICTION VS REALITY

A survey experiment comparing the effect of representation in different spheres on political efficacy.

Nina Muossa

## Abstract

The social debate mentions how people in socioeconomic weaker areas are less politically engaged and have less political efficacy. Previous research mentions lack of representation as a possible explanation. Using the parasocial interactions theory, this thesis tested if representation in politics and in fictional political TV-series would affect individual's level of political efficacy. I hypothesized that both representation in the actual political world and in fictional political TV-series would have positive effects on political efficacy for people in socioeconomic weaker areas of Gothenburg.

An online-survey experiment was conducted, and the results were analysed using linear regression. No hypotheses could be verified and reasons for this could be due to small sample size (N=324) and a weak manipulation in the experiment.

Since many people watch fiction and entertainment, future research could consider representation in fiction alongside political representation.

Keywords: *Political efficacy. Political representation. Fiction. Experiment. Parasocial theory.*

*Thank you!*
A big thanks to everyone that answered the survey, to my supervisor Maria Solevid, my friend Sara, my mother, father and my sister!

# Table of contents

# 1. Introduction

*"If you believe it, you can achieve it!"*

We have all on one occasion heard these words. These words are meant to encourage people to go ahead with their tasks. But these are not just words; theories in the field of psychology regarding self-efficacy show that the more people believe in their ability, the higher the chances that they will fulfil what they want in life (Bandura, 1989; Schnuk, 1989; Merolla, 2013). In political science political efficacy is seen as a needed too l for people to participate more in political activities. Political efficacy is in short about people's belief in their own ability to affect politics and is thus an important factor explaining political participation (Bandura, 1989; Merolla, 2013).

In every democratic society, a citizen's political participation is a key factor for the survival of democracy. It is required that citizens actively engage in the political processes and discussions (Dahl, 1971). In practice, far from all citizens are politically engaged (Dalton, 2018; Iyengar, 2018). In Sweden and many other countries, both research and the social debate mention how in particular people in socioeconomically (SES) weaker areas feel less hope, participate less in political activities, see a darker future ahead of themselves and therefore do not believe their voices matter. In the long turn, hopelessness can lead to several negative outcomes such as health issues and joining extremist groups (Mair, Kaplan & Everson-Rose, 2012; Barnombudsmannen, 2018). In addition, most socioeconomic weaker areas in Sweden are also areas with a higher share of the population being immigrants and having a foreign background. It is mostly people in these SES-weaker areas that participate less in elections and see more obstacles towards reaching political rooms (Dancygier, Lindgren, Nyman & Vernby, 2020). A reason for this is lack of political efficacy. Although political efficacy is seen as a key explanation to lower political participation among individuals in general, and among individuals living in socioeconomic weaker areas in particular, the antecedents of political efficacy are rarely studied. (Merolla et al., 2013; Dancygier, 2020).

A very few studies mention representation – more specifically political representation – as a potential antecedent to political efficacy. A way of making people believe in their own ability is to give people role-models or someone who share common traits with them that they can look up to (Merolla, Sellers & Fowler, 2013). Studies on political representation show that having

legislatures sharing the same ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or hometown with you, boosts the underrepresented citizen's willingness to participate (Merolla et al, 2013; Banducci, Donovan & Karp, 2004; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Political representation is mostly discussed in correlation with political participation and most studies are conducted in the US. The few studies done in Sweden also point to that immigrants in Sweden have lower efficacy than native Swedes due to less representation in politics (Dancygier, 2019). The effect of political representation on political efficacy are much fewer, I therefore want to fill this gap. Important to note however, is that the people who participates less in politics and feel less efficacious, to a higher extent avoids the news (Prior, 2014). This means that even if underrepresented groups would be politically represented there is perhaps less chance that they would find out as they do not watch the news as much as people with higher SES.

Media have the power to affect, create and break stereotypes, and could also have a great impact in mobilizing the citizenry to participate in political activities (Delli Carpini, 2012). Through framing what people see and hear on the news, talk shows, movies etcetera, media plays an important part alongside the legislature today (Holbrook & Hill, 2005). Although entertainment and fiction are seen as distractors of reality (Prior, 2004), entertainment and fictional shows can influence the viewers identity and behaviour just as news does according to the *parasocial interactions theory*. Since it is well-known that media can change people's behaviour or thoughts, it is of relevance to study whether other forms of representation such as in fictional shows also affects the citizenry. A gap within the research field of political representation is the lack of consideration to *fictional representation* per se, as well as its influence on political efficacy. Fictional representation or to be more precise, fictional political representation that I will be studying, refers to everything fictional that portray the political sphere. It could be a book telling the story of a leader's rise and fall to power or a movie about different fractions trying to influence policies.

Researchers disagree on the societal relevance of fiction and entertainment. On one hand researchers argue that watching entertainment in general and fiction in particular makes people forget about the real world and increases the knowledge gap between people with higher education and those with lower levels of education (Dalton, 2018; Prior, 2004; Besley, 2009). On

the other hand, the argument goes that it is easier for people to understand entertainment and fictional shows as an easier language is used to describe complicated social issues (Dalton, 2018; Delli Carpini, 2012; Zaller, 2003). Departing from parasocial theory and research on political representation, the overall research question in this thesis is if different forms of representation affect political efficacy for underrepresented groups.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: I start by presenting the aim and contribution of this text and from there move on to present the theories that will help explain why the independent variable is expected to affect the dependent variable. After that I present the hypothesis, method, and the move on to the result and analysis. I conclude this thesis with a conclusion chapter.

## 2. Aim and contribution

My aim with this thesis is to conduct an experimental study to test and compare how different forms of representation affects peoples' feeling of political efficacy. To be more specific, the aim is to compare how real political representation versus fictional political representation in the media affects individual's political efficacy, and whether effects differ between people living in SES strong versus SES weaker areas. As mentioned initially, people in SES weaker areas, or as I will call it low-SES areas are usually underrepresented in politics in Sweden. Thus, individuals in low-SES areas are an underrepresented group that I expect to feel more efficacious when they perceive that their group achieves representation in different spheres  (see more under *Hypotheses*).

In sum**,** the contribution of this thesis is two-fold. First, it will build on the few studies which emphasize the importance of political representation for underrepresented groups increased levels of political efficacy. Most studies conducted are mainly based on an American context. My thesis extends this research to a different context and thereby tests whether this conclusion holds outside of the US.

The other point, and the main contribution, is that I examine if and to what extent fictional political representation, compared to real political representation, affects political efficacy. Fiction is rarely considered as an antecedent of political efficacy in political science in general.

Therefore, I hope to shed light on whether other forms of representation such as fictional representation, is a predictor of political efficacy. If fiction positively affects political efficacy among individuals belonging to underrepresented groups, it is a factor to consider more broadly when studying political attitudes and behaviour. It would further be an incentive for directors of movies and series to include a more diverse cast, as this might have more long reaching societal and political consequences, not least as so many people spend their time watching fictional shows rather than news (Prior, 2014).

# 3. Theoretical Framework

To build the argument for why fictional representation should affect political efficacy, I combine several theories, to argue for my case. I will first introduce the main theory, that is, the Parasocial interactions Theory and then move on to present the social identity theory. The last theories I will shortly present is labelling- and stigmatization theories. Although these are sociological and psychological theories, they are nevertheless equally relevant for other social sciences and is often used in for example political science as we will see further below in the text.

- **3.1 The theory on Parasocial Interactions**

Within the social cognitive theory – which emphasizes that humans can best be understood by studying their interactions and the environment they live in – the parasocial interactions theory is found. The parasocial interaction theory (shortened PSI) was first introduced by the two sociologists Donald Horton and Richard Wohl in 1956. PSI is about the relations one has with persons and characters in books, radio, newspapers, Television, social media etcetera. Although PSI mostly departs from relationships viewers form with characters on television, the theory can be applied to all mass media (Holbert & Wohl, 1956; Chandler & Munday, 2016; Giles, 2002). According to PSI, people start to believe what they see on screen and form a relation with the character or person they see. It could be a fictional character or a real person, such as for instance an actor, a politician, or a tv-host.

Horton & Wohl (1956) coined the term *personae* to refer to characters or persons people form a parasocial relation with. The reason why people feel like they have a relationship with a television personae is because the media make sure these personae's speak in a way that makes

the audience think they are having an individual interaction with them (Cohen & Holbert, 2018). It could for example be that a TV-host or character in a TV-show mentions things that happened in previous shows, which makes the viewers feel that they are part of the events and belong to the personae's relationships (Ibid.).

PSI has been used in the field of communication to explain people's relation with personae in the mass media. However, Giles (2002) writes that the PSI must be studied more as a psychological theory as it is easier to understand when we compare PSI with social interactions – interactions that we make daily face-to-face with people. Social interactions and PSI share many similarities. In both kind of interactions, the person holds feelings towards another person and see them as an acquaintance. The big difference is – however – that in a parasocial relationship (PSR) the person continues to become a stranger to the personae whereas in a social relationship the strangeness fades by time (Giles, 2002).

PSI also share similarities to the theories about stigmatization and labelling theory. According to PSI, people start to believe that the way media portrays for instance their ethnic group, is the way their ethnic group is. The labelling theory and stigmatization theory mention the same thing as PSI but focuses on society in general. What we consume becomes our reality according to both the stigmatization theory and PSI. To only hear negative stereotypes about someone who for example share the same ethnicity as you might over time affect how you view people of your ethnic community (Roman, 2000). A student hearing that they come from a disadvantaged area where most people fail to get a degree and job will destructively believe they too shall not succeed (Johansson & Lalander, 2010). Ramasubramanian and Yadlin-Segal (2017) mention how media through framing and agenda setting affects contents we see. To frame a content means choosing in what light to mention a topic, for example the choice to portray an educated person with immigrant background from a disadvantaged area or portraying young people of immigrant background as criminals (Ibid).

Although PSI argues that people form relations with figures they have not even met, it is debated whether online relationships or cyberfriends can be just as strong and impactful as face-to-face interactions (Giles, 2002). Back in 1995 Lea and Spears, argued that, for a relationship to count it

must be real and mutual between both parts interacting with each other. However, Giles (2002) notes that PSI does not require a relationship to exist between the viewer and personae, a relationship can also be imaginary. A relationship can exist in the mind of the viewer only and still pass as a relationship. That kind of relationship would then be called a parasocial relationship. There are parasocial relationships where there is a slight chance that the viewer might meet the personae – such as supporters of a football club meeting the players after a match or voters of a party meeting one of the party candidates at a party rally. When the parasocial interaction is with a fictional character, this is however not possible. That is why PSI mostly explains relations between viewers and fictional personaes' (Giles, 2002).

Giles (2002) writes that studies testing the parasocial theory have found that people watching Coronation Street for example, felt like they wanted to help the characters when they had been in a car accident or other dilemmas. The way people react towards what they see in the media is the same way they react when seeing people in real life. Thus, depending on how a character is portrayed, it affects how we view people around us too. Media can thus make people change attitudes towards an issue or a social group by affecting the content people consume on TV, radio, newspapers, and social media. PSI, could therefore be used to explain how attitudes change only through watching a fictional character.

For a relationship to be considered a parasocial relationship it does not necessarily have to be that the viewer and personae share common characteristics. Giles (2002) writes that PSI ought not to be confused with theories about identification, rather they can complement each other. Due to this the parasocial theory leads us into theories on *social identity*.

- **3.2 Social identity theory**

Social identity theory is about how people identify – see – themselves. A person's identity can be based on their ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, religion, or class. All these categories interplay, a person can identify as a man, Afghan, bi-sexual all at the same time. Yuval-Davis (2006) mentions that even if people would like to "identify exclusively with one identity category" (2006:200), there are different identity categories shaping each human. Even if we would for example like to see ourselves solely by our gender, society would still prescribe us an ethnicity,

nationality etcetera. The theory distinguishes between ingroup- and outgroup relations (Armenta & Hunt, 2008). Ingroup relations are relations with people with the same identity as us. Outgroup relations, on the other hand refers to how we view people who do not share the same identity as us. For example, being of Kurdish ethnicity means your ingroup is Kurdish and all other ethnic groups would be the outgroup. Discrimination, shame, how we look, culture and traditions are strong factors that explain why or why not a person identifies with a group (Behtoui, 2019; Hellgren, 2019; Zevallos, 2008; Armenta & Hunt, 2008).

Studies from US have shown how white people are usually the ones portraying the powerful and stronger characters in tv-shows or movies whereas minority groups play weaker roles such as criminals, low status jobs etcetera Tukachinsky, Mastro & Yarchi (2017). If the parasocial theory holds, having a stronger representation of underrepresented groups playing characters who are successful in life – having high positions, salaries, and education – would make people both in the ingroup and outgroup believe that it could happen in the real world as well. Fewer people would believe the negative stereotypes about underrepresented minorities being criminals, less intellectual and incompetent. Tukachinsky, et al. (2017) says that if we were to apply the parasocial interactions theory a "U.S. president of Mexican descent in the West Wing or a Black district attorney on Law and Order" (2017:552) will make people of Mexican and African American descent respectively to trust political institutions more and feel hopeful that they too could attain an impactful role in real life society. Basing my argument on PSI, I intend to test whether it indeed could be true that fictional representation leads to higher levels of political efficacy among underrepresented groups such as people in low-SES areas.

## 4. Representation

I now move on to discuss the research literature on representation. I will test both fictional political representation and real political representation, which will be explained more in-depth below. Before moving on to that, I want to underline that as I include representation in different spheres of society both within the actual political world and in fictional shows depicting politics, to make it easier for the reader, the term *real political representation* will be used when referring to representation within the political world. The term *fictional political representation* declares representation in fictional tv shows and movies about politics.

- **4.1 Real political representation**

Voters usually vote for the party that best matches their own political opinion. A question that comes to mind then is whether the politician's political stance is the most important factor? Research in political science have long emphasized how it is important that the political realm reflect society (Arnesen & Peters, 2017). One of the core principles of democracy is that all citizens have equal chances to be heard and their wishes fulfilled (Verba, 2003). As most democratic countries are representative democracies today and not direct democracies – this fundamental principle requires that there is a representative for all citizens. But a politician who share the same class, gender or other characteristics with their constituent may not necessarily share the same political opinions. However, many studies point to the fact that a politician with the same identity as the constituent better understands what the constituents need (Arnesen & Peters, 2017; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005; Banducci et al., 2004). When more people feel like they are understood and their wishes have the possibility to be implemented, they are more likely to participate in political activities (Verba, 2003).

Political representation is often divided and conceptualised into four forms that was first presented by the political scientist, Hanna Pitkin. The forms are *formal-*, *substantive-*, *symbolic-*, and *descriptive representation*. *Formal representation* is about how the voters elect and depose legislatures from power. *Substantive representation* refers to whether politicians implement policies that are in line with what the people want. This form is usually mentioned as the most important form of representation by researchers and is also the most studied one (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). *Symbolic representation* does not pay much attention to whether legislature and constituent share the same ideological opinion. Instead, this form of representation means that for example higher share of females in parliament will make women – regardless of their political opinions – feel hopeful and see the female politician as a symbol for equality (Ibid.). *Descriptive representation* is divided into two subcategories. The first one is functional representation – if politicians have the same occupation as the constituents. The other one is social representation and refers to if legislatures have the same ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, class etcetera as the citizens electing them (Ibid.). In this essay, the form of political representation that I am interested to study is a mix of Pitkin's descriptive and symbolic

**8**

representation. The idea is that a politician from a low-SES area will both be a representative for people living in low SES areas (social descriptive representation) and also a symbol for that underrepresented group that shows they can also reach power and have a say in politics (symbolic representation).

### - 4.2.1 Determinants and consequences of real political representation[1]

Previous research has mostly studied how political representation affects individual's political participation and few studies have tested the relationship between political representation and political efficacy as I aim to do. Furthermore, there is even less research investigating fictional political representation. As political representation serves as one of my independent variables however, it is worth mentioning what factors current research state as its determinants and how representation in turn affects political behaviour.

Banducci et al (2004) talk about how descriptive representation is important since people can feel like they can communicate better and be better understood if they talk to a legislature who share the same ethnicity, job, sexuality etcetera, as themselves (Banducci, 2004). Research has previously shown that descriptive representation "improves the quality of policy outputs" (Arnesen & Peters, 2017: 1). This is not because of biological traits, rather it is since people within the same identity group share a history (Arnesen & Peters, 2017).

Ethnicity and gender are regularly mentioned as being strong factors of representation. For example, more women felt they could trust a female politician in understanding their needs than a male politician (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Similarly, when it comes to ethnicity, more people were participating in local elections in Denmark if there was a candidate who shared the same ethnic identity as them (Togeby, 1999).
Togeby (1999) also argued that living among your ingroup, had positive effects on voter turnout in Denmark. When many people of the same ethnic minority live in the same area, they can all mobilize to make their representative win the election. Knowing that there are many people who will vote like you, making it easier to win, motivated people to vote. This, however, did require

---

[1] I do not use the term "Descriptive representation" as I want to enhance the comparison between a fictional political character and a real politician. Therefore, the term Real political representation is used instead.

that the social group did have a candidate they felt were their representative. Despite talks in media and the political debate often mentioning residential segregation as something negative – living among people of the same social identity as oneself, can enhance people's participation. This phenomenon is also called the "ethnic community model" which states that people of the same ethnicity face the same problems and therefore could mobilize each other to solve problems (Skirrmunt, 2012). In a UK context Skirrmunt (2012) found that Asian immigrants who lived in areas with high percentage of other Asian immigrants participated more in political activities. A study done in Sweden by Bevelander (2014) investigated what factors that affected immigrant's political participation in Sweden. He concluded the opposite of what most research say, that political representation did not matter if the person had low socioeconomic status. What mattered was both level of education, salary and how long the person had lived in Sweden (Bevelander, 2014). Even though representation is seen as important, the research is not always pointing at that direction. Since fewer studies are done in Sweden compared to the US, more research in a Swedish context can better explain if representation is important or not. This is further argument to why the aim of this essay is relevant.

Although few studies have used political efficacy as a dependent variable in studies of the effects of political representation, two important exceptions are the studies by Merolla et al., (2013) and West (2017). Both studies examined whether the election of Barack Obama as president of US, increased the political efficacy of African Americans. People of African American descent and Asian Americans had lower levels of political efficacy than whites due to being less influential in the political sphere and discriminated, respectively (Merolla et al., 2013). The authors thus wanted to see if one could increase levels of political efficacy by increasing the political status for ethnic minorities. African Americans level of efficacy before and after Barack Obama got elected was tested. Both studies hypothesized that descriptive representation would lead to higher political efficacy. The results showed that after Obama got elected, African Americans had higher levels of political efficacy, but this was not the case for other ethnic minority groups. This supports the theories of descriptive representation that argue that the group sharing common social attributes with the politician should be affected the most. In other words, ingroup attitudes will be affected, whereas the outgroup will not be affected (Merolla et al., 2013). Furthermore, West (2017) also investigated if women were positively affected by Hillary Clinton being the first

female candidate to run for president. The results showed that women were not positively affected. West (2017) hence concluded that whether representation matters or not depends on what social identity category we are looking at.

- **4.3 Fictional representation**

While there are plenty of studies on real political representation, the opposite is true when it comes to fictional representation. In general, when previous studies discuss fiction and its effects on politics it is mostly how fictional shows affect policy preferences and political views. Before I move on to present the conclusions from previous research let me first mention in short what "being more represented" in fiction means. Being more represented in politics means having several politicians that represent you (belonging to the same ingroup as oneself). Representation in fiction means TV shows and movies have a diverse cast and characters – reflecting how society looks. As most of the highest-grossing films are from Hollywood, there is much criticism towards Hollywood movies about lack of minority actors and characters. In 2016, a hashtag #OscarsSoWhite was trending on social media to protest that most Academy Awards went to White people (King, Ribeiro, Callahan & Robinson, 2021). Minorities are often portrayed as criminals, uncivilized or victims in need of being saved. For example, Shaheen (2003) mentions how only 5% out of 900 films with an Arab character depicted Arabs as successful, kind, and caring people and this therefore leads to negative stereotypes about the ethnic group. In recent years movies with more diverse casts such as Star Wars Rogue One, Black Panther and Crazy Rich Asians, have been praised by moviegoers and in research as positively affecting ingroup and outgroup attitudes (Tukachinsky et al., 2017; Alaoui & Abdi, 2020; D'agostino, 2018; Besana, Katsiafikas & Loyd, 2020). Like the US, in Sweden there is a lack of diversity too. In Swedish Film institute's equality report[2] from 2020 participants mentioned how people from Middle Eastern background would mostly be casted in stereotypical roles such as criminals or victims of honour culture. The typecasting even got its own name – The "Fatima-role"[3]. The term got established in early 2000s to indicate how most Swedish series and movies would "'throw in the Middle Eastern girl Fatima', in the script to increase the diversity of the production" (Svenska Filminstitutet, 2020:16 – my translation). To tackle this issue, the report mentions how different

---

[2] The Equality Report is called *Jämställdhetsrapporten* in its original language, Swedish.
[3] In Swedish called "Fatima-rollen"

people of different ethnicities, socioeconomic factors, age etcetera must be casted and allowed to portray more than just the "Fatima-role". Being more represented in film and tv-shows thus means having more characters and actors' viewers can identify with.

Fictional shows have impacted people's attitudes towards several societal issues (Mutz & Nie, 2010; Giles, 2002). Mulligan & Habel (2012) also showed how fictional news and shows had an impact on political efficacy, cynicism and that it is therefore important to consider fictional programmes as a factor affecting political attitudes.

A well-cited study was conducted by Mutz & Nie (2010) who did a factorial experimental study where some participants watched a show about the justice system and the death penalty while other participants watched an episode where the justice system was more positively portrayed as the judiciary succeeds in catching the criminal. The authors also manipulated how they presented their study to the participants. Some participants were asked to try think about how the character felt whereas others were only told they would watch an episode of *Law & order*. Results indicated that people who watched the show where the judiciary failed to catch the criminal became more critical towards the judiciary (Mutz & Nie, 2010; Mulligan & Habel, 2012).

Additional research shows that attitudes towards other people can be changed too by the media. Gillig, Rosenthal, Murphy & Folb (2017) investigated how transgender characters in TV shows impacted the view people had on policies and views surrounding transgender people. The results showed that the more individuals had watched shows including transgender characters, the more positive attitudes they had towards transgender people. Viewers felt that they could sympathise and connect with the characters and thus less hostile. The feeling of hope, that the characters despite being "underdogs" and marginalized could succeed made people root for them and just as PSI states, make people less hateful towards transgender people in real life as well.

Albeit not comparing people in areas with varying socioeconomic status as I want to do, the study by Hoewe & Sherrill (2019) does look at an underrepresented group and how media representation affects political interest and political efficacy. Since women usually have not been characterized as strong and powerful characters, Hoewe & Sherrill (2019) wanted to test how this

new representation of women impacted viewers. The authors conducted a study in the US, hypothesizing that watching a TV-series with a strong female lead as the main character, would lead to people starting to feel like they are part of the story and feel connected to it. Consequently, they would believe they could make a breakthrough in politics. Thus, PSI would lead to stronger political self-efficacy and political interest, that in turn would lead to higher political participation. The researchers recruited people to answer their survey through fan forums for the three TV series *Scandal*, *The Good Wife* and *Madam Secretary*, on Reddit. To measure the parasocial interaction, they asked questions such as "When you're watching your favorite one of these characters, think about how it makes you feel". To measure political interest, they asked the respondents if they followed the news about public affairs, the government and elections. For internal political self-efficacy, they asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed to statements such as "I can make a difference if I participate in the election process" and "I have a real say in what the government does" (2019:69). They got support for their hypotheses and therefore advocated that TV series should include more characters that go against the stereotypical ones such as housewives, models, low-status workers etcetera. However, as the study used observational and not experimental data, the results should not be interpreted as strong arguments for causality (Hoewe & Sherrill, 2019).

## 5. Political efficacy

As mentioned in the introduction, political efficacy deals with how individuals believe they can influence the political sphere. Political efficacy is derived from the psychological concept of self-efficacy, established by the psychologist Albert Bandura in his book *Self efficacy – the exercise of control* (1989). Just like PSI, self-efficacy is related to social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy deals with the belief people have in their competence to conduct a task. For example, a student believing they are smart enough to pass an exam will take the exam and do their best. The student thus, has high levels of efficacy, whereas a student doubting their ability to pass might not even show up to the exam due to low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989).

Political efficacy is specifically focusing on individual's self-efficacy within politics. Political efficacy emphasizes individual's beliefs in their ability to affect politics and society. As political scientists also measure the belief about government listening to us, efficacy is usually divided

into two kinds, internal and external. Internal political efficacy implies just like self-efficacy that people trust their own ability, knowledge, and competence to affect politics. External political efficacy is whether people believe the government and governmental institutions listen to them (Pattanaik & Sia, 2015; Merolla et al., 2013). People with low levels of efficacy tend to participate less in civic life and political activities as they do not believe their participation would make any difference or matter (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Political internal efficacy is sometimes used as a synonym for political confidence. To conclude one could say that political efficacy is a broader concept than both self-efficacy and political confidence since external efficacy is included in the concept as well (Anduiza & Morant, 2011).

Studies testing factors that affect political efficacy mention several different points. For example, Ardévol-Abreu, Diehl & Gil de Zúñiga (2019) state that demographical factors and social orientation factors affect political efficacy. Demographical factors refer to our gender, age, ethnicity, and nationality, while the social orientations are our political knowledge, trust in the media or how big of a network we have to discuss with. Their results show that social orientation factors affect political efficacy more than the demographical factors. In particular, political interest had the strongest positive effect on political efficacy.

# 6. Hypotheses

In this thesis, I will test three different hypotheses about how real political representation and fictional political representation respectively affects individuals' political efficacy. The hypotheses presented below are all derived from previous research as well as based on theories about descriptive representation and PSI theory.

- ## 6.1 Hypothesis 1
Since PSI theory have shown that fiction makes people change attitudes (Giles, 2002), I expect representation in movies and TV-shows to have a positive effect on political efficacy as well. If politicians can serve as "role models" and enhance people's beliefs in their ability to make an impact in the political sphere, then this could also be expected from *fictional* politicians. I expect that if there is a character from an underrepresented group in a fictional political series, book or

movie, it is better than having no representation at all for citizens from the same underrepresented group.

To explain why fictional political representation is expected to affect political efficacy, I depart from PSI and social identity theory. Seeing a fictional personae sharing the same social identity trait as oneself and having a high position in politics, will make the viewers or readers feel like they are somehow related to the character due to their social identity. This will then make people believe that they could also have a say in politics. I expect that political fictional representation will have a positive effect on political efficacy among respondents who belong to an underrepresented group. People who live in non-low-SES areas are not expected to be affected. Although the theory on social identity theory mention how outgroup attitudes can change too, I am here measuring respondent's own level of efficacy. PSI theory does not talk about certain people more easily forming parasocial relationships, all people can. However, people in non-low-SES areas are mostly high educated and well represented in politics and thus, their efficacy levels are already high and can hardly increase much more (Bandura, 1989; Dancygier et al., 2019).

As we see in figure 1 below, political fictional representation is the independent variable (X) and political efficacy the dependent variable (Y) with low-SES being the moderating variable (Z). As I expect it to be different results based on which area one lives in, I add underrepresented group as a moderating variable. The plus indicates that fictional political representation, compared to no representation, is expected to have a positive effect on political efficacy for people in low-SES areas, but not among people in not-low-SES areas.

*Figure 1.*
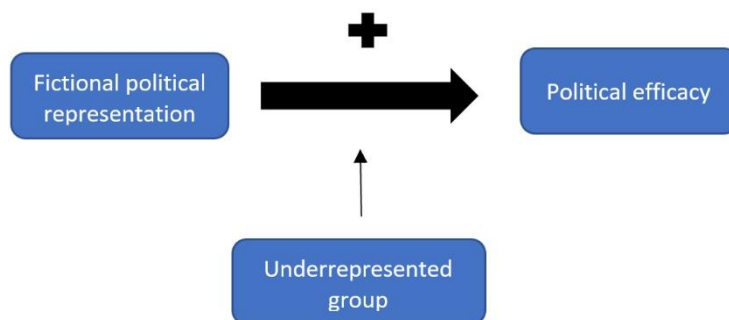
As political efficacy is two-dimensional and each dimension usually measured separately, I intend to do the same and therefore hypothesis 1 is divided as follows:

Hypothesis 1a (H1a) is:
*Fictional political representation, compared to no representation, will have a stronger positive effect on internal political efficacy among people in low-SES areas compared to non-low-SES areas.*

Hypothesis 1b (H1b):
*Fictional political representation, compared to no representation, will have a stronger positive effect on external political efficacy among people in low-SES areas compared to non-low-SES areas.*

- **6.2 Hypothesis 2**

As previous research has shown that descriptive representation does have a positive effect on political efficacy, I expect the same in my study. A person who has the same characteristics as the constituents, are assumed to know their preferences better. For example, someone who has grown up and live in the same weak SES area might better understand what recourses the schools in the area need. Furthermore, by testing what independent effect real political representation has on political efficacy for underrepresented people, I minimize the risk of confirmation bias – to only test fictional political representation. Nevertheless, studies investigating the effect of political representation on political efficacy have previously mostly been done in a US context. Few studies are done in Sweden thus I can contribute to the research on whether real political representation affects citizens. Once again, I do not expect people in non-low-SES areas to be affected as there is nothing to be affected – they already have high political efficacy.

*Figure 2.*



H2a is:

*Real political representation, compared to no representation, will have a stronger positive effect on internal political efficacy among people in low-SES areas compared to non-low-SES areas.*
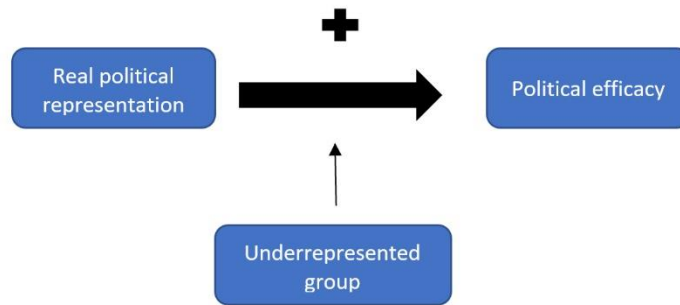
H2b is:

*Real political representation, compared to no representation, will have a stronger positive effect on external political efficacy among people in low-SES areas compared to non-low-SES areas.*

- **6.3 Real- versus fictional political representation**

Lastly, I intend to test which one out of real- and fictional political representation that has stronger effect. Research do show that political representation has a positive effect on political efficacy (Merolla et al., 2013; West, 2017). The comparisons between the two spheres – fictional and the actual political world – has not been conducted before and to derive an expectation on which of the two that will have a stronger effect on political efficacy from previous research, is therefore impossible. Based on what PSI theory say, both fiction and reality affect humans the same way, it could therefore be possible to expect that both real- and fictional political representation would boost political efficacy equally much for people in low-SES areas. However, expecting it to be no difference between two independent variables means we are expecting *a failure* to reject the null hypothesis. This could be problematic as it easily happens that a null hypothesis cannot be rejected in small sample studies (Leppink, 2016). To avoid accepting a false hypothesis I therefore form a question to test the comparison between both real- and fictional political representation simply because it is not plausible to form a hypothesis as I do not have any previous studies to base my expectations on.

The research question is thus: *Is there a difference in the effect of real- and fictional political representation on political efficacy for people in low-SES areas?*

# 7. Method

We have reached the part of the text where I will present how I will conduct my study, which variables I will be using and what tools I will use to analyse my results.

To test the hypotheses, I will conduct a survey experiment. Among previous research we find studies who have used cross-sectional surveys and a few that have used experiments. The strength of experiments lay in stronger evidence of causality. This is because scientists can manipulate the independent variable to see if it leads to changes in the dependent variable while other factors are isolated. Classic experiments include a treatment group that gets manipulated by a treatment (also called stimuli) while another group – the control group – does not get any treatment (Scherrer & Curry, 2010; Esaiason, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns & Wängnerud, 2017). By doing an experiment I can manipulate my independent variables (fictional and real political representation) and write a made-up news article where a person from an underrepresented group is portrayed as a fictional politician or a real politician (more about this under *Design of the experiment*). If I had done a cross-sectional survey and asked participants questions about what they think about having characters in dramas or politicians in parliament sharing the same characteristics as them, I would not be able to know if in fact it was the perceived representation that influenced their level of political efficacy. For that reason, I will do an experiment which will help me draw conclusions about causality – whether representation affects political efficacy and not the reverse. Crucial in any experiment is the random assignment of respondents to treatment- and control group. To make sure the randomization of respondents has worked, that is, that the different groups are equal in terms of respondent's background characteristics, I will also conduct tests of the randomization (more about this under chapter *Other variables* and *Randomization control*).

- **7.1 Reduced factorial design**

To test my hypotheses, I will use a *reduced factorial design* (see Collins, Dziak & Li (2009). This type of design is similar to traditional factorial design where two or more independent variables

are manipulated simultaneously. In a reduced design, this is not the case. Instead, the researcher also includes non-manipulated variables that are expected to interact with the treatment (Collins et al., 2009). Non-manipulated variables are variables that are not part of the factors being manipulated in an experiment but will be used in the analysis of the results. Brown, Kosslyn, Delamater, Fama & Barsky (1999) investigated whether people with hypochondriasis where better at recalling health-related compared to non-health-related words. To test it they had two experiment groups that both consisted of participants with low and high hypochondriasis. The first experiment group heard health-related words and the second experiment group heard non-health-related words. By including participants with different levels of hypochondriasis in both groups, the researcher could in the analysis test whether the ability to recall different kind of words differed between participants with low and high hypochondriasis. Thus, only when Brown et al. (1999) had gathered their data and started the analysis, the variable "level of hypochondriasis" was used. Similarly, in my study I will not manipulate the political personae's SES, instead I keep SES constant meaning both experiment groups read about a political personae from a low-SES area. However, the two experiment groups as well as the control group consist of respondents from both strong and weak SES areas respectively.

To be able to reach conclusions about the effects of fictional/real political representation on political efficacy among residents in low-SES areas, I also compare with respondents *not* living in low-SES areas. In both H1 and H2, I expect political efficacy among respondents from low-SES areas to be positively affected both by the fictional politician and the real politician, respectively, while no such corresponding effect is expected among other respondents, as they are already well-represented both in fiction and politics. Thus, in the analysis, I will explicitly test whether the treatment effect differs across respondents living in different areas.

I also include a control group that does not get any treatment. Due to time limits I cannot do a longitudinal study where I check how individual's efficacy levels change before and after the experimental treatment. Thus, I cannot be sure about the participants level of efficacy before my manipulation, it might be that it was high from the beginning. Therefore, I add a control group to my experiment. If the results show that there are no differences between the experiment groups and the control group, then we can conclude that fictional/real political representation did not

have any effect on level of efficacy. If there is a difference for example, if participants in the control group scored higher on efficacy scale then my hypotheses are falsified.

The three groups are 1) Treatment group 1 who read about an actor from a low-SES area in Gothenburg who will star as a politician in a drama series.
Group 2) Treatment group 2, participants here will read about a real politician from a low-SES area in Gothenburg. Lastly group 3) Control group, who do not get any stimuli (manipulation). See table 1 below.

*Table 1. Treatment and control groups*

| 1. Experiment group: Fictional politician Low-SES | 2. Experiment group: Real politician Low-SES | 3. Control group No stimuli |
|---|---|---|

My study design originally was to do a full factorial design and include both a fictional politician from a non-low-SES area and a real politician from that type of area. Nonetheless, after further consideration with theory and previous research – adding experimental groups with a personae with high SES would be irrelevant. The theory on descriptive representation states that people will be affected when they share the same characteristics with someone, therefore a high SES politician would not theoretically affect the participants in low SES areas. Participants in not low-SES areas are not expected to be affected at all as they have enough resources to be politically involved and hold high efficacy. Additionally, many previous studies testing descriptive representation have only manipulated the group they expect to be affected the most. For example, Merolla et al., (2013) only examined how African Americans, Latinos, Asians and whites were affected by Obama (an African American politician) becoming the president, they did not include a politician of any other group. Atkesson & Carillo (2007) investigated how increased number of women in parliament increased external efficacy for women and compared the answers from female participants with male participants. Scherer & Curry (2010) only manipulated the amount of African American legislatures in their experiment and let both African American and white participants read about it.

To clarify further, low-SES, which is a non-manipulated moderating variable in this study, will come to play after the experiment is conducted. When analysing the results from the experiment, I will test differences in political efficacy between two groups. Below I present which groups that will be analysed in all hypotheses.

When testing *H1a* and *H1b*, the level of political efficacy between underrepresented people, that is, respondents living in low-SES-areas, who read about a fictional politician (treatment group 1) will be compared to underrepresented people who did not get any treatment (control group). To show that there has been an effect of representation, I will compare and also show the average level of efficacy for respondents in non-low-SES areas, as they are not expected to be affected. Thus, regardless if respondents in non-low-SES areas where in the treatment- or control group, I expect them to have the same level of efficacy. Furthermore, I expect respondents in treatment group 1 (fictional politician) to get a boost and reach as high levels of political efficacy as people in non-low-SES areas.

Similarly, when testing H2, the level of political efficacy will be compared between respondents from low-SES areas in treatment group 2 who read about a real politician, and respondents from low-SES areas in the control group to see whether underrepresented people got a boost in level of internal- and external political efficacy.

Finally, I will compare both independent variables with each other to answer the question. Participants in treatment group 1 will be compared with participants in treatment group 2 to find out whether they have the same effect on political efficacy for underrepresented groups or if one is stronger than the other.

- **7. 2 Stimuli**
In survey experiments, researchers usually want to use real facts and not made-up stimuli (Esaiasson, et al., 2017). In my study I have weighted the pros and cons of using existing politicians and existing actors and reached the conclusion that a made-up personae is better. If I had used an existing politician and actor, the chances could be that participants might have

formed a parasocial relationship with them before the experiment. To give both experiment groups the same starting point, I use made-up personaes to make sure there are no prior parasocial relations that affect the outcome. To make the vignettes seem realistic, I have written them as news articles. To create the news stories, I took inspiration from published articles (see for example Fjellborg, 9/10-2020). I deliberately edited the vignette in Word to resemble an article from an online news outlet and took inspiration from the Swedish online newspaper Dagens Nyheter (DN).

I am aware that most research on PSI mentions the use of film instead of written text. Due to time limitations, I could not create a movie to use as my stimuli. It is also hard to find two similar films where the only difference is that one is about a real politician and the other one a fictional political character. However, PSI theory does not only mention motion picture, reading newspapers can also create parasocial relations according to Giles (2002). I therefore used a text as my stimuli as it was the only feasible alternative.

The personae in both experiment groups share the same name, gender and age, Muhammed Abdullah, 32. They are also from the same area Angered and residing today in Bergsjön – both low-SES areas (more information about low-SES areas under *sample*). Both are interested in being role models for people in low-SES areas. The only thing I vary is that in the fictional text Muhammed will portray a character that is a Social democratic member of parliament in a political TV series, whereas in the other text Muhammed is himself a Social democratic member of parliament. At first, I considered vary the party the personae is a member of but decided to keep party constant in the vignette as it might have been less trustworthy if a respondent would read about a parliamentary member of the Swedish Democratic party named Muhammed. Several other parties such as the Centre Party and the Christian Demorats have few members with foreign background (Garcia, 12/6-2018). I made the character a member of the social democratic party of Sweden since it is to date the biggest party in Sweden in general and the most popular party amongst people in low-SES areas (SCB, 2020). To handle the fact that the respondent's own party preference might influence how he/she perceives the vignette, I also included a question on party preference in the survey and will also include party preference as a control variable in the analysis.

The personae is 32 years old, which makes him neither too young nor too old to stand out as a member of parliament. After the 2018 election in Sweden, 56 percent of the members of parliament are between age 30 to 49 (SCB 2019). I chose to use a male personae as it simply put, was easier to find a popular male name that do not reveal exact ethnicity but does still sound foreign. Muhammed was one of the top 20 most popular given names for boys in 2019. In total, over 9.000 males in Sweden are named Muhammed (also spelled as Mohammed) as of 2020. Many residents in low-SES areas of Gothenburg are from Somalia, Iraq, Kurdistan, and Afghanistan where majority of the population are Muslims, and the name Muhammed is popular in these areas (Göteborgsbladet, 2020).

Below you can see the vignette[4] for both treatment group 1 (fictional politician) and treatment group 2 (real politician)[5].

---

[4] Note that in the original text in Swedish, the term "förort" or "orten" are used when Muhammed is quoted. The term "förort" translated straight to English simply means *a suburb*. In Sweden, both "förort" and "orten" are often used in vernacular language to refer to what the English-speaking world calls "the hoods".

[5] I have translated the articles to English from Swedish. For the original text in Swedish, see Appendix A. The term vulnerable area is used as that is what "utsatt område" directly translates to. It does mean the same as "disadvantaged area".

*Figure 3: Vignette treatment group 1 (to the left) and treatment group 2 (to the right).*

## From a vulnerable area to the parliament in new Viaplay series

Culture | PUBLISHED 2020-09-28

**Muhammed Abdullah, from Angered in Gothenburg will star in a new Viaplay series and hopes the series will change the view on vulnerable areas.**

Viaplay confirms that they are releasing a new series that is expected to premiere in the autumn of 2021. The series is directed by Peter Grönlund who also created the HBO series Björnstad. The role of the Social Democrat and Member of Parliament Karim from Bergsjön in Gothenburg is played by the actor Muhammed Abdullah, 32. He grew up in Angered himself and lives in Bergsjön today. In addition to great interest in film, Abdullah is very involved in changing the view of Gothenburg's socio-economically vulnerable areas.

– I see way too rarely that characters in film are from orten and at the same time hold a high political position. Oftentimes movie characters from the suburbs are just criminals or vulnerable people. The suburbs are also part of Sweden and I really want to work and make everyone understand that, says Abdullah.

## From a vulnerable area to the parliament

Sweden | PUBLISHED 2018-09-28

**Muhammed Abdullah, has gone from Angered in Gothenburg all the way up to the parliament and hopes his journey can change the view on vulnerable areas.**

One of the 349 members of parliament will be the Social Democrat Muhammed Abdullah, 32. He grew up in Angered and lives in Bergsjön today. In addition to great interest in film, Abdullah is very involved in changing the view of Gothenburg's socio-economically vulnerable areas.

– I see way too rarely that politicians are from orten and at the same time hold a high political position. Oftentimes we are only seen as criminals and vulnerable people. The suburbs are also part of Sweden and I really want to work and make everyone understand that, says Abdullah.

I mention two low-SES areas in the article. Muhammed is from Angered but lives today in Bergsjön, both being low-SES areas. I used two well-known low-SES areas in Gothenburg as they are well-covered in media and have the lowest higher education rate as well as highest rate of immigrants among the low-SES areas (see figure 4 below). I am aware that there is a risk people in for example Biskopsgården, another low-SES area, might not feel that a politician from Angered/Bergsjön is representing them. However, the personae himself mentions that he wants to make low-SES areas in general better and change their reputation, he does not mention a specific area he wants to fix or feel like he belongs to.

- **7.3 Sample**

The survey experiment is conducted as an online survey. To reach the survey respondents, I use a convenience sample limited to respondents living in or nearby Gothenburg. As I use a convenience sample, I share the survey to people I know and let them share it further. Since I

conduct an online survey, I could have tried gather people all over Sweden. However, as the information in the vignettes is about an actor/politician from Gothenburg, I also want respondents from the same city or larger area. Limiting my sample to one city – Gothenburg -makes the respondents relate to the areas mentioned in the vignette. If I had used all cities in Sweden and only mentioned one or two low-SES areas in one or two cities, people in other cities would perhaps have a harder time to relate to it. Furthermore, geographic representation is part of the Swedish electoral system. There are currently 19 members of parliament representing Gothenburg.

However, I also included the areas near Gothenburg such as Partille, Öckerö and Mölndal as these three areas are usually seen as part of the city and were recently also included in the same travel zone by the public transport agency Västtrafik (Vgregionen, 2020).

Figure 3 shows the share of higher education, foreign background and unemployment for most areas included in the sample.

*Figure 3. Share of highly educated, foreign born and unemployment for 19 areas in percent.*
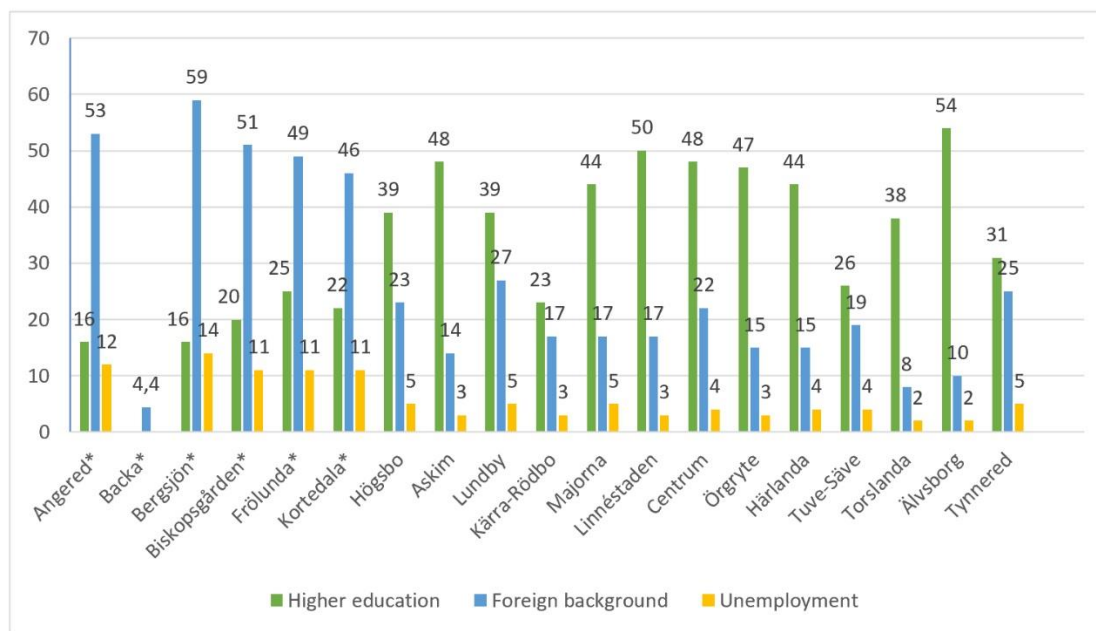


**Comment:** * Low-SES areas. All statistical numbers attained from Göteborgsbladet (2020), a report produced by the municipality of Gothenburg.

Figure 3[6], shows us that there are huge social cleavages in the city of Gothenburg. The definition of socioeconomic status includes education, occupation and salary (Pedersen, 1997). Low-SES areas have higher unemployment rates and fewer people who have higher education[7]. Most of the disadvantaged areas are also characterised by higher number of immigrants. The number of immigrants in each of the low-SES areas is in general above 46% whereas the same number for the high-SES areas is as low as 8%. There are also big differences in level of education, being lowest in Angered and Bergsjön with only 16% attaining an upper secondary degree. In contrast, most of the other areas are characterised by lower number of immigrants, high population with higher education and low unemployment rates. We do see that Kärra-Rödbo do not differ much from the low-SES areas in terms of higher education, but the area still has low people born abroad and low unemployment rates. It is also not an area mentioned as disadvantaged or with high criminality rate, as most of the low-SES areas in the diagram are according to the Police report from 2019 (Eidenskog & Josefsson, 3/6-2019).

As mentioned previously, I intend to have both people of low SES and not low-SES in my sample, and the participants will randomly be assigned to experiment and control group respectively. I will also only use participants who are 18 and above as it is from this age that you are allowed to vote.

Furthermore, I am aware that a individual living in an area labelled by media and local reports as "socioeconomically weaker" does not necessarily have lower SES. It could be that someone has

---

[6] Unfortunately, I did not find statistics for Mölndal, Partille and Öckerö as Göteborgsbladet only includes it for areas within Gothenburg. The newest data for Mölndal that I found was from 2017. In the report produced by Mölndal municipality, the unemployment rate was below the mean unemployment rate of Gothenburg and education as well as yearly salary was higher than the average Swedish municipalities (Mölndals stad, 2017). Partille scores high on all socioeconomical factors in the 2019 report by Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner (Swedens municipalities and regions).

[7] The definition of higher education used by Göteborgs Stad's website, is that one has studied for three years or more after graduating high school. This includes college and/or university.

high SES but lives in for example Angered, an area known for being socioeconomically weaker, and scores high on the efficacy scale. I will therefore ask questions regarding participants own SES to make sure I do not draw false conclusions (more about formulations of research questions under *Operationalisation*).

- **7.4 Designing the survey**

I used the online website Qualtrics to create my survey. In the first page of the survey, I informed the respondents that it was non-compulsory to take part and all answers would be anonymous. To not give away too much information I only mentioned that the survey was about media and politics. At the end of the survey, I wrote that it was an experiment.  I restricted the possibility to go back to a previous question page and change an answer. I also added "force response" to most of the questions. A weakness of experiments in general and online experiments in particular is people skipping the vignette and moving on to the questions. A manipulation check is helpful to tackle this issue. Manipulation checks can be a question related to the vignette with only one right answer. It helps researchers sort out all the participants who did not read the text properly, and thereby cannot be assumed to be affected by the stimuli. My manipulation check for the vignette about the real politician was "In the text you just read, what kind of person did you read about" and three alternatives were given "1. Chairman of the cultural committee", "2. A member of parliament" and "3. A minister". The manipulation check participants who read the fictional text had to answer was "In the text you just read, what role will Muhammed Abdullah play in the TV series", the alternatives were "1. Prime Minister of Sweden". "2. Member of parliament, Karim" and "3. Member of parliament Ali".

Objections to my manipulation check is that the manipulation check in the fictional text is harder as the response options "member of parliament, Karim" and "member of parliament, Ali" are very similar. However, I did this purposely to make sure participants really had read the text and understood that he was going to play a character named Karim.

I added the manipulation check on a separate page right after the vignette and it was not possible for the participants to go back and read the vignette again.

I programmed Qualtrics to randomize the respondents into the three different groups.

- **7.5 Operationalisations**

I now move on to present how I measured the dependent variable political efficacy as well as other control variables.

- **7.5.1 Dependent variables**

To measure political efficacy, I took inspiration from Niemi, Craig & Mattei (1987) who presented an index for internal- and external efficacy back in 1987 that is still widely used. Note that, as political efficacy is a two-dimensional concept, I will measure both internal- and external efficacy separately (Fierro, Aroca & Navia, 2020). The reason for not merging them into one index is since they have in previous research shown to be affected differently, for example sometimes the internal efficacy can be high – people believe they are capable to affect politics but sceptical towards whether the government will listen and implement what they want (external efficacy) (Fierro et al., 2020).

I did not use the exact formulations Niemi et al. (1991) had, as I had to translate the questions to Swedish and therefore made minor changes. Furthermore, I took inspiration from survey questions on political efficacy in Swedish from European Social Survey and their questions were similar to Niemi et al. (1987). I also copied a question from Ardevol et al (2019). The index for internal political efficacy consists of four questions formulated as statements. (1) "I consider myself competent enough to participate in political activities"; (2) "I have good knowledge about the most important political issues in Sweden"; (3) "I find it hard to understand most of the political issues" and lastly (4) "If I had been a politician I would do as good as most other people". The four answer options ranged from (1) "Strongly disagree" to (4) "Strongly agree". For the question "I find it hard to understand most of the political issues" the response "Strongly disagree" would indicate high internal political efficacy on that specific statement and thus the question was reversed so all questions range from 1 (low internal political efficacy) to 4 (high internal political efficacy). To make sure there is high reliability, that I have measured items that are internally consistent, I have conducted a Cronbach's alpha test. Cronbach's alpha gives a number between 0 to 1 and a number above 0,70 indicates that the index consists of compatible

questions (Ejlertsson, 2017). For example, if most people had answered "strongly disagree" on question "I consider myself competent enough to participate in political activities" and scored high on statement "If I had been a politician I would do as good as most other people" it would mean the two questions are measuring different things and cannot be part of the same index or that sadly respondents randomly checked an answer. Cronbach's alpha for internal efficacy was 0,72 which indicates high reliability.

All questions were asked as statements and the respondent had four answer options in a Likert-type scale. Likert scales are good to use when we want to measure people's opinion on a statement. As I have mixed both negative and positive statements, I can minimize the chance of making one alternative sound "more right" than others, which sometimes is mentioned in the literature as a downside with Likert scales (Ejlertsson, 2017).

The index for external political efficacy consists of three statements: (1) "Regardless of which party I vote for, there will be no change to society"; (2) "Politicians in Sweden do not care what people like me think" and (3) "People like me got no influence on politics". Just as the index for internal political efficacy, the answer options were a four-point Likert scale. All these questions were reversed so that the index ranges from 1 (low external political efficacy) to 4 (high external political efficacy). Cronbach's alpha for external efficacy was 0,76.

- **7.5.2 Moderating variable**

My moderating variable here is "underrepresented group" and to be more specific – people in low-SES areas. To find out whether people live in a low-SES area or not I had to ask where in Gothenburg they lived. I formulated the question as "Where in Gothenburg and its surroundings do you live"? I had 27 alternatives including "I do not live in Gothenburg or its surroundings". The "surroundings" refer as previously mentioned to Partille, Mölndal and Öckerö. When coding the variable in STATA, I deleted 66 of the responses as they did not live in Gothenburg or its surroundings. I then coded the variable as a dummy. 0 includes all low-SES areas which are Angered, Bergsjön, Backa, Frölunda, Biskopsgården and Kortedala. All other areas are coded as 1 and represent high-SES areas.

There are several labels to address socioeconomically weaker areas. Behtoui & Strömberg (2018) used the term marginalised areas. Other terms in the media involve disadvantaged-, vulnerable-, stigmatized areas or socioeconomically weaker/lower areas. All terms do refer to a place with high amount of unemployment, low yearly salary, education levels and many people being immigrants (Dancygier et al., 2019). Not all the above areas labelled as "non-low-SES areas" are strong socioeconomically. Therefore, to not falsely call an area as high-SES area and make it easier in the text to distinguish a disadvantaged area from a non-disadvantaged area, I use the terms "low-SES areas" and "non-low-SES areas", respectively.

- **7.5.3 Other variables**

To be able to perform randomization checks, I also included survey questions tapping the respondents ethnic background, level of education, gender and how long they had lived in the area.

To measure ethnic background, I asked the respondents about where they and their parents respectively were born and three alternatives were given: "1. Sweden", "2. Other country in Europe" and "3. Outside Europe". I used the definition of Statistics Sweden (SCB) where a person born abroad is considered an immigrant. People born in Sweden but with both parents born abroad are also considered immigrants whereas people born in Sweden with both parents also born in Sweden are Swedish. the definition often used in previous research (see for example Behtoui & Strömberg, 2020)

People from outside Europe might face more discrimination and hardships than ethnic Swedes or other European immigrants (Yuval-Davis, 2006), I therefore did this distinction as I first intended to code the question as 0=Swede, 1=from other European country and 3=from outside of Europe. However, when the data was gathered there were most people from Sweden, a few from other country in Europe and outside Europe. The variable would have been even more unbalanced than it is now. The background variable is therefore coded as a dummy, 0=Swede and 1= foreign background (to see exact numbers, see *descriptive statistics* in table 1 below).

To measure level of education, I included the following question: "What is your education" and five alternatives were given: (1) "I have not gone to school; (2) "Elementary school"; (3) High school"; (4) "Upper secondary education, not university" and (5) "University". The variable was coded 0= low education, 1=medium-low, 2= medium high and 4=high education.

Gender is coded 0 for female 1 for male and 2 for other.

To find out if there are equal amount of people who have lived long time/short time in the area they live in, I asked the question "How long have you lived in the area you currently live in?". If one of the treatment groups consist of many people that have just moved in, the stimuli cannot affect effectively as those respondents might not identify with the area. I will therefore check this in the randomization control.

I also do a randomization check on how much people watch news and entertainment respectively to make sure one of the group have many respondents watching news and keeping up with politics whereas respondents in the other groups do not.

The only variable that will be used as a control variable is party preference. The reason I include this variable is because the vignette only includes a real/fictional politician that is a Social Democrat. I asked the question "Which current parliamentary party do you like the most today?". I limited myself to only include the eight parties currently in parliament. The question is coded as 0 for people who voted for parties supporting the government. This includes people who voted for Social Democrats, the Left Party, Centre Party, Green Party and Liberals[8] and 1 for the parties in the opposition, Moderate Party, Christian Democrats plus the Swedish Democrats[9].

- **7. 6 Pilot study**

The purpose of a pilot study is to see if the survey works and it is usually sent out to people who are as similar as possible to the actual participants who will be in the final sample. I sent a pilot study to people who were over 18 and living outside of Gothenburg since I wanted to have as

---

[8] These parties did not actively vote against the government consisting of Social Democrats and the Green Party.
[9] I also did additional tests where party was coded as 1) for preferring the Social Democrats and 0) not preferring the Social Democrats. See Appendix C.

many people as possible in the final sample and a participant should not be in both the pilot and the final survey version. 15 persons answered the survey and gave me feedback. Thanks to the pilot study, I learned some question formulations were hard to understand. I therefore used an easier formulation on most questions as it is important to consider how well the respondents would understand a question.

Some, questions were dropped such as the question "I don't think public officials care much what people like me think". The question was too complicated for most participants in the pilot study and after I explained the point of this question to the participants, they felt the same idea was grasped by the question "People like me don't have any influence on politics". Therefore, the index for external political efficacy consists of three items.

The participants in the pilot study also commented that the survey was too long. I had first included three questions regarding political interest as I thought it would be important to control for people's level of political interest. However, as I already asked the question "Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?" before the vignette, I already measured for interest. Although I now only have one question to measure political interest, the importance of this survey is to measure political efficacy.

After the vignettes I realized it would be better to add a question related to political representation so participants who answered the survey would not think the text was completely out of place.

- **7.7 Collection of data**

After the pilot study was finished and the survey had been edited, I launched the survey on December 7, 2020. I spread the survey link on Facebook pages and asked people in turn to spread it further. I also uploaded it to Twitter using hashtags that were trending in Sweden at that point. The survey was also uploaded to a group on reddit dedicated to Gothenburg and sent out to students at University of Gothenburg, high school students and associations active in low-SES areas. I closed the survey on the 22 December. In total over 400 individuals answered the survey. Respondents who failed the manipulation check or did not live in Gothenburg were not included

in the analysis. The final number of participants that was used in the analysis was therefore 324 respondents.

To analyse the results from the experiment, I will be using the statistical software STATA (Software for Statistics and Data Science). The tool I will use is *linear regression* (OLS). Regression analysis helps us see a correlation between the independent and dependent variables. Although no statistical tool can surely tell us whether there is a causal relationship, we have to back up the numbers with theory. OLS is appropriate to use as we can use control variables in case the randomization failed. I use indexes for the dependent variables internal- and external political efficacy (see *Operationalisations*), each having more than two interval scale values, which makes OLS a fitting choice (Esaiasson et al., 2017)[10]. The important numbers within linear regressions are p-values and the b-coefficients. Low p-values indicate the results are significant and thus not due to coincidence, and that it indeed exists a difference. Usually, a significant result of 95% is used in social sciences. It is important not to have a too low confidence level as it could lead to us accepting a hypothesis that is false. However, as I am working with a smaller sample (*N*= 324) a significance level down to 90% can be accepted in order to avoid rejecting a hypothesis that is true but failed to reach our confidence level due to low number of participants (Sauro & Lewis, 2002). Because I use a 90% confidence level, the p-value must be equal to or below 0,10 otherwise the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Furthermore, b-coefficients will be interesting for us as they tell us how much the dependent variable changes for each step forward on the independent variable. In other words, how much does political efficacy increase or decrease further towards fictional/real political representation we go? Note that, my model includes a moderating variable and thus the b-coefficients mainly interesting in this thesis is the coefficient for the interaction term, which tells us how strong or weak the treatment effect is on efficacy for people in non-low vs low-SES areas (I clarify this further under *Results & Analysis*).

- **7.8 Randomization control**

A randomization check is necessary to conclude that the randomization did create similar groups in terms of different demographical and other factors of importance to the research. Insignificant

---

[10] A diagnostic test will be conducted under the Result chapter, to see whether the model indeed was optimal.

p-values indicate a successful randomization check as it means there are no differences among the groups

*Table 2. shows distribution of demographic- and other variables across the treatment- and control groups (mean and p-values given).*

|  | Treatment group 1 (fictional politician) | Treatment group 2 (real politician) | Control group | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | 0,34 | 0,36 | 0,40 | 0,38 |
| Age | 1994 | 1995,5 | 1994 | 0,14 |
| Background | 0,44 | 0,39 | 0,40 | 0,57 |
| Years lived in area | 3,03 | 2,81 | 3,12 | 0,56 |
| Supporting gov. | 0,84 | 0,80 | 0,82 | 0,82 |
| Education | 2,38 | 2,38 | 2,41 | 0,80 |
| Area | 0,34 | 0,30 | 0,30 | 0,51 |
| News watching | 2,46 | 2,60 | 2,63 | 0,34 |
| Watching entertainment | 1,76 | 1,85 | 1,87 | 0,39 |
| Total *(N)* | 91 | 105 | 128 | |

**Comment:** Education is coded 0=low level of education, 1= medium low, 2= medium high education, 3= high education level. Area is coded 0= living in non-low-SES area, 1=living in low-SES area. Gender is here coded, 0 female and1 =male. News watching and watching entertainment had answer scales that asked the respondents about how many days in a week they watch a type of tv-programme. They are both coded as 1=watching 6-7 days a week, 2=3-5 days, 3=1-2 days, 4= less often, and 5= never. Years lived in the area is coded 1= Their whole life, 2= more than 10 years but not their whole life, 3= 4-10 years, 4= 1-3 years and 5= less than a year. For more detailed coding see *other variables*.

In the table above[11] I show descriptive statistics of the three experiment groups. Total amount of participants in each group are stated as well as the distribution of background, gender, and whether one supports the Social Democratic government of the participants in each group. For

---

[11] The total number of participants identifying as "other" on the gender question, were only four people. I therefore did not run a randomization check on them as it is a low *N*.

the variables of age, education, how many years one has lived in an area, watching news and entertainment respectively and internal- and external political efficacy means are given. P-values are included as well.

In general, more females and ethnic Swedes answered the survey. Most people watch entertainment daily or 3-5 days a week whereas news are watched 3-5 days a week or less often than that. In the table above we see no significant p-values (all values are higher than the accepted significance level of 0,10). And as we can see based on the means and number of participants in each group, the randomization was successful as there are no significant differences. The biggest difference, however, is the number of total participants in the two treatment groups compared to the control group. When using *simple randomization*, the researcher has no control of who gets into which group and we cannot control the number of participants in each group either. Unbalanced groups are not ideal and can be an issue but when it simply is a cause of simple randomization – it only means we get a weaker statistical power (Esaiasson, et al, 2017). Therefore, I bear in mind that any insignificant result I get might be due to weak power which in turn is due to unbalanced groups.

# 8. Results & analysis

I start this chapter by presenting the mean for the dependent variable across the three experiment groups. Afterwards the results based on regression analysis will be presented in order of the hypotheses.

*Table 3. Descriptive statistics showing the overall mean for internal- and external political efficacy across the three experiment groups as well as for people in low- and non-low-SES areas. Standard errors in parentheses.*

|  | Treatment group 1 Fictional politician | Treatment group 2 Real politician | Control group |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Internal political efficacy** | | | |
| **All** | 2,96 (0,59) | 2,7 (0,65) | 2,93 (0,57) |
| **Low-SES** | 2,94 (0,52) | 2,77 (0,73) | 2,75 (0,66) |
| **Non-low-SES** | 2,97 (0,62) | 3,06 (0,59) | 3,01 (0,51) |
| **External political efficacy** | | | |
| **All** | 2,95 (0,70) | 2,96 (0,74) | 2,91 (0,58) |
| **Low-SES** | 2,94 (0,52) | 2,77 (0,73) | 2,75 (0,66) |
| **Non-low-SES** | 2,97 (0,62) | 3,06 (0,59) | 3,01 (0,51) |
| *N* | 91 | 105 | 128 |

**Comment:** Both internal- and external political efficacy are coded from 1 to 4. 1 indicates low political efficacy, 4 indicates high political efficacy. For exact questions and scales, see Appendix A. "All" show the means for respondents in both type of areas in each group.

Table 1 demonstrate that in general there seem to be no big differences between the groups. This indicates that my manipulation might not have led to changes in political efficacy. In all three groups, internal political efficacy is neither low nor very high. The mean for treatment group 1

(fictional politician) is 2,94 and slightly less for treatment group 2 with 2,77, while the control group scores 2,75. Thus, most respondents have answered they (2) "Somewhat disagree" to (3) "Somewhat agree". The standard error states how much the respondent's answers deviate from the mean, the lower the standard error the better (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). As the standard errors are overall small and below 1, the means are representative for how most people have answered. The differences between respondents in low-SES and non-low-SES areas are small but systematic. Participants from non-low-SES areas have slightly higher internal and external political efficacy across all experiment groups. To give an example, for external political efficacy, participants in treatment group 1 who reside in low-SES areas had a mean of 2,74 (ranging between "somewhat disagree" to "somewhat agree"), whereas the mean for participants in non-low-SES areas was 3,10 ("somewhat agree"). Once again, the differences are very small.

I now move on to present the linear regression results for H1a and H1b in table 1. Model 1 and 2 present the effect of fictional representation compared to no representation on internal and external political efficacy respectively and how the effects differ based on whether one is underrepresented, that is, lives in a low-SES area, or not. Model 3 and 4 include the same regressions but here, the variable party preference is controlled for. H2a and H2b, follow the same structure but instead of fictional representation, real political representation serves as the independent variable and is compared to the control group (see table 2). Lastly, I compare fictional- and real political representation with each other (see table 3).

- **8.1 Hypothesis 1 – Fictional political representation vs no representation**

The participants of the control group will be compared to participants in the treatment group 1, who got a treatment of fictional representation. See comment under table 1 for coding information.

*Table 4. Treatment effects on political efficacy (unstandardized b-coefficients and p-values given) Standard errors within parentheses.*

| | Model 1 Internal pol.efficacy | Model 2 Internal pol.efficacy | Model 3 External pol.efficacy | Model 4 External pol.efficacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group (reference group: Control group)** | | | | |
| - **Fictional representation** | -0,04 (0,99) | -0,04 (0,10) | 0,11 (0,11) | 0,10 (0,11) |
| - **Real Pol. representation** | 0,05 (0,09) | 0,05 (0,09) | 0,47 (0,10) | 0,07 (0,10) |
| **Low-SES area** (reference group: not living in low-SES area) | -0,26** (0,11) | -0,27** (0,12) | -0,26** (0,13) | -0,30** (0,13) |
| **Fictional rep\*low-SES area** | 0,24 (0,17) | 0,24 (0,17) | -0,10 (0,19) | -0,06 (0,19) |
| **Real pol\*low-SES area** | -0,03 (0,17) | -0,03 (0,17) | 0,03 (0,19) | 0,01 (0,19) |
| **Supporting gov.** (reference category: Not supporting gov.) | | 0,05 (0,09) | | 0,27** (0,10) |
| **Constant**[12] | 3,01\*** | 2,97\*** | 2,99\*** | 2,97\*** |
| **N** | 324 | 324 | 324 | 324 |

\* Significant if p ≤0.10, \*\* Significant if p ≤0.05, \*\*\* Significant if p ≤0.001

**Comment:** Low-SES area is coded 0 to 1 with 0 being residing in non-low-SES area, thus being represented and 1 for people who are underrepresented (those who live in low-SES areas). Supporting gov. is coded 0-1, 0= not supporting the government, 1= supporting the government. Fictional rep\*low-SES area and Real pol\*low-SES area are the variables showing the interaction terms for hypotheses H1 and H2 respectively. The group variables are coded 0= Control group, 1= treatment group 1-fictional representation and 2= treatment group 2-real political

representation. The control group is the reference group, which means the other groups are each compared to the control group.

When running a regression model with moderating variables, what we are interested in is the interaction term which in table 2 is called fictional rep*low-SES area for hypotheses H1a and H1b. In model 1 the hypothesis 1a is tested to see whether the effect of the fictional political treatment on internal political efficacy differ depending on whether people are living in a low/non-low SES area. I expect that people in low-SES areas in the fictional politician treatment group will have just as high efficacy as people in non-low-SES areas and higher efficacy than respondents in the control group who live in low-SES areas. The B-coefficient (-0,26) in model 1 for the variable low-SES area shows that levels of internal political efficacy is slightly lower among respondents in the control group living in such areas. The variable fictional rep*low-SES area shows us the interaction term, the difference in the effect for people who are underrepresented (live in low-SES area) vs represented (liv in non-low-SES area). We can see that the coefficients neither in model 1, nor model 2 are significant even with a 90% confidence level. The finding is further illustrated in figure figure 1 to visualize how the relationship looks between fictional representation and internal political efficacy for people in low-SES vs non-low-SES[12] areas.

---

[12] If the results had been significant, we would have had to calculate the numbers to get how fictional representation affected internal political efficacy for people in low-SES areas. To get the effect for people who read about fictional representation, we must take the b-coefficient for low-SES area on its own -0,26 plus the coefficient for the interaction term. The math would be -0,26 + 0,24= -0,02. We then get a negative number of -0,02 which means that the effect of fictional representation on internal political efficacy is -0,02 for people who live in low-SES areas, which is higher than for people who get no representation at all (control group). People in non-low-SES areas had higher efficacy levels to begin with, however people who got the treatment and read about fictional representation increased positively towards higher internal efficacy levels. If the results had been significant we could conclude that fictional representation leads to higher efficacy, now there are no proof that fictional representation creates changes in levels of efficacy.

*Figure 4. The effect of the independent variable fictional political representation (x-axis) on internal political efficacy (y-axis) across different types of areas.*
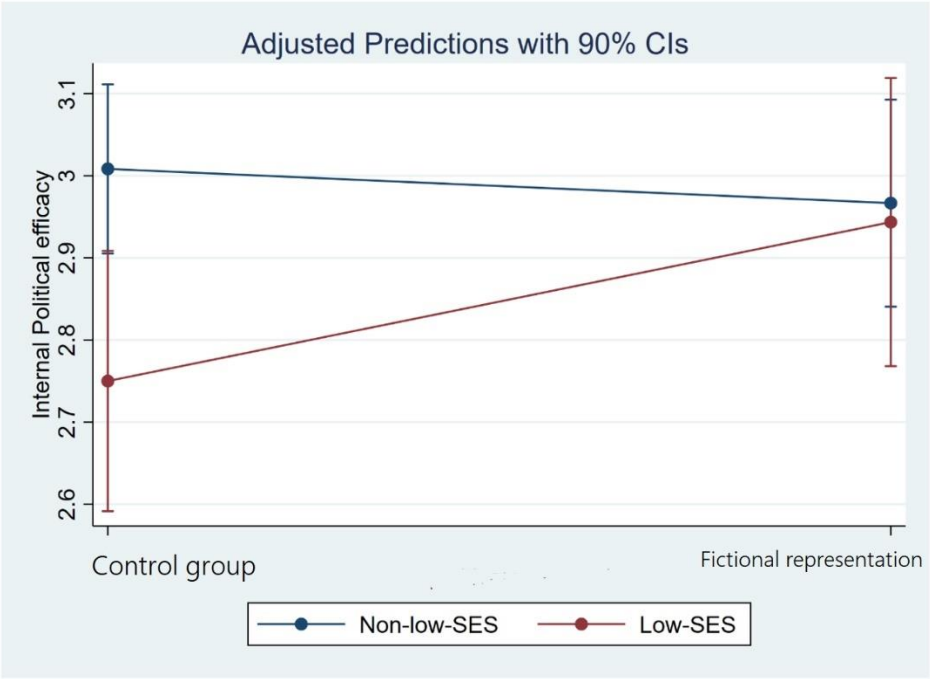


**Comment:** The x-axis ranges from the control group (left) to treatment group 1 - fictional political representation (right). Internal political efficacy is coded 1 (low efficacy) to 4 (high efficacy). Note however, that the span ranges from 2,60 to 3,10. Although it might look like big differences between participants in non-low vs low-SES areas, there are only small differences, just as we did see in the means for the groups (see table 1).

In figure 1 we can see the numbers in model 1 illustrated as a linear graph, which makes it easier to spot differences and similarities. Graph 1 shows that people in non-low-SES areas had higher efficacy levels to begin with in both the control group and the treatment group for fictional

representation. Just as we saw in the descriptive statistics above, the mean was 3,10 for respondents in non-low-SES areas in treatment group 1- fictional representation. However, respondents in low-SES areas who got the treatment and read about fictional representation increased positively towards higher internal efficacy levels and thus the difference in the treatment group is smaller between respondents in non-low-SES and low-SES areas. Once again, the results are not significant as the p-value is larger than 0,10.

In model 2 the variable social democrat is controlled for as the personae in the treatment vignette was a Social democrat. The interaction term remains insignificant and thus party preference does not create to any changes in the treatment effect on internal political efficacy.

In model 3 we see the result of H1b, where external political efficacy is the dependent variable. Once again, the results are not significant and thus the conclusion to be drawn is that the manipulation did not have any effect on political efficacy. The insignificant effect remains in model 4 which also includes the control for party preference. In short, hypothesis 1b could not be verified, fictional representation compared to no representation does not increase political efficacy.

We do see that the variable for low-SES areas on its own is significant, which means people in the control group who are underrepresented (live in low-SES areas) have less political efficacy levels compared to participants in the control group who live in non-low-SES areas. However, we cannot say that people in the treatment group have lower or higher political efficacy as no significant changes were given.

To test the robustness of the results, I also did additional tests with gender, ethnic background and party preference included in the models as the personae was a male, of foreign background and a Social Democrat. Nonetheless, none of the additional tests led to any changes as the interaction term remained insignificant meaning that there are no differences not created by chance[13]. To see the regression results for the additional tests please see Appendix B.

---

[13] When background was used as a moderating variable, a significant result was given. People of foreign background who read about a fictional politician ha higher internal political efficacy compared to respondents of foreign

In sum, this thesis failed to provide results which indicates that fictional representation would be better than no representation at all as the parasocial theory and few previous studies did show. I discuss this further below under *Conclusions*.
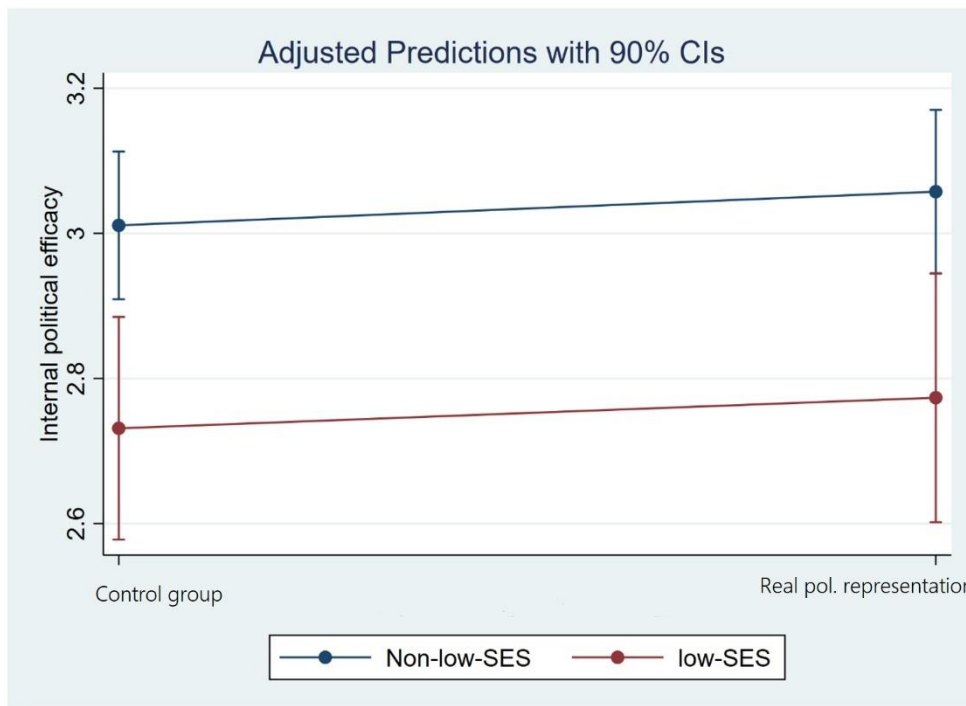
- **8.2 Hypothesis 2 – real political representation vs no representation**

We move on to test the hypothesis 2a and 2b, whether there is a treatment effect of reading about a real politician on levels of internal- and external political efficacy, and whether this effect differs between people in low-SES and non-low-SES areas. Participants in the control group will this time be compared to participants in treatment group 2, who got a treatment of real political representation. Similar to H1, I expect that participants in low-SES areas who were in treatment group 2 (real political representation) will have higher efficacy than people in control group from low-SES areas. People in non-low-SES areas, will not be affected, so people in the treatment group or control group who live in non-low-SES areas will have the same levels of efficacy as I do not expect they will be affected by the treatment.

Model 1, table 2, shows an insignificant interaction term between real political representation and type of area. The coefficient -0,03 is near 0 and insignificant. In other words, the manipulation of real political representation did not alter the level of internal political efficacy between respondents in low-SES and non-low-SES areas in treatment group 2- real political representation.

---

background who read about a real politician. Therefore, maybe foreign background would have been a better operationalisation for the moderating variable *underrepresented groups* than living in low-SES areas. However, in the Swedish media it is often mentioned how low-SES areas shall be developed and, in the vignette, I manipulated area and not foreign background. However, even if I had used background as my moderating variable, only one of my hypotheses would be verified (Hypothesis H1a). See appendix B.

*Figure 5. The effect of the independent variable real political representation (x-axis) on internal political efficacy (y-axis) across different types of areas.*



**Comment:** The x-axis ranges from the control group (left) to treatment group 2 – real political representation (right). Internal political efficacy is coded 1 (low efficacy) to 4 (high efficacy). Note however, that the span ranges from 2,60 to 3,20. Thus there are only small differences, just as we did see in the means for the groups (see table 1).

Figure 5 visualizes the treatment effect of real political representation vs the control group, and whether the effect differs depending on which type of area one lives in. The correlation between internal political efficacy and which type of area one lives in makes it clear that differences are small, but the manipulation did increase efficacy a little for both people in non-low-SES and low-SES areas. However, the differences are small and insignificant since the p-value is above the threshold of 0,10. Hence, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected which means H2b failed to be verified. The results however once again show that there is a significantly lower level of internal efficacy among low-SES respondents in the control group (p-value below 0,10). To conclude, Hypothesis two must be discarded as I failed to provide results that shows real political

representation affects efficacy for underrepresented groups. This deviates from previous research such as Merolla et al. (2013) who showed that real political representation affects political efficacy positively. The reason why I failed to come to the same result might be due to low statistical power, as there are low number of respondents in the analysis.

The inclusion of the control variable whether one supports the Social democratic party or not does not alter the results, and therefore my results do not say anything for people outside of my sample[14].

- **8.3 Fictional- vs real political representation.**

In the last part of the result chapter, I will test to see which one of the forms of representations that affect more or if there even are any differences.

*Table 5. Treatment effects on political efficacy (unstandardized b-coefficients and p-values given) Standard errors within parentheses.*

| | Model 5 Internal pol.efficacy | Model 6 Internal pol.efficacy | Model 7 External pol.efficacy | Model 8 External pol.efficacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group (reference group: Fictional rep. group)** | | | | |
| - **Real pol. representation** | 0,09 (0,10) | 0,10 (0,10) | -0,07 (0,11) | -0,07 (0,11) |
| - **Control group** | 0,04 (0,10) | 0,04 (0,10) | -0,11 (0,11) | -0,11 (0,11) |
| **Low-SES area** (reference group: not living in low-SES area) | -0,23* (0,13) | -0,24* (0,13) | -0,36* (0,15) | -0,36* (0,14) |
| **Real pol*low-SES area** | -0,26 (0,18) | -0,27 (0,18) | 0,13 (0,20) | 0,08 (0,20) |
| **Control group*low-SES area** | -0,24 (0,17) | -0,24* (0,17) | 0,10 (0,19) | 0,06 (0,19) |
| **Supporting gov.** (reference category: Not supporting gov.) | | 0,05 (0,09) | | 0,27* (0,10) |
| **Constant** | 2,97*** | 2,92*** | 3,10*** | 2,88*** |
| *N* | 324 | 324 | 324 | 324 |

* Significant if p ≤0.10, ** Significant if p ≤0.05, *** Significant if p ≤0.001

---

[14] Additional tests were done to make sure no other variables altered the results, see Appendix B.

**Comment:** Control group*low-SES area is the interaction term, the relation is already discussed under *Hypothesis 1*.

In table 3 fictional representation serve as the reference group, comparing both the control group and real political representation to it. The B-coefficient for low-SES area (-0,23*) in model 5 shows that levels of internal political efficacy is slightly lower among respondents in treatment group 1 living in socioeconomically weaker areas. The variable Real pol*low-SES area shows us the interaction term, the difference in the effect of real political representation on internal political efficacy for people who are underrepresented (live in low-SES area) vs represented (liv in non-low-SES area). The interaction term -0,26 added to the low-SES area variable gives us the number -49, which indicates that the effect of fictional representation compared to real political representation is weaker on internal political efficacy for underrepresented participants. However, the results are not significant as the p-value is once again too high. Neither is model 6 with party preference controlled for, nor model 7 and 8 with external political efficacy are significant even with a 90% confidence level. Due to insignificant results, we can conclude that there are no differences between fictional- and real political representation and the null hypothesis cannot be rejected this time either. Although the parasocial theory emphasize how viewers create relationships with fictional characters on television and that these ties are just as strong as relationships with real people. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this study has a small *N* (324 in total) and just as H1 and H2 could be insignificant due to a weak stimuli and low statistical power, perhaps a bigger sample would show that there is a difference between fictional- and real political representation. I discuss this more below under the final chapter of this essay, *Conclusions*[15].

# 9. Conclusions

We have reached the final part of this thesis and it is time to discuss and conclude the results. First, I will recap the aim and purpose of this thesis. I aimed to answer whether fictional political representation positively affected political efficacy for people in low-SES areas in Gothenburg. The Swedish parliament is equal when it comes to the distribution of genders. Less equal is the

---

[15] To check whether Ordinary Least Squares was the best analytical tool to use I did a diagnostics test, see *Diagnostics* in Appendix D.

distribution when it comes to politicians being from different type of areas – socioeconomically weak and strong ones. Previous studies have demonstrated how it indeed is positive with more representation for underrepresented groups in society. Political representation has been showed to have a positive impact on for example political participation since people feel that they have someone who can make their voices heard and communicate to which in tun increases the individual's feelings of that they too can affect society (political efficacy). (Merolla et al. 2013; Banducci, et al 2004; Hoewe & Sherrill, 2019).

I therefore wanted to test if representation in other spheres of society such as in fictional political shows, lead to higher levels of political efficacy. There is a big research gap on this as no studies to my knowledge, have compared how representation in different spheres affects political efficacy. In fact, the antecedents on political efficacy are rarely studied as well. The aim with this thesis has therefore been to experimentally test whether fictional political representation and real political representation affects political efficacy equally strong for underrepresented people.

I used the parasocial theory that states people get affected by what they see on media the same way we get affected by things that happen in real life. I also used the theories about social identity and stigma as they help us understand the causal mechanisms, I expect to happen. Based on these theories, my first hypothesis was that fictional political representation would boost the level of political efficacy positively for people in low-SES areas compared to the control group that did not receive any information about representation. However, no significant treatment effect could be detected.

In hypothesis 2, real political representation served as the independent variable and was expected to affect political efficacy positively for people in low-SES areas. Although this hypothesis also turned out to be insignificant, as the positive effects of real political representation is well investigated and documented, there is high chance that this hypothesis could have been verified if I had a bigger sample and a stronger manipulation. Fictional political representation is less researched on and more tests must be made in order to see whether it does affect political efficacy or for example political interest or participation, and whether it can be seen as an equally strong factor when it comes to political efficacy and participation as real political representation. Based

on the parasocial relations theory, there are reasons to conduct further studies and expect positive results in coming studies.

When comparing fictional- and real political representation head-to-head, I did not formulate any hypothesis as according to PSI theory there should be no difference but that would require me to form a null hypothesis and it is hard to reject null hypotheses in small sample studies. Furthermore, it was hard to form a hypothesis as it was not possible to compare the results from previous research to conclude whether fictional- or real political representation would have a stronger effect on political efficacy, as fictional political representation is rarely studied. I therefore formulated an open research question, "Is there a difference in the effect of real- and fictional political representation on political efficacy for people in low-SES areas?", the answer is no.

I did a survey experiment applying a reduced design. The survey was spread on Facebook, Twitter and Reddit, as well as to students through email. The survey had three experiment groups: treatment group (1) read about a fictional politician, treatment group (2) about a real politician and group (3) was the control group with no manipulation. In the analysis, 324 respondents are included.

As mentioned under the results, this study has a small sample ($N$=324) and the experiment groups are not balanced in number of participants. Due to this the statistical power of my study was weak. Future research could thus conduct a bigger study than I managed to do and see if this does make a difference. I have in this thesis failed to provide any proof that representation of underrepresented groups in political fiction positively affects political efficacy. But given the PSI theory and that viewers watch non-news related content more and more, it could be worth studying the effects of fiction on political behaviour further.

Furthermore, the literature mention how null results can occur when we have not manipulated the treatment groups enough (Esaiasson et al., 2017). In my case, perhaps I should have increased the political power position of the real politician and the political character the fictional personae would play, for example by portraying them as a minister. However, in the case of the fictional

character it would be easy to manipulate as much as possible. However, I did not find a realistic solution for the vignette about the real politician as actual ministers are more well-known and most people would find out there are no ministers in the Swedish government named Muhammed Abdullah. Nonetheless, out of the possible positions the characters could be, a member of parliament is a rather high position as well.

To thoroughly manipulate representation and make sure parasocial relationships come to play, watching a movie would probably lead to stronger effects. As Gillig et al (2017) mentioned in their study, the more people had watched a show with a certain character, the more people felt connected to the characters. Within the frame of a master thesis, I did not have the time or resources to do that. There is a big difference between watching a show daily, seeing characters talk and act compared to only reading about a tv-series not even released yet. The same goes for the real politician vignette, participants only read a short text and it might take longer time than that to be affected and feel that the politician is "your representative". As I mentioned under my method chapter, it was under a short period of time that people read the text in the vignette and were expected to form a parasocial relationship and feel more politically efficacious Even if a picture had been added, it would still only be a couple of minutes the reader (participants) would spend with the personae. Unfortunately, I could not have done it in another way and thus must admit that the implementation of the study was hard to conduct on a student thesis level. This subject is yet to be studied on and evaluated more by established researchers. As mentioned previously, conducting a bigger longitudinal study can help detect changes in people's level of political efficacy.

In conclusion, the importance of everyone's' participation in politics is important and the more people believe in themselves, the more they will take part and make their voices heard ((Dalton, 2019). If watching entertainment and skipping the news is a problem in today's society (Prior, 2018; Delli Carpini, 2012), relating and looking up to the characters we see on our fictional shows might make us believe that we too can succeed just like the characters we identify with. To find out if this works, more representation – more diversity in films – is needed in the entertainment branch. And, more studies testing whether fiction – just like representation in real life – affects political efficacy.

# **References**

Alaoui, F., & Abdi, S. (2020). Wakanda for everyone: an invitation to an African Muslim perspective of Black Panther. *Review of Communication, 20*(3), 229-235, DOI: 10.1080/15358593.2020.1778073

Anduiza, E., & Morant, J. (2011). Political Efficacy and Confidence among Migrants. In L. Morales, M. Giugni (Eds.), *Social Capital, Political Participation and Migration in Europe* (pp. 198-218). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ardèvol-Abreu, A., Diehl, T., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2019). Antecedents of internal political efficacy incidental news exposure online and the mediating role of political discussion. *Politics, 39*(1), 82–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395717693251

Armenta, B., & Hunt, J. (2009). Responding to Societal Devaluation: Effects of Perceived Personal and Group Discrimination on the Ethnic Group Identification and Personal Self-Esteem of Latino/Latina Adolescents. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 12*(1).

Arnesen, S., & Peters, Y. (2018). The Legitimacy of Representation: How Descriptive, Formal, and Responsiveness Representation Affect the Acceptability of Political Decisions. *Comparative Political Studies, 51*(7), 868–899. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017720702

Atkeson, L., & Carrillo, N. (2007). More Is Better: The Influence of Collective Female Descriptive Representation on External Efficacy. *Politics & Gender, 3*.

Banducci, S.A., Donovan, T., & Karp, J.A. (2004). Minority Representation, Empowerment, and Participation. *Journal of Politics, 66*, 534-556.

Bandura, A. (1989). Self efficacy – the exercise of control. New York: W.H.Freeman Co Ltd

Barnombudsmannen. (2018). Utanförskap, våld och kärlek till orten. Retrieved from Barnombudsmannen https://www.barnombudsmannen.se/globalassets/dokument-for-nedladdning/publikationer/ar2018.pdf

Behtoui A. (2019). Constructions of self-identification: children of immigrants in Sweden, Identities, (u.a), *2*(20). DOI: 10.1080/1070289X.2019.1658396

Besana, T., Katsiaficas, D., & Loyd, A. B. (2019). Asian American Media Representation: A Film Analysis and Implications for Identity Development. *Research in Human Development, 16(*3-4), 201-225, DOI: 10.1080/15427609.2020.1711680

Bevelander, P. (2014). Voting Participation of Immigrants in Sweden—a Cohort Analysis of the 2002, 2006 and 2010 Elections. *Springer Science, 16*. DOI 10.1007/s12134-014-0332-x

Brown, H. D., Kosslyn, S. M., Delamater, B., Fama, J., & Barsky, A. J. (1999). Perceptual and memory biases for health-related information in hypochondriacal individuals. *Journal of psychosomatic research, 47*(1), 67–78.

Cohen, J., & Holbert, R. L. (2018). Assessing the Predictive Value of Parasocial Relationship Intensity in a Political Context. *Communication Research*. (n.d). DOI:10.1177/0093650218759446.

Collins, L., & Dziak, J., & Li, R. (2009). Design of Experiments With Multiple Independent Variables: A Resource Management Perspective on Complete and Reduced Factorial Designs. *Psychological methods, 14*. 202-24. 10.1037/a0015826.

Göteborgs stadsledningskontor. (2020). Göteborgsbladet. Retrieved from https://goteborg.se/wps/portal/enhetssida/statistik-och-analys/goteborgsbladet/hamta-statistik/faktablad/goteborgsbladet?uri=gbglnk%3A20188311275396

Dahl, R. (1971). Polyarchy; Participation and Opposition. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dalton, R. J. (2014). *Citizen Politics. Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Washington DC: CQ Press.

D'Agostino, A. M. (2019). "Who are you?": representation, identification, and self-definition in Black Panther. *Safundi, 20*(1), 1-4, DOI: 10.1080/17533171.2019.1552346

Dancygier, R. M., Lindgren, K., Nyman., & Vernby, K. (2019). The Pipeline Is Not the Problem: A Case–Control Study of Immigrants' Political Underrepresentation.

Delli Carpini. M. X. (2012). Entertainment Media and the Political Engagement of Citizens. In H. A. Semmetko & M. Scammel (Eds.) The SAGE handbook of political communication (pp. 2-17). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Esaiasson P., Gilljam, M., Oscarsson, H., Towns, A., & Wängnerud, L. (2017) *Metodpraktikan*. Stockholm: Wolters Kluwer.

Ejlertsson, G. (2005). *Enkäten i praktiken – En handbook I enkätmetodik*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Garcia, I. (12/6-2018). Få med utländsk bakgrund i C. *Sveriges Radio.* Retrieved from https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/6974252

Eidenskog, J., & Josefsson, H. (3/6-2019). Polisens nya lista: Här är Västsveriges utsatta områden. *SVT.* Retrieved from https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/vast/polisens-nya-lista-har-ar-vastsveriges-sarskilt-utsatta-omraden

Giles, D. (2002). Parasocial Interaction: A Review of the Literature and a Model for Future Research. *Media Psychology, 4*(3), 279-305, DOI: 10.1207/S1532785XMEP0403_04

Gillig, T., Rosenthal, E., Murphy, S., & Folb, K. (2017). More than a Media Moment: The Influence of Televised Storylines on Viewers' Attitudes toward Transgender People and Policies. *Sex Roles, 78*, 515–527. 10.1007/s11199-017-0816-1.

Fierro, P., Aroca, P., & Navia, P. (2020). How people access the internet and the democratic divide: Evidence from the Chilean region of Valparaiso 2017, 2018 and 2019. *Technology in Society, 63*

Fjellborg, K. (9/10-2020). Pepp! Se trailern för Netflix svenska "Kärlek & anarki". *Aftonbladet*. Retrieved from https://www.aftonbladet.se/nojesbladet/tv/a/gW7L41/pepp-se-trailern-for-netflix-svenska-karlek--anarki

Hellgren, Z. (2019) Class, race – and place: immigrants' self-perceptions on inclusion, belonging and opportunities in Stockholm and Barcelona. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 42*(12), 2084-2102. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2018.1532095

Hoewe, J., & Sherrill, L. (2019). The Influence of Female Lead Characters in Political TV Shows: Links to Political Engagement, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 63*(1), 59-76, DOI: 10.1080/08838151.2019.1570782

Holbrook, R. A., & Hill, T. G. (2005). Agenda Setting and Priming in Prime Time Television: Crime Dramas as Political Cues. Political Communication, 22(3), 277–95.

Iyengar, S. (2018). *Media Politics – a citizen's guide*. New York: WW Norton & Co.

Johansson, T. & Lalander, P. (2010). Vardagslivets socialpsykologi. Stockholm: Liber AB.

Kahne, J., & Westheimer, J. (2006). The Limits of Political Efficacy: Educating Citizens for a Democratic Society. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 39*(2), 289-296. doi:10.1017/S1049096506060471

King, J., Ribeiro, S., Callahan, C., & Robinson, T. (2021). Representing race: the race spectrum subjectivity of diversity in film, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 44:2, 334-351, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2020.1740290

Lea, M., & Spears, R. (1995). Love at first byte? Building personal relationships over computer networks. In J. T. Wood & S. Duck (Eds.), Understanding relationship processes series, Vol. 6. Under-studied relationships: Off the beaten track (p. 197–233). Sage Publications, Inc.

Leppink, J., Winston, K., & O'Sullivan, P. (2016). Statistical significance does not imply a real effect. *Perspect Med Educ, 5*, 122–124.

Mair, C., Kaplan, G. A., & Everson-Rose, S. A. (2012). Are there hopeless neighborhoods? An exploration of environmental associations between individual-level feelings of hopelessness and neighborhood characteristics. *Health & place, 18*(2), 434–439. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2011.12.012

Merolla, J., Sellers, A., & Fowler, D. (2013). Descriptive Representation, Political Efficacy, and African Americans in the 2008 Presidential Election. *Political Psychology*, *34*. 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2012.00934.x.

Mulligan, K., & Habel, P. (2012). The Implications of Fictional Media for Political Beliefs.*Working Papers*. Paper 8.

Mutz, D. C., & Nie, L. (2010). Not necessarily the news: Does fictional television influence real-world policy preferences? *Mass Communication and Society, 13*, 196-217.

Mölndals Stad. (2017). *Årsedovisning*. Retrieved from https://www.molndal.se/download/18.23312daa162db0538eb77/1553600325383/%C3%85rsredovisning_2017.pdf

National Level Study. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 61*(3), 538-556, DOI: 10.1080/08838151.2017.1344669

Niemi, R. G., Craig, S. C., & Mattei, F. (1991). Measuring internal political efficacy in the 1988 national election study. *American Political Science Review, 85*, 1407-1413

Pattanik, S., & Sia, N. (2015). Self-efficacy, political efficacy and political orientation. *Indian Journal of Health & Wellbeing*, *6*(2), 222-225.

Prior, M. (2004). News Versus Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens the Gap in Political Knowledge and Turnout. *American Journal of Political Science, 49*(3), 577–592

Ramasubramanian, S., & Yadlin-Segal, A. (2017). Media Influence on stigma.

Roman, E. (2000). Who exactly is living la vida loca: The legal and political consequences of latino-latina ethnic and racial stereotypes in film and other media *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice*, *4*(1), 37-68.

Riksdagen. (2020). Ledamöter & partier. Retrieved from https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/ledamoter-partier/?typeoflist=valkrets&valkrets=g%c3%b6teborgs+kommun

Sauro, J., & Lewis J. (2012). *Quantifying the User Experience: Practical Statistics for User Research*. Waltham: Elsevier.

SCB. (2020) Partisympati undersökning 2020. Retrieved 14/12-2020 from https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/partisympatier/partisympatiundersokningen-psu/pong/statistiknyhet/partisympatiundersokningen-i-maj-2020----val-idag/

SCB. (2019). Fem av åtta riksdagspartier har ojämn könsfördelning. Retrieved 15/12-2020 from https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/demokrati/allmanna-val/allmanna-val-nominerade-och-valda/pong/statistiknyhet/nominerade-och-valda-2018/

Schunk, D. H. (1989). Self-efficacy and achievement behaviors. Educational Psychology Review, *1*, 173-208

Schwindt-Bayer, L., & Mishler, W. (2005). An Integrated Model of Women's Representation. The *Journal of Politics, 67*(2), 407-428. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00323.x

Scherer, N., & Curry, B. (2010). Does Descriptive Race Representation Enhance Institutional Legitimacy? The Case of the U.S. Courts. *The Journal of Politics, 72*. 90-104.

Secom. (2019). *Socioekonomisk analys av Sveriges kommuner*. Retrieved from http://www.sou.gov.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Socioekonomisk-analys-av-Sveriges-kommuner-slutrapport-2019-09-23.pdf

Shaheen, J. G. (2003). Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 588*(1), 171–193.

Skirmuntt, M. (2012). Ethnic segregation and collective political action in urban England.

Svenska Filminstitutet. (2020). *Vilka kvinnor? Jämställdhetsrapport*. Retrieved from https://www.filminstitutet.se/globalassets/4.-om-oss/svenska-filminstitutet/bilder-jamstalldhetssidan/jamstalldhetsrapport_hemsida_pdf_s1_201119.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2YNfGPnk2esyS_mg0A7fNMfuak03yJYr1i9bCdPFPzFyoy36PYSC-y7Fc

Strömberg, I., Behtoui, A., & Björklöf, M. (2018). The social relations and educational expectations of young people in marginalised areas: Evidence from Sweden. In Van Praag. L, Nouwen. W, Van Caudenberg. R, Clycq. N, Timmerman. C (Eds.) *Comparative Perspectives on Early School Leaving in the European Union* (pp. 102-116). Oxfordshire: Routledge

Togeby, L. (1999). Migrants at the polls: An analysis of immigrant and refugee participation in Danish local elections. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 25*(4). 665-684. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1080/1369183X.1999.9976709

Tukachinsky, R., Mastro, D., & Yarchi, M. (2017) The Effect of Prime Time Television Ethnic/Racial Stereotypes on Latino and Black Americans: A Longitudinal Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice, 40*(3), 197-214. DOI: 10.1080/00313220600769331

Verba, S. (2003). Would the dream of political equality turn out to be a nightmare? *Perspectives on Politics 1*(4), 663-679

Västra Götalandsregionen. (2020). Så blir priserna i Västtrafiks nya zoner. Retrieved from https://www.vgregion.se/regional-utveckling/aktuellt-ru/sa-blir-priserna-i-vasttrafiks-nya-zoner/

West, E. A. (2016). Descriptive Representation and Political Efficacy: Evidence from Obama and Clinton. *The Journal of Politics, 79*(1).

Zevallos, Z. (2008). 'You Have to be Anglo and Not Look Like Me': identity and belonging among young women of Turkish and Latin American backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia. *Australian Geographer, 39*(1), 21-43. DOI: 10.1080/00049180701877410

# Appendix A

Survey (Swedish).

Hej! Jag heter Nina Muossa och läser Statsvetenskap vid Göteborgs universitet. Som en del av min masteruppsats genomför jag en enkät om medier och politik. Deltagandet är helt frivilligt, men jag blir väldigt tacksam om du vill delta.

Enkäten är helt anonym, varken jag eller någon annan kommer att veta vad just du har svarat. Svara så ärligt som möjligt på alla frågor och kom ihåg att det varken finns några rätta eller felaktiga svar.

*Tack så mycket för att du besvarar enkäten!*

Q1 **Vilket är ditt kön?**

○ Kvinna

○ Man

○ Annat


Q2 **Vilket år är du född?**

▼ 2003 ... 1904 (

Q3 **Hur intresserad är du i allmänhet av politik?**

◯ Inte alls intresserad

◯ Inte särskilt intresserad

◯ Ganska intresserad

◯ Mycket intresserad

(Intro to vignette for treatment group 1 – fictional politician)

**Du kommer nu att få läsa en nyhetsartikel om en politisk dramaserie. Var vänlig läs texten noga och besvara sedan frågorna.**

## Från utsatt område till riksdagen i ny Viaplay-serie

Kultur | PUBLICERAD 2020-09-28

**Muhammed Abdullah, från Angered i Göteborg tar plats i ny Viaplay-serie och hoppas serien ändrar synen på utsatta områden.**

Viaplay bekräftar att de släpper en ny serie som förväntas få premiär hösten 2021. Serien regisseras av Peter Grönlund som även skapat HBO serien Björnstad. Rollen som socialdemokraten och riksdagsledamoten Karim från Bergsjön i Göteborg spelas av skådespelaren Muhammed Abdullah, 32. Han växte själv upp i Angered och bor i dag i Bergsjön. Förutom ett stort intresse för film engagerar sig Abdullah mycket i att ändra synen på Göteborgs socioekonomiskt utsatta områden.

– Jag ser alldeles för sällan att karaktärer i film är från orten och samtidigt innehar en hög politisk ställning. Ofta är filmkaraktärer från förorten bara kriminella eller utsatta personer. Förorterna är också en del av Sverige och jag vill verkligen arbeta för att alla ska förstå det, berättar Abdullah.

Manipulation Check for treatment group 1 – fictional politician

**I texten du precis fick läsa, vilken roll spelar Muhammed Abdullah i serien?**

◯ Sveriges statsminister

◯ Riksdagsledamoten Karim

◯ Riksdagsledamoten Ali

(Intro to vignette for Treatment group 2 – Real politician)

**Du kommer nu att få läsa en nyhetsartikel som publicerades efter riksdagsvalet 2018. Var vänlig läs texten noga och besvara sedan frågorna.**

## Från utsatt område till riksdagen

Inrikes | PUBLICERAD 2018-09-28

**Muhammed Abdullah, har tagit sig från Angered i Göteborg ända upp till riksdagen och hoppas han med sin resa kan ändra synen på utsatta områden.**

En av de 349 riksdagsledamöterna blir Socialdemokraten Muhammed Abdullah, 32. Han växte upp i Angered och bor i dag i Bergsjön. Förutom ett stort intresse för kulturfrågor engagerar sig Abdullah mycket i att ändra synen på Göteborgs socioekonomiskt utsatta områden.

– Jag ser alldeles för sällan att politiker är från orten och samtidigt innehar en hög politisk ställning. Ofta ses vi bara som kriminella och utsatta personer. Förorterna är också en del av Sverige och jag vill verkligen arbeta för att alla ska förstå det, berättar Abdullah.

Manipulation check for treatment group 2 – real politician.

**I texten du precis fick läsa, vad för person fick du läsa om?**

○ Ordförande för kulturnämnden

○ En riksdagsledamot

○ En minister

Q4 **Allmänt sett, hur viktigt tycker du det är att riksdagsledamöter delar samma bakgrund som dig?**

○ Inte alls viktigt

○ Ganska oviktigt

○ Varken viktigt eller oviktigt

○ Ganska viktigt

○ Mycket viktigt

**Q5 Nedan följer ett antal påståenden. Markera för varje påstående det som stämmer bäst in på dig.**

| | Stämmer mycket dåligt | Stämmer ganska dåligt | Stämmer ganska bra | Stämmer mycket bra |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Jag anser mig vara kompetent nog att delta i politiska aktiviteter** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Jag har god kunskap om de viktigaste politiska frågorna i Sverige** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Jag har svårt att förstå de flesta politiska frågorna** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Om jag vore politiker skulle jag utföra ett lika bra jobb som de flesta andra människor** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q6 Nedan följer ett antal påståenden. Markera för varje påstående det som stämmer bäst in på dig.**

| | Stämmer mycket dåligt | Stämmer ganska dåligt | Stämmer ganska bra | Stämmer mycket bra |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Oavsett vilket parti jag röstar på kommer det inte ske någon förändring i samhället** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Politiker i Sverige bryr sig inte om vad människor som jag tycker** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Människor som jag har inget inflytande över politiken** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Q7 Vilket nuvarande riksdagsparti tycker du bäst om idag?**

○ Centerpartiet

○ Kristdemokraterna

○ Liberalerna

○ Miljöpartiet

○ Moderaterna

○ Socialdemokraterna

○ Sverigedemokraterna

○ Vänsterpartiet

**Q8 Hur många dagar i veckan brukar du titta på följande program?**

| | 6-7 dagar i veckan | 3-5 dagar i veckan | 1-2 dagar i veckan | Mer sällan | Aldrig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Barnprogram** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Nyheter** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Sport** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Underhållningsprogram/Tv-serier/Filmer** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Nu kommer ett antal frågor om dig**

**Q9 Vilket område i Göteborg och dess kringliggande områden bor du i?** *Om du tillfälligt bor på annan ort, var vänlig ange det område du är folkbokförd på.*

○ Bor ej i Göteborg eller dess kringliggande områden

○ Angered

○ Askim

○ Backa

○ Bergsjön

○ Biskopsgården

○ Centrum

○ Frölunda

○ Gamlestaden

○ Härlanda

○ Högsbo

○ Kortedala

○ Kärra-Rödbo

○ Linnéstaden

○ Lundby

○ Majorna

○ Mölndal

○ Partille

○ Styrsö

○ Torslanda

○ Tuve-Säve

○ Tynnered

○ Utby

○ Älvsborg

○ Öckerö

○ Örgryte

Q10 **Hur länge har du bott i området du för nuvarande bor i?**

○ I hela mitt liv

○ I mer än 10 år men inte hela mitt liv

○ I 4-10 år

○ I 1-3 år

○ Mindre än 1 år

Q11 **Vilken utbildning har du?** *Om du ännu inte avslutat din utbildning, markera den du genomgår för närvarande* (*oavsett om du läst i Sverige eller utomlands*).

○ Har inte gått i skolan

○ Grundskola

○ Gymnasium

○ Eftergymnasial utbildning, ej högskola/universitet

○ Högskola/universitet

Q12 **Var är du själv, respektive din mamma och pappa född?**

|  | I Sverige | Annat land i Europa | Land utanför Europa |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Du själv född** | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Din mamma född** | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Din pappa född** | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Enkäten du besvarat var en del av ett experiment jag utför inom min masteruppsats. Om du var en av dem som fick läsa en nyhetsartikel, var artikeln helt påhittad och är alltså inte sann. Syftet med experimentet är att se om representation inom fil, serier och inom den faktiska politiska världen påverkar människors självförtroende när det kommer till politik.

Om du har frågor om studien eller experimentet får du gärna mejla mig på
gusmuoni@student.gu.se

Återigen, tack för att du besvarat enkäten!

Survey (translated to English)

Hi! My name is Nina Muossa and I am studying political science at the University of Gothenburg. As part of my master's thesis, I am doing a survey about media and politics. Participation is completely voluntary, but I will be very grateful if you would like to participate. The survey is completely anonymous, neither me nor anyone else will know what exactly you have answered. Answer all questions as honestly as possible and remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

*Thank you very much for answering the survey!*

Q1 **What is your gender?**

○ Female

○ Male

○ Other

Q2 **In what year were you born?**

▼ 2003 ... 1904

Q3 **In general, how interested are you in politics?**

○ Not at all interested

○ Somewhat uninterested

○ Somewhat interested

○ Very interested

(Intro to vignette for treatment group 1 – fictional politician)


**You will now read a news article about a political drama series. Please read the text carefully and answer the questions afterwards.**


## From a vulnerable area to the parliament in new Viaplay series

Culture | PUBLISHED 2020-09-28

**Muhammed Abdullah, from Angered in Gothenburg will star in a new Viaplay series and hopes the series will change the view on vulnerable areas.**

Viaplay confirms that they are releasing a new series that is expected to premiere in the autumn of 2021. The series is directed by Peter Grönlund who also created the HBO series Björnstad. The role of the Social Democrat and Member of Parliament Karim from Bergsjön in Gothenburg is played by the actor Muhammed Abdullah, 32. He grew up in Angered himself and lives in Bergsjön today. In addition to great interest in film, Abdullah is very involved in changing the view of Gothenburg's socio-economically vulnerable areas.

– I see way too rarely that characters in film are from orten and at the same time hold a high political position. Oftentimes movie characters from the suburbs are just criminals or vulnerable people. The suburbs are also part of Sweden and I really want to work and make everyone understand that, says Abdullah.

Manipulation Check for treatment group 1 – fictional politician

**In the text you just read, what role will Muhammed Abdullah play in the TV series?**

○ Prime Minister of Sweden

○ Member of parliament, Karim

○ Member of parliament, Ali

(Intro to vignette for Treatment group 2 – Real politician)

**You will now read a news article published after the parliament election in 2018. Please read the text carefully and answer the questions afterwards.**

### From a vulnerable area to the parliament

Sweden | PUBLISHED 2018-09-28

**Muhammed Abdullah, has gone from Angered in Gothenburg all the way up to the parliament and hopes his journey can change the view on vulnerable areas.**

One of the 349 members of parliament will be the Social Democrat Muhammed Abdullah, 32. He grew up in Angered and lives in Bergsjön today. In addition to great interest in film, Abdullah is very involved in changing the view of Gothenburg's socio-economically vulnerable areas.

– I see way too rarely that politicians are from orten and at the same time hold a high political position. Oftentimes we are only seen as criminals and vulnerable people. The suburbs are also part of Sweden and I really want to work and make everyone understand that, says Abdullah.

Manipulation check for treatment group 2 – real politician.

**In the text you just read, what person did you read about?**

○ chairman of the cultural committee

○ A member of parliament

○ A minister

Q4 **Generally speaking, how important do you think it is that members of parliament share the same background as you?**

○ Not at all important

○ Somewhat unimportant

○ Neither important nor unimportant

○ Somewhat important

○ Very important

**Q5 Below are a number of statements. For each of the following statements, check the level of agreement that you personally feel.**

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I consider myself competent enough to participate in politics** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **I have good knowledge about the most important political issues in Sweden** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **I find it hard to understand most of the political issues** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **If I had been a politician I would do as good as most other people** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q6 **Below are a number of statements. For each of the following statements, check the level of agreement that you personally feel.**

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Regardless of which party I vote for, there will be no change to society** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Politicians in Sweden do not care what people like me think** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **People like me got no influence on politics** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Q7 **Which current parliamentary party do you like the most today?**

◯ Centerpartiet

◯ Kristdemokraterna

◯ Liberalerna

◯ Miljöpartiet

◯ Moderaterna

◯ Socialdemokraterna

◯ Sverigedemokraterna

◯ Vänsterpartiet

## Q8 **How many days a week do you watch the following programmes?**

| | 6-7 days a week | 3-5 days a week | 1-2 days a week | Less often | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Childrens programme** | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| **News** | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| **Sports** | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| **Entertainment/TV series/movies** | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

**Here comes a number of questions about you.**

**Q9 Where in Gothenburg and its surroundings do you live?** *If you temporarily live in another city, please indicate the area you are registered at.*

○ I do not live in Gothenburg or its surroundings

○ Angered

○ Askim

○ Backa

○ Bergsjön

○ Biskopsgården

○ Centrum

○ Frölunda

○ Gamlestaden

○ Härlanda

○ Högsbo

○ Kortedala

○ Kärra-Rödbo

○ Linnéstaden

○ Lundby

○ Majorna

○ Mölndal

○ Partille

○ Styrsö

○ Torslanda

○ Tuve-Säve

○ Tynnered

○ Utby

○ Älvsborg

○ Öckerö

○ Örgryte

Q10 **How long have you lived in the area you currently live in?**

○ My whole life

○ More than 10 years but not my whole life

○ In 4-10 years

○ In 1-3 years

○ Less than a year

Q11 **What is your education?**

○ I have not gone to school

○ Elementary school

○ High school

○ Upper secondary education, not university

○ University

Q12 **Where are you, your mother and father respectively born?**

| | In Sweden | Another country in Europe | A country outside Europe |
|---|---|---|---|
| **You born** | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Your mother born** | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| **Your father born** | ○ | ○ | ○ |

# Appendix B

|  | Model 1 |
|---|---|
|  | Internal pol.efficacy |
| **Group (reference group: Control group)** |  |
| - **Fictional representation** | -0,05 |
|  | (0,11) |
| - **Real Pol. representation** | 0,11 |
|  | (0,10) |
| **Foreign background** | -0,12 |
| (reference group: Ethnic Swede) | (0,11) |
| **Fictional rep\*Foreign background** | 0,20 |
|  | (0,16) |
| **Real pol\*Foreign background** | -0,19 |
|  | (0,16) |
| **Constant** | 2,98*** |
| **N** | 324 |

**\* Significant if p ≤0.10, \*\* Significant if p ≤0.05, \*\*\* Significant if p ≤0.001**

In the table above control group is the reference group. Even if we put background in the model as a moderating variable, the results still remain insignificant.

|                                                        | Model 2<br>Internal pol.efficacy |
| ------------------------------------------------------ | :------------------------------: |
| **Group (reference group: fictional representation)**  |                                  |
| -     **Control group**                                | 0,05<br>(0,11)                   |
| -     **Real Pol. representation**                     | 0,17<br>(0,11)                   |
| **Foreign background**<br>(reference group: Ethnic Swede) | 0,07<br>(0,13)                |
| **Fictional rep\*Foreign background**                  | -0,39\*<br>(0,17)                |
| **Real pol\*Foreign background**                       | -0,20<br>(0,16)                  |
| **Constant**                                           | 2,93\*\*\*                       |
| **N**                                                  | 324                              |

**\* Significant if p ≤0.10, \*\* Significant if p ≤0.05, \*\*\* Significant if p ≤0.001**

In the table above treatment group 1 – fictional politician, is the reference group. Here we see a significant result. The respondents who are of foreign background and read about a fictional politician (treatment group 1), have higher internal political efficacy than those who have foreign background who read about a real politician. This, however, was not significant either when external political efficacy served as the dependent variable.

|  | Model 1<br>Internal pol.efficacy |
|---|---|
| **Group (reference group: Control group)** | |
| - **Fictional representation** | 0,04<br>(0,10) |
| - **Real Pol. representation** | -0,02<br>(0,10) |
| **Man**<br>(reference group: Woman) | 0,12<br>(0,11) |
| **Other**<br>(reference group: Woman) | -0,64<br>(0,60) |
| **Fictional rep\*man** | -0,06<br>(0,17) |
| **Fictional rep\*other** | 1,46<br>(0,85) |
| **Real pol\*man** | 0,17<br>(0,16) |
| **Real pol\*other** | 1,00\*<br>(0,73) |
| **Constant** | 3,00\*\*\* |
| **N** | 324 |

**\* Significant if p ≤0.10, \*\* Significant if p ≤0.05, \*\*\* Significant if p ≤0.001**

In this table I have used gender as a moderating variable since the personae was a male and thus, we can expect that it would affect how other genders felt represented or not. Note that a surprising result is that the result is significant for respondents who identify as "other" and read about a real politician even though they were in total only four respondents. I did not have a

hypothesis on this, the point of this additional test was rather to see if males responded more positively since the personae was a male. When external political efficacy was the dependent variable, no significant results were made.

# Appendix C

|  | Model 1<br>Internal pol.efficacy | Model 2<br>External pol.efficacy |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group (reference group: Control group)** | | |
| - **Fictional representation** | 0,17<br>(0,11) | 0,11<br>(0,11) |
| - **Real Pol. representation** | 0,06<br>(0,09) | 0,04<br>(0,10) |
| **Low-SES area**<br>(reference group: not-low-SES area) | -0,24<br>(0,11) | -0,26<br>(0,13) |
| **Fictional rep\*Foreign background** | 0,23<br>(0,17) | -0,10<br>(0,19) |
| **Real pol\*Foreign background** | -0,15<br>(0,17) | 0,22<br>(0,19) |
| **Social democrat**<br>(reference group: not Social Democrat) | -0,16*<br>(0,78) | 0,07<br>(0,09) |
| **Constant** | 3,03*** | 2,97*** |
| **N** | 324 | 324 |

**\* Significant if p ≤0.10, \*\* Significant if p ≤0.05, \*\*\* Significant if p ≤0.001**

In the table above I ran an extra test to make sure I did not draw any false conclusions as not everyone who voted for a party that did not actively vote against the government in 2018, must

support Social Democrats today. In model 1 and two, I control for social democrats and just as in the result chapter, no interaction term is significant and the party variable on its own is here significant when internal political efficacy is the dependent variable compared to in the result chapter, where the party variable was significant only when external political efficacy was in the model.

# Appendix D

## Diagnostics.

I did a diagnostics test using the regcheck command in STATA which controls for "homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, normally distributed residuals, correctly specified model, appropriate functional form and influential cases" (Mehmetoglu & Jakobsen, 2017:157). The only problem with my model was that the residuals were not normally distributed, meaning that there is some skewness in my data. Thus, OLS have not been the optimal tool to use. Unnormal residuals can lead to insignificant results in small sample studies. However, to try combat the issue with unnormal residuals, we can log-transform the dependent variable, meaning that we change its scale so it can be more "normal" and fitting to our dataset. Even after doing this, the residuals were still not normally distributed. When looking more into detail, we see that the deviation is not too far from the means. To check the values for skewness and kurtosis could also help show if the problem is too big. In a perfect study, the skewness should be 0 and kurtosis 3, Table 5 below shows how it was in my case[16].

*Table 6. Skewness and Kurtosis for H1a.*

|  | Regression H1a |
| --- | --- |
| **Skewness** | -0,05 |

---

[16] Note that I only show the skewness and kurtosis for hypothesis H1a. However, all other regressions that I ran had the same problem thus I only report one of them here.

| Kurtosis | 3,33 |
|---|---|

The skewness is not far from 0 and kurtosis not far from 3, which means the problem is not too far from being normal. Nevertheless, I must keep this in mind when drawing the conclusions, the model is not perfectly fit and therefore any insignificant result in this study might be due to this.