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Being Outsiders: How ostracism, populism, social capital and social support affect political participation.

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Abstract

This study investigated how perceived social support may lead ostracised individuals to be more willing to participate in and recommend extreme action against a political cause. Furthermore, it assessed if rejection sensitivity, populism and social capital moderated this effect, and whether these variables are intercorrelated. The participants were asked to read an article describing the proposal to implement tuition fees in Sweden and were then rejected from a student group concerned in the matter. They were then either included in a new student group were they perceived to have high social support for their opinion in the matter, or included in a group with low social support. They were then asked to indicate how willing they were to participate and recommend extreme action against the proposition about tuition fees. The results indicated that those who perceived high social support, and also those high on rejection sensitivity were more willing to participate in and recommend extreme action. Furthermore, these effects were moderated by social capital and populism to moderate extent. The study could also establish a significant correlation between populism, social capital and rejection sensitivity.

Keywords: ostracism; social support; political participation; extremism, populism, social capital; rejection sensitivity.

Introduction

In May 2009, hundreds of students participated in a squatting festival called "Ockupationsfestivalen" in the city of Lund, Sweden. The purpose of this festival was to give attention to the shortage of student housings in Lund and comprised a series of political activities such as demonstrations, petitions and more extreme actions such as squatting. While many hundreds of students participated in these activities, many were also outraged by the festival – despite there being a general consensus among students in Lund that there was a shortage of student housing. How come some people simply do not wish to join in political participation, despite agreeing to the cause – and some go as far as to break the law in order to fight for the same cause? Which factors influence whether you participate or not?

Many studies have shown that humans have a strong need to belong and interact with other people. Humans are instinctively drawn to every opportunity we can get in order to create relationships and connections with others. The social group is a pivotal tool to fulfil this need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Group memberships seem to have a considerable effect on individuals' well-being, as being rejected or ostracised from a social group evokes negative emotions independently of the nature of the group (Williams & Zadro, 2005). Being ostracised also seems to lead to increased inclination to conform in order to be accepted. The same study showed that individuals who are ostracised from social groups show more aggressive behaviour, and are more anxious to acquire social interaction with others (Williams, 2007). Williams & Zadro (2005) suggest that this urge for seeking group memberships is derived from four internal motivations: need to belong (1), need for self-esteem (2), need to control (3) and lastly a need for meaningfulness (4). In order to meet these motivations, individuals seek social interaction and groups – and failing to meet those (being ostracised) results in negative emotions. These emotions are usually basic emotions like anger, sadness and frustration but also affect the individual's self esteem. Being ostracised tends to lower one's self-esteem drastically, as ostracised individuals perceive themselves as less worth and unwanted. This also affects feelings of meaningfulness and feelings of control. While sadness is caused by failure to meet the need to belong and a lowering of self-esteem, anger and frustration often follow failure to meet need for control.

Sociometer theory (see figure 1) launched by Leary (1999) stipulates that feelings of self-esteem are used as indicator on an individual's social acceptance, according to which the individual alters its behaviour. Consequently, ostracism leads to a lowering of self-esteem which evokes negative emotions like sadness, which in turn serves as a warning signal

motivating the ostracised individual to change behaviour in order to re-heighten its self-esteem and thus rid oneself of the negative emotions. The behaviour change is meant to meet the need for self-esteem and need to belong, leading to more pro-social behaviour in order to establish social inclusion (Twenge, Zhang, Catanese, Dolan-Pascoe, Lyche, & Baumeister, 2007).

Figure 1. Schematic plan depicting the four internal motivations (Williams & Zadro, 2005) and its connections with behaviour (Leary, 1999; Twenge et al., 2007)
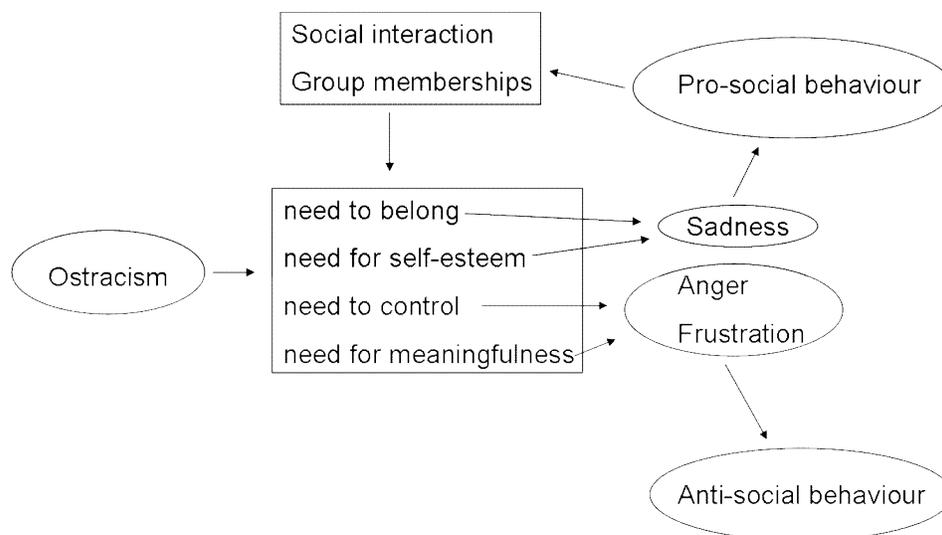
This behaviour has been widely studied, primarily using a virtual interactive game called "Cyberball", where participants toss a virtual ball between themselves in any order they choose. This game was first used by Williams & Sommer (1997), who showed that female participants who were ostracised by other participants in the game (thus not receiving the ball at any time) were keener to prove themselves more capable in the following match – though merely if the match was observed by other members of the group. This shows that pro-social behaviour do follow ostracism a certain extent.

Further research have however found that pro-social behaviour of this sort only shows when seeking acceptance from a new social group, and not the same group that the individual was previously ostracised from. This implies that individuals estimate their chances of social reacceptance realistically, avoiding groups that have previously rejected them (Maner, Dewall, Baumeister and Schaller, 2007). The Cyberball game was also used in Williams, Cheung & Choi (2000), who showed that ostracised participants were more inclined to conform to task in an Asch paradigm context (obeying authorities).

However, being ostracised tends to have the same negative effect independently of the context. Van Beest & Williams (2006) for example found that participants in a Cyberball match, even though being financially encouraged to be rejected in the game (rewarded for not receiving the ball and fined when receiving), still happier being included in the game than excluded. Even when told that the ball in reality was a bomb that could detonate in any second effectively eliminating the player from the game, participants still strongly preferred to be included in the game, showing great distress when excluded.

The nature of the excluding group does not seem to matter either. In a study by Gonsalkorale and Williams (2006) participants being ostracised by the Ku Klux Klan still reported higher levels of distress than those who were not, despite a strong dislike towards the Ku Klux Klan. In fact, much research have suggested that ostracised individuals become more open and willing to join any social group, including extremist groups, even though being well aware of these groups' reputations (Picket & Gardener, 2005). All this suggest that ostracism is an important factor in explaining why individuals join extremist groups – even though perhaps not sharing their beliefs and values at an initial stage. Being ostracised leads to such a great amount of negative emotions, that people will accept almost any group membership in order to soothe those emotions. As ostracism leads to higher inclination to join any social group, it also leads to higher inclination to conform and to act pro-socially and compliant towards a new including group. To make things even more disturbing, it has also been established that ostracism can lead to more aggressive anti-social behaviour. Put together, it is highly probable that violent extremist groups recruit members who have previously been rejected and ostracised by other groups, perhaps because of political or religious views, or other life style decisions. They might not even actually have been rejected, but perceive themselves as rejected by society because of their views or beliefs. These individuals will do anything to fit in, including violent actions, in order to regain social acceptance. Studies have even shown, that being ostracised has an upsetting effect on personal moral, inducing people to commit serious crimes such as massacres and terrorist attacks (Williams, 2007).

Political action has however been suggested to be dependent on more explicit incentives. Current research proposes that collective (1) and selective (2) incentives underlie individuals' propensity to take part in political action. This study will focus on the latter. While the collective incentives are defined as the conviction that political influence and change can be achieved through group actions, selective incentives are defined as the social benefits of participation in political action. Interestingly, this incentive does not give any attention to the

expressed purpose of political action – to evoke political change and influence. Instead it focuses totally on the social interaction and the positive emotional benefits participants can get from it (Bäck, Teorell,Westholm, 2011). Could it be possible that people participate in political activities without caring for the political outcome? Much research suggests so.

Rejection Sensitivity

A personality factor that seems to mediate the effect of selective incentives is a participant's rejection sensitivity. Rejection sensitivity is defined as the extent to which an individual feels anxiety due to perceived and expected rejection. The higher the rejection sensitivity is in an individual, the more inclined this individual will be to expect and perceive rejection, and also more inclined to react irrationally and anxiously to any sign of perceived rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Bäck, Bäck and Garcia-Albacete (2013) could determine a relation between rejection sensitivity and selective incentives to political action, supporting the hypothesis that people with high rejection sensitivity also participate in political activities because of the social benefits it produces – much in line with previous research on ostracism. The study did however also indicate that low rejection sensitivity can lead to participation in more social political activities, as demonstrations, if the individual perceives a low social support for the cause. Bäck (et al., 2013) proposes that these individuals (who are low in rejection sensitivity) instead seek participation because of collective incentives, meaning they will only participate if they perceive that collective participation is pivotal for political change. Considering these results it would be expected that individuals high on rejection sensitivity, when ostracised, would also be more attentive to social support when deciding upon joining in political participation. For example, an ostracised individual who are high on rejection sensitivity, would most certainly be very anxious to fit in and adapt when included into a new social group. Thus, if this individual perceives high social support within the new group for his/her attitudes, the individual would most likely be very inclined to join in any group activity in order to gain acceptance. However, if the individual perceives low social support within the new group, he/she would most likely be less inclined to join in any group activity – as this increases the risk of being rejected by the new group. As previous studies have shown, people high on rejection sensitivity react anxiously to any sign of rejection, and avoid any risk of being rejected. Based on these assumptions, the first and second hypotheses of this study will stipulate as follows:

Ostracised individuals who perceive to have high social support for their political views, will be more inclined to participate in more extreme political actions, than those who perceive to have low social support for their views. (H1)

Rejection sensitivity will act as a moderator between social support and inclination to participate in and favour extreme political action, where ostracised individuals high on rejection sensitivity and perceiving high social support, also being more inclined to participate in extreme political action. (H2)

Research has shown a connection between ostracism and an increase in hate towards the ostracising group (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice and Stucke, 2001). A combination of ostracism and high rejection sensitivity has also been shown to make individuals more negative towards the ostracising individuals (Ayduk, Downey, Testa, Yen & Shoda, 1999). Bourgeois and Leary (2001) also showed that ostracised individuals are more inclined to take revenge on the ostracising group. Sacco, Wirth, Hugenberg, Chen and Williams (2011) could show that ostracised individuals were more inclined to conduct categorical discrimination – which suggests the need for revenge on the ostracising group affects all perceived out-groups, leading to increased hostility and prejudices towards out-groups in general. In connection with the above mentioned research, we can now clearly see the plausibility that extreme political groups can attract ostracised participants who are high on rejection sensitivity, by activating the identity dimensions among these. This is done through establishing prejudices and justifying discrimination towards perceived out-groups, arguing for hostile actions towards these in order to nourish the participants' need for revenge.

A personality variable that has been shown to have close connections with prejudices and discrimination is Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), an ideological personality variable that measures submission and adherence to perceived legitimate authorities and traditional societal norms. People high on the RWA-scale seem to more discriminating and prejudiced towards perceived outgroups – thus groups that do not share their values and norms (Stenner, 2009). Recent research by Knapton (2013) suggests that RWA, together with rejection sensitivity, moderates the relationship between ostracism and inclination to participate in political action. The results of the study found (in accordance with previous research) that individuals being excluded from the group, when accepted into a new group were more inclined to participate and to recommend more extreme activities such as vandalism. The study did

however not find any significant interaction between rejection sensitivity, condition (included or excluded) and inclination to participate and recommend extreme actions. It did however find a three-way interaction between RWA, rejection sensitivity, condition and inclination to political participation – though not on recommending extreme action. Individuals high on both RWA and rejection sensitivity, were more inclined to join in social activities such as demonstrations, when being excluded. Taking part in social activities do seem to appeal to these individuals, whilst extreme actions such as vandalism, that do not have an apparent social side, are rejected. This research suggests that certain ideological-personal structures do affect individuals' inclination to participate in political activities. It would therefore be interesting to examine the effects of other ideological structures as well. As the Knapton (2013) study assessed in-group and out-group attitudes based on the issue of tuition fees, the main out-group was targeted as the people responsible for lifting the issue - politicians. To relate to above mentioned research, people who are ostracised are more inclined to discriminate and show aggressive behaviour towards out-groups, especially to those responsible for their ostracism. This means that individuals who already have a negative view towards politicians – when presented with information that politicians will enforce reforms that will affect the individuals very negatively – will get support for their views, consolidating the prejudices against politicians that these people already have. This will also justify actions towards politicians, either social activities to show strength in numbers towards the politicians (thus showing that the politicians are wrong, because they are more and they disagree with the politicians), or extreme actions towards politicians (using violence to threat the politicians).

As an ideology aiming specifically towards politicians, this study will assess Populism as a measure to see how it affects the inclination to participate in political activities.

Populism

Even though being an ambiguous term widely used as a political insult, there is a consensus among political scientists about its actual definition. Populism is not considered to be a concrete ideology from where specific political content can be derived, but more of a structural ideology defining the structural framework of the political values rather than the actual politics.

Regarding the political values of populist movements, they differ greatly depending on the political context - but there are some common properties found in all populist movements. Primarily, Populism tends to have an anti-establishment dimension manifesting in a harsh

rhetorical approach against the perceived societal or political elite (van Leeuwen, 2006). Reversely, populist rhetoric tends to take side with a perceived "ordinary people" (Canovan, 1999). This originates in the foundational populist perception that the people have lost its sovereignty to a tyrannical elite. According to Barr (2009) the central approach for populist movements is to create an "us & them" relation between the people and the perceived elite. This is usually done by creating and promoting prejudices towards the elite, such as them being corrupt, isolated and greedy for power. At the same time, it also promotes positive in-group stereotypes about "common people", whom are usually defined as hard working, moral and wise. This line of conflict is the reason why Populism seems to transcend the left-right scale, being able to incorporate perceptions of class, race or any other societal hierarchy. A further implication of this line of conflict, is that the in-group (the people) is defined as the majority population, effectively excluding all social minorities – by dismissing them as "special interests groups" (Ljunggren, 2002). The populist perception is generally that social minorities have infiltrated the corrupt political elite and thus acquired a disproportionate amount of influence – all at the expense of the "common people". In order to correct this injustice, populism usually favours all forms of direct democracy, e.g. public referendums and people's councils. The populist view on the entire modern democratic system is some what skewed by the above mentioned notion, repudiating the representative democracy as too corrupt by special interests to be able to claim to represent the people (Barr 2009). Lastly, Populism should be seen a political ad hoc tool. Populist movements tend to be formed as reactions to current crises and political disturbances in order to offer easy solutions that they feel the "political elite" is overlooking. This influences their rhetoric strongly, creating an inclination towards making short and uncomplicated statements, strongly simplified in order to be easily understood by anybody (van Leeuwen, 2006). This communication approach is based on the perception that the political elite use an overly advanced and bureaucratic language meant to keep the people away from the power. By speaking in a manor familiar to the common people, populist agitators can reach out with their ideas more easily and inevitably break the linguistic stronghold the political elite has on the people. Populist rhetoric also concentrates on easy solutions, claiming that the political elite have been overlooking them in order to complicate the situation – making them indispensable (Canovan, 1999).

Furthermore, based on the indications given in the Knapton (2013) study, that ideological variables can moderate the relation between rejection sensitivity and political participation , this study will stipulate that Populism can have the same significance. Due to the

nature its perceived out-group (politicians) it should to a high degree be able to act as a moderator, especially as the political cause for participation and action concerns proposals from politicians. The implementation of tuition fees in Sweden should be an issue well able to evoke feelings of threat and thus activate out-group attitudes towards politicians – primarily among those who already posses those attitudes to some extent (Populists). So, if Populism actually do have the same significant effect as RWA on political participation, moderating the relation between rejection sensitivity and political participation, Populism should also have a positive correlation with rejection sensitivity. It is theoretically consistent that individuals who are sensitive to social rejection also feel anxiety towards social relations and society at large. It would be consistent behaviour for these people to embrace attitudes that justify their isolated situation in society, preferably blaming the group who is perceived to be in control in society; politicians. In this study it is therefore hypothesised that Populism and rejection sensitivity are positively correlated, and that populism by moderating the relationship through rejection sensitivity, also affects inclination to participate in political activities. The experimental hypotheses are thus:

Populism and rejection sensitivity will have a positive correlation, where individuals with high scores on populism also have high scores on rejection sensitivity. (H3)

Populism will act as a moderator between social support and rejection sensitivity, with those ostracised individuals being high on populism also being more inclined to participate in and favour extreme political action when they are high on rejection sensitivity and social support, than those low on populism and low on rejection sensitivity and social support. (H4)

Social capital

Social capital is a term framed by the political scientist Robert Putnam, who developed a theory on democratic functionality based on the idea of social capital. He defines social capital as a micro level interpersonal factor in which trust and faith in the democratic system is consolidated. Historically, social capital has been used to describe strong community between people – a definition that Putnam has expanded and concretised (Putnam, 2006). To him, social capital is accumulated through social networks where people meet and interact with other people. By doing this, people are socialised into communities and learn their codes of conduct – and thus develop trust towards others. According to Putnam, learning to understand other

people's behaviour is pivotal to create trust and therefore trust can only be created in situations where people are able to observe and learn how to respond to this behaviour. The social networks that generate trust can take many forms, but Putnam (2006) mentions sports clubs and families as examples. Social capital could here be defined more specifically as the socialisation of people, manifesting as an increase in interpersonal and societal trust, but also increased motivation to cooperate and engage in social activities and groups. Putnam refers to this as a civil spirit, a mindset in which people can identify themselves with society and feel belonging. By increasing social capital in a society, people become more open to cooperation which facilitates public rule (Putnam, 1996). The Swedish political scientist Bo Rothstein developed this societal thought further, putting emphasise on the public institutions (Rothstein, 2003). Rothstein argued that social capital is dependent upon functioning public authorities in order to have the positive societal effects that Putnam described. If public institutions and authorities are dysfunctional, people's trust in them will be low, as will the social capital. This study will assess social capital as a measure of social trust and social contacts, meaning that it logically should be negatively correlated with rejection sensitivity – as individuals high on rejection sensitivity would rather avoid social situations where they risk getting rejected. Thus having a large social network and having high trust to people in general would not be compatible with being sensitive to rejection. It is therefore also plausible that social capital will act as a moderator on the relationship between rejection sensitivity, social support and inclination to participate in political activities. The study's 2 hypotheses concerning Social Capital are thus:

Social capital and rejection sensitivity will have a negative correlation, where individuals high on social capital will be low on rejection sensitivity. (H5)
Social Capital will also act as a moderator between social support and rejection sensitivity, with those ostracised individuals being low on social capital also being more inclined to participate in extreme political action when they are high on rejection sensitivity , than those high on social capital and low on rejection sensitivity. (H6)

As suggested by a recent study, Social capital may play crucial role in the surge of Populism. The cause for rises in Populist movements has previously been thought to be explained by economic disturbances, leading to dissatisfaction with politicians. However, a recent study done on the Radical Right Populist party Sverigedemokraterna (The Sweden democrats) in Sweden (Taleny, 2012), suggests that there are other causal factors responsible

for the rise in Populist support. The study found that the regional social identity structures could explain much of the support, but also that variations in social capital have a clear significant influence, though modest. As previously discussed, social identity has been showed to have a crucial influence on political participation. Social capital has however not previously been associated with with political participation. Psychological research on social capital is scarce, despite its apparent importance in above mentioned matters. In this study, social capital will be considered a causal factor for populism, testing the results from the Taleny (2012) study. Thus the following hypothesis is:

Populism and social capital will have a negative correlation, where individuals with high scores on populism have low scores on social capital. (H7)

Method

Research design

The study was conducted using a between-subjects design, in order to examine if and to what extent social support affect inclination for joining in political participation and recommending extreme political action when ostracised, and if rejection sensitivity, populism and social capital act as moderators on this effect, and whether populism and social capital are inter-correlated. The independent variables are thus perceived social support (high/low), rejection sensitivity (high/low), populism (high/low) and social capital (high/low). The manipulated experimental variable here being social support, where participants could be placed in either the high social support condition or the low social support condition. This was done by presenting participants with different debate articles on the issue, depending on which condition they had been assigned to. Participants in the high social support condition were presented with a fake debate article supposedly written by their assigned student union, that presented a strongly negative standpoint to the proposal – thus opposing tuition fees, a standpoint shared by 95 % of all students (Bäck et al., 2013) which is meant to give the participants of this condition the perception that they have high social support in their assigned group for their views on this issue. Participants in the low social support condition are reversely also presented with a debate article, supposedly written by their assigned student union, that however presented a slightly more positive standpoint on the issue, thus giving support to intuition fees – in opposition to the views of 95 % of students, which is meant to give the participants in this condition the perception of having low social support in their assigned

group. Ostracism was manipulated verbally, through instructions to the participants by the experimenter. Each participant was ostracised by being told that they had been rejected as members of a specific student union, and then told that they instead had been included in an alternative student union. The other variables (rejection sensitivity, populism and social capital) were measured using questionnaires. The dependent variables consisted of the extent of the inclination to participate in political activities and recommend extreme action. These variables were also measured by questionnaires, issued following the manipulation of ostracism and social support.

Participants

The participants came from a sample consisting of 43 students – 16 female and 26 male (and one who did not state any gender). One male participant did also not finish the experiment, so only 42 participants were included in the final analysis. The participants' age ranged from 18 to 32 with a mean age of 22,6. They were recruited on the Lund University campus, being told that they would participate in a political study on student issues in exchange for two Triss lottery tickets. The criteria for participating were four; being fluid Swedish speakers (1), being students at Lund University (2), being opposed to the implementation of tuition fees in Sweden (3), and not having studied more than 15 credits in Psychology (4). These criteria were set due to practical reasons as the questionnaires were in Swedish, and the experimental manipulations were adjusted for a student population that opposes intuition fees, and finally that the participants had not previously encountered similar experiments as part of their studies as this might had affected the outcome. Each participant were assigned to a condition using random selection, resulting in 13 males and 7 females in the high support condition (mean age: 23, 1), and 12 males and 9 females in the low support condition (mean age 22, 1).

Materials

The study was conducted using a series of questionnaires issued in a predetermined order. The first questionnaire, consisted of an article and a follow-up questionnaire. The fake article was designed as short neutral news-article on an education policy directive from the EU. More specifically, the article's content concerned news about a draft on a new common European education policy for the EU, submitted by the commissioner for education policy to the European Commission. In the draft, a proposal for an equalisation of the European tuition fees is included – effectively meaning that Sweden would have to implement tuition fees on the

same level as other EU-members, according to the alleged author. The articled used a template from a well-known Swedish newspaper (*Dagens Nyheter*). In the following questionnaire, the participants were first asked to state their standpoint to tuition fees being either pro or against to proposal. Any participant stating being pro the proposal was later excluded from the analysis. In the following question participants were asked to state where they would place themselves on a left-right political scale consisting of numerical scale from 1 to 7, 1 being strongly to the left and 7 being strongly to the right. As the study was a part of a larger data collection, many other variables outside the outline of this study were included in the questionnaires. In the next questionnaire the participants were asked to give some background information. They were first asked to state age and sex (male or female), and then to answer following questions. The questions that followed were items measuring rejection sensitivity, Populism and social capital. The items measuring rejection sensitivity had previously been used in Knapton (2013) and originally developed in Downey & Feldman (1996). This study utilised the shortened 16-items questionnaire used in Knapton (2013), consisting of a number of statements with following questions. The statements describe fictive situations where the participant is required to interact with another person or to ask for help form another person. Each statement is followed by two questions concerning feelings and expectations regarding the situation depicted above. For example: Statement: "A) You approach a friend to talk with him/her after having done or said something to him/her that might have upset him/her very much." Questions: "– How worried would you be that your friend would not want to talk with you? (1) – How likely do you think it would be that your friend would like to talk with you? (2)". Each question was then answered by filling in a 7 digits numerical scale, were 1 corresponded to "not worried" on the first of the questions, and "not likely" on the second, while 7 corresponded to "very worried" on the first question and "very likely" on the second. To calculate the total score of rejection sensitivity on each participant, the product is assessed from multiplying the answer on question 1 with the inversion on the answer on question 2. This is repeated on each of the two questions for each of the 8 statement (A-H). The mean overall score on rejection sensitivity in the study was 6,08, with a standard deviation of 2.41 (population scores M= 9.69, SD = 3.07, in Romero-Canyas & Downey (2012)). Furthermore to estimate the internal consistency of rejection sensitivity in the study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to α= 0.58.

Populism was measured using a scale similar to the RWA-scale, but containing different items adapted to assess Populism. Since no previous research have developed a scale to measure populism, a new scale was developed using empirical research by Barr (2009),

Ljunggren (2002) Fryklund & Petersson (1981) and Canovan (1999). The scale was originally consisting of 29 items, structured in 5 categories corresponding to the policy dimensions of Populism that have been delimited by above mentioned research. The categories were; Anti-establishment (7 items), Out-group stereotypes (6 items), In-group stereotypes (6 items), System change policies (5 items), and Ideal society (5 items). The items on each category consisted of a populist statement related to the category, e.g.: "*The rulers in society always try to make politics more complicated and abstruse than necessary, in order to keep ordinary people from understanding it*" under the anti-establishment category. Half of the items were inverted. This primary scale was pre-tested using a web-survey, where the participants were asked to state how much they would agree to each statement using a 7 point Likert-scale were 1 equals strongly disagree and 7 equals strongly agree. 29 participants answered the survey, which was considered sufficient in order to perform a reliability analysis. The result from the reliability analysis showed that the scale had a Cronbach alpha value of $\alpha=0,895$, which suggested that the scale had a strong internal consistency reliability. In order to downsize the scale, the items with the lowest correlated items total correlation values were excluded, and the scale could be cut down to 21-items with a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha=0,915$. However, since populism tends have different out-groups depending on the population, it was decided to exclude the out-group stereotype category items, since the population in focus was too homogenous making these items superfluous. Further items were excluded due to lack of space, and the final populism-scale was composite consisting 9 items in total (5 from anti-establishment category, 2 from system change policies and 1 from ideal society, and 1 from in-group stereotypes), with a Cronback alpha of $\alpha=0,69$, M=4,2, SD=0,95. These final 9 items were included in the questionnaire following the rejection sensitivity items. In the results from the main study however, the reliability was lowered to $\alpha=0,49$, which motivated a further reduction of the scale by 2 items down to 7 items. By doing this the reliability was heightened to a satisfactory $\alpha=0,66$, and showing similar descriptives as in the pre-test; M=4,3, SD=0,83. The relatively low Cronbach α-level was considered to be a result of the low number of items (as enforced by the lack of space in the questionnaires), but was not considered to be problem for the study since the pre-test showed high reliability. Future use of the scale can however use the 21-item version with the highest reliability.

Social capital was measured using a composite scale, parts of which had previously been used in other studies. The first 8 items were collected from Grootaert, Narayan, Nyhan Jones & Woolcock (2004), while the final 4 were collected from the Riks-SOM survey (2009).

The primary study, from which 8 items were collected, was primarily focused on social capital in the third world – which claimed some minor adjustments in order to be relevant for this study. Consisting of 27 questions in whole, 8 questions were deemed to have relevance and were acquired from this study. These questions were formed as statements following a 5 point Likert scale where 1 corresponded to "strongly agree", and 5 "strongly disagree", e.g.: "*I think you can trust people in general*". The remaining 4 items were assessed from the RIKS-SOM survey, being specifically developed to measure social capital in Sweden. In order to handle lack of space, 4 items were selected from the survey focusing on trust towards public authorities. The selected 4 questions were also formed as statements following a 5 point Likert scale identical to the previous 8 items. E.g.: "*I think you in general can trust the police*". The final compilation of the selected items consisted of 12 items, that was included in the questionnaire following the rejection sensitivity items and the populism items, showing a result of; $\alpha=0,770$, M=4,5, SD=0,91.

Following the second questionnaire, the ostracism manipulation was executed as the participants were told that they had been rejected membership by the group, but that they instead were welcome into another, similar group. Following this, each participant were presented with a fictional debate article supposedly written by the European student union's Swedish national chairman. However, this was where the social support was manipulated – as participants of the high social support condition were presented with a debate article taking a very strong oppose to intuition fees. The participants of the low social support condition were however presented with a debate article somewhat more positive to the proposal. Both of these articles had been designed in a template assessed from a renowned Swedish newspaper (*Dagens Nyheter Debatt*). The participants were asked to read the article and answer the following questionnaire. The third questionnaire consisted of items for the dependent variables, inclination to join in political activities. The items had previously been used in Knapton (2013) where it originally had been developed. The 8 items focused on willingness to join in political action – both peaceful (5 items) and more extreme (3 items). These items were answered using a 7 point Likert scale where 1 indicated "*Very unlikely*" and 7 indicated "*very likely*". Each item were formed as a statement; e.g.: "*I would consider signing a petition*" (peaceful action), and "*I would consider joining in more extreme actions on my own (such as sabotaging the government's daily functions)*" (extreme action).The results suggested a strong reliabillity: $\alpha=0,89$, M=3,2, SD=1,34.

The last item in the questionnaire was designed as a manipulation check control item, simply put *"How strong support do you feel you have for your view within the organisation (ESU)?",* and was answered using a 9-point scale where 1 indicated "very low support" and 9 indicated "very high support". This item was designed to measure if the participant perceived to have low or high social support for his/her views within the assigned group (The European student union). This enabled a direct analysis of the effect of the manipulated variable.

Procedure

Participants were recruited at the Lund University campus, being told they would participate in a survey on student politics, and that they would be given two Triss lottery ticket for their participation. The participants were then asked to meet up with the experiment leaders at a pre-determined place, and then lead to the laboratory. Each participant was told to sit down at the table, where a questionnaire and an article already had been placed. When seated, the participant was welcomed and shortly briefed about the procedure and background. They were told that the study was part of a master thesis in political science, focusing on students' attitudes in politics concerning student issues. They were then told that the thesis was carried out in cooperation with the "International Student Union" and that they were looking for potential members. The participants were told to read the article on a current student issue, and then answer the following questionnaire as honest as possible. They were then told that the experiment leader would leave the laboratory in order to examine the answer of this questionnaire and together with a "contact person" from the "International Student Union", contacted by telephone, check if the answers were compatible with the views of the organisation and thus if the participant would be included as a member in the organisation. The participant was told that during this telephone call, he or she would fill out a background questionnaire. After this briefing, the participant was informed about his/her rights to withdraw at any time, and that by filling out the questionnaire he/she also give his/her informed consent to participate in the study. He/she was also informed that the materials provided by him/her would be handled confidentially, and that personal details would only be visible for the experimenter and the members of the research group. After this they were asked to begin reading the article and filling out the questionnaire. After completing these tasks, the experiment leader took hold the questionnaire while handing out the second questionnaire. The experiment leader then told the participant that he/she would fill out this "background questionnaire" while the experiment leader would leave the room to read through the answers

of the first questionnaire and call the "contact person" from the organisation to check if the participant was compatible and thus a potential member. The participant was told that the experiment leader would return in approximately 5 minutes. The experiment leader left the room, waiting outside, returning in 5 minutes during which time the participant would fill out the second questionnaire. After completing this questionnaire, the participant was told about the decision reached during the telephone call with the "contact person". In order to manipulate ostracism, each participant was told the following; "I have spoken with my contact person (X) who has provided me with some feedback","As you understand, I cannot go into details, but unfortunately he felt that your views were not compatible with the views of the International Student Union. You are therefore not let in as a member of the organisation". Following this, the participants were instead informed about another student union that would let them in as a member: "However, the European Student Union would be glad to have you as a member. So I have prepared an article and some questions regarding which activities you would consider joining in together with the European Student Union". The participant was then asked to read this debate article allegedly written by their national chairman, and then to fill out the following questions. At this stage the social support manipulation was done, as participants of the two conditions (high and low social support) received different debate articles. These were placed in front of each participant together with the third questionnaire. After completing this, the participant was verbally debriefed on the experiment, and told that there had been no real rejection and that none of the organisations, articles or names are real. They were also informed that this had been a psychological experiment conducted as a part of a bachelor thesis and as part of a research project at the department of Psychology at Lund University. The participant was asked if he/she had any questions, and was also offered to join a e-mail list to acquire further information about the research and its publications. The participant was then thanked for their time and given two Triss lottery tickets. The entire procedure took approximately 45 minutes.

Results

The descriptive results give a primary insight to the variables, here showed through means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations displayed in the table (1) below.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations for all variables.

	Mean	*SD*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
1. Populism	*4,37*	*0,83*				
2. Rejection Sensitivity	*6,08*	*2,41*	*0,367**			
3. Social Capital	*4,53*	*0,92*	*-0,345**	*-0,426***		
4. Extreme political participation	*1,81*	*1,51*	*0,089*	*0,082*	*0,037*	
5. Social Support	*0,5*	*0.5*				*0,335**

Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01

The results indicate a series of significant correlations. The manipulated variable social support show a significant positive correlation with extreme political participation. The correlation indicate that higher social support correlates to higher extreme political participation. Furthermore, social capital, populism and rejection sensitivity are significantly correlated to each other. Rejection sensitivity and populism show a positive correlation (significant at the .05-level), which indicates that higher rejection sensitivity is correlated to higher populism. Rejection sensitivity is also negatively correlated to social capital (significant at the .01-level) which indicates higher rejection sensitivity is correlated to lower social capital. Finally, populism is negatively correlated to social capital (significant at the .05-level) which shows that higher populism is correlated to lower social capital.

Manipulation check

In order to check if the manipulation of the social support had any effect on the participants, a manipulation check was conducted using an independent samples t-test. The independent variable in this analysis was Condition (high/low social support) and the dependent variable was item number 10 in the third questionnaire; *"How strong support do you feel you have for your view within the organisation (ESU)?"*. The results showed a clear difference between the two conditions were participants in the low social support condition reported a lower perception of social support in the group (M=3.11, SD=1.604) than the participants in the high social support condition (M=5.250, SD=1.409). This was shown to be a significant

difference; t (36) = 4.375, p< .01 (two-tailed). Based on these results, the conclusion was drawn that the perception of social support had been successfully manipulated by the different articles.

Testing hypothesis 1 (H1): Ostracised individuals who perceive to have high social support for their political views, will be more inclined to participate in more extreme political actions, than those who perceive to have low social support for their views.

In order to establish whether this hypothesis can be supported by the data, an independent samples t-test between high and low social support was performed, using extreme political participation as dependent variable

Table 2. t-values, p-values, means and (standard deviations) for high and low social support participants on inclination to participate in extreme political participation..

	High Support	Low Support	t	p
Extreme Political Action	*2,31 (1,91)*	*1,31 (0,69)*	-2.251	0,03

As showed in table 2 there are consistent differences in means between low and high social support. These differences in means indicate that increasing social support is connected with increasing political participation. Table 2 shows that all of these differences are significant in the extreme political participation.These results indicate that social support do have a significant impact on political participation – where high social support is connected to higher political participation. The hypothesis can thus be supported by the results.

Testing hypothesis 2 (H2): Rejection sensitivity will act as a moderator between social support and inclination to participate in and favour extreme political action, where ostracised individuals high on rejection sensitivity and perceiving high social support, also being more inclined to participate in and favour extreme political action.

In order to test this hypothesis, a multiple regression was conducted using extreme political participation as dependent variable, social support, and the interaction between rejection sensitivity * social support as the independent variables. The results showed that none of the variables was indicated to make any significant unique contribution on extreme

participation, though rejection sensitivity showed the highest result (β=0,358, p=0.445), followed by social support (β=0,351, p<0.05).

Diagram 1. The interaction effect of rejection sensitivity and social support on extreme political participation.
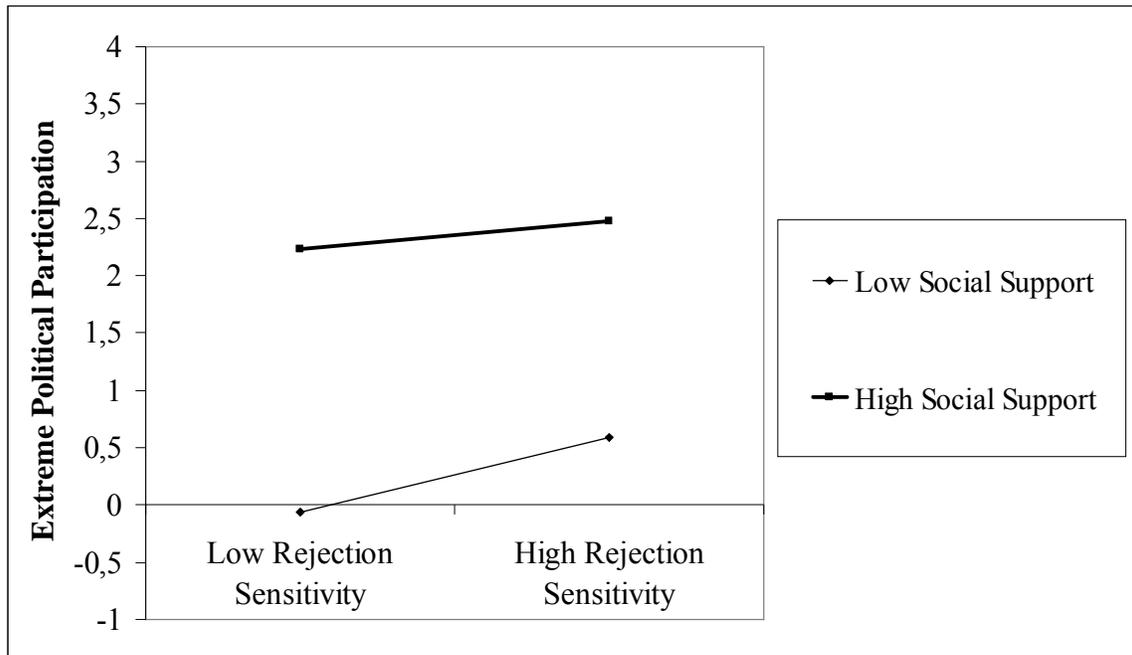
As seen on the diagram above (diagram 1), the results indicate that individuals high on social support and high rejection sensitivity, are more inclined to participate in extreme political action – than those low on social support and rejection sensitivity. This shows that both social support and rejection sensitivity have a main effect on extreme participation. However very moderate, the result do also indicate an interaction effect, supporting the hypothesis that rejection sensitivity moderate the relation between social support and inclination to participate in political action. High rejection sensitivity makes individuals more inclined to participate in extreme political action.

Testing hypothesis 3 (H3): *Populism and rejection sensitivity will have a positive correlation, where individuals with high scores on populism also have high scores on rejection sensitivity.*

This hypothesis was tested using a bivariate correlation analysis between populism and rejection sensitivity. As seen in table 1, the two variables show a positive significant correlation

of .367 (p<0.05), indicating that higher degrees of populism is connected with higher rejection sensitivity. The study can thus support this hypothesis.

Testing hypothesis 4 (H4): *Populism will act as a moderator between social support and rejection sensitivity, with those ostracised individuals being high on populism also being more inclined to participate in and favour extreme political action when they are high on rejection sensitivity, than those low on populism and low on rejection sensitivity.*

In order to test this hypothesis, another multiple regression was conducted using extreme political participation as dependent variable, rejection sensitivity, populism and social support as the independent variables, furthermore the 2-way interactions populism*social support, populism*rejection sensitivity and social support*rejection sensitivity were added and finally the 3-way interaction between rejection sensitivity * social support * populism (which is of main interest here). The results showed that none of the variables was indicated to make any significant unique contribution on extreme participation, though rejection sensitivity showed the highest result ($\beta=0,355$, $p=0.561$) followed by social support ($\beta=0,304$, $p=0.133$). The results do however indicate support for the hypothesis, which is demonstrated in diagram 2:

Diagram 2. The 3-way interaction effect of rejection sensitivity, social support and populism on extreme political participation.
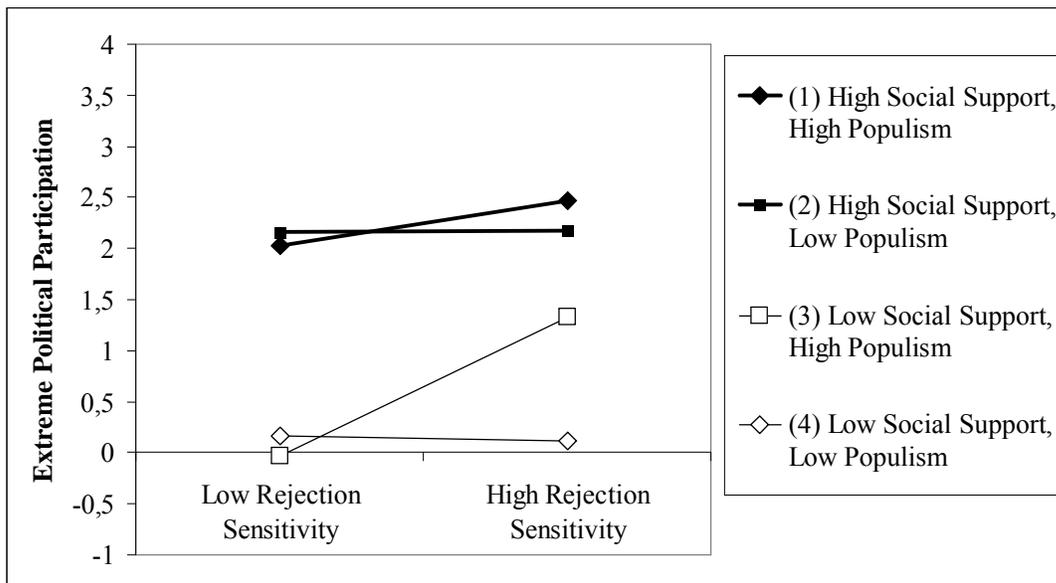
In the diagram it is visible that there are main effects on extreme participation done by populism, social support and rejection sensitivity. There is also a clear interaction effect

between the variables. These results indicate that individuals high on populism (compared to those low on populism) are more inclined to participate in extreme political action when having high social support – and being high on rejection sensitivity. Interestingly, the results show that individuals high on populism and social support, but low on rejection sensitivity – are less inclined to participate in extreme political action. High populism thus seem to work as an amplifier of rejection sensitivity on its effect on extreme political participation. These result can support the hypothesis; populism do moderate the relationship between social support, rejection sensitivity and extreme political participation. High levels of populism amplifies the effect of rejection sensitivity on the main effect of social support to extreme political participation

Testing hypothesis 5 (H5): *Social capital and rejection sensitivity will have a negative correlation, where individuals high on social capital will be low on rejection sensitivity.*

In order to test this hypothesis, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted. As shown in table 1b, the two variables were shown to have a significant negative correlation of -.426 ($p<0.01$ (two-tailed)). This implies that higher social capital is connected to lower rejection sensitivity. The hypothesis can thus be supported.

Testing hypothesis 6 (H6): *Social Capital will also act as a moderator between social support and rejection sensitivity, with ostracised individuals being low on social capital also being more inclined to participate in and favour extreme political action when they are high on rejection sensitivity and social support, than those high on social capital and low on rejection sensitivity and low on social support.*

This hypothesis was tested conducting a multiple regression analysis using rejection sensitivity and social support as the independent variables, extreme political participation as dependent variable, social capital as the moderator, furthermore the 2-way interactions social capital*social support, social capital*rejection sensitivity and social support*rejection sensitivity were added and finally rejection sensitivity * social support * social capital as a 3-way interaction variable. The results showed that no variable made any significant unique impact (on the 0,05-level) on the dependent variable. The strongest variable was however rejection sensitivity ($\beta=0{,}475$, $p=0.421$) followed by social support ($\beta=0{,}406$, $p=0.059$). The results did however suggest that social capital have influence on the relation, as shown in the diagram (3) below:

Diagram 3. The 3-way interaction effect of rejection sensitivity and social support and social capital on extreme political participation.
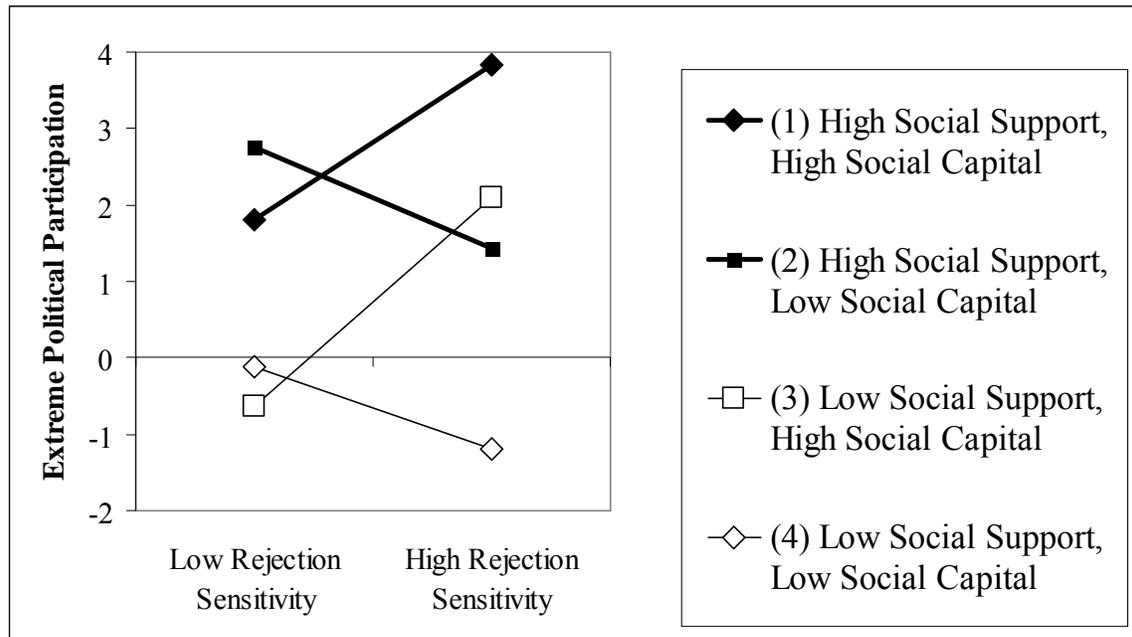
In the diagram it is visible that there are clear interaction effects between the variables, but very moderate main effects caused by the variables alone. The results shows that social capital moderates the relationship between rejection sensitivity, social support and extreme political participation – as individuals high on rejection sensitivity, social support and social capital are more inclined to participate, than those who are low on social capital, social support and rejection sensitivity. However, it is very clear from the diagram that increasing social capital and rejection sensitivity together have a strong positive effect on extreme participation, meaning individuals high on both social capital and rejection sensitivity will increase their inclination to participate in extreme action. These results contradict the hypothesis that stipulates that higher degrees of social capital has a negative effect on extreme participation (while high support and rejection sensitivity). In summary, the results can thus disprove the hypothesis that low social capital, high social support and high rejection sensitivity leads to increased extreme political action.

Testing hypothesis 7 (H7): Populism and social capital will have a negative correlation, where individuals with high scores on populism have low scores on social capital. (H7)

This hypothesis was tested using a bivariate correlation analysis. The result can be seen in table 1, and showed a significant negative correlation; -.345 ($p<0.05$(two-tailed)). This

implies that higher degrees of populism corresponds to lower degrees of social capital. The results can thus support the hypothesis.

Discussion

The results of this study coincide with much previous research, but also suggest that other variables previously untested in psychological research, may be of interest for further examination. Examining the study's first hypothesis (H1), it was predicted that *Ostracised individuals who perceive to have high social support for their political views, will be more inclined to participate in more extreme political actions, than those who perceive to have low social support for their views.* The results could show a significant difference in inclination to participate in extreme political action between the two experimental groups (low/high social support), where the participants in the high social support group, were considerably more inclined to participate in extreme political action, than those in the low social support group. The first hypothesis could thus be supported by the results. This means that the study can confirm previous research that ostracised individuals are more inclined to participate when perceiving high social support (Bäck et al., 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2008; Klandermans, 1997). This has generally been considered to be a consequence of the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and need for high self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) – to have a group identity and having others' support is thus crucial for satisfy those needs. This suggests that people seek extreme participation mostly because of selective incentives, meaning people participate because of the emotional and social benefits, more than the actual political effects (Bäck et al., 2011). Previous research has however also shown that people use heuristics in order to make these kinds of decisions, especially social evidence – thus looking at other people's behaviour in order to interpret the situation (Cialdini, 2004). He argues that individual's behaviour is influenced by other people – especially people that are similar to them (and people they like). When finding oneself in an ambigous situation, people copy the behaviour of others', and if people act differently; they copy the behaviour of those most similar to them (or the ones they like best). Considering Cialdini's research, it plausible that the connection between high social support and extreme political participation might not only be a result of a strong need to belong, but also a result of influence by other people. People who perceive high social support for their views in a group where they are included, will most probably feel that they are similar to the other group members (and thus even begin to like them). If so, they are very likely to copy their behaviour, especially if the context is unfamiliar

to them. Cialdini also argues that attitudes can be manipulated by social evidence and liking – meaning that people alter their beliefs and attitudes to better agree with other's (and then again, especially those similar to them, and those they like). Thus, an individual who is included into a social group where people are similar to that individual, he/she will most likely alter his/her beliefs and attitudes to better agree with the others'. Applying this research to the outline of the current study, it is possible to interpret the results as a consequence of social evidence heuristics. In that case, people who were included in the new group in the high social support condition, felt more similar to the other group members and a stronger liking towards them. Thus, they were more inclined to participate – and thus showing a greater openness to conform to any behaviour in the group – despite some being illegal.

The second hypothesis (H2) predicted that *rejection sensitivity will act as a moderator between social support and inclination to participate in and favour extreme political action, where ostracised individuals high on rejection sensitivity and perceiving high social support, also being more inclined to participate in and favour extreme political action.* The results indicated support for the hypothesis as it was shown that rejection sensitivity did have an effect on the relation between social support and extreme political participation. Individuals with high rejection sensitivity were more inclined to participate than those with low rejection sensitivity. These results coincide with the study by Bäck et al. (2013), who suggested a relation between rejection sensitivity and selective incentives to political action. That study implied that individuals high on rejection sensitivity seek political participation based on selective incentives – thus evaluating what social benefits the participation can generate. While the current study does not explicitly adress whether people engage in political action due to selective incentives, the results can still be considered to support this notion. By examining diagram 1, it is clear that individuals high on rejection sensitivity increase their inclination to participate radically when social support heightens. This confirms the notion that people high on rejection sensitivity are considerably more attentive to social support. As previously discussed, individuals high on rejection sensitivity are more anxious towards social relations and more inclined to perceive rejection of any kind (Downey & Feldman, 1996). This would lead to the expectation that these individuals also would be more careful when engaging in political activities, in order to be sure that they will not be rejected because of their attitudes. These individuals would thus be more keen to have social support for their views in the group before engaging in the groups activities (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998). As is supported by the results of this study, highly rejection sensitive individuals who perceive low

social support would not be inclined to participate, as the risk of being rejected is large because of the lack of social support. In summary, it can be established that the social nature of the political action and the social support is pivotal for highly rejection sensitive individuals when deciding on participation.

The study also confirms support for hypothesis 3, stipulating that *populism and rejection sensitivity will have a positive correlation, where individuals with high scores on populism also have high scores on rejection sensitivity.* This correlation had previously not been tested, but is theoretically consistent with previous research on populism and rejection sensitivity. Many studies have assessed populism as a collection of attitudes associated with increasing social and economical instability, unemployment and social marginalisation. Populism becomes an ideological framework for those people, enabling them to focus their frustration and anger towards a perceived outgroup – politicians. As similar ideological variables with clear outgroup hatred and prejudgementalism, such as right-wing authoritarianism, has been shown to have a strong relation with rejection sensitivity (Knapton, 2013), it suggested that populism could work the same way. Furthermore, many studies have confirmed the relationship between outgroup-hatred, rejection sensitivity and ostracism (Twenge et al., 2001), (Ayduk et al., 1999), and the connection to willingness for political action towards these outgroups (Bourgeois & Leary, 2001) (Sacco et al., 2011). This study can now support the idea that populism also works this way; the more rejection sensitive, the more populist attitudes. Even though only being a minor correlation, this result could potentially have large implications for future research on populism and all related ideologies such as radical right populism, radical left populism, nationalism and nazism. If populism and similar ideologies can be connected to high degrees of rejection sensitivity, it would increase the understanding of how populist movements rise and fall, but also what causes it and how to stop it. Together with previous research on ostracism, rejection sensitivity and populism, this study can suggest that populism grows among people with high rejections sensitivity, implying that these attitudes are rooted in the emotional and social foundation of individuals, but that societal changes perhaps trigger it. Previous research (Williams, 2007; Knapton, 2013) have shown that many members of extremist groups have perceived themselves to be rejected and isolated by society – in some cases due to societal rises in discriminative ideologies. As people high on rejection sensitivity react anxiously to any sign of rejection, they are also inclined to act more irrational when rejected. These people are (as the results imply) also more inclined to have negative prejudices against politicians and dislike the perceived societal elite. Thus, if these individuals perceive themselves to be rejected by a group

(a student group as in this study) or society for some reason (loosing one's job, living in a peripheral district from where many people move out – thus becoming more isolated, or perhaps simply feeling that media and politicians no longer support one's values or care about one's situation) they will react anxiously and irrationally in order to balance the negative emotions accumulated and re-heighten their self-esteem. To blame the out-groups responsible for the changes (and thus the perceived societal rejection) such as politicians or immigrants, would be a way for them to handle the rejection – and assimilating populist attitudes would be a way of through political means take revenge on these out-groups. This would explain why populist movements rise in times of economic disturbance, but more rarely in times of economic stability – as it would only manifest when there are any threats of rejection.

The study's fourth hypothesis (H4) stipulating that *populism will act as a moderator between social support and rejection sensitivity, with those ostracised individuals being high on populism also being more inclined to participate in and favour extreme political action when they are high on rejection sensitivity and social support, than those low on populism and low on rejection sensitivity and social support -* was supported. The results did support the hypothesis as populism was found to moderate the relationship between social support, rejection sensitivity on its effect on extreme political participation. The higher levels of populism, the higher the extreme participation. The results are theoretically consistent, as populism (incorporating out-group hatred towards politicians) would be considered a key factor in extreme actions towards the people responsible for the proposition of tuition fees (politicians). Previous research has shown that action towards a group is facilitated by stereotyping that group negatively - de-humanising them in order to reduce sympathy for them and thus justifying action towards them (Tajfel, 1981). Populism could in such a situation be used as an ideological tool to do so. It would logically follow that activists squatting a public building and thus breaking the law, would not have high thoughts about politicians, the police or any public authority. It is most probable that these people perceive this societal establishment as illegitimate and hold negative prejudices against them. These attitudes would then confirm that their actions are justified, acting as a moral balance to any discomforts or negative emotions caused by their illegal actions. However, populism also involves a lack of trust in the democratic system. This means that it supports non-democratic tools of influence, discarding any ordinary democratic tool as ineffective. While most populist movements would perhaps not explicitly support violent political action, many of them would still consider some illegal actions to be justified – as some are illegal because of the political corruption in the system and

thus illegitimate. In essence, breaking the law deliberatly would infer a lack of respect towards the legal system, suggesting a perception of an illegitimate and corrupt societal system – a central principle in populism.

The fifth hypothesis (H5) stipulated that *social capital and rejection sensitivity will have a negative correlation, where individuals high on social capital will be low on rejection sensitivity.* This hypothesis could be supported by a rather strong negative correlation, providing an interesting foundation for future research. As social capital has previously not been investigated in psychological research, this study can confirm that there are psychological implications to social capital. Being a widely used societal variable in political science and sociology to measure democratic consolidation and strength of civic society, using it as an variable on an individual level would instead show the individual's belief in democracy and trust towards other people. Using it as such, this study can establish that social capital correlate negatively with rejection sensitivity – meaning that people who are not sensitive to rejection are also more trusting to other people in general and believe in the democratic system. Reversely, people who are very sensitive to rejection and strongly inclined to anticipate rejection and behave anxiously to any situation where they risk rejection, are also less trusting to other people in general and doubt in the democratic system. These results also follows logically, as high social capital incorporates a high degree of social engagements and memberships in organisations, thus a large social network – something that logically would be difficult to obtain if you feel anxiety in social situations and constantly anticipate rejection. Social capital can here also be argued to be a "social experience variable", meaning it measures the extent of the experience an individual has of social interactions. Putnam argues that people with high social capital are better trained in social situations, because they have wide experience from social interactions and through that learned to create trust towards others. According to Putnam (1996, 2006), this is crucial for understanding how societal trust is created. Though being a political scientist, Putnam's explanation might have a psychological validity. Previous research have shown the importance of knowledge and experience for creating trust. Knowing how to handle a situation means having a mental script of how to behave – reducing uncertainty and thus any fear or anxiety that could arise from the situation. The more experience an individual has from social interactions, the less anxious and afraid this individual should be towards undertaking new social interactions. The result should thus be that some people accumulate social interactions, while some do not, depending on their chances to obtain any social interaction. As Putnam argues, in some societies people simply do not interact with others to a sufficient

extent, but keep to themselves or their closest. The opportunities for social interactions are thus limited. In other societies however, people organise themselves and actively seek up social situations – increasing the opportunity to interact with others. Sweden has generally been considered to have a high degree of social capital, a fact that has been used to explain the firm democratic consolidation and societal trust in the country (Rothstein, 2003). This study can however suggest that this societal stability is rooted in the secure personality of the Swedes perhaps more than anything else. It can be speculated to a great length whether a general low rejection sensitivity among the Swedes has led to more social interactions and thus increasing social capital in Sweden – or if the Swedish society from early on has offered more social opportunities leading to lower rejection sensitivity in general and higher social capital in Sweden. This study cannot assess the causality between rejection sensitivity and social capital, but future research might.

The sixth hypothesis (H6) stipulated that *Social Capital will also act as a moderator on the interaction between social support and rejection sensitivity, with those individuals being low on social capital also being more inclined to participate in and favour extreme political action when they are high on rejection sensitivity and ostracised, than those high on social capital and low on rejection sensitivity.* This hypothesis could be disproved by the results. It was instead shown that social capital has an overall positive influence on participation. The hypothesis stipulated that high social capital would keep individuals from participating in extreme political actions – which was disproved. Social capital (in the form that the study has measured it), leads to a heightened inclination to participate in any activity – legal or illegal. The notion that high social capital thus leads to less political activism and vandalism can thus be rejected. As theorised in the hypothesis however, the individuals high on social capital would be expected to be against non-democratic tools such as vandalism and squatting since this is illegal and based on societal distrust – as previously discussed in the populism section. This was however disproved, indicating that social capital perhaps do not have any ethical dimensions but only a social dimension inflicting the individual to actively engage in social activities and trusting others – even activists breaking the law. The results evokes the question whether this study has assessed social capital correctly – Putnam (1996, 2006) and Rothstein (2003) would probably not consider criminal activities such as squatting as social capital. The problem that arise here is that this study did not discriminate between legal and illegal activities in the questionnaire. This could mean that participants included illegal activities in their answers – which is perhaps being rather unlikely, but completely possible. However, if the

questionnaire was to have discriminated between illegal and legal activities, there is still a possibility that the participants would not consider their activities to be illegal. As previously discussed, research has shown that ostracism can lead to a weakening of the moral compass, leading individuals to be unable to evaluate an actions moral status. Even though it could still be expected that these individuals can interpret the legality of the action, if the individual still perceive an illegal action as moral – then this might keep the individual from categorising it as illegal. One could consider that cognitive dissonance would arise if an individual categorised his/her action as criminal, making it more appealing to lie in order to evade the cognitive dissonance.

The final seventh hypothesis (H7) stipulated that *populism and social capital will have a negative correlation, where individuals with high scores on populism have low scores on social capital.* The study could confirm this hypothesis, as the result showed a significant (though moderate) negative correlation between the two variables. These results coincide with previous results from political research on populist movements in Sweden (Taleny, 2012). Social capital was in that study showed to be negatively correlated to voter support to the radical right populist party the Sweden democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*). In that study however, the data was collected and measured on a regional level – comparing municipalities and counties. This study has however collected data on an individual level, which enables these results to be drawn from individuals. Interestingly however, the results coincide and thus suggest that macro-level statistics as regional social capital and voting results are compatible and provide comparable results with micro-level statistics from individuals. The implications of these results are however quite extensive. Comparing with the previous results in this study, a clear triangular pattern of correlations can be seen (figure 2):

Figure 2. The intercorrelation between social capital, populism and rejection sensitivity.
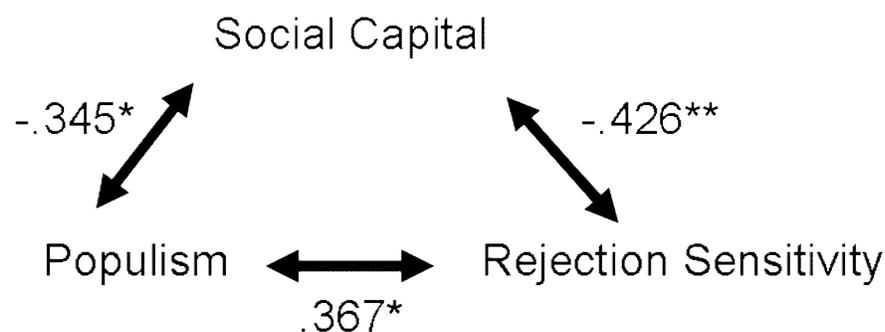
Social capital is significantly correlated to populism and rejection sensitivity, while populism and rejection sensitivity also show significant correlation. These results clearly shows that decreasing rejection sensitivity would lead to decreasing populism and increasing social capital. While previous research on populism and social capital have focused almost entirely on societal changes, policies and macro-level statistics, this study suggest that the cause of rise in populism and social capital might be found in personality factors. As seen in the figure, these variables interact and interconnect in a way that is theoretically consistent; Individuals low on rejection sensitivity are open to social interactions and engage in social activities – which generates trust towards other people, thus heightening social capital, but at the same time creates trust towards society in general and the democratic system – which also leads to less prejudices against out-groups such as politicians, thus lowering populism. Reversely, individuals high on rejection sensitivity are anxious towards social interactions (Downey & Feldman, 1996) and avoid any risk of being rejected (Downey et al., 1998) – which generates distrust towards others (as Putnam (1996, 2000) would argue that social interaction is key to trusting others) and thus lowers social capital, but also leads to a lowering trust towards society in general and thus creating out-groups and creating prejudices towards them in order to blame someone for the rejection (Twenge et al., 2001; Ayduk et al., 1999; Bourgeois & Leary, 2001; Sacco et al., 2011) – especially the politicians in charge of society, thus increasing populism. This causality could explain the results from previous research on macro-level structures (Taleny, 2012), inferring that rejection sensitivity is larger in regions with low social capital, generating higher voting support for populist movements such as the Sweden democrats. However, the results also evokes many questions, especially considering how people become rejection sensitive in the first instance. Much recent neurological research (Eisenberger, 2006; Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004; Gunnar, Sebanc, Tout, Donzella, van Dulmen, 2003) suggest the ability to handle the pain caused by rejection is concentrated in the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC) in the brain, but also dependent on the hormone cortisol – that is thought to regulate reactivity to danger. These findings supports the idea that these mechanisms might be evolutionary traits – and thus heriditary. As Williams (2007) argues, handling social rejection is pivotal for survival for most animals, as security in numbers (social interaction) is a crucial tool for surviving. However, continuing research in developmental psychology based on Attachment theory might well prove meaningful in order to further examine the roots of rejection sensitivity, implying that the sensitivity to being rejected originate in early infancy and attachment patterns with parents. Some research on rejection sensitivity suggest a possible

connection to attachment, as rejection by close others have effect on rejection sensitivity (Downey et al., 1998).

There are however a few limitations in this study, primarily derivative of the research design. Due to time and financial restrains, the study did not assess any control group to compare with the experimental groups. For example, the study did not assess any non-ostracised experimental group, nor specifically a neutral non-manipulated control group in order to examine the more precise effects of ostracism on the variables used in this study. Because of this, it is difficult to predict what the effects from the variables would be on non-ostracised individuals. Since previous studies (Knapton, 2013) however already established that ostracism do have a strong significant effect on inclination to participate in political action – a relation that was found to be moderated by rejection sensitivity, the decision was made to focus this study mainly on social support. The effects of ostracism are however so well documented (as discussed above), that it could be well assumed that the results of a non-ostracised control group would have shown considerably lower inclination to participate. Furthermore, as this study's main focus was on social support, the use of non-ostracised control groups would imply a 2x2-group experimental design, where both ostracism (rejected/included) and social support (high/low) would have been used in order to assess all combinations of manipulations. This would have made the study twice as large, which unfortunately was not possible to conduct given the time and financial restrains. The social support manipulation is another element in the study that can also be a source of discussion. The manipulation was done through the use of mock articles, describing the standpoints of the new student organisation into which the participant allegedly had been included. The entire effect of the manipulation was dependent upon the participant's belief in the validity of the article, but also in the very existence of the organisation – and their membership in it. The study did not assess whether any of the participants were already active in student politics or student union, which could mean that participants might have doubted the existence of any of the organisations connected to the articles and thus responded differently to the manipulation. Since the neutral news article about the tuition fee proposition, that was presented to the participants in the beginning of the experiment also was fake, it is possible that some participants well conversant in student politics might have doubted the authenticity of the article, evoking them to answer differently on the following questionnaire and reacting differently to the following social support manipulation. However, there were no indications that any of the participants actively disbelieved neither the news article nor the debate article. As the results of the manipulation

check showed, there were a significant difference between the experimental groups. It thus seems that the participants did believe in the situation and the facts presented to them, eventhough some participants after being debriefed expressed their gratitude over the fact that the articles were fake – as they could not understand how such a big news story possibly could have eluded them. This pinpoints the problem with using news articles to manipulate social support, since these rarely go by unnoticed. But as this study follows the design of previous studies (Bäck et al. 2013; Knapton, 2013) the news story had been well tested before and was therefore used with confidence in this study as well.

The results of this study could replicate the findings in Bäck (et al., 2013) and Knapton (2013), but could in addition prove that populism and social capital are factors that play an active role in the decision to join in extreme action. It is however of further interest to future research to assess how to handle populist movements considering the results of this study. While much research has focused on the societal "triggers" such as economic instability, unemployment etc., a few studies have assessed solutions to populist advances. A recent rapport (*Right response*, 2011) from the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, suggested that policies should be enacted to create social forums where people from different communities could meet – such as festivals or other societal events. It also suggested that established politicians should pay more focus on people in the populist electoral group, and acknowledge their concerns and exposedness. Relating to the results of this study, these suggestions seem to pinpoint both social capital and rejection sensitivity – considering the importance of interaction with other people and the sense of being rejected from society. It seems there is beginning to grow a larger interest in how to handle the growing populist movements and hopefully this study can contribute substantially to this increasing research.

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