Consideration Set Models of Voting Behavior
My main research interests

- Consideration sets
- Party system change
- Survey methodology
- Party Leader Effects
- Electoral reform
- Party pledges
- Political sophistication
- Political Partisanship
- Public Opinion
- Electoral behavior
Consideration Set Models (CSM)

• Theory and definitions
• Why should we care about CSM?
• The Challenges of CSM
• What we have found out so far
• On-going work
Sequential Decision Making
Making choices in two stages

1
Consideration stage
Long term factors play an important role
Voters use non-compensatory decision rules (screening)

2
Choice stage
Short term factors
compensatory decision rules
The alternatives that a voter is aware of.
The alternatives the voter take under consideration

![Alternative logos](image)
The Final Party Choice
Universal set of political parties

Awareness set of political parties

Consideration set of political parties

Vote Choice

External factors (e.g. political knowledge, cleavage structure, partisan identities, ideology, policy issues, leader evaluations)

consideration stage

choice stage
CSM: Why should we care?

1. **Lower predictability in standard models**
2. ”Voters begin to choose”; we need choice models!
3. Increasing heterogeneity in voting behavior
4. A more realistic account of voters’ decision making process
5. A more complex information environment make voting a demanding task
6. A new indirect way to measure electoral competition: contestability; availability
7. Bridging the gap between models of party choice and models of turnout
Proportion of party attached voters and Alfords index of class voting 1956-2014 (Percent, Alford's index).

Source: Swedish Election Studies 1956-2014
CSM: Why should we care?

1. Lower predictability in standard models
2. "Voters begin to choose"; time for choice models!
3. Increasing heterogeneity in voting behavior
4. A more realistic account of voters’ decision making process
5. A more complex information environment makes voting a demanding task
6. A new indirect way to measure electoral competition: contestability; availability
7. Bridging the gap between models of party choice and models of turnout
CSM: Why should we care?

1. Lower predictability in standard models
2. “Voters begin to choose”; we need choice models!
3. **Increasing heterogeneity in voting behavior**
4. A more realistic account of voters’ decision making process
5. A more complex information environment make voting a demanding task
6. A new indirect way to measure electoral competition: contestability; availability
7. Bridging the gap between models of party choice and models of turnout
Proportions of party switchers between elections, party switchers during election campaigns, late deciders, and split ticket voters at Swedish general elections 1960-2014 (Per cent).

- % party switchers during the election campaign
- % party switchers between elections
- % Late deciders
- % ticket splitters

Source: Swedish Election Studies 1956-2014
CSM: Why should we care?

1. Lower predictability in standard models
2. ”Voters begin to choose”; we need choice models!
3. Increasing heterogeneity in voting behavior
4. **A more realistic account of voters’ decision making process**
5. A more complex information environment make voting a demanding task
6. A new indirect way to measure electoral competition: contestability; availability
7. Bridging the gap between models of party choice and models of turnout
CSM: Why should we care?

1. Lower predictability in standard models
2. ”Voters begin to choose”; we need choice models!
3. Increasing heterogeneity in voting behavior
4. A more realistic account of voters’ decision making process
5. **A more complex information environment make voting a demanding task**
6. A new indirect way to measure electoral competition: contestability; availability
7. Bridging the gap between models of party choice and models of turnout
CSM: Why should we care?

1. Lower predictability in standard models
2. "Voters begin to choose"; we need choice models!
3. Increasing heterogeneity in voting behavior
4. A more realistic account of voters’ decision making process
5. A more complex information environment make voting a demanding task
6. A new indirect way to measure electoral competition: contestability; availability
7. Bridging the gap between models of party choice and models of turnout
CSM: Why should we care?

1. Lower predictability in standard models
2. ”Voters begin to choose”; we need choice models!
3. Increasing heterogeneity in voting behavior
4. A more realistic account of voters’ decision making process
5. A more complex information environment make voting a demanding task
6. A new indirect way to measure electoral competition: contestability; availability
7. Bridging the gap between models of party choice and models of turnout
CSM: Why should we care?

1. Lower predictability in standard models
2. "Voters begin to choose"; we need choice models!
3. Increasing heterogeneity in voting behavior
4. A more realistic account of voters’ decision making process
5. A more complex information environment make voting a demanding task
6. A new indirect way to measure electoral competition: contestability; availability
7. Bridging the gap between models of party choice and models of turnout
The Challenges of CSM: Worth the trouble?

1. New strategies for data collection
2. New survey instrumentation
3. New ways to prepare data for analyses
4. New estimation techniques
The Challenges of CSM: Worth the trouble?

1. New strategies for data collection
2. **New survey instrumentation**
3. New ways to prepare data for analyses
4. New estimation techniques
The Challenges of CSM: Worth the trouble?

1. New strategies for data collection
2. New survey instrumentation
3. **New ways to prepare data for analyses**
4. New estimation techniques
The Challenges of CSM: Worth the trouble?

1. New strategies for data collection
2. New survey instrumentation
3. New ways to prepare data for analyses
4. New estimation techniques
Data & Measurement

• Nine wave web panel March 2014-February 2014
• Probability based sample (2053 signed up, 823 answered all waves)
• Opt-in sample (23 539 signed up, 9205 answered all waves)
• Web version of CS question: "What party or which parties do you consider voting for in the 2014 Swedish national election?"
What we have learned so far

- **Occurrence**: about two thirds of the panel participants actually consider more than one party.
- **Size**: The average CS size hover around two parties.
- **Content**: Parties in CS are generally ideological neighbors.
- **Stability**: CSs containing more than one party are fairly unstable over the course of the campaign, meaning that parties are frequently being included in/excluded from CS.
- **Relevance**: For almost 98 percent of the panelists the final party choice was included in the pre-election panel wave CS.
- **Subjective process**: The formation of CS and final choice is consistent with the panelist’s own subjective choice process – the more parties considered, the more difficult the final choice was perceived and the closer to Election Day the final choice was made.

The Considering Kind
Proportion of Swedish voters (SNES 2014) with CS>1
The Considering Kind
Proportion of Swedish voters (SNES 2014) with CS>1

Easy to choose party: 25
Rather easy: 57
Neither easy nor hard: 61
Rather hard: 69
Very hard: 80
Decided since long: 30
Decided during summer: 52
Decided last week of...
Far to the left: 41
Somewhat to the left: 47
Neither to the left nor right: 47
Far to the right: 51
Strongly convinced: 29
Weak adherent: 28
No party attachment: 47
Vote advice application: 52
No vote advice application: 42
Publications so far


JELS Symposium on Consideration Set Models

1. Consideration set models for party choice: An introduction
   OSCARSSON and ROSEMA

2. What Choice Sets Can Teach Us About Electoral Competition: A Two Hurdle Model
   STEENBERGEN and WILLI

   OSCARSSON and OSKARSON

4. Bridging the Gap Between Life-course Persistence and Electoral Volatility: The Stability of Consideration Sets in Sweden and the Netherlands
   REKKER and ROSEMA

5. Channelling attention and choice? Examining effects of consideration sets on electoral decision-making.
   STEINBRECHER and SCHOEN

6. Balancing Coalition Outcomes via a Strategic Vote A Consideration Set Model Approach
   FREDÉN and SOHLBERG.
1. Consideration set models for party choice: An introduction
OSCARSSON and ROSEMA

2. What Choice Sets Can Teach Us About Electoral Competition: A Two Hurdle Model
STEENBERGEN and WILLI

OSCARSSON and OSKARSON

4. Bridging the Gap Between Life-course Persistence and Electoral Volatility: The Stability of Consideration Sets in Sweden and the Netherlands
REKKER and ROSEMA

5. Channelling attention and choice? Examining effects of consideration sets on electoral decision-making.
STEINBRECHER and SCHOEN

6. Balancing Coalition Outcomes via a Strategic Vote A Consideration Set Model Approach
FREDÉN and SOHLBERG.
JELS Symposium on Consideration Set Models

1. Consideration set models for party choice: An introduction
   OSCARSSON and ROSEMA

2. What Choice Sets Can Teach Us About Electoral Competition: A Two Hurdle Model
   STEENBERGEN and WILLI

   OSCARSSON and OSKARSON

4. Bridging the Gap Between Life-course Persistence and Electoral Volatility: The Stability of Consideration Sets in Sweden and the Netherlands
   REKKER and ROSEMA

5. Channelling attention and choice? Examining effects of consideration sets on electoral decision-making.
   STEINBRECHER and SCHOEN

6. Balancing Coalition Outcomes via a Strategic Vote A Consideration Set Model Approach
   FREDÉN and SOHLBERG.
1. Consideration set models for party choice: An introduction
   OSCARSSON and ROSEMA

2. What Choice Sets Can Teach Us About Electoral Competition: A Two Hurdle Model
   STEENBERGEN and WILLI

   OSCARSSON and OSKARSON

4. Bridging the Gap Between Life-course Persistence and Electoral Volatility: The Stability of Consideration Sets in Sweden and the Netherlands
   REKKER and ROSEMA

5. Channelling attention and choice? Examining effects of consideration sets on electoral decision-making.
   STEINBRECHER and SCHOEN

6. Balancing Coalition Outcomes via a Strategic Vote A Consideration Set Model Approach
   FREDÉN and SOHLBERG.
JELS Symposium on Consideration Set Models

1. Consideration set models for party choice: An introduction
   OSCARSSON and ROSEMA

2. What Choice Sets Can Teach Us About Electoral Competition: A Two Hurdle Model
   STEENBERGEN and WILLI

   OSCARSSON and OSKARSON

4. Bridging the Gap Between Life-course Persistence and Electoral Volatility: The Stability of Consideration Sets in Sweden and the Netherlands
   REKKER and ROSEMA

5. Channelling attention and choice? Examining effects of consideration sets on electoral decision-making
   STEINBRECHER and SCHOEN

6. Balancing Coalition Outcomes via a Strategic Vote A Consideration Set Model Approach
   FREDÉN and SOHLBERG.
JELS Symposium on Consideration Set Models

1. Consideration set models for party choice: An introduction
   OSCARSSON and ROSEMA

2. What Choice Sets Can Teach Us About Electoral Competition: A Two Hurdle Model
   STEENBERGEN and WILLI

   OSCARSSON and OSKARSON

4. Bridging the Gap Between Life-course Persistence and Electoral Volatility: The Stability of Consideration Sets in Sweden and the Netherlands
   REKKER and ROSEMA

5. Channelling attention and choice? Examining effects of consideration sets on electoral decision-making.
   STEINBRECHER and SCHOEN

6. Balancing Coalition Outcomes via a Strategic Vote A Consideration Set Model Approach
   FREDÉN and SOHLBERG.
JELS Symposium on Consideration Set Models

1. Consideration set models for party choice: An introduction
   OSCARSSON and ROSEMA

2. What Choice Sets Can Teach Us About Electoral Competition: A Two Hurdle Model
   STEENBERGEN and WILLI

   OSCARSSON and OSKARSON

4. Bridging the Gap Between Life-course Persistence and Electoral Volatility:
   The Stability of Consideration Sets in Sweden and the Netherlands
   REKKER and ROSEMA

5. Channelling attention and choice? Examining effects of consideration sets on electoral decision-making
   STEINBRECHER and SCHOEN

6. Balancing Coalition Outcomes via a Strategic Vote A Consideration Set Model Approach
   FREDÉN and SOHLBERG.
What happens next?

- Fredén & Oscarsson (2017) Project report (in Swedish) to the *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*.
- Dahlberg, Oskarson & Boije (2018) ”Considerable Competition: how properties of electoral competiveness affects voter’s consideration set size”
- .
Thank you for listening!
References

• individuals often form consideration sets before making the ultimate choice (Roberts, 1989; Roberts and Lattin, 1991, 1997; Shocker et al., 1991).

• that electoral choice can therefore best be modelled as a two-stage process (Oscarsson et al., 1997; Shikano, 2003; Steenbergen & Hangartner, 2008; Wilson 2008; De Vries & Rosema, 2009)

• In other words, voters have finally begun to choose (Rose & McAllister 1986),

• consideration sets become relevant in particular if individuals have many options to choose from (Bettman, 1979, p. 215; Gensch, 1987).

• in some multi-party democracies substantial numbers of voters identify with two or three different parties (Van der Eijk and Niemöller, 1983).

• ever increasing degree of complexity of the choice context – multi-level democracy, more complex information environment, diversified social structures, differentiation of political supply, fragmentation of party systems (Weßels et al. 2014).
References

• the *elimination by aspects* theory of choice (Tversky, 1972).
• Shocker et al. (1991) thus distinguish between a *consideration set* (or *evoked set*) and a *choice set*, where the latter is defined as the sub-set of alternatives from which the ultimate choice is directly made.
• The consideration set may also be formed in another way, however, namely by *including* choice options instead of *excluding* choice options (Yaniv and Schul, 1997; Levin et al., 1998).
• was developed in the context of consumer behaviour, but it also be applied to voting electoral choice (Shikano, 2003).
• long-term partisan loyalties and stable cleavages have only minor impact on large proportions of the electorate of today (Mair, 2008).
• cleavage structures have weakened and these models no longer provide a good general explanation of voting behaviour (see e.g. Irwin and Van Holsteyn, 1989, 1997).
• many voters make their decision in the final days of the campaign (Van der Kolk et al., 2007).
References

- Students of voting behavior are not novel to the idea of expanding the dependent variable vote choice (van der Eijk and Franklin 1997).
Figure 2. Voters' perceptions of party positions along the left-right dimension 1979-2014 (means)
Dahlberg, Oskarson & Oscarsson (2018?) "Considerable Competition: how properties of electoral competitiveness affects voter’s consideration set size"
Fredén & Sohlberg (2018?) ”The Struggle Really Is Real: How Voters with Coalition-Straddling Consideration Sets Think and Behave During Election Campaigns” Presented at MPSA 2017

Abstract: Pre-electoral party coalitions are common in multi-party systems and they often have far-reaching consequences on political behavior. We propose that individuals who choose between parties from competing coalitions think and act differently than individuals who only consider voting for parties of the same coalition, partially because the coalition-straddling individuals are crucial to the election outcome. Drawing on election campaign data from a multi-wave panel with thousands of participants collected during two election campaigns in Sweden, we show that individuals who straddle opposing coalitions think that the vote decision is harder and rely more on voting advice applications. Moreover, we find that they are less influenced by their ideology in making retrospective evaluations and become less ideologically extreme over the election campaign. Finally we find they are more affected by their ultimate vote choice.

Keywords: Consideration Sets, Coalitions, Political Behavior
“Even if the ability to accurately predict vote choice will not increase, insight in the act of voting might still benefit from knowledge about the way that consideration sets are formed in the vote decision making process.”

“The idea would be that understanding involves more than being able to predict a pivotal dependent variable (e.g. party choice in an election) on the basis of a set of independent variables. Understanding also involves insight in all the processes that lead to that decision.”

DeVries & Rosema (2009):