

**Heterogeneous campaign effects in the German multi-party system? An empirical test of consideration set models**

Markus Steinbrecher

Bundeswehr Center for Military History and Social Sciences

Zeppelinstrasse 127/128

D-14471 Potsdam

[MarkusSteinbrecher@bundeswehr.org](mailto:MarkusSteinbrecher@bundeswehr.org)

Harald Schoen

University of Mannheim

A5, 6

D-68131 Mannheim

[Harald.schoen@uni-mannheim.de](mailto:Harald.schoen@uni-mannheim.de)

Paper prepared for delivery at the 9<sup>th</sup> ECPR General Conference, Université de Montréal, Montreal, Canada, August 26-29, 2015.

Panel: Consideration set models for Party Choice in Multi-Party Elections.

**Abstract:**

Consideration set modeling builds on the notion that voters in multi-party systems make electoral decisions in multiple stages. Temporal heterogeneity implies some kind of path dependency in electoral decision-making. Accordingly, a voter's responsiveness to specific campaign efforts during a campaign may depend on his decision at previous stages of this process. Provided this hypothesis is correct, consideration set modeling is a powerful tool in addressing unobserved heterogeneity in traditional models of voting behavior in multi-party systems.

In this paper, we discuss the analysis of campaign effects in multi-party systems and identify potential problems resulting from unobserved heterogeneity in traditional models. Next, we discuss whether consideration set modeling might be a means to overcome these problems. Finally, we examine the utility of consideration set modeling in addressing issues resulting from heterogeneous campaign effects using data from the campaign-panel component of the 2013 German Longitudinal Election Study.

## 1. Introduction

Consideration set modeling builds on the notion that voters in multi-party systems make electoral decisions in multiple stages (De Vries and Rosema 2009; Oscarsson 2004, 2009; Oscarsson et al. 1997; Oskarson et al. 2014; Paap et al. 2005; Steenbergen and Hangartner 2008; Steenbergen et al. 2011; Steinbrecher et al. 2014). Given the limitations of human beings in processing information (Simon 1985), it is reasonable to assume that voters aim at simplifying electoral decision-making. One way to simplify decision-making is to edit the decision by eliminating one or more alternatives from the original set of possibilities (Redlawsk and Lau 2013: 137). Thus, voters will first narrow down the number of alternatives under consideration (stage 1) and then choose one of the parties (or candidates) from this consideration set (stage 2). While voters will use the campaign and related political information for their decision-making and selection process in order to come up with just one party on Election Day, the consideration set perspective implies that voters differ in the way they arrive at the final vote choice. In particular, they will differ in the perception of the campaign as well as in the responsiveness to the campaign. If these hypotheses proved to be correct, ignoring consideration sets would imply a considerable amount of unobserved heterogeneity leading to biased results in traditional models of voting behavior. Put differently, it would be indispensable to take consideration sets into account when analyzing electoral decision-making, particularly in multi-party systems.

Our main goal thus is to explore whether, on the one hand, information search, the perception and evaluation of campaign-related information are dependent on the alternatives a citizen considers for her electoral decision and whether this selective and potentially biased set of information, on the other hand, has an impact on the final decision for one of the parties (from the consideration set). This line of reasoning suggests that we have to identify relevant external stimuli closely linked to specific parties. The relevant external stimuli may comprise, e.g., campaign efforts by the parties themselves (like rallies, posters, or TV ads), biased personal political communication (like conversations with friends or significant others), or campaign events (e.g., the TV debates between the chancellor candidates of the two major German parties or issues, scandals, or problems which emerge during the campaign). Although the focus of this paper is on selective awareness and biased information processing, this contribution is a follow-up to our paper on the validity of consideration set measures (Steinbrecher et al. 2014). In that paper we mentioned that comparing consideration set measures based on direct questions on possibly eligible parties with other measures of consideration sets was just one test of the validity of the concept and its measurement. We argued that the composition of the consideration set should also be reflected in the attention as well as the reception and evaluation of campaign information. Accordingly, the subsequent analyses in this paper can also be regarded as an additional test of the validity of the consideration set concept itself.

Based on the previous considerations, the paper will be organized as follows: In the next section we will present and discuss consideration sets and the added value of this concept for electoral research.

In addition, we will link the consideration set concept with theories of information processing and motivated reasoning. Subsequently, we will focus on campaign events and relevant campaign-related information. We will come up with a definition for the concept and will discuss the different categories of events. Subsequently, this section will give a short overview on the relevant events during the 2013 German federal election campaign, followed by our hypotheses regarding the selective awareness towards and the biased perception of campaign events and efforts as well as their potential effects on voting behavior. The third section concentrates on the data from the campaign-panel survey of the 2013 GLES used for the analyses and the operationalization of the relevant variables measuring consideration sets, campaign information, and events. The fourth section will present the results of our analyses, while the fifth and last section will summarize our findings and their implications for future research on consideration sets, campaign effects, and voting behavior.

## **2. Theory and hypotheses**

Elections provide voters with an opportunity to choose a party or candidate from an extensive number of alternatives. At the same time, voters face a quite complex task when making up their minds upon whom to vote for. Even in pure two-party settings, there is a multitude of criteria to employ to pick one party. Moreover, campaigns provide voters with lots of information about competing parties and candidates that they might process when making an electoral decision. Switching from two- to multi-party settings increases the complexity of decision-making additionally. Given the cognitive limitations of human beings, choosing a party in a multi-party setting implies serious cognitive challenges for voters. The history of elections suggests, however, that there are some means for voters to cope with this kind of task complexity. Relying on an information processing perspective (e.g., Lau and Redlawsk 2006), voters do not collect information on all alternatives to process it and make a decision over all alternatives at a single point in time. Rather, information processing and making decisions extend over a longer period of time. By implication, the task of electoral decision-making can be divided into manageable steps which are taken subsequently, rather than simultaneously.

In a sequence of decisions, voters might narrow down the number of alternatives to a manageable set from which they then choose. Put differently, they are assumed to form a consideration set from which they finally pick the party to vote for. By eliminating alternatives, voters make the decision problem more manageable because they have to deal with information on a limited number of alternatives. Utilizing a sequential strategy might permit voters also to employ different criteria at different stages of the decision-making process. Having chosen considerable parties by rather crude criteria, voters might switch to more demanding strategies and fine-grained criteria when choosing from the parties included in the consideration set (e.g., Redlawsk and Lau 2013). Irrespective of the criteria employed, this notion suggests a (gradual) narrowing-down of the number of alternatives and a final choice.

To be useful in alleviating the burden of electoral decision-making,<sup>1</sup> consideration sets should exhibit some causal effects on voters' information processing. We shall focus on two of them. First, the composition of the consideration set should guide one's search for and awareness towards information during the campaign period. According to the consideration set perspective, voters will pay close attention to information about the parties or candidates within their consideration set, while being reluctant exposing themselves to or even ignoring information about competitors not in the consideration set. This proposition follows from the notion on narrowing down the number of alternatives to a manageable consideration set. If consideration sets did not have this effect, they hardly would be useful in making electoral decision-making more manageable. In addition to this cognitivist line of reasoning (e.g., Redlawsk and Lau 2013), consideration sets might exhibit an impact on information processing via an affective channel. Voters are likely to hold positive affects toward parties and candidates who made it into their consideration set. Building on the notion of partisan motivated reasoning (e.g., Lodge and Taber 2000, 2013; Taber and Lodge 2006), positive affect toward political parties and candidates makes voters inclined to focus selectively on information provided by and concerning the considered alternatives. Moreover, citizens will be inclined to ignore negative information on the considered alternatives (unless a certain threshold is crossed) and they will be more attentive to positive information on the considered alternatives.<sup>2</sup>

We have to keep in mind that the nature of political campaigns might limit this focusing effect of consideration sets. First, election campaigns are crafted to obtrusively reach out to as many potential voters as possible. As a consequence, it might be harder to avoid witnessing campaign information than receiving it. Thus, consideration sets might exhibit limited effects on information reception. Second, messages and information provided during campaign periods differ in content. Some of them reiterate well-known messages, e.g., long-held policy positions, and thus fit nicely in (stereotypic) images of parties and candidates. This kind of messages is unlikely to attract much attention among media and voters alike. Others, however, do not fit into preformed images and provide some surprise and, thus, arouse public attention in all subgroups of the electorate. These messages may also have the capacity to change voters' minds because they contain information that counter pre-existing images. In this line of reasoning, surprising messages are more likely to attract voters' attention across the board than image-confirming messages.

In addition to channeling voter attention, consideration sets might also condition the impact of new information on electoral decision-making. In traditional models of vote choice, external stimuli are assumed to affect decision-making of all voters alike. This assumption rests on the notion of a homogeneous electorate or builds on the notion that preexisting political preferences do not make a

---

<sup>1</sup> We assume that citizens are motivated to make a sufficiently "good" decision and to make it with least effort.

<sup>2</sup> Negatively valenced information about alternatives not in the consideration set might prove valuable bolstering the choice of considered parties. Given constraints in time and cognitive resources, however, ignoring this information is more straightforward.

difference in the effectiveness of new information and messages. Against the second assumption one might raise the objection that the potential impact of new information depends on the nature of the choice a voter faces. Provided a person has to choose from alternatives A and B, information on alternative C will be not that influential unless it is somehow connected to one of the alternatives the voter has to choose from. Provided a consideration set comprising A, B and C, things look somewhat different. Positive messages about C will increase the likelihood of voting for it, whereas negative messages will decrease it. Moreover, as alternatives A and B are comprised by the consideration set, the likelihood of voting for either or both of them will increase. The probability of casting a vote for parties not included in the consideration set should be unaffected, however. Put differently, effects of new information on vote choice are assumed to be conditional on the composition of the voter's consideration set.<sup>3</sup>

Provided the validity of this argument, neglecting information about consideration sets in analyses of voting behavior will lead to flawed conclusions about the electoral impact of campaign messages. Estimates will be some kind of weighted average of the effects across a diversity of subgroups of voters preferring different consideration sets. In effect, these estimates will be not very informative. For example, they might suggest that a campaign stimulus is ineffective although it actually exhibits a positive effect in one group, a negative effect in another group, and no effect in still another subsection of the electorate. Accounting for voter heterogeneity in terms of consideration sets will thus enable scholars to glean more precise insights into the effectiveness of stimuli arising during campaign periods.

As with the hypotheses concerning information processing, campaign communications are likely to serve as confounding factors. For example, campaign strategies, including priming and framing, aim at shaping the criteria voters rely on when making decisions (e.g., Iyengar and Kinder 1987). Provided these strategies are successful, selection criteria might change and thus the composition of the consideration set. In summary, it cannot be taken for granted that voters monotonically narrow down the number of alternatives under consideration before finally picking a party. Rather, we might observe a back-and-forth process before voters arrive at their voting decision.<sup>4</sup> As this example suggests, we cannot take it for granted that consideration sets will exhibit effects derived from theory.

Before turning to the details of the case from which we draw the data, we shall recap the two hypotheses we aim to examine. First, the reasoning on consideration sets suggests that having a

---

<sup>3</sup> In another, more refined version of this argument, the criteria a voter relied on selecting parties to be included in the consideration set will affect the impact of new information on further decision-making. In this line of reasoning, voters who relied on, e.g., traditional morality as a criterion for preselecting parties will be more responsive to information referring to this domain than to other information.

<sup>4</sup> We will only draw on consideration sets in wave 1 of the GLES-campaign-panel and thus ignore this aspect for the current version of this paper. However, we are definitely aware of the possible changing nature of consideration sets during an electoral campaign and intend to include this aspect in future extensions of our analyses. For a description of the developments of consideration sets during the campaign-panel survey of the German federal election 2013 see Steinbrecher et al. 2014.

specific party within one's consideration set will increase the likelihood of receiving information about that party and its representatives. Moreover, it will make voters more inclined to evaluate information about the party and its representatives favorably. When it comes to the responsiveness to campaign stimuli, second, we expect that affectively charged information about party A (or its representatives) will exhibit particularly strong effects on the likelihood of voting for party B if voters consider both parties A and B (rather than just A or another combination of parties not including B). These general hypotheses will become clearer when we deal with external information and campaign events in general as well as the particularly relevant events during the 2013 German federal election campaign subsequently.

A campaign period comprises a multitude of specific events whose perception and evaluation might be dependent on antecedent consideration processes regarding eligible parties. However, events and their perception and evaluation will also likely affect individual-level vote choice, as well as the aggregate outcome of the ensuing election to a different degree. To have a considerable impact on voting behavior, events have to meet several conditions. First of all, an event that is only noticed by a handful of voters is unlikely to make a difference on a national scale. That is, an event will have a noticeable impact only if it affects lots of potential voters or it is covered by (mass) media, so that a great deal of voters may learn about it. Moreover, for being influential, the event in itself or communication about it needs to have political implications. In addition, even if an event is covered by many media outlets, voters need to pay attention and form an evaluation on the issue and the relevant actors. Based on the above discussion of motivated reasoning, it is very likely that voters will not focus on each and every event, but will concentrate on a reasonable selection instead that will help them to form a decision to vote. If they pay attention, events might affect voters, the set of parties they consider and their eventual behavior mainly through persuasion or priming effects (Brady et al. 2006: 8-11; Schoen 2014: 682-703). Moreover, voters glean information from events that are useful in making up their minds. For example, they use information from campaign events to update their expectations concerning the viability of a party and the willingness of two parties to form a coalition after the election. We also have to bear in mind the possibility of countermobilization: An event can be regarded negatively for a specific party, but might also be beneficial for other parties, because the party is its issue owner or because it provides a different position towards that particular issue.

External stimuli arising during election campaigns differ on several dimensions, including the initiator or sender of a message, the channel of communication, and the substance of a message. Relying on these dimensions, prior research explored campaign effects from different angles. For example, one line of research studied whether party-initiated messages differ in effect from other messages (e.g., Schoen 2014 for an overview). Likewise, scholars addressed the question whether face-to-face communication and written messages differ in effectiveness (e.g., Imai 2005). Finally, concerning the substance of messages, a lively debate revolves around the question of whether negative campaigning

messages have specific effects (e.g., Valentino and Nardis 2013: 578-579). Obviously, these lines of research address the same phenomena from different angles leading to a considerable overlap between them.

For our purpose, we distinguish five types of external stimuli whose perception and evaluation might be dependent on voters' consideration sets and which thus are potentially capable of affecting voters' decision-making. From a sender perspective, we start with our first category, partisan campaigns. Before the 2013 election, parties devised campaigns aiming at mobilizing and persuading voters. They employed a number of vehicles to reach voters including campaign posters, newspaper ads, spots broadcast by TV and radio, party rallies, canvassing as well as internet-based forms of campaigning.<sup>5</sup> Leaving aside the symbolic value of campaign tools, campaign contacts work in a quite straightforward way. If a citizen considers voting for a party, he should be more attentive towards messages from that particular party. In general, we thus expect that citizens will expose themselves to a greater extent towards the campaigns of those parties they have included in their consideration set. Regarding the final decision to vote, people witnessing persuasive messages from political parties may become more likely to prefer and switch to the respective parties and will eventually vote for it.

Our second category is personal political communication with partisans. Election campaigns increase the salience of electoral politics for ordinary citizens, making them inclined to talk about the election, parties, and candidates. By talking about politics, citizens may disseminate information but also provide their friends, acquaintances, and family members – consciously or unconsciously – with cues on which party to vote. Given interpersonal trust among close acquaintances and the power of personal communication in persuading others (e.g., Gerber and Green 2000; Imai 2005), people with the respective parties in their consideration set will, on the one hand, engage in more political communication with known partisan friends, acquaintances, and family members. However, it will be quite difficult to avoid political communication with a family member, even in case of political disagreement. On the other hand, partisan signals in political talk may prove particularly influential affecting voting behavior, net of other communications<sup>6</sup>: People who have more political

---

<sup>5</sup> Other campaign events initiated by parties like party conventions and the presentation of candidates and programs are also important tools to affect public opinion and voting behavior. However, these campaign events were not covered by the GLES campaign-panel and thus cannot be included in the analysis.

<sup>6</sup> Mass media are definitely another sender which provides voters with news coverage before, during, and after campaign periods. By covering and commenting on events, polls, the state of the economy, policy proposals, and candidates, mass media may affect voters' opinion formation and decision-making in several ways. By highlighting some topics and events, they may affect the public's agenda and individuals' impression of which topics are salient. Provided issue ownership, agenda setting may benefit some parties at the polls and hurt others. Likewise, media may portray events, policy proposals, and other topics using specific frames. Moreover, mass media comment on events and policies, thereby explicitly providing recipients with cues how to evaluate events and policies. Of course, mass media cover and comment on partisan campaigns. Taken together, mass media provide a multitude of messages potentially influential in affecting opinion formation and voting behavior. The most straightforward way media content may exhibit effects on behavioral outcomes and their proximate causes is by providing a partisan tone. However, information on the tone of specific media is not available to us. Instead the data just provide information on the extent of consumption regarding different media outlets. Since we are



communication with a sympathizer or voter of a party will be more likely to vote for the respective party.

Turning from a sender to a content perspective, we focus on our third category, media events, i.e. events live broadcast by mass media (Dayan and Katz 1992). The televised debate between Angela Merkel and her challenger Peer Steinbrück was by far the most prominent media event. It took place on September 1, just three weeks before Election Day. This event is designed to reach large proportions of the electorate, including citizens who are not involved in politics. In fact, about 17 million people watched the debate which was broadcast simultaneously on all major German TV networks. Given the partisan nature of the messages, the potential of these events to affect voters is limited. Still, they can affect voters, primarily via persuasion effects, with politically independent citizens being particularly susceptible to debate effects (e.g., Maier and Faas 2011). At the same time, we have to keep in mind that televised debates in Germany feature primarily the chancellor candidates, i.e. the top candidates of the two major parties CDU/CSU and SPD. Accordingly, these media events are likely to affect primarily those who consider voting for these parties rather than for their competitors in the German multi-party setting. However, we cannot ignore potential strategic considerations among sympathizers with other parties regarding potential coalitions. Thus, it might be that people who consider voting for the FDP will concentrate on Merkel's performance, while sympathizers with the Green party will focus on Steinbrück and will keep his performance in mind when forming their electoral decision. The social aspect of the TV debate cannot be ignored as well: Since the TV debate is the major campaign event, there is lots of coverage in the media on it before and afterwards. Aside from media coverage, it can be expected that citizens will talk about the TV debate with others. Accordingly, we will also include the perceived tenor of media and social environment regarding the TV debate with similar expectations for consideration sets and voting behavior than for the evaluation of the TV debate itself.

Approximately a week after the TV debate, Merkel and Steinbrück took part in two separate 75-minute TV-discussions called "Wahlarena". Similar to US-townhall meetings, citizens got the chance to directly ask the respective candidate about their political opinions and positions. As with the TV debate, only the candidates of CDU/CSU and SPD were invited and, thus, perceptions and evaluations of the "Wahlarena" should only be relevant for those who consider voting for one of the major parties.<sup>7</sup> However, the overall relevance of this discussion format should be much smaller, because only 3.2 million (Merkel) and 3.9 million (Steinbrück) people, respectively, watched these TV shows.

Our fourth category, information about events, may prove valuable in creating political scandals (e.g., Kepplinger 2012; Nyhan 2015) and questioning the credibility and viability of competing parties and

---

not able to come up with a reasonable hypothesis how specific configurations of consideration sets might influence the extent of media use we unfortunately have to ignore the mass media in the subsequent analyses.

<sup>7</sup> There were also TV events which covered the leading candidates of the smaller parties represented in the federal parliament. However, the survey does not include items on these events.

candidates. Put differently, information about this kind of events is not in itself powerful in shaping political opinion formation and voting behavior but serves as some kind of raw material for campaign communication from all senders. If a campaign succeeds in scandalizing a deed or non-deed, the respective politician or party gets into trouble. We argue that motivated reasoning will also work regarding the perception and evaluation of these events in conjunction with consideration sets. People who consider voting for the party or parties involved will evaluate the respective event more in favor of their party, while those who do not consider the party/parties for their electoral decision will bear more negative evaluations. Regarding electoral behavior, public debate about and media coverage of a failure of a politician or a party, despite motivated reasoning along partisan lines,<sup>8</sup> is likely to decrease support for the politician or her party. Provided a sufficient magnitude and strong linkage to the party, this persuasion effect will decrease the likelihood of voting for the respective party. Political scandals, however, might exhibit additional effects. For example, they might increase the salience of an issue that is “owned” by a particular party and thereby increase the likelihood of voting for this party. Put differently, the primary effect of a scandal is to hurt the party that is identified as responsible for or connected to the scandal, but via secondary effects a scandal might also affect the electoral fortunes of other parties, depending on the nature of the scandal.

For the most part, the federal election campaign in 2013 was void of high-level scandals, gaffes and controversies. We will provide a short summary on the relevant events during the campaign which were covered by the campaign-panel survey<sup>9</sup>: A constant topic over the course of the whole campaign was the NSA-spy scandal. After the publication of Edward Snowden’s information about the widespread surveillance of British and US intelligence, public discussion in Germany focused on the issue whether the government (and later also the opposition parties) knew about the spy activities and how Chancellor Merkel dealt with the problem. The media inveighed against the underestimation of the scandal by top politicians such as Merkel or the minister of the interior Hans-Peter Friedrich (both CDU/CSU). Thus, this scandal mainly is linked to CDU and CSU (and maybe the FDP as their coalition partner) on the one hand, and the Greens on the other hand, whose agenda and party platform strongly focus on privacy protection.

The Euro Hawk or drone scandal actually began quite a few months prior to the campaign, but got heated again on July 30, when an investigation committee on this issue received much public attention. Minister of defense Thomas de Maizière (CDU) faced severe criticism due to his behavior in this important and expensive arms project. Germany invested heavily in Euro-Hawk drones, which,

---

<sup>8</sup> Depending on the nature of the scandal, additional dispositions and prior beliefs will affect information processing, including whether an incident is evaluated as a scandal. Given the focus of this paper, we will not deal with these sources of heterogeneity in detail.

<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, this is not a complete description of all possibly relevant campaign events before the German federal election in 2013. However, due to the online mode of the campaign-panel and the close timing of the panel waves, the project group of the GLES was able to react quickly to possibly relevant scandals and events during the campaign. We thus argue that we can include the most important events during that particular campaign.

however, failed to be authorized by the Civil Aeronautics Board. According to the opposition parties, de Maizière lied about the fact at which point in time he was informed about the problems regarding the project. They further claimed that de Maizière failed to lead his ministry appropriately and therefore put forward an investigating committee, in which the minister had to explain his behavior and knowledge of the process. The party most strongly connected to this scandal is definitely the CDU.

On August 5, the media reported that the Green party suggested implementing a so-called Veggie Day in public and company staff lunchrooms: Once a week only vegetarian dishes should be offered. The media and political opponents criticized the plans as too restrictive and called the Greens a “prohibition party”. The Greens, surprised by the amount of public controversy, reaffirmed that the Veggie Day should be introduced on a voluntary basis only, not in form of a public law. Accordingly, the Greens are clearly the party which is linked to this issue.

A few days later, another policy proposal received much public attention. Horst Seehofer, leader of the CDU’s Bavarian sister party CSU, dominantly demanded to introduce a highway toll for foreign car drivers (in addition to the already existing toll for trucks). His proposal was widely discussed, mainly in regard to its questionable financial benefits and legal problems with EU regulations. His opponents also claimed that Seehofer was trying to stir up populist sentiment against foreigners. Chancellor Merkel clearly stated not to support such a highway toll; Horst Seehofer, however, made it one of the CSU’s major conditions in prospective coalition negotiations. Due to the lack of consensus between both sister parties, it is hard to estimate how people who consider voting for one of these parties will be affected by the issue.

At the end of August, the United States considered a military intervention in Syria, after the Syrian government used chemical weapons against opposition forces and civilians. Chancellor Merkel hesitated to sign an agreement expressing the willingness to support the US in case of an intervention. The opposition parties SPD and the Greens criticized Merkel’s indecisive behavior. Thus, while the Syria issue could be disadvantageous for CDU/CSU and maybe the FDP as their coalition partner, it could be beneficial for supporters of the Social Democrats and the Green party.

A few days later, the chancellor candidate of the SPD, Peer Steinbrück, took part in a special photo-interview format by a major national newspaper (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*) in which he had to answer in gestures rather than verbally. As an answer to a critical question regarding his unlucky campaign, Steinbrück showed his middle finger to the photographer. With Steinbrück’s consent, the newspaper published the photo on its cover. In the following public debate it was discussed whether this gesture was acceptable given Steinbrück’s candidacy and its associated role-model functions. It is quite possible that voters who were strongly appalled by the middle finger turned away from the SPD and stopped considering voting for it.

One week before the election, the Greens got caught up with their own past. In the 1980s a considerable faction in the Green party demanded to legalize sexual actions with under-aged. In 2013 a German political scientist was asked to clarify the details of this problematic chapter of the party's history. A few weeks before Election Day the researchers published first results that revealed the involvement of major political figures of the Green party, such as top candidate Jürgen Trittin, in this movement. This scandal clearly is connected to the Greens.

There are three additional issues which cannot be assigned to a single event during the federal election campaign. Instead these issues were on the agenda already before that election and came back on it during the campaign. One of these events is the so-called "Causa Wulff". Federal President Christian Wulff stepped down from his office on February 17, 2012 after he was accused of favouritism and unethical behavior and the district attorney of Hanover had requested the lifting of his immunity just one day before. The court trial in Hanover started on August 27, less than four weeks before Election Day. Since Wulff was the candidate of the government parties CDU/CSU and FDP when he was elected Federal President in 2010, this issue might hurt both parties. However, as a party member of the CDU, it is likely that his party will be connected to this scandal to a higher degree.

A regular topic in recent campaigns, but also in the 2013 federal election campaign, was a so-called "Red-red-green coalition", meaning a potential alliance between the left and center-left parties SPD, Greens, and The Left. Although these parties are relatively close in terms of positions towards many policies and issues, this coalition is still an unrealistic option at the federal level because of antipathies between party leaders, lack of consensus in terms of foreign and security policy goals, the low level of general support among the electorate for this coalition, and because The Left still carries the stigma of being the successor of the state party of the GDR. The potential or hypothetical coalition between these parties is used by different political actors. CDU/CSU, FDP, and the right wing of SPD and Greens use it as a potential threat to align party members and supporters of their own and the other parties, while proponents of the left wing of SPD and Greens as well as The Left can use it as a potential perspective for coming into power. Accordingly, it is difficult to come up with a clear expectation how broaching the issue of such a coalition might be influenced by consideration sets and how it might impact on the final decision to vote.

A permanent issue in the media, independent of an upcoming election or not, is the state of the economy. According to the economic voting literature, this is the central yardstick which is used by voters to estimate the performance of an incumbent government (e.g., Duch and Stevenson 2008; Kramer 1971; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2013). Poor economic conditions thus provide opposition parties with an opportunity to criticize government. By the same logic, a flourishing economy may prove helpful for governing parties seeking reelection because it permits them to lead a feel-good campaign. The economic conditions around the federal election 2013 in Germany were good, especially when compared with other EU-member states. Thus, people who consider voting for one of

the government parties should have more positive evaluations of the state of the economy than citizens who do not consider (one of) the government parties. In terms of the decision to vote consideration sets should work in a similar way than other partisan orientations (e.g., Steinbrecher 2015 for party identification).

Our fifth and last category is outcomes of elections at other levels of government as well as results of voting advice applications (VAA). We put these aspects in one category, because both provide strategic or heuristic information regarding potential electoral decisions. One week before the federal election, a state election was held in Bavaria. Leaving aside inferences about coalition signals, parties and candidates may utilize information on elections at other levels in commenting on the viability of parties and candidates at the national level. Some voters may rely on this information and accompanying spinning by forming political preferences along the lines suggested by bandwagon and underdog models (e.g., Brettschneider 2000; Patterson 1980, 1993). For others, inferences about the electoral fortunes of parties play a role in strategic voting behavior. For example, a person considering voting for a party unlikely to enter parliament may become less likely to vote for that party if she learns that this party failed to enter a state parliament. In the case of the Bavarian state election, this might have been particularly relevant with respect to the FDP which failed to cross the 5 percent threshold. Considering the low support and bad ratings for this party in opinion polls at the federal level the result of the Bavarian state election might have been particularly relevant for all those who considered voting for the Free Democrats.

Having in mind the latter two mechanisms, information from VAAs is likely to have similar effects compared to state elections. VAAs have become popular tools to inform voters about party programs and the voters' closeness to parties and their platforms. Before the federal election in 2013, more than 13 million people used the most popular VAA, "Wahlomat", hosted by the state-run Federal Center for Political Education. VAAs may influence some voters in preference formation, whereas for others it may feed into strategic calculi of voting. Especially for those who consider voting for several parties, it might be a helpful tool in their decision-making process. However, while the tool may help some voters to come up with a decision, others might be irritated by the result once they learn that they are closest to a party which they did not consider voting for or which is not their first preference. Accordingly, the shape of a voter's consideration set will have an impact on the use and the relevance of VAA results for the decision to vote.

Altogether, the mentioned aspects provide a comprehensive set of events that can help to illustrate the relevance and the implications of the consideration set concept. Before we present the results of our analysis, we will first introduce the data, show the relevant variables and their measurement, before we will eventually discuss some problems that might be linked to this particular dataset and the operationalization of the relevant measures.

### 3. Data and operationalization

We will use the GLES (German Longitudinal Election Study; Rattinger et al. 2014) campaign-panel study for the German federal election 2013. Between June 20 and October 4, 5,256 persons have been interviewed up to seven times, six times before the election (which took place on September 22) and one time afterwards. Interviews were conducted online. Participants came from an online access panel run by the market research company Respondi. These persons had been mostly recruited on special webpages; hence they are on average very web-affine and clearly not representative of the general population in Germany. However, since our goal is to study the consequences of intra-individual decision-making processes and not to describe the entire population, this should not be a disadvantage for our analysis. Instead of applying random sampling, the selection of campaign-panel participants had been consciously designed to obtain a maximally heterogeneous sample. By using quota specifications, groups of people defined by 30 combinations of sex, age and education categories are represented in the dataset with approximately the same relative frequency. Our analyses will focus on those 2,917 respondents who do not show a stable voting behavior over the course of the campaign-panel. Accordingly, we do not include respondents with stable intentions to vote for one party and those who did cast an absentee ballot before Election Day. We exclude absentee voters because they decided early before the election and hence were not asked subsequently whether they considered voting for other parties than the one they had already mentioned. In addition, we can assume that the fact of having cast a ballot already before Election Day has an impact on the likelihood to consider possible other parties for the (then hypothetical) decision to vote. Stable voters are excluded because we want to explain changes in electoral behavior by using fixed-effects panel regression models in the second step of our analysis.

Our main indicator for consideration sets is based on a direct question whether a respondent considers voting for a specific party or not. All respondents except absentee voters were asked these questions, no matter if they already intended to vote for a party or if they were still undecided about their voting decision. These questions were part of waves 1, 3, 6, and 7 of the survey, and a four-point scale was used providing the options “do consider [party]”, “do rather consider [party]”, “do rather not consider [party]”, and “do not consider at all [party]”.<sup>10</sup> The parties for which these questions were asked included CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, Greens, The Left, AfD, and the Pirate Party and thus all parties which were either represented in the federal parliament before the 2013 election or which had chances to

---

<sup>10</sup> The exact wording of the question and the response options was, of course, adapted to the timing of the question and whether the question was addressed to a respondent who was decided to vote for or a party or not. The exact German wording for respondents who provided an intention to vote was: “Sie haben gesagt, dass Sie mit Ihrer Zweitstimme [Partei] wählen wollen. Gibt es für Sie noch weitere Parteien, die für Ihre Zweitstimme in Frage kommen?“ Response options: „(1) [Partei] kommt für mich in Frage, (2) [Partei] kommt für mich eher in Frage, (3) [Partei] kommt für mich eher nicht in Frage, (4) Partei kommt für mich auf keinen Fall in Frage.“

secure more than five percent of the votes and hence could be part of the newly elected parliament. In addition, “other party” was also included as a residual category. However, we have no information which party or parties a respondent might have thought of when he provided an answer on whether he considers voting for this “other party” or not. Previous studies on consideration sets (Oscarsson 2009; Oscarsson et al. 1997; Oskarson et al. 2014; Paap et al. 2005) have used similar items, but only in cross-sectional surveys or panel surveys with a much lower number of waves.

Based on our previous analyses regarding the validity of different consideration set measures (Steinbrecher et al. 2014), we use a dichotomous variable which indicates if a respondent considers to vote for a specific party or not. This means that we decide when a party is part of the consideration set of a voter and when it is not by introducing a cut-point. The consequence of using a dichotomous variable is that we have to regard consideration sets as deterministic constructs in a sense that a party is either part of a consideration set of a voter or not. However, we have to point to the fact that consideration sets and the fact that a party is considered by a voter is rather a probabilistic construct and that probabilities change over the course of the campaign. However, as mentioned earlier we will not focus on the dynamic development of consideration sets in this paper. Since our main goal is to analyze whether different configurations of consideration sets have an impact on campaign and event perceptions as well as on the extent of their effects on the decision to vote, we will just use the measurement at the outset of the 2013 campaign in wave 1 of the survey. Our measure combines the top-two responses “do consider” and “do rather consider”. If respondents provided an intention to vote for a party in the pre-election waves or mentioned a party in the post-election question on their electoral behavior, the mentioned party is part of their consideration set and the variable for the respective party thus equals one. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for consideration sets by parties. We will just focus on the five parties who were represented in the federal parliament before the federal election and for whom we have measures regarding communication and campaign events. We just present those consideration sets which are shared by at least 50 respondents.<sup>11</sup> We see that 38.9 percent of our survey population considers voting for the SPD, 33.9 percent for the Greens, 29.9 percent for CDU or CSU, 17.4 percent for The Left, and 14.3 percent for the FDP. The share of respondents who just considers voting for one party is quite low, but this is a consequence of excluding stable voters from the analysis who are much clearer about their preference. Thus, for all parties, a consideration set of at least two parties usually is the most common combination, e.g., SPD-Greens for those who have those parties in their consideration set.

– Insert Table 1 about here –

Our main variables of interest are perceptions of the campaign and relevant events during the campaign. Table 2 presents an overview of the variables, their wording, and the assumed party that

---

<sup>11</sup> We also present the consideration sets which just comprise the FDP and The Left due to their importance, although they do not match this criterion.

should be mostly affected by it. The table does not include issue orientations, candidate orientations (which both are used as “hard” control variables in the second part of our analyses), frequency of discussion with most important political conversation partners, and the index of campaign contacts with the parties. In contrast to the items presented in Table 2 these variables were created for all parties. Issue orientations are based on items for which respondents had to mention parties they think will be able to solve the two most important problems in Germany. Candidate orientations were calculated from feeling thermometers for the chancellor or top candidates of the five parties. The political conversation item represents the frequency of discussions (in days) with the most important discussion partner. Participants of the campaign-panel were also asked about the party they thought this person would vote for. The campaign contacts item refers to a broad set of activities the parties conducted during the campaign to convince voters. The respective index counts all activities by which a voter was targeted or which he actively used regarding the particular party.

– Insert Table 2 about here –

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Selective exposure to campaign communication and biased perceptions and evaluations of campaign events**

In this sub-section we will look at the consequences of consideration sets for campaign exposure and the perception of events during the campaign in particular. We will base the analyses on the consideration set measures introduced in the previous section. This means, we will concentrate on the most frequent consideration sets in our survey displayed in Table 1. We ran analyses of variance (Anova) to explore differences between the means in the selected consideration set groups (Tables 3-7). The significance statistics show whether at least one of the groups differs significantly from at least one other group or not. For the sake of brevity we will only look at campaign exposure and evaluations from wave 6 of the survey, which was the last wave before the election. We will also not look at each and every cell of the table, but will try to provide a summary of the general patterns concerning our expectations and hypotheses presented in section 2.

Table 3 shows the results for consideration set types that include CDU and CSU. Looking first at those who just consider voting for the Christian Democrats and no other party (in comparison to those who do not consider voting for CDU and CSU at all), we see that these people evaluate most of the event and communication variables more positively when the CDU is connected to the particular issue, e.g., these people evaluate the handling of the NSA-scandal much better (0.50). The same is true for the drone-scandal (0.60) or the Syria issue (0.59) and they think the beginning of the court trial against former President Wulff is less justified (0.57). There is also evidence for more negative evaluations of events which are connected to other parties: Steinbrück showing his middle finger is regarded much



more problematic (0.65). And the denial by Steinbrück that a potential red-red-green coalition will not be formed after the election seems to be less credible for this group of voters (0.47).

Interestingly, people who consider voting for one of the government parties even bear more positive evaluations on many of the event variables than those people who just consider CDU and CSU. While those who consider CDU/CSU and FDP talk much more about politics with suspected CDU-voters (0.40), they show higher values regarding the different “handling” variables, e.g. for the NSA-scandal (0.58) or the reaction of the government on Syria (0.65). In addition, they bear more negative evaluations on events connected to the opposition parties, e.g., the middle finger (0.71) the pedophilia scandal (0.54) or the Veggie Day-proposal (0.18). However, the performance of the FDP in the Bavarian state election is not evaluated more positively in this group compared to other consideration set types.

People who consider voting for the CDU and at least one of the opposition parties (in this case, SPD or Greens) exhibit attitudes which are less favorable for the Christian Democrats and more favorable for the respective other party/parties than those people who just consider voting for CDU and CSU. Examples for those who consider CDU and SPD include the handling of different scandals (drone: 0.54, NSA: 0.43), the evaluation of Steinbrück’s middle finger (0.58) and the credibility of not forming a left coalition (0.55). We find some similar patterns among those who favor CDU and Greens: These people seem to talk much about politics with different people, in particular to Green-voters (0.14) and to CDU/CSU-voters (0.36). They evaluate the Veggie Day idea much better (0.39) than other people and they are much more in favor of the court trial against Christian Wulff (0.73). However, they see the pedophilia scandal as critical as those who just consider voting for CDU and FDP (0.53). We also see some motivated reasoning and behavior effects for those who consider CDU, SPD, and Greens. These people talk a lot about politics with suspected SPD-voters (0.20). They are less convinced of the handling of different scandals by the government (NSA: 0.43, drone: 0.45), they provide the worst rating of FDP-performance in the Bavarian state election (0.19), and they have a quite favorable view on Steinbrück’s middle finger (0.47).

Turning to those who have the SPD in their consideration set (Table 4), we can also see some evidence for motivated reasoning based on the specific set of parties in the consideration set. However, the patterns seem less clear, particularly for those who just consider voting for the SPD. As can be expected, they talk less to suspected voters of CDU and CSU (0.07), evaluate the handling of the NSA-affair by the government less positively (0.34), have less negative evaluations of Steinbrück’s middle finger (0.45), and think that Steinbrück’s denial of a left coalition is more credible (0.57). However, there is also contradictory evidence on motivated reasoning for this group: Those who just consider the SPD for their decision to vote evaluate the handling of the drone scandal even better (0.63) than those who consider voting for SPD and CDU. They also show the most positive evaluation of the highway toll issue (0.74) among all groups.

– Insert Table 3 through 7 about here –

Those who consider voting for SPD and CDU talk much more to perceived CDU-voters (0.20), show a more positive evaluation of Merkel's performance in the TV debate (0.56), have the best evaluations of the government's performance in the NSA-scandal (0.43), regard Steinbrück's middle finger (0.58) and the pedophilia scandal as very problematic (0.45), and have the least favorable opinion on the Veggie Day proposal (0.22). However, people who belong to this group are less supportive of governmental activities in the drone affair (0.54) and on the highway toll (0.58) than those who just consider voting for the Social Democrats.

We also find several signs for motivated reasoning among those who combine SPD and Greens. To mention just a few examples, we see that they talk a lot more to supporters of those two parties (SPD: 0.28, Greens: 0.13). They evaluate Steinbrück's performance in the TV debate better (0.59), are very critical of government actions (NSA-handling: 0.23; drone-handling: 0.42, highway toll: 0.52, Syria-handling: 0.38), and are more favorable of events that are related to their considered parties (middle finger Steinbrück: 0.34, Veggie Day: 0.33, credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition: 0.65). However, in contradiction to our expectation they have more campaign contacts to all parties.

Motivated reasoning for those who consider SPD and The Left can be found in several occasions: They have more contact to SPD-supporters (0.31), to SPD-campaign information (0.15), have a quite positive evaluation of Steinbrück's performance in the TV debate (0.60), and clearly do not agree with the handling of the NSA- as well as the drone-scandal by the government (0.21/0.44), but surprisingly they really seem to like the highway toll idea (0.65). Those who favor SPD, CDU, and Greens clearly are more attentive to personal information (0.22) by CDU/CSU-supporters and campaign information (0.16) by CDU and CSU. They partly show better ratings of the government (NSA-handling: 0.43), are more critical of the pedophilia scandal (0.51), and evaluate the FDP-result in the Bavarian state election very negatively (0.19). Those who favor the three left parties show clear biases against the government and in favor of their own parties, e.g., they talk much more to supporters of The Left (0.15) and have more contact with campaign information from all three parties (SPD: 0.18, Greens: 0.11, The Left: 0.13). They evaluate the government's performance regarding the NSA (0.21) and Syria (0.34) very negatively, are very much in favor of the trial against Wulff (0.77), are the least critical group of Steinbrück's middle finger (0.32), the most skeptical group on the highway toll (0.48), and the most favorable on the Veggie Day-proposal (0.41).

Turning to the FDP, the small number of people who consider the FDP only is a serious issue in terms of data reliability and validity (Table 5). We will thus not discuss the results for this group and just focus on those respondents who considered voting for the parties of the outgoing government, FDP and CDU. We see a great host of evidence for motivated reasoning among this group. They talk more to voters of CDU and CSU (0.40), evaluate Merkel's performance in the TV debate better on several

dimensions, are more favorable of the government (NSA-handling: 0.58, drone-handling: 0.61, Syria-handling: 0.65), have a very negative evaluation of Steinbrück's middle finger (0.71), the Veggie Day (0.18), and the pedophilia scandal (0.54). They also are quite skeptical of the court trial against Christian Wulff (0.51), and have very positive ratings of the state of the economy (0.60/0.56).

Moving on to the Greens, we start with those voters who just consider voting for this party only (Table 6). We do not find evidence for motivated reasoning regarding personal conversations and campaign contacts by the parties. However, we find that citizens in this group show more favorable evaluations of Steinbrück's performance in the TV debate and less favorable ones of Merkel's performance on all dimensions. People who just consider the Greens are also less favorable of government actions (NSA-handling: 0.24, drone-handling: 0.44, Syria-handling: 0.36). They are less critical of Steinbrück's middle finger (0.42) and more supportive of the Veggie Day (0.36).

Supporters of Greens and CDU talk more often to supporters of both parties (CDU/CSU: 0.36, Greens: 0.14), are more favorable of Angela Merkel's TV debate performance on all dimensions, have more positive evaluations of scandals and event related to the government (NSA-handling: 0.47, Syria-handling: 0.56, highway toll: 0.64), and have very favorable evaluations of the economy. They are very critical of Christian Wulff (0.73), and show the most negative evaluations of Steinbrück's middle finger (0.70) and the pedophilia scandal (0.53). At the same time, they are quite in favor of the Veggie Day (0.39), but regard the denial of a left coalition very skeptical (0.50).

People who consider voting for the Greens and the Social Democrats also show many signs of motivated reasoning. They talk a lot to supporters of the SPD (0.28) and the Greens (0.13) and have a high number of contacts with the campaign of both parties (SPD: 0.19, Greens: 0.14). In addition, the VAA returns the SPD as a result to them to a significantly higher degree. These voters have a very critical opinion of Wulff (0.78) and a very positive evaluation of Steinbrück's middle finger (0.34). Respondents in this group strongly believe the denial of a red-red-green coalition by Steinbrück (0.65). In addition, they are very critical with respect to the behavior of the government on Syria (0.38) and show the worst evaluation of the FDP's result in the Bavarian state election.

We also find many examples for motivated reasoning among those sympathizers with the Green party who take two other parties into consideration. Those who additionally consider the Social and the Christian Democrats have more campaign contacts with the CDU (0.22) and more political discussions with supporters of this party (0.16). They also show positive evaluations of the government in the case of NSA (0.43) and Syria (0.52) and are critical of the pedophilia scandal (0.51). People who consider voting for the three parties of the left camp have a higher level of communication with the respective parties and/or their supporters, they are more positive towards Steinbrück (TV debate: 0.61, middle finger: 0.32, Wahlarena: 0.57), show the best evaluation of the Veggie Day proposal (0.41), and quite negative evaluation of government-related issues and events (Wulff: 0.77, highway toll: 0.48).

People whose consideration set includes The Left also show different signs of motivated reasoning towards the party/parties in the consideration set. However, differences between those who just consider The Left and those who do not are not very big for most of the campaign and event variables and likely not statistically significant. The only major exceptions occur for frequency of discussion with SPD (0.00) and The Left voters (0.15). The profile of those who consider the Social Democrats and The Left is much more distinct: They talk less to CDU-voters (0.08) and The Left-voters (0.06), but much more to SPD-voters (0.31), show slightly better evaluations of Steinbrück's performance in the TV debate, and finally have a negative perspective on government performance (NSA: 0.21, drone: 0.44, Syria: 0.41, individual economic situation: 0.40).

Those who consider all three parties of the left and the center-left also show a distinct profile in favor of these parties and a more negative view of the government (parties). They talk more about politics to voters of the SPD (0.24) and The Left (0.15). Their general level of exposure towards partisan campaigns is quite high, also towards the FDP (0.10) which is at odds with our assumptions. However, the very negative rating of the Liberals' performance in the Bavarian state election fits quite well (0.16). Steinbrück's performance in the TV debate (0.61) and the Wahlarena (0.57) is evaluated better as well as his middle finger affair (0.32). This group of people is quite critical of the government (drone: 0.40, highway toll: 0.48, Syria: 0.34), but quite positive about affairs/issues which are related to the Greens (pedophilia: 0.39, Veggie Day: 0.41). All in all, there is plenty of evidence in favor of our expectations: Consideration sets seem to be relevant for the perception of the campaign and evaluation of events and scandals.

#### **4.2 The impact of consideration sets on the effects of campaign stimuli on vote choice**

The second argument for the relevance of consideration sets concerns the impact of campaign stimuli on vote choice. Following this line of reasoning, the impact of campaign stimuli varies depending on the composition of the consideration set. Ignoring consideration sets implies overlooking heterogeneity and flawed results. To explore the validity of this speculation, we analyzed the impact of the (perceptions or evaluations of the) campaign stimuli on vote choice. We employed fixed-effects regression analysis to avoid problems in identifying causal effects using cross-sectional data. Candidate and issue orientations are used as "hard" controls. In addition, please note that fixed-effects models automatically control for all characteristics of a respondent which do not change during the period of observation, e.g., socio-demographic characteristics, personality, or party identification). The results of these analyses are reported in Tables 8 through 12.

We start our analysis by taking a look at the specific effects of political conversations with likely voters of parties. The evidence for this avenue of campaign information is somewhat mixed. Talking to likely voters of a specific party tends to exhibit somewhat larger effects on the likelihood to vote for

that party among persons whose consideration set includes that party than among others, though the difference is far from tremendous. Switching to negative effects, we expected that talking to a prospective voter of a party will decrease the likelihood of voting for another party more strongly if the consideration set comprises the former party. This hypothesis receives some support from the evidence on voting for CDU/CSU. In particular, among voters with CDU/CSU-Greens consideration set talking to a prospective voter of the Greens has a strong negative effect on the likelihood of voting for the CDU/CSU. A similar pattern applies to effects of talking to an SPD voter among voters considering CDU/CSU or SPD. Yet, in the subsection considering CDU/CSU, SPD, and the Greens we did not find any effect of this kind. Turning to effects of talking to a CDU/CSU voter among voters with CDU/CSU-SPD or CDU/CSU-Greens consideration on the likelihood of voting for the SPD or the Greens, the evidence is even less encouraging. In these cases, the analysis yields coefficients with counterintuitive signs. The evidence is thus somewhat mixed.

– Insert Table 8 through 12 about here –

The effects of party-initiated campaign contacts vary across voters, but strictly as predicted by the hypotheses drawing on the notion of consideration sets. Contacts to the FDP-campaign decreased the likelihood of voting for the CDU/CSU strongest among voters with a CDU/CSU-FDP consideration set. A similar pattern emerges for the effects of SPD contacts on CDU/CSU-voting as well as for effects of CDU/CSU contacts on voting for the SPD. However, there is also much evidence contradicting the expectations. To give just one example, contacts to the Left party have a particularly strong negative effect on the likelihood of voting for the SPD among voters considering SPD and CDU/CSU. To be sure, one could imagine arguments to account for that pattern but they require additional cognitive and motivational assumptions that undermine the analytical value of the notion of consideration sets. Consideration sets appear to have conditioned the impact of party-initiated campaign contacts on vote choice, though not always in expected ways. Contacts to CDU/CSU and the Green party had disproportionately strong positive effects on the likelihood of voting for the respective party among those persons who did not consider that party. At the same time, some findings lend support to the hypotheses. For example, contacts to the FDP campaign had particularly strong negative effects on CDU/CSU voting among persons with a CDU/CSU-FDP consideration set.

A similar pattern emerges from the analysis of effects of media events. Favorable evaluations of the CDU/CSU's candidate's performance in the televised debates decreased the likelihood of voting for the SPD or the Greens strongest among voters who had these parties (one or both) and the CDU/CSU in their consideration sets. Likewise, positive evaluations of the SPD challenger's performance led to a large decrease in the probability of casting a vote for CDU/CSU among voters considering CDU/CSU, SPD (and the Greens). At the same time, these are tendencies rather than strong effects. Moreover, the patterns of other media event-initiated effects do not even fit with the hypotheses when leaving aside effect size and statistical significance.

Turning to the effects of specific campaign events for which we proposed hypotheses, the evidence is also mixed. Favorable evaluations of Mr. Steinbrück's gesture tended to decrease support for the CDU/CSU among voters who considered CDU/CSU and SPD; yet, this tendency was even more pronounced among voters considering solely the CDU/CSU. In line with the hypotheses, favorable evaluations of the Green's so-called Veggie Day proposal decreased the likelihood of voting for the SPD by a considerable margin among voters who considered the SPD and the Greens. When turning to voting for the CDU/CSU, however, the effects of evaluations of the Veggie Day proposal and the pedophilia scandal yield counterintuitive patterns.

Finally, the findings on the effects of VAA use refute, rather than support the expectations. Looking at the likelihood of voting for the CDU/CSU, learning that one's issue preferences resemble closest those of the SPD had a strong negative effect on CDU/CSU among voters considering CDU/CSU and the FDP or the Greens. In comparison, among voters who considered CDU/CSU and SPD (and the Greens) there was virtually any effect. Voters considering CDU/CSU and SPD, however, were particularly responsive to VAA results suggesting a good fit with issue positions of the Greens or the FDP. The findings on voting for other parties lend additional credence to the above conclusion.

Taken together, the evidence on the conditioning role of consideration sets is far from overwhelming. To be sure, some patterns fit nicely with the expectations derived from our theorizing on consideration sets. However, many findings refute, rather than lend support to, the hypotheses on specific effects of consideration sets.

## **5. Conclusion and discussion**

The notion of heterogeneous electorates has attracted considerable attention in scholarly work. The concept of consideration sets contributes to this stream of research as it builds on the idea that the set of parties voters actually choose from varies across individuals. Thus, voters differ in the process of decision-making depending on the composition of their choice set. Drawing on this line of reasoning, we derived two kinds of hypotheses. For one thing, we suggested that the composition of consideration sets affects information acquisition and evaluation prior to vote choice. For another thing, it might affect the responsiveness to stimuli arising during campaign periods. We tested these two sets of hypotheses using data from the GLES online campaign-panel collected through the 2013 German federal election campaign. The evidence does not lend unequivocal support to the hypotheses. On balance, the hypotheses concerning the reception and evaluation of stimuli during the campaign fared quite well, although some findings clearly contradict them. When it comes to the responsiveness to campaign stimuli, the evidence also turned out to be mixed. We thus conclude that the analysis does not lend strong support to the notion that consideration sets as measured with the above mentioned survey instruments condition voter decision-making in predictable ways.

This conclusion does not necessarily refute the concept of consideration sets. Rather, it raises several questions. The first question concerns the measurement strategy. In particular, we relied on information from the first panel wave rather than from later waves. Yet, additional analyses demonstrated that employing information about consideration sets in later waves does not change the overall findings. Moreover, the hypotheses might be in need of improvement. Probably, the evidence shows reasonable effects we are not able to account for with our theory. There is indeed some reason for second thoughts. For example, we did not consider strategic voting although it might play a role in a multi-party system. In a similar vein, one might include additional assumptions or information about variation in motivations or cognitions to improve our theorizing about electoral decision-making. We note, however, that at a point this might lead to concerns about the parsimony of theorizing. In any case, pointing to individual differences in motivation and cognitions raises an important issue.<sup>12</sup> In a similar vein, voters might differ in their use of consideration sets, thereby imposing some kind of heterogeneity in heterogeneity. Another possible avenue for problems is the measurement and operationalization of campaign awareness and event evaluations. Due to the limitations of survey research, it is almost impossible to include all possibly relevant events and evaluations from all important perspectives or all important parties. Finally, in terms of methodology, another limitation stems from the fixed-effects panel regression we employed to test the hypotheses. While this technique is helpful in overcoming identification issues, it implies that only those observations exhibiting variation will be included in the analysis. In the 2013 GLES online panel, these respondents differed considerably from the overall sample in terms of political predilections, political involvement, and party preferences. It may thus have led to a somewhat skewed sample. Although the findings presented in this paper are not encouraging, the last word about consideration sets as a valuable tool to account for important voter heterogeneity is not said yet.

---

<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the problem of unobserved heterogeneity in terms of cognitions and motivations among persons with a certain consideration set maybe exacerbated by the specific political setting within which an election takes place.

## References

- Brady, Henry E., Johnston, Richard, and Sides, John 2006. The Study of Political Campaigns. In: Brady, Henry E. and Johnston, Richard (eds.), *Capturing Campaign Effects*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1-26.
- Brettschneider, Frank 2000. Demoskopie im Wahlkampf – Leitstern oder Irrlicht. In: Klein, Markus et al. (eds.), *50 Jahre Empirische Wahlforschung in Deutschland. Entwicklung, Befunde, Perspektiven, Daten*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 477-505.
- Dayan, Daniel, and Katz, Elihu 1992. *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History*. Harvard University Press.
- De Vries, Catherine E. and Rosema, Martin 2009. Taking voters' consideration set into consideration: Modelling electoral choice in two stages. Paper presented at the 5th ECPR General Conference in Potsdam.
- Duch, Raymond and Stevenson, Randy 2008. *The Economic Vote: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerber, Alan S. and Green, Donald P. 2000. The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment. In: *American Political Science Review* 94, 653-663.
- Imai, Kosuke. 2005. Do Get-Out-The-Vote Calls Reduce Turnout? The Importance of Statistical Methods for Field Experiments. In: *American Political Science Review* 99, 283-300.
- Iyengar, Shanto and Kinder, Donald R. 1987. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kepplinger, Hans M. 2012. *Die Mechanismen der Skandalisierung: zu Guttenberg, Kachelmann, Sarrazin & Co.: Warum einige öffentlich untergehen – und andere nicht*. München: Olzog.
- Kramer, Gerald 1971. Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896-1964. In: *American Political Science Review* 65, 131-143.
- Lau, Richard R. and Redlawsk, David P. 2006. *How Voters Decide. Information Processing during Election Campaigns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S. and Stegmaier, Mary 2013. The VP-function revisited: a survey of the literature on vote and popularity functions after over 40 years. In: *Public Choice* 157: 367-385.
- Lodge, Milton and Taber, Charles S. 2000. Three Steps Toward a Theory of Motivated Political Reasoning. In: Lupia, Arthur, McCubbins, Matthew, and Popkin, Samuel (eds.), *Elements of Reason*,



- Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality. New York et al.: Cambridge University Press, 183-213.
- Lodge, Milton and Taber, Charles S. 2013. *The Rationalizing Voter*. New York et al.: Cambridge University Press.
- Maier, Jürgen and Faas, Thorsten 2011. "Miniature Campaigns" in Comparison: The German Televised Debates, 2002-09. In: *German Politics* 20, 75-91.
- Nyhan, Brendan 2015. Scandal Potential: How Political Context and News Congestion Affect the President's Vulnerability to Media Scandal. *British Journal of Political Science* 45: 435-466.
- Oscarsson, Henrik 2004. Verkligen väljande väljare. In: Holmberg, Sören and Oscarsson, Henrik (eds.), *Väljare. Svenskt väljarbete under 50 år*. Stockholm: Norstedts.
- Oscarsson, Henrik 2009. Identifying Voters' Consideration Sets. Paper presented at the 5th ECPR General Conference in Potsdam.
- Oscarsson, Henrik, Gilljam, Mikael, and Granberg, Donald 1997. The Concept of Party Set – A Viable Approach or Just Another Way to Slice the Same Cheese? Working paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Swedish Political Science Association in Uppsala.
- Oskarson, Maria, Oscarsson, Henrik E., and Boije, Edvin 2014. How Voters make up their minds. Consideration Set Models for Party Choice in European and National Elections. Paper prepared for the Swedish Network for European Studies in Political Science Conference: Elections and Democracy in Europe in Brussels.
- Paap, Richard et al. 2005. Consideration sets, intentions and the inclusion of "don't know" in a two-stage model for voter choice. In: *International Journal of Forecasting* 21, 53-71.
- Patterson, Thomas E. 1980. *The Mass Media Election. How Americans Choose Their President*. New York: Praeger.
- Patterson, Thomas E. 1993. *Out of Order*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Rattinger, Hans et al. 2014. Wahlkampf-Panel (GLES 2013), 20.6.-04.10.2013. GESIS Datenarchiv, Köln: ZA5704 Datenfile Version 1.0.0, doi: 10.4232/1.11846.
- Redlawsk, David P. and Lau, Richard R. 2013. Behavioral Decision-Making. In: Huddy, Leonie, Sears, David O., and Levy, Jack S. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 130-164.

Schoen, Harald 2014. Wahlkampfforschung. In: Falter, Jürgen W. and Schoen, Harald (eds.), Handbuch Wahlforschung. 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 661-728.

Simon, Herbert A. 1985. Human nature in politics: The dialogue of psychology with political science. In: American Political Science Review 79, 293-304.

Steenbergen, Marco R. and Hangartner, Dominik 2008. Political Choice Sets in Multi-Party Elections. Paper prepared for the Conference “The Politics of Change” in Amsterdam.

Steenbergen, Marco R., Hangartner, Dominik, and de Vries, Catherine E. 2011. Choice under Complexity: A Heuristic-Systematic Model of Electoral Behavior. Paper presented for the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago.

Steinbrecher, Markus 2015. Eine Analyse der Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Parteiidentifikation und Wahrnehmungen der aktuellen wirtschaftlichen Lage in Deutschland. In: Giebler, Heiko and Wagner, Aiko (eds.), Wirtschaft, Krise und Wahlverhalten. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 107-138.

Steinbrecher, Markus et al. 2014. Vote Choice and Consideration Sets in a Multi-Party Setting: Comparing different Measures of Consideration Sets. Paper prepared for the 8th General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research in Glasgow.

Taber, Charles S., and Lodge, Milton 2006. Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs. In: American Journal of Political Science 50, 755-769.

Valentino, Nicholas A. and Nardis, Yioryos 2013. Political Communication. Form and Consequence of the Information Environment. In: Huddy, Leonie, Sears, David O., and Levy, Jack S. (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 559-590.

**Table 1: Share of most frequent consideration sets in wave 1 of the 2013 GLES campaign-panel survey**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Consideration set</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>% by party</b>
CDU/CSU	Not CDU/CSU	2074	71.1
	CDU only	114	3.9
	CDU-SPD	130	4.5
	CDU-FDP	112	3.8
	CDU-Greens	68	2.3
	CDU-SPD-Greens	98	3.4
	CDU: all other combinations	321	11.0
SPD	Not SPD	1810	62.1
	SPD only	93	3.2
	SPD-CDU	130	4.5
	SPD-Greens	249	8.5
	SPD-The Left	52	1.8
	SPD-CDU-Greens	98	3.4
	SPD-Greens-The Left	152	5.2
	SPD: all other combinations	333	11.4
FDP	Not FDP	2501	85.7
	FDP only	13	0.5
	FDP-CDU	112	3.8
	FDP: all other combinations	291	10.0
Greens	Not Greens	1930	66.2
	Greens only	66	2.3
	Greens-CDU	68	2.3
	Greens-SPD	249	8.5
	Greens-CDU-SPD	98	3.4
	Greens-SPD-Left	152	5.2
	Greens: all other combinations	354	12.1
The Left	Not The Left	2408	82.6
	The Left only	42	1.4
	The Left-SPD	52	1.8
	The Left-SPD-Greens	152	5.2
	The Left: all other combinations	263	9.0

**Table 2: Wording of campaign perception and event variables in the subsequent analyses**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Wording</b>	<b>Most affected party</b>
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	Evaluation of Merkel's performance in TV debate on September 1.	CDU/CSU
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	Evaluation of Steinbrück's performance in TV debate on September 1.	SPD
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	Evaluation of Merkel's performance in TV debate on September 1 among political discussion partners	CDU/CSU
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	Evaluation of Steinbrück's performance in TV debate on September 1 among political discussion partners.	SPD
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	Evaluation of Merkel's performance in TV debate on September 1 among media outlets	CDU/CSU
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	Evaluation of Steinbrück's performance in TV debate on September 1 among media outlets.	SPD
NSA-handling government	Appropriate reaction by Chancellor Merkel on eavesdropping actions by American and British secret services.	CDU/CSU, (FDP)
Wulff-affair	Justification for court trial against former President Wulff due to accusations of favouritism and unethical behaviour.	CDU/CSU, (FDP)
Drone-handling government	Secretary of Defence Thomas de Maizière lied in front of the Bundestag about the Eurohawk-drone project.	CDU/CSU, (FDP)
Middle finger Steinbrück	Evaluation of Steinbrück showing his middle finger during an interview.	SPD
Pedophilia scandal	Jürgen Trittin unacceptable as leading politician due to his support for pedophilia-friendly party program thirty years ago.	Greens
Veggie Day	Public and company staff lunchrooms should only offer vegetarian dishes once a week.	Greens
Highway toll	Introduction of a highway toll for foreign car drivers.	CDU/CSU, (FDP)
Syria-handling government	Appropriate reaction by Chancellor Merkel on intensification of situation in Syris.	CDU/CSU, FDP
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	Evaluation of Merkel's performance in Wahlarena TV-show	CDU/CSU
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	Evaluation of Steinbrück's performance in Wahlarena TV-show	SPD
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	Credibility of Peer Steinbrück's statement that he will not form a coalition with The Left after the federal election.	SPD, Greens, The Left
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	Evaluation of FDP as winner or loser of the Bavarian state election on September 15	FDP
VAA result CDU/CSU	CDU/CSU best-matching party in VAA	CDU/CSU
VAA result SPD	SPD best-matching party in VAA	SPD
VAA result FDP	FDP best-matching party in VAA	FDP
VAA result Greens	Greens best-matching party in VAA	Greens
VAA result The Left	The Left best-matching party in VAA	The Left
Evaluation general economic situation	Evaluation of current general economic situation	CDU/CSU, FDP
Evaluation individual economic situation	Evaluation of current individual economic situation	CDU/CSU, FDP

**Table 3: Perception, evaluation, and frequencies for event variables in wave 6 of the GLES campaign-panel 2013, by consideration set types including CDU/CSU**

	All	Not CDU	CDU only	CDU-SPD	CDU-FDP	CDU-Greens	CDU-SPD-Greens	CDU: all other combinations
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.15c	0.11	0.24	0.20	0.40	0.36	0.22	0.24
Frequency discussion SPD	0.15b	0.17	0.11	0.12	0.04	0.10	0.20	0.11
Frequency discussion FDP	0.01c	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.00	0.02	0.01
Frequency discussion Greens	0.04c	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.14	0.02	0.02
Frequency discussion The Left	0.05c	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	0.12b	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.15	0.15	0.16	0.16
Index party contacts campaign SPD	0.12	0.12	0.10	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.15	0.14
Index party contacts campaign FDP	0.08b	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.10	0.08	0.10	0.10
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0.08a	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.09	0.10	0.09
Index party contacts campaign The Left	0.07a	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.08	0.08
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0.51c	0.48	0.59	0.56	0.66	0.59	0.56	0.58
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	0.55a	0.56	0.52	0.53	0.49	0.50	0.56	0.56
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	0.51c	0.49	0.54	0.53	0.57	0.55	0.54	0.54
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	0.52b	0.52	0.52	0.50	0.48	0.50	0.54	0.52
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	0.52c	0.52	0.55	0.52	0.58	0.55	0.57	0.54
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	0.54a	0.54	0.51	0.54	0.52	0.55	0.57	0.55
NSA-handling government	0.36c	0.31	0.50	0.43	0.58	0.47	0.43	0.51
Wulff-affair	0.68c	0.70	0.57	0.62	0.51	0.73	0.65	0.66
Drone-handling government	0.52a	0.51	0.60	0.54	0.61	0.51	0.45	0.53
Middle finger Steinbrück	0.50c	0.45	0.65	0.58	0.71	0.70	0.47	0.59
Pedophilia scandal	0.43c	0.41	0.45	0.45	0.54	0.53	0.51	0.50
Veggie Day	0.32c	0.34	0.27	0.22	0.18	0.39	0.29	0.30
Highway toll	0.62	0.62	0.67	0.58	0.68	0.64	0.57	0.66
Syria-handling government	0.47c	0.42	0.59	0.50	0.65	0.56	0.52	0.60
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	0.51c	0.49	0.54	0.52	0.59	0.56	0.52	0.54
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	0.53	0.54	0.50	0.52	0.51	0.51	0.53	0.53
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0.54c	0.55	0.47	0.55	0.42	0.50	0.58	0.52
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	0.27c	0.28	0.25	0.32	0.22	0.22	0.19	0.27
VAA result CDU/CSU	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.02
VAA result SPD	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.02
VAA result FDP	0.00a	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01
VAA result Greens	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
VAA result The Left	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.02
Evaluation general economic situation	0.49c	0.47	0.56	0.53	0.60	0.61	0.54	0.55
Evaluation individual economic situation	0.48c	0.47	0.50	0.53	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.52

Note: perception of Wulff-affair measured in wave 5. Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.05$ ; b:  $p < 0.01$ ; c:  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 4: Perception, evaluation, and frequencies for event variables in wave 6 of the GLES campaign-panel 2013, by consideration set types including SPD**

	All	Not SPD	SPD only	SPD-CDU	SPD-Greens	SPD-The Left	SPD-CDU-Greens	SPD-Greens-The Left	SPD: all other combinations
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.15c	0.17	0.07	0.20	0.09	0.08	0.22	0.04	0.17
Frequency discussion SPD	0.15c	0.11	0.16	0.12	0.28	0.31	0.20	0.24	0.18
Frequency discussion FDP	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01
Frequency discussion Greens	0.04c	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.02	0.06	0.03
Frequency discussion The Left	0.05c	0.05	0.07	0.01	0.03	0.06	0.00	0.15	0.04
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	0.12c	0.11	0.08	0.12	0.16	0.12	0.16	0.16	0.15
Index party contacts campaign SPD	0.12c	0.10	0.10	0.12	0.19	0.15	0.15	0.18	0.14
Index party contacts campaign FDP	0.08c	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.10	0.10	0.10
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0.08c	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.14	0.07	0.10	0.11	0.10
Index party contacts campaign The Left	0.07c	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.11	0.09	0.08	0.13	0.09
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0.51c	0.52	0.47	0.56	0.46	0.48	0.56	0.46	0.55
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	0.55c	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.59	0.60	0.56	0.61	0.58
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	0.51c	0.51	0.51	0.53	0.47	0.49	0.54	0.48	0.52
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	0.52a	0.52	0.51	0.50	0.54	0.55	0.54	0.52	0.53
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	0.52	0.52	0.49	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.57	0.52	0.54
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	0.54c	0.53	0.54	0.54	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.55	0.56
NSA-handling government	0.36c	0.39	0.34	0.43	0.23	0.21	0.43	0.21	0.41
Wulff-affair	0.68c	0.66	0.67	0.62	0.78	0.67	0.65	0.77	0.68
Drone-handling government	0.52c	0.54	0.63	0.54	0.42	0.44	0.45	0.40	0.50
Middle finger Steinbrück	0.50c	0.55	0.45	0.58	0.34	0.43	0.47	0.32	0.47
Pedophilia scandal	0.43	0.43	0.37	0.45	0.43	0.41	0.51	0.39	0.45
Veggie Day	0.32b	0.33	0.29	0.22	0.33	0.30	0.29	0.41	0.30
Highway toll	0.62c	0.66	0.74	0.58	0.52	0.65	0.57	0.48	0.63
Syria-handling government	0.47c	0.49	0.46	0.50	0.38	0.41	0.52	0.34	0.50
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	0.51a	0.51	0.50	0.52	0.49	0.48	0.52	0.49	0.52
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	0.53c	0.52	0.53	0.52	0.57	0.54	0.53	0.57	0.54
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0.54c	0.50	0.57	0.55	0.65	0.57	0.58	0.59	0.56
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	0.27c	0.29	0.31	0.32	0.15	0.26	0.19	0.16	0.28
VAA result CDU/CSU	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
VAA result SPD	0.02a	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.02
VAA result FDP	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
VAA result Greens	0.01b	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
VAA result The Left	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.02
Evaluation general economic situation	0.49c	0.49	0.44	0.53	0.54	0.46	0.54	0.48	0.51
Evaluation individual economic situation	0.48c	0.48	0.43	0.53	0.53	0.40	0.55	0.44	0.49

Note: perception of Wulff-affair measured in wave 5. Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.05$ ; b:  $p < 0.01$ ; c:  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 5: Perception, evaluation, and frequencies for event variables in wave 6 of the GLES campaign-panel 2013, by consideration set types including FDP**

	All	Not FDP	FDP only	FDP-CDU	FDP: all other combinations
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.15c	0.14	0.00	0.40	0.20
Frequency discussion SPD	0.15b	0.16	0.00	0.04	0.13
Frequency discussion FDP	0.01c	0.01	0.00	0.06	0.02
Frequency discussion Greens	0.04	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.03
Frequency discussion The Left	0.05	0.06	0.00	0.01	0.03
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	0.12	0.12	0.08	0.15	0.14
Index party contacts campaign SPD	0.12	0.12	0.08	0.11	0.13
Index party contacts campaign FDP	0.08b	0.07	0.13	0.10	0.10
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0.08	0.08	0.02	0.07	0.09
Index party contacts campaign The Left	0.07	0.07	0.01	0.06	0.07
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0.51c	0.50	0.55	0.66	0.57
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	0.55a	0.55	0.55	0.49	0.55
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	0.51c	0.50	0.50	0.57	0.54
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	0.52b	0.52	0.52	0.48	0.52
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	0.52c	0.52	0.56	0.58	0.54
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.52	0.55
NSA-handling government	0.36c	0.34	0.53	0.58	0.50
Wulff-affair	0.68c	0.69	0.72	0.51	0.67
Drone-handling government	0.52a	0.51	0.60	0.61	0.54
Middle finger Steinbrück	0.50c	0.48	0.53	0.71	0.57
Pedophilia scandal	0.43b	0.42	0.33	0.54	0.48
Veggie Day	0.32c	0.13	0.18	0.18	0.34
Highway toll	0.62	0.62	0.44	0.68	0.64
Syria-handling government	0.47c	0.45	0.53	0.65	0.57
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	0.51c	0.50	0.53	0.59	0.53
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	0.53	0.53	0.59	0.51	0.54
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0.54c	0.54	0.41	0.42	0.54
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	0.27c	0.27	0.44	0.22	0.30
VAA result CDU/CSU	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.02
VAA result SPD	0.02	0.02	0.08	0.00	0.02
VAA result FDP	0.00a	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01
VAA result Greens	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
VAA result The Left	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01
Evaluation general economic situation	0.49c	0.49	0.46	0.60	0.52
Evaluation individual economic situation	0.48c	0.48	0.54	0.56	0.51

Note: perception of Wulff-affair measured in wave 5. Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.05$ ; b:  $p < 0.01$ ; c:  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 6: Perception, evaluation, and frequencies for event variables in wave 6 of the GLES campaign-panel 2013, by consideration set types including Greens**

	All	Not Greens	Greens only	Greens-CDU	Greens-SPD	Greens-CDU-SPD	Greens-SPD-Left	Greens: all other combinations
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.15c	0.16	0.12	0.36	0.09	0.22	0.04	0.16
Frequency discussion SPD	0.15c	0.12	0.24	0.10	0.28	0.20	0.24	0.16
Frequency discussion FDP	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.02
Frequency discussion Greens	0.04c	0.02	0.00	0.14	0.13	0.02	0.06	0.05
Frequency discussion The Left	0.05c	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.15	0.07
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	0.12c	0.11	0.11	0.15	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.14
Index party contacts campaign SPD	0.12c	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.19	0.15	0.18	0.13
Index party contacts campaign FDP	0.08c	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.09
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0.08c	0.06	0.08	0.09	0.14	0.10	0.11	0.10
Index party contacts campaign The Left	0.07c	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.11	0.08	0.13	0.09
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0.51c	0.52	0.47	0.59	0.46	0.56	0.46	0.54
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	0.55c	0.53	0.58	0.50	0.59	0.56	0.61	0.57
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	0.51c	0.51	0.47	0.55	0.47	0.54	0.48	0.52
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	0.52a	0.52	0.54	0.50	0.54	0.54	0.52	0.52
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	0.52b	0.52	0.50	0.55	0.52	0.57	0.52	0.54
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	0.54c	0.53	0.56	0.55	0.57	0.57	0.55	0.55
NSA-handling government	0.36c	0.39	0.24	0.47	0.23	0.43	0.21	0.41
Wulff-affair	0.68c	0.65	0.69	0.73	0.78	0.65	0.77	0.68
Drone-handling government	0.52c	0.55	0.44	0.51	0.42	0.45	0.40	0.48
Middle finger Steinbrück	0.50c	0.54	0.42	0.70	0.34	0.47	0.32	0.49
Pedophilia scandal	0.43	0.43	0.45	0.53	0.43	0.51	0.39	0.43
Veggie Day	0.32c	0.30	0.36	0.39	0.33	0.29	0.41	0.36
Highway toll	0.62c	0.66	0.57	0.64	0.52	0.57	0.48	0.59
Syria-handling government	0.47c	0.48	0.36	0.56	0.38	0.52	0.34	0.51
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	0.51c	0.51	0.48	0.56	0.49	0.52	0.49	0.52
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	0.53c	0.52	0.56	0.51	0.57	0.53	0.57	0.54
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0.54c	0.51	0.57	0.50	0.65	0.58	0.59	0.55
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	0.27c	0.30	0.25	0.22	0.15	0.19	0.16	0.26
VAA result CDU/CSU	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
VAA result SPD	0.02b	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.02
VAA result FDP	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
VAA result Greens	0.01c	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.01
VAA result The Left	0.02b	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.05	0.03
Evaluation general economic situation	0.49c	0.48	0.48	0.61	0.54	0.54	0.48	0.50
Evaluation individual economic situation	0.48c	0.48	0.45	0.56	0.53	0.55	0.44	0.48

Note: perception of Wulff-affair measured in wave 5. Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.05$ ; b:  $p < 0.01$ ; c:  $p < 0.001$ .



**Table 7: Perception, evaluation, and frequencies for event variables in wave 6 of the GLES campaign-panel 2013, by consideration set types including The Left**

	All	Not The Left	The Left only	The Left-SPD	The Left-SPD-Greens	The Left: all other combinations
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0,15b	0,16	0,15	0,08	0,04	0,16
Frequency discussion SPD	0,15c	0,15	0,00	0,31	0,24	0,12
Frequency discussion FDP	0,01	0,01	0,00	0,03	0,01	0,01
Frequency discussion Greens	0,04	0,04	0,00	0,00	0,06	0,05
Frequency discussion The Left	0,05c	0,04	0,15	0,06	0,15	0,12
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	0,12a	0,12	0,10	0,12	0,16	0,12
Index party contacts campaign SPD	0,12c	0,12	0,09	0,15	0,18	0,12
Index party contacts campaign FDP	0,08	0,08	0,06	0,06	0,10	0,08
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0,08a	0,08	0,06	0,07	0,11	0,08
Index party contacts campaign The Left	0,07c	0,07	0,07	0,09	0,13	0,09
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0,51b	0,52	0,49	0,48	0,46	0,51
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	0,55c	0,54	0,56	0,60	0,61	0,58
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	0,51a	0,51	0,48	0,49	0,48	0,51
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	0,52a	0,52	0,52	0,55	0,52	0,54
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	0,52	0,53	0,52	0,52	0,52	0,53
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	0,54	0,54	0,53	0,58	0,55	0,55
NSA-handling government	0,36c	0,38	0,29	0,21	0,21	0,34
Wulff-affair	0,68b	0,67	0,70	0,67	0,77	0,67
Drone-handling government	0,52a	0,53	0,47	0,44	0,40	0,47
Middle finger Steinbrück	0,50c	0,52	0,45	0,43	0,32	0,46
Pedophilia scandal	0,43	0,44	0,44	0,41	0,39	0,44
Veggie Day	0,32a	0,32	0,35	0,30	0,41	0,31
Highway toll	0,62c	0,64	0,63	0,65	0,48	0,58
Syria-handling government	0,47c	0,48	0,41	0,41	0,34	0,47
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	0,51	0,51	0,49	0,48	0,49	0,50
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	0,53b	0,53	0,52	0,54	0,57	0,53
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0,54	0,53	0,54	0,57	0,59	0,54
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	0,27c	0,28	0,30	0,26	0,16	0,24
VAA result CDU/CSU	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,01
VAA result SPD	0,02	0,02	0,00	0,00	0,03	0,02
VAA result FDP	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,01
VAA result Greens	0,01	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,01	0,01
VAA result The Left	0,02c	0,01	0,07	0,00	0,05	0,06
Evaluation general economic situation	0,49	0,50	0,46	0,46	0,48	0,50
Evaluation individual economic situation	0,48b	0,49	0,48	0,40	0,44	0,48

Note: perception of Wulff-affair measured in wave 5. Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.05$ ; b:  $p < 0.01$ ; c:  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 8: Effects on voting decision for CDU/CSU in German federal election 2013 from fixed-effects panel regression, by consideration set types**

	All	Not CDU	CDU only	CDU-SPD	CDU-FDP	CDU-Greens	CDU-SPD-Greens	CDU: all other combinations
Issue orientation CDU/CSU	0.22d	0.27d	0.05	0.35d	0.10	0.02	0.22b	0.21d
Candidate orientation CDU/CSU	0.21d	0.12d	0.77d	0.31b	0.09	1.06d	0.50b	0.26c
Candidate orientation SPD	-0.07c	-0.01	-0.09	-0.43b	-0.26	-0.04	-0.24a	-0.15a
Candidate orientation FDP	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.08	-0.24	0.10	0.00	-0.01
Candidate orientation Greens	-0.03	-0.01	-0.45b	0.21	0.15	-0.16	-0.25a	0.03
Candidate orientation The Left	-0.02	-0.05b	0.42	-0.14	-0.06	0.03	0.00	-0.03
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.06d	0.04b	0.13b	0.13a	0.09	0.09	0.12a	0.04
Frequency discussion SPD	0.00	0.00	-0.02	-0.13	0.06	0.16	0.02	-0.02
Frequency discussion FDP	-0.03	0.00	-0.06	0.07	-0.02	-	0.05	-0.08
Frequency discussion Greens	0.01	0.01	0.26	0.55d	0.00	-0.44c	0.08	-0.04
Frequency discussion The Left	-0.02	-0.03c	0.51	0.11	-0.37c	0.33d	-0.06	0.06
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	-0.01	0.08a	-0.25	0.07	-0.30	0.38	0.19	-0.32b
Index party contacts campaign SPD	0.02	-0.01	0.30	-0.29	0.77d	-0.03	-0.20	0.10
Index party contacts campaign FDP	0.00	0.04	-0.71	0.18	-0.69b	0.53	-0.02	-0.04
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0.01	-0.06	-0.21	-0.57	-0.18	-0.01	0.27	0.21
Index party contacts campaign The Left	-0.01	-0.02	0.49	0.95c	-0.48	0.05	-0.72a	0.07
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0.13c	0.09b	0.47a	0.19	0.16	0.44	0.35	0.39c
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	0.02	-0.02	0.12	-0.27	0.13	0.06	-0.21	0.04
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	0.07a	0.02	0.26	-0.28	0.17	0.31	-0.15	0.27a
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	-0.03	-0.02	-0.42	-0.02	0.20	-0.77a	0.15	0.10
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	0.08a	0.07a	-0.27	0.24	0.63b	-0.72	-0.37	0.12
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	-0.07a	-0.06	0.03	0.17	-0.50a	0.54	0.07	-0.24
NSA-handling government	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.09	0.11	0.06	-0.09	-0.04
Wulff-affair	0.00	0.04a	-0.39a	0.06	-0.08	-0.21	-0.18	0.00
Drone-handling government	-0.03a	0.00	0.10	-0.05	-0.16	-0.20	0.04	-0.07
Middle finger Steinbrück	0.02	0.04a	-0.17	-0.11	-0.09	0.24	-0.02	0.06
Pedophilia scandal	0.05c	0.08d	0.00	0.03	-0.09	0.05	-0.02	0.07
Veggie Day	-0.01	0.00	0.12	0.02	-0.09	0.12	-0.20b	-0.04
Highway toll	0.00	0.01	0.16	-0.23b	0.10	-0.10	-0.09	-0.02
Syria-handling government	-0.03a	-0.01	-0.05	-0.06	0.14	-0.02	-0.24b	0.01
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	0.08	0.15a	-0.63	0.41	0.31	0.09	-0.05	-0.17
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	-0.02	0.02	-0.08	-0.02	0.63a	-1.95d	-0.29	-0.03
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0.02	-0.03a	0.16	-0.05	0.13	0.30a	0.00	0.11
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	-0.01	-0.02	-0.07	-0.05	-0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.00
VAA result CDU/CSU	0.02	0.00	0.08	0.24	-0.15	0.29a	0.77d	-0.06
VAA result SPD	-0.05c	-0.01	-0.32	-0.12	-1.09d	-0.40a	-0.06	-0.11a
VAA result FDP	-0.07	0.07	-0.65a	-0.33c	0.00	-0.42b	0.18	-0.27b
VAA result Greens	-0.02	-0.01	-	-0.38c	-	-0.11	-0.09	-0.07
VAA result The Left	0.00	-0.01	-0.35a	-	0.14	-0.09	-	0.11
Evaluation general economic situation	0.03	0.05a	0.23	0.25	0.31	0.39	0.02	-0.19
Evaluation individual economic situation	0.04	0.07b	0.09	-0.14	-0.26	-0.04	0.22	-0.01
N	2,520	1,744	99	109	108	66	95	299
R2 within	0.07	0.10	0.19	0.18	0.14	0.26	0.14	0.09
R2 between	0.42	0.37	0.05	0.12	0.03	0.06	0.32	0.15

---

R2 overall	0.29	0.29	0.15	0.17	0.08	0.16	0.22	0.14
------------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------

Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.1$ ; b:  $p < 0.05$ ; c:  $p < 0.01$ ; d:  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 9: Effects on voting decision for SPD in German federal election 2013 from fixed-effects panel regression, by consideration set types**

	All	Not SPD	SPD only	SPD-CDU	SPD-Greens	SPD-The Left	SPD-CDU-Greens	SPD-Greens-The Left	SPD: all other combinations
Issue orientation SPD	0.26d	0.29d	0.23b	0.26c	0.21d	0.30b	0.11	0.34d	0.20d
Candidate orientation CDU/CSU	-0.07b	-0.02	-0.34	-0.23	-0.11	-0.05	-0.13	0.08	-0.07
Candidate orientation SPD	0.26d	0.19d	0.11	0.20	0.53d	0.17	0.18	0.55d	0.38d
Candidate orientation FDP	-0.04	-0.02	-0.25	-0.30	-0.01	-0.09	0.18	0.10	-0.14
Candidate orientation Greens	0.00	0.02	0.14	-0.03	-0.06	0.06	0.38c	-0.41c	0.00
Candidate orientation The Left	-0.10c	-0.07b	-0.35a	0.16	-0.16	-0.45	-0.05	0.04	-0.20b
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.00	-0.01	-0.14	0.10a	-0.05	0.42a	-0.04	0.03	0.02
Frequency discussion SPD	0.07d	0.04	0.16	0.02	0.05	0.10	0.19a	0.13c	0.05
Frequency discussion FDP	-0.05	-0.03	-	-0.81d	-0.11	-0.71b	0.21a	0.14	-0.02
Frequency discussion Greens	-0.03	-0.02	0.00	-0.53d	-0.07	-	-0.01	0.05	-0.10
Frequency discussion The Left	-0.04b	-0.03a	-0.31a	0.37b	0.06	0.02	-0.05	0.05	-0.18b
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	0.01	0.04	0.30	-0.34	0.13	0.35	-0.23	-0.28	0.11
Index party contacts campaign SPD	0.03	0.02	-0.12	0.25	-0.27a	0.08	0.41b	0.54b	-0.02
Index party contacts campaign FDP	-0.01	-0.05	0.25	0.77c	0.14	-0.43	-0.13	-0.14	0.17
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0.02	-0.04	-0.78	0.33	-0.06	0.30	-0.26	0.05	0.10
Index party contacts campaign The Left	-0.06	-0.01	1.81c	-1.21c	-0.01	-0.38	0.50	-0.26	-0.53c
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	-0.10b	-0.04	-0.05	-0.46a	-0.25	-0.73	0.05	-0.37b	-0.11
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	0.11b	0.10a	0.38	0.23	0.12	0.29	0.29a	-0.01	0.12
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	-0.03	-0.16c	0.48	-0.13	0.30	0.69	-0.12	0.16	0.06
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	-0.02	0.04	0.78b	0.08	-0.40b	-0.84	0.11	-0.03	0.01
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	0.11b	0.13b	0.30	-0.12	0.01	0.35	0.17	0.39a	-0.05
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	-0.02	0.00	-0.84	0.24	0.00	-0.12	0.01	-0.05	0.00
NSA-handling government	0.02	0.00	0.12	-0.03	-0.06	-0.15	0.05	0.06	0.11c
Wulff-affair	0.00	0.01	-0.05	-0.24	-0.03	0.64a	0.02	-0.11	0.17a
Drone-handling government	-0.01	-0.02	0.10	0.03	0.03	0.24	-0.07	-0.04	-0.06
Middle finger Steinbrück	-0.08b	-0.07b	-0.03	-0.01	-0.10	-0.30	-0.18a	-0.05	-0.05
Pedophilia scandal	0.05b	0.06c	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.23c	0.00	0.03
Veggie Day	-0.01	0.01	-0.06	-0.08	-0.14b	-0.05	0.12	-0.02	0.00
Highway toll	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	0.13	-0.15b	-0.04	0.14b	0.07	-0.02
Syria-handling government	-0.04b	-0.06c	0.00	-0.15a	-0.04	0.34a	0.06	0.04	-0.06
Evaluation Wahllarena candidate CDU/CSU	-0.04	-0.05	0.21	0.23	0.01	0.05	-0.32	-0.36	0.09
Evaluation Wahllarena candidate SPD	0.08	0.09	0.29	-0.28	0.06	0.26	-0.01	-0.58	0.21
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0.04b	0.03	0.30a	-0.03	0.08	-0.11	-0.02	0.16a	0.03
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	-0.02	-0.01	0.26	0.10	-0.17	-0.49	0.14	-0.13	-0.07
VAA result CDU/CSU	0.01	-0.01	-	0.11	0.21c	-	-0.12	-	0.06
VAA result SPD	0.11c	0.09a	0.39a	0.29c	0.10	0.03	0.01	0.08	0.06
VAA result FDP	0.06	-0.02	-	0.44b	0.02	-	-0.08	0.58d	0.13
VAA result Greens	-0.10c	-0.06	-0.94d	-0.47d	-0.05	-	-0.13a	-0.34c	-0.04
VAA result The Left	-0.03	-0.01	-0.21	-	0.05	-0.26	-	0.10	-0.14c
Evaluation general economic situation	-0.01	0.05	-0.36	-0.53b	-0.15	0.10	-0.33a	-0.23	0.14
Evaluation individual economic situation	0.05	-0.01	0.03	0.50b	-0.10	0.62	0.14	0.00	0.05
N	2,520	1,477	84	109	243	49	95	148	315
R2 within	0.11	0.14	0.28	0.23	0.13	0.28	0.22	0.17	0.13

R2 between	0.36	0.33	0.08	0.08	0.19	0.02	0.18	0.29	0.16
R2 overall	0.23	0.24	0.20	0.16	0.15	0.06	0.21	0.22	0.15

---

Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.1$ ; b:  $p < 0.05$ ; c:  $p < 0.01$ ; d:  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 10: Effects on voting decision for FDP in German federal election 2013 from fixed-effects panel regression, by consideration set types**

	All	Not FDP	FDP only	FDP-CDU	FDP: all other combinations
Issue orientation FDP	0.22c	0.24b	-1.11c	0.07	0.21b
Candidate orientation CDU/CSU	0.00	-0.01	1.47	0.14	0.06
Candidate orientation SPD	0.00	0.00	7.95	0.29	-0.02
Candidate orientation FDP	0.05b	0.01	0.75	0.19	0.18b
Candidate orientation Greens	-0.01	0.01	-6.92	-0.26	-0.06
Candidate orientation The Left	-0.02	0.00	-0.17	-0.10	-0.07
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.01	0.01	-1.07	-0.04	0.04
Frequency discussion SPD	0.00	0.00	-1.52b	-0.04	-0.01
Frequency discussion FDP	0.09b	0.05	1.14	0.10	0.11
Frequency discussion Greens	-0.01	0.00	-	0.10	-0.09
Frequency discussion The Left	0.00	0.00	-	0.27b	-0.11b
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	0.02	0.01	-1.42	0.15	-0.08
Index party contacts campaign SPD	-0.03	-0.02	-1.39	-0.49c	0.01
Index party contacts campaign FDP	0.00	0.03	-0.23	0.44	0.05
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0.01	-0.01	2.56	-0.01	-0.02
Index party contacts campaign The Left	0.01	-0.02	-	-0.09	-0.06
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0.01	0.02	-6.14a	-0.06	0.03
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	-0.01	0.02	-7.85b	-0.19	-0.19
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	-0.03	0.01	-3.14	-0.05	-0.17
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	-0.01	0.00	-16.91	-0.18	0.00
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	-0.04	-0.02	0.78	-0.41a	-0.04
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	0.03	0.00	27.42b	0.42	0.18
NSA-handling government	0.00	0.00	0.97b	-0.07	0.04
Wulff-affair	0.00	0.01	-0.30	-0.01	0.02
Drone-handling government	0.00	0.00	-1.02	0.17	-0.08
Middle finger Steinbrück	0.02	0.02	6.71b	0.24	-0.04
Pedophilia scandal	0.02	0.01	1.46	-0.03	0.07
Veggie Day	-0.02a	-0.01	2.32a	0.08	-0.07
Highway toll	-0.01	-0.01	2.35c	-0.07	-0.03
Syria-handling government	0.02a	0.01	-0.12	-0.03	0.13a
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	-0.03	0.05	-25.06b	-0.48	-0.25
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	-0.04	-0.02	20.90c	-0.62	-0.02
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0.00	0.00	1.59a	-0.19b	0.02
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	-0.03	-0.02a	2.34	-0.26	-0.05
VAA result CDU/CSU	0.03	0.00	-	0.13	-0.01
VAA result SPD	-0.01b	-0.01	-0.14	0.08	-0.07
VAA result FDP	0.17b	0.18b	-	0.07	0.15
VAA result Greens	0.02	0.00	-	-	0.12
VAA result The Left	0.00	0.00	-	0.01	0.02
Evaluation general economic situation	0.00	0.00	-2.08	-0.41b	0.06
Evaluation individual economic situation	-0.02	0.00	3.56c	0.32	-0.22a
N	2.520	2.132	12	108	268
R2 within	0.02	0.03	0.86	0.10	0.05
R2 between	0.22	0.17	0.00	0.05	0.08
R2 overall	0.12	0.08	0.19	0.06	0.09

Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.1$ ; b:  $p < 0.05$ ; c:  $p < 0.01$ ; d:  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 11: Effects on voting decision for Greens in German federal election 2013 from fixed-effects panel regression, by consideration set types**

	All	Not Greens	Greens only	Greens-CDU	Greens-SPD	Greens-CDU-SPD	Greens-SPD-Left	Greens: all other combinations
Issue orientation Greens	0.26d	0.29d	0.14	0.10	0.29d	0.34b	0.30c	0.08
Candidate orientation CDU/CSU	0.01	0.00	-0.27	-0.37	0.13	-0.04	0.00	-0.07
Candidate orientation SPD	-0.04a	-0.01	0.05	0.17	-0.27b	0.01	-0.20a	-0.04
Candidate orientation FDP	-0.05a	-0.02	-0.05	-0.31	0.05	-0.12	-0.11	-0.05
Candidate orientation Greens	0.15d	0.07b	0.51a	0.38	0.24b	0.03	0.24a	0.23c
Candidate orientation The Left	-0.05b	0.00	-0.29	0.07	-0.09	-0.02	-0.20	-0.08
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.02	0.01	-0.16	0.13a	0.09	-0.03	-0.04	0.00
Frequency discussion SPD	0.01	0.03b	0.13	-0.19	-0.02	0.02	-0.05	0.01
Frequency discussion FDP	0.10c	0.04	-	-	0.10	0.01	0.02	0.23c
Frequency discussion Greens	0.11d	0.11c	0.06	0.42d	0.09	-0.05	0.01	0.16c
Frequency discussion The Left	-0.03a	-0.05c	-0.19	-0.20b	-0.25c	0.19	-0.09	0.12b
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	-0.01	0.00	-0.15	-0.28	-0.02	0.14	0.18	-0.01
Index party contacts campaign SPD	-0.06a	-0.04	-0.77	-0.54	0.18	-0.14	-0.35c	-0.01
Index party contacts campaign FDP	0.03	-0.02	1.05a	0.27	-0.18	-0.38	-0.16	0.14
Index party contacts campaign Greens	0.10a	0.20c	0.42	0.20	-0.08	0.26	-0.05	0.01
Index party contacts campaign The Left	-0.04	-0.12c	-0.74	-0.17	0.24	0.33	0.28b	0.05
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0.05	0.01	-0.09	-0.36	0.40b	0.12	-0.02	0.07
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	-0.06	-0.05	0.65	0.06	-0.31b	0.18	0.09	0.03
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	0.00	0.02	0.59	-0.20	-0.30	-0.51a	0.19	0.00
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	0.02	-0.01	0.09	-0.36	0.45c	-0.22	-0.20	-0.02
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	-0.04	0.00	0.15	0.18	0.08	0.08	-0.10	-0.24b
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	0.03	0.01	-0.39	0.18	0.01	-0.05	-0.05	0.10
NSA-handling government	-0.03c	-0.03b	0.07	-0.04	-0.04	-0.14a	-0.09a	-0.05
Wulff-affair	-0.02	-0.03	-0.10	-0.31	0.05	-0.07	-0.11	0.02
Drone-handling government	0.02	0.00	0.17	0.11	-0.05	0.13	0.06	0.05
Middle finger Steinbrück	-0.02	-0.02	-0.09	-0.18	0.08	0.06	-0.04	-0.07
Pedophilia scandal	0.02	0.01	0.20	-0.28b	0.08	-0.11	-0.14	0.07a
Veggie Day	0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.06	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.00
Highway toll	0.01	0.00	0.11	0.11	0.15b	-0.05	-0.07	-0.08a
Syria-handling government	0.03b	0.01	0.29b	-0.17	0.09	0.03	-0.10	0.06
Evaluation Wahllarena candidate CDU/CSU	0.02	0.00	-1.51c	-0.40	-0.17	0.83b	0.07	0.26
Evaluation Wahllarena candidate SPD	-0.09	-0.03	-0.71	0.80b	-0.07	0.16	0.27	-0.37b
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	0.00	0.00	-0.04	-0.06	0.06	-0.11	-0.11	0.05
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	0.09c	0.05b	0.51b	-0.17	0.11	-0.31b	0.24	0.17b
VAA result CDU/CSU	-0.03a	-0.01	-	-0.11	-0.04	-0.30	-	-0.03
VAA result SPD	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.44a	0.01	-0.08	-0.14a	0.06
VAA result FDP	-0.01	0.04	-	0.24	-0.47d	0.06	-0.57d	-0.11a
VAA result Greens	0.16c	0.20b	-0.07	0.70b	0.11	0.51c	0.28d	0.02
VAA result The Left	-0.02	0.00	0.29a	0.15	0.04	-	-0.07	-0.13b
Evaluation general economic situation	-0.04	-0.05a	0.12	0.03	-0.03	0.54b	-0.05	-0.12
Evaluation individual economic situation	0.02	0.00	-0.24	-0.23	0.18	0.00	0.20	0.07
N	2,520	1,573	62	66	243	95	148	333
R2 within	0.05	0.06	0.34	0.25	0.12	0.19	0.13	0.08



R2 between	0.28	0.25	0.16	0.01	0.08	0.14	0.17	0.09
R2 overall	0.17	0.17	0.27	0.07	0.10	0.15	0.17	0.09

---

Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.1$ ; b:  $p < 0.05$ ; c:  $p < 0.01$ ; d:  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 12: Effects on voting decision for The Left in German federal election 2013 from fixed-effects panel regression, by consideration set types**

	All	Not The Left	The Left only	The Left-SPD	The Left-SPD-Greens	The Left: all other combinations
Issue orientation The Left	0.29d	0.25d	0.25a	0.20	0.28d	0.33d
Candidate orientation CDU/CSU	-0.04a	0.01	-0.31	-0.17	-0.20	-0.15
Candidate orientation SPD	-0.05b	-0.06c	0.22	-0.32	-0.11	-0.09
Candidate orientation FDP	-0.03	-0.05b	0.54	0.06	0.10	0.10
Candidate orientation Greens	-0.06b	-0.04a	-0.40	-0.10	-0.04	-0.23a
Candidate orientation The Left	0.19d	0.15d	0.14	0.58b	0.30b	0.35b
Frequency discussion CDU/CSU	0.00	0.00	-0.28	-0.02	0.06	0.00
Frequency discussion SPD	0.00	0.02b	-0.35	-0.07	-0.04	-0.02
Frequency discussion FDP	0.01	0.01	-	0.62a	-0.19b	-0.10
Frequency discussion Greens	0.01	0.01	-0.03	-	0.07	0.00
Frequency discussion The Left	0.16d	0.19d	-0.16	0.18	0.06	0.12a
Index party contacts campaign CDU/CSU	-0.01	-0.01	-0.20	-0.76	-0.14	0.20
Index party contacts campaign SPD	-0.03	0.00	-0.18	0.17	-0.33b	-0.13
Index party contacts campaign FDP	-0.08a	-0.13c	2.03b	-0.09	0.58b	-0.12
Index party contacts campaign Greens	-0.06	-0.09a	-1.27	0.64	0.05	-0.08
Index party contacts campaign The Left	0.17c	0.26d	-0.62b	0.44	0.06	-0.06
TV debate: evaluation candidate CDU/CSU	0.02	0.00	-0.10	0.95a	0.38b	-0.21
TV debate: evaluation candidate SPD	-0.01	0.00	0.17	-0.16	-0.26	-0.08
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (CDU/CSU)	-0.02	0.00	1.53c	-0.86	-0.09	-0.01
TV debate: evaluation of social environment (SPD)	-0.05	-0.04	0.25	0.62	0.30a	-0.18
TV debate: evaluation of media (CDU/CSU)	-0.01	-0.01	0.21	-0.32	-0.23	0.13
TV debate: evaluation of media (SPD)	-0.03	-0.01	-1.35	-0.33	-0.11	0.00
NSA-handling government	0.00	0.00	-0.02	0.21	-0.05	-0.02
Wulff-affair	-0.01	-0.03	0.15	-0.05	0.25b	-0.06
Drone-handling government	0.01	0.01	0.31a	-0.23	0.03	0.01
Middle finger Steinbrück	-0.03	-0.02	0.34	-0.26	0.04	-0.05
Pedophilia scandal	0.01	0.01	0.29	0.19	0.18b	-0.04
Veggie Day	-0.01	-0.01	-0.09	0.23	-0.13a	0.05
Highway toll	0.02	0.01	0.31a	0.24	0.06	-0.02
Syria-handling government	-0.05d	-0.05d	0.09	-0.13	0.01	-0.17b
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate CDU/CSU	-0.04	-0.05	-0.43	-1.53a	0.14	0.04
Evaluation Wahlarena candidate SPD	-0.07	-0.10a	1.35	-0.81	0.28	-0.08
Credibility SPD-Greens-The Left-coalition	-0.04b	-0.03b	-0.13	0.25	-0.05	-0.08
Evaluation Bavaria election FDP	-0.01	0.01	-0.19	0.70a	-0.23	-0.06
VAA result CDU/CSU	-0.03c	-0.03c	-	-	-	-0.04
VAA result SPD	-0.01	0.00	-	-0.29	0.10	-0.09
VAA result FDP	-0.05c	-0.04c	-	-	0.07	-0.18
VAA result Greens	-0.04b	-0.02	-	-	-0.17	-0.14
VAA result The Left	0.07b	0.07a	0.79d	0.07	-0.09	0.05
Evaluation general economic situation	0.02	0.02	-0.26	-0.12	0.05	0.04
Evaluation individual economic situation	0.02	0.00	-0.12	-0.49	-0.18	0.18
N	2,520	2,036	39	49	148	248
R2 within	0.10	0.11	0.33	0.26	0.17	0.13
R2 between	0.43	0.38	0.10	0.14	0.24	0.20
R2 overall	0.28	0.26	0.19	0.10	0.21	0.19

Levels of significance: a:  $p < 0.1$ ; b:  $p < 0.05$ ; c:  $p < 0.01$ ; d:  $p < 0.001$ .