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## Ideology-driven public opinion formation in Europe: The case of third sector attitudes in Sweden

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FS III 00-202

**Ideology-Driven  
Public Opinion Formation in Europe:  
The Case of Third Sector Attitudes  
in Sweden**

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## **Zusammenfassung**

Dieses Papier nutzt die Einstellungen zum Dritten Sektor in Schweden als Testfall für generelle Annahmen darüber, wie Bürger in westeuropäischen politischen Systemen, die ideologisch strukturiert sind, von ideologischen Schemata auf kürzestem Wege zu politischen Präferenzen kommen. Es läßt sich feststellen, daß Einstellungen zum Dritten Sektor von allen ideologischen Schemata beeinflusst werden, die sich im Parteiensystem wiederfinden (Staat-Markt, christlicher Traditionalismus und Wachstum-Ökologie). Im Gegensatz zu dem, was US-amerikanische Untersuchungsergebnisse implizieren, sind diese Effekte zudem über sozio-ökonomische Gruppen hinweg sehr stabil (vor allem die Effekte, die mit dem dominierenden Staat-Markt-Schema zusammenhängen). Es läßt sich gleichermaßen keine Wechselwirkung mit politischer Erfahrung nachweisen und der relative Einfluß der Schemata bleibt gleich, egal ob der Dritte Sektor als Alternative zum Wohlfahrtsstaat dargestellt wird oder nicht. Schließlich bestätigen sich die theoretischen Erwartungen, daß das Ausmaß, in dem die Schemata vor der Beurteilung hervorgehoben werden, sich auf ihren relativen Einfluß auswirkt. Es wird diskutiert, welche Implikationen diese Ergebnisse für die Vorstellung davon haben, wie Meinungsbildung auf der individuellen Ebene in ideologisch klaren und strukturierten politischen Systemen funktioniert.

## **Abstract**

This paper uses “third sector attitudes in Sweden” as a test case for general assumptions about how citizens in ideologically structured West European political systems apply ideological schemas as shortcuts to political preferences. Third sector attitudes are found to be affected by all ideological schemas mirrored by the party system (state-market, Christian traditionalism, and growth-ecology). Moreover, contrary to what is implied by findings from America, these effects are very stable across socio-economic groups (especially those of the dominant state-market schema). Similarly, no interaction effects of political sophistication could be traced, and the relative impact of the schemas remains the same regardless of whether or not the third sector is presented as an alternative to the welfare state. Finally, consistent with theoretical expectations, the extent to which schemas have been made salient prior to the judgement affects their relative impact. The implications of these findings for the nature of public opinion formation in ideologically clear and structured political systems are discussed.



Staffan Kumlin

## **Ideology-Driven Public Opinion Formation in Europe: The Case of Third Sector Attitudes in Sweden\***

### **Introduction**

Citizens regularly face political issues which they know little about and towards which they have no crystallised pre-existing attitudes. Yet if you ask them, people will somehow manage to swiftly form opinions “on the spot,” based only on immediately available information (Zaller 1992; Sniderman 1993; Lupia 1994; Chong 1996; Kinder 1998). How do they manage this difficult task?

A powerful answer is that they use *ideological shortcuts* (Downs 1957; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991). When forming an opinion, the modern citizen does not collect large amounts of issue-specific information. Rather, she is a “cognitive miser” who extract from the meagre information directly at hand what is implied by a more general ideological orientation. This paper tests a number of key assumptions about such shortcut-driven opinion formation. In particular, I test hypotheses about *which ideological shortcuts* are used by *which citizens*. I do this in an analysis of attitudes towards “the third sector” (in broad sweeps, voluntary non-profit organisations) among the Swedish Electorate. Throughout the paper, I consider the fact that theories about ideological shortcuts have been developed mainly in America. A central problem is how these theories can be developed in order to comfortably travel to European countries, where the degree of ideological clarity, stability and persistence in political conflict is considerably higher (Granberg and Holmberg 1988; van der Eijk, Franklin and Oppenhuis 1996; van der Brug and van der Eijk 1999).

The paper proceeds like this. First, I identify some basic assumptions about how individuals use “ideological schemas” as shortcuts to opinions. Second, those assumptions are

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merged with the fact that Sweden is a West European political system marked by ideologically clear and stable political conflict; it is argued that such conflict has implications for predictions as to which schemas will be used by which citizens. Third, relevant research on the structure of ideological conflict in Sweden is reviewed. Fourth, I discuss why the case of “third sector attitudes in Sweden” is a suitable laboratory for the present purposes. Fifth, the theoretical discussion generates a set of empirical hypotheses about the relation between third sector attitudes and ideological schemas among different groups of people. Sixth, after a presentation of the data, empirical tests are undertaken. Seventh, the implications of theories and findings for the nature of opinion formation in ideologically structured West European political systems are discussed.

### **Ideological schemas as informational shortcuts**

The ideological shortcut argument has been specified in several ways. For instance, Downs (1957) assumed that citizens simplify the political world by relating issues to one overarching conflict dimension which can subsume much of political life. Cognitive misers “*reduce all political questions to their bearing upon one crucial issue: how much government intervention in the economy should there be?*” (Downs 1957:116). When the citizen is forming opinions, the most important information is how different alternatives fit with her position along that dimension (Fuchs and Klingemann 1989; Knutsen 1995).<sup>1</sup>

In recent decades, the ideological shortcut argument has increasingly been interpreted from the perspective of social psychological “schema theory” (see Conover and Feldman 1984; Lau and Sears 1986; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Wyer and Ottatti 1993; Eagly and Chaiken 1993).<sup>2</sup> A schema is a cognitive structure of previous knowledge and feelings about a class of objects. Typically, schemas are organised around semantic categories, for instance “welfare state,” “taxes,” “market economy” and so on. Such categories are often affect-laden; they carry an “affective tag” of memorised degrees of goodness/badness (Fiske 1986; Lodge and Stroh 1993; Sears 1993). Filed under a category are a

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1 Political behaviour and public opinion studies concerned with left-right ideology have often built on the rational choice paradigm (Green and Shapiro 1994). It is believed that voters are self-consciously aware of their own ideological shortcut, and (2) relate different possible specific political alternatives to the shortcut in a rational and cognitively driven decision process. The ideological shortcut argument as such, however, extends beyond the rational choice paradigm. It does not presuppose a rational decision process. On the contrary, empirical research contends that shortcuts are often affective in nature with the capacity of triggering emotionally strong responses (Sears et al. 1980; Sears 1993; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991).

2 For introductions and further references to this line of public opinion research, see Lau and Sears (1986), Sniderman (1993), Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), Listhaug (1995), Pappi (1996), and Kinder (1998). For a critical discussion, see Kuklinski, Luskin and Bolland (1991), and Lodge and McGraw (1995).

number of related beliefs (“the welfare state gives people an equal opportunity,” “the market generates wealth”). *Ideological schemas*, then, are schemas organised around semantic categories of very general political relevance.<sup>3</sup>

An ideological schema can be used to interpret and evaluate novel political objects. Rather than collecting costly object-specific information, people make inferences from what they already know and feel about a more general category to which the new issue is perceived to belong (Conover and Feldman 1984; Lau and Sears 1986). Schemas are thus stereotyping devices which “replace missing data” with familiar, previously evaluated information (see Hofstetter et al. 1999; Valentino 1999). How does this work? First, the citizen searches her mind for schema categories which may approximate the issue. Cognitive misers interrupt their search when an acceptable, rather than perfect, understanding of the issue has been reached (Fiske 1986; Kinder 1998). Second, the affect associated with the activated schema category is transmitted to the new issue (Sears 1993; Lodge and McGraw 1995). The formed opinion, then, will not be a function of information and deliberation particular to the specific issue. Rather, it echoes beliefs and feelings constituting a more general ideological schema.

Many studies conclude that people typically have *several* schemas which can be used for interpretation of the same political objects (Lau 1989; Kinder 1998). Such competing schemas are often relatively independent from each other. This lack of integration means that depending on which schema an individual applies to an issue, significantly different opinions may be formed (Zaller 1992). As Sapiro and Soss (1999:287) explain, “*citizens do not all share a single set of ‘capstone ideas’ through which they understand and judge politics. People’s responses to politics reflect a wide range of considerations. Indeed, individuals’ manifest preferences and opinions often reflect ambivalent mixtures of conflicting considerations and values.*” In turn, the observation that several competing schemas can exist side by side in the mind of the citizen has given birth to an intriguing research problem: “*how (are) we to know which political schema will be applied?*” (Lau and Sears 1986:362). In other words, how can we explain which ideological schemas are used by which citizens?

### **Which schemas among which citizens?**

Much research contends that individuals are quite volatile and open to systematic influence in their choices of schemas to be used for opinion formation (Lau and Sears 1986; Iyengar

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3 An alternative term for schema would be “stereotype” (see Kinder 1998).



and Kinder 1987; Zaller 1992; Gamson 1992; Mutz, Sniderman, and Brody 1996; Chong 1996; Valentino 1999). People seem prone to pick *certain* schemas, and to momentarily forget about others. Few are sophisticated enough to “stop-and-think”; that is, to look at the issue through a second or even a third schema (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Zaller 1992).

These results introduce the possibility that different people use different schemas to interpret the same political objects. For instance, Lau (1989) demonstrated that some Americans tend to evaluate presidential candidates on the basis of party-related information. Yet other groups of people make up their minds using group-, issue-, or candidate-centred schemas (Lau 1989:25-28; Huckfeldt et al. 1999). Similarly, Sapiro and Soss (1999), found that attitudes towards the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill-scandal reflected very different considerations among different subsets of the population. Interpretations of the issue reflected group affiliations and living conditions, rather than a commonly defined dimension of conflict. For instance, white women were more likely to look at the issue as a case of gender politics and sexual harassment, whereas blacks were inclined to apply a race politics schema, and so on. These findings not only suggest that different groups of citizens hold different opinions. More interestingly, they suggest that different people use different schemas to interpret the same issue. People differ not only as to what they think about political objects, but also as to what they think objects *are about*. Expressed differently, different groups of citizens do not share a common conflict dimension. Neither do they share a common language for political communication (Sapiro and Soss 1999).

In addition, many researchers expect an impact of *political sophistication* (Converse 1964; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Zaller 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Ferejohn and Kuklinski 1990; Bartels 1996; Gastil and Dillard 1999; Huckfeldt et al. 1999). An individual is more politically sophisticated, (1) the more political information she remembers, (2) the more political domains the remembered information covers and (3) the more interrelated with each other (or “constrained”) the pieces of information are (Luskin 1987, 1990). Several scholars have suggested that the politically sophisticated are better at identifying the opinion that fits best with their ideological predispositions (Converse 1964; Hamill and Lodge 1986; Zaller 1992; Bartels 1996). That is, politically sophisticated citizens are thought to be more skilled in encoding the ideological content of political information (Zaller 1992). Also, the politically sophisticated are more likely to “stop-and-think” and consider several, perhaps competing, ideological schemas. A large and tightly knit cognitive structure makes the individual more sensitive to alternative interpretations. For these reasons, the literature suggests that effects of ideological schemas on opinions should grow with political sophistication (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991).

It is also regarded as crucial how an issue is *cued* (or “framed”). Political stimuli typically come with a number of ideological cues answering questions like “what is this issue about?” and “to which of my schema categories is it relevant?” (Fiske 1986; Zaller 1992; Gamson 1992). People use these cues to figure out which schema category might approximate the object to be evaluated. Consequently, alterations of which ideological cues are emphasised—for instance in survey questions—should influence citizens’ schema choices.

Finally, *saliency* is important. That is, often and recently activated schemas are more likely to be applied again than those rarely used (Srull and Wyer 1979; Wyer and Ottati 1993; Huckfeldt et al. 1999). Zaller (1992:48) drew on this idea in his accessibility axiom: “*the more recently a consideration has been called to mind or thought about, the less time it takes to retrieve that consideration or related considerations from memory and bring them to the top of the head for use.*” An implication of the accessibility axiom is that people are likely to use ideological schemas that they have often used in the recent past, also when less salient schemas would be logically just as appropriate.<sup>4</sup>

### **Schemas go to Europe: The impact of ideologically clear and structured party systems**

These assumptions about schemas and shortcuts have been developed mainly in America. How can they be refined in order to comfortably travel to European political systems? Here, a number of researchers have found that the nature of opinion formation and voting behaviour varies with the nature of *the party system* (Granberg and Holmberg 1988, 1990, 1996; van der Eijk, Franklin and Oppenhuis 1996; Oppenhuis 1995). If elite politics is clearly and persistently structured by stable party-driven ideological conflict (as opposed to individualist candidate-driven) it is easier to learn, remember and apply ideological schemas. The “stronger” party conflict is in these respects, the more well-developed, emotionally strong, and easily accessible will corresponding ideological schemas be in citizens’ minds (for similar discussions and/or findings, see Budge, Crewe and Farlie 1976; Carmines and Stimson 1980; Niemi and Westholm 1984; Fuchs and Klingemann 1989; Dalton and Wattenberg 1993; Bartels 1996; van Wijnen 2000). Using political psychology parlance, such schemas can be thought of as “symbolic orientations” (Sears et al. 1980; Sears 1993) which, as time goes by, are made “chronically accessible” (Lau 1989) to citizens’ by ideologically clear and persistent party conflict.

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4 The notion that certain beliefs are more accessible from “top of the head” than others has received empirical support, not only in survey research (Zaller 1992) but also in qualitative interview data analysis (Chong 1993, 1996).

How does a strong party system affect predictions as to which schemas are used by which citizens? A first theoretical adjustment is that very different groups of citizens will tend to choose *the same* schemas when forming opinions. This is because a strong party system provides people with different group affiliations and living conditions with a clear, persistent and common site of political learning. As parties reiterate the same symbolic conflicts, corresponding ideological schemas will finally become chronically accessible among virtually all groups of citizens. In contrast to what has convincingly been demonstrated in American studies, *a common understanding* of what “politics is about” will be established across different groups in society (compare with Lau 1989; Sapiro and Soss 1999; Huckfeldt et al. 1999). People might differ as to what they think about political objects, but there will be consensus as to what they think issues *are about*. This is to say that different groups of citizens share common dimensions of conflict, and that they share a common language for political communication (Granberg and Holmberg 1988; van der Eijk, Franklin and Oppenhuis 1996; Oscarsson 1998; van der Brug and van der Eijk 1999).

A second theoretical adjustment concerns political sophistication. Even unsophisticated citizens should be able to recall and accurately use ideological schemas mirrored by clear and persistent party conflict. Recollection and use of schemas demand little sophistication if one is persistently and consistently reminded about their importance and content (for similar arguments, see Carmines and Stimson 1980; Granberg and Holmberg 1988). Even the politically inattentive will learn to apply time-persistent basic building blocs of clear and political competition. Thus, in a strong party system, the prediction is that people on different levels of political sophistication will not differ much as to which and how many party-promoted schemas they use.

The third theoretical adjustment is that in a strong party system we expect a small impact of ideological cueing. Again, the reason is that certain ideological schemas have been dubbed “chronically accessible” by an ideologically clear and persistent party system. The impact of such chosen schemas will not be easily manipulated by subtle cueing. Regardless of what ideological cues look like, people automatically recall chronically accessible schemas as soon as they are confronted with political objects (Sears 1993).<sup>5</sup> They do not look carefully at cues stating what an issue “is about.” Rather, they assume that old reliable schemas are relevant to the new object as well. If needed, old schemas are used to “impute missing data” into unknown issues so that the issue fit schemas even better.

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5 This prediction is in line with recent findings reported by Huckfeldt et al. (1999). They demonstrated that people with accessible schemas (as measured by computer-timed survey responses) were much less likely to change policy opinions as the result of persuasion attempts (Huckfeldt et al. 1999:903-04).

## Ideological Schemas in Sweden

So far I have discussed ideological schemas in the abstract. However, to arrive at testable hypotheses one must consider which schemas come into question in the political system under study. Recycling Schank and Abelson's observation (1977:10), "*it does not take one very far to say that schemas are important: one must know the contents of the schemas.*"

Research has detected several schemas which structure political choices among the Swedish electorate. Three of these will be analysed here: (1) *state-market orientations*, (2) *Christian traditionalist orientations*, and (3) *growth-ecology orientations*.<sup>6</sup> The argument for focusing on these is that they reflect the three basic substantive political conflicts represented in the Swedish party system (Holmberg 1981; Gilljam and Holmberg 1993; Bennulf 1994; Oscarsson 1998; Aardal et al. 1998). This is crucial as our hypotheses about which schemas are used by which citizens will be based on the assumption that the schemas are clearly and persistently mirrored by stable party conflict.

The state-market schema has been a crucial variable ever since survey based electoral research started in Sweden in the mid-1950s (see Särilvik 1970, 1974; Petersson 1977; Holmberg 1981; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Gilljam and Holmberg 1990, 1995; Bennulf 1994; Oskarson 1992, 1994; Oscarsson 1998). The core component is a conflict about how much state intervention in the market economy there should be. The important semantic categories defining the schema are "the public sector," "the welfare state," "market economy," "taxes," "privatisation," and the like. Peoples' feelings and beliefs about these symbols are very powerful predictors of opinions and party choice. There are no immediate signs that they will lose their prominence in this respect (Gilljam and Holmberg 1995; Oscarsson 1998).

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6 A conceptual note is in order. The three schemas must all be kept conceptually separated from *subjective left-right placement* (see Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Fuchs and Klingemann 1989; Knutsen 1995, 1999). This concept refers to citizens' subjective identification with the spatial images of left-right. The important difference is that, taken on their own, left and right are substantively undefined political categories. As Knutsen (1998:294) explains, left and right "*can be considered as empty containers ready to be filled with political content.*" In contrast, the three schemas analysed here are organised around semantic categories which, taken on their own, have substantive political meaning ("the state," "the family," "the environment"). It is an empirical, not conceptual, question whether subjective left-right ideology is correlated with either or all of the substantive schematic dimensions at focus in this paper (Fuchs and Klingemann 1989; Knutsen 1995). In fact, nothing prevents left and right from having different substantive meaning at different points in time, in different countries, or among different groups of citizens. For example, Knutsen (1995) found that, in Western Europe, state-market orientations, religious traditionalism, and postmaterialist orientations all contribute to citizens' subjective left-right ideology (see also Inglehart 1990). Interestingly, in recent years there has been a tendency in many countries for postmaterialist orientations to become more strongly associated with subjective left-right placement (Knutsen 1995). In contrast, Oscarsson (1998) found that, in Sweden over the last thirty years the substantive contents of the left-right dimension have changed surprisingly little. By and large, left and right are still defined by the industrial-age question of how large state intervention in society there should be.

Although the state-market schema still dominates Swedish electoral politics it now faces competition. Oscarsson's (1998) analysis of the dimensionality in citizens' party evaluations during the last forty years showed that, although the state-market dimension is still clearly number one in structuring perceptions of the party space, its dominance has weakened somewhat. For instance, *Christian traditionalist* orientations are responsible for breaking up the uni-dimensionality of party evaluations. Christian traditionalists hold positive feelings and beliefs about schematic categories such as "Christian values," "the family," "law and order," and "Swedish traditions" (Oscarsson 1998; Holmberg 1981). In the party system, the Christian Democrats are closest to the Christian traditionalist schema extreme. This party gained parliamentary representation for the first time in 1991.<sup>7</sup>

The third ideological schema is *the growth-ecology schema*. At the ecology extreme we find people strongly in favour of efforts to solve environmental problems, even if it means deteriorating growth and consumption standards (Nas 1995). When measuring the growth-ecology schema, one is likely to capture variation also along some conceptually related dimensions (Nas 1995; Scarbrough 1995). Of course, the most important one is the post-materialist dimension. Inspired by Inglehart's (1977, 1990) work, researchers have looked for "new politics" in Sweden (Bennulf and Holmberg 1990; Bennulf 1994, 1995; Oscarsson 1998) Such politics would be driven by a value conflict between materialists (who value economic consumption standard and physical protection) and postmaterialists (who emphasise non-physical values such as quality of life, democratic principles and a healthy environment). The new value conflict would structure attitudes towards a wide range of topics such as growth-ecology issues, authorities, democratic principles, decentralisation, popular initiative etc. Previous research, however, contends that new postmaterialist politics does by no means form Swedish political conflict with the same strength as old materialist politics (Bennulf 1994, 1995; Bennulf and Holmberg 1990; Oscarsson 1998). Nevertheless, these studies indicate that voters have a more limited growth-ecology schema consisting of fairly interrelated "green" attitudes which improve predictions of party preferences significantly. In the party system, the ecology extreme is represented most clearly by the Greens (which entered the parliament in 1988), and by the countryside-oriented Centre party.

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<sup>7</sup> Christian traditionalist orientations are only weakly correlated with state-market orientations (Gilljam and Holmberg 1993; Kumlin 1997).

## Why Study Third Sector Attitudes in Sweden?

The dependent variable to be explained by the three ideological schemas is “third sector attitudes.” The third sector can be understood as a set of voluntary and non-profit distributing organisations (Salamon and Anheier 1997).<sup>8</sup> These more or less formalised organisations are driven mainly by other forces than market profit incentive and political decisions. The sector involves a diverse set of undertakings such as human services, culture, recreation and political mobilisation. (Gidron, Kramer and Salamon 1992; Salamon and Anheier 1997; Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Johnson et al. 1998; Billis and Glennerster 1998). The central dependent variable in this paper is popular attitudes towards letting the third sector become more important in social and political life.

Why is the case of third sector attitudes in Sweden a suitable laboratory for the present purposes? First, the issue could easily be interpreted by each of the three ideological schemas.<sup>9</sup> For instance, one might expect state interventionists to view the third sector as a threat to a strong welfare state. Moreover, Christian traditionalists might associate the third sector with a preferred traditional social order with small communities, based on a moral obligation to assist people in the immediate surrounding. Finally, ecology-oriented citizens might welcome third sector voluntarism as a counterweight to centralised authority. Indeed, they might perceive the third sector as a well-suited forum for the new politics slogan “think global-act local.” In summary, because the third sector can easily be given multiple ideological meaning, it offers opportunities to test hypotheses about which schemas are used by which citizens.

Why do I study third sector attitudes *in Sweden*? The first reason is that the nature of political conflict is markedly different to that of the United States (where, to a large extent, theories of schemas and shortcuts have been developed). In Sweden, as in many other countries and elections in Western Europe, “responsible parties” appeal to voters on the basis of general platforms of ideological and policy-based character (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996; Schmitt and Thomassen 1999). The ideological conflict dimensions underlying these appeals only change with glacial velocity (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984; Franklin, Mackie and Valen 1992; Oskarson 1994). Also, the responsible party mode of political competition gives much less attention to individual competencies than the more candidate-oriented American system (see Wattenberg 1990; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996). Since this paper

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8 Several different terms have been used to capture what I refer to as the third sector. The examples include “voluntary sector,” “nonprofit sector” and “civil society” (see Anheier and Salamon 1997).

9 Of course, this does not mean that citizens’ will do so by any logical necessity (indeed this is one of the questions that will be empirically investigated). Rather, it means that one *can* interpret the third sector issue from the perspectives of all the schemas, without becoming exotic or politically unrealistic.

argues that a strong party-based system has consequences for predictions as to which schemas are used by which citizens, Sweden is a relevant case to study (see Granberg and Holmberg 1988, for a similar argument).

A second argument has to do with the role of the third sector in Swedish society. Because of the large welfare state, Swedish third sector organisations are mainly responsible for recreation, sport or political mobilisation. In contrast to many other West European countries, the main activity is not production of human services and welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990; Boli 1991; Gidron, Kramer and Salamon 1992; Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Salamon and Anheier 1997; Rothstein, forthcoming 2000). Therefore, the relationship between the third sector and the public sector has rarely been one of deep political conflict. Rather, in Scandinavia, this relationship can be characterised by a high degree of co-operation and consensus (Klaussen and Selle 1996; Boli 1991; Rothstein 1998). Since the Swedish third sector is not overly politicised it is unlikely that many citizens are motivated enough to build and keep track of well-developed third sector attitudes, which they can simply report from their memory when it is called for (Lodge and Stroh 1993; Feldman 1995; Huckfeldt et al. 1999).<sup>10</sup> Of course, this does not mean that people cannot make sense of the third sector. However, because most of them lack crystallised pre-existing attitudes, they must rely on familiar ideological schemas to impute political meaning into a rarely encountered issue.

## Five hypotheses

Let me now deduct five hypotheses from the theoretical discussion. Here are the first two:

*H1: The State-market-, Christian traditionalist-, and growth-ecology schemas respectively, all affect third sector attitudes: Market-oriented individuals, Christian traditionalists and ecologists respectively, hold more positive third sector attitudes than others.*

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10 Things might look different in a few years time as the Swedish third sector has now begun to carry out new responsibilities. Slowly, it is beginning to expand in areas previously defined as public sector domains. As Lundström and Wijkström (1997b:240-41) conclude: “Conditions for the nonprofit sector today appear to be changing rapidly. Pressure on state budgets and changes in the ideological climate [...] call for a different social policy. They emphasise freedom and individual responsibility in the social welfare system and advocate a larger space for civil society. [...] Accordingly, government policy will probably open up new space for nonprofit organizations providing services in areas such as social welfare, health and education. [...] At present there are several attempts from both local government and nonprofit organizations to initiate voluntary participation in areas traditionally run by government.”

*H2: The effects of the three party system-promoted schemas in H1 are stable across socio-economic and demographic groups.*

Many studies contend that citizens are prone to emphasise one schema and momentarily “forget” about others (for an overview, see Kinder 1998). However, since the three particular schemas in H1 are persistently and simultaneously emphasised in a strong party system, we expect them to be “chronically salient.” That is, people recall all of them more or less automatically. They do not reduce the meaning of the complex third sector issue by processing it through only one of the relevant schemas.

The notion that people emphasise different schemas on different occasions (Zaller 1992) opens the door for differences in emphasis across different groups in society. This has been convincingly shown to be applicable in American studies (Lau 1989; Sapiro and Soss 1999; Huckfeldt et al. 1999). However, as reflected by H2, strong party systems forcefully establishes a common political language which is easily accessible and well-rehearsed regardless of group affiliation, living conditions etc. Empirically, I will test H2 by allowing the effects of ideological schemas on third sector attitudes to interact with a number of variables which have been suggested in the literature as potential causes of schema usage (for example age, sector employment, class affiliation, income etc.). Of course, H2 predicts that such interactions will not enhance our ability to explain third sector attitudes.

The third hypothesis addresses the impact of political sophistication. American public opinion researchers have often found that effects of ideological schemas rise with political sophistication (see Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Zaller 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Expectations change in a strong party system. Given the clarity and stability of political conflict in the Swedish political system, we expect even the politically unsophisticated to learn and use those schemas which are persistently reiterated by stable party conflict:

*H3. In a clear and stable party system such as the Swedish one, the magnitude of state-market, Christian traditionalism, and growth-ecology effects on third sector attitudes will not increase at higher levels of political sophistication.*

Moving on, several studies suggest that different schemas rise to explanatory sovereignty depending on how a stimulus is framed (Fiske 1986; Zaller 1992; Gamson 1992; Kinder 1998). Again these studies originate from the USA where political conflict revolves around individual action and competence rather than around party-based ideological conflict (Wattenberg 1990). Such a political system makes it less likely that certain schemas are recalled clearly and persistently enough to become “chronically salient” at the cost of oth-



ers. People will therefore need to look more intensely for cues as to which schema might be relevant. Conversely, citizens in strong party system will, out of old habit, assume that a new issue can be readily interpreted with chronically salient schemas. Empirically, I will concentrate on one politically important case of “cue manipulation”: the relative presence of cues indicating a relation between the third sector and *the welfare state*. The main hypothesis to be tested is:

*H4. Regardless of whether ideological cues are clearly related to the welfare state or not, the relative impact of state-market, Christian Traditionalist, and Growth/Ecology orientations respectively stays the same.*

H1-H4 build on the assumption that chronic schema accessibility is continuously achieved by a strong party system through a steady flow of political information; this flow clearly and persistently reflects the ideological conflicts represented in such a system. This assumption has an implication which is, perhaps, not immediately visible: if we can identify *an unusual situation* where one schema has recently been emphasised much more than normally, the foundation for the chronic saliency assumption is removed. The recently emphasised schema should become more important for subsequent opinion formation (Srull and Wyer 1979; Wyer and Ottatti 1993; Zaller 1992; Huckfeldt et al. 1999). By the same token, schemas which have recently played more subordinate political parts should have their effects on subsequent opinion formation reduced:

*H5. The more recently a particular ideological schema has been recalled and used, the greater effect that schema will have on subsequently formed third sector attitudes.*

Empirically, I test H5 by looking at the impact of differences between surveys as to what schemas have been emphasised by questions *prior* to third sector items.<sup>11</sup> If respondents have been asked a great number of state-market related questions prior to the third sector question they can be expected to make heavier use of the state-market schema. Of course, in reality such radical saliency shifts will be unusual in strong European responsible party systems. Parties such as the Greens and the Christian Democrats in Sweden make sure that state-market is not the only emphasised conflict. However, if one can nevertheless identify

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<sup>11</sup> The crucial difference between H4 and H5 is that whereas the former is about information which comes directly with the stimulus (cues), the latter addresses information which has been received and processed *at a previous point in time*, and which have made certain schemas salient. Using the distinction between stimulus versus perceiver determinants of perception (see Granberg 1993), H4 is concerned with a possible stimulus determinant, and H5 with a possible perceiver determinant.

the occurrence of a saliency shift which does not reflect the regular structure of party system composition, this shift should be influential.

## Data and Measurement

The data come from two sources.<sup>12</sup> First, the author was given the opportunity to collect data within the 1998 Swedish Election Study.<sup>13</sup> This study included a question battery where people were asked to respond to suggested ways of organising society in the future. Among them was the suggestion to “*Create a society where idealistic organisations and voluntarism play more important roles.*” Respondents placed this suggestion on an eleven-point scale running between 0 (very bad suggestion) and 10 (very good suggestion) with 5 (neither good nor bad suggestion) as an explicitly labelled middle alternative. Second, I use data collected by the SOM Institute at Göteborg University.<sup>14</sup> This involves secondary analysis of the nation-wide SOM survey conducted in 1990. Respondents were asked for their opinions about the idea to “*Let voluntary associations run leisure time facilities.*” The alternatives were “very good,” “rather good,” “neither good nor bad,” “rather bad” and “very bad” suggestion. Also, the SOM-institute gave the author the opportunity to participate in two surveys with social science students at Göteborg University.<sup>15</sup> In the fall of 1997 314 students responded to an item very similar to the one subsequently included in the 1998 Election Study. One year later exactly 600 students evaluated the proposals to “*Redistribute some of society’s resources via voluntary organisations instead of via public benefit systems*” and “*Transfer some public social service tasks to voluntary organisa-*

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12 All datasets used in this paper are, or will be, available for scientific purposes from the Swedish Social Science Data Archive (SSD) at Göteborg University (<http://www.ssd.gu.se>).

13 The Swedish Election Studies are carried out by The Swedish Election Studies Program at the Department of Political Science, Göteborg University, and headed by Professor Sören Holmberg. More information about the Swedish Election Study Program is available at <http://www.pol.gu.se/sve/vod/vustart.htm>.

14 The SOM Institute conducts interdisciplinary research and organises seminars on the topics of Society, Opinion and Media in Sweden (hence the name SOM). It is managed jointly by the Institute for Journalism and Mass Communication, The Department of Political Science and the School of Public Administration at Göteborg University. The Institute is headed by a steering committee consisting of Professor Sören Holmberg, Department of Political Science, Professor Lennart Weibull, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, and Senior Lecturer Lennart Nilsson, School of Public Administration. For more information about the SOM-institute and its surveys, see Holmberg and Weibull (1997), and visit its website at <http://www.som.gu.se/>.

15 The student data were collected by employees at the SOM institute who, after having made appointments with lecturers, visited all undergraduate courses at the Department of Political Science, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, and the School of Public Administration. The students filled in the questionnaires at the end of class. By necessity, there is no exact information about the percentage of students who decided not to take part in the survey. Personal communication with the staff at the SOM Institute, however, indicates that this percentage is “very small.”

tions.” Again the alternatives were “very good,” “rather good,” “neither good nor bad,” “rather bad” and “very bad suggestion.” To familiarise ourselves with these dependent variables, let us have look at their univariate distributions (table 1).

Table 1: Frequency distributions of dependent third sector attitude variables

	<i>Create a society where idealistic organisations and voluntarism play more important roles</i>		<i>Create a society where idealistic efforts and voluntary organisations play more important roles</i>			
	The 1998 Swedish Election Study (mean 5.85 SD 2.20)		The 1997 Student SOM Survey (mean 5.69 SD 2.54)			
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency		
0 very bad suggestion	2.2	39	4.3	13		
1	.9	15	1.3	4		
2	4.5	78	7.3	22		
3	5.4	94	7.9	24		
4	5.6	97	3.3	10		
5 neither good nor bad suggestion	30.9	538	27.2	82		
6	12.3	214	8.3	25		
7	15.1	264	12.9	39		
8	12.4	216	15.9	48		
9	4.0	70	3.3	10		
10 very good suggestion	6.8	118	8.3	25		
Total	100.0	1743	100.0	302		
	<i>Let voluntary associations run leisure time facilities</i>		<i>Redistribute some of society's resources via voluntary organisations instead of via public benefit systems</i>		<i>Transfer some public social service tasks to voluntary organisations</i>	
	The 1990 nationwide SOM survey		The 1998 Student SOM Survey		The 1998 Student SOM Survey	
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
Very good suggestion	28.4	421	4.1	24	3.2	19
Rather good suggestion	42.5	630	18.4	108	14.5	85
Neither good nor bad suggestion	20.0	297	24.6	144	23.2	136
Rather bad suggestion	5.9	87	29.5	173	32.8	192
Very bad suggestion	3.2	48	23.4	137	26.2	153
Total	100.0	1483	100.0	586	100.0	585

The items in table 1 fulfil the most basic criterion for subsequent use in explanatory analysis: the stimuli manage to produce quite some response variation. However, the distributions are skewed. Those who responded to either the 11-point scale items or the 5-point question in the SOM 1990 survey were more likely to express positive third sector attitudes (for these items between 51 and 71 percent were on the positive side of the third sector fence). Conversely, those who answered the questions used in the 1998 student survey

tended to be negative (only 18 and 23 percent respectively regarded these suggestions as very or rather good).<sup>16</sup>

An important concern has to do with the level of measurement. It is tempting to treat these variables as interval level scales. However, I will not do so for the following theoretical reasons. As discussed above, we are dealing with an issue that has not been submitted to the court of public opinion on a regular basis, primarily because of the extended welfare state arrangements in Sweden. It is therefore unlikely that many citizens hold pre-existing and crystallised third sector attitudes (Feldman 1995; Huckfeldt et al. 1999). Consequently, it would be dubious to treat third sector attitudes as delicately chosen positions along a fine-tuned gradual continuum. It is more reasonable to regard responses as rougher and somewhat more categorical statements (see Diamond and Cobb 1996 for a similar argument). Empirically this will mean dichotomization, thus dividing the dependent variable into basic categories of “pros and cons.” To be sure, this means loss of information. However, the lost information is not likely to be all that systematic or theoretically meaningful.

## Empirical results

### *H1 and H2: Effects of the three ideological schemas, and differences in schema usage across groups*

We first turn to empirical tests of H1 and H2. The 1998 Swedish Election Study offers possibilities to measure all concepts involved. Three schema measures and one political sophistication scale were extracted using principal components factor analysis (one factor analysis for each of the four measures).<sup>17</sup> The variables were scored so that high values

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16 A brief speculation about these differences is appropriate. In particular, two explanations come to mind. First, there is a difference as to what ideological cues are communicated through the questions. The items that produce third sector negativism all highlight more voluntary responsibility for social services. It is likely that such cues make people regard the third sector as being more of an anti-public sector suggestion than they would otherwise. (Note that this cueing effect is different from the one covered by H4. The latter one is about cueing effects on which ideological dimensions are or are not used. The former ones are about where on an already given ideological dimension a stimulus belongs). Second, items that produce third sector positivism contain no trade-off between priorities whereas the two others explicitly pit the third sector and the public sector against one another. When a stimulus does not indicate any such trade-off it is natural that more people are positive toward it (Green 1992).

17 The conventional constraint to extract only factors with eigenvalues larger than one was employed for each analysis (Kaiser’s criteria). In each factor analysis, only one factor had a strong enough eigenvalue to be extracted. The state-market variable (explained variance 48 percent) was extracted from a factor analysis (loadings within parentheses) involving responses to the items “*reduce the public sector*” (.70), “*reduce social benefits*” (.63), “*lower the taxes*” (.70), “*privatise public companies*” (.77) and “*introduce more private health care*” (.72). The Christian traditionalist scale (explained variance 52 percent) builds on items where people evaluated proposals to work towards a society “... where Christian values play a

represent high degrees of market positivism, Christian traditionalism, ecologism, and political sophistication respectively. Table 2 reports three logistic regression models where attitudes towards the third sector constitutes the dependent variable, as measured by the 11-point scale in table 1. The scale has been dichotomised (1 = positive or neutral response, 0 = negative response to the third sector). The models thus predict the log-odds of giving a positive (meaning non-negative) response towards the third sector.

The model in the first column involves the three schema variables only. The main observation is that all three display significant and roughly equal logit coefficients.<sup>18</sup> It is predicted that an increase of one standard deviation unit along the factor scales increases the log-odds of positive third sector response with about .3 to .4. Market-oriented citizens, Christian traditionalists, and ecologists are thus all more likely than others to favour the third sector. To get a more intuitive feeling for these logit effects, we may translate them into effects on predicted probabilities. At the mean (0) of the two other variables in the equation, the effect of moving from the lower standard deviation point (-1) to the higher (+1), on the probability of a positive third sector response is .12 for both state-market and Christian traditionalism, and .11 for growth-ecology.<sup>19</sup>

In order to reduce the risk of spurious effect interpretations, the second column in table 2 adds a number of demographic control variables to the model. Controlling for ideological schemas, these variables only modestly increase the model fit (Chi-square improvement = 9.65, df 7, p = .209). Nevertheless, some coefficients approach significance and are sub-

*greater role*" (.53), "... with more law and order" (.75), "... that strengthens the position of the family" (.82) and "... that protects traditional Swedish values" (.76). The growth/ecology measure (explained variance 50 percent) comes from the following items: "work towards an environmentally friendly society even if it means a low or non-existent growth" (.67), "Sweden should in the long run shut down the nuclear power production" (.73) and "ban private motorism in inner cities" (.67). Finally, the political sophistication scale (explained variance 61 percent) was extracted using a variable counting correct answers among seven questions about which party seven different politicians belong to. In the factor analysis, this variable (loading .77) was used together with the following two questions: "to what extent do you read news and articles about politics in daily papers" (.77) and "generally speaking, how interested are you in politics" (.80).

18 H1 was also tested by fitting a latent variable structural equation model to the covariance structure among the observed variables (using LISREL 8.30). The tested model included three latent variables: state-market orientations, Christian traditionalism and growth-ecology orientations (as measured by indicators involved in the factor analyses reported in the text). The third sector item (as measured by the 11-point scale in table 1) was allowed to load on all the three latent variables; this item was the only factorially complex item in the model. The model fitted the data rather well (Adjusted GFI= .954), with relevant fit indices just around .95. Also, the substantive conclusions about ideology effects on third sector attitudes remained the same: the LISREL model predicted that all the three latent variables had highly significant and about equal effects on the third sector item. I have chosen to report logistic regression results since this procedure corresponds better with the theoretical argument made in the text that third sector attitudes can hardly be regarded as conceptually continuous.

19 The formula for transforming predicted log-odds of positive third sector response into predicted probability of positive third sector response is: probability of positive response =  $\text{Exp}(\text{predicted log-odds of positive response}) / [1 + \text{Exp}(\text{predicted log-odds of positive response})]$ , where predicted log-odds of positive response =  $1.490 + .394\text{STATE-MARKET} + .386\text{CHRISTTRAD} + .285\text{GROWTH-ECOLOGY}$ . See for instance Hosmer and Lemeshow (1989).

stantively meaningful, although weak. For instance, higher age and religiosity are predicted to make third sector attitudes more positive. Public sector employees and middle class citizens hold somewhat more negative attitudes than others.

*Table 2:* Effects of ideology, control variables, and political sophistication interaction terms on third sector attitudes in the 1998 Swedish Election Study (logistic regression)

	Model 1: Ideological schemas		Model 2: Ideological schemas and control variables		Model 3: Ideological schemas, control variables, and political sophistication interactions	
	B	p-value	B	p-value	B	p-value
<i>Ideological schemas</i>						
State-Market Orientations	.394	.000	.422	.000	.398	.000
Christian Traditionalism	.386	.000	.322	.000	.290	.000
Growth-Ecology Orientations	.285	.000	.298	.000	.318	.000
<i>Control variables</i>						
Age in years	-	-	.010	.048	.010	.057
Gender (1 = woman, 0 = man)	-	-	.023	.886	.017	.916
Public sector employment	-	-	-.232	.125	-.228	.133
Subjective class identification (1 = middle class, 0 = worker)	-	-	-.200	.194	-.206	.182
Income (100 000 SEK)	-	-	.005	.940	.007	.919
Religious	-	-	.226	.241	.216	.264
Political sophistication	-	-	-.057	.495	-.036	.676
<i>Political sophistication X schema interactions</i>						
Political Sophistication X State-Market	-	-	-	-	.041	.610
Political Sophistication X Christian Traditionalism	-	-	-	-	.094	.210
Political Sophistication X Growth Ecology	-	-	-	-	-.035	.663
Constant	1.490	.000	1.177	.000	1.188	.000
Chisquare Improvement (df)	77.62 (3)	.000	9.65 (7)	.209	2.55 (3)	.466

*Comment:* The dependent variable is coded 1 = positive or neutral response (5-10), 0 = negative response (0-4). N = 1372, Initial -2 log likelihood value = 1374.7. For information about schema measures, and the political sophistication measure, see text. Other independent variables were coded as follows. Public sector employment: 1 = national-, regional-, or local government administration, 0 = others. Subjective Class Identification: 0 = working class family, 1 = white-collar, academic, farming, or private enterprise. Religious: 1 = respondent stated that she was rather or very religious, 0 = others.

Consistent with H1, then, these data provide some evidence that no less than three party system promoted ideological schemas are used by the Swedish electorate to interpret and evaluate the third sector. H2, however, makes the even stronger claim that schema effects

are stable across groups. The strong party system is believed to facilitate an ideological framework which is common to virtually all groups of people. Of course, the data so far do not test this hypothesis. In fact, it is quite possible that important interaction variables have been left unspecified, and that their inclusion would alter the neat and coherent picture shown in table 2.

To test H2, an analysis in two steps was undertaken. In the first step, I added sets of interaction variables to main-effects models. For instance, to a model including main effects of the three schemas and the main effect of subjective class, I added three “class x schema” interaction terms. The results from this first step in the analysis can be inspected in table 3.

*Table 3: Adding interaction terms to main-effects logistic regression models predicting third sector attitudes (1998 Swedish Election Study)*

Added interactions	Chi-square improvement	df	p-value
Schemas x Subjective class	2.24	3	.525
Schemas x Public employment	5.80	3	.122
Schemas x Age	2.18	3	.536
Schemas x Income	11.99	3	.007
Schemas x Religious	1.82	3	.610
Schemas x Gender	.843	3	.839

*Comment:* For variable descriptions, see table 2 and related main text.

The interaction variables were chosen on the basis of theoretical expectations as to how they could affect schema usage. First, it was hypothesised that the state-market schema is more salient to members of the working class than to others. Swedish workers have been successfully mobilised by strong trade-unions with close links to the Social Democratic party (Korpi 1983; Oskarson 1992; Rothstein 1992). These organisations have been involved mainly in the politics of wages, redistribution, taxes, welfare etc (Rothstein 1992). It is possible that workers, because of their closer connection to state-market focused interest organisations, more often than other citizens face political information related to the state-market schema. Such information should make the state-market schema more accessible, and the Christian traditionalism and growth-ecology schemas less accessible in workers’ minds. However, this prediction is not supported by the data. The three subjective class interaction terms make only a small and statistically insignificant contribution to the overall model fit (Chi-square improvement = 2.24, df 3,  $p = .525$ ; to be significant at the .05-level, an observed chi-square improvement with three degrees of freedom must amount to 7.81).

I also suspected that public sector employment tends to make the state-market schema more accessible at the cost of growth-ecology and Christian traditionalist concerns. In re-

cent years, there have been severe cutbacks in most parts of the Swedish public sector (Svallfors 1996). A reasonable expectation is that people who face problems directly related to questions concerning the size of the public sector in their every-day work environment are more used to thinking about politics in terms of state versus market (for similar arguments see Dunleavy 1979; Lipsky 1980). Consequently, public employees might have less accessible Christian traditionalist and growth ecology schemas. The results in table 3 indicate that there might be something to this prediction as the model fit contribution produced by the three sector interactions approaches significance (Chi-square improvement = 5.80, df 3,  $p = .122$ ).

Furthermore, younger voters might have more salient growth-ecology schemas than older voters. The oldest generations were socialised into a political environment where growth-ecology concerns and new politics were largely absent (Inglehart 1990; Bennulf and Holmberg 1990). Therefore, this schema might be less well-developed and less accessible among older citizens. The three age-schema interaction terms, however, make only a small and statistically insignificant model fit contribution (Chi-square improvement = 2.18, df 3,  $p = .536$ ).

One might also expect income level to affect schema usage. Inglehart (1981) suggests that a lower level of material standard makes people more prone to think about political issues in materialist state-market terms, as opposed to post-materialist terms. Conversely, the argument goes, struggles which have less to do with allocation of material goods (Christian traditionalism, growth-ecology) will be less salient (see also Sears and Funk 1991; Green 1988). The empirical test does not refute this hypothesis as the chi-square increase is relatively large (Chi-square improvement = 12.00, df 3,  $p = .007$ ). Finally, in addition to the theoretically anchored interactions, I also undertook exploratory tests of gender- (Chi-square improvement = .843, df 3,  $p = .839$ ) and religiosity (Chi-square improvement = 1.82, df 3,  $p = .610$ ) interactions.

In summary, the data suggest that effects of the three schemas on third sector attitudes do not vary greatly across social classes, age groups, gender, and groups with different degrees of religiosity. As I noticed, however, the public employment- and income interactions respectively, increased explanatory power. To assess how serious damage these interactions do to H2, a second step in the analysis was taken. It involved adding six interaction terms (three schemas x public employment and three schemas x income) to a model including the main effects of the three schemas, public sector employment, and income (Chi-square improvement = 15.18, df 6,  $p = .019$ ). Interestingly, it turned out that three of these interaction coefficients were statistically insignificant and substantively unimportant. Most notably, the state-market effect was neither altered by public employment nor by income level. The impact of the most important ideological schema in the Swedish party system is



thus insensitive also to levels of income and public sector employment. In addition, the effect of Christian traditionalism is unaffected by public sector employment.

What remains, then, is three influential interaction terms. The following equations express the predicted growth-ecology and Christian traditionalism effects on third sector attitudes as a function of two components: (1) a constant main effect, and (2) an interaction component which is sensitive to the level of public employment and income respectively (p-values within parenthesis).

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Growth-Ecology effect} = & .740 - .166 \times \text{INCOME : 100 000 Kronor} - .322 \times \text{PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT} \\ & (.000) \quad (.017) \qquad \qquad \qquad (.033) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Christian traditionalism effect} = & .177 + .091 \times \text{INCOME : 100 000 Kronor} \\ & (.210) \quad (.151) \end{aligned}$$

An initially striking feature of the first equation is that the impact of income on the growth-ecology effect does not have the hypothesised sign. Contrary to expectations, growth-ecology effects on third sector attitudes *decrease* at higher income levels. This observation runs counter to the hypothesis that materially harsh living conditions make schemas other than state-market less salient. While it is difficult to speculate here about the causes of this surprising interaction, an assessment of its magnitude is still relevant from the perspective of H2. More exactly, the equation predicts that an income change of 100 000 Swedish kronor will decrease log-odds effect of growth-ecology on third sector endorsement with  $-.166$  (average sample income 172 300, median 156 000). As much as this interaction is clearly influential, also people with incomes far above average appear to make quite some use of the growth-ecology schema for forming third sector attitudes.

As expected, the growth ecology-effect also decreases among public employees ( $-.322$ ). The assumption is that these individuals are primed by their work environment to “think politics” more in terms of state versus market, and less in terms of other schemas. However, this interaction effect too is a matter of gradual tendency rather than of a radical shift in schema usage. For instance, among public employees with an average income, the effect of the growth ecology schema is still predicted to be  $.132$ . To systematically identify individuals among which growth-ecology has no effects, we would have to look among public employees with an income above sample average. Of course, this group constitutes a rather small minority of people. Hence, these interactions notwithstanding, our data suggest that a large majority of Swedes make use of the growth-ecology schema to arrive at third sector attitudes.

Finally, as expected, the Christian traditionalist schema becomes a better predictor of third sector attitudes at higher income levels. However, again we are dealing with a quite

subtle, rather than radical, interaction. Even among people with *no* income, the effect of Christian traditionalism approaches significance (.177,  $p = .210$ ). More realistically, among people with an average income, the predicted log-odds coefficient for the Christian traditionalism scale amounts to .333.

### *H3: The absent interaction effect of political sophistication*

Let us move on to H3. Looking at the third column of table 2, the three interaction terms make only a small and statistically insignificant contribution to the overall model fit (Chi-square improvement = 2.55,  $df\ 3$ ,  $p=.466$ ). To say that all three schema effects remain the same at different levels of political sophistication is not a bad approximation of reality. Even the least politically sophisticated citizens appear to make simultaneous use of all three ideological schemas. It should be pointed out that there is some tendency for Christian traditionalist effects to rise with sophistication. However, this schema is influential even at the lower standard deviation point (-1) of the sophistication scale (predicted logit effect (.290 - .094 = .196). Moreover, analogous to the previous analysis, the schema which is most persistently stressed in party competition—the state market schema—does not behave differently across sophistication levels. The same goes for growth-ecology.

Making a joint assessment of H1, H2 and H3, the data suggest that most respondents, regardless of socio-economic location and political sophistication, simultaneously use three party system promoted schemas to interpret and evaluate the third sector issue. Few respondents seem to have reduced the meaning of the issue by processing it through only one or two of the schemas. Not even when interaction terms are significant and substantially meaningful (as in the case of sector employment and income) do we find other differences across groups than gradual ones. Moreover, the conclusion is especially valid for the most stable, persistent and clear political conflict in Sweden: The impact of state-market orientations is *completely* insensitive to group affiliation, socio-economic location and political sophistication, even in the ideologically complex third sector issue.

### *H4: The unimportance of ideological cues*

Several American studies contend that alterations of ideological cues affect schema usage (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Zaller 1992; Kinder 1998). However, I suspected that people in a strong party system automatically apply chronically salient schemas, regardless of subtle alterations of cues. To test H4, I used the two SOM student surveys from

1997 and 1998 respectively. In 1997 the students responded to a third sector proposal that was relatively free from clear ideological cues: “*Create a society where idealistic efforts and voluntary organisations play more important roles.*” Here, by and large, respondents had to decide for themselves what this stimulus “is.” (An alternative to the welfare state? A vehicle for Christian traditionalism? An ecologists’ “think-global-act-local” forum?). The 1998 items were different: “*Redistribute some of society’s resources via voluntary organisations instead of via public benefit systems*” and “*Transfer some public social service tasks to voluntary organisations.*” These items emphasise that the third sector is an alternative to public services and transfers and that there is a trade-off to be made between the two. In other words, clear state-market schema cues were communicated to the respondents.

These dependent variables have been dichotomised and used as dependent variables in the three logistic regression models reported in table 4 (1 = positive or neutral response to the third sector, 0 = negative response). As in the previous analysis, the independent variables measure state-market, Christian traditionalism and growth-ecology orientations respectively. Unfortunately, the possibilities to construct Christian traditionalism and growth-ecology measures were less favourable than in the 1998 Election Study. For this reason, the Christian Traditionalism measure consists of a dichotomised proxy that separates people who in the last twelve months went to a religious ceremony at least every six months, from other responses.<sup>20</sup> The Growth/Ecology measure is a dichotomy separating those who prefer the Green Party from others. For the state-market measure, additive indices were created from responses to the items “*reduce the public sector*” and “*introduce more private health care;*” these indices were dichotomised as close to the median as possible.<sup>21</sup> Since the Christian traditionalism and growth/ecology proxies are rough measures, one should not make too much out of the relative impact of the three schemas at a given point in time. Given the quality difference it is almost self-evident that the state-market measure will be the best predictor. Fortunately however, H4 is not about the relative impact at a given point in time. Rather it predicts that the relative impact of the three ideological schemas *will not change* when ideological cues are manipulated.

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20 To validate the measure of Christian traditionalism I created a similar dichotomy in the 1998 Election Study data set (0=never goes to a religious ceremony (76 percent), 1=goes at least once a year (26 percent). This variable had exactly the same distribution as the dichotomies used for the SOM student data, and a bivariate logit effect on third sector attitudes (.203, p=.135). However, this effect decreased drastically when controlled for the Christian traditionalism factor (.067, p=.632). Hence, much of the bivariate effect of the churchgoing proxy is in fact due to uncontrolled covariation with Christian traditionalism ideology. This finding supports the idea that the churchgoing proxy can function as a (rough and imperfect) measure of Christian traditionalism. Finally, an alternative strategy would be to use the party preference variable to build a proxy for Christian Traditionalism orientations. There are, however, too few Christian Democratic partisans among Social Science students at Göteborg University to make this a viable strategy.

21 Cronbach’s alpha for these indices were .75 (1997) and .76 (1998).

The first column in table 4 reports the 1997 findings, the second and the third column contain results from 1998. Although the 1998 questions are different in terms of ideological cues, the relative effects of our three ideological dimensions are largely stable. No systematic changes seem to occur as a result of the alterations in question wording. Looking at the first column, we see that the state-market schema does not need clear state-market cues to be activated. Looking at the second and third columns, we see that Christian traditionalism and growth-ecology effects are not reduced because of a clear emphasis on state-market concerns.

*Table 4:* Logistic regression of third sector attitudes (1997 and 1998 SOM Student Surveys)

	<i>Create a society where idealistic efforts and voluntary organisations play more important roles (1997)</i>		<i>Redistribute some of society's resources via voluntary organisations instead of via public benefit systems (1998)</i>		<i>Transfer some public social service tasks to voluntary organisations (1998)</i>	
	Logit coefficient	p-value	Logit coefficient	p-value	Logit coefficient	p-value
State-Market Dichotomy (0 = state, 1 = market)	1.27	.000	1.46	.000	1.28	.000
Religious Activity (0 others, 1 = religiously active)	.43	.647	.06	.767	.34	.095
Green partisan (0 = others, 1 = green)	.16	.269	.31	.236	.49	.060
Constant (p-value)	1.87 (.000)		.63 (.000)		.17 (.250)	
Chi-square Improvement (df; p-value)	16.4 (3; .001)		64.7 (.000)		54.4 (.000)	
Number of respondents	268		525		525	

*Comment:* The dependent variables were coded: 0 = response other than negative, 1 = negative response to the third sector.

Initial -2 log likelihood values: 1997 = 306.48, 1998 = 749.24 (redistribute resources) and 733.22 (transfer public social service tasks) respectively.

It should be noted that when comparing the 1997 “cueless” item and the 1998 proposal to “*Redistribute some of society's resources via voluntary organisations instead of via public benefit systems,*” one can discern a pattern somewhat at odds with H4; the effect of the state-market schema rises slightly (from 1.27 to 1.46), and the other effects decrease. However, these changes are quite small and not paralleled in a comparison between the first and the third column. There, in spite of clearer state-market cues, the pattern is almost

reversed with somewhat stronger effects of Christian traditionalist and green orientations in 1998, and a stable coefficient for state-market orientations.<sup>22</sup>

### *H5: Curing Swedes from chronic saliency*

The assumptions regarding the impact of a strong party system on which schemas are used build on the idea that saliency and accessibility matter (Wyer and Ottati 1993). Citizens in different societal segments recall schemas, not so much because of how an issue is cued, but because a small set of schemas are made salient by observation of policy-based party competition (Lau 1989). Hence, for politicians or the media it might not be worth the effort to manipulate ideological cues as I just tried to do. Chronically salient ideologies will automatically be called to mind almost regardless of the way a specific issue is cued.

These assumptions are valid when party competition and political communication proceed as usual. However, if Swedes have recently faced *an unusual information flow* which exclusively emphasised one schema represented in the party system, whereas it completely neglected the other two, the emphasised schema should dominate (H5). Empirically, I contrast the third sector item used in the Swedish Election Study 1998 and the one from the 1990 nation-wide SOM survey. Although the two questions contain quite similar third sector stimuli, they were *preceded* by very different questions in the questionnaire. These differences facilitate an interesting possibility to assess H5.

In the 1998 Election Study the third sector item was placed last in a question battery with the following introduction: “*On this card there is a list of suggestions for various kinds of societies that some people think we should realise in Sweden in the future. I would like to hear what you think about them. You can answer using the scale on the card. A high number means that you think a suggestion is good. A low number means that you think a suggestion is bad.*” The battery then began with two items related to the state-market conflict (“*Create a society with more private enterprise and market economy*” and “*Create a socialist society*” respectively). However, after this followed no less than ten items with little or no state-market relevance. At least nine of these ten items speak directly to either the Christian traditionalist or new politics/growth-ecology orientations respectively.<sup>23</sup>

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22 A methodological shortcoming which cannot be solved here should be pointed out. The dependent variables were measured with somewhat different techniques in 1997 compared to 1998 (see table 1). Therefore, the conclusions rest on the assumption that the two measurement methods are roughly interchangeable when it comes to separating between those who rejected the third sector (more negative than “neither good nor bad suggestion”) and other respondents.

23 The ten items preceding the third sector item were: *Work towards* “... a society with high economic growth and productivity,” “... an environmentally friendly society even if it means a low or non-existent growth,” “... a society using advanced technology such as computers and industrial robots so that pro-

Things looked different in the 1990 SOM survey questionnaire. Again the third sector item was located last in a battery of ideologically controversial proposals. This time however, the preceding information and questions were all of very clear state-market relevance. The head question was: *“In recent years it has been debated whether different tasks should be carried out by the state and local government or by private companies, associations or individuals. What do you think about the following suggestions. Tick the box that fits best with your opinion.”* Then followed these five items before the third sector question appeared: *“Privatise state agencies, for instance Swedish Telecom (Telia),” “Let private companies handle elder care,” “Increase the number of private schools,” “Transfer banks and insurance companies into public ownership,” “Introduce more private health care.”* The prediction is that these items made the state-market schema salient in respondents’ minds, more so than would a normal information flow emanating from regular patterns of party competition.

The procedure for generating schema measures in the Election Study 1998 has already been described. A similar procedure was applied to the SOM 1990 data.<sup>24</sup> The three schema measures constituted the independent variables in the logistic regression analyses reported in table 4. The first column repeats the results for the Election Study 1998 and the second column shows the results for the 1990 SOM survey.

As was established above, the coefficients of the three ideology scales are about equal in strength in the 1998 Election Study. However, in the 1990 SOM survey the state-market measure proves to be the most important predictor. The effect of one standard deviation change towards the right side is predicted to increase the logged odds of a positive third sector response with .45. The effect of a corresponding change in the green direction is

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duction is made efficient,” “... a society where Christian values play a greater role,” “... a society with more law and order,” “... a society with more equality between men and women,” “... a society that protects traditional Swedish values,” “...a society that strengthens the position of the family,” “...a multi-cultural society with great tolerance towards people from other countries with different religions and ways of living,” “...a more internationalist society with less of borders between people and countries.”

24 The schema measures in the 1990 SOM survey were constructed as follows. Each variable was extracted through a principal components factor analysis. The conventional constraint to extract only factors with eigenvalues larger than one was employed for each analysis (Kaiser’s criteria). In each factor analysis, only one factor had a large enough eigenvalue to be extracted. The state-market measure (explained variance 50 percent) was extracted from a factor analysis (loadings within parentheses) involving the items *“reduce the public sector”* (.61), *“increase the number of private schools”* (.76), *“privatise public companies”* (.74), *“let private companies handle elder care”* (.80) and *“introduce more private health care”* (.85). The Christian traditionalist scale (explained variance 50 percent) builds on items where people evaluated the Christian Democratic Party (along a like/dislike scale running from 0 to 10, loading .72), gave their opinions on the suggestion to *“prohibit all forms of pornography”* (.63) and where they were asked to reveal how important *“salvation”* was to them personally (.77). The growth/ecology measure (explained variance 45 percent) were based on the following items: *“lower the speed limits”* (.69), *“prohibit plastic bottles and aluminium cans”* (.67), *“stop private motorism in inner cities”* (.71), *“work towards an environmentally friendly society”* (.68) and *“introduce compulsory garbage assortment”* (.60).

predicted to bring about a much smaller effect (.14). The coefficient for Christian traditionalism is not significantly different from zero.

*Table 5:* Logistic regression analysis of third sector attitudes among Swedish citizens

	The 1998 Election Study		The 1990 SOM survey	
	Logit Coefficient	p-value	Logit Coefficient	p-value
State-Market orientations	.40	.000	.45	.000
Christian traditionalism	.31	.000	-.07	.274
Growth-Ecology orientations	.33	.000	.14	.030
Constant	-1.54	.000	-.97	.000
Chisquare Improvement (d.f.)	74.6 (3)	.000	55.9 (3)	.000
Percent accurately predicted	80.8		71.8	
Number of respondents	1504		1303	

*Comment:* Initial -2 log likelihood value: 1474.8 (1998) and 1554.9 (1990). For variable descriptions, see main text and table 1.

As was established above, the coefficients of the three ideology scales are about equal in strength in the 1998 Election Study. However, in the 1990 SOM survey the state-market measure proves to be the most important predictor. The effect of one standard deviation change towards the right side is predicted to increase the logged odds of a positive third sector response with .45. The effect of a corresponding change in the green direction is predicted to bring about a much smaller effect (.14). The coefficient for Christian traditionalism is not significantly different from zero.

It should be acknowledged that the questions asked in the two surveys were of somewhat different character. Ideally one would have preferred identical stimuli to come closer to an experimental situation where all factors other than the theoretically interesting saliency differences were held constant. Here, one difference pertains to question wording. As has been discussed, the 1998 question contained no cues that “favoured” one particular ideological dimension. The 1990 item is somewhat different in that it touches on a trade-off between the public and the third sector (should leisure-time facilities be run by associations?). It is possible that this cue difference—not the saliency difference—helped to decrease the effects of dimensions other than state-market. However, based on the previous findings I am inclined to reject such an objection. When cues were manipulated in a similar fashion at the same time as saliency differences were lacking, I found no shifts in the relative impact of schema measures (see table 3). It is notable that those cue differences were of an ideologically more explosive kind as they pertained to core domains of the welfare state (public services and transfers). It would appear that the 1990 item refers to an ideo-

logically less touchy part of the public sector (leisure time facilities). For these reasons, it is less likely that the difference in question wording produced the shift in relative impact of the three ideological schemas.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, the findings in table 5 are consistent with H5. If a recent information flow was biased in the direction of one party system-promoted schema, whereas it neglected others, subsequent schema usage is affected accordingly. This confirms that saliency and accessibility matter for which schemas are used (Srull and Wyer 1979; Wyer and Ottati 1993; Zaller 1992). More generally, it implies that the terms in which previous issues were discussed by politicians and the media affect how people process a new issue. This is crucial as our assumptions about party system impact on schema usage builds on the notion that people apply schemas which were activated in the recent past. In strong party systems, persistent policy-based political conflict continuously ensures the saliency of the particular schema mix represented in the party system.

The results also show that Swedes *can* be cured from chronic saliency by unusual information flows which do not correspond to how political conflict is already represented in the party system. However, as much as shifts in prior schema emphasis are influential when they do occur, they are rare in strong party systems. Parties such as the Greens and the Christian Democrats in Sweden usually make sure that state-market is not the only emphasised conflict. Campaigns and mass media coverage will therefore typically reflect all conflicts clearly represented in the party system and not just one of them (see for instance Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994; Esaiasson and Holmberg 1996).<sup>26</sup> The biased information flow which faced respondents in the 1990 SOM survey is thus not very realistic. In sum, our results show that Swedes can be cured from chronic accessibility. The medicine, however, will typically be kept well out of reach by the strong and persistent party system.

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25 At first glance, it might seem like a problem that no less than eight years passed between the two compared surveys. However, it would appear that the time difference makes the H5 test tougher than it would otherwise have been. Previous research has shown that the growth/ecology-dimension was at its saliency peak at the end of the 1980's. However, the economic crisis that began after the 1991 election meant that left-right issues such as public sector cutbacks and fiscal concerns started to crowd out growth-ecology issues in Swedish politics (Bennulf 1995, 1999). This process has continued throughout the 1990's and produced two election campaigns dominated by traditional state-market concerns (Gilljam and Holmberg 1995; Oscarsson 1999; Möller 1999). Hence, the fact that growth-ecology orientations seem to have a stronger effect on third sector attitudes in 1998 compared to 1990 can probably not be explained with just the time difference.

26 Experience shows that it takes major external events of a rather idiosyncratic kind to make the political information flow at odds with the basic structure of political competition (nuclear disasters, severe economic crises etc.) The prominent example in Swedish political history is the "green" parliamentary election of 1988. In this campaign environmental concerns became salient to a degree not motivated by the existing structure of party conflict (the Greens gained parliamentary representation as a result of the election). Rather, green issues seem to have been brought to the forefront of the campaign by external events such as polluted water in the Baltic sea, and by the Sovjet nuclear disaster in Tjernobyl (see Bennulf 1995; Asp 1990).



## Implications

Research on citizens' tendencies to apply schemas, shortcuts and stereotypes to political reality has improved our understanding of public opinion. However, most studies have reported American data (see Sniderman 1993; Kinder 1998 for overviews), and findings should not be automatically generalised across the Atlantic. As Granberg and Holmberg (1988:1) remind us, "*in analyzing political behavior and political psychology, it is essential to bear in mind the nature of the political system in which people are thinking and acting.*" In this spirit, evidence demonstrating that clear and persistent party conflict affects individuals' use of ideological schemas is accumulating (Niemi and Westholm 1984; Granberg and Holmberg 1988, 1990, 1996; van der Eijk, Franklin and Oppenhuis 1996; Oppenhuis 1995; Oscarsson 1998; van der Eijk, Franklin and van der Brug 1999; van Wijnen 2000). The assumptions and data presented here add some pieces to the emerging puzzle. Which pieces?

I discovered that third sector attitudes are affected by all three party system-promoted ideological schemas. In contrast to what has been successfully demonstrated in several American studies, the effect pattern was very stable across socio-economic groups (see Sapiro and Soss 1999). This observation pertained especially to the state-market conflict which still clearly dominates Swedish party competition. The theoretical interpretation of these findings is that a strong party system facilitates a pervasive political language, which is chronically accessible to virtually all citizens. Citizens in such a system will share common mental tools for interpreting political information, and a common language for political communication between the electorate and its representatives (Oscarsson 1998).

Furthermore, ideology effects on third sector attitudes do not grow among politically sophisticated citizens. This a different picture than the one painted in many American studies, where significant interaction effects of political sophistication into ideology-driven opinion formation have been reported (see Converse 1964; Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock 1991; Bartels 1996). Converse's (1964) classical argument that preference formation works differently at different levels of sophistication might thus be less accurate for many European countries than it has proven to be for the United States. It seems as though ideologically strong party systems make it easier for the unsophisticated and inattentive to learn and accurately apply ideological schemas (Carmines and Stimson 1980; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Oscarsson 1998). Hence, cognitive misers in such systems might be less dependent on extensive and detailed information to make political choices which correspond to their underlying preferences. Given that political choices can be interpreted with well-rehearsed ideological shortcuts, cognitive misers can choose *as if they were informed* (see Lupia 1994; Bartels 1996). Given the right conditions, then, an extremely well-in-

formed electorate might not be all that crucial for achieving accurate political representation and public policies which are congruent with public preferences.

Moreover, I found very weak effects of welfare state cues on the relative impact of ideological schemas. Respondents seem to evaluate the third sector using the three schemas in a way which is insensitive to apparent cues surrounding the object. This finding implies worse prospects for framing attempts by political elites to influence public opinion in strong party systems. The reason is that citizens habitually apply the same chronically salient belief structures, relatively independent of surrounding information telling them what issues “are about.” Conversely, as can be predicted from the assumptions presented here, several studies assert that American political elites and media have quite an impressive power over its audience in this respect (see Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Iyengar 1991; Zaller 1992, 1996; Chong 1993, 1996; Gamson 1993; Miller and Krosnick 1996; Kinder 1998; Valentino 1999).

In conclusion, the main argument in this paper is that strong party systems of the kind common in Europe influence how citizens apply ideological schemas as shortcuts to political preferences. Of course, just as theories and findings cannot be automatically generalised across the Atlantic, neither should they be thoughtlessly exported within Europe. As I have analysed only Swedish data, one might wonder how valid findings are for other European countries. Here, it should be acknowledged that Sweden is probably a *very* clear-cut case of a stable policy-driven political system (Särilvik 1974; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Oskarson 1992; Oscarsson 1998). However, comparative research asserts that electoral politics in most political systems in Europe are structured by similar, though not identical, patterns of structured ideological party competition (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Knutsen 1995). Recent empirical findings demonstrate that European voters have impressively clear and uniform perceptions of these ideological conflicts (van der Brug and van der Eijk 1999), and that ideology is the most powerful predictor of party choice (van der Eijk, Franklin and Oppenhuis 1996). Findings such as these suggest that the arguments presented in this paper have bearing on many other European countries as well.

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