

‘No Country for Green Men?’

A case study of the Green Party of the
United States

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The title of the thesis is based on the article “Climate Change in Germany's Federal Election: No Country for Green Men?” by Mark Dawson and Pierre Thielbörger (2013), and is a rewrite of the title of Cormac McCarthy’s (2005) novel “No Country for Old Men”.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the following question: “Why has the Green Party of the United States not been more successful in the political arena?” This question is again related to two broader questions; why are some green parties successful, while others are not? And why are minor parties in the United States, like the Green Party, in general not successful?

In the thesis I present several different explanations for the lack of success of minor political parties (in general). Basically I argue that the different explanations can be separated into three broad categories; the political system, the electorate and the political party itself. In regard to the political system, electoral law especially has proven to have a major impact on party system. In addition, party laws, campaign financing and ballot access regulations also have some impact. On the electorate I explore primarily two contrasting theories concerned with explaining how voters act; the cleavage model by Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) and Anthony Downs’ (1985 (1957)) theory of rational action and the rational voter. When it comes to the political party I, based on the research by Kaare Strøm and Wolfgang C. Müller (1999), show how parties may operate with different goals, being either office-seeking, voter-seeking or policy-seeking, and how the goals of a party may have consequences for the electoral outcome. Additionally, I also present Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb’s (2005) theory on how political parties have to respond to the increasing focus in campaigns on candidates, rather than parties.

In short my conclusion is that the Green Party’s relative lack of success in the United States is related to not just one, but several different factors. First and foremost, the plurality electoral system utilized in the United States is the main culprit so to speak. Not only does it effectively make it harder for minor parties, like the Green Party, to win seats in Congress or members of the Electoral College, but it also has an effect on how the electorate vote and reason. In addition, factors like complicated ballot access laws, lack of a proper system of public campaign financing for minor parties, several challenges with the party itself, like difficulties with attracting enough good candidates willing to run for the party, and a slight lack of interest for environmentalism among the United States’ citizens, all do their part to make it difficult for the Green Party to achieve major success.

PREFACE

The general performance of minor parties in the United States and green parties worldwide is an interesting subject for several reasons. First and foremost one can observe that both minor parties in general, and green parties in particular, have some quite contrasting experiences when it comes to electoral success. In Germany Die Grünen is an established minor party and was for several years even part of government, holding cabinet positions like vice-chancellor and foreign minister (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). In the United States, on the other hand, the Green Party is far from achieving success in neither elections for Congress nor presidential elections. An important mission for political science must therefore be to try and seek an explanation for this phenomenon.

As many scholars have shown before, a country's party system is closely linked to its country's electoral system. This is also the case for the United States where the plurality electoral system is utilized, and the political arena is almost exclusively dominated by two major parties; The Republicans and the Democrats. Still, some parties in countries with a two-party system have been able to achieve success. One such party is the Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom, which has not only been able to win seats in parliament, but also has become part of the government coalition, despite the country's electoral system.

In the United States the Green Party's results in presidential elections have varied from year to year, with the result in 2000 being 2,74 percent, but only 0,10 percent at the following presidential election four years after. Since the electoral system is a static institution that has not changed much during this period, it is likely to believe that other factors also have an impact on the party's performance.

My goal for this thesis has been to explore why some minor green parties, like the Green Party of the United States, are relatively unsuccessful, while others, like Die Grünen in Germany, are much more successful. Furthermore, I have tried to not just exclusively focus on the electoral system as an explanation for the issue at hand, but also discuss whether other factors also have had an impact. In doing so I hope that I am able to contribute to the scientific understanding of what factors prevent minor (green) parties from being successful, and also of how the parties themselves respond to these challenges. Much of what is written in

this thesis has been presented before by different scholars, and I do not believe that the findings presented here are to be considered revolutionary or controversial in any way. Still, I hope that this thesis can be of help to other scholars looking for an in-depth study of minor green parties, and the Green Party of the United States in particular.

Finally, I would like to extend some gratitude to those who have helped make this thesis possible. A warm thank you goes to Jody Grage, Sanda Everette, Jared Laiti and Nancy Allen from the Green Party of the United States who each in their own way have provided me with useful information and interesting reflections on the thesis question and the Green Party of the United States.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis question

The question of this thesis is the following:

Why has the Green Party of the United States not been more successful in the political arena?

Looking at the results of most elections in the United States it is safe to say the Green Party has not enjoyed much success, at least not on the national level. Except for the 2000 election the party has the last fifteen years never managed to get a result above one percent of the popular vote (Federal Election Commission, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013). What makes the Green Party's relative lack of success particularly interesting, though, is that some other green parties worldwide have enjoyed much more success. One such party is Die Grünen in Germany which not only managed to get 10,7 percent of the votes in the 2009 election (European Election Database, 2010b), but also was a part of a government coalition from 1998 to 2005 (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). How come that Die Grünen has enjoyed much more success than the Green Party, despite the fact that both to a large extent are built on the same ideology and have similar political platforms?

In literature, there are several different explanations as to why some parties are successful while others are not. In general I believe that these explanations can be divided into three major categories¹:

- The political system
- The electorate
- The political party

It should be noted that some explanations may be difficult to place in one of the categories listed above. Some might fit into several categories and the categories themselves may at

¹ This categorization is to some extent based on the distinction made by Webb et.al. (2002) who distinguish between three broad types of research inquiry into the performance and standing of political parties (Webb et al., 2002a: 7). This distinction will be discussed further in chapter two.

times be overlapping. One category of explanations may also have an effect on explanations in another category. Hence, it is not my intention to argue that the categorization of explanations used in this thesis is the superior way of analyzing a party. I do, however, believe that most theories and studies related to the analysis of a political party fit within at least one of these categories, making them a useful tool for this thesis.

1.1.1 The system

The core of every democracy is that political power is exercised through participation by the people in free and fair elections, through competition between different political ideologies, parties and candidates, and through the protection of civil rights and liberties as well (O'Neill, 2007). Still, every democratic country is unique and the exercise of political power might take on different forms depending on what country we are looking at. In the United States the head of state, the President, is elected by the people (O'Neill et al., 2006: 80), while the head of state in the United Kingdom is the British Crown (O'Neill et al., 2006: 35). Another example is the composition of the cabinet. The United Kingdom has, almost without exception², had one-party cabinets since 1945, while such cabinets are quite rare in Germany, where coalition cabinets are common (Ljiphart, 1999: 110 - 111). How come that countries built on the same political principles and guidelines, are so different from one another at the same time? And what effects do these differences have on the political parties of these countries?

According to Arend Ljiphart (1999) there are two ideal models for how a democracy may be designed and organized, namely the Westminster Model (often referred to as the majoritarian model) and the Consensus Model (Ljiphart, 1999). These two models are different on a total of ten dimensions:

² The exception being the coalition between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats formed after the election of 2010 (BBC, 2010).

Table 1: The Westminster model versus the Consensus model

	The Westminster model	The Consensus model
1. The cabinet	Single-party majority cabinet	Multiparty coalition cabinet
2. The executive-legislative relationship	Dominant executive	Executive-legislative balance of power
3. Party system	Two-party system	Multiparty system
4. Electoral system	Majoritarian disproportional system	Proportional representation
5. Interest groups	Pluralist interest groups with free competition	Coordinated interest groups aimed at compromise
6. Government	Unitary and centralized government	Federal and decentralized government
7. The legislature	Unicameral legislative	Bicameral legislative
8. The constitution	Flexible constitution	Rigid constitution
9. The supreme court	Absence of judicial review	Judicial review
10. The central bank	Central bank controlled by the executive	Independent central bank

(Ljiphart, 1999: 3, 4, 21 – 25, 34 - 41)

The dimensions above proposed by Ljiphart (1999) are useful when comparing different democracies and understanding the many different ways a democracy may be organized. Still, it is important to note that few (if any) countries fit one of the models perfectly. The United Kingdom, which perhaps is to be considered the democracy fitting the Westminster model the best (hence the name of the model), has a bicameral legislature, contrary to the unicameral legislature of the ideal Westminster model (O'Neill et al., 2006: 39). Therefore, the model cannot be applied directly on any given country, but rather be used to understand the many differences between democratic countries.

In particular two dimensions are of special interest for this thesis, namely the third and fourth dimensions, related to party system and electoral system. As Maurice Duverger (1964) has shown, these dimensions are in many ways closely linked. According to Duverger (1964) the design of the electoral system will have a major impact on the number of parties in

parliament, in addition to the number of parties having a reasonable chance of winning a given election for the office of head of state³ (Duverger, 1964).

Almost without exception a plurality electoral system (“first-past-the-post”) will result in a two-party system, while a system of proportional representation will produce a multiparty system (Ljiphart, 1999: 165). In other words, the theory suggests that in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, which have the plurality electoral system, the legislature will be dominated by two major parties competing for majority. This is also the case in each of these countries. The United States Congress is split between the Republican Party on the right, and the Democratic Party on the left (O'Neill et al., 2006: 87), and in the United Kingdom the Conservative Party and the Labour Party hold most of the seats in parliament (O'Neill et al., 2006: 44 - 46).

The relationship between electoral system and party system can be explained primarily by two factors. The first one is the “mechanical factor” (Ljiphart, 1999: 165). In the plurality electoral system the party or candidate with the majority of the votes in a given district wins (all) the seat(s) from that district (O'Neill, 2007: 142). Due to this minor parties will have slim chances of winning any seats at all since they (by definition) almost never have the support of the majority of the votes in a district. The second factor is the “psychological factor” (Ljiphart, 1999: 165). Since voters realize that their votes for a minor party almost always are “wasted”, they will rather tend to vote for the major party they agree with the most (Ljiphart, 1999: 165). Combined these two attributes of the plurality electoral system will (with some unique exceptions) tend to shape the party system into a two-party system.

³ An interesting take on the presumed relationship between electoral system and party system is provided by Josep M. Colomer (2005), who, in short, argues that the number of (influential) parties existing in a political system determines that system's electoral system (Colomer, 2005: 2). According to him existing political parties will tend to choose the electoral system that serves to “crystallize, consolidate or reinforce previously existing party configurations” (Colomer, 2005: 1). Hence, one should not hasten to the conclusion that the dependent variable at any given time is the party system, and not the other way around. As Colomer (2005) also emphasizes, though, “existing electoral systems offer different positive and negative incentives for the creation and endurance of political parties...” (Colomer, 2005: 2). For this thesis it is sufficient to establish that there are strong indications of a correlation between electoral system and party system, and determining the dependent and the independent variable is therefore not of any major importance for answering the thesis question.

Most often explanations of minor parties' lack of success will tend to end with the discussion of the link between party system and electoral system. To solely focus on the electoral system when explaining a party's lack of success is in my opinion to oversimplify matters, though. Using the United Kingdom yet again as an example, the Liberal Democrats (which is considered a third party) have achieved major success in British politics the last years. In 2010 the party won 57 seats in the House of Commons⁴ (Electoral Commission, 2013), and formed a government coalition with the Conservatives (BBC, 2010). There might be several explanations for this success of the Liberal Democrats. One explanation is provided by Thomas Quinn (2005) who argues that political polarization in the United Kingdom created a vacuum in the center which the Liberal Democrats managed to fill (Quinn, 2005: 1). This goes to show that not only the electoral system that has an impact on party performance, but several other factors as well.

One factor, not directly related to the electoral formula, is the degree of restrictions on ballot access implemented in a country. In this regard different democracies may have different laws concerning ballot access. In federal democracies, like the United States, restrictions on ballot access may even differ greatly from state to state (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 164), meaning that parties have to deal with quite a few different ballot-access laws all together. The same goes for laws concerning voter registration (especially in the United States), which in many cases tend to favor the major established parties over the minor parties (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 163 - 164).

Another major factor that might have an effect on the success of a minor party, is party- and campaign financing regulations. In some democracies, like Norway, political parties receive large economic subsidies from the government. Norway's largest party, the Labour Party, received over 79 million kroner, about 13,2 million dollars⁵, in subsidies to the national party in 2012 (Partifinansiering.no, 2014b). This constituted about 75 percent of the national party's

⁴ Other parties also winning seats in the House of Commons in 2010 include: Democratic Unionist Party (8), SNP (6), Sinn Fein (5), Social Democratic & Labour Party (3), Plaid Cymru (3), Alliance Party (1) and Green (1) (Electoral Commission, 2013).

⁵ Based on the currency rate on the 15th of March, 2014.

total income that year (Partifinansiering.no, 2014b). These subsidies are not only reserved for the major parties, though, like the Labour Party, but other political parties also receive a fair amount of state subsidies (based on their election results) (Kommunal Rapport, 2013). One such party is the Liberal Party. At the 2009 election for the Norwegian parliament, “Stortinget”, the Liberal Party got 3,88 percent of the votes and two seats in parliament (European Election Database, 2010a). In 2012 the party received, based on the election results of 2009, almost 15 million kroner, about 2,5 million dollars⁶, in subsidies to the national party organization (Partifinansiering.no, 2014a). Private contributions did, on the other hand, only constitute a relatively small amount of both parties’ total income that year (Kommunal Rapport, 2013)⁷.

In other countries, like the United States for instance, the federal laws concerning party financing are different and do create more obstacles for new parties than in our previous example; Norway. In the United States parties whose candidate received more than 25 percent of the popular vote in the previous presidential election are entitled to most of the public campaign funding for the next election (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 168). Parties with results between five and 25 percent may also receive some funding, while parties that did not reach the five percent limit in the previous election basically are left on their own (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 169). This in turn makes it harder for minor parties to be successful because they are always “dragged down” by the (bad) results of the previous election. Another trait of campaign- and party financing in the United States is the parties’ reliance on private contributions. As mentioned above private contributions for neither the Labour Party, nor the Liberal Party, in Norway make up the majority of the parties’ total income. This is quite different from the United States where parties to a large extent are encouraged (by the system) to acquire such contributions. During the 2008 election campaign, for instance, the current president of the United States, Barack Obama, managed to raise as much as a total of 389 million dollars (!) in private contributions (BBC, 2008), giving him a tremendous advantage over the minor parties, whom basically had no public funding and enjoyed very limited amounts of private contributions.

⁶ Based on the currency rate on the 15th of March, 2014.

1.1.2 The electorate

Obviously the design of the political system of a country has a major impact on the performance of the different parties in that country. Still, it is the electorate that ultimately decide who is going to win and lose each election, and in order for a party and its candidate(s) to have any success, they have to put in an effort to win as many votes as possible. The behavior and preferences of the electorate is therefore of major importance if one wants to analyze the performance of a political party. So far we have determined the electoral system has a psychological impact on voters, making it more appealing to vote for one of the major parties, rather than the minor parties. Still, I believe this is not the only factor influencing voters.

In general, one can find two (contrasting) explanations in political science as to why voters behave as they do. The first explanation is provided by Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967). In their book “Party Systems and Voter Alignments” (1967) they basically argue that the electorate is divided by several cleavages based on critical junctures in Western history (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). In general they list four major cleavages central for the creation of the different political movements as we know them today:

1. Center - Periphery
2. State – Church
3. Land – Industry
4. Owner – Worker

(Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 46)

The cleavage model of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) is an important tool for understanding why voters group together around different parties, and why certain parties (historically) have had an appeal to certain groups of voters. In “Dealing in Votes”, Iain Mclean (1982) explains how scholars in France in the early 1900s observed how voting was related to diverse and conflicting economic interests based on “different forms of land tenure, different size of holding, and different crops” (McLean, 1982: 5). One can for example imagine that blue-collar workers share common ground on several political issues, hence making it appealing for them to come together in one political party. The same might be the case for other groups like farmers and conservative Christians.

The four major cleavages listed above are not exclusive, though, and new cleavages might arise, as illustrated by Simon Bornschier's (2010) study of the right-wing populist movement in Western Europe, for instance. Additionally, the cleavages themselves might also change. For instance do Aardal and Waldahl (2004) argue that there has been "a gradual erosion of loyalties based on membership in structurally defined groups", which basically means that today's "voters do not necessarily see one party as their only alternative" (Aardal and Waldahl, 2004: 268).

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) primarily focus on how the traditional parties and political movements were created and manifested themselves. For understanding how party systems and traditional political parties persist we turn to Anthony Downs (1985 (1957)). In short, he argues that the actions of the electorate first and foremost must be seen in the context of "rational action" (Downs, 1985 (1957)) #54). This concept is not originally created by Downs (1985 (1957)), but has been employed by economic theorists for a long time (Downs, 1985 (1957): 4). In short, rational action (as defined by Downs (1985 (1957))) should be understood as "[an] action which is effectively designed to achieve the consciously selected political or economic ends of the actor" (Downs, 1985 (1957): 20). A rational voter will, in other words, vote for the party he or she believes will yield him or her most benefits, or "utility income" as Downs (1985 (1957): 38) puts it. In addition, when the voter is having difficulties separating two parties from one another, the voter will also take into account whether he/she believes that the incumbent party has done a good job or not (Downs, 1985 (1957)) #54: 41).

In his book Downs (1985 (1957)) also argues that there is a difference between two-party systems and multiparty systems when it comes to the act of rational voting. In multiparty systems a voter will not just vote for the party he/she believes will yield the most benefits, but also consider the chances that party has of actually winning the election (Downs, 1985 (1957): 48). If the voter believes that his/her preferred party has slim chances of winning, he/she will vote for a party with better chances. Remembering the discussion in 1.1.1 on the psychological factor of the plurality electoral system, it can be argued that this way of rational thinking is prevalent in two-party systems as well (and not just multiparty systems as Downs (1985 (1957): 48) seems to argue). In a two-party system a voter will be less likely to vote for a minor party if this means that the major party he/she disagrees with the most will have a chance of winning the election. In these cases the voter might be more inclined to vote for the other major party in order to prevent the former major party from winning. The chances of

this (rational) switch taking place is again dependent upon how important he/she believes it is that the major party he/she disagrees with does not win the election (Downs, 1985 (1957): 48).

The cleavage model of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and the theory of rational action proposed by Downs (1985 (1957)) are somewhat different in their take on voter behavior. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) do on the one hand focus on the importance of voters' social, cultural and socio-economic affiliations and background. Voters can be grouped together based on a set of cleavages, and voters in one group will be inclined (or even predestined if you will) to vote for a certain party or candidate.

Downs (1985 (1957)) does, on the other hand, put a greater emphasis on rationality and rational action. First and foremost he argues that a voter will vote "for the party he believes will provide him with a higher utility income than any other party during the coming election period" (Downs, 1985 (1957): 38 – 39). In other words; a voter will not be automatically bound by certain cleavages if this is perceived by him/her as irrational.

In summary, I do believe that both theories/models discussed above are useful for analyzing the actions of the electorate, and both of these will therefore be utilized in the later discussion on the Green Party of the United States. On the one hand, I will discuss the position of the Green Party, and environmentalism in general, in the United States electorate, focusing on whether environmentalism should be considered an independent cleavage in United States politics or not. On the other hand, I will also discuss how "rational voting" is affecting the Green Party. My position is therefore that a combination of the two theories/models is, in this case, the most productive way of analyzing the Green Party.

1.1.3 The party

In the previous section some of the discussion centered on rationality as a central concept for trying to understand how voters behave. According to Downs (1985 (1957)) the same concept can also be applied to political parties. Downs (1985 (1957)) defines a party as "a team of individuals seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in an election" (Downs, 1985 (1957): 34). He then goes on to argue that "the main goal of every party is the

winning of elections” (Downs, 1985 (1957): 35). In other words; parties will do anything that they consider to be the most rational⁸ way to get (re)elected.

To argue that all parties seek re-election as their only goal is, in my opinion, somewhat problematic. As Kaare Strøm and Wolfgang C. Müller have shown in their book “Policy, Office and Votes” (1999), a political party may, alternatively to seeking to win office, be either policy-seeking and/or vote-seeking (Strøm and Müller, 1999: 7 - 8). If a party is policy-seeking that party is not necessarily seeking to win elections, but rather to get the best possible policy results (Strøm and Müller, 1999: 7). Hence, a party seeking to form a coalition with another party will try to find the party closest to it politically, in order to be able to adopt and implement as much policy from its political platform as possible.

The other goal a party may be seeking is winning the most votes. This type of behavior is to a great extent linked to Down’s (1985 (1957)) primordial theory of the office-seeking party. The difference is that vote-seeking parties will not be focused on the office they are campaigning for per se, but rather the votes necessary for winning that office (Strøm and Müller, 1999: 8). The rational choice for these parties is therefore to seek vote-maximizing in all their actions and decisions (Strøm and Müller, 1999: 8).

According to Strøm and Müller (1999) the three models of a party’s goals and behavior should not be viewed as mutually excluding. A party is not purely office-seeking or policy-seeking. Rather parties and their leaders may, in most cases, view all of these goals as important (Strøm and Müller, 1999: 12). Furthermore, it is feasible to believe that there is some sort of trade-off between the three, and that parties seeking one of these goals perhaps have to compromise on the other two (Strøm and Müller, 1999: 12 – 13). A party in a multiparty system may, for instance, be able to attain more votes by adopting a less compromising approach on some policy areas, while at the same time alienating other parties, lowering its chances for winning the election. Conversely, the same party may be more pragmatic when promoting its own policies, shrinking the gap to other parties, but making itself a less attractive option to voters all at once.

⁸ It is important to note that Downs’ (1985 (1957)) concept of rational action only refers to the means used to reach an end, and not to the end itself (Downs, 1985 (1957): 5). Whether a political party is acting rationally or not, solely depends on whether those in the party choose the actions they believe are the best for reaching their goals or not.

In order to be successful it is not sufficient for a party to just choose the right goal(s) to pursue, but also to choose the correct means of reaching the(se) goal(s). In other words, the party has to ask itself what types of actions are most rational for achieving the goals set forth. Turning to Aardal and Waldahl they argue, on the basis of the cleavage model of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), that “parties play an important role in upholding and reproducing favorable circumstances for their continued existence” (Aardal and Waldahl, : 268). From this we can derive that parties actually benefit from certain cleavages in the electorate and that they will work to uphold the ones they benefit from. The rational action of a party is therefore to use the contrasts and conflicts in society to win elections. A party that does not place itself on either side of at least one cleavage will, according to this model, enjoy little success.

Rational action is not constricted to upholding cleavages, however. Especially in two-party systems the two major parties will put a lot of effort into gaining the support of what McLean refers to as the “median voter” (McLean, 1982: 21). To explain this term, and the importance for the two major parties of winning over the median voters, Mclean describes the following scenario:

“Suppose I live in a street of identically spaced houses all on the same side – nos. 1 to 100. I do all my shopping in the street and will always buy my goods from the nearest shop. At which number should a shopkeeper set up his business if he believes one rival may come into the street? The answer is exactly half-way along at no. 50. Then any rival can, at best, set up shop next door – say at no. 51. In that event, the first trader has all business from nos.1 to 50 inclusive and the second has all the business from nos. 51 to 100 inclusive: an even split. But suppose either the first or the second trader sets up somewhere away from the middle. If the first goes to no. 20, the second has only to go to no. 21 to gain four-fifths of the trade” (McLean, 1982: 21).

The point of this scenario is to illustrate how a rational major party in a two-party system thinks and plans when striving to reach the goal of electoral victory. Most importantly the party needs to give the median voters what they want. If the party is not able to do so the other major party will be more likely to win these votes. Voters positioned on the far left and far right will usually support the major party closest to them in order to prevent the other major party from winning (as discussed earlier) and the main focus of the major parties will

therefore be on the median voters. Of course the major parties have to be careful not grasping for more than the median voters, since this might create a vacuum on the party's far side of the political spectrum, which again might lead to the creation of a new party aimed at pleasing the voters who feel too neglected by the major party closest to them.

An important part of any campaign is the party's candidate running for office. So far we have discussed the party as a whole, but some focus should be put on the party's candidates as well, especially when discussing party performance in the United States. In their book "The Presidentialization of Politics" Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb (2005) argue that there has been a development in democratic countries towards a greater focus on the candidates running for office, instead of the party (and its respectable political platform). They have termed this development "presidentialization" (Poguntke and Webb, 2005: 4). Basically their argument is that power and authority vested on party executives, and politically elected executives, have increased, and that the electoral process has become more focused on candidates and leadership (Poguntke and Webb, 2005: 5).

For the purpose of this thesis the changes in the electoral process suggested by Poguntke and Webb (2005) are of particular interest. Based on their arguments one can derive that voters today are more focused on the candidate running for office than they were before, meaning that parties wanting to win an election have to be more focused on nominating candidates with charisma and leadership skills than before. According to Poguntke and Webb (2005) there are mainly two possible explanations for the presidentialization of politics. The first explanation is that the traditional social cleavages in the electorate have eroded. Voters are, presumably, less restricted by party loyalties and ideology, and therefore more focused on which candidate to trust (Poguntke and Webb, 2005: 348 - 349). The second explanation is that the major changes in campaign media coverage and mass communication have created a more personality focused society⁹. This is due to the fact that the electronic media "by their nature tend to focus on personalities rather than programmes" (Poguntke and Webb, 2005: 349). To summarize, a party wanting to be successful not only has to have a political platform that appeals to (certain segments of) the electorate, but also has to have candidates who both

⁹ This explanation is also supported by Aardal and Waldahl (2004) who argue that "the media [today] emphasize confrontation between individuals more than what they disagree about" (Aardal and Waldahl, : 264).

appeal to an electorate less bound by traditional cleavages and know how to do well on electronic media.

1.2 Thesis purpose and structure

With the Green Party of the United States as the main case, the purpose of this thesis is to explore different explanations as to why some minor green parties are successful, while others are not. The discussion will build on the different theories and models discussed above, as well as relevant literature and data on the subject.

The thesis will consist of five main parts. Firstly, I will present the scientific design of the thesis, explaining what types of data I have used, how the data has been gathered, as well as the data's validity and reliability.

Secondly, the political system of the United States will be discussed. Here much of the focus will be on the political culture of the country, as well as its electoral system and party system.

Thirdly, I will review the Green Party of the United States and Die Grünen in Germany. More specifically I will present some of the key features of the two parties, how they were founded, what their ideology and political platform is, how their political organization is structured and how successful they have been in their respectable countries.

In the fourth part, the Green Party's performance will be discussed in detail, and I will try to provide some explanations as to why the party so far has not enjoyed much success on the political arena. In general, possible explanations related to the political system, the electorate and the party itself will be discussed, based on relevant literature and data on the subject. Throughout most of the discussion I will briefly compare the Green Party to Die Grünen in order to better illustrate why the Green Party so far has experienced relatively little success.

Lastly, I will summarize the thesis and present its main conclusion. Additionally, I will share my opinion on what relevance the thesis might have for future research on the subject.

2. SCIENTIFIC METHOD

2.1 Scientific design

2.1.1 Case study and the comparative method

This thesis' main question; why the Green Party of the United States has enjoyed little political success, is in many ways a complex question. Given this complexity it is possible to explore the question in several different ways. One way would be to analyze the issue from a "methodological collectivistic"¹⁰ approach, focusing exclusively on how one phenomenon (the Green Party's lack of success) is correlated with other phenomena (Gilje and Grimen, 1993: 176), like the US electoral system for instance. The most common way of doing this would be to explore whether the plurality electoral system actually does create a two- party systems by using a regression analysis¹¹ of data from all democratic countries worldwide. To some extent such an analysis is included in this thesis through the findings by Duverger (1964) discussed earlier. The problem, however, with exclusively relying on this approach is that it does not facilitate much focus on how and why each individual¹² connected with the phenomenon is responsible for its creation. One question is whether voters in countries using the plurality electoral system will tend to vote for one of two major parties, over minor parties. A very different question is why they actually do so.

¹⁰ Harald Grimen (2004) presents three arguments for the methodological collectivistic approach. The first argument is that all individuals are molded by the society they live in and that it is impossible to subtract the social context from the understanding of how individuals in that society think and reason, because you would then be left with "organisms without language or culture" (Grimen, 2004: 281-282). The second argument is related to how we understand human behavior and action. Without social context human behavior would not make any sense (Grimen, 2004: 282 - 283). The third argument concerns the rules of society. Social rules and judicial laws are different from the laws of nature in the respect that they actually can be broken. But were it not for society it would be impossible for an individual to know if he/she was breaking the rules/laws or not (Grimen, 2004: 284).

¹¹ In a regression analysis one measures whether there is a correlation between the values on one variable with the values on another variable (Skog, 2004: 213). When applied to electoral system and party system the argument for a relationship between these two will be strengthened if the countries utilizing the plurality electoral system, like the United States and the United Kingdom, also have a two-party system.

¹² Voters, party members, party candidates and so forth.

The lack of focus on the individuals connected with the phenomenon could more easily be made up for by looking at the thesis question from a “methodological individualistic”¹³ approach (Gilje and Grimen, 1993: 177). In this approach the main focus would be on how the individuals affect and create the phenomenon at hand, and the thesis research would then revolve around voter reasoning and voter behavior when explaining why the Green Party gets so few votes in most elections. The downside with exclusively using such an approach though is that it to a large extent fails to capture the importance of the institutional context, like the impact of the electoral system.

Obviously, strictly using only the methodological collectivistic approach, or just the methodological individualistic approach, will make it somewhat difficult to analyze the issue at hand from all important angles. Hence, I find it most productive not to solely rely on one or the other. Based on existing literature on the subject I must assume that the answer to the thesis question is to be found in both social phenomena (having an influence on voters) and in the voters/individuals themselves (having an influence on the phenomenon). In addition, I am more interested in analyzing the Green Party itself, rather than comparing it to a wide selection of minor (green) parties around the world. Hence, I believe it is more fitting to rely on a third approach; the comparative method, and more specifically the case study, when trying to answer the thesis question.

Charles C. Ragin (1987) views comparative social science as more of a separate discipline than a sub-discipline of methodological collectivism and/or – individualism. More specifically

¹³ Harald Grimen (2004) presents four arguments the methodological individualistic approach. Firstly it can be argued that methodological individualism serves as a protection against pseudo sciences where organizations and social phenomenon are given properties that only individuals can have. Since the core of methodological individualism is that social phenomenon only are products of the individuals, such a misinterpretation of what a society is will be prevented (Grimen, 2004: 276 - 277). The third argument is that social phenomena are created by humans and that they cannot exist on their own. Simply put, “if you take away the attitudes and perceptions people have about the social phenomena, the phenomena themselves will disappear” (Grimen, 2004: 277). Thirdly it is difficult for a researcher to collect data on a phenomenon without collecting data on the individuals. In order to understand and analyze the phenomenon you have to understand the different parts of the phenomenon – the individuals (Grimen, 2004: 278). The last argument, which in many respects resemble the second argument, is that no phenomena, neither physical nor social, are more than the sum of their parts. The freezing point of water for instance, is nothing more than the combination of the freezing points of hydrogen and oxygen, and the same logic also applies to any social phenomena (Grimen, 2004: 278).

he argues that the comparative method is characterized by its goal to “identify the similarities and differences among macrosocial units” (Ragin, 1987: 6). A researcher using the comparative method is not just interested in the relationship between variables, but also puts a greater emphasis on understanding the case itself (Ragin, 1987: 6). This does to a large extent fit with of the scope of this thesis. In addition to analyzing the Green Party of the United States, I intend to along to way compare it to Die Grünen in Germany in order to get a better understanding of the Green Party’s performance as a minor green party.

The comparative method does of course include a wide variety of different research methods from experiments to surveys to case studies (Yin, 2009:8). What then makes the case study the proper method for this thesis? Yin (2009) argues that the “need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2009: 4). The Green Party is, like any other political party, a complex case. As will be discussed further in 2.1.2., a political party consists of several different dimensions, each showing off a unique part of that party.

Yin’s (2009) argument for when to use the case study method is also supported by John Gerring (2007) who defines the case study as the “intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases” (Gerring, 2007: 20). For the purpose of this thesis the Green Party is part of two populations of relevance. First and foremost the party is part of a population consisting of green parties all across the world. As already mentioned briefly, some of these parties have enjoyed a great deal of success, like Die Grünen in Germany, while others have not. Secondly, the Green Party may also be considered a part of the population of minor parties in the United States. Although the findings of a case study are not sufficient for automatically generalizing to the larger population, this thesis may still be helpful for understanding the performance of green parties around the world, as well as minor parties in the United States. By understanding why the Green Party is struggling, one might be able to better understand and analyze the performance of green parties in other countries. And obstacles making it difficult for the Green Party, as a minor party in the United States, to be successful may also be the same obstacles hindering other minor parties in the country from achieving success.

Still, the conclusions provided in this thesis are not automatically applicable to all other green parties worldwide, nor all of the minor parties in the United States. This is not the goal of a case study either, since it by definition is “hypothesis testing”, not “hypothesis generating”

(Gerring, 2007: 39). According to Gerring (2007) there is as a matter of fact a trade-off between these two, with the strength of the case study being its exploratory power, not its power to confirm or falsify theories (Gerring, 2007: 40). In other words; through the case study I am able to present a set of findings and possible hypotheses on the subject at hand, but I am not able to make any solid generalization to the entire population based on these findings. In order to do this, I would have had to choose a more quantitative (collectivistic) approach.

Even though the case study method has been chosen for this thesis, it is of interest to explore whether other methods, like a survey for instance, could have been utilized. According to Yin, a survey (and analysis of archival data) is a proper tool when one is trying to answer so called ““what” questions”, meaning questions where the goal is to describe an event or make predictions about certain outcomes (Yin, 2009: 9). ““Why” questions” (like the question for this thesis) are of a more exploratory sort, however, often best answered through experiments, histories or case studies (Yin, 2009: 9). Of these three I believe the case study is the preferred method for this thesis. On the one hand the case (the Green Party of the United States) is a too complex and big case to be studied through an experiment. Yin argues that experiments are only usable when “control over behavioral events is possible” (Yin, 2009: 8), and obviously national elections, party candidate nominations and a large quantity of voters are far beyond the control of a researcher. On the other hand histories are not a proper method as long as my focus is on the Green Party today, and not just a specific election in the past. This is also supported by Yin who argues that “the case study [however] is preferred in examining contemporary events” (Yin, 2009: 11).

2.1.2 How to analyze a political party

So far we have established that the case study provides a good framework for analyzing the Green Party and answering the question of this thesis. There are however several possibilities and alternatives within the framework of the case study as well. A political party is a complex entity, and in order for the analysis to be successful it is important to have a plan as to how the party as a case should be studied.

In the first chapter I discussed how different explanations of a party’s performance can be put into (at least) one of three categories; the political system, the electorate and the political party itself. This categorization is based on the work by Webb, Farrell and Holliday (2002) on how

to analyze political parties in democracies. In their book “Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies” they present three distinct dimensions of political parties (Webb et al., 2002a):

1. Party connections with the electorate
2. Development of organizations over time
3. Party performance on behalf of the wider political system

(Webb et al., 2002a: 7)

The first dimension, the connection between the party and the electorate, can be analyzed by looking at how stable the link between the party and the electorate is and in what esteem the electorate holds the party (Webb et al., 2002b: 7).

The second dimension is concerned with party’s organizational strength. Here the relevant questions are concerned with whether the party is persisting and developing as an organization, and in what manner the party is adapting to new challenges and changes in the political environment (Webb et al., 2002a: 9).

The third and last dimension is the function parties have in the political system. What does the relative strength of the parties say about the system and the political environment? Do weak parties indicate a lack of legitimacy for these parties (Webb et al., 2002a)?

The three dimensions of political parties proposed by Webb et.al. (2002b) are first and foremost not related to one single party, but rather all of the political parties in a country or a region. This is useful for understanding what role political parties in general play in a system, and how the electorate perceives the parties and the party system as a whole. This is not the focus of this thesis, however. The focus here is primarily on one party, The Green Party, and also to some extent Die Grünen as a comparable case to the former one. The three dimensions of Webb et.al. (2002b) are still relevant though, since they illustrate what parts of a political party it is important to analyze, namely the political system the party operates in, the electorate and the party itself. Hence, my analysis of the Green Party will be based on the three dimensions proposed by Webb et.al. (2002b), but with some revisions.

When analyzing the political system I will be interested in discussing the degree to which the system is designed and function in such a way that the Green Party has small chances of success. In particular I am interested in the electoral system, the election laws and other systematic schemes in the United States that in one way or another might give the Green Party a disadvantage in elections, compared to the other parties, and the major parties in particular.

In my analysis of the electorate my focus will be on voter behavior, reasoning and action, as well as different factors that might make the Green Party an unattractive choice for most voters. One question for instance is if most voters reason in any particular way that might be unfavorable for a party like the Green Party?

When looking at the party I will be looking for flaws with the party organization, as well as the party's own efforts to attract more voters, that might help to explain why the party is not more successful.

Collectively I believe these three dimensions cover many (and perhaps even most) of the relevant factors determining whether a political party is successful or not, and the final analysis will also be divided into three separate segments, each concerned with one of these dimensions.

2.2 Data and data collection

2.2.1 Informal interviews

Vital information concerning the party organization, and how those active in the party explain their party's performance, has been obtained through politicians and representatives of the Green Party. There are several ways to collect such data, but I chose to mainly rely on informal interviews where data collection was done through conversations and personal interviews with the respondents (Grønmo, 2004: 159). One of the advantages of this method is that it provided me as a researcher with a good amount of flexibility throughout the data collection process. New and relevant topics could be included during the interviews if necessary, and I was able to further explore interesting observations and arguments provided by the respondents if I wanted to.

It should be noted that there are downsides as well to informal interviews, though. These types of interviews do for instance require a lot more of me as a researcher during the interview. Since I am not able to plan the data collection in detail (Grønmo, 2004: 159), there is the constant danger that the interviews could go off topic and end up revolving around matters that are not relevant for the thesis. In order for this not to happen I used an interview guide as a guideline for the interviews, where I roughly sketched out the relevant topics and how the interview would be conducted (Grønmo, 2004: 161). Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in a manner that felt relaxing and comfortable for both me and the respondents. The interviews took place somewhere quiet where the chances of being interrupted were minimized. In addition it was my responsibility that the conversation between us felt natural and relaxed, and that the interview was structured in a pedagogical way (Grønmo, 2004: 163).

Due to constraints on both resources and time, some respondents were required to answer my questions through written questionnaires. These questionnaires consisted basically of many of the same questions used during the interviews. Often written questionnaires contain closed questions where the respondents have some predetermined alternatives to choose from when answering the questions (Grønmo, 2004: 167). This is done to make the questions less difficult for the researcher to process afterwards, as well as making it easier for respondents to answer potentially difficult questions (Grønmo, 2004: 167). There are, on the other hand, several good reasons why a researcher rather should rely on open questions. In the case of this thesis, when asking about possible explanations for the party's lack of success, alternative answers could have been perceived as somewhat biased, and could also have made the respondents feel restricted from thinking for themselves and providing me with their own independent analysis. In addition, I have been interested in the nuances in the respondents' answers and to get a feel of what explanations they emphasize the most. Had I used closed questions these benefits would not have been as present (Grønmo, 2004: 168 - 169).

An important part of collecting data from few, but important, respondents is to find the right respondents and get in contact with them. Here I basically used what is termed "snowball sampling" (Grønmo, 2004: 102). This is a form of strategic sampling that involves the assistance of the respondents themselves. After the first possible respondent has been contacted he or she provides the researcher with suggestions on other respondents that might contribute to the research project, and when contacted, these respondents then do the same.

This continues and the number of respondents adds up until the researcher is satisfied (Grønmo, 2004: 102). In order to get the most out of this method of sampling though, it is important that the researcher is conscious on who to actually interview or not. In addition, the respondents suggesting new respondents have to have a clear idea on what criteria the respondents have to meet in order to be of relevance to the research project (Grønmo, 2004: 102).

Early in my work with the thesis I contacted the party office of the Green Party of the United States, situated in Washington DC, by email. In the email I presented my research project and expressed a desire to meet with and interview politicians and party representatives. From the party's DC-office my request was forwarded to several of the state parties, in addition to some national representatives. This resulted in several replies back to me and I was able to pick the ones I believed could provide me with the most interesting and useful information. Among these respondents were Jared Laiti, the Green Party of California's Liaison to the Secretary of State, Jody Grage¹⁴, former treasurer of the Green Party of the United States, and Sanda Everette, co-chair of the Green Party of California Coordinating Committee and former co-chair of the Green Party of the United States.

2.2.2 Statistics and public data

The interviews and the written questionnaires make up an important part of the data for the thesis. In addition, public data is used when discussing the parties' election results and the parties themselves (ideology, organizational structure etc.).

When discussing election results and party support I primarily rely on data provided by the Federal Election Commission (of the United States) (Federal Election Commission, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013) and the European Election Database (European Election Database, 2010a, 2010b). The former gives reliable information on the presidential elections from 1996

¹⁴ Jody Grage agreed by email to be interviewed. The interview took place in Oslo, Norway in December 2013. After the interview I have not been able to get in contact with Grage again, and she has therefore not read through the thesis, and her quotes, before the thesis was submitted. Given the fact that Grage is an official representative of the Green Party of the United States, and that no sensitive information provided by her have been published in this thesis, I believe publishing the thesis in its current form (with the quotes by Grage) is within the ethical boundaries of scientific research.

to 2012, which is not only useful for studying how popular the Green Party is in general, but also for giving an impression of how the support for the Green Party has changed over time.

In addition to using the data provided by the Federal Election Commission (Federal Election Commission, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013), I also use some data from Politico.com (Politico, 2012, 2014a, 2014b) when studying differences in party support between states. This is particularly useful since substantial differences from state to state might give an indication on what is needed for the Green Party to be successful.

For studying election results in Germany (and other European countries of relevance), I rely on the European Election Database (European Election Database, 2010a, 2010b). Like the Federal Election Commission, the data collected here is reliable and help me study the support for the Die Grünen over the last decade or so.

Data on other matters, like party- and campaign financing, in addition to political cleavages in the United States, is gathered from reliable news articles and research groups/centers, like the Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2013a, 2013b), in addition to public data records.

When it comes to data on the parties themselves (primarily The Green Party and Die Grünen), I mostly rely on the parties' own web sites (or related web sites). These web sites contain much useful data on subjects like the parties' history, their ideology and political platform and how their party organization is structured. For the Green Party specifically, I also use some data from Paul S. Herrnson and John C. Green's book "Multiparty Politics in America" (2002).

All in all data gathering has gone as planned and I have been able to procure most of the data I have searched for. One issue, though, has been to obtain sufficient data on the Die Grünen in Germany. This is due to the fact that most of the information on the party, including information found on the party's own web site, is only produced in German. This has been somewhat of an issue due to this researcher's limited knowledge of the German language. To compensate for this, much of the data on Die Grünen has been gathered from the web site of European Greens-European Free Alliance (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a, 2014d) – the group of parties in the European Parliament which Die Grünen is a member of.

In doing so I have been able to gather much of the data needed for studying Die Grünen in a satisfying manner.

2.3 The quality of the data

To evaluate the quality of the data sampled and used in a research project is an important part of any scientific work. Inaccurate data, or data collected from unreliable sources, might seriously jeopardize the quality of the project and its findings.

According to Grønmo (2004) there are in general five preconditions for a satisfactory discussion of a research question (Grønmo, 2004: 217). Firstly (and perhaps most importantly) the data utilized in the project must represent the reality as best as possible. Data containing inaccuracies, or information that is simply wrong, must be avoided, and the data itself should be thoroughly explained and documented to the reader (Grønmo, 2004: 218). This is important since it not only commits the researcher to evaluate the data properly, but the reader is also given the opportunity to evaluate the data for himself/herself afterwards.

Secondly, the collection and analysis of data should build upon “scientific principles of logic and language/terminology” (Grønmo, 2004: 218). This means that the description of the data should be as precise as possible and be done by the use of common scientific terminology. In addition, the data should be as complete as possible and clarify any relevant aspects of the research question (Grønmo, 2004: 218).

Thirdly, the choice of unit(s) (and case for that matter) should be done in an appropriate way in compliance with the research question (Grønmo, 2004: 218). This means that the case(s)/unit(s) that in the best possible way serve to answer the research question should be chosen. The selection should also coincide with the degree of generalization for which the researcher wishes to use the findings (Grønmo, 2004: 218).

Fourthly, the choice of what types of information to gather should be done systematically (Grønmo, 2004: 218). What information to gather and use, and how dimensions and categories are defined, should be consistent with relevant literature and theory on the subject (Grønmo, 2004: 218).

Lastly, the gathering of data must be done in compliance with the method the researcher has chosen (Grønmo, 2004: 218). This is important in order to be able to reduce the degree of (typical) errors that might arise when collecting data (Grønmo, 2004: 218).

In addition to the preconditions described above, there are two criteria for measuring the quality of research project's data; "reliability" and "validity". In short reliability is a measurement of how reliable the data are, while validity is a measurement of how accurate the data are (Grønmo, 2004:222, 231).

2.3.1 Reliability

In general we distinguish between two different measures of reliability; "stability" and "equivalence". If the data have a high degree of stability it means that there is compliance between data on the same phenomenon collected at different points in time (Grønmo, 2004: 222).

In my opinion there is a high degree of stability in the data collected for this thesis. The analysis of the Green Party is not just based on data from the last presidential election, but on every presidential elections back to 1996. Common for every election is that the Green Party has not been able to win any of the Electoral Colleges in any state (Federal Election Commission, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013). When it comes to the interviews and questionnaires the replies from the different respondents are not very different and they all basically point to the same reasons for the Green Party's lack of success (which of course will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six).

The other type of reliability, equivalence, is concerned with whether the data tell the same about a phenomenon as data presented by other scholars (Grønmo, 2004: 229). Here too I do believe that the data I have collected is reliable. Both O'Neill (2006) and Herrnson and Green (2002) draw the same conclusions as this thesis regarding the party system of the United States and its effects in the Green Party; the United States party system is a two-party system where minor parties, like the Green Party, have had little success (O'Neill et al., 2006: 87 - 88) (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 3).

One objection to the presumed high degree of equivalence of the data in this thesis though, is that information is gathered through interviews and questionnaires. In my research I have been unable to find scientific work on the Green Party of the United States where party

officials and politicians have been interviewed and asked about their opinions of the party's performance. Measuring that data's equivalence is therefore not as easy. Still, many of the answers provided by the respondents coincide with the findings and arguments by Herrnson and Green (2002). According to them several obstacles in the United States, of both legal and institutional character, are making it difficult for minor parties to be successful. Some examples of such obstacles are ballot access laws and campaign financing (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 164, 168), both of which the respondents also point to. Hence, I would argue that the reliability of these data used in this thesis should be considered to be high.

2.3.2 Validity

As already described validity refers to the extent to which the data actually measure and serve to answer, the research question at hand (Grønmo, 2004: 231). For this thesis I do believe that the data collected serve this purpose to a great extent. Data on election results gives an accurate picture of the electoral situation for the Green Party, and the answers provided by the respondents are invaluable in understanding why the Green Party has not been very successful. One can of course make an objection to this by arguing that the Green Party may be more popular among the electorate than what one is led to believe by the election results. For instance did over 27 percent of all voters in 1996 express a support for a multiparty system in the United States (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 62), which might indicate that more people support minor parties than what is expressed through elections. Still a party's success is in this thesis solely measured by the percentage of votes they receive in elections, which means that data to a great extent do measure what they are supposed to.

Like with reliability, there are also different ways to measure validity. The first one is "competence validity", which refers to the degree of competence the researcher himself/herself has in collecting the data for the project (Grønmo, 2004: 234). An assessment of my own competence in the field of political science is of course greatly subjective, but as a master's student of comparative politics I do believe that I have the necessary competence and knowledge to conduct a research project of this nature.

The second measurement of validity is "communicative validity". This measurement refers to the degree to which the research project has been discussed with other scholars and scientists (Grønmo, 2004: 235). In my opinion this "requirement" is to a good extent fulfilled. Throughout the project my supervisor at the Department of Comparative Politics has been

given the opportunity to read and comment on the thesis. In addition he has provided guidance on how to answer the thesis question and what literature that might be of interest.

The third and final measurement is “pragmatic validity”, which is related to the practical results of the findings of the research project (Grønmo, 2004: 236). For instance would a study of the working environment in a company have high pragmatic validity if its findings would lead to improvements in that company (Grønmo, 2004: 236). What consequences could the findings of this thesis have then? First and foremost I do believe, in all modesty of course, that some of the findings presented here might prove useful for other scholars studying the party system of the United States. Most often the theory proposed by Duverger (1964) concerned with the link between electoral system and party system is used in political science when trying to explain why the United States is a two-party system. As will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six, the party system, and minor parties’ chance of success in the United States is also shaped by other factors, reinforcing the effects of the electoral system.

I also believe that this thesis might provide scholars with some interesting information on the Green Party as a case on its own. Especially does the information gathered through the interviews and questionnaires provide some insight into how members and representatives of a minor party in a two-party system view the political system they work in, in addition to their party’s role in that system.

Lastly it is possible that the Green Party of the United States might be able to use some of the findings in this thesis for their own good. If one knows and understands the obstacles and challenges that are keeping one from succeeding, then one might be more able to avoid these in the future.

3. POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES

In order to be able to analyze the Green Party's performance it is essential to understand the political arena they are operating in. Obviously, no country is absolutely similar, and although democracies are based on the same fundamental values, they may be organized quite differently, as argued by Ljiphart (1999) (see the discussion in 1.1 for more detail). Hence, it would be a somewhat challenging effort to analyze a political party without taking the country's political system into account.

In the following chapter I will present and discuss some of the major traits of the political system of the United States, focusing on topics like political culture and electoral system. The purpose of this is first and foremost to create a foundation for the analysis of the Green Party in chapter six, where explanations related to both the political system and the United States electorate will be presented.

3.1 Political culture

The political culture of the United States is as interesting as it is somewhat unique. Needless to say the United States is to be considered a consolidated and free democracy, gaining top score (like most Western democracies) by Freedom House (Freedom House, 2013). Still, the political culture of the United States does in some aspects differ from the political culture found in Western Europe. For example does the country lack any viable socialist (or even social democratic) movement, as discussed by Eric Foner (2013), for instance. This might be an indication that the political culture in the United States is more oriented to the right than the democracies in Western Europe. The uniqueness of the United States does not end there, though.

For one, Americans greatly value personal liberty and individualism (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 12-13). All individuals are considered rational, fair and endowed with certain core rights (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 13), and the role of the government is to give all individuals freedom to achieve his/her goals and protect everyone's personal liberty.

Secondly, the political culture of the United States emphasizes the key role of popular sovereignty and majority rule (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 12-13). Ultimately power rests with the people and all authority granted groups or individuals should be derived from the people. This is for instance expressed through the system of judge elections at both local, state and federal level (Hall, 2008).

Thirdly, the United States is a federation where power and authority is divided between the national government and self-governing states (O'Neill et al., 2006: 85). This strong federal system, rooted in the American Revolution where the people of the United States rebelled against the strong British state, has made many citizens skeptical of a large state with excessive powers (O'Neill et al., 2006: 93).

Fourthly, religion and religious faith have had great influence on United States politics and the political culture (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 13-14). In 2012, 50 percent of all Americans answered that religion was very important in their lives, compared to only 21 percent and 22 percent in Germany and Spain, respectfully (Pew Research Center, 2012a). This indicates a major gap between the United States and the Western European countries with respect to religion's influence in society. To be more specific, not all faiths and religions enjoy the same degree of influence on though, and for the most part it is Christianity that enjoys this privilege. For instance did 69 percent of respondents in 2007 agree with the statement that "the president should have a strong religious belief" (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 14). This is perhaps not a big surprise though, given the fact that 78,4 percent of all Americans professed themselves as Christians in 2007 (Pew Research Center, 2013a). Still, it is somewhat unique for citizens in a modern democracy to put that much emphasis on their president's (personal) religious faith.

Lastly, the gap between rich and poor in the United States, as well as the electorate's attitude towards welfare benefits, is of importance when studying the country's political culture. According to Gilens (1999) "millions of Americans lack sufficient food, clothing, and shelter", despite the fact that the country "is among the richest societies ever to exist" (Gilens, 1999: 1). In his book, "Why Americans Hate Welfare" (1999), he describes why the United States lacks of a welfare state, like the ones found in Western Europe, and how many voters in the country resent welfare programs because they believe that the existing programs reward

“the underserving poor” (Gilens, 1999: 2 - 3). This makes many citizens skeptical of welfare programs provided by the state, as well as policies aimed at redistributing income¹⁵ (O’Neill et al., 2006: 92).

Like in all democracies, different ideologies and political parties struggle for political power in the United States. According to O’Connor and Sabato, (2009) there are in general at least two major prevailing political ideologies in United States politics, namely conservatism and liberalism (O’Connor and Sabato, 2009: 16).

3.1.1 Conservatism

Conservatism traces its origins to the British politician and philosopher Edmund Burke in the late 1700s (Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009: 269). Burke argued that major wholesale reforms would have unwanted consequences if rushed and not implemented slowly, step by step¹⁶ (Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009: 269-270). Hence modern-day-conservatives in the United States often come out as defenders of status quo. One such group is the Protestant and Roman-Catholic voters, who believe that “moral decay must be stemmed and that traditional moral teachings should be supported and furthered by the government” (O’Connor and Sabato, 2009: 16). This sub-group of the conservatives are often referred to as “social conservatives” (O’Connor and Sabato, 2009: 16). Still, conservatism in the United States is not just about defending status quo. Many conservatives also argue that the federal state should be kept small and have limited regulatory powers on state- and local governments (O’Connor and Sabato, 2009: 16). Due to this, conservative voters will usually lean towards the Republican Party, whose candidates and representatives often promote many of these conservative ideas.

¹⁵ It should be emphasized that Gilens (1999) argues that the skepticism in the United States towards welfare programs, is perhaps not rooted in a general skepticism towards welfare programs or the idea of government helping the poor per se. Instead he argues that this skepticism stems from a notion that the current welfare programs are not functioning as they should, and that the poor, in particular African-Americans, are abusing the benefits provided them (Gilens, 1999: 2 - 3).

¹⁶ It should be underlined that Edmund Burke did not reject the need for reforms and necessary changes in a society, but he believed, based on the experience from the French revolution, that such changes should be implemented gradually and carefully (Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009: 269-270).

3.1.2 Liberalism

The word “liberalism” may in fact have very different meanings, depending on the context. “Market liberalism” for instance, refers to many of the ideas presented by Adam Smith (and later promoted by scholars such as Friedrich A. Hayek and Milton Friedman) concerning the superiority of a free market and the so called “invisible hand” (Dryzek and Dunleavy, 2009: 100-101). In this case, however, “liberalism” refers to the (more leftist) ideas that government regulation and involvement is necessary to preserve and promote “rights of women, the elderly, minorities, and the environment” (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 16). Contrary to a conservative a liberal will argue that the government should “seek to change the political, economic, and social status quo” to ensure development and real individual freedom and well-being for all citizens (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 16). Hence, liberal voters will lean towards the left and the Democratic Party¹⁷.

3.1.3 Moderate voters and the difficulties with political labels

Even though many voters in the United States consider themselves to be either conservative or liberal, the largest ideological group is “moderates”¹⁸ (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 15). Studies show that many voters tend to be conservative on one issue and liberal on another, making it somewhat difficult to label all voters as either purely conservative or purely liberal (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 16). Hence, many voters are referred to, and refer to themselves, as moderate, basically meaning that they are somewhat in the center of the traditional political left-right-scale. This also illustrates some of the difficulties of using political and ideological labels on United States voters in general. The same goes with linking all voters to either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. For instance, polling from 2000 show that 20 percent of those voters labeling themselves as conservative, actually voted for Al Gore and the Democratic Party (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 133). Additionally, as much as 40 percent of all United States voters proclaimed themselves as “independent” in 2011 (Telegraph, 2012). In other words; ideological labels might be helpful for understanding the political cleavages in United States politics, and why a voter votes for a certain party, but one should

¹⁷ As will be discussed later, some liberals, like the representatives of the Green Party, argue that the Democratic Party is in fact not sufficiently liberal and that other parties, like the Green Party, are better at promoting the liberal ideas and policies (Grage, 2013).

¹⁸ The number of voters labeling themselves “moderate” have dropped somewhat during the last two decades, though (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 15).

be careful with trying to explain every aspect of United States politics solely on the basis of ideologies and ideological labels.

3.1.4 Traditional cleavages in the United States electorate

Given the cleavage model by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) presented in chapter one, identifying the major cleavages in the United States electorate is important for understanding why some voters cast their votes for one party, while others vote for the other. According to McLean (1982) the voters in the United States are mainly split by four major cleavages; class, regional, religious and race and ethnicity (McLean, 1982: 46 - 57).

The United States is a country where the difference between the poorest citizens and the richest citizens is big. In 2012 the richest one percent of the country's population received about 22,5 percent of all pretax income, while the 90 percent at the bottom received about 50 percent of all pretax income (Pew Research Center, 2013b). McLean (1982) claims that the class cleavage to a large extent is linked to the regional cleavage, with low income farmers living in the rural parts of the country and the richer consumers living in the urban parts (McLean, 1982: 46 - 47). Furthermore, he argues that the Democratic Party traditionally has taken sides with the poor, while the Republican Party has sided with the rich (McLean, 1982: 47). The flaw of such an argument, however, is the fact that the Republican Party actually enjoy the greatest support in the more rural states and regions of the country, while the Democratic Party is strongest in the cities (O'Neill et al., 2006: 87). Still, the Democrats have, at least in recent years, been the ones promoting policies aimed at making life for poor people easier. One such policy is the Affordable Care Act¹⁹ proposed by president Barack Hussein Obama, imposing every citizen to buy health insurance (at a cost affordable for anyone, hence the name of the act). At the same time the Republican Party will also argue that they too have the interests of the poor in mind, promoting greater individual freedom and lower taxes (Republican Party of the United States, 2012: 21). Regardless, it is safe to argue that class and income inequality remain an important cleavage in United States politics.

Another cleavage is the regional cleavage. As already mentioned, McLean (1982) argues that this cleavage to a great extent is linked to the class cleavage, since regional conflicts often occur between “the rich people in towns [...] [and the] poor people in the country” (McLean,

¹⁹ Commonly referred to as the “Obamacare” (Obama Care Facts, 2014).

1982: 48). Such a cleavage is what Peter Flora et.al. (1999), based on the theories by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), term “center-periphery” (Flora et al., 1999: 108). Some regions are on the one hand centers where people gather, and major decisions are made that affect both the centers and other regions (Flora et al., 1999: 108). The other regions are on the other hand peripheries where the population to some extent depend on the decisions made in the centers (Flora et al., 1999: 108). Conflicts between these two regions might arise when the population in the peripheries feels that there is a too large gap between them and the ones living in the centers, either in the sense of some form of inequality or due to issues related to decision-making. As mentioned above the Republican Party does, based on election results, seem to have the most support in the peripheries, while the Democratic is performing better in the centers (O'Neill et al., 2006: 87). This too might be an indication that the regional cleavage is of significance, since the support for certain ideologies or policies seem to follow a regional pattern of some sort.

The third cleavage emphasized by McLean (1982) is the religious cleavage (McLean, 1982: 51). As already discussed in 3.1, the impact of religion is much greater in the United States than in the Western-European democracies (McLean, 1982: 51). Interestingly, this cleavage does seem to have some connection with the regional cleavage as well. According to McLean (1982) organized religion seems to have a major impact in the rural parts of the country, especially the South²⁰, while it is almost invisible in the big cities (McLean, 1982:51). Furthermore, he argues that the cleavage primarily takes two forms. The one form is the dispute between different religions or denominations, while the second form is between religious and secular attitudes (McLean, 1982: 52). When it comes to the two major political parties, the Republican Party is generally viewed as the party attracting more of the morally conservative voters, while the Democratic Party attracts the more liberal ones (O'Neill et al., 2006: 87 - 88). This argument is to a certain degree backed by the Pew Research Center, which in 2012 published a report showing that 92 percent of all Republican voters stated that “they never doubt the existence of God”, while 77 percent of the Democratic voters stated the same (Christian Post, 2012). Still, 77 percent is a substantial share of the Democratic voters, and when looking at the Catholic voters specifically we see that 57 percent supported the Democrats in 2011, while only 40 percent supported the Republicans the same year (National Catholic Reporter, 2011). Hence, I would not argue that the Democratic Party does not attract

²⁰ Commonly used term for the southern states in the United States.

religious voters, but rather that the Republicans seems to enjoy a bit more support from this (composite) group in general than the Democrats.

The last cleavage proposed by McLean (1982) is related to race and ethnicity (McLean, 1982: 53). According to him race, and the discrimination of certain races, is (and most certainly has been) a big issue in the United States. Today African-Americans “are the most politically distinctive ethnic group” largely favoring the Democratic Party (McLean, 1982: 54). The increasing Spanish speaking part of the population is also of importance, with both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party competing for their votes (McLean, 1982: 54, 56). Part of the reason why race is considered an important cleavage is related to the discrimination historically imposed by the Caucasian population on both African-Americans and Native Americans alike (McLean, 1982: 53 - 54).

3.2 The system of government

In the United States power at the national level is shared by three different institutions; the president, the Congress and the judiciary (O'Neill et al., 2006: 78). Executive power rests with the president who serves for four year terms as both head of state and head of government (O'Neill et al., 2006). The Congress is the country's legislative assembly consisting of representatives from all of the country's fifty states. It is divided into two chambers. The first chamber is the House of Representatives, consisting of 435 representatives, each representing their own district in the home state (O'Neill et al., 2006: 81 - 82). The second chamber is the Senate, consisting of two representatives from each state (O'Neill et al., 2006: 82). The last institution, the judiciary, is led by the Supreme Court, consisting of eight associate judges and one chief justice (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 350). The justices are appointed by the president and must be confirmed by the Senate, and are basically given lifetime appointments (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 352) (O'Neill et al., 2006: 83).

Although the three institutions of government at the national level have much power, the United States employs an extensive federal system of government where substantial power is vested in self-governing states (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 46). Much like with the national government, power in the states is shared by three separate institutions, namely a state governor serving as the executive, a state legislatures and a state supreme court (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 129 – 134).

In chapter one the major impact the electoral system has on a country's party system was thoroughly discussed, revealing that minor parties' lack of success in certain countries often is related to the electoral system. Hence, reviewing the electoral system of the United States might be important for the purpose of understanding the Green Party's lack of success.

In the United States numerous elections take place at various levels of government. In this thesis I will primarily focus on the "general elections", where the public vote candidates into different offices like a city council (local level), state legislature (regional level) or Congress (national level) (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 465), as well as the presidential election, of course. General elections are not just contests between different candidates, but also between the candidates' respective parties. The decision of who is going to run for each party is made through "primary elections", often termed "primaries", where voters (either party members or the entire electorate, depending on the type of primary) decide which candidate will represent the given party (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 465). In addition, you also have "recall elections", "initiatives" and "referendums"²¹, but these are of minor relevance for this thesis and will not be a part of the continued discussion.

For most general elections the United States use the plurality electoral system, often referred to as "single-member district system", or "first-past-the-post" (O'Neill, 2007). In this system the constituencies are constructed as single-member districts, where the candidate who obtains the most votes in a district wins that district (O'Neill, 2007: 142). Votes for any other candidate in the district are discarded, since each district only has one seat it needs to occupy.

Presidential elections are conducted by using the first-past-the-post-system, but instead of voting directly on presidential candidates, voters vote on members of the Electoral College (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 473). The College consists of a total of 538 electors who are divided among the fifty states. In order for one candidate to win the presidency, he/she needs to win a total of 270 electors (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 473). Winning the majority of the votes in a state also means winning all the electors of that state. A candidate does, in other

²¹ "Recall" is a type of election where voters have the possibility to remove an incumbent from office, while an "initiative" is the possibility for citizens to propose legislation directly to the electorate for a popular vote. A "referendum" on the other hand is an election where the legislature themselves seek the approval of a legislation from the electorate and put it up for popular vote (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 467).

words, not need to win a majority of the states, but a majority of the electors. This means that winning a state like California, with its 53 electors, is more beneficial than winning both Nebraska, Idaho and Wyoming together, since those states only have 11 electors between themselves (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 476).

3.3 Party system

As discussed in chapter one the plurality electoral system tends to create a two-party system, rather than a multiparty system. Therefore it might not come as a surprise to the reader that the United States almost exclusively have a two-party system as well, with the Republican Party on the right side and the Democratic Party on the left side (O'Neill et al., 2006: 87).

The simple explanation as to why the electoral system affects the party system is that voters do not have any incentive for voting for a minor party if the electoral system is a “winner-takes-all” system, since chances that their vote will be wasted is substantial. In the single member plurality electoral system, only the winning party in a district is rewarded, while the losing party/parties gain nothing. Hence, the priority for voters often is to ensure that the party they favor the most wins the seat(s)/the electors, and at the same time prevent the party they favor the least from winning the same seat(s)/electors. For the United States electorate this means voting for either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party in order to ensure that the other one does not win the election.

The two major parties in the United States are to be considered so called “catch-all” parties, meaning that they do not promote themselves as protest parties or single-issue parties, but rather parties that appeal to the majority of voters. Having established itself on the left side, the Democratic Party focuses on more state intervention and liberal policies, drawing most of its support from urban citizens, different minorities and organized labor (O'Neill et al., 2006: 87). The Republican Party, on the other hand, places itself on the right side, focusing on more free market and social conservative policies, with the support of rural citizens, evangelical Christians and upper-income voters (O'Neill et al., 2006: 88).

What is somewhat unique with the US party system though, separating it from other two-party systems, is the use of primaries, as described above, for selecting the parties' presidential candidates. More particularly a primary is a sort of electoral contest where the different

contenders for the candidacy compete to secure a majority of the delegates from a state for the party's national convention, where the party's presidential candidate is formally elected (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 413, 467 - 468). The Republicans use a version of this system termed "winner-take-all primary" where the candidate who wins the most votes in a state, also gets all the delegates from that state (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 467). The Democrats most often use a somewhat different system though, termed "proportional representation primary", where the state's delegates are awarded to any candidate who manage to secure more than 15 percent of the votes, proportional to that candidate's share of the total amount of votes cast (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 468). It is, however, only in recent decades that primaries have been used to such an extent as seen today. Earlier the party's candidate was chosen through caucuses, where party members met in closed meetings and chose the candidate themselves. Although such a system still is used in some states, the majority of the states today rely on primaries for electing candidates (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 468). Furthermore, states can either have closed primaries, meaning that only voters affiliated with the given party can vote for a candidate, or open primaries, where all the states' voters are eligible to vote (Center for Voting and Democracy, 2014). The growing shift from caucuses to primaries is to some extent rooted in a growing notion in the United States that primaries are more democratic than caucuses, and that the latter to some extent is an expression of elitism (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 468).

As mentioned above, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party can be viewed as catch-all parties, seeking to appeal to the majority of the electorate. This characteristic is, in my opinion, further strengthened by the use of primaries. This is because the system makes room for a bigger focus on candidates rather than the parties they represent. For a candidate is it not sufficient to gain the support of the party's members to win the candidacy, but one also has to worry about the electorate as a whole, since voters in many states are eligible to vote in the primaries, regardless of whether they actually support the party or not. Hence, a voter does not necessarily have to agree with the party's political platform in order to support the party in the presidential election, as long as he/she agrees with one of the party's candidates. In August 2011, well over one year before the 2012 presidential election, ABC News (2011) reported 27 possible contenders from the Republican Party for the presidential candidacy

(ABC News, 2011)²². With so many potential candidates, a large majority of the voters will most likely be able to identify with at least one candidate he/she identifies with, in turn making minor parties less attractive to support in the election.

3.4 Multiparty politics in the United States

The domination of the Republicans and the Democrats in United States politics produces an important question; is there any basis for a multiparty system in the United States at all? Research on this subject is somewhat scarce, but several data indicate that there might be some basis in the electorate for an expansion of the system into multipartism. In 1996 almost one third of the electorate supported a multiparty system when asked (Herrnson and Green, 2002). This is also backed up by the fact that the Reform Party's candidate in 1992 and 1996, Ross Perot, managed to get 18,9 and 8,4 percent of the popular votes respectively (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 99), in addition to Ralph Nader's (the Green Party) relatively good result of 2,74 percent of the popular vote in 2000 (Federal Election Commission, 2001). Hence, one can argue that there might be some potential for multiparty politics in the country. Furthermore, if the data from 1996 is correct, a large minority of the electorate would also welcome such a change. Interestingly the data from 1996 also show that almost one third of the electorate wanted a more candidate-focused system, meaning the voters favoring the present two-party system actually only make up a minority (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 62).

Perhaps a bit surprisingly, voters favoring a multiparty system in '96 were divided almost equally between independents, Republicans and Democrats, with 10,2, 7,6 and 9,9 percent respectfully (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 62). Furthermore, these three groups show some interesting features. The group of independent voters wanting a multiparty system were conservative on economic issues, while at the same time pro-environment and liberal on the subject of abortion (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 72). The multiparty Republicans were, like the independents, conservative on economic issues, but, contrary to the independents, pro-life and in favor of free trade. The last group, the multiparty Democrats, were on the other hand liberal on almost all issues (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 72).

²² It should be noted that not all of the 27 potential candidates reported by ABC News did eventually run for the candidacy, but it illustrates in a good way the diversity of a major party like the Republican Party, and the amount of candidates a voter has the possibility to identify him-/herself with.

What can we then deduce from the data related to voters wanting a multiparty system in the United States? First and foremost supporters of a multiparty system are a mixed group, and no single political strategy is fitting for appealing to all of them. A conservative standpoint on economy will most likely alienate the Democratic supporters, while a pro-choice standpoint might do the same with the Republican supporters. A minor party does, in other words, need to choose its political solutions carefully if the goal is to gain significant levels of support from those in the electorate supporting multipartism. In addition, a minor party needs to establish itself as relevant to voters and provide them with a viable alternative not similar to the two major parties (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 125).

Although the United States remain a stable two-party system, some changes have occurred in recent years. For instance has the number of independent candidates for Congress increased significantly over the last decades, and even two members of the 111th Congress were independent representatives (O'Connor and Sabato, 2009: 419). The Green Party also does have some elected representatives scattered around the country, including several city council members (Green Party of the United States, 2013b). There is in other words a potential for minor parties, like the Green Party, to perform better than they have so far. The real question is in other words not if there is a potential or not, but rather how minor parties can/should be exploiting the existing potential.

4. THE GREEN PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

Having focused on the political system in which the Green Party operates, it is time to review the party itself. Remembering the discussion in chapter one, several explanations for why some minor parties are unsuccessful are related to the parties themselves, and not exclusively the political system or the electorate. Therefore it is essential to have knowledge of a party's political platform and how it functions in order to be able to analyze the party.

The Green Party of the United States is a national confederation of green parties at state level, and is, as its name implies, first and foremost committed to the environmentalist movement (Green Party of the United States, 2013a). The Party is a member of the Global Greens (Global Greens, 2013a), which is an international partnership organization consisting of green parties from about 90 countries in total (Global Greens, 2013b). Still, the Green Party of the United States is quite small in scale compared to their sister parties in countries like Germany and France, and during the 2012 presidential election only 0,36 % of the electorate voted for the party's presidential candidate, Jill Stein (Federal Election Commission, 2013: 4).

4.1 History and ideology

The Green Party was formed in 1996 as a national confederation of green parties at local and state level, and filed the Federal Election Commission for status as national party in 2001 (Green Party of the United States, 2013d). Prior to this there had been several local and state parties running for different offices. The "10 Key Values", the party's political fundament so to speak, was adopted in 1984 at a convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, and formally ratified in its present form at The Green Party's convention in Denver, Colorado in 2000 (Green Party of the United States, 2013c, 2013d). Hence, the Green Party should be considered a fairly young party at the federal level, despite the fact that the green movement, and several minor green parties, has been present and active in the country for some time.

The 10 Key Values of the Green Party is a set of guiding principles that are, according to the Green Party (2013d), "adapted and defined to fit each state and local chapter" (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

The first principle is “Grassroots democracy” which states that “every human being deserves a say in the decisions that affect their lives...” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c). As a consequence the party promises to work for more use of direct democracy²³. What this means specifically is not mentioned, but it is reasonable to assume that such direct democracy includes a more extensive use of referendums and alike.

The second principle is “Social justice and equal opportunity”, concerning “all persons [...] rights and opportunity to benefit equally from the resources afforded us by society”, which include combating “class oppression, sexism and homophobia (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

The third principle is “Ecological wisdom”, dictating that “we are part of nature, not separate from nature” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c). Hence the Green Party “support[s] a sustainable society which utilizes resources in such a way that future generations will benefit and not suffer from the practices of our generation” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c)²⁴.

The fourth principle of the Green Party is “Non-violence”. In short this means that the party “will work to demilitarize, and eliminate weapons of mass destruction” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c). At the same time the party does emphasize the need for self-defense, stating that they promote non-violence “without being naive about the intentions of other governments” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

²³ The Green Party’s call for more direct democracy in the United States is perhaps somewhat puzzling, given the fact that there are few democratic countries today where citizens have as many possibilities to influence legislation as in the United States (O’Connor and Sabato, 2009: 465 - 467). In the party’s defense, though, more direct democracy is perhaps one of the best ways for minor parties in the United States to have influence over legislation and political processes, given their relatively low degree of electoral success. Hence, one can understand the party’s eagerness for more referendums, as well as a greater degree of politicization of different local and regional public offices and boards/councils.

²⁴ In many ways one might say that this principle is the one most people relate to green parties, like the Green Party of the United States.

The fifth principle is “Decentralization”, stating that “decision-making should, as much as possible, remain at the individual and local level [...] [in order to create a more] democratic, less bureaucratic system” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

The sixth principle focuses on “Community-based economics and economic justice” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c). Here the party argues that the economic system should assure “protection of the environment and workers’ rights”, and that they support both “independently owned and operated companies [...] as well as co-operatives and public enterprises” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

The seventh principle of the Green Party is “Feminism and gender equity”, where the party proposes the replacement of the current “social system based on male domination of politics and economics” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c). Furthermore, the party states that it will work to promote values such as “equity between sexes, interpersonal responsibility, and honesty...” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

The eighth principle is concerned with “Respect for diversity”. The Green Party clearly states that they “believe it is important to value cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, religious and spiritual diversity” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c). Furthermore, they “encourage respect for other life forms [...] and the preservation of biodiversity” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

The ninth principle is devoted to “Personal and global responsibility”. In short the party “encourage[s] individuals around the world to improve their personal well-being [...] [and] enhance ecological balance and social harmony” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

The tenth principle concerns “Future focus and sustainability”, where the party basically states that “our actions and policies should be motivated by long-term goals” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c). Hence, the party is committed to the development of sustainable economics and “safely disposing of or “unmaking” all waste we create” (Green Party of the United States, 2013c).

Based on values listed above one can argue that the party places itself on the political left in United States politics, since values like feminism, gender equality and non-violence are

primarily emphasized by the political left. As will be discussed later such an argument is strengthened when looking at the political preferences of the party's voters. At the 2000-election for instance, 26 and 38 percent of the Green Party voters considered themselves liberal and moderate, respectfully, while only 16 percent considered themselves to be conservative (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 133).

4.2 Political platform

The political platform of the Green Party of the United States (adopted in 2010) is divided into four chapters: Democracy, Social Justice, Ecological Sustainability and Economic Justice (Green Party of the United States, 2010). Here the ten values (reviewed above) are explained in detail, and it is obvious that the party tries to distinguish itself from the two major parties; The Democrats and The Republicans, on several subjects. All in all I do, however, believe it is favorable to analyze the Green Party's platform on the basis of the traditional left-/right scale. As will be argued below the party does in many respects support policies traditionally promoted by leftist parties in Western Europe. In addition I believe the policies proposed by the Green Party are more similar to those of the Democratic Party, rather than the Republican, further suggesting that the proper position for the Green Party in the political landscape should be to the left.

4.2.1 Democracy

The first chapter introduces the party's policies on several somewhat dissimilar topics like the federal electoral system and the party system, civil society and United States foreign policy (!)²⁵. Most prominently the party proposes that the Electoral College should be dismantled and that an electoral system of proportional representation should be implemented to replace the existing plurality system, in order to “moderate extremist views and offer more fair

²⁵ The reader might find it somewhat odd that that the same chapter in the platform includes policies on both the party system and the country's foreign policy. The probable explanation for this is that the party believes that both of these topics are related to “democracy” (the title of the chapter) in their own way. When it comes to the party system, the Green Party argues that “multi-party democracy will [...] offer more fair representation [and therefore strengthen the US democracy] (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 6). On foreign policy the party calls for a reduction of “militarism”, a more pro-Palestinian line and the repeal of the UN Security Council veto power (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 7-8) – topics that all may be considered to have some link to democratic principles in one way or another.

representation” (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 6). Major changes in party financing are also proposed, and the party wishes to implement caps on campaign contributions and “full public financing of elections” (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 6). It should come as no surprise that all of these proposed policies would greatly benefit the Green Party. As discussed earlier, proportional representation is to a large extent correlated with multipartism, and public campaign financing would mean a major spike in income for a party like the Green Party.

In the case of foreign policy the Green Party has adopted a much more non-violent, non-aggressive and non-militaristic approach than its major political competitors. First and foremost the party rejects military intervention and occupation as viable foreign policy tools. In addition the party wants to abolish nuclear weapons, prohibit governmental arms sale to other countries altogether, and close all United States foreign military bases (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 7-8). This implies a significant change from the country’s current foreign policy though. Today the United States has the biggest military budget of any country in the world, accounting for almost 40 percent of the combined military spending worldwide in 2012 (Global Issues, 2013). Taking into account that the Green Party has adopted a clear pro-Palestinian policy, comparing Israel to the former apartheid regime in South Africa (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 8), it is safe to say that the gap between the adopted platform of the Green Party and its two major competitors is quite significant.

4.2.2 Social Justice

In the second chapter of the platform the party presents its policies on civil rights, health care, labor and immigration. On all of these issues the Green Party has adopted a liberal approach, placing themselves on the left, with the Republican Party as its main counterpart. The party supports the use of affirmative action to fight discrimination, the right to same-sex marriage and argues that “the option of a safe, legal abortion must remain available” (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 10, 12).

It should be noted that the party also has adopted a clear secular stance concerning religious (and more specifically; Christian) influence on government and society. The party opposes the use of religious symbols on governmental properties, wishes to remove the common use of

the terms “under God”²⁶ and “in God we trust”²⁷ and end the use of “public funds to support religious organizations that do not adhere to specific standards...” (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 13). Contrary to the party’s policies on abortion and same-sex marriage, the promotion of secularism is not as strong within the Democratic Party as the Green Party, once again implicating the notable gap between The Green Party and the Democrats (as well as the Republicans, of course).

When it comes to healthcare the platform clearly states that the Green Party supports the adoption of a universal health care system, arguing that “health care is a right, not a privilege” (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 16), much in line with the party’s general liberal agenda. The same goes with labor, where the Green Party argues that it is a right to organize unions and strikes if necessary (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 17).

4.2.3 Ecological sustainability

In the third chapter, the Green Party’s policies on environmental issues and climate change are explained. The party advocates that “climate change is the gravest environmental, social and economic peril facing humanity” and proposes a carbon emission cut of 95 percent in 2050 compared to the 1990 levels (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 21). Furthermore the party wishes to greatly decrease the use of fossil fuels in the United States, in addition to establishing a carbon emission tax and eliminating subsidies for fossil fuels and nuclear power (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 21-22).

The Green Party’s policies on the environmental issues are very similar to the policies advocated by other green parties worldwide, like the Green Party of Norway (“Miljøpartiet De Grønne”) and Die Grünen in Germany (Green Party of Norway, 2014) (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). This is not surprising given the fact that it is this policy area that unites them. When it comes to the other major parties in the United States, the Democratic Party comes closest to the Green Party on the issue of environmentalism. The Democratic Party also promotes the use of more renewable energies and a greater focus on, and development of, public transportation for instance (Democratic Party of the United States, 2012: 8, 25) Still, the Green Party should be considered much more radical and

²⁶ In the Pledge of Allegiance (Office of the Secretary of State, 2014).

²⁷ Most notably seen on the dollar bill.

uncompromising on this area than the Democratic Party. In their platform, the former clearly state that they wish to “end the use of fossil fuels now” (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 22), generally advocating more drastic solutions and policies than the Democratic Party

4.2.4 Economic Justice

In the fourth and last chapter of the Green Party’s platform the party’s economics policies are presented. Economics is not an isolated policy area and most of the chapter is in some way or another linked to the other precluding chapters. First and foremost the party argues that the strive towards constant expansion and continuing growth in the capitalist market economy is not sustainable in the long turn, and an obstacle for a future green zero-emissions society (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 33). In order to confront and change the capitalist notion in the country’s economy the party proposes a so called “steady-state economy”, where progress is not measured in profit, but rather by “non-monetary goods and services [...] [like] infant mortality, life expectancy of people, educational opportunities offered by the state, family stability, environmental data and health care for all people” (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 33).

According to the Green Party the steady-state economy is difficult to achieve as long as large corporations in the United States continue to operate in their current state. Therefore, the party’s goal is to change the very legal structure of corporations, making it impossible to generate profits “at the expense of environment, human rights, public health, workers, or the communities in which the corporation operates” (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 34). In addition, the party proposes to break up all large national banks and financial institutions (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 38).

When it comes to taxation and benefits the Green Party wishes to implement universal basic income for all adult citizens in the United States. Furthermore, they believe in raising taxes for all high-income citizens²⁸, while at the same time exempting low-income citizens from income taxation all together. This is in turn intended to not only diminish income inequality in society, but also reduce the United States’ national debt (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 35, 40). To further reduce the debt the party also wishes to decrease spending on

²⁸ Termed «super-rich» in the platform (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 35).

warfare and the military and adopt a system of taxes on emissions (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 35 - 40).

Last, but not least, the Green Party proposes a more regional based economic system, emphasizing more local trade, production and manufacturing, in addition to co-operative enterprises (Green Party of the United States, 2010: 36). The purpose of such a system is to make citizens less dependable on large corporations and the capitalist market economy, but also to decrease pollution and CO2-emissions.

The Green Party's economic policies are interesting for several reasons. On the one hand, several of the policies go contrary to the very idea of the capitalist market economy, which in many ways might be considered one of the backbones of the United States as a state and society. On the other hand, the party's emphasis on more decentralization and regional and local based economies, might sit better with the electorate given United States federal nature.

Looking at the Green Party's platform as a whole, I believe that the most correct placing of the Green Party is significantly to the left of the Democratic Party. On several policy areas the Green Party proposes comprehensive and radical changes to the political and financial system of the United States, and one is unlikely to find any significant support for these changes in the Democratic Party. That the Green Party is positioned far to the left is also supported by the Green Party of California's Liason to the Secretary of State, Jared Laiti (2014), who provided the following statement:

"The Green Party is effective at [...] [articulating] a platform substantially to the left of the two major corporate-funded dominant parties..." (Laiti, 2014).

Polling data from the 2000 presidential election also give the same impression; the majority of the Green Party's voters characterize themselves as either moderate, liberal or very liberal (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 133)²⁹. This issue is explored further in chapter 6.2.

²⁹ Interestingly the label mostly preferred by the Green Party's voters in 2000 was «moderate» and not liberal or very liberal (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 133). This might seem as somewhat of a contradiction to the "leftist-label" given to the Green Party in this thesis, but that is not necessarily the case. A possible explanation might actually be that those voters who do not strongly oppose either the Republicans or the Democrats, will have

4.3 Party organization

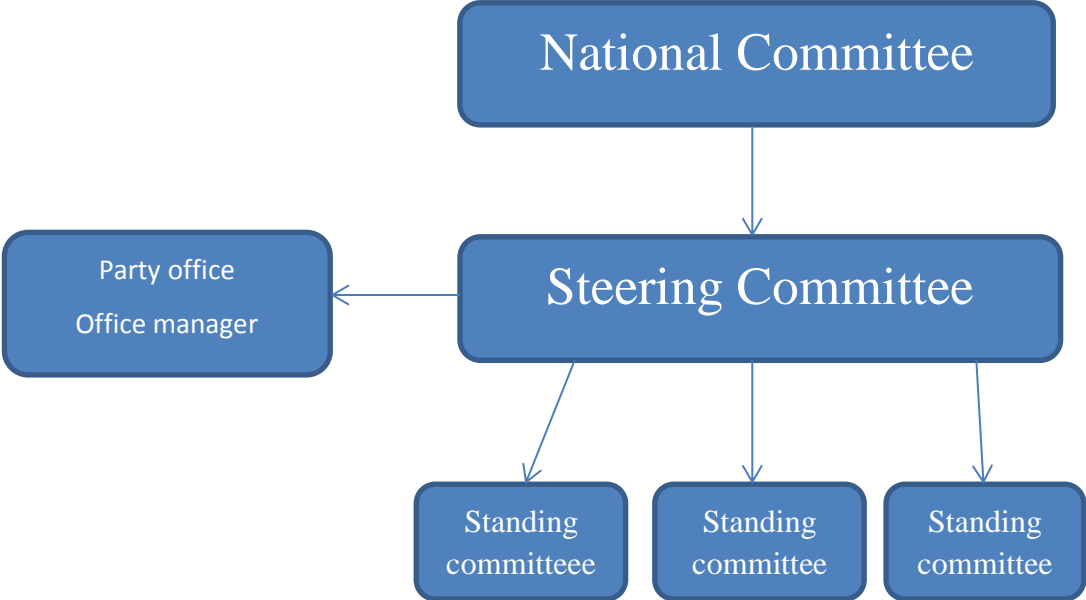
Like most parties in the United States the Green Party has a national committee responsible for the main decision making of the party (Green Party of the United States, 2014b). Here the delegates from each of the state Green parties, which are members of the Green Party, meet to shape out the direction of the party and work on the party's most important issues, like the content of the party's political platform, for instance.

The top body after the National Committee is the Steering Committee consisting of several co-chairs, a secretary and a treasurer (Green Party of the United States, 2014c). In addition, the party has several standing committees each responsible for their own political or organizational field. For instance is there one committee handling media, another handling fundraising and yet another concerned with ballot access for elections (Green Party of the United States, 2014b). To coordinate the party on a day-to-day basis the Green Party also has a party office in Washington DC headed by an office manager (Green Party of the United States, 2014d).

The relationship between the different offices and committees of the party is perhaps even better illustrated through the figure below:

least objections to “steal” votes from them by voting for the Green Party (in accordance with the theory of the rational voters by Downs (1985 (1957)) discussed in chapter 1).

Figure 1: The Green Party of the United States’ party structure



(Green Party of the United States, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d)

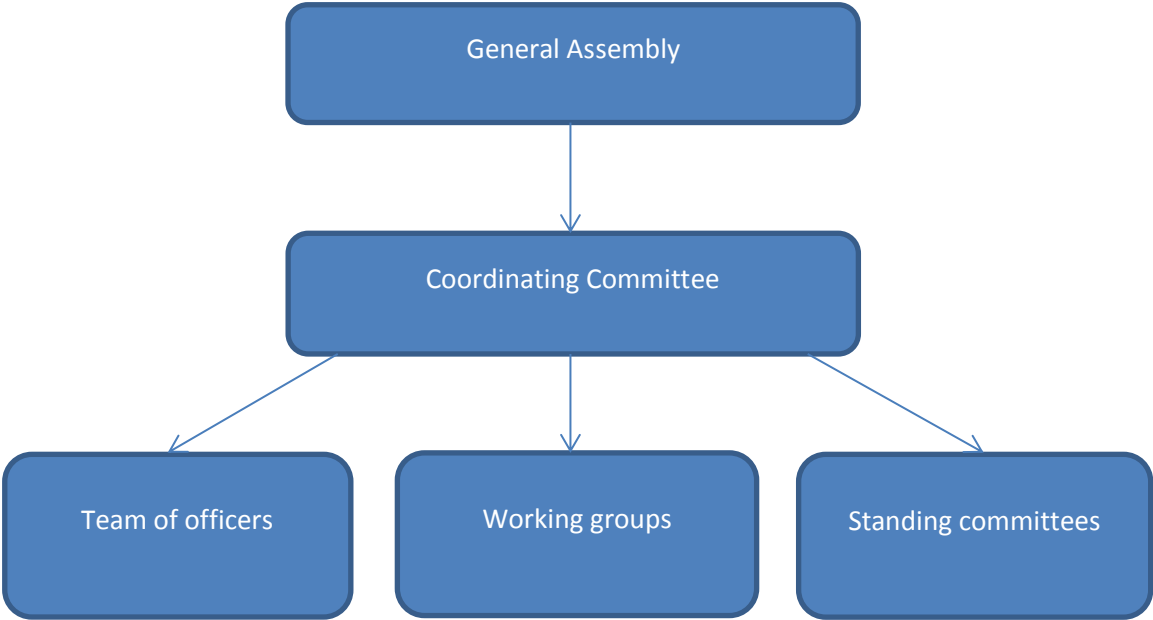
Even though the Green Party has a comprehensive national organization, much of the decision making and political work is done in the different state Green parties nationwide. Altogether there are 44 state parties nationwide affiliated with the Green Party of the United States, in addition to one party in the Virgin Islands and one in the District in Colombia (Green Party of the United States, 2014e). These state and regional parties are actually viewed as independent parties by themselves that are only members of the national Green Party. Still, as members of the national Green Party, the state parties have committed themselves to the Ten Key Values described above, as well as the party’s political platform.

One of the major state parties affiliated with the Green Party of the United States is the Green Party of California. The main decision-making body of the party is the General Assembly. Here delegates from the different county parties meet bi-annually to approve the party’s political platform and budget (among other things) (Green Party of California, 2011). In between the General Assemblies, the party has a Coordinating Committee whose main task is to oversee and coordinate the political work in the state (Green Party of California, 2011).

The Green Party of California does not have a chair person (or two co-chairs like some other state Green parties), but instead a “team of officers” concerned with running the state party (Green Party of California, 2011). These officers are appointed by the Coordinating

Committee and each of the different officers have a specific field of expertise he/she works with on a regular basis. This includes spokespeople who are concerned with media contact and coordinators who administer the party organization (Green Party of California, 2011). In addition to the team of officers, the party also has several Standing Committees and Working Groups (Green Party of California, 2011). The relationship between these different groups/committees is illustrated in the figure below:

Figure 2: The Green Party of California’s party structure



(Green Party of California, 2011)

On local level there are also quite a few county parties in each state. How these are organized may vary from county to county, but common for them all are that each are represented in the state parties’ General Assembly as described above.

4.5 Elections and results

In national elections the Green Party has never managed to win any seats in Congress, nor any of the Electoral Colleagues. The best result they achieved was in 2000 when their presidential candidate, Ralph Nader, managed to get 2,74 percent³⁰ of the votes nationwide (Federal Election Commission, 2001). In the following election of 2004 though, the party fell

³⁰ Nearly 3 million votes (Federal Election Commission, 2001).

drastically to merely 0,10 percent (Federal Election Commission, 2005), with the state of Connecticut being their best state with a total of 0,6 percent of the popular vote (Politico, 2014b). The presidential election of 2008 also turned out very similarly, with a result of 0,12 percent of the popular vote (Federal Election Commission, 2009), with Louisiana at the top with 0,5 percent of votes in that state (Politico, 2014a).

When it comes to the results of the presidential election of 2012, the results are not as grim as those of the two previous elections. Totally the party managed to receive 0,36 percent of the popular vote (Federal Election Commission, 2013). Although nowhere near the results of the election of 2000, it is still triple of the amount of votes received in the election of 2008. When it comes to the individual states, Maine came out as their best state in 2012 with a result of 1,3 percent of the votes (Politico, 2012).

When comparing the two major parties in the United States, the results described above are of course low, and it is clear that the party in general has not been very successful at the national level. Looking at the regional and local levels the party has enjoyed some success, though. In New Paltz (New York Times), Antelope (Oregon), Marina City (Green Party of California), Richmond (Green Party of California) and Village of Greenwich (New York Times) the citizens have elected a mayor from the Green Party, and representatives from the party also hold positions in several city and town councils (Green Party of the United States, 2014a). In addition the party has elected representatives in several school boards and neighborhood councils, as well (Green Party of the United States, 2013b).

5. DIE GRÜNEN IN GERMANY

Contrary to the Green Party of the United States, Die Grünen in Germany has been a bit more successful, even managing to become part of the government coalition in Germany from 1998 to 2005 (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). Due to this it is my intention to use Die Grünen as a contrast to the Green Party, comparing the two parties to one another in order to better answer the main question of this thesis. In order for such a comparison to be productive it is important to have some knowledge of Die Grünen as well, understanding how the party is organized and the different political solutions it promotes.

5.1 History and political success

Die Grünen was founded in West Germany in 1979 (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). The main purpose of the party was to give the different environmental- and peace activist groups in the country political representation, and in the 1983 federal election the party managed to receive support from 5,7 percent of the electorate, which equaled 27 seats in the German federal parliament, the Bundestag (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a).

Four years later the party's support had increased to 8,3 percent, probably in part due to the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and the increasing public focus on air pollution (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). The following years the party struggled with the support in the electorate though, even failing to win any seats at all in parliament at the election of 1990. Three years later the party merged with the Alliance 90', a similar party that had been established in East Germany some years earlier (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a).

In 1998 Die Grünen managed to join the federal government as part of a coalition with the Social Democratic Party of Germany, which lasted for seven years until 2005 (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). The party has not been in government since then, but managed to win 10,7 percent of the votes in 2009, which is their best result in any federal election so far (European Election Database, 2010b).

5.2 Ideology and political platform

As already mentioned Die Grünen was established by, and for, environmental- and peace activist groups. Hence, some of their main policies were “opposition to pollution, the use of nuclear power and NATO military action” (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). Although the party has had to make some compromises as part of the government coalition, especially on matters regarding military and foreign policy (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a), the core of their platform has not changed drastically. During the 2013 election, the party campaigned on issues like putting an end to animal exploitation, the improvement of minimum working conditions, the introduction of a minimum wage and (of course) a general prioritization of renewable energies (Local, 2013).

In the EU Parliament, Die Grünen is a member of the European Greens-European Free Alliance (EGP-EFA hereafter) which currently hold fourteen seats (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a)³¹. The political platform of the EGP-EFA is divided into six chapters:

1. Economy and jobs
2. Climate and energy
3. Food and environment
4. Rights and democracy
5. International and peace
6. Cultural diversity

(European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014d)

Each of these chapters is again divided into sub-chapters concentrated on different specific policy areas. On “Economy and Jobs” the party lay out its proposals for what they term a more “ethical economy”, focusing on job creation, bank regulation and market transparency (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014b).

³¹ Die Grünen is, like the Green Party of the United States, also a member of the Global Greens (European Green Party, 2014 #38).

In the second chapter, “Climate and Energy”, the EGP-EFA argues that the EU should “take the lead in the international fight against climate change”, proposing to not extract shale gas, to end to the use of nuclear power and to start a “shift from fossil fuel dependency to renewable energy” (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014c).

In chapter three the EGP-EFA presents its policies on “Food and Environment”, warning about the risks related to pollution from industry and traffic (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014e). Furthermore, the party proposes better consumer rights and “transparency in the food supply chain” (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014e).

The fourth chapter, “Rights and Democracy”, is concerned with human rights and the issue of transparency within the EU-system. Here the party presents arguments for a closer link between the EU as an organization and its citizens, as well as “internet freedom” (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014f).

Under the fifth chapter, “International and Peace”, the EGP-EFA proposes that the EU should play a more prominent role in world politics, as a promoter of peace and non-military solutions to conflicts (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014g). In addition, the party demands a more “human and efficient” way of handling immigration to the EU, proposing “full citizenship rights [...] to all regular immigrants” (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014g).

In the last chapter, named “Cultural Diversity”, the EGP-EFA underlines the importance, and success, of cultural exchange and education, arguing for the necessity of access to digital technology in cultural productions, and sufficient pay to art creators” (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014h).

Looking at the political platform of the EGP-EFA as a whole one can observe many similarities to the Green Party of the United States. Some examples are the demands for more transparency and tighter regulations of the financial sector, the promotion of renewable energies as a substitution for fossil fuels, as well as the general emphasis on peace-keeping and non-violence, instead of military approaches, in international conflicts. Given the fact that Die Grünen is receiving more votes than the Green Party, this observation is interesting,

further supporting the argument of this thesis that explanations related to the political system, as well as the electorate, are of relevance when analyzing the Green Party's lack of success.

5.3 Party organization

The most powerful body of Die Grünen is the National Assembly which meets at least once a year (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). Here both the party's political platform and its rules and statutes are formed and evaluated, and members of the party's executive committee, the National Executive, are elected. In total the National Assembly consists of 820 delegates representing the party's different district organizations (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a).

The National Executive (elected by the National Assembly as described above) is composed of a total of six members elected for two years at a time. Of these six members, two act as co-presidents (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). The main purpose of the National Executive is to represent the party to the public and lead the party on behalf of the National Assembly (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a).

In addition to the National Assembly and the National Executive, the party also has an advisory body, the Greens Party Council, tasked with creating plans and initiatives, coordinating work between different party bodies, as well as advising the National Executive. The body consists of a total of 16 politicians and advisors, where 13 are elected by the National Assembly (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a).

Besides the bodies described above Die Grünen also has several associated bodies, like the Green Youth and the National Women's Council (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a).

6. ANALYSIS

At the start of this thesis I asked the question why the Green Party of the United States has not been more successful. Firstly, we started off by looking at different possible explanations why some minor parties are unsuccessful, grouping these explanations into three main categories: the political system, the electorate and the political party. Secondly the methodological framework of the thesis was presented in order to give the reader a better understanding of how the analysis of this project is executed, as well as what data are being used and how the data have been gathered.

Furthermore, we reviewed the political system of the United States, focusing on subjects like political culture, electoral system and party system in order to get a better understanding of the system in which the Green Party operates. After this the Green Party, and its sister party in Germany, Die Grünen, was reviewed with the purpose of giving the reader some knowledge on the how parties function, as well as their political platforms.

For this final part of the thesis I will discuss whether the different explanations of why some parties are successful, while others are not, can be applied to the Green Party of the United States. The chapter will be separated into three sub-chapters, each dealing with one of the categories of explanations listed above and in chapter one. Throughout parts of the analysis I will also be using Die Grünen in Germany as a contrast to the Green Party of the United States, in order to better highlight the different obstacles faced by the Green Party.

6.1 The system

In chapter three we reviewed how the political system of the United States functions, focusing on the electoral system among other things. Remembering the discussion in chapter one, it is safe to argue that the design of the system will have an impact on the Green Party's performance. As will be discussed below, this impact is still not just limited to the electoral system, but also some other parts of the system, like ballot access. Together several of these parts constitute some very powerful obstacles the Green Party has to overcome in order to be successful.

As described in the first chapter, Arend Lijphart (1999) operates with two ideal models of how a democracy may be designed; the Westminster Model and the Consensus Model, differing on a total of ten dimensions (Lijphart, 1999), from the party system to the role of the country's supreme court. On several of these dimensions, particularly the structure of the cabinet, the relationship between the executive and legislative branch, the party system and the electoral system, the United States follows that of the Westminster model. The country has a two party system and a plurality electoral system and (much because of this) a cabinet consisting of a single party holding majority power. In addition the executive, the President, is elected through separate elections, making him fairly dominant and independent from Congress (O'Neill et al., 2006: 80, 83 – 84, 87 – 88). On the other hand, the government of the United States is federal, the national legislative is bicameral and the Supreme Court has the power to perform judicial review (O'Neill et al., 2006: 81 – 83, 85 – 86), all of which are attributes of the Consensus Model. This makes the United States perhaps somewhat difficult to characterize as either a Westminster-democracy or a Consensus-democracy, although it is my belief that the country should be placed in the former category. Whether the United States most closely resembles the Westminster Model or the Consensus Model is not of major importance for this thesis, though. What is most relevant is how the country is faring on dimensions three and four; party system and electoral system. As already described, Maurice Duverger (1964) argues that there is a connection between electoral system and party system, with the plurality electoral system tending to create a two party system (Lijphart, 1999: 165), both of which are present in the United States. This is probably also the main reason for the Green Party's lack of success, given its position as a minor party.

The table below gives the reader an overview of the Green Party's results in all 50 states the last four presidential elections. At the top the party's presidential candidate in the given election is listed. The color of the results indicates whether the Republican Party (red) or the Democratic Party (blue) won the majority that year in the given state. The results that are highlighted are the results in states where the Green Party has performed well consistently every election compared to the other states. The numbers in brackets show the results for Ralph Nader, who ran for the Green Party in 2000, but as an independent candidate in 2004 and 2008.

Table 2: The Green Party’s election results, 2000 – 2012, percentage of the popular vote (Nader’s results in 2004 and 2008 when running as an independent candidate).

	2000	2004	2008	2012
Presidential candidate	Ralph Nader	David Cobb	Cynthia McKinney	Jill Stein
Alabama	1,1	0 (0,4)	0 (0,3)	0,2
<u>Alaska</u>	<u>10,07</u>	<u>0 (1,6)</u>	<u>0 (1,2)</u>	<u>1</u>
Arizona	2,98	0	0,1 (0,5)	0,3
<u>Arkansas</u>	<u>1,46</u>	<u>0 (0,6)</u>	<u>0 (1,2)</u>	<u>0,9</u>
California	3,82	0,3	0 (0,8)	0,6
Colorado	5,25	0 (0,6)	0 (0,6)	0,3
Connecticut	4,42	0,6 (0,8)	0 (1,2)	0
Delaware	2,54	0 (0,6)	0 (0,6)	0,5
Florida	1,63	0 (0,4)	0 (0,3)	0,1
Georgia	0,52	0	0	0
Hawaii	5,88	0,4	0 (0,8)	0,7
Idaho	2,45	0	0 (1,1)	0,7
Illinois	2,19	0	0,2 (0,6)	0,6
Indiana	0,84	0	0	0
Iowa	2,23	0 (0,4)	0 (0,5)	0,2
Kansas	3,36	0 (0,8)	0 (0,9)	0
Kentucky	1,5	0 (0,5)	0 (0,8)	0,4
Louisiana	1,16	0 (0,4)	0,5 (0,4)	0,4
<u>Maine</u>	<u>5,7</u>	<u>0,4 (1,1)</u>	<u>0,4 (1,5)</u>	<u>1,3</u>
Maryland	2,65	0,2 (0,5)	0,2 (0,6)	0,6
Massachusetts	6,42	0,4	0,2 (0,9)	0,6
Michigan	1,99	0,1 (0,5)	0 (0,7)	0,4
Minnesota	5,2	0,2 (0,7)	0 (1)	0,4
Mississippi	0,82	0 (0,3)	0 (0,3)	0,1
Missouri	1,63	0	0 (0,6)	0
Montana	5,94	0 (1,4)	0 (0,8)	0

Nebraska	3,52	0 (0,7)	0 (0,7)	0
Nevada	2,46	0 (0,6)	0 (0,6)	0
New Hampshire	3,9	0 (0,7)	0 (0,5)	0
New Jersey	2,97	0 (0,5)	0 (0,6)	0,3
New Mexico	3,55	0,2 (0,5)	0 (0,6)	0,3
New York	3,58	0 (1,4)	0,2 (0,5)	0,6
North Carolina	0	0	0	0
North Dakota	3,29	0 (1,2)	0 (1,3)	0,4
Ohio	2,5	0	0 (0,7)	0,3
Oklahoma	0	0	0	0
<u>Oregon</u>	<u>5,04</u>	<u>0,3</u>	<u>0 (1)</u>	<u>1,1</u>
Pennsylvania	2,1	0,1	0 (0,7)	0,4
Rhode Island	6,12	0,3 (1,1)	0,2 (1)	0,5
South Carolina	1,46	0 (0,3)	0 (0,3)	0,3
South Dakota	0	0 (1,1)	0 (1,1)	0
Tennessee	0,95	0 (0,4)	0 (0,4)	0,3
Texas	2,15	0	0	0,3
Utah	4,65	0 (1,2)	0 (0,9)	0,4
Vermont	6,92	0 (1,4)	0 (1)	0
Virginia	2,17	0	0 (0,3)	0,2
Washington	4,14	0 (0,3)	0 (1)	0,6
West Virginia	1,65	0 (0,5)	0,3 (1)	0,7
Wisconsin	3,62	0,1 (0,5)	0 (0,6)	0,2
Wyoming	2,12	0 (1,1)	0 (1,0)	0
Overall:	2,74	0,10 (0,38)	0,12 (0,56)	0,36

(Federal Election Commission, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013) (Politico, 2012, 2014a, 2014b)

The table above is interesting in more than one way. First and foremost it shows that the Green Party has not enjoyed much success in any state. Since the Green Party is one of the major third parties in the country, it is therefore safe to say that the political system of the United States must be considered a two party system. Hence, it is difficult to deny the major

impact the electoral system in the United States has on the Green Party's chances of being successful. The notion that the electoral system serves as a major obstacle for the Green Party is prevalent within the Green Party as well. When asked what they believe to be the main reason for the Green Party's lack of success, every respondent interviewed for this thesis primarily pointed to the electoral system (Grage, 2013) (Everette, 2014) (Laiti, 2014).

Despite the fact that the electoral system seems to serve as an obstacle for the Green Party, the table does show a great deal of variation from state to state and from election to election. One example is Alaska where the party managed to get over ten percent of the popular vote in 2000, but only one percent in the same state twelve years later. Moreover, how come the Green Party got 1,3 percent of the popular vote in Maine in 2012, but no votes³² in its neighboring state, New Hampshire the same year? There might be several reasons for this, but one reason may be related to the psychological factors of the electoral system, as described in the first chapter. In short the plurality electoral system will make voters skeptical of voting for minor parties, in fear of "wasting" their vote (Ljiphart, 1999: 165). In addition, relying on the theory of the rational voter by Downs (1985) (which will be discussed in greater detail in 6.2), voters will be reluctant to vote for a minor party since such an action might cause the major party they support the least to win the election (Downs, 1985 (1957): 48). These arguments are to a great extent supported by the data presented in the table above. Looking at the four states where the Green Party has performed well each election (compared to the other states); Alaska, Arkansas, Maine and Oregon, all of these were either consistently Republican or Democratic in all four elections. Hence, the potential "cost" of voting for the Green Party might have been reduced in these states.

When looking at the political system of the United States as a whole, it is not just the electoral system that functions as an obstacle for minor parties, though. Both laws concerning ballot access and campaign- and party financing pose a great challenge. On the topic of ballot access, Jody Grage (2013), former treasurer of The Green Party of the United States and current co-chair of the Ballot Access Committee, puts it this way:

³² It is possible that the Green Party did manage to get some votes in New Hampshire in 2012, but given that the results are presented in numbers with just one decimal, these votes are not shown.

“Every state has different ballot access laws. [...] In Washington State in order to get a candidate on the ballot we have to get a thousand signatures, which is a piece of cake. In Georgia [on the other hand], they have to get 85 000 signatures. And the Democrats and Republicans don’t have to do any of this” (Grage, 2013).

Not only does the Green Party have to contend with different laws concerning ballot access from state to state, but in addition the Republican Party and the Democratic Party have automatic ballot access in several of these states (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 164). According to Grage (2013), the difference between states is not just limited to the amount of signatures required to get ballot access, though:

“[The states] have different rules about who can gather signatures, when they have to be turned in, what the vetting process for the signatures is...” (Grage, 2013).

Needless to say the process of getting ballot access is a tedious and complicated one for a minor party in the United States. According to Grage (2013) it also makes it difficult for the Green Party to focus on campaigning before the last three months prior to the election, since the entire organization up until then is working on getting the party on the ballot in as many states as possible (Grage, 2013). Given that the two major parties do not have to use any resources or energy on this issue, it gives them an obvious advantage over the minor parties.

The other obstacle for the Green Party is campaign and party financing. In the United States parties do not get any financial support, except from campaign funding, from the government (Grage, 2013). In other words; the parties have to get their support from private contributors. Additionally, only parties with over five percent of the votes in the previous election are entitled to some public campaign financing (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 168), meaning that the Green Party, with its 0,36 percent of the votes, is not entitled to any public financial support. Even when comparing to other minor parties, campaign financing for the Green Party is particularly challenging according to Sanda Everette (2014), co-chair of the Coordinating Committee of the Green Party of California and former co-chair of the Green Party of the United States:

“We don’t take any money from corporations and there’s not a lot of rich people supporting us” (Everette, 2014).

In other words; the party does not get any public funding, nor support from private corporations and companies - only from individual donors and contributors. On the one hand one might find it odd that a minor party struggling financially is refusing to accept certain types of support, like contributions from private companies. On the other hand such a viewpoint is consistent with the party's anti-capitalistic and anti-corporate policies presented in their political platform (Green Party of the United States, 2010), and the party's refusal to accept "corporate money" should be viewed as the party practicing what it preaches so to speak. This is also emphasized by Jody Grage (2013) who states that "*one of our chief selling points is that we don't accept corporate money*" (Grage, 2013).

6.1.1 The political system of Germany

In order to better understand the impact the political system has on the Green Party's degree of success, as well as checking if the findings presented actually are reliable, it is helpful to compare the situation for the Green Party with that of Die Grünen in Germany. Remembering the discussion in chapter one, Die Grünen has enjoyed far more success than the Green Party, even though they both are based on the ideological foundations, hence making Die Grünen an interesting case for comparison.

Like the United States Germany is a federal state divided into sovereign states (Hay and Menon, 2007: 7). Given the discussion above on the relationship between electoral system and party system, the success of Die Grünen should be an indication that the German political system is somewhat different than the system in the United States. In several ways this is also the case.

First and foremost the plurality electoral system used in the United States is not utilized in Germany to the same extent. Instead Germany operates with a mixed system where half of the seats in the German federal parliament, the Bundestag, are filled through plurality elections, while the other half are filled by using a system of proportional representation (Hay and Menon, 2007: 7). Moreover, when it comes to the executive he/she is not chosen through separate elections like in the United States, but rather by the parliament (Hay and Menon, 2007: 7).

Although the electoral system in Germany is not a pure system of proportional representation, it does seem to make it easier for minor parties to be successful. Looking at the election in Germany of 2009 one can observe that the Green Party was not the only minor party able to win seats in parliament. Both the Free Democrats and the Left were able to attain several seats - more specifically 93 and 76 respectfully (European Election Database, 2010b).

The United States and Germany also differ when it comes to campaign and party financing. *“When people run for office, their campaign is separate from the party”*, Jody Grage (2013) explained when asked about public financing of parties and campaigns in the United States. In Germany this is somewhat different. Here the political parties are the ones financing campaigns, meaning that there is no separate campaign organizations or separate system public campaign financing (Library of Congress, 2014). Instead the political parties receive public funding from the government continually, and all parties that receive more than 0,5 percent of the votes in the latest national or EU election, or more than one percent in the latest state election, are entitled to public funding (Library of Congress, 2014). This is different from the United States where there for one is no public funding of parties, and secondly only some campaign funding for parties that received more than five percent of the votes in the previous election (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 168 - 169). In order to receive significant funding in the United States though, the result in the previous election had to surpass 25 percent of the votes, which no minor party today is even close to (Herrnson and Green, 2002: 168).

Obviously the German political system facilitates better for minor parties to win seats in parliament and become part of government, as Die Grünen managed to do in 1998 (European Greens-European Free Alliance, 2014a). Several of the obstacles for minor parties existing in the United States are less prevalent, or even absent, in the German system. Therefore it is likely to believe that Die Grünen would have been less successful if Germany had the same electoral law and financing system as the United States.

6.2 The electorate

So far we have established that the lack of success of the Green Party to a great degree is related to the political system of the country and the electoral system in particular. Still, as already observed, there are variations between states and between elections. This indicates

that relying solely on explanations related to the system for explaining why the Green Party is struggling is not sufficient. For one I believe that a thorough understanding of how voters reason and act is important for answering the thesis question and grasping the complexity of the issue at hand.

First off it might be of relevance to review whether the electorate of the states where the party is performing well show any particular traits or attributes. In the table below the income per capita, unemployment rate, poverty rate, racial/ethnic composition and concentration of Christian adherents in all the four states where the party consistently has gained most support in national elections, as described 6.1, are listed. In addition, the value for each variable is compared to the US average.

Table 3: Demographic attributes of the populations of Alaska, Arkansas, Maine and Oregon, compared with the US average.

	Alaska	Arkansas	Maine	Oregon	US average
Per capita income (2012)	46 778 USD	34 723 USD	39 481 USD	38 786 USD	42 693 USD
Unemployment (2014)	6,6 %	6,9	5,9	6,9	6,0
Poverty (2012)	10,1 %	19,8 %	14,7 %	17,2 %	15,9 %
Race/ethnicity (2012)	Caucasian: 67 % African-American: 2 % Hispanic: 8 % Other: 23 %	Caucasian: 75 % African-American: 15 % Hispanic: 5 % Other: 4 %	Caucasian: 95 % African-American: 1 % Hispanic: 1 % Other: 3 %	Caucasian: 78 % African-American: 2 % Hispanic: 11 % Other: 9 %	Caucasian: 63 % African-American: 12 % Hispanic: 17 % Other: 8 %
Christian adherents (2010)	54,4 %	56,7 %	58,7 %	30,1 %	47,4 %

(Bureau of Business & Economic Research, 2013) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) (Gabe, 2013: 16 - 18) (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2014) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012: 62)

Looking at the table I am not able to observe any coinciding traits among the four states. On all but one variable, the states' values on the different variables are both below and above those of the US average, suggesting that the Green Party is not exclusively linked to certain groups in the electorate³³. The exception is the concentration of Caucasians in all of the states, which might suggest that the Green Party enjoys more support from these voters, than from African-Americans for instance. Still, the table provides few answers as to why some people choose to support the party, while others do not.

According to The Telegraph (2012) the amount of voters labeling themselves as “independent” in the United States is growing, reaching an all-time high in 2011 with 40 percent (Telegraph, 2012). In other words, 40 percent of United States' voters do not want to be automatically identified with either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. One would think that such a development would be beneficial for the Green Party, making them attractive to more voters. As shown so far in this thesis this has not been the case, though. Could it be that the political solutions provided by the Green Party simply do not appeal to most Americans?

As described in the first chapter there are basically two ways of understanding why voters vote on certain parties in given situations. On the one hand there is Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) theory that the electorate is divided into several major cleavages related to economy and religion for instance, and that different parties will emerge within these cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). On the other hand, Downs (1985 (1957)) argues that a voter chooses the party that he/she believes will yield the most benefits for him/her (Downs, 1985 (1957): 38), without automatically considering certain cleavages.

The cleavage theory by Lipset and Rokkan is interesting when discussing the Green Party for several reasons. First and foremost one has to ask the question whether the party's most

³³ Obviously Table 3 is insufficient as an in-depth statistical analysis of the electorate in the four states, and I have only chosen some of the variables that I believe to be the most important when studying the traditional cleavages in the electorate. Hence it is possible that an analysis of all US states, with the inclusion of more variables might provide a somewhat different conclusion than what is presented here. At the same time I believe it is safe to argue that there at least are not any obvious coinciding traits among these states when solely studying variables related to the traditional cleavages of the United States.

important political cause, environmentalism, is an independent cleavage in United States politics, or if it is just integrated into the other existing cleavages.

Amongst the topics listed by BBC as the key issues during the presidential election of 2012, environment and climate change was not one of them³⁴ (BBC News, 2012), suggesting that this issue is not of major importance for the United States voters. This is also confirmed by Gallup (2012), which in 2012 (prior to the election) asked voters what issues that were most important to them. Among the list of the nine most important issues, environment was not one of them. Instead the economy, unemployment and the federal budget deficit ranked at the top of the list (Gallup, 2012).

On the other hand, it should be emphasized that even though environmentalism does not seem to be a cleavage in the United States electorate, this is not the same as saying the electorate is indifferent to the issue. In 2013 63 % percent of Americans answered that they believe that global warming is happening, and 49 percent also believed that global warming is caused by human activity (Yale Project on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, 2013). When asked if they had to prioritize between protecting the environment and economic growth, 43 percent even said that they would prioritize protecting the environment (Gallup Politics, 2013).

So what should we make of environmentalism in the United States? Should it be considered a cleavage or not? Although the answer perhaps is not completely straightforward, I do believe that it is difficult to argue that environmentalism makes up an independent cleavage on its own. This conclusion is to some extent based on the findings by Russel J. Dalton (2008) who argues that there has been a movement in Western party systems in a direction where environmentalism is to some extent integrated into the traditional left/right-dimension (Dalton, 2008: 10). Furthermore, he argues that emerging green parties have adopted a leftist position on economic issues, mixing environmentalism with these viewpoints on economy (Dalton, 2008: 11). Hence, most green parties should be situated to the left of center, and environmentalism should follow the traditional left/right-dimension, where environmentalism finds strongest support on the left. This is also to a large extent the case in the United States.

³⁴ «Energy» is listed by the BBC News as a key issue, including some policies related to the environment, like renewable energies (BBC News, 2012). Still, energy is as much related to economy as it is to environment and represents only a fraction of the political cause that is environmentalism.

In 2009 35 percent of all Republicans believed that there is solid evidence for global warming, against 75 percent of all Democrats answering the same (Pew Research Center, 2009a). When asked about how serious of a problem they believe global warming is, 14 percent of all Republicans answered that they find it to be a serious problem, while 49 percent of all Democrats said the same (Pew Research Center, 2009a). Additionally, about twice as many Democrats as Republicans believed, in 2012, that the government should impose stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment³⁵ (Pew Research Center, 2012b). In other words, like Dalton (2008), I believe that environmentalism should not be considered an independent cleavage since it probably already has been absorbed into the traditional left/right-cleavage.

When it comes to the positioning of the Green Party of the United States on the left/right-dimension, it is, based on the party's political platform discussed in chapter three, safe to say the party on most accounts positions itself on the left. This is also confirmed by Jody Grage (2013) when asked if the Green Party positions itself to the left of the Democratic Party:

"We like to say we are not right or left, we're ahead, [...] but basically left, yes" (Grage, 2013).

A somewhat similar answer was also provided by Jared Laiti (2014) when asked what characterizes the states where the Green Party is weakest and strongest:

*"In general, the areas that have the strongest support for the Democrats will also have the most Greens..."*³⁶ (Laiti, 2014).

³⁵ The Republicans' skepticism towards laws and regulations to protect the environment is perhaps as much associated with the party's general skepticism towards government regulations in general (Republican Party of the United States, 2012), as it is to the environment and climate change per se.

³⁶ Table 2 presented in 6.1 might seem to contradict this statement by Laiti (2014), since the Green Party's support seems to be divided fairly equal between Republican-leaning states and Democratic-leaning states. On the other hand, the table only shows results for the presidential elections, meaning that the party's member base and results in local and state elections are not taken into account. With this in mind there is perhaps no contradiction between the statement by Laiti (2014) and the data presented in table 2.

Should the Green Party be considered some sort of environmentally-focused copy of the Democratic Party then? Judging by the party's platform I believe this would be an inaccurate conclusion. The party positions itself quite far to the left of the Democratic Party, not only by emphasizing solutions like universal healthcare, but also by their rejection of the capitalist market system all together. As a matter of fact the Green Party believes itself to be the true leftist party in US politics, placing both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party to the right of center:

"We don't have anything to the left much because the Republicans are far right, the Tea Party³⁷ is a little farther right and the Democrats are following right behind. As the Republican Party gets righter, you know, the Democratic Party is not that far behind..." (Grage, 2013).

If it is the case that the Democratic Party is moving too far to the left this should create some sort of vacuum to the left of the Democrats (as described in 1.3), making it possible for the Green Party to grow in size. Even though environmentalism cannot compete with topics like economy when it comes to how important the issue is perceived by the electorate, 3,6 percent of US voters answered in 2013 that they perceive the environment as the nation's most pressing concern (UChicago News, 2013). Although this is not a high number, it is still much higher than the party's latest election result of 0,36 percent (Federal Election Commission, 2013). In addition the party's platform covers a whole range of leftist viewpoints, meaning that the political appeal of the party extends well beyond just the environmental issue. In other words; if all voters cast their vote for the party that was closest to them politically, the Green Party would probably be much bigger than they are today. So why is this not happening?

As briefly discussed in 6.1 I believe the answer to the question above can be found in Downs' (1985 (1957)) theory of the rational voter. According to Downs (1985 (1957)) a voter will not necessarily vote for the party he/she agrees with the most, but rather the party that will provide him/her with the most benefits³⁸ (Downs, 1985 (1957): 36 - 37). In many cases the

³⁷ A grassroots movement positioned on the far right in United States politics (Tea Party, 2014).

³⁸ The reader should take note that the premise of Downs' (1985 (1957)) theory is that the goal of every voter is to acquire the most benefits for him-/herself, and that rational actions are only actions that the voter believe will

party the voter agrees with the most and the party he/she believes will provide him/her with the most benefits will be one and the same. But this might not always be the case. Remembering the discussion in 1.2, a voter will, after having decided which party will benefit him/her the most, make an estimate on whether that party has any chances of winning. If the party's chances of winning are slim, he/she may be inclined to switch to another party in order to prevent his/her vote from being wasted (Downs, 1985 (1957): 48). This might to a great extent be the case in the United States as well. Voters that actually agree the most with the Green Party, are still voting for the Democratic Party in order to prevent the Republican Party from winning. As discussed earlier this psychological factor, as Ljiphart (1999) termed it, is in many ways a product of the electoral system (Ljiphart, 1999: 165). The presence of this way of reasoning in the United States electorate is also confirmed by Sanda Everette:

“People are afraid – they think the Democrats are better than the Republicans, and therefore they got to vote Democrat, because otherwise they might get a Republican [in office]” (Everette, 2014).

The existence of the psychological effect of the electoral system, and the perceived dangers of voting for a minor party in a country using the plurality electoral system, is also supported by John C. Berg (2008) who argues that “the Republicans probably lost in 1992 because of H. Ross Perot, and the Democrats certainly lost in 2000 because of the Green Party and Ralph Nader” (Berg, 2008: 23). Whether the loss of the Democratic Party to the Republican Party in any way should be blamed on the Green Party (as Berg (2008) suggests) will not be discussed in any further detail here though. For this thesis it is sufficient to establish the existence of such a way of thinking and acting within the electorate, not to discuss if they are right in doing so or not.

To summarize, the Green Party is primarily facing two challenges in the electorate. Firstly the protection of the environment does not seem to be a very important issue for most voters in the United States. This is of course not good news for a party whose main political agenda is advocating environmentalism. Secondly voters who actually would be inclined to vote for the

help him/her reach his/her goal in the best way (Downs, 1985 (1957): 5). Hence the goal itself is of little importance when considering whether an action is rational or not.

Green Party choose not to do so because of the psychological effect the electoral system has on them.

6.2.1 The German electorate

Having established several challenges for the Green Party when it comes to the United States electorate, it might be interesting to review whether these challenges also are present within the German electorate.

In general the German electorate seems to be more concerned with the protection of the environment than that of the United States electorate. In 2009 60 percent of all Germans answered that they believe global warming is a very serious problem, while only 44 percent of all Americans answered the same (Pew Research Center, 2009b). First and foremost this shows that the conditions for environmentalism are perhaps a bit better in Germany than in the United States. At the same time this does not, based on the arguments by Dalton (2008) presented earlier, automatically mean that environmentalism somehow represents a political cleavage in the German electorate. For instance have Dawson and Thielbörger (2013) noted that the environment and climate change was not one of the major issues of the German federal election for parliament in 2013. When asked Germans only ranked the environment as the fourth most important issue from a list of seven different alternatives (Dawson and Thielbörger, 2013). In addition Die Grünen themselves focused their campaign on more traditional leftist issues, rather than the environment (Dawson and Thielbörger, 2013).

Based on the arguments by Dalton (2008) on how environmentalism has been absorbed into the traditional left/right cleavage, the findings by Dawson and Thielbörger (2013) might suggest that this is the case in Germany, as well as the United States. Additionally, the latter argue that all contesting parties in the German 2013 election have proclaimed a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Dawson and Thielbörger, 2013), which might also be the reason why this topic was not of major importance in the election – it was simply not as interesting to discuss since most parties agreed on it. If we compare the situation in Germany with the one in the United States, it is still clear though that the conditions for promoting environmentalism and focusing on climate change in a campaign is better in the former than the latter. As explained above the environment was the fourth most important topic for the German electorate (Dawson and Thielbörger, 2013) which is still far better than in the United

States, where only 3,6 percent of the electorate prioritized the protection of the environment as a political cause (UChicago News, 2013).

When it comes to the psychological factor the electoral system can create in the electorate, as observed in the United States, I believe this factor is much less present in the German electorate, given Germany's use of a different electoral system than the United States. Remembering the discussion in 6.1.1 Germany uses a mixed system where half of the seats in parliament are filled through proportional elections, making it easier for minor parties win some of the seats. Hence, German voters will feel less obliged to vote for a major party in fear of wasting their votes. In the 2009 election Die Grünen won 68 seats in the German parliament (European Election Database, 2010b), meaning that Die Grünen's voters in several districts were given value for their money so to speak.

All in all I believe Germany and the United States differ when it comes to the electorate, as well as the political system. Not only is environmentalism a more important issue for German voters than voters in the United States, but Germany's electoral system also makes it more attractive for voters to cast their votes for a minor party, instead of one of the major parties.

6.3 The party

By this point we have discussed several explanations as to why the Green Party so far has been relatively unsuccessful. In chapter one I listed three main categories the explanations for minor parties' lack of success could be group into. So far we have covered two of these, namely the political system and the electorate. This last part of the thesis analysis is devoted to the explanations related to the Green Party itself, and not as much to the system or the electorate. More specifically the analysis is divided into three parts: campaign apparatus, candidates and financial situation³⁹.

³⁹ 6.3 does not include any comparisons between the Green Party and Die Grünen. The main reason for this is basically the lack of information on Die Grünen publically available. During this project I have also tried contacting the party, but the response from the party's office was that they had little relevant information available in English. Hence I have chosen to not include any comparison to Die Grünen in this last part of the analysis, focusing exclusively on the thesis' main case; The Green Party.

6.3.1 Campaign apparatus

An important part of any political party is the campaign apparatus and the party's ability to run an extensive and successful campaign. In the first chapter I described how Strøm and Müller (1999) argue that different parties may focus on different goals, either being office-seeking, voter-seeking or policy-seeking (Strøm and Müller, 1999: 5 - 8). According to Steffen Blings (2012) the most successful green parties are the ones focusing on policy-seeking, rather than vote- or office-seeking (Blings, 2012: 26). Given that the Green Party has not been very successful so far does this mean that they are pursuing the wrong goals? This is hard to say. What makes it somewhat difficult to apply the theory presented by Blings (2012) on the Green Party is that the success of the green parties analyzed by him seems to be related to the policy gains they provide while in government (Blings, 2012: 26). Since the Green Party has not been part of any government yet, nor has been able to win seats in Congress, they have yet to be given the opportunity to provide any policy gains for their voters.

What can be derived from the findings by Blings (2012) though, is that it would be wise for the Green Party to not focus solely on winning seats in Congress or attracting as many voters as possible, but rather strive to achieve as significant political results as possible in the city councils and alike where there are elected Green Party representatives. In addition it would be beneficial for the party to promote its platform and political solutions to as many voters as possible.

According to Aardal and Waldahl (2004) upholding political cleavages and keeping certain political conflicts alive is also of major importance for a political party seeking success (Aardal and Waldahl, 2004: 268). This also poses a challenge for the Green Party. As observed in 6.1 environment and climate change is not a topic of major importance for voters in the United States when compared to other topics (BBC News, 2012). This can of course be changed. I do for instance believe that one reason as to why environmentalism is not such an important topic amongst the voters in the United States is the fact that the Green Party is given relatively few opportunities to promote this issue to them. There might be several reasons for this, but most prominently is perhaps the lack of proper media coverage. This is also something Jody Grage (2013) emphasized when asked about obstacles in the Green Party's campaigns:

“It is very hard for minor parties to get any media attention. Jill Stein [the Green Party’s presidential candidate in 2012,] did better than what has ever been done before [...], but it was still pretty poultry” (Grage, 2013).

Furthermore, Grage (2013) believes that the reason for this to a large extent is related to the issue of media control:

“What the two major parties have done is really to buy the media. Now, our political parties do not have newspapers [...], but the media is more and more getting into the hand of fewer and fewer people. There used to be laws that said you could only own one television station in a city, and you couldn’t own a newspaper also. But now you can pretty much own all the television stations and all the newspapers in a place, so [...] the media coverage is very limited” (Grage, 2013).

This puts the Green Party in a somewhat difficult situation. In order to be more successful they have to promote their platform and policies to the public. The best possible way of doing this is through the media, which they are having trouble getting the attention of. These difficulties are also emphasized by Jared Laiti (2014) when asked about what he believes are some of the weaknesses of the Green Party:

“[We] have difficulty reaching our potential supporters. Many members of our most likely constituencies (i.e. youth, the poor) still do not know we exist. We spend too much time and energy internally, on our rules, structures, and platforms, and not enough in attracting new membership and integrating it into the party. We need a greater focus on effectively coordinating the potential volunteers that are drawn to us” (Laiti, 2014).

6.3.2 Candidates

It is likely to believe that the party’s difficulties with reaching out to potential voters and supporters also affect the party’s candidates. For a party operating in a candidate-focused political system like the United States (remembering the discussion of primaries for one), it is of course of major importance for a party to have as good candidates running for the different offices as possible.

As discussed in chapter one Poguntke and Webb (2005) argue that there has been a development in democratic countries towards a greater focus on candidates, instead of the parties they run for, which they term “presidentialization” (Poguntke and Webb, 2005: 4). Remembering table 2, one can observe two interesting trends. Firstly, the Green Party achieved its best election results when Ralph Nader was running as their presidential candidate. Secondly, once Nader ran as an independent candidate the party’s results dropped dramatically. Nader even performed better than the Green Party in 2004 and 2008, receiving 0,38 percent and 0,56 percent of the popular vote respectfully.

When asked why Nader performed so well in 2000, Sanda Everette provided this answer:

“He had a strong following already [and] he had lots of money” (Everette, 2014).

Looking at the candidate of other minor parties in the United States who have been able to achieve good results in elections, the explanation provided by Everette seems to hold up. The last 25 years a total of four candidates from minor parties have won an election for state governor; Lowell Weicker in Connecticut in 1990, Walter Hickel in Alaska in 1990, Angus King in Maine in 1994 and Jesse Ventura in Minnesota in 1998 (Lentz, 2002: 1, 116 – 117). Common for all of these were that they 1) were well-known to the electorate prior to running for office, and 2) had their own financial resources at their disposal during the campaign (Lentz, 2002: 117 - 188).

For a minor party it might be a major problem finding a good candidate possessing both the attributes of being rich and well-known before running as a candidate, in addition to having the necessary qualities needed to represent a political party. Jody Grage describes this dilemma in the following way:

“If you are gonna run as a Green, you pretty much know you’re out there on your own, because we don’t have much of a campaign support structure set up. So we don’t get that many candidates [willing to run for the party]. So we have a hard time getting a campaign support set up, because we don’t have candidates, and we don’t have candidates because we don’t have a campaign structure set up. [...] It is kind of a spiral. People don’t wanna run if they have to do everything themselves, and yet you can’t get people interested in learning how to be a campaign manager if there’s no one to be a campaign manager for” (Grage, 2013).

6.3.3 Financial situation

In 6.1 we discussed how the political system in the United States is designed in such a way that minor parties, like the Green Party, get close to no public funding. When combining this with the Green Party's standpoint to not accept any contributions from private corporations or organizations (Grage, 2013), this puts the party in a difficult situation financially. For one it limits the party's ability to invest in commercials, pay for transportation for its candidates, print pamphlets and so forth. The Green Party's problematic financial situation is not made any better either by the fact that campaigns in the United States are very costly. During the campaign of 2012 Barack Obama spent a total of 1,11 billion dollars, closely followed by his Republican contender, Mitt Romney, who spent 928 billion dollars (Washington Post, 2012). By comparison the Green Party estimated to spend about 1 million dollars on its 2012 campaign (New York Times, 2012). The gap between the major parties and the minor parties when it comes to finances is in other words vast.

There are of course variations between the different minor parties in the United States. According to Jody Grage (2013) *"the Libertarian Party has a lot more money"*, since they are not reluctant, like the Green Party, to accept corporate money (Grage, 2013). Hence, one could argue that it would be wise for the Green Party to change this policy and start accepting this kind of money. This is perhaps not a viable solution, though. As described in 6.1 the refusal to accept contributions from corporations is rooted in the party's idealistic, anti-corporate and anti-capitalism standpoint. As mentioned earlier, Grage (2013) puts it this way:

"One of our chief selling points is that we don't accept corporate money" (Grage, 2013).

Hence, the party is left to rely on contributions made by private individuals. This predicament is explained by Sanda Everette in the following way:

"Some people in the party [...] go; "but I have this friend and he's incorporating his business and he's really a good guy and he wants to support us", and I say; "so he can write us a check out of his personal account. He just can't write us a check out of his corporate account"" (Everette, 2014).

On the one hand one could argue that a minor party struggling financially does not have the luxury of refusing to accept some types of contributions as long as they are legal. On the other

hand the party could risk losing its integrity by accepting certain contributions. Whether the standpoint of the Green Party on corporate contributions is wise or not is, however, not a discussion for this thesis. In short it is sufficient for us to note the party's stance on this issue, and the effects it has on their financial situation.

To summarize, the Green Party is facing several challenges related to the party itself, as well as those that have to do with the political system and the electorate. As discussed above the party is struggling financially since it is not receiving any public funding, as well as refusing so called corporate money, relying solely on money from private individuals. Additionally, the party's campaign apparatus has room for improvements in regard to securing media attention and reaching out to potential voters and supporters. In total this has a negative effect on the party's candidates. This is of course not meant as derogation for the candidates running for the party presently, but it is a fact that the party is struggling to recruit candidates that have the necessary attributes proven to be vital for minor party candidates in the United States.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to review why the Green Party of the United States has not been more successful on the political arena than it has. As of this day the Green Party has not been able to win any seats in Congress, nor been able to win any of the Electoral College votes needed for winning the presidential election. At the same time, the Green Party's sister party in Germany, Die Grünen, has not only been able to win seats in the German parliament, but has also served as part of a government coalition for two terms.

In order to answer the thesis question I chose to conduct a case study of the Green Party of the United States, while at the same time drawing some comparisons between this party and its more successful sibling in Germany, Die Grünen.

I started this thesis by presenting several different explanations as to why some minor parties are successful while others are not. Furthermore, I argued that these explanations can be grouped into three categories: the political system, the electorate and the party itself.

Next I presented the scientific and methodological framework of the thesis, discussing the different sides of using case study as a way of conducting a research project. In addition I reviewed the different types of data used during the project, with respect to both reliability and validity.

Furthermore, I reviewed the political system and political culture in the United States with the purpose of providing the reader with an understanding of the context the Green Party is operating in. To give the reader more knowledge of both the Green Party and Die Grünen, I also provided a review of these parties, focusing on party history and election results, political platform and party organization.

In short I believe that the question regarding the Green Party's lack of success cannot be answered by one simple explanation. Instead several explanations related to both the political system of the United States, its electorate and the Green Party are needed to answer the question at hand. As noted in this thesis most of the challenges the Green Party is facing are

challenges that Die Grünen in Germany has not had to contend with, hence its success as a minor green party

When looking at the system, both the electoral system, ballot access laws and the lack of public funding for minor parties make it hard for the Green Party to improve its election results. When it comes to the electorate both voters' lacking focus on the environmental issue and the (psychological) effect the electoral system has on them pose a challenge for the Green Party. Additionally, there is room for improvements when it comes to the party itself. The Green Party is to some extent lacking the proper campaign apparatus for improving its election results, and is struggling with attracting enough good candidates as well. The fact that the party is lacking the proper funding for running its campaigns does not help the situation either.

Based on the conclusion presented here the reader might find the situation for the Green Party of the United States very grim. Such an observation is not unjustified. Being a minor party in a two-party system is not all that easy. At the same time there is a lot of potential for the party, though. It is possible for the Green Party to do something about several of the factors contributing to the party's lack of success, like the campaign apparatus or the environmental issue's near absence from the country's political debate. The road to where Die Grünen is today is long, and it might perhaps be beyond reach as long as the electoral system of the United States remains unchanged. Still, it is not impossible that the Green Party might be able to once again reach the result of the 2000 presidential election ... or perhaps even surpass it.

7.1 Further research

Theories regarding minor parties and green parties' success already exist in academic literature, and this thesis does to a large extent serve as a support of these theories. This does not mean that every aspect of this subject has been explored, however. For instance would a more statistical analysis of the United States electorate's views on the Green Party be able to provide scholars with a more in-depth understanding of how voters in the country view its minor parties. Another approach could also be to focus exclusively on the Green Party's results in different states and whether there are any correlations between the party's election results and different attributes of these states. Nevertheless I hope the reader has found this

thesis of interest and that other scholars reading this might be inspired to study minor parties in the United States, and perhaps the Green Party in particular.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: List of respondents/interviewees

Appendix B: Main questions from the interview guide/questionnaire

Appendix A: List of respondents/interviewees

Grage, Jody

Former treasurer of the Green Party of the United States

Interview

Sanda Everette

Co-chair of the Green Party of California Coordinating Committee, and former co-chair of the Green Party of the United States

Interview

Jared Laiti

The Green Party of California's Liaison to the Secretary of State

Questionnaire

Appendix B: Main questions from the interview guide/questionnaire

Can you tell a bit about how you became involved with the Green Party?

Can you tell me about some of the offices you have held during your time with the Green Party?

What is your opinion on the performance of the Green Party in US politics?

What would you say are the Green Party's greatest strengths?

What would you say are the Green Party's greatest weaknesses?

What, if anything, can the Green Party itself do to increase its support?

What kind of candidate qualities (political experience, professional background etc.) do you think influence voters to support the Green Party?

What is needed for policy issues of concern to the Green Party to figure more prominently in the election campaign?

In which states do you believe the Green Party is strongest/has gained the most influence?

What is your experience with the system of party and campaign financing in the United States?

What would you say is the financial situation in the Green Party? Do you have a strong or weak economy?