It’s easy being Green: Ecofeminism, women politicians, and Green party electoral success

by
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Abstract

Why do Green Parties in Western democracies have a higher percentage of women candidates than other, major parties? Why are these women elected in nearly equally high percentages? This exploratory, mixed-methods case study of Green parties in Canada and Australia aims to generate possible explanations for these questions. Traditional political representation literature tends to focus on critical mass, ideological, or structural explanations to explain women’s political success. These explanations fail to account for the cross-state phenomenon of Green women’s political success which appears to hold constant despite differing electoral systems, party ideologies and histories, and existing gender compositions of elected political bodies. By collecting extensive election data in all Western democracies where Green parties have won seats, I present empirical findings illustrating how women’s representation in Green parties outpaces other parties in nearly every case examined. Explanations for this phenomenon are generated using data from interviews with Green Party politicians in both cases, seeking to uncover a possible connection between environmental concerns and perceived gender differences between men and women. I suggest that it is an emphasis on completing a specific environmental policy goal rather than “politics as usual” which is responsible for attracting high levels of women candidates to Green parties. This is complemented by a strong history of ecofeminist principles within parties such as an emphasis on women’s lived experiences. These findings contribute to the political representation literature by illustrating a specific case where the 50% threshold for women has often been surpassed. Political parties interested in bolstering their own representativeness may look to findings on Green parties for inspiration.

Keywords: Green parties; political representation; ecofeminism; women; environmental activism
To my parents who are everything, to my friends who are powerhouses, and to those who refuse to sacrifice the good for power.
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Chapter 1.

Closer to Nature? Exploring possible links between women and Green parties

Since the first Green Party candidate, Helen Smith, won a municipal seat in New Zealand in 1973, Green parties across the globe have gone on to elect more than 300 people at the national level in several countries and hundreds more at state/provincial and local levels of government (Global Greens, n.d.). Many of those elected have been high profile women politicians, including the Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Canadian Member of Parliament (MP), Elizabeth May, and UK MP, Caroline Lucas. For such a new and relatively small party, the ability to attract and elect qualified women appears to be relatively unmatched. This ability is not explained in existing literature, however. Existing explanations including critical mass theory and structural theory do not appear well suited to explain the electoral success of Green women. One explanation that has not been explored relates to the motivation of Green women being rooted in principles of ecofeminism. Is there a link between this motivation to run and get elected under the Green banner and ecofeminism? Women’s motivations for running with a party, when doing so is typically not a guaranteed recipe for electoral success, begs exploration.

In this project, I propose a mixed-methods approach to exploring two central questions related to the apparent electoral success of women Green party candidates: Is there an observable and verifiable trend of Green women having relatively more electoral success than women from other parties? And, if so, can the principles of ecofeminism help us in understanding this success? The first question is “testable” using quantitative methods; the second I explore using qualitative-interpretive methods. Based on these questions and using an inductive approach to theory-building, I suggest that in the cases outlined in my study, ecofeminism is central to the motivation for women to run for Green Parties and their success in getting elected. More specifically, the principles associated with ecofeminism including a “synthesis of ecological and feminist principles as guiding lights for political organizing” (Lahar 1991, 29) which...
environmental challenges with attracts women to the party and ultimately bolsters their success.

Through a quantitative study of available years that green parties have challenged and won elections, I first explore the question of whether Green parties worldwide tend to elect a higher proportion of women than other parties: Is there an advantage to women of running on the Green Ticket? To answer this question, I analyze data from three countries with a relatively high number of elected Greens – Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. In the last two decades, Green parties in Australia and New Zealand elected a caucus that, on average, is made up of more than half women (“Women in Parliaments” 2019). No other national parties in those countries have consistently produced majority-women caucuses. In and of itself, this would seem to suggest that Green Parties offer a particular attraction to or advantage to women in politics. The Canadian Green Party provides a foil to those examples. Although the first Green party representative elected federally was a woman, when provincial representatives are taken in to account, the majority of Greens are men. This contrasting example suggests that Green women’s motivations and success may be contingent on other contextual or personal factors that are not as salient in the national elections in Australia and New Zealand. Comparing these different cases may help discern the factors on which women’s greater participation in Green parties depends.

In order to develop a rich account of how Green women perceive their own pathway to involvement in politics and in the Green party, I will explore those motivations directly through a series of interviews with women in each context. Specifically, these interviews explore whether ecofeminist theory offers possible explanations for Green women’s electoral success, in its proposed connection between gender and environmental concerns. The possible relevance of this approach is manifest not only in women’s distinctive political role in advancing environmental protection, but ecofeminists have also been at the forefront of the formation of Green parties in several countries including Australia (Mies and Shiva 1993). Radical ecofeminists assert that women and the planet have experienced profound injustice, linking environmental degradation to patriarchal forces (Mies and Shiva 1993, 65). They claim that both women and the planet are viewed as “resources,” which must be developed in the name of progress, economic or otherwise. Because of their experiences and reproductive capabilities, women are positioned as better suited to remedy environmental challenges (ibid).
While this assessment is problematic in that it essentializes women, it may be possible that women are attracted to Green parties and choose to run if they identify themselves with ecofeminist values. In her recent study, Naomi Bick (2019) found that despite vast differences in policy and leadership, European Green parties are universally feminist. This study aims to build upon that finding by showing that Green parties are ecofeminist, meaning that they do not only value women’s representation, but women’s specific contributions to addressing environmental concerns as women. The interviews will explore candidate’s motivations to run with green parties as well as other potential confounding factors. Additionally, it is possible that it is precisely this essentializing characterization that makes women successful Green candidates. If characteristics associated with women are also associated with Green parties, voters may choose women as their preferred environmental advocate.

Alternative explanations for Green women’s electoral success include party ideology and internal structure, as well as the political system operating in that state (Coffe 2013; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). I use semi-structured, elite interviews with elected Green Party members with questions pertaining to these explanations to investigate possible links. Results of this study offer a significant contribution to the political representation literature and to women political hopefuls by illuminating a specific case where success in women’s representation has largely been achieved and offering a new, potential explanation for that success.

**What are Green parties and how do they relate to feminism?**

As a collection of parties with a global base and representation in dozens of countries, Green parties offer a unique research opportunity. In English-speaking countries, these parties typically run under the “Green Party” banner, but multiple iterations of Green parties exist. These are often translations of “Green Party” into that country’s language such as Die Grünen in Austria and Les Verts du Benin, or coalitions of many small Green parties such as eQuo in Spain. There is also a Green group within the European Parliament called The Greens-European Free Alliance. Formed in 1999, the group is made of 52 elected members from 18 different countries, representing 27 parties (“About the Group,” n.d.). They, along with parties at various levels of government and in the countries explored in this study form an international network.
called Global Greens. Full members are subject to the Global Greens Charter and participate in a Congress every five years to set new priorities (“Global Greens,” n.d.).

Since their inception, Green parties have been closely tied to ecofeminism. Greta Gaard asserts that:

[From Petra Kelly in West Germany to Ariel Sellah in Australia and Charlene Spretnak in the US, ecofeminists have been central to the founding of the green movement. The work of ecofeminists in the greens has involved general feminist aims such as equal rights and representation, revaluing the feminine, eliminating racism and classism within the organization (1998, 140).

This point is further theorized by Per Gahrton, who states that almost every Green party in existence has gender equality as a central demand (2015, 68). This focus is required by the Global Green Manifesto which requires “gender-balanced policy-making” in order for parties to be accepted and remain a member (“Global Greens” n.d.). In practice, this is exemplified by the German Greens who first formed government in a coalition with the Social Democrats in 1998. From the outset, the government labeled itself as “feminist,” which was entirely unique at that time (Meyer 2008, 401). As the first party to support gender quotas in 1983, the German Greens were partially responsible for quadrupling the number of women entering the Bundestag from the 1980’s to 2002. Their own caucus is made up of 60% women which is a trend that appears to be mirrored by other Green parties the world over. Based on this anecdotal evidence alone, there is a connection between green parties, (eco)feminism, and women’s political success which requires further exploration.

What is Ecofeminism and how might it relate to other explanations?

Traditionally, literature explaining women’s electoral success falls into three main areas: party ideology, electoral and party structure, and critical mass theory. In the first explanation, the perceived “left-wing” nature of a party combines with the expected behavior of female politicians. Party ideology literature argues that women who run with ideologically left-wing parties have more electoral success (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Herrnson et al. 2003). This argument is premised on the idea that policy priorities associated with the left such as social welfare are also seen as “feminine” priorities which female politicians are better able to address (Herrnson et al. 2003, 245). While stereotypical, this perception would benefit left-wing women, especially if those policy
priorities are held by voters. This is potentially advantageous to Green women because extensive polling has shown that Green voters are “most often female, younger, and have a high level of education than the average voter” (Gahrton 2015, 15). These characteristics lead to a higher interest in post materialist issues such as climate change and gender equality (Tranter and Western 2009, 66). Among those who intended to vote Green and those who would never vote Green in New Zealand, a correlation between concern for the environment and social justice issues is significant (Carroll et al. 2009, 266). Far from being simply an environmental party, the Greens are seen as champions for social justice. Based on this theory, the typical Green voter’s priorities are best advocated for by women and would therefore prefer a female candidate.

Where this theory breaks down is the assumption that Green parties are the only left-wing party championing post-materialist values, or that they are even left-wing at all. According to the Manifesto Project, the Greens’ ideological placement is typically the most left-wing in Australia, less left-wing than Labour and sometimes other parties in New Zealand, and quite centrist in Canada (Volkens et al. 2018). New Zealand voters interested in post materialist values could vote for the Labour or Maori parties (“Our Vision, n.d;” “Our Kaupapa, n.d.”). Australian voters can vote for Labor (“Our Plan, n.d;”). Finally, the Liberal Party of Canada and the New Democratic Party have offered extensive environmental and other post materialist policies in Canada (“Real Change, n.d;” “Policy of the New Democratic Party of Canada, n.d.”). If a left-wing ideology and emphasis of post materialist values alone benefitted women over men, then many other parties would see the same effect. This theory does not explain why Green women have done so well in comparison to women from other parties.

A second explanation is one heard often from proponents of proportional representation systems (Krook 2010; Tremblay 2008; Lawless and Fox 2005; Sawer 2002). Even within a heavily patriarchal political realm, the absence of a winner-takes-all system is a significant boon to women’s political representation (Krook 2010, 164). Wilma Rule argues that above all else, the electoral system of a state is the greatest indicator of women’s ability to be elected (1987, 479). Specifically, an electoral system featuring party lists is the best way to increase women’s descriptive representation in politics as women’s names will be listed at or near the top in most cases in order to avoid charges of sexism. (Rule 1987, 494). While the effects of a proportional representation system may be felt in New Zealand, Green women in Canada and
Australia have found political success within a variety of systems not known for their benefit to women. This includes the winner-take-all first past the post system in Canada, and a combination of proportional and preferential voting in Australia (Bennett and Lundie 2008). In contrast, countries that do make use of proportional representation systems such as Brazil and Latvia do not have large percentages of women in elected positions, nor in Green caucuses, indicating there are other factors at play. With so much variation between only three cases, it is unlikely that any particular electoral system is solely responsible for Green women’s success.

A similar argument is related to the existence of quotas for women, either within the political system or the party itself (Bush 2011; Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2016). While it is not always true that quotas substantially improve women’s representation, Elin Bjarnegård and Per Zetterberg find that left-wing parties tend to be better at complying with quotas and nominate more women than right wing parties (2016, 394). Green parties have a history of implementing gender quotas, especially in Australia and New Zealand (Miragliotta 2015). In both countries, the parties started out with self-imposed gender quotas that were highly influential, eventually leading to broader adoption across the political system (Hartshorn-Sanders 2006). Eva Hartshorn-Sanders describes how the New Zealand Greens implemented a policy focusing on equal representation at all levels of the party, including a co-leadership structure with roles filled by one man and one woman concurrently (2006, 44). This was expressed by late co-leader Ron Donald as a way of reflecting the make-up of society, and ensuring good women were not kept away due to a bias towards men (Hartshorn-Sanders 2006, 45).

In recent years, however, Green parties have relaxed the requirement for formal gender equality (Miragliotta 2015, 708). The Canadian and New Zealand Greens do not have a specific gender quota system at present, other than the requirement that co-leaders be male and female in New Zealand, and there is no gender quota requirement for either parliament (“Constitution of the Green Party of Canada, n.d.;” Proudfoot 2016). According to the Gender Quotas database, the Liberal Party of Canada, the New Democratic Party of Canada, and the Australian Labor Party do have gender quotas (“Gender Quotas Database” 2019). Regardless of the effectiveness of gender quotas, they cannot explain Green women’s electoral success. When questioned about the lack of quotas, Green party politicians in this study expressed their belief that quotas are unnecessary because they have always been able to strike a gender balance. As Green
party popularity increases, however, this may no longer be the case and is an idea that will be explored further throughout this study.

Since their creation, Green parties have valued gender equality and their adherence to the Global Green Constitution requires this commitment is maintained (Gahrton 2015). What this literature review shows, however, is that this commitment is not limited to Green parties and in some cases is better demonstrated by other parties. Rather than being unique to Green parties, it may be a characteristic of smaller or more “new” parties to uphold values of gender equality in order to attract the best candidates away from larger parties (Vromen and Gaujen 2009; Caul 1999). While firmly established in some respects, Green parties can still be considered relative newcomers compared to the larger establishment parties. It does not appear that there is something about the structure of Green parties that would indicate a likelihood of women’s success over comparable parties.

A final explanation for women’s electoral success in the literature is critical mass theory (Swers 2001; Saint-Germain 1989; Lovenduski and Norris 1993; Sainsbury 1993). Mona Lena Krook describes how beginning in the 1980’s, the idea that only after a certain number of women were elected could real policy change begin (2005, 184). This theory can also be applied to the positioning of women within parties, where female “gatekeepers” are more likely to recruit and promote other women (Chang and Tavits, 2011; Erzeel and Celis 2016). The more women present in positions of power, the more likely that other women will be encouraged and allowed to find success (Chang and Tavits 2011, 461). This effect is amplified when this gatekeeper is also in a leadership role (Swers 2001). Benefits from the gatekeeper relationship may include a larger share of party resources and placement in electoral districts where the candidate has a more favorable chance of winning (Change and Tavits 2011, 461). While women in Green parties would not benefit from critical mass or gatekeeping within the larger political body any more than women in other parties, it is possible that the early history of Green parties could have been impacted by a large concentration of women. As many Green parties were founded by women, this may have encourage further waves of women to become involved, or for those in positions of power to seek out other women to join the party. I explore this notion further in the qualitative analysis section.
The explanation this study will explore is based on ecofeminist theory. Like feminism writ large, ecofeminism is not a monolith but can be broken down into sub-categories which are representative of a large variety of beliefs (Gaard 1998). Tzeporah Berman identifies three main strains of ecofeminism based on Jaggar’s feminist typology (1993). The first is liberal ecofeminism which seeks environmental redistribution, for example, focusing on women attaining equal access to natural resources (Berman 1993, 15). Opponents of liberal ecofeminism reject its basic premise that humans are superior to non-human nature (Mellor 1997). The second category is socialist ecofeminism which links the oppression of women and the non-human world to the patriarchal and capitalist systems (Berman 1993, 16). As women have been primarily valued for their reproductive capabilities in producing new workers, so has the Earth been valued for its productive capabilities to drive profit. So long as this valuing of profits above all else continues, women and the planet will suffer. Socialist ecofeminist solutions require a dramatic breaking down of exploitative economic and labor structures which can be accomplished with the simultaneous valuing of both women and nature with some socialist ecofeminists advocating for an “economic and social revolution that would simultaneously liberate women, working class people and nature” (Kettel 1993, 13).

This assumption that there is something unique to women which makes them ideal environmentalists is also found in radical ecofeminism (Kettel 1993). The radical branch can be broken down into two sub-groups. These are “nature” ecofeminists who believe that “women have a biological and spiritual link with the non-human world and are, therefore ‘closer to nature’ than men” and those who believe “women’s oppression is rooted in women’s reproductive roles and the sex/gender system” (Berman 1993, 16). Both groups believe that the liberation of women and nature is rooted in the destruction of patriarchal forces which women play a key role in because of their unique experiences and abilities (Kettel 1993).

Unfortunately, the proliferation of nature ecofeminist ideas about women as “closer to nature” has led to the dismissal of all ecofeminism as overly simplistic and essentializing (Phillips and Rumens 2016). Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands acknowledges that in different times and places, ecofeminists have adopted essentialist or maternal arguments to develop feminist-environmental connections (2008, 306). Ariel Salleh, an ecofeminist who played a large part in the formation of the Australian Green Party, goes
further than Shiva, arguing that women have a greater propensity for caring for nature based on reproductive capabilities (Salleh 1997).

Other ecofeminists question radical ecofeminist assumptions that women are “closer to nature” than men are and see the notion as too generalizing and essentialist (Lahar 1991; Gaard 1998; Phillips and Rumens 2016). Stephanie Lahar highlights the danger that comes from implying women are natural carers and have a biologically determined “way of knowing” that does not situate that experience in its historical context and may limit women’s potential (1991, 40). Anne Archambault constructs a critique of this line of argument by pointing out that the positioning of women as the “critical other” in this sense is a recreation of the dualistic representation of women that ecofeminists reject (1993, 20). Furthermore, constructing women as somehow removed from environmental degradation removes the responsibility of those who have contributed to it. Reducing women to their reproductive capabilities is not only something feminists have been fighting against for decades but ignores the contributions of women who for whatever reason do not share those capabilities (Archambault 1993).

While these are genuine concerns that must be addressed in any project, there is still something about women and their relationship with environmentalism that begs attention. Avoiding reducing women to their role as nurturers is important; however, avoiding essentialist arguments may not be a relevant exercise if those arguments are what cause voters to vote for Green women. In fact, “strategic essentialism” as developed by Gayatri Spivak (1988), advocates for the deployment of “the strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (13). While no essentialist role is all-encompassing, in this specific circumstance it can assumed to be stable enough to serve the political interest of women addressing climate change. In this case, the essentialization is beneficial to the group being essentialized and is used to advance a specific, beneficial goal which increases its palatability. It may also be that voters see women as “better Greens” because they are women and therefore environmentally-concerned voters are more likely to vote for a woman. According to Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, women’s nurturing side might be what draws them to become Greens as well. Particularly in North America, “environmental activism is an important site through which women are able to develop not only a politicized understanding of environmental issues but also a sense of themselves as political actors” (2008, 310). Empirically, Christina Ergas and Richard York argue that women are
more likely than men to support environmental protection (2012). They show that regardless of the cause of this support, countries with greater gender equality in government have lower carbon emissions per capita than those with poor gender equality (Ergas and York 2012). Not only do voters perceive women as better advocates for the environment, there is evidence that this is the case.

For some women who become interested in environmentalism, it might be the “maternalist” logic of caring that propels them into politics as they see a need for someone to protect the community against environmental degradation (Mortimer-Sandilands 2008, 310). Additionally, the historical connections between ecofeminism and Green politics are clear. Notable and pioneering ecofeminists such as Petra Kelly in West Germany, Ariel Sellah in Australia and Charlene Spretnak in the United States were central to the formation of Green parties in their respective countries (Gaard 1998, 140). They imbued the parties with feminist policies including equal representation for women and predicted the Green movements success depended upon its ability to uproot the traditional patriarchal behaviors found in politics (ibid, 141). By interviewing those within Green parties, I hope to explore whether their motivations reflect ecofeminist assumptions about women and their relationship to environmentalism and whether their experiences within the parties reflects the historical legacy of ecofeminist influence.

To best examine women’s electoral success through a lens of ecofeminism, it is important to break down the most salient points to be applied to the case studies. Regardless of the type of ecofeminism, Ynestra King argues the main goal is “connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice [which] asserts the special strength and integrity of every living thing (Caldecott and Leland 1983). Ecofeminist political goals include “the destruction of oppressive social, economic and political systems and the reconstruction of more viable social and political forms” (Lahar 1991 in Warren 2000, 98). Additionally, Karen Warren maintains that there are key features of ecofeminist ethics which include: 1) theory that changes over time depending on context but remains within a set of basic values, 2) a rejection of sexism or any form of social domination, 3) practices that emerge from a narrative based on different voices reflecting diversity, 4) does not try to be objective, 5) provides a place for ideas not popular in the mainstream, and 6) engages in ethical decision making (2000, 98). These guidelines are key to examining party documents and establishing a rationale for a potential
ecofeminist explanation. If green parties are able to fulfill ecofeminist political goals, a potential explanation for green women’s political success may lie in that connection.

**Case Selection**

**Table 1. Greens elected in worldwide national parliaments (as of 2019)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Seats held by Greens</th>
<th>Percentage of Women in Green Caucus</th>
<th>Percentage of Women in House</th>
<th>Electoral System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>House of Representatives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Ranked Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Single-Transferable Vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Federal Assembly</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Proportional Representation (PR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>House of Commons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Single-Member Plurality (SMP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Chamber of Representatives</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>National Parliament</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>National Parliament (Bundestag)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>National Assembly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>MMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>National Parliament (Althing)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>National Parliament (Saeima)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>General Congress</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>MMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>MMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Seats held by Greens</td>
<td>Percentage of Women in Green Caucus</td>
<td>Percentage of Women in House</td>
<td>Electoral System</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>House of Representatives</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>National Parliament</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>MMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Assembly of the Republic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>National Parliament</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>National Parliament (Riksdag)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>List PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>List PR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Council of States</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Various</td>
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<tr>
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<td>National Parliament</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>SMP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>House of Lords</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Appointed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 23, Mean: 11, 48%, 29%

As represented in Table 1 (data sources available in Appendix A), there are dozens of countries with elected members of a Green Party and the rationale for their exclusion requires thorough explanation. In order to verify the claim that Green parties elect a greater percentage of women than other parties, I constructed a table with data from each country where a Green politician has been elected at the national level for simpler comparison purposes than including other levels of government would allow. Out of these 18 countries, the 13 which can be considered “Western Capitalist Democracies” according to Swank’s Comparative Parties Dataset elected more than half women in the last national election. These 13 countries form the basis of my case selection as they demonstrate the highest level of comparability in demonstrating the phenomenon I aim to explore.

This discrepancy highlights an important shortcoming of structural theories about women’s representation. Despite those countries that are not classified as Western Capitalist Democracies primarily utilizing proportional representation electoral systems,
for the most part their legislative bodies contain low percentages of women that is reflected in the percentages of women in Green caucuses in those bodies. This differs from those countries which have low percentages of women elected overall (Canada, Germany, Switzerland) but high percentages of women within Green caucuses. This points to a difference between Green parties in Western Capitalist democracies and not, rather than a difference in electoral systems. Even with the presence of a proportional representation system, Green parties which do not adhere to Green ideology as set out in the Global Green Charter are unlikely to prioritize women and their experiences and may not make the effort to have them elected in great numbers. For the purposes of this study, they are not “ideal Green cases” and are excluded.

In order to conduct a thorough case study, three cases allow for adequate investigation. The case with the largest sample size is Germany with 67 elected Greens, 58% of which are women. Upon examination of party documents, however, it is unlikely that a thorough enough study can be done upon those which are available in English. Due to time and budgetary constraints, translations must be ruled out. Similar constraints were found with the following largest sample size cases including Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, and Switzerland.

The Anglophone country with the most Greens is Australia with 31 elected at the national and state level. Their lengthy history with the Party, as well as an even more robust number of women in previous elections makes them an appealing case. With eight elected Greens, a long history with green parties, geographic similarities, and shared language, New Zealand is the most comparable country to Australia. Both cases provide easily accessible material and some of the first cases of elected Greens in history. Finally, the last case chosen is Canada with two elected Greens nationally, but an additional 15 elected at the provincial level. Canada is an ideal case because of its comparatively large number, as well as its political similarities to the other two cases to allow for easier comparison between cases. Although the comparison of parties at the state/provincial and federal levels may yield some discrepancies on specific policies, as all Green parties must ascribe to the Global Green Charter, their core beliefs and party policies on aspects central to ecofeminist theory such as consensus-base decision making and gender equality are essentially the same. This similarity in areas directly investigated in this study allow for a high standard of comparability amongst Green parties at various levels of government.
Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are parliamentary democracies and members of the British Commonwealth. Because ecofeminist theory itself exists primarily in Anglophone institutions, it stands to reason that its impact may be most widely felt in Anglophone countries and therefore best suited to be tested in these cases. While sharing similar origins, their electoral systems differ which will allow for an exploration of whether or not a proportional representation system may factor in to Green women’s electoral success. Additionally, they provide a level of difference in women’s representation, not only in the overall political arena, but within the Green parties as well. At 27% women, the Canadian House of Commons lags the New Zealand Parliament at 38% women and the Australian Senate at 41% women, although a national Australian election will take place during this study which will likely alter that number. In 2019, the Green Party of Canada has gone from 100% to 50% elected women, and a provincial election means seven out of 15 provincial Greens are now women. While more even in percentages of women than previously, there is still a discrepancy between the cases which will hopefully provide a strong basis for exploring potential links between women’s electoral success and ecofeminism.

Testing and Exploring: Methodology

To best explore the connection between ecofeminism, Green parties, and women’s electoral success, I will employ mixed methods. Based on preliminary research of states where Greens have been elected, Green caucuses consistently contain more than 50% women. I hypothesize that Green parties elect more women than other parties in a given country. To test this hypothesis, I expand on the quantitative analysis available in the second chapter by including election results for all available years in each case.

With this quantitative work, it is simple to determine if the hypothesis is correct. If the percentage of women elected from Green parties exceeds that of other parties in most cases, the hypothesis cannot be rejected. It will then be necessary to explore possible explanations for this phenomenon. These explanations will be based primarily on semi-structured, elite interviews to identify the motivations and experiences of those within the party. For example questions, see Appendix B. I begin with the provincial Green Party Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who I have previously worked with and have established a commitment from for this project. I then use my contacts
and experiences with Canadian participants to secure Skype or phone interviews with participants in Australia and New Zealand using the snowball recruitment method. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed with recordings retained for potential use at a later date with participant consent. With the larger number of participants from Canadian Green Parties as well as participants from Australia and New Zealand, I aim to develop theories based on a rich qualitative study that is applicable across political systems. The interview contact list can be found in Appendix C.

After collection, interview data will be stored with identifying features remaining. As the participants are public figures or publicly associated with the party and all interview questions are at a level on par with publicly available information, I do not anticipate any danger with keeping their identities intact. As their identities are the reason why they have been selected to be interviewed, they will be identified in the study, and quoted from directly when necessary.

Limitations and Conflict of Interest

The primary limitations of this project are my linguistic abilities and confinement to local interviews. As I can only understand English, several potential case studies have been excluded such as Austria, Germany, and any other non-English speaking countries. This may limit the explanatory potential of the project as it is possible other explanations for Green women’s electoral success exist in non-English speaking countries. Due to financial and time constraints, any interviews that take place in person will be with those residing in Vancouver and Victoria. Skype or telephone interviews were utilized for Australian and New Zealand participants.

Another concern that must be addressed in this study is the closeness I have to the interview participants. Cecelia Lynch (2014) discusses the perceived problems that can arise when a researcher is perceived as too personally invested in their research, particularly in critical studies when the goal is improving a social cause (302). After working closely with some of my participants and considering them to be role models, it is particularly important to ensure due course is given to all evidence and that the views of certain individuals are not privileged above those of others. While the goal of this study is not to be “objective,” I acknowledge any potential bias in my analysis and have made a conscious effort to remedy it by carefully considering all evidence.
Chapter 2.

A Quantitative Analysis of Green Parties and women

After selecting the three cases for in-depth analysis, I undertake a visual analysis of the data, available in Appendix D (N=135). I organize the data by country and party, providing counts for how many elections a party has won seats in that a Green candidate has also won a seat. In Australia, the maximum number of times is 24, in Canada it is eight, and in New Zealand it is seven. On average, the Australian Greens have 52% of their candidates as women which is ahead of Labor at 45%, but the parties both elect an average of 43% women. In Canada, Greens lag the NDP with 39% women candidates compared to 43% but make up ground with elected women as well. In New Zealand, the Greens put forward far fewer women candidates (41%) compared to Labour (43%) and the Maori Party (50%) but elect far more at 57%. Statistics for median percentages reveal similar patterns. In terms of standard deviation, Green Parties in all countries show much larger numbers than the more established parties, primarily based on their smaller numbers of elected members overall. It is not uncommon for only one or two Greens to be elected in a given election, leading to very large ranges and standard deviations.

When comparing the percentage of women candidates and the percentage of women elected per party in each election year, the differences between parties and countries is immediately apparent. In New Zealand, the differences between parties is much less stark than in Canada and Australia. Even parties considered to be to the "right" of the political spectrum have much higher percentages of women in both categories than the more "progressive" parties do in the other countries, particularly in Canada. While this may indicate a difference based on the use of a single-member plurality voting system in Canadian political bodies, it may also be indicative of the political culture in Canada placing less value on gender equality which is beyond the scope of this study.

Overall, in most cases Green parties are at or near the top in all three countries in terms of percentages of women as both candidates and elected members. It appears that in most cases, more "left-wing" parties have higher means and medians of women
in both categories, and vice versa. In all years, the highest percentages go to either the Greens or the Labor Party in Australia, Greens, Labor, and in two cases, Maori in New Zealand, and The Green Party or The New Democratic Party in Canada. These parties also have the largest standard deviations however, which are illustrated in the following ANOVA models. While more centrist parties in all countries appear to hover around similar percentages of women, the more representative parties vary wildly from year to year.

To determine the significance of these findings, it is necessary to undertake an individual-level analysis of available election data in each country. Upon completion, I use a multi-level regression model controlled for time to establish significance across cases. Based on those results, I move towards a qualitative understanding of the relationship between Green parties and a strong electoral representation for women in order to further explore this phenomenon.

**Individual-country Analysis**

The first portion of my individual analysis involved running one-way ANOVA tests on each case with all parties which consistently hold seats across the sampled time period included in each country. The dependent variable for each test is either “Percentage of Women Elected” or “Percentage of Women Candidates” and the independent variable is “Party”. This allows for a visualization of the variance of each party’s seats and candidate spots held by women, as well as the median level for each party to be compared. The first test shows the variance of the percentage of women elected in both the Australian Senate and House of Representatives from 1996 (when the Green’s first Senate seat was won), until 2016 (when the last national election was held). Parties included are the Australian Green Party, Katter’s Australian Party, The Australian Labor Party, The Liberal Democratic Party, and the Liberal National Party which is an electoral coalition between the Liberal Party and the National Party which have worked together over this time period. The Liberal National Coalition and the Australian Labor Party have been primarily dominant at the national level during this period and have each controlled the House of Representatives and Senate at various points. The other parties are relatively minor in terms of seats in comparison.
Figure 1. **One-way ANOVA test for percentage of women elected in Australia by party**

This test shows that while the Green Party has had the highest variance in women elected, it is the Liberal Democratic Party that has the highest median percentage of women elected. This variance may suggest that there is a significant difference in women’s representation over time which will be further explored in later sections. The Labor Party also has a relatively high median and a consistently low variance over the period. This result may be deceptive however, as the Liberal Democratic Party has not held a seat in either House since 2001. When the sample is adjusted to the most recent five elections, the Green Party has the highest median level of women elected. On the other end of the spectrum, the Liberal National and Katter’s parties have dependably low variance and medians of women throughout the period.
Figure 2. One-way ANOVA test for percentage of women elected in Australia by party

When the percentage of candidates is examined in Australian national elections over the same time period, the Green Party’s representation of women is even more obvious. They have both the highest median and the variance is over a much higher percentage than other parties. Labor and the Liberal Democrats are nearly identical in terms of median, but the Liberal Democrats’ low sample size once again impacts their variance. Katter’s has such a low level of women’s candidacy they do not even register in this test. I did not run this test at the Australian state level as the sample size would be far too small for an accurate result on the individual state level.

When examining the percentage of women elected in New Zealand, the one-way ANOVA test is by far the most illustrative of the trend examined. New Zealand is unique in this study as it is a unitary, unicameral state with a mixed-member proportional system. This allows for the proliferation of minor parties which can win seats and no state or provincial governments to compare it to. The parties included in this test have won seats in national elections from the first time the Green Party won a seat (1999), to the most recent national election (2017) and include: ACT New Zealand, Alliance, The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand (Green), New Zealand Labour Party (Labour), Maori Party, The New Zealand National Party (National), New Zealand First, and United Future.
Based on this test the Green Party has both variance at the highest percentage, and the highest median percentage of women elected. They are followed by ACT and Labour who each have large sample sizes, then by Alliance which has not been a major electoral force since the first election in this sample. The variance between parties is also much lower for New Zealand than in the other cases, with only New Zealand First and United Future being markedly lower. Interestingly, these trends totally reverse in terms of the percentages of candidates who are women in New Zealand parties.
In terms of candidates, the Maori party is markedly higher than any other party, with the Green Party coming in third behind Labour. The Green party has a very low level of variation, however, indicating that they are consistently high performers when it comes to nominating women candidates. Part of the Maori party’s success in this instance may be due to the low number of candidates they run in each election – typically far less than most other parties. Of note is how low the percentage of women candidates is for ACT compared to the percentage of women they elect, and how low New Zealand First and United Future are overall. The relationship between more right-wing parties electing a higher percentage of women than they have candidates is something worth exploring in future study.

Lastly, I did not include this test of percentage of seats in the Canadian context because of the same small sample size at the federal level as Australia. I did, however, include a one-way ANOVA test of the percentage of women candidates for all of the federal parties as well as the provincial parties in provinces with a Green elected as the sample size is much larger and not skewed by outliers in the same way as the seats won test would be. Parties included are: The Bloc Quebecois, The Conservative Party of Canada, The Green Party of Canada, The Liberal Party of Canada, The New Democratic Party (NDP), The People’s Alliance of New Brunswick, and the Progressive Conservatives.
Among the federal parties, the NDP has the highest variance level of women’s candidates but the Green Party has the highest median as well as the largest outliers. When considering the provincial parties, the People’s Alliance has the highest median, but with a very small sample size of one election, consisting of one election and 29 candidates. This result is somewhat inconclusive and must less supportive of the hypothesis that Green Party’s are the most representative of women in comparison to the other countries in this study. To achieve a more conclusive result, a multilevel regression model comparing the parties across countries is required.

Multi-level Analysis

While the individual variance tests allow for the visualization of the hypothesis, they do not test its significance, or allow for a cross-country analysis. While it does appear that in general, Green parties have a high percentage of both women elected and women candidates, it has not been determined whether this is at a statistically significant level for all cases. The multi-level regression tables for the percentage of women elected and the percentage of women candidates with the party variable controlled for country can be found in Appendix E. As anticipated based on the previous tests, the results are positively significant with The Australian Green Party being statistically significant at the 95th percentile in terms of percentage of women elected while the Green party of Aotearoa New Zealand is significant at the 99th percentile. Additionally, the Labour Party of Australia is also significant at the 95th percentile. No
other party's percentage of women is statistically significant, including the Green Party of Canada, and the New Zealand Labour Party. This may be due to the small sample size of the Canadian context and shows the model is not unduly influenced by the Green Party of Canada's federal outlier.

When examining the regression model for the percentage of candidates, the results differ slightly. The Australian Greens now have a positive relationship with significance at the 99th percentile while the New Zealand Greens have significance at the 95th percentile in the positive direction. Both countries' Labour parties become significant at the 99th percentile. Perhaps most significantly, the Canadian Green Party is significant at the 95th percentile as well as the New Democratic Party which is significant at the 99th percentile. In neither model is there an example of party's being significant in the opposite direction, or, for having a low percentage of women. Both these models provide support for the thesis that Green parties have more women as candidates and elect more women than other parties although this conclusion is somewhat moderate considering the significance of the Labour and New Democratic Parties. Finally, when the "year" variable is added to the model, there are no significant findings. This suggests that there is no election that is a significant outlier to bias the results and that the findings in this chapter are applicable over the time span of this project.
Chapter 3.

The Greens in Australia and Canada

This chapter begins with an explanation of its title. This project originally set out to capture the experience of Green women in three countries: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Throughout the interview participant recruitment process however, it became clear that the sample would be limited to accounts of Green women in Australia and Canada only. While Canadian interviewees were conducted based on previously established connections, no such connection existed elsewhere. Three Australian politicians expressed that they agreed to participate because they were interested in the project, and ultimately because they were not sitting during the interview period and had more spare time. There is also simply a much greater number of Australian Greens in office than is the case in New Zealand where most of the eight elected Greens sit as Ministers and do not have the time required to assist with my research. Therefore, the scope of my interviews is limited to two countries but retains a variety of perspectives and backgrounds including veteran and newly elected politicians, and party leaders and founders in both countries which could be conceivably compared to the makeup of Green parties in other countries. The final list of interviewees can be found in Appendix F.

The inclusion of men in the British Columbia (BC) Green Party was also something I did not necessarily intend on when this project was conceptualized. I am primarily interested in capturing the experiences of women in Green parties and worried that including men’s perspectives may lessen the impact of women’s unique voices which I wished to highlight. This concern has not been substantiated, and in fact, the experiences of men within the BC Green Party amplifies many of the views expressed by Green women about the different perspective they have on politics in comparison as their responses differed significantly in their responses to key questions.

Research Protocol

I began the interview recruitment process in January 2018 by emailing an explanation of my project and interview consent form to my contact with the British Columbia Green Party, as well as to a list of 23 other potential interview participants
from Canada, Australia and New Zealand. I identified these individuals using party websites and contacted every elected woman with a publicly available email address who was not a Minister with the assumption that those individuals would be unlikely to have the required time to participate. Where an individual email address was not available, I sent a general email to the party office. From the 23 total potential interviewees, I received responses from eleven – eight confirmations, one rejection, and two who expressed interest but could not ultimately commit time from their schedules. Interview participants cover a breadth of experiences: three from Australia, five from Canada, five from the state/provincial level in both countries, two from a federal level in both countries, and one from the municipal level in Canada. Two participants founded Green Parties, four have been the leader of their party, and five are serving their first term in their current position. Six participants are women, with two men providing a counter-perspective. Perspective on the parties studied comes primarily from my own experience working within the BC Green caucus, examination of party documents online, and brief explanations from interviewees at the start of each interview outlining their position within the party.

With this diversity of experience and wealth of knowledge about Green parties and their histories, I aim to present a rich account of women and Green Parties. Interviews were conducted in February 2018 with all Canadian interviews taking place in person, and Australian interviews taking place via Skype or phone conversation. The interviews began as semi-structured scripts with fairly similar questions for all participants and gradually became more open-ended as I became more comfortable with the subject matter and elite interviewing in general.

After audio files were transcribed by hand, they were initially coded in NVivo using pre-determined codes that I had created based on both the questions I had asked and my initial impressions of the interview data. Following that initial round of coding, interview data was subjected to secondary, inductive coding based on themes that I had not initially anticipated. After that process, I had six overarching code themes, further broken down into 22 sub-themes which contained more specific concepts and ideas. Those themes and the results contained within them are detailed in the following section.
Interview Results

With the motivating theory of ecofeminism guiding the project, I aimed to thread ecofeminist ideas throughout my interviews. Based on the idea that it is women who are most affected by the impacts of climate change and will therefore become involved in the fight against it, I sought to ascertain whether interviewees had a significant history of climate change activism based on their experiences as women (Shiva 1989, Mortimer-Sandilands 2008). This goal was broken down into two essential questions: what are green women’s collective stories of environmental activism and are they motivated by something based in their experiences as women? Inherent to the second question is the need to avoid essentialist claims. While the story I am presenting relies on a claim that there is something unique to women in Green Parties, this is not based in something biological or essential within women. Rather, it is the collective experience that women have due to their subjugation by larger patriarchal forces that is applied similarly to the environment (Lahar 1991, 35). The shared history of women and the planet as exploited objects for the progress of man binds them and positions women as protectors of the natural world (Mies 2006, Berry 2015).

Feminism

As such a large, overarching category, feminism was broken down in to several sub-categories. Surprisingly, it was the “women’s experience” code rather than the “ecofeminism” code which yielded the most extensive data as it allowed for the exploration of feminist themes while skirting any potential issues with essentialism. Green MLA Adam Olsen sees this play out in the recruitment process because “if you ask a woman to run for you, she will most certainly say no the first time, the second time, the third time. You most certainly have to pursue women candidates in a different way”. This sentiment largely rings true for the women interviewees and is well documented in the literature (Fox and Lawless 2010; 2011, Lawless 2015). Although women are often just as or more qualified to run for office as men, they often hesitate or refuse requests to do so due to a combination of socialization and self-perception (Lawless 2015, 354). These factors create perceptions amongst the general public and within women themselves that becoming a political leader is “inappropriate or undesirable for women and depresses their political ambition” (ibid). City Councillor Adriane Carr describes how in her experience, women are the nurturers who have trouble asking for help when it
comes to things like fundraising, which is critical in order to be considered for a winnable seat. Carr describes the consideration of the impact on future generations as a critical party of every political decision she makes which she sees as setting her apart from her male colleagues.

Interviewees expressed anti-feminist experiences, both from their perspective, and in their experiences as well. This rejection of specifically ecofeminist principles was made explicit by several interviewees upon initial questioning. West Australian Green leader Alison Xamon bluntly states, “[n]o, I don’t think women are better stewards [of the environment]. I am firmly of this view”. Western Australian Member of Legislative Council Diane Evers answered very similarly: “Better stewards? I don’t know. I don’t know if there’s better. A lot of males were good too”. When reflecting on their own experiences, however, interviewees were much more likely to relate to and support ecofeminist principles. In fact, three participants acknowledged the direct impact ecofeminism had or continues to have on their party. Carr describes the existence of an entire ecofeminist caucus in the early days of the BC Green Party which helped solidify party principles including consensus decision-making which she attributes to the success found by the now majority-women Vancouver City Council. Xamon described the West Australian Greens as a “fundamentally ecofeminist party”. Furthermore, “from the get-go, the intersections of patriarchy and oppression of women and oppression of the environment was always quite overtly discussed”. It is clear that ecofeminist theory is a significant factor operating within Green Parties and something interview participants are aware of.

Party and Environmental Movement History

Without exception, the Green women I talked to had extensive experience with environmental activism. Often, this experience pre-dates the existence of Green Parties in their respective locations, and in the case of the interviewees who founded Green Parties, was essential to their doing so. Notably, this background with environmental activism combined with a perceived failure by existing parties to address climate concerns served as the catalyst for interviewees to found their respective parties. Carr describes her work with the Wilderness Committee, opposing logging in environmentally sensitive areas during the 1980’s which became a dangerous pursuit as their opponents would physically attack the environmentalists. While no other interviewees described their experience with environmentalism as potentially dangerous, in all cases it has
involved activism over a prolonged period. BC Green MLA Sonia Furstenau became well known prior to her provincial election win through her work defending the Shawnigan Lake watershed from industrial pollution. West Australian Green Leader Alison Xamon has been involved with the party for 29 years, both as a candidate and supporter and in the late 1980’s viewed the party as “an extension of [environmental] activism” seen in groups such as the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace.

Former Canadian Green Party candidate Lynne Quarmby attracted the party’s attention through her activism. Quarmby started committing acts of civil disobedience in 2009, including blocking coal trains and eventually being arrested on Burnaby Mountain for violating the Kinder Morgan protest injunction. Victorian Green Party founder and Senator Janet Rice’s history of environmental activism stretches back to the early 1980’s and her work in nature conservation, lobbying the government to enhance protections against logging and forestry operations. West Australian Member of Legislative Council Diane Evers got her political start on local council running with a party specifically dedicated to protecting forests. Prior to that, she worked as a local activist, petitioning the government to address problems with algae blooms in her local lake.

While all interviewees described an affinity for the planet and a commitment to environmental principles, only women identified themselves as environmental activists. A history of activism was shared by all women, but was explicitly rejected by a male interviewee, BC Green Party leader Andrew Weaver. While acknowledging that activism is an important part of environmentalism and a valuable experience for others, about his own career as a climate scientist he states, “there was no activism per se. I haven’t been an activist”. Weaver also classifies Furstenau as coming from an “activist background” while the other male interviewee, Adam Olsen, has not quite the same level of activist background as Furstenau. The authors describe women’s activism as “relational” where an emphasis is placed community and networks and their role in long-term change. It is possible that women’s “relational activism” is a significant driver for their Green Party candidacy and success as they leverage their connections and lived experience within the movement as evidence of the efficacy in addressing environmental challenges.
Party Culture and Ideology

Closely connected with an environmental activism background is the role of other major parties in inspiring interviewees to become or stay involved in politics. This is particularly true for party founders like Carr. Despite assurances from the former NDP government in the early 1980’s that everything would be fine, the hugely critical issue of logging in ecologically sensitive areas was not adequately addressed. Carr describes this inaction as a catalyst for her entry into politics and eventual founding of the Green Party of BC. Victorian Green Party founder Rice described a nearly identical situation where the supposedly progressive Labor Party repeatedly betrayed environmental activists. After being directly lied to by the Environment Minister, Rice decided she had had enough. She described her thoughts at the time:

I’m fed up with the Labor Party, you just can’t trust them, they will promise you one thing and then in government do something else completely different. So I threw myself into forming the Greens in Victoria.

Dissatisfaction or outright conflict with traditional parties is a shared experience for the BC Greens. Furstenau describes years of challenges dealing with the governing Liberal Party and indifference from the opposition NDP. Weaver frequently cites his dissatisfaction with climate change policy inspiring his entrance to politics, as well as his inability to reconcile the political culture of the other parties with his own values. Fellow Green MLA Adam Olsen is less critical but describes a culture of “retail politics” dominating the Liberal Party and to a lesser extent the NDP which allow them to rely on party reputation over substance. In all cases, it appears that interviewees either founded or joined the Green Party largely because of something lacking in existing parties. That could be an absence of concrete environmental policy or a perceived conflict in values. Regardless of the ideology of other parties, and indeed of the Green Party in question, all Greens expressed a political mismatch with other parties driving their political affiliation. This is not necessarily based on an ideological position but rather a set of policy priorities typically not prioritized by other parties.

Structural Issues

Closely connected to the idea of disconnection with more traditional political parties, is the structure of the political system itself and that impact that can have on a newer, smaller party such as the Greens. Although the Canadian Green Party and BC
Green Party were founded prior to some of the Australian parties in this study, they have experienced much less success and when seats have been won, it came at a much later date. Rice attributes the difference in Green Party’s electoral success almost entirely to the electoral system used. For example, the Australian Senate uses a Single-Transferable Vote Proportional system which she attributes to not only the Green Party’s relatively high success, but the high percentage of women in the Senate because of its smaller electoral districts and party lists. In comparison to the Senate, the Australian House of Representatives uses a type of preferential voting that Rice describes as “better than first past the post, but only just”. She attributes this majoritarian electoral process for the singular Green elected there and suggests that a more representational proportional representation system as the most viable way to elect both more Greens and more women.

Carr echoes this sentiment and connects the lack of Greens elected, as well as the relatively low percentage of women elected in Canada, to the absence of proportional representation, and specifically a list system. Quarmby takes it even further, stating that “without proportional representation, Greens don’t have much of a chance”. Where Greens have found success, it is due to either the previously referenced dissatisfaction with more traditional parties, or due to the popularity of the few Greens who have managed to get elected. This relates directly to the final concept explored in the interviews: critical mass. Interestingly, interviewees do not speak of a difference in political or party cultures between countries which may help to explain some differences. The ideological differences of the Canadian Greens to other Green parties was not mentioned, and perhaps begs further exploration in future work.

**Critical Mass Theory**

Every interviewee who has been involved in the founding of a party referenced the same person as being part of their inspiration – Petra Kelly of the West German Greens. After requesting information about the West German Greens upon reading about them in the newspaper, Carr was inspired enough to start her own Green Party in BC, later welcoming Kelly to BC and help with the effort. Kelly made a similar trip to Australia in the 1980’s to help parties get situated there where she encountered and inspired Rice to start her party. Other longstanding Green women were also mentioned by respondent women as inspirations such as Jo Valentine, the first Green Senator in
Australia, Christine Milne, the first Green elected in Tasmania, and Elizabeth May, the Canadian Green Party leader who helped so many other women get elected across Canada including Carr and Furstenau. In all cases, a singular elected Green woman with strong feminist principles and a commitment to helping other women directly or indirectly led to the election of all my interviewees, regardless of gender. This is consistent with findings by Childs and Krook (2009) that the presence of one feminist or “woman-identified-woman” may do more for advancing the status of other women in politics than even a so-called critical mass of women can do (137). These “critical actors” such as Kelly embolden other women by taking action that “mobilizes the resources of institutions to improve the situation for themselves” and other women (Childs and Krook 2009, 138).

Of course, one Green woman is essentially the opposite of critical mass which requires that women constitute a “large minority” of elected representatives in order to have a major impact on policy outcomes (Krook 2015). Within parties, however, it is possible that having such a large percentage of elected women as well as candidates may have an impact on how that party operates. According to Xamon, since the outset of the West Australian Greens, it was women coming together around issues of nuclear disarmament “that really permeated and set the tone for the party”. Interviewees provided examples of this lasting influence on party culture in the behavior Green Party politicians typically express in comparison to other politicians. Furstenau sees this as present in all members, regardless of gender and is represented by the way Greens refuse to engage in heckling and are committed to engaging in politics with “integrity”.

Did this original critical mass of female presence in Green parties influence policy and party culture? Interviewees agree that it did. It does not, however, appear to have led to those policies or the dominance of women being assured. Quantitative and interview data indicates that the once universal majority of women in Australian Green parties has started to drop both in terms of elected representatives and candidates. Rice explains that historically, men have not been interested in running as candidates in unwinnable seats. As more Greens have won seats however, men are willing to run in any seat to gain experience and eventually run where they have a better chance of getting elected. She states:
These young men then will displace women, particularly those with families who decide they have better things to do than run an unwinnable campaign but end up losing the experience. As more men fill spots within the party, women are displaced, and with it there is the potential for a loss of (ecofeminist) party culture.

All interviewees expressed concern with the possibility of losing what they perceive as the differentiating factor between them and other parties. At its heart, this is a commitment to consensus-based decision making, maintaining an atmosphere where people of all types feel comfortable, and a rejection of “political games” which are central to the Global Green Charter. Furstenau acknowledged that for Green Parties in Canada, the current period, prior to electoral success, is the perfect time to think about how the party’s principles can be upheld, and potentially learn from their Australian colleagues. Electoral success in its own right has never been the goal for Furstenau,

You don’t run for the Green Party [in Canada] because you want power, it is the most circuitous route to never having power in your life. […] What we are motivated by is purpose and the work that we want to achieve while we’re here.

For his part, Weaver argues that this is precisely what makes Green Parties so attractive to women, putting the good of the future above the rewards of today.

**Analysis**

If Green parties attract more women because women care about the future, does that mean that men do not? How about other parties? While this turn of phrase may be too glib to describe an electoral phenomenon, I argue that it may be indicative of something important. More specifically, I argue, Green parties operate outside of the political mainstream which empowers them to focus on more specific policy issues rather than trying to appeal to a broad base of voters like larger parties often do. Because women interviewees entered politics to accomplish a predetermined environmental policy goal rather than to become politicians, this party feature is particularly appealing to them. This is intrinsically tied to the concept of “ambition,” which is repeatedly referenced by interviewees and within the literature (Fox and Lawless 2011, 2014a, 2014b). Women are less likely to consider running for office, less likely to enter professions that typically lead to political careers, and their ambition may be more tied to specific policy goals, while men who enter politics may seek more overarching power (Fox and Lawless 2014b). Furthermore, an explicit history of both ecofeminist principles
and female leadership has historically led to both the targeted selection of women candidates, and the high potential for women to succeed within the party. This may contribute to why Green Parties have been able to field such high percentages of female candidates in all countries studied.

Largely growing out of the roots of nuclear disarmament parties, addressing environmental causes has always been the main goal of Green parties, regardless of a certain pre-defined identification with a position on the political spectrum (Hartshorn-Sanders 2006, 44). For interviewees who have multi-decade histories with the party, it was this commitment to the environment without a specific ideological tilt that was so appealing. Negative experiences with the governing party occurred regardless of that party’s political leaning, and reactions to it were described as requiring a new way of approaching politics rather than the desire to start or join a party with a specific place on the political spectrum. Over time, Green parties have often come to be associated with more leftist or politically progressive causes, but this is not always the case, and I argue this is more an effect of women joining rather than a cause.

Interviewees formed and joined Green parties to address environmental shortfalls left by other parties. They expressed frustration and, in some cases, outright disgust with the environmental policies or lack thereof of other parties across all sides of the political spectrum. This lack of political spectrum adherence is also present within Green parties themselves. Based on findings presented by the Manifesto Project, Green parties worldwide are particularly difficult to classify (Volkens et al. 2018). The Green Party of Canada has been classified as the farthest left party in the 2011 federal election but the third most right party in the 2015 election. The Green Party in Australia is consistently the most left party, while the Greens in New Zealand have traded off with the Maori party, and in some cases Labour, for that spot. While this lack of consistency may have roots in changing party leadership or public sentiment, no matter what their left-right classification, a commitment to environmental principles is always the foremost policy.

This unwavering commitment to environmental principles is directly related to the different way interviewees describe ambition manifesting in women and men. Nearly all Green parties studied were founded by women out of an explicit desire to combat problems they saw as negatively impacting their communities that the government was
not addressing. Rather than strive to form government or even have a large electoral presence necessarily, these parties helped shift public awareness and hold governing parties to account, eventually picking up a seat or two along the way. This “circuitous route to never having power” as described by Furstenau did not attract those with ambitions as career politicians. Those with an environmental interest who had designs on political success were more likely to try to work within other parties and make change there, according to Xamon. As the Green Party has become more electorally successful in Australia, for example, the overall percentage of male candidates and elected members has increased. This phenomenon occurs despite concerted efforts by those within parties at so-called “positive discrimination” tactics to recruit more women. The already difficult task of convincing women to run for election is made harder when potential candidates feel pushed out by career-motivated men. Party members tasked with candidate recruitment describe making concerted and special efforts to ensure that women feel both supported, and desired as potential candidates at a level not shown to men.

Women’s electoral success in Green Parties is less easy to explain, but their lack of success running in Canada is relatively straightforward. Respondents were unequivocal in their assertion that it is the electoral system that prevents women from Green parties, and often in general, from being elected in larger numbers. Rice’s recounting of the differences between two supposed proportional systems is telling. When elections have smaller districts, the chances for minor parties to be elected increases since the vote share required is much lower. Additionally, when elections feature party lists like in the Australian Senate’s proportional system, parties have incentives to list women at the top to avoid accusations of sexism. This combination of factors opens doors for both smaller parties, and the women within them to have success and explains why a proportional representation system does not simply allow more men from smaller parties to be elected. This contrasts with the Australian House of Representatives which uses a run-off voting system and national districts. With huge vote shares required to win and no lists, neither women nor men from smaller parties have a high chance of election.

This finding has a strong basis in the quantitative data findings and in established literature. Canada’s first-past-the-post elections and Australia’s House of Representatives are the only examples in Table A of Western Democracies with both 1)
low overall numbers of Greens elected and 2) low percentages of women among those elected from any party. Representation literature has long asserted that the party system of a state, and party lists specifically, is the best predictor for women’s representation (Norris, 1985; Rule 1987; Curtin 2003). While the impact of any proportional representation system is notable, only specific systems with similar characteristics to the Australian Senate – namely high district magnitude and lists – are consistent indicators of women’s electoral success (Lane 1995; Matland and Studlar 1996; Bernauer et al. 2015). These same characteristics are found in other states with high percentages of Green women like New Zealand and Germany and seems to provide a satisfying explanation for the difference in Green women’s representation between cases such as those states and Canada. It does not explain, however, why Green Parties elect significantly more women than other parties in countries that do have proportional representation as other parties should ostensibly benefit from the same system, or why similar systems such as Canada and Australia produce such different results.

This is where the concept of ecofeminism comes in to play. As referenced throughout this study, ecofeminism defies a singular definition, but is primarily understood to mean a connection between women’s experiences of oppression and the oppression of the natural world through patriarchal forces (Shiva 1989; Salleh 1997). Proponents and critics of ecofeminism alike are quick to point out the potential problems with equating women with nature and any assertion that women, as a group, exhibit essentialist characteristics (Sandi 1993; Archambault 1993). Rather than exhibiting natural characteristics, I reference lived experiences that women in similar situations may have in common, potentially contributing to their priorities and actions. In this study, that situation is environmental activism and politics which as I have previously pointed out, unites all women interviewees. Interviewees described constant battles for minor environmental gains at the hands of ambivalent-at-best governments, as well as experiences of discrimination or hardship in the political realm. This experience is at the heart of ecofeminist theory which many interviewees describe as guiding their actions, especially as it pertains to always considering the future impacts of policies both on the environment, and the most vulnerable populations in their jurisdictions.

As the interviewees describe ecofeminist principles as guiding their actions, it is possible voters use ideas related to ecofeminist claims to vote for candidates. Although quick to dismiss the idea that women are naturally “better stewards of the environment”
than men, interviewees described how they see women politicians, particularly within Green Parties, using different decision-making processes than their male colleagues. Carr lists the questions she asks herself prior to making any decisions which are:

- Is this going to as my decision yes or no evidently move us forward and a tangible way on some bigger issue. Will it make that kind of a difference?
- Is it fair and equitable? Will it leave our children and their children better off?

Carr goes on to state that she does not believe she has ever heard a male colleague undertake a similar thought process when making decisions, although Weaver invokes a very similar concept when talking about “intergenerational equity,” which he has long described as the cornerstone of Green Party thought. Prior to becoming a politician, Weaver taught a class on intergenerational equity where the main question is, “does the present generation owe anything to future generations in terms of the quality of environment that we leave, yes or no?“.

The idea of intergenerational equity is a concept expressed either explicitly or implicitly by all interviewees, regardless of gender. Furstenau encapsulates intergenerational equity with her description of those she worked with prior to election in the movement to eliminate toxic waste from the Shawnigan Lake watershed. Supporters ranging in ages from young children to grandparents came day after day to ensure the resource they depended on would be available to future generations as well. Ensuring policy decisions are made by governments that consider the future rather than simply the current situation is a defining feature of how interviewees see their respective parties.

Even in the context of value shared by women and men, the way voters typically think of “female” behavior might benefit women in Green Parties above men. This relates to the final concept of “nurturing” behavior explored in the interviews. The way Green Parties function – focusing on long-term effects and impacts on future generations, the connection between the environment and health, refusing to engage in bullying behaviors such as heckling – is described as “nurturing” by interviewees. Weaver explicitly links this concept with the feminine, stating, “if you were to say if you want to assign a word, a label either male or female to nurturing, I would suspect 9/10 people would say it's a female trait”. Carr also describes women as the “nurturers” who “give rather than take,” while Rice describes women as “more collaborative and more caring
and more nurturing than your average man”. If nurturing is a positive characteristic of Green Parties, and something associated with women, then it is possible voters who are looking to elect the best possible Green may look to a woman candidate to fulfill that expectation. While testing this effect on voters is outside of the scope of this study, interviewees suggested they have experienced it anecdotally in their campaign experiences.

This is not to say that all women are “nurturers” or will be successful Green candidates. Interviewees made that point clear by acknowledging that oftentimes, this is simply not true, and that assuming otherwise is a harmful stereotype. On the other hand, when voters who may be similarly disaffected by mainstream parties as my interviewees were, they may look to the candidate who most embodies the opposite characteristics of a typical politician. Additionally, prior research has indicated that voters see women as a better choice for implementing “left” or more progressive policies such as increased welfare rates or actions benefitting minority populations (Coffee 2013, Erzeel and Celis 2016). As Green Parties have tended to have a high percentage of women within them, those policy priorities have become increasingly salient, leading voters to see Green Parties as “lefty” (Carroll et al. 2009, 261). This perception could lead to a net benefit for women running in Green Parties, and perhaps other parties which offer an alternative to traditional parties and that market themselves as a more humane option. For that to happen, small parties must have a chance of winning at all, and women’s names have to be on the ballot. That could be why this benefit is not seen for women in Green Parties that do not have the benefit of running under a highly representative electoral system.
Chapter 4.

Conclusion

Potential explanations for Green women’s electoral success flow from explanations for Green parties’ typically high levels of women candidates. I suggest that women are disproportionately attracted to and become Green party candidates for three major reasons. The first, is that women who enter Green Parties, to a much higher degree than men, do so in order to accomplish a specific environmental goal. In the case of the participants in this study, that goal was stoked by many years of environmental activism prior to becoming involved in politics, informing their policy priorities. Interviewees held the common belief that comparatively, men entered Green Parties without this substantial activist background and are typically more interested in the benefits that may come with a political position. As a result, more men have become interested in running with Green Parties as the parties have become more electorally viable as this increases their chances of obtaining an elected position. This is tied to the idea of “ambition” and how it is perceived as manifesting differently in men and women. Women are seen as having ambitions to fix a problem, while men have stronger overall career ambitions according to participants.

The second reason women run with Green Parties is due to the culture of the parties themselves. Interviewees described consistent failures of other, more mainstream parties to address those specific environmental priorities they aimed to address. Green Parties function as the political apparatus to satisfying women’s environmental policy ambitions, often without necessarily having to win an election. Simply being able to apply pressure to governing parties within a party apparatus can be hugely beneficial to a cause, and traditionally, Green parties have emphasized this environmental activism over electoral success. Primarily founded by women, Green party culture has revolved around the needs and desires of those women, creating a space for women-centered policy in an oftentimes male-dominated political environment which continues today. The third reason is that quite simply, Green Parties try to attract women candidates and particularly did so in their initial years because they understand it is in their best interest to do so. This “strategic essentialism” based on the idea that women will be successful Greens appears to be a common practice amongst parties in
my study. While the data has yet to be recorded on whether this assumption about women and Green parties is correct, anecdotally, it appears to be important.

I use the concept of ecofeminism to primarily explain how Green Parties leverage this large percentage of female candidates in to large percentages of elected women. Green Parties, as both special interest parties and perceived parties of the “left” most likely attract a specific kind of voter than more mainstream parties do. That voter hopes to elect the candidate who is most likely to advocate for those special interests such as “intergenerational equity”. If the voter agrees with the interviewees that women are more nurturing and that the values of Green Parties are best fulfilled by nurturing people, than it is possible they will judge a woman to be better able to represent those values than a man. This benefit depends upon the ability of Green Parties to get elected at all, and for women’s names to be promoted. This may only be possible in electoral systems that utilize voting techniques such as single-transferable vote, as is the case in the Australian Senate and helping explain why this phenomenon is not observed as strongly in the Canadian case.

The potential for further research concerning this study is significant. As an exploratory study, this project aims to contribute new theoretical ideas to the political representation literature but does not offer concrete or generalizable explanations. Research on Green women’s electoral success would benefit from research focused on voter perspective. Currently, no research exists examining whether voters do indeed see women as “better Greens” which would be enormously beneficial to explore. Examining ecofeminist explanations for Green women’s electoral success from the voter side would help offer more concrete findings on this topic. The scope of this research could also be expanded beyond women to feature a more intersectional lens. Interviewees made valuable points about the stereotypes attached to both age and ethnicity that could also have impacts on how voters see candidates, although this aspect is beyond the reach of this study.

Despite its limitations, I believe this project offers a valuable contribution, both within the literature, and to the political community. By linking ecofeminism with more traditional explanations for women’s representation, commonly held beliefs are expanded upon. Parties that seek to expand their level of women’s representation may look to the example of Green Parties as to how they could accomplish this goal. And
women who want their voices heard and to satisfy their ambitions, whatever they may be, can examine parties with a critical eye to determine their best option to run with. No matter which party they ultimately choose, every political body is improved when the voices and experiences of women are upheld.
References


Global Greens, Who we are. (n.d.). Retrieved October 17, 2018, from https://www.globalgreens.org/who-we-are

Appendix A.

Data Sources for Table 1

Data about the country, house, and percentage of seats held by women overall is from the Interparliamentary Union’s “Women in Government 2017” dataset, data about electoral systems is from the Quality of Government database, and the variable “Western Capitalist Democracy?” is based on Duane Swank’s Comparative Political Parties dataset where 21 “capitalist democracies” were identified for study based on their political and economic comparability.
Appendix B.

Sample Interview Script

1) Can you please describe what drew you to your role with the Green party?

2) Can you tell me about your experience with environmental causes prior to your political career?

3) What would you say influenced your decision to run with the Green party?

4) A main facet of ecofeminism is the linking of women’s priorities and green priorities. What do you make of that?

5) Do you know of any particular supports available for women candidates in the party? Could you please describe them for me.

6) How would you describe the gender composition of the party and any effect that has on you?

7) The Greens have only had less than 50% women in the senate once since first entering – why do you think that is?

8) Why do you think the Senate is so much more representative of women than parliament, despite both using a form of proportional representation?

9) Please describe your reaction to the following statement: “Women are better stewards of the environment because of their unique experiences as women”.

10) Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
## Appendix C.

### Interview Contact List

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Sonia Furstenau</td>
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<td>Andrew Weaver</td>
<td>MLA, party leader</td>
<td>Canada/BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth May</td>
<td>MP, party leader</td>
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<td>Diane Evers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynne Quarmby</td>
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### Appendix D.

### Descriptive Features of the Quantitative Data

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## Appendix E.

### Multilevel Regression Tables

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<td>(11.571)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAN: Party NDP</td>
<td>20.250</td>
<td></td>
<td>(12.384)</td>
</tr>
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<td>-2.583</td>
<td></td>
<td>(11.916)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11.250</td>
<td></td>
<td>(20.639)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>21.750**</td>
<td></td>
<td>(9.230)</td>
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Percentage of Women Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAN: Party Bloc</td>
<td>-0.750</td>
<td></td>
<td>(7.436)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN: Party Con</td>
<td>-4.250</td>
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<td>(7.436)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUS: Party Green</td>
<td>25.670***</td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.624)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN: Party Green</td>
<td>12.000**</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.258)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ: Party Green</td>
<td>13.750**</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.382)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS: Party Labor</td>
<td>16.870***</td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.624)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ: Party Labor</td>
<td>16.750***</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.382)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS: Party Lib</td>
<td>7.981</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN: Party Lib</td>
<td>6.875</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.258)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS: Party Liberal</td>
<td>-0.750</td>
<td></td>
<td>(7.436)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS: Party Lib Nat</td>
<td>-0.893</td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.868)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUS: Party National</td>
<td>7.000</td>
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<td>(6.071)</td>
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<td>NZ: Party National</td>
<td>3.893</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.382)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN: Party NDP</td>
<td>15.750***</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.760)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ: Party NZF</td>
<td>-5.850</td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.760)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN: Party PA</td>
<td>17.750*</td>
<td></td>
<td>(9.600)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>27.250***</td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.293)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Observations: 135
Log Likelihood: 577.082
Akaikes Inf. Crit.: 1,198.164

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
# Appendix F.

## Interview Participants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Elected level</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison Xamon</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>State – West Australia</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Council and Party Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane Evers</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>State – West Australia</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet Rice</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>Senator, Founder of the Victorian Green Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriane Carr</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Municipal – Vancouver</td>
<td>City Councillor, Founder of the BC Green Party, former Federal Green Party candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia Furstenau</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Provincial – BC</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Assembly and BC Green Party Deputy Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Weaver</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Provincial - BC</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Assembly and Leader of the BC Green Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Olsen</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Provincial – BC</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Assembly and BC Green Party Whip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynne Quarmby</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>Former Green Party of Canada candidate</td>
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