The Australian Greens and the Moral Middle Class

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Abstract

Support for minor parties like the Australian Greens is often attributed to the growth of postmaterialist values among the economically secure. Yet, while the Greens draw disproportionate support from voters on higher incomes, the party's emphasis on economic redistribution and security and immigration issues is inconsistent with the Inglehart thesis. Drawing on Brett's *Moral Middle Class* this paper offers an alternative framework for understanding Green voters. In positioning their party as the defenders of an emerging global interest, this paper asserts that the Greens are drawing on a familiar theme in Australian politics; that of the national/global interest versus narrow/sectional interests. Thus, rather than simply a reincarnation of Labor's socialist left, the Greens could be considered the beneficiaries of Australian Liberalism's tradition of civic responsibility.

Selected Stream

Australian Politics

Introduction

The electoral rise of the Australian Greens is a curious phenomenon in modern politics and the subject of contrasting academic interpretation. In particular, disproportionate support for the party among voters on high incomes is inconsistent with the traditional class based understanding of voting behaviour in Australia. Rather than voting to further their economic interests, affluent Green voters are supporting a party with redistributive economic policies that may in fact threaten these interests. Inglehart's postmaterialist thesis could explain this anomaly and he notes a correlation between growing up in "relative economic affluence and physical safety"[1] and support for quality of life issues, along with an "emphasis" on "subjective wellbeing."[2] Thus, as societies become more affluent and secure Inglehart asserts that there is a shift away from economic oriented voting in favour of new postmaterialist values; like environmentalism and human rights.[3] Yet, while there is an academic consensus that Green voters hold many postmaterialist values,[4] the extent to which this explains their support for the party is contestable. For instance, in their analysis of the structure of Australia's party system Ellis and Charnock

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[1] Bruce Tranter and Mark Western, 'Postmaterialist Values and Age: the Case of Australia,' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 38, No 2, 2010, 239, 240.

[2] Ronald Inglehart, *Modernisation and Postmodernisation: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton University Press, 1997, 86.

[3] Ronald Inglehart, *Modernisation and Postmodernisation: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies,* Princeton University Press, 1997, 86 and Bruce Tranter and Mark Western, 'Postmaterialist Values and Age: the Case of Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science,* Vol 38, No 2, 2010, 239, 240.

[4] See eg: David Charnock and Peter Ellis, 'The Structure of the Australian Party System and its Strategic Consequences,' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 38, No 3, November, 423, 430.

argue that the Greens' left positioning means that the party is "better described as a left-libertarian party than by Ingelhart's depiction of postmaterialists who have little interest in classic left redistributive agendas."[5] Indeed, the Greens' stance on economic redistribution and security issues does not sit easily within the Inglehart framework. Even more paradoxically, electoral support for the Greens increased during a decade (2001-2010) of relative uncertainty and volatility as issues like terrorism, national security and a global financial crisis dominated international and domestic politics. More recently, Western and Tranter have questioned the extent to which being raised in affluence and safety influences political values in Australia. Noting an absence of "generational-based postmaterialist value change," they contend that in political systems where smaller parties have a presence, postmaterialist values may simply increase as a result of these parties "highlighting and giving legitimacy to new politics issues."[6] McAllister also questions the legitimacy of the value change theory, observing a decrease in postmaterialist voters in Australia since the late 1990s that is inconsistent with the increase in postmaterialist values that Inglehart associates with economic growth.[7] In this context, there is a need to consider alternative explanations for the Greens' electoral support. While increased support for centre-right parties among traditional working class constituencies on the basis of social and "cultural" issues is well documented,[8] the drift of the affluent middle class towards parties to the left of the spectrum has been the subject of less academic attention.

If Green voters are not postmaterialist, why might they be voting beyond their class interest? Drawing on Brett's *Moral Middle Class*,[9] this paper aims to answer this question by offering an alternative framework for understanding Green voters. Using the 2010 Australian Election Study of voters in the House of Representatives[10] and material gathered from an interview with Greens' founder and former leader Dr Bob Brown, the paper examines the values of Green voters. It is argued that middle class support for the party could be considered part of a broader theme of civic responsibility in Australian politics and reflective of an expansion of the concept of good citizenship in an era of globalisation.

Brett's Moral Middle Class

In her book, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class* Brett challenges the traditional Marxist construction of class, arguing instead that the middle class in Australia is "best understood as a projected moral community whose members are identified by their possession of particular moral qualities, political values and social skills."[11] Brett argues that it is "individual attributes and moral qualities" that differentiates the middle class from other class frameworks and the middle class represents "a mode of social classification opposed to the very idea of economically based social identity and economically based

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Bruce Tranter and Mark Western, 'Postmaterialist Values and Age: the Case of Australia,' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 38, No 2, 2010, 239, 251.

[7] Ian McAllister, *The Australian Voter: 50 Years of Change*, 2011, UNSW, 210.

[8] George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, The University of Chicago Press, (2nd edition) 2002, 16 and see eg: Thomas Frank, *What's The Matter With Kansas?* Picador (2005).

[9] Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[10] Note, the author has chosen to rely on data from the House of Representatives on the basis that this is considered a more accurate reflection of voter values, given the disparity that sometimes exists between support for minor parties in the House of Representatives and the Senate (see eg: Simon Blount, 'Postmaterialism and the Vote for the Senate in Australia,' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.33, No.3, 441). Additionally, to ensure readability, figures have been rounded to the nearest decimal point which means that some graphs total to 101 or 99 per cent.

[11] Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 7-8.

social classification."[12] Rather than being constrained by economic determinants like employment, the middle class emphasises the personal "attributes" of the individual.[13] Critically, this group is unified in its rejection of the "sectional" or "class-based interest" associated with Labor politics[14] and shares a belief in good "citizenship", characterised by acting in "the national interest."[15] Brett's middle class are not simply identified by shared "values" as these are relative and therefore contestable, rather they share "moral virtues" explicitly linked to the sense of self.[16] She asserts that it is this and a shared belief in governing in the national interest that has historically "underpinned" the middle class' claim to "political power" in Australia.[17] Brett also draws a distinction between the "old middle class" traditionally associated with the Liberal Party and the "new middle class" that emerged post-war empowered by education.[18] She argues that while the old middle class drew their sense of "virtue" from the "self-discipline" associated with Protestantism, the new middle class drew their sense of authority from their advanced education and "control of knowledge."[19] Both however continued to reject the politics of sectional interest, the latter perceiving the reform agenda of Whitlam Labor to reflect a new conception of the national interest.[20] Brett notes that there are "signs" this middle class "support for Labor is weakening as the Greens become the specialist party of disinterested concern."[21] An application of Brett's middle class framework to the Australian Greens suggests that they are perhaps the contemporary beneficiaries of this tradition. It should, of course, be noted that the Labor and Liberal parties still enjoy the electoral support of a majority of middle class voters, however Brett's theory does provide a potential explanation for why this demographic (and in particular, those on higher incomes) are more inclined to support the Greens.

Beyond class interest?

Class and economic values

An analysis of the Australian Election Study from the 2010 federal election reveals an interesting contradiction between the class position of Green voters in the House of Representatives and their views on economic questions.[22]

Table 1: Class and income by party[23]

Self-identified class	Liberal %	Labor %	Nationals %	Greens %
Upper Class	2	1	1	3
Middle Class	60	45	45	63

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[12] Ibid 9.

[13] Ibid 11.

[14] Ibid 53.

[15] Ibid 11.

[16] Ibid 10.

[17] Ibid 10.

[18] Ibid 140-41.

[19] Ibid 141.

[20] Ibid 146.

[21] Ibid 216.

[22] AES, 2010, *Australian Election Study 2010* [computer file] compliers, I. McAllister, C. Bean, R.K Gibson and J.Pietsch, Australian Data Archives, Australian National University, Canberra, 2011 (ADA 1228).

[23] Ibid.

3.

Working Class	32	48	45	28
Gross annual income	Liberal	Labor	Nationals	Greens
0 to $40,000	27	30	41	24
$40,00 to $80,000	30	31	32	28
$80,00 to $120,000	22	22	16	25
$120,00 to $160,000	11	9	9	13
$160,000 +	11	8	1	10
Supervisory responsibilities at work				
Yes	59	49	48	57
No	41	51	52	43
Living urban or regional				
A rural area, village or country town	22	19	58	20
A large town (over 25,000 people)	180.	22	31	13
A major city (over 100,000 people)	60	59	11	67

Table 2: Attitudes on economic issues[24]

	Liberal	Labor	Nationals	Greens
Government involvement	%	%	%	%
The less government involvement the better	36	18	37	14
There are more things government should be doing	67	82	64	86
Trade unions have too much power				
Agree	72	30	68	26
Neither agree nor disagree	21	37	28	37
Disagree	7	34	4	38
Big business has too much power				
Agree	61	82	63	85
Neither agree nor disagree	29	15	34	13
Disagree	10	3	2	2
Choice between taxes and social services				
Favour reducing taxes	48	32	49	26
Depends	27	28	28	25
Favour spending more on social services	25	40	24	49
Income and wealth should be redistributed				
Agree	39	62	42	58
Neither agree nor disagree	32	28	32	32
Disagree	30	10	26	10

As demonstrated by Tables 1 and 2, Green voters are the most likely of all voters to identify as 'middle class' and are also the most affluent, with 48 per cent earning more

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[24] Ibid.

than $80,000 per annum. Despite drawing similar levels of support from high-income earners, Green and Liberal voters differ markedly in their attitudes to economic questions; with the two cohorts presenting virtually diametrically opposed views on taxation in particular. Green voters present strong support for economic redistribution and like Labor voters, a majority are in favour of the concept. Further, while a minority support a reduction in taxes, 49 per cent favour increased investment in social services. While Green voters are less concerned about union power, they are more likely than the voters of other parties to consider big business to be too powerful.

These economic values are perhaps more consistent with a Marxist left economic platform than a postmaterialist one and potentially contradict the claims of Green parties to transcend the traditional left/right dichotomy. Indeed the German Greens often described their party as "not left or right but out in front."[25] This phrase is sometimes associated with the Greens here in Australia but Brown concedes that it doesn't mean "much," instead he argues that the conception of what it means to be left and right has changed:

> The left is now seen as an interchangeable word with 'progressive' and the Greens are the only party of substance on the left side of politics and I think people shouldn't be fearful of that. Left is caring, right is authoritarian.[26]

Rejection of sectional interests and good citizenship

If the Greens are indeed the modern face of a 'progressive left' politics in Australia as Brown asserts, why would middle class voters in particular be drawn to this platform? After all, given they are predominantly on higher incomes, Green voters would be disproportionately adversely affected by the redistributive economic policies with which their party is associated. Brett's moral middle class offers a potential explanation for this and the disconnection between class position and economic values is consistent with the rejection of sectional class based politics that has historically characterised this group.[27] Rather than viewing the state as an avenue for resolving "class-based grievance[s]"[28], Brett argues that the middle class shared a belief in good citizenship characterised by acting in the national interest.[29] Integral to this were notions of "selfless service" and to be a good citizen meant "putting the interests of the common good before those of the self"[30] and a consideration of the proper relationship between one's own needs, desires and actions and the rest of the community."[31] It is a concept that Brett argues was firmly engrained in traditional middle class parenting and the notion that government should operate in the national interest, rather than self-interest, was an extension of their teachings of responsibility and virtue.[32]

Brett is not alone in establishing a relationship between family models and political values. For instance, in his study of politics in the United States of America Lakoff argues that conservative and progressive attitudes have their genesis in "strict" and "nurturant"

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[25] See eg: Charlene Spretnak and Fritiof, *Green Politics – The Global Promise*, Bear and Company – Santé Fe, New Mexico, 1986.
[26] Interview with Bob Brown, 7th April, 2013
[27] Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 9.
[28] Ibid 39.
[29] Ibid 11.
[30] Ibid 61.
[31] Ibid 58.
[32] Ibid 61.

parenting models.[33] Much like Brett, Lakoff believes that the "conception of the nation as a family" defines questions of political morality[34] and in this sense, the state and the role of the citizen within it, is considered an extension of private morality. Brown also alludes to a link between private morality and political identity, suggesting that Green voters link self-interest with broader notions of public good:

> [To say] that people could ostensibly vote against their own interests… is to say that wealthier, or tertiary educated people who are generally wealthier, can't think through what's in their best interests… for example, stopping asylum seekers, 'we will decide who comes into our country' has been something that has upset may of those people… It's pure and simple human generosity, care and the ability to think that self-interest is in having a secure society and that means dealing with people… It's a sign of an older generosity which has been a hallmark in the civilising of nations and the international community. It's alive and well in the Greens.[35]

Civil Society

This sense of private morality being linked to public service could also be reflected in the propensity of Green voters for civic participation.

Table 3: Civic Participation as Demonstrated by Organisational Memberships[36]

	Liberal	Labor	Nationals	Greens
Member of a trade union	%	%	%	%
Yes	17	31	11	25
No	83	69	89	75
Member of a professional association				
Yes	22	17	15	27
No	78	83	85	73
Member of a charitable organisation				
Yes	23	17	18	31
No	77	83	82	69

As demonstrated by Table 3, Green voters are more likely to be members of all types of organisations, excepting unions. Higher levels of union membership among Labor voters are not unexpected given the party's working class support base, yet despite their similarities in terms of demographics, Green voters are also much more likely than Liberal voters to be union members. This contrast is particularly pronounced in relation to charities and Green voters are much more likely to hold memberships than the voters of other political parties. While this increased level of civic participation could be considered consistent with the associations of Inglehart's postmaterialists with "new social

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[33] George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, (2nd Edition), University of Chicago, 2002, 12.

[34] George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, (2nd Edition), University of Chicago, 2002, 12.

[35] Interview with Bob Brown, 7 April, 2013.

[36] AES, 2010, *Australian Election Study 2010* [computer file] compliers, I. McAllister, C. Bean, R.K Gibson and J.Pietsch, Australian Data Archives, Australian National University, Canberra, 2011 (ADA 1228).

movements"[37], there are also parallels with Brett's middle class model. Brett argues that good citizenship was "expressed through… participation in the voluntary associations of civil society" and that the absence of a "traditional ruling class" in Australia created a responsibility for the middle class to organise and pursue a range of social goods; thus being a good citizen meant being actively engaged in civil society.[38] The high levels of community engagement among Green voters, predominantly on higher incomes, could be a contemporary representation of this phenomenon.

While it is not possible to apply these theories conclusively to the Greens using quantitative data alone, these ideas do position the party's middle class supporters within a broader social and historical context. They offer an alternative explanation for why Green voters may subjugate self-interest to the interests of the broader community and establish a long-term nexus between relative affluence and more altruistic conceptions of politics and citizenship in Australia.

Religion and education

In addition to being on higher incomes, as demonstrated by Tables 4 and 5, Green voters are highly educated and less religious than the voters of other political parties.

Table 4: Education by party[39]

	Liberal %	Labor %	Nationals %	Greens %
No qualification since school	31	32	35	25
Postgraduate qualification	10	10	5	15
Bachelor degree	15	18	7	31
Undergraduate diploma	5	4	1	5
Associate diploma	11	8	11	4
Trade qualification	20	15	20	15
Non-trade qualification	8	13	20	5

Table 5: Religious identification by party[40]

	Liberal %	Labor %	Nationals %	Greens %
Roman Catholic	28	27	25	19
Anglican / Church of England	24	17	28	13
Uniting Church / Methodist	7	7	9	4
Orthodox Church	3	4	1	4
Presbyterian	6	4	7	2
Other religion	13	11	9	12
No religion	20	31	20	46

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[37] Inglehart in Bruce Tranter, 'Environmentalism and Education in Australia,' *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Summer 1997, 123, 124.

[38] Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 64.

[39] AES, 2010, *Australian Election Study 2010* [computer file] compliers, I. McAllister, C. Bean, R.K Gibson and J.Pietsch, Australian Data Archives, Australian National University, Canberra, 2011 (ADA 1228).

[40] Ibid.

Green voters are much more likely to be university educated, with 46 per cent holding a bachelor degree or a postgraduate qualification. This is consistent with Inglehart's finding that, "the wealthier and better educated will be most likely to hold a range of security (postmaterialist) values." [41] Similarly, Rootes has noted a correlation between education and environmentalism in particular[42] and Tranter establishes a nexus between type of study and political activity noting that "those educated in sciences or medicines… are less active than former humanities students" in "environmental activism" in Australia.[43] He further "suggests that intellectuals are natural supporters of green issues and groups" given their "highly developed cognitive capacities and propensity to hold more radical views on social issues."[44] However, despite their distinct educational profile, perhaps the greatest point of difference between Green voters and other voters is in relation to religious identification. While just 20 per cent of Liberal voters and 31 per cent of Labor voters identified as having 'no religion,' 46 per cent of Green voters identified in this way. Again, this could be considered consistent with the concept of postmodern value change and Inglehart notes that "the publics of most advanced industrial societies show both declining confidence in churches, falling rates of church attendance and are placing less emphasis on organised religion."[45]

Brett offers an alternative explanation for this correlation between education and secularism. While the middle class' traditional conception of the national interest was based on the protestant values of "self-discipline and character building" and hence oriented towards the Liberal Party, this began to change over time.[46] As the influence of organised religion began to wane,[47] these protestant values came to be replaced by new values influenced by education – and by extension, the new social movements and causes associated with this.[48] In particular, the expansion of the public service and increased participation in higher education in the 1960s and 70s precipitated the emergence of a new cohort of middle class professionals who were much more sympathetic to Labor's vision for a more "expansive"[49] state:

> Middle-class people who came to support Labor because of its policies on Aborigines, or multiculturalism, or women, or attitudes to Asia, or the environment… [ultimately] supported Labor because it accorded with their principled belief that these policies would advance the national interest.[50]

The high level of support for the Greens among the university educated could thus be considered to be a continuation of this middle class realignment. Brown adds credence to this theory noting that education has supplanted religion as a source of values for many Green voters:

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[41] Ronald Inglehart, *Modernisation and Postmodernisation: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton University Press, 1997, 134.
[42] Chris Rootes, 'A New Class – The Higher Educated and Politics' in L. Maheu (ed), *Social Movements and Social Classes: The Future of Collective Action*, Sage London, 110-26 in Bruce Tranter, 'Environmentalism and Education in Australia,' *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Summer 1997,123.
[43] Bruce Tranter, 'Environmentalism and Education in Australia,' *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Summer 1997, 123, 138.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ronald Inglehart, *Modernisation and Postmodernisation: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton University Press, 1997, 45.
[46] Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, Cambridge University Press, 2003,131.
[47] Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, Cambridge University Press, 2003,131.
[48] Ibid 134.
[49] Ibid140.
[50] Ibid 146.

> Green voters are thinking for themselves and sometimes at least that's a case of having been through an education system which ended up saying, 'you think it out for yourself, don't be dictated by other people…' a rational assessment of where we are has led many people to put aside their religious dogmatic beliefs.[51]

Further, Brown suggests that education is the key to understanding the way in which Green voters assess political issues. In particular, he notes that they are not as susceptible to campaigns motivated by economic insecurity:

> They have the advantage of seeing how the world works and doesn't work and they've read a bit more of the analysis… Whereas, if you're a person who can't read or write and you're scraping the bottom of the barrel, you're only judging on what you hear coming across the radio waves and if that happens to be 2GB telling you that somebody is coming to take what little you've got off you, then you respond to it.[52]

The assertion that education influences the way in which political issues are evaluated is consistent with studies noting a correlation between higher levels of education and support for policies based on "expert opinion and evidence."[53] This is not to imply that the policies of the Greens are necessarily more evidence-based than those of other political parties, but it does offer an explanation for why Green voters may be less likely to determine their vote on the basis of self interest and reflects the broader aggregation of interests that Brett describes.

Reconstructing Good Citizenship

As this paper has demonstrated, the support for the Greens among affluent middle class voters is consistent with a broader class theme in Australian politics. However, the realignment of the moral middle class from Labor to the Greens in the first decade of the 21st century requires further examination. Here, the emergence of new political issues may offer an explanation. For example, Cahill and Brown link the strong showing for the Greens at the 2002 Cunningham by-election to the increased profile of issues like refugees and the war on Iraq, and note that support for the party was 'concentrated in Wollongong's affluent beachside northern suburbs"[54] suggesting a tendency for middle class voters to be concerned about these issues. Further, in the lead up to the 2004 federal election there was some media debate about the adverse impact of social and environmental issues on the Liberal Party's vote in its traditional heartland of affluent middle class electorates. The somewhat pejorative (and gendered) term "Doctor's Wives" was adopted by commentators to describe the "phenomenon" of "upper-middle class women" supporting the Greens on the basis of their concerns about "war, refugees and environmental issues."[55]

Brown notes that climate change and refugees "have been forefront in the rise of the Greens from being on 2 per cent at the turn of the century…"[56] Indeed the significance of

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[51] Interview with Bob Brown, 7 April 2013.

[52] Interview with Bob Brown, 7th April 2013.

[53] Andrew Levison, 'Who Lost the Working Class? A funny thing happened on the way to the election,' *The Nation*, May 14 (Volume 272 119) 25.

[54] Damien Cahill and Stephen Brown, 'The Rise and Fall of the Australian Greens – the 2002 Cunningham By-election and its Implications,' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.43, No. 2, June 2008, 259, 270.

[55] Mark Suich, 'Debating The Doctor's Wives Phenomenon,' *The Age Online*, September 17, 2004 < http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/09/16/1095320892014.html> accessed 28, July 2013.

[56] Interview with Bob Brow, 7th April 2013.

these is reflected in Table 5 and Green voters hold distinct views in relation to these key policy questions.

Table 5: Views on international issues by party

| | Liberal | Labor | Nationals | Greens |
	%	%	%	%
Importance of global warming				
Extremely important	16	40	21	55
Quite important	44	43	36	38
Not very important	40	17	43	6
Threat of global warming to way of life				
Serious	12	22	12	34
Fairly serious	27	47	23	47
Not very serious	44	25	48	15
Not at all serious	18	7	17	4
Turn back boats carrying asylum seekers				
Agree	64	44	69	25
Neither agree nor disagree	20	19	21	21
Disagree	17	36	10	55

While this may simply reflect disaffection with the handling of these issues by the major parties, there is another reason why the political issues of climate change and refugees may be of particular interest to some sections of an affluent middle class, especially those who vote for the Greens. An application of Brett's thesis suggests that just as the conception of the national interest changed in the 1970s in ways that favoured the Australian Labor Party, recent changes in domestic and global politics have favoured the Greens. Indeed, it could be argued that the global dimension of these policy dilemmas has redefined the middle class' understanding of sectional and broader interests and with this, notions of good citizenship. For instance, opponents of national efforts to combat climate change or advocates for a stricter immigration regime often frame their position in terms of an advancement of the national interest; 'Australia must put Australia first.' This position is used to legitimise opposition to carbon pricing initiatives that may adversely impact Australian businesses[57] or increases in the numbers of asylum seekers arriving by boat that may threaten Australian sovereignty.[58] This is not the national interest as traditionally understood by the moral middle class. Rather advocacy for the national interest against the broader interests of the global community has positioned the national interest in the 21st century as sectional, a form of self-interest. Conversely, through deploying the "language of human rights" and more recently of global responsibility, asylum seeker advocates and environmentalists respectively have sought "to expand their sense of moral

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[57] See eg: Ron Boswell 'Australia's Expensive Carbon Tax,' *The Courier Mail*, July 4 2013 <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/opinion/australia8217s-expensive-carbon-tax-is-hitting-households-and-businesses-in-the-hip-pocket-and-costing-jobs/story-fnihsr9v-1226673651121> accessed 15 July 2013.
[58] See eg: Judith Ireland, 'Boats Our Problem and Not The World's: Tony Abbott,' T*he Sydney Morning Herald*, July 18 2013< http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2013/boats-our-problem-not-the-worlds-tony-abbott-20130718-2q5r1.html> accessed 22 July 2013.

community."[59] Thus, these policy debates have expanded the notion of good citizenship to encompass the global sphere.

The post Whitlam moral middle class' support for a more interventionist state meant a natural accommodation with Labor's working class constituency who perceived this as a pathway to their economic advancement, but "the new economy" has exposed divisions between these two constituencies.[60] While Labor's traditional working class constituency still looks to nationally-oriented policy solutions for its economic advancement, in keeping with their broader rejection of sectionalism, the global dimensions of the issues of climate change and immigration have caused that section of the affluent middle class I consider to be 'the moral middle class,' to look for international solutions. The need to balance the competing interests of these constituencies has made it difficult for Labor to champion this emerging global interest. It is here that it could be argued that the moral middle class have reached an accommodation with the Greens. The party's four pillars of 'ecological sustainability, grassroots participatory democracy, social justice and peace and non-violence'[61] create a nexus between environmentalism and broader notions of social responsibility and in framing their opposition to globalisation and consumerism as part of a broader rejection of self-interest, the Greens have become a natural receptacle for this constituency. Brown and Singer's approach to Green ethics illustrates the point:

> The dominant ethic (consumerism) is indefensible because it focuses only on human beings who are living now, leaving out the interests of others who are not of our species, or not of our generation. [62]

Additionally, Brown positions the issue of immigration within this frame, by presenting this policy dilemma:

> How is it, that the Liberals but Labor as well, want to throw open the country to the free movement in and out of money, but not of people. Money above people?[63]

In linking the global issues of environmentalism and asylum seekers into a broader rejection of sectional interests in this way, the Greens are drawing on the traditions of altruism and civic responsibility outlined in this paper. Thus, rather than simply evidence of postmaterialism, affluent middle class concern about these issues can perhaps be better understood as the continuance of a much broader theme in Australian politics.

Conclusion

This paper has drawn extensively on Brett's moral middle class to offer an alternative framework for understanding Green voters. Australian Electoral Study data and material gathered through interview with Bob Brown, suggests some interesting correlations between the attitudes of Green voters and Brett's 'projected moral community.' While Green voters' support for economic redistribution is in curious contradiction to their class position, it is consistent with the broader rejection of the politics of self-interest that has characterised the moral middle class' political world-view. In particular, high levels of civic engagement among Green voters and a conflation of notions of the self with the broader public good suggest an ethic of civic responsibility very much in keeping with the Brett thesis. Additionally, the propensity for secularists and the tertiary educated to support the

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[59] Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 216.
[60] Shaun Wilson, 'The Emergence of the Green Electorate in Australia,' AQ Nov-Dec 2002, 17, 19.
[61] The Australian Greens, *Our Core Beliefs*, <http://www.greens.org.au/about> accessed 15 July 2013.
[62] Bob Brown and Peter Singer, *The Greens*, The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne Victoria, 1995, 44.
[63] Interview with Bob Brown, 7th April 2013.

Greens could be considered a continuation of the moral middle class' transition away from the Liberal Party over the last few decades. More recently, the prominence of the issues of climate change and asylum seekers has potentially challenged traditional conceptions of good citizenship; precipitating the emergence of a global ethic and a further realignment of the moral middle class that has favoured the Greens. The paper raises a number of avenues for further inquiry and qualitative data would need to be obtained before any definitive conclusions can be drawn about the motivations of Green voters. Yet, despite these obvious limitations, the paper does position middle class support for the party within the broader themes and traditions of Australian politics in a way that calls into question the conventional depictions of the Greens as socialists or postmaterialists. In so doing, the paper aims to paint a more complete picture of Green voters in Australia.

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