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Expressive behavior in economics and politics

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Abstract

Expressive behavior provides expressive utility by confirming identity. Aspects of identity are predetermined. I focus on attributes of identity that people choose, to be pleasing to themselves or pleasing to others. All people are expressive insofar as behavior is predicated on identity. Expressive behavior can however be deceptive and can be the source of externalities. I use expressive voting to illustrate expressive behavior and generalize the model of expressive utility to behavior that I call expressive rhetoric and expressive generosity. Experimental evidence on expressive behavior and a reinterpretation of other experimental evidence reveals extensive prevalence of decisions predicated on expressive utility. Expressive behavior can coexist with altruism or malice. I enquire into remedies for the social costs of expressive behavior.

Keywords: Expressive behavior; Identity; Deception; Voting; Rhetoric; Charity; Soft power; Self-defamation; Terror; Defense; Anti-Americanism; Useful idiots; Trust; Altruism; Malice

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1. Introduction

Neo-classical economic analysis describes individual behavior based on axioms of rational behavior. Behavioral economics (for example, Camerer, Loewenstein, and Rabin, 2003; DellaVigna, 2009) departs from the traditional rationality axioms in using concepts such as loss aversion, endowment effects, hyperbolic discounting, and framing to explain "non-rational" behavior. Expressive behavior (for example, Brennan and Lomasky 1993; Brennan and Hamlin, 2000; Schuessler, 2000; Hamlin and Jennings, 2010) is another departure from the neo-classical view of human behavior. People are recognized as obtaining utility from self-confirmation of identity.

Aspects of personal identity are predetermined. People are also able to choose attributes of their identity. The identity chosen reflects a view that people have of themselves in terms of who they are and what they stand for or support or oppose. Expressive utility may in particular be obtained by choosing an identity of being generous, cooperative, trusting and trustworthy, and in conflict situations being conciliatory and open to compromise. The identity can be chosen to be self-pleasing or to be pleasing to others.[1]

Insofar as all people have an identity that influences their behavior and decisions, all people behave expressively and seek expressive utility. People may define themselves or express how they view themselves or how they want others to view them, with no consequences for others. Expressive behavior can also be deceptive and be the source of externalities.

In section 2, I use expressive voting, which is the most extensively studied form of expressive behavior, to illustrate

[1] Yan Chen and Sherry Xin Li (2009) describe how common group identity provides benefits through empathy and preferential treatment. Paul Rubin (2002) describes how much human behavior can be traced to small-group hunter-gather origins. The desire for an identity with attributes that are pleasing to others has suggestively such origins.

deception and socially undesirable externalities. Section 3 introduces deception and externalities from expressive rhetoric. The rhetoric of appeasement, soft power, and "useful idiots" illustrates sources of expressive utility, as does anti-American rhetoric in Europe and elsewhere. Instances of self-defamation illustrate cases where an identity that is pleasing to others is in conflict with self-pleasing identity. Section 4 describes behavior that I call expressive generosity. Section 5 proposes expressive behavior as a unifying rational-behavior explanation for outcomes observed in experiments, including differences in behavior between economics and non-economic students and gender differences. Section 6 considers coexistence of altruism or malice with expressive behavior. Section 7 compares delusionary behavior in economics with expressive behavior. In the final section I investigate possibilities of remedies for social costs of expressive behavior.

2. Expressive voting

2.1 The expressive voting hypothesis

Expressive voting illustrates expressive behavior.[2] The expressive-voting hypothesis contrasts with an instrumental view of voting in which voters are described as believing that their vote is decisive. A single vote in general makes no difference to a voting outcome.[3] The "paradox of voting" is that instrumental voters, if rational, are predicted not to vote because the time cost of voting exceeds the

[2] Expressive voting is a centerpiece of the public-choice perspective on political economy (Mueller, 2003; Hillman, 2009). Expressive voting was suggested in Buchanan (1954) and has origins in Tullock (1971). Continuations include Brennan and Buchanan (1984), Glazer (1987), Brennan and Lomasky (1984, 1993), and Brennan and Hamlin (1998, 2000).

[3] Individual voters are not decisive in both representative and direct democracy.

expected benefit of voting based on the likelihood of one vote being decisive. Expressive utility from voting can change the cost-benefit calculation. Voters decide whether to vote and to vote. The decision whether to vote can involve conceptions of civic duty and expressive confirmation of an identity of a socially responsible person. Having decided to vote and therefore to incur the cost of voting, voters make an expressive decision regarding *how* they vote. Expressive voters can vote for policies that they truly wish to be implemented. However, rationally recognizing that their one vote will not be decisive, and with the cost of voting low,[4] expressive voters can vote for candidates and policies that they would oppose if they knew that their vote were decisive. Expressive voters can thus vote as they do precisely because they know that their vote is *not* decisive.[5]

People can, for example, base their vote on principles of righteousness and generosity that they do not apply in practice. Expressive voters who vote in favor of high taxation and extensive redistribution may not truly wish to share their income and wealth. They may believe that recipients of publicly financed income transfers are subject to moral hazard and that, with the opportunities provided in their society for self-reliance, people in need are more likely not to have a work ethic than being unfortunate in being unable to be self-reliant. Voters in welfare states may believe

[4] Voting is a case of a "low-cost decision". See Kirchgässner (1992).

[5] Expressive voting is consistent with compulsory voting: although legally obliged to vote, when deciding how to vote, voters know that their individual vote is not decisive. Kliemt (1986) described inconsequential decisions as made behind a "veil of insignificance". The comparative reference is to the veil of ignorance of Rawls (1971). Proceeding with the metaphor, people eventually emerge from behind Rawl's veil of ignorance to confront the consequences of decisions that were made under conditions of anonymity and uncertainty (Hillman, 2009, chapter 7). In the case of inconsequential expressive behavior, people know with certainty when a decision is made that the decision provides only expressive benefit and no material benefit.

that immigrants have been attracted by publicly-financed benefits. However, they may regard their truly held beliefs, although reflecting truthful perceptions, as inconsistent with a benevolent view of other people's intentions and actions. Being aware that their vote is not decisive in determining policies, they can rationally choose to set aside their true beliefs – and also their self-interest – and obtain expressive utility by voting for ethically pleasing or "politically correct" policies.

Table 1 describes an example of expressive voting. The vote is on whether two taxpayers will collectively finance an income transfer to a third person.[6] The two voters will be taxed and the income transfer will take place only if there is consensus in favor. Abstention by one voter is sufficient to veto the income transfer. For each voter:

Expressive utility from voting in favor of the transfer = 1

Material loss from paying for the transfer = -2

Utility when the voter vetoes the transfer = 0.

Each voter is best off with benefit 1 from voting for the income transfer that is not made because the other person has vetoed the transfer.

Table 1: Expressive voting

	Person 2 votes against income transfers	Person 2 votes in favor of income transfers
Person 1 votes against income transfers	0, 0	0, 1
Person 1 votes in favor of income transfers	1, 0	-1, -1

[6] The example is from Hillman (2009, chapter 7).

If voting were sequential, the Nash-equilibrium outcome would be (1, 0) or (0, 1). The person voting first has expressive utility from voting to be generous and the second voter maximizes utility (for both voters) by vetoing the income transfer. In a simultaneous-move game, Nash equilibria in pure strategies are also (1, 0) and (0, 1) and in the mixed-strategy equilibrium a voter votes in favor of or against the income transfer with equal probability. In a simultaneous-move repeated game, equilibrium outcomes include the possibility of voters taking turns in vetoing.

In actual elections, there are many voters, each of whom is aware that a single vote is not decisive. Voters maximize utility by voting in favor of the income transfer and have utility –1 in the Nash equilibrium.[7] Therefore:

Proposition 1a (Brennan and Lomasky, 1984)

When voters vote expressively, the outcome of majority voting can be policies that each voter who supported the policies would veto if given the opportunity to be decisive.

Voting externalities are present in instrumental voting because voters disregard how their vote affects the utility of others (Tullock, 1959; Hillman, 2009, chapter 6). Expressive voting introduces further voting externalities. A corollary of proposition 1a is:

Proposition 1b

[7] With each voter confronting the payoffs in table 1, voting against the transfer provides utility of –2 from paying to finance the transfer when the majority has voted in favor; because of the expressive utility of 1, voting in favor of the transfer provides utility of –1.

Expressive voters, if a majority, impose social costs on themselves by supporting policies that they do not want.

Expressive voting is a hypothesis or conjecture. An alternative explanation for why and how people vote is regret. If no one voted because everyone believed that a single vote is not decisive, every voter would regret not having voted. No one voting is therefore not a Nash equilibrium. In actual elections, no individual voter can reasonably expect to be decisive. Regret in having missed the opportunity to be decisive by not voting therefore cannot explain why people vote. Regret can however confirm expressive voting. New information or changed sentiments can lead people to express regret about how they voted. Such regret is clear evidence of expressive voting because the opportunity to change a voter's decision would not change the electoral outcome. As Brennan and Hamlin (2000, p. 31) point out in describing expressive voting: "If you made a mistake in the polling booth and voted for the 'wrong' candidate, that mistake would almost certainly not alter the electoral outcome – though, presumably, it would remain a mistake from your point of view."

Expressive voting has been inferred from more visible forms of expressive behavior. The inference is that, having displayed expressive behavior in other visible respects, people also vote expressively (Copeland and Laband 2002; Laband et al., 2009).

The theory of instrumental voting predicts that people maximize utility by voting for the policy or candidate closest to their ideal from among available alternatives and abstain from voting only if indifferent between alternatives. Expressive voters are, in contrast, influenced by the distance between their ideal and political parties' policy positions or candidates' attributes, and abstain when there is too great a distance between their ideal and the alternatives offered (Brennan and Hamlin, 1998; Hillman, 2009, chapter 6). People who do not vote because they declare that they have "no one to vote for" confirm that they are expressive voters. Guttman et al (1994)

investigated whether voter abstentions are due to "indifference" as predicted by the instrumental voting or "alienation" as predicted by expressive voting. The evidence was consistent with expressive voting: distance of candidates from voters' ideal policies determined whether people voted or abstained.[8]

Guttman et al (1994) also found that the propensity of an individual to vote decreased with the number of "politically eligible adults" in the household. Such behavior is inconsistent with instrumental voting but consistent with expressive voting. Because the number of household members that votes does not affect the voting outcome, expressing identity can be delegated within the household.

An instrumental view of voting predicts greater participation in voting by low-income than high-income people because low-income people have a lower value of time. The evidence is, to the contrary, that high-income people have been more likely to vote. We expect low-income people to be focused more on the material requisites of life than on the quest for expressive utility.[9]

In the 2008 U.S. presidential election, turnout was high for high and low-income voters, who both often waited hours in line to vote. The high turnout, in particular of low-income voters, is consistent with expressive voting. The voters did not vote previously because they could not adequately express themselves in their voting decision, because "there had been no one to vote for".

The scope of expressive voting extends beyond voting to choose political representatives. Glazer (1992) proposed expressive voting as

[8] The study used panel survey data from the 1976 U.S. presidential election.

[9] Generous distributional policies correspondingly appear to have greater public support in prosperous times when incomes are higher: see for example Markussen (2008). Frey (1971) linked the propensity of high-income people to vote to their better access to political information. Such information can be used instrumentally (and irrationally) or expressively (and rationally).

explaining majority decisions of workers to strike. Fort and Bunn (1998) found that people who incurred high costs of participation in voting were more likely to vote against nuclear power; voting against nuclear power provided sufficiently high expressive utility to compensate for the high costs of participation in voting. Voting on a flag is expressive (Karahan and Shughart, 2004), as is voting on the choice between remaining the subject of a non-resident monarch and becoming a citizen of a republic (Davidson, Fry, and Jarvis, 2006). Voting in the Eurovision song contest (Ginsburgh and Noury, 2008) is expressive; in principle, people cannot vote for their own resident country's song but immigrants can identify with their cultural home and there are common elements of identity through geographical proximity and language. Voting on the official languages of multinational bodies (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber, 2009) is expressive: governments and people want their language included because of identity. Voting in the United Nations General Assembly is expressive, not only because of the low probability of a single vote being decisive but because the inconsequential nature of voting outcomes allows governments to vote to express their identity, for example as members of an alignment (Potrafke, 2009).

2.2 A general model of expressive utility

If people are not irrationally delusional in believing that their vote is decisive (a possibility that has been discussed in the literature and to which I shall return), voting when the likelihood of being decisive is small or negligible is explained by expressive utility.[10] In behaving expressively, people are guided by identity.

Definition: Expressive utility
Expressive utility is utility from behavior that confirms identity.

[10] This raises the question of why researchers persist with models of instrumental voting when the likelihood of a voter being decisive is negligible. This is not a question that I shall pursue here.

Aspects of identity can be predetermined. Previous literature has focused on the predetermined aspects of identity.[11]

We view identity as a choice.[12] An identity is specified in terms of attributes. We distinguish *d* identities:

$$I = \{I^1, I^2, ..., I^d\}. \qquad [1]$$

The identities can, for example, indicate degrees of generosity but an identity can also be based on holding the opinion that misfortune rather than moral hazard is the reason for low incomes. Each of *n* individuals chooses an identity and seeks to confirm the identity chosen by a voting decision. The decision can be not to vote, which we denote x_j^A. Or the decision can be to vote for one of *m* candidates:

$$x_j^V = \{x_j^1, x_j^2, ..., x_j^m\}, \quad V = 1, ...m; \; j = 1, .., n. \qquad [2]$$

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[11] Rose (1988) proposed that predetermined gender-based identity explained emergence of specialized "breadwinner-homemaker" households in England in the 19th century. An alternative explanation based on preferences, technology, and income was proposed by de Vries (2008). Similarly, Akerlof and Kranton (2000) proposed that utility of men declines when women do "men's jobs" – and also when men do "women's jobs", so that women earning market incomes contribute disproportionately to housekeeping because the woman does not wish to emasculate the man by undermining male identity. Akerlof and Kranton also suggested that, with identity predetermined by race, educational achievement can result in utility loss because of compromise of identity. See also Austen-Smith and Fryer (2006) on "acting white".

[12] Brennan and Hamlin (2000) describe choice of identity as people as choosing "dispositions". Lewisch (2004) describes choice of "windows" through which people view the world. Glaeser and Ward (2006) describe choice of identity in the U.S. Choice of identity can also take the form of attempt to escape from predetermined identity; for example, Jews sought to escape the prejudices of anti-Semitism in Europe by changing the focus of identity to choice between socialist and capitalist ideologies.

There is a positive cost of voting:

$$C(x_j^V) > 0. \qquad [3]$$

Expected material (or non-expressive) utility from a decision x_j^k is:[13]

$$U_j^{MAT}(x_j^k) = EB_j(x_j^k) - C_j(x_j^V), \quad k = A,1,....m. \qquad [4]$$

If the decision is x_j^A, the cost of voting is not incurred. There is also no material benefit from a decision not to vote. Therefore:

$$U_j^{MAT}(x_j^A) = 0. \qquad [5]$$

An individual's vote is consequential if his or her vote is decisive. In principle, an individual does not know whether he or she will be decisive. We denote the probability of being decisive by *p*. The decision x_j^V to vote for one of the *m* alternative candidates provides zero benefit if the voter is not decisive and benefit $B_j^{kD} > 0$ if decisive. The benefit is from being personally decisive in determining the voting outcome according to personal self-interest.

Expected material benefit from the decision x_j^{V*} to vote for the individual's preferred candidate is

$$EB_j(x_j^{V*}) = pB_j^{DV*}. \qquad [6]$$

The individual chooses either not to vote, or to vote for a preferred candidate, to maximize material utility:

$$x_j^{MAT} = \arg\max U_j^{MAT}(x_j^k) = \begin{cases} x_j^A \\ x_j^{V*} \end{cases} \qquad [7]$$

There is an incentive to vote if decisive:

$$U^{MAT}(x_j^{V*}) = pB_j^{DV*} - C_j > 0. \qquad [8]$$

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[13] Usual conditions of concavity and differentiability properties of functions. Additivity in functions is for convenience of simplicity.

If not decisive, the individual does not vote.

We now consider expressive utility for an individual who is not decisive. For a decision x_j^k, expressive utility for individual *j* is

$$U_j^{EXP}(x_j^k) = A_j(x_j^k) - D_j(\left|x_j^k - x_j^{EXP}\right|) \qquad [9]$$

where $A_j(x_j^k)$ is expressive benefit and

$$x_j^{EXP} = \arg\max A_j^{EXP}(x_j^V). \qquad [10]$$

Possible loss of expressive utility is indicated in [9] by $D_j(\left|x_j^k - x_j^{EXP}\right|)$. Expressive utility is lost by voting for a candidate whose policies or attributes deviate from the policies or attributes that maximize expressive benefit. There is no certainty that x_j^{EXP} is included among the alternatives in [2]. The individual may therefore have no alternative that provides positive expressive utility or has "no one to vote for" to provide expressive utility. There is at best zero expressive utility from not voting and possibly loss of expressive utility because of deviation from the principle of personal participation in democratic decision making:

$$U_j^{EXP}(x_j^A) \leq 0. \qquad [11]$$

It is sufficient for the individual not to vote if voting is not a source of expressive utility.

Total utility accounts for both material and expressive utility:

$$\begin{aligned} U_j(x_j^k) &= U_j^{MAT}(x_j^k) + \mu_j U_j^{EXP}(x_j^k) \\ &= \upsilon_j[EB_j(x_j^k) - C(x_j^k)] + \mu_j[A(x_j^k) - D_j(\left|x_j^k - x_j^{EXP}\right|)]. \end{aligned} \qquad [12]$$

Total utility [12] is maximized by choosing

$$x_j^* = \arg\max U_j(x_j^k). \qquad [13]$$

If $\upsilon_j > 0$ and $\mu_j = 0$ so that only material utility matters, a decisive voter maximizes utility by choosing

$$x_j^* = x_j^{MAT} = x_j^{TRUE}. \quad [14]$$

By x_j^{TRUE}, we represent the presence of non-deceptive behavior in the sense of behavior that is predicated on personal self-interest. This is the standard presentation of self-interested behavior when expressive utility is not present. A decisive voter votes truthfully in accord with material self-interest.

If υ_j=0 and μ_j>0, voting is inconsequential for material utility but is the source of expressive utility. The individual votes for the preferred candidate from the alternatives offered in [2] if expressive utility more than compensates for the cost of voting:

$$U_j^{EXP}(x_j^{V*}) = A_j(x_j^{V*}) - D_j(\left|x_j^k - x_j^{EXP}\right|) > \frac{C_j}{\mu_j}. \quad [15]$$

If [15] is not satisfied, the individual does not vote.

For a person who votes, the voting decision affects only expressive utility. The expressive voter may but need not choose the decision consistent with true identity as determined by personal self-interest:

$$x_j^* = x_j^{EXP} = \begin{cases} x_j^{V*} = x_j^{TRUE} \\ x_j^{V*} \neq x_j^{TRUE}. \end{cases} \quad [16]$$

Thus:

Proposition 2

Voting in the presence of expressive utility can be but need not be deceptive.

Table 1 showed a case of deceptive expressive behavior. In the example, behavior was deceptive when voters supported policies that they did not wish to see implemented because the policies were contrary to material self-interest.

All individuals with the same material preferences and same true identity need not have the same expressive preferences. Some might choose to vote deceptively and some not. However, in the absence of expressive utility, voting would never be deceptive.

The general conclusion is:

Proposition 3

When behavior is inconsequential for material utility, people may maximize expressive utility by behaving deceptively to confirm an identity that they would not choose, if they knew that their behavior were consequential.

3. Expressive rhetoric

Expressive rhetoric is, like expressive voting, a source of expressive utility and can, also like expressive voting, be a low-cost decision. I shall more generally include in the category of expressive rhetoric written proclamations, which may have higher cost than the cost of voting.[14]

3.1 Conciliatory rhetoric and terror

Expressive rhetoric can take the form of low-cost declarations of platitudes such as "we should have a social conscience". The objective, as with expressive voting, is to confirm likeable identity Expressive utility can also be provided by confirming identity as being a person who is conciliatory and open to compromise. The rhetoric can be embedded in a narrative of "strong" and "weak" based on per capita income and economic development indicators:

General proclamation A1:

[14] Expressive rhetoric differs from the "cheap talk" of game theory whereby proclamations of intentions are made without means of commitment. Cheap talk can be beneficial in coordinating mutually beneficial outcomes, as for example in weakest-link public-good games (see Hillman, 2009, p. 162).

"When one side is strong and the other side is weak, the strong side should be conciliatory and be generous in giving the weak what they want".

When the rhetoric is inconsequential for actual outcomes or personal behavior, the source of expressive utility is in the continuation, implicit or explicit:

Personal proclamation A2
"I would be conciliatory and generous toward the weak if I were strong".

The rhetoric of the proclamations parallels expressively voting for policies that would require high-income people (the strong) to be generous in sharing income or wealth with low-income people (the weak). A context for the proclamations the policy question of how a society should respond to terror inflicted on its population.

Facts that reveal that expressive proclamations are counterfactually based reduce expressive utility from the rhetoric. With the rhetoric based on a narrative of strong and weak, expressive utility is diminished by:

Fact B1
Organizers and perpetrators of terror do not necessarily originate from low-income societies; nor do instigators and perpetrators of terror necessarily have low personal incomes or low wealth.[15]

[15] For the evidence, see for example Krueger and Maleckova (2003). The proposition that deprivation is the reason for participation in terror is contradicted by the evidence that terrorists have often been personally wealthy. Osama bin Laden was a member of a high-wealth Saudi family. September 11 terrorists and other terrorists in the US and terrorists in the UK have been university-educated. The last act of attempted terror before the final version paper was completed occurred on December 25 2009 on

Expressive utility from the proclamation of personal willingness to compromise is also diminished by the fact that organizers and perpetrators of terror are guided by a supreme-value belief system.

> Definition: Supreme-value ideology (Bernholz 1993, 2003)
> *An ideology has supreme values if the preferences that rank objectives are lexographic.* [16]

Avoiding conflict through compromise is impossible when adversaries have supreme-value ideologies. A public policy proposal when a society confronts supreme-value terror is:

> Proposal B2
> *Effective defensive measures should be taken to ensure public safety in the face of terrorist intentions, even if the measures are inconsistent with the usual standards of legal and civil rights in our society.*[17]

People who are accustomed to lives of compromise may not find credible the idea that other people live by a creed of supreme values that disallow compromise. The defense of expressive utility denies the supreme values.

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the approach to Detroit airport. The terrorist was the son of high-wealth parents, had been educated at a college of London University, and had lived in one of the more exclusive areas of London.

[16] The supreme-value objective of adversaries may be annihilation of peoples who are deemed inferior (national-socialism) or who lack required consciousness (communism), or the supreme-vale objective may be submission of all people to a belief system (radical Islam) (Bernholz 2004; Hillman, 2007).

[17] See Plaut (2004) and Inbar (2006).

Counterfactual declaration A3

"All people are reasonable and open to compromise, and supreme values should therefore not be taken at face value".[18]

We apply the model of expressive behavior proposed on the basis of expressive voting to describe utility-maximizing choice of rhetoric as:

$$x_j^* = \begin{cases} x_j^A \\ x_j^{R*} = x_j^{TRUE} \\ x_j^{R*} \neq x_j^{TRUE}. \end{cases} \qquad [17]$$

Utility may be maximized by x_j^A, which is choice of no rhetoric and parallels the decision not to vote. The decision x_j^{R*} is to engage in rhetorical proclamations. The proclamations may or may not be deceptive in being contrary to own material self-interest.

There is a moral dilemma in effective defense against terror. Punishment may be collective in restricting travel of populations from amongst terrorists are known to emerge because intending terrorists cannot be distinguished from the general population. An apprehended terrorist may have information that if divulged in sufficient time can save lives.[19] The moral dilemma is avoided in expressive rhetoric that denies the need for effective countermeasures against terror. The denial of the need for countermeasures is predicated on the individual not being decisive, because personal rhetoric does not determine the policies that are actually implemented. The inconsequential conciliatory rhetoric provides expressive utility by confirming personal attributes of tolerance in acknowledging that others may have different views and in taking the position that compromise is always possible because

[18] See Cowen (2004) and Frey (2004).

[19] On the moral dilemmas of effective self-defense against terror, see Frank, Hillman, and Krausz (2005).

people are reasonable. As with expressive voting, if the rhetoric were consequential in affecting the person's own material utility, the decision would not be otherwise and public policies that provide for personal safety would be sought.

Proposition 4a

People whose rhetoric is inconsequential for their personal safety may choose to obtain utility from expressive rhetoric that proclaims the merit of policies that would be personally harmful if actually implemented.

3.2 Soft power and "useful idiots"

Soft power (Nye, 2005) is a concept proposing that persuasion can result in conciliation through appeal to the rationality of avoiding conflict.

Proposition 4b

Advocates of soft power in the face of supreme-value adversaries are behaving expressively to obtain expressive utility from expressive rhetoric.

Before the fall of the Soviet Union, there was support in the West for unilateral disarmament and soft power. Lenin described the Western supporters of communism as "useful idiots". The "useful idiots" obtained expressive utility from rhetoric that confirmed their peace-loving identity. They were maximizing utility through inconsequential expressive rhetoric.

Proposition 4c

The rhetoric of "useful idiots" is expressive behavior to confirm a peace-loving identity.

3.3 Soft power for others

The "useful idiots" were denying the need for their *own* defense against the objectives of a supreme-value ideology.[20] Denial of self-defense can also be directed at *others*. In the days following the terror attacks on the U.S. on September 11 2001, large majorities surveyed in European countries reported being of the opinion that the American people did not the right to self-defense through preemption of further attacks. Support for a U.S. response against countries harboring terrorists was expressed by 29 percent of French respondents, 21 percent of Italians, 18 percent of British, 17 percent of Germans, and 12 percent of Spaniards. [21]

Individual responses in a survey are inconsequential expressive behavior. An individual's response to a survey question can provide expressive utility but does not affect personal material utility.[22]

Confirmation in expressive rhetoric of *own* conciliatory identity in the face of threats *that others face* imposes costs on people who are placed in the unnatural circumstances of being told that they should not resist when adversaries seek to do them harm. Self-defense is a natural instinct beyond humans. The externality is in the declared demeaning lack of worthiness of the life of a person who is told that he or she is not entitled to self-defense. In the case of expressive voting, expressive voters can impose externalities on themselves, as can "useful idiots" denying for their own expressive utility that someone wishes to harm *them*. Expressive behavior in these cases can depend on whether the behavior is consequential for personal material utility. However:

Proposition 5

The possibility of a decision being personally consequential is never present to set bounds on expressive rhetoric directed at others.

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[20] On the supreme values of communism, see Bernholz (1993).

[21] Pew Global Attitudes Project, reported in Kirchick (2009).

[22] On the unreliability of responses in surveys, see List and Gallett (2001).

3.4 Expressive rhetoric and inconsistent policies

The source of expressive utility can be inconsequential expressive rhetoric in support of inconsistent policies. Sustained viability of a welfare state and immigration of unproductive immigrants is inconsistent with the social insurance contract that underlies the welfare state (Sinn, 1997; Nannestad, 2004, 2007).[23] Nonetheless, expressive utility can be obtained from the rhetoric:

> **Proclamation C**
>
> *"We as a high-income (strong) society should be generous in permitting immigration of people from a low-income (weak) society".*

The observation that the welfare state is not sustainable in the face of adverse selection through immigration diminishes utility from the expressive rhetoric.[24]

3.5 Political correctness as defense of expressive utility

The role of political correctness is to defend expressive utility through the prohibition:

> *You are not allowed to say that.* [25]

[23] Nannestad (2009) speculates on an expressive interpretation of sustained unproductiveness of immigrants in welfare states.

[24] Expressive utility is also diminished by information regarding the predatory nature of government in many low-income countries (Hillman, 2004; Boroorah and Paldam, 2007). The predatory governments make any person not born to a family of a country's political elites a possible refugee. Expressive utility is diminished by the realization that the country's welfare state cannot accommodate everyone who wishes to come and that permitted refugees are therefore privileged.

The implicit continuation is:

Even if what you say is true, you diminish my expressive utility.

Proposition 6

Political correctness protects the utility obtained from expressive rhetoric. [26]

3.6 Expressive rhetoric and expressive media

The media can be expressive – although not the financial media, because people seek accurate information and not expressive rhetoric when making decisions about personal finance and wealth. Outside of financial reporting, expressive media can profit by catering to identity-confirming interpretations and perspectives of expressive populations. The media can expressively prescribe soft power. When populations to whom the media cater obtain expressive utility through expressive support for one side in a conflict, the media can provide substantiation of biased expressive perceptions by engaging in selective prejudicial reporting. True information that contradicts

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[25] The behavior is related to cognitive dissonance (Akerlof and Dickens, 1973).

[26] For perspectives on political correctness, see Loury (1994), my 1998 paper, and Morris (2001). Loury (1994) pointed out the reputational concerns that underlie voluntary adherence to restraints of political correctness. Morris (2001) showed more formally that a person with true information has a reputational incentive to lie in order to avoid being regarded as politically incorrect. My paper was concerned with the political incorrectness of rent seeking as had been reflected in exclusion of rent seeking from a stream of neo-classical models of public policy. See also Kuran (1995), who described the inhibitions on truth when living with "private truths" and "public lies".

the predispositions of expressive listeners, viewers, and readers would diminish the expressive utility that the media provides.

Proposition 7

The media can increase expressive utility by selectively ignoring true information and by changing information to achieve consistency with the requisites of the expressive utility of readers and listeners. [27]

3.7 Conflicting identities

I have not distinguished between behavior intended as self-pleasing and behavior intended to please others. The two types of behavior can conflict. The conflict in identities is introduced by defining A_j as self-pleasing identity and S_j as the identity sought by individual j for approval from others. Expressive utility is:

$$U_j^{EXP}(x_j^k) = A_j(x_j^k) + S_j(x_j^k) - D_j(x_j^k), \quad j = 1,...,n; \; k = 1,...,m. \qquad [18]$$

Material utility remains unchanged. Total utility is:

$$U_j(x_k) = \upsilon_j[EB_j(x_j^k) - C(x_j^k)] + \mu_j[A(x_j^k) + \beta_j S(x_j^k) - D(x_j^k)] \qquad [19]$$

β_j is the weight on social approval relative to own-pleasing identity.

The choice of behavior now depends on the importance of expressive utility (the values of υ_j and μ_j), and within expressive utility the importance of pleasing others (the value of β_j).

3.8 The rhetoric of self-defamation

Some U.S. commentators joined Europeans and others in declaring that the United States had brought the September 11 terror attacks

[27] Mullainathan and Shleifer (2005) describe manipulation of reporting of news. Iyengar and Hahn (2009) provide experimental evidence from the U.S. indicating matching of personal preferences for choice of media with media ideology.

upon itself.[28] There was rhetoric of self-defamation that took the form:

> *"We deserve what others do to us because we have been condescending in supposing the primacy of our culture".*

The rhetoric was conjoined with the familiar:

> *"The U.S. is strong and the terrorists are weak and the U.S. should have been more respectful".*

Rhetoric of self-defamation is predicted in particular from persons with foreign peer groups such as academics and journalists. The rhetoric, which is predicated on high values of μ_j land β_j in the individual utility function, serves to confirm the identity required for acceptance by the foreign peer groups. The rhetoric does not change the prejudicial position of the group from which approval is sought. There is loss of expressive utility because of the compromise of true identity but the self-defamation provides from group approval. The approval from the peer group can also bring material benefit. The expressive and material benefits compensate for the expressive loss from forsaking own true identity.

3.9 Anti-Americanism

Significant parts of European and other populations have indicated a dislike of the U.S. (Judt and Lacorne, 2005; Katzenstein and Keohane; 2007). A study by a panel of U.S. political scientists (Katzenstein, Legro, and others with dissent by Krasner and Nau, 2009) concluded that that there had been a decline in U.S. "standing" during the administration of president George W. Bush.

[28] For example, see Miller (2008), who reviews the themes of post 9/11 U.S. novelists.

"Standing" was defined as corresponding in international relations to long-term political capital or to goodwill in accounting. The American political scientists were proposing that behavior of the Bush administration reflected values of μ_j and β_j that were too low. The panel described "standing" as having intrinsic value even when there are "no readily observable behavioral implications". "Standing" could therefore be independent of anything that is actually done. The subsequent U.S. president Barak H. Obama appeared to increase μ_j by being more expressive in rhetoric and increased β_j through expressive rhetoric that was pleasing to others (see Kirchick, 2009). The change in rhetoric was consequential. Consequences were revealed in the approval by the Norwegian judges for the Nobel peace prize. An American president's rhetoric is consequential when the issue is the self-defense of the American people. When accepting the Nobel peace prize in Oslo on December 10 2009, the American president declared:

> *"I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: Evil exists in the world."*

Conciliatory rhetoric had first been chosen when rhetoric was inconsequential. When rhetoric was consequential for the American people, the rhetoric stressed the importance of public safety.[29]

[29] From among the many who proposed that the prize had been awarded for rhetoric, see Lech Walesa (http://www.krakowpost.com/article/1623). Walesa had previously won the same prize for the instrumentality of his actions in helping free his country of Soviet domination. When presenting the prize, the chairperson of the Nobel prize committee confirmed that the prize had been awarded for expressive rhetoric: "Political leaders must be able to *think* beyond the confines of realpolitik" (emphasis added). The prize had been awarded for what the Nobel committee members believed that

3.10 Academia

George Stigler (1982, p.13) described economists as preachers and proposed that

"the main lesson that I draw from our experience as preachers is that we are well received in the measure that we preach what the society wants to hear".

An author may be satisfied with a research paper submitted for publication but acceptance of idiosyncratic dictates of reviewers as "improvements" can be a requirement for a favorable publication decision (Bruno Frey, 2003). A sufficiently high value of β_j in [19] results in deceptive behavior that provides authors with expressive utility S_j from being "well-received" by the reviewers with whom they disagree. As with geopolitical self-defamation, insisting on expressive utility through own expressive self-satisfaction A_j rather than accommodating behavior to seek expressive utility S_j through approval from others can also be consequential. In the absence of approval from a requisite group, a researcher can be passed over when conference invitations are issued and when awards of merit are made.

4. Expressive generosity

I turn now to expressive behavior in a form that I call expressive generosity. For some people (in particular students, to whom I shall return), the deception of expressively voting for generosity while not behaving generously, or of expressively declaring the virtue of generosity while not actually personally giving, may not provide expressive utility. Rather, expressive utility to confirm generous

president Obama was thinking, as expressed in Obama's conciliatory rhetoric.

identity may require the act of actual giving. As with expressive voting and expressive rhetoric, interdependent utility is absent from expressive generosity: the utility of others (the recipients) does not appear in the utility function. Hence, although money is given to others, expressive generosity is defined without utility from altruism.

Definition: Expressive generosity

Expressive generosity is generosity that motivated only by own expressive utility and not by consequences of giving for others. [30]

Utility is maximized by choosing

$$\arg\max U_j(x_j^k) = x_j^* = \begin{cases} x_j^o = 0 \ \ (give\,nothing) \\ x_j^{GIVE} > 0 \ (give\,something) \end{cases} \qquad [20]$$

In the absence of expressive utility, the decision is to give nothing. Expressive utility changes behavior to result in positive giving.

Either positive or negative externalities can be associated with expressive generosity. I consider now negative externalities. We shall return to the positive externalities when considering outcomes in experiments.

4.1 Negative externalities in a natural experiment

A natural experiment illustrates expressive generosity in individual behavior. Two high-income visitors to a low-income country

[30] Expressive generosity is here viewed as increasing expressive utility. Corneo and Grüner (2000) have however suggested circumstances in which expressive generosity can decrease expressive utility. They described utility from social status as requiring high income and proposed that, after giving away money, people could lack the wealth or income that allows them to express themselves as having high social status.

encounter a school-age child offering trinkets for sale at a time of day when the child confirms that she should (and could) be in school. One of the visitors (an economist) points out that the child's best interest is that she be in school and that purchasing trinkets will discourage the child's parents from sending her to school. The other visitor withdraws from the purchase but later is seen hopingly furtively buying trinkets from the child. The purchase of the trinkets is inconsequential for the material utility of the buyer: the amount of money spent on the trinkets is insignificant for the purchaser, who also obtains no material utility from the trinkets. The purchase of the trinkets only serves to provide expressive utility by confirming generous identity. The negative externality is through the incentives for the child's education. The buyers' decision was not based on outcomes for the child. Only own expressive utility mattered. The buyers' expressive utility was reduced by the information that purchasing trinkets imposed a negative externality on the child. There remained sufficient expressive utility from expressive generosity to seek out the child and buy the trinkets.

4.2 Overfeeding children

The above case involves exploitation of children. In another example, parents obtain expressive utility through expressive generosity by overfeeding children. The overfeeding is due to parents' own expressive utility. There is disutility when parents are informed that they are overfeeding a child.[31]

[31] The case of overfeeding children departs from utility functions [8] and [8′] because of interdependent utility. However, the parents proceed to feed the child beyond the quantity that is desirable for the child.

4.3 Ineffective aid

International agencies, donor governments, and non-government organizations have persisted over time in providing ineffective aid.[32] The evidence is that the aid does not promote economic growth and does not benefit the poor in low-income countries (Doucouliagos and Paldam, 2008). The aid is often appropriated by the political elites (Hillman, 2004). There is a hostage problem, with people kept poor so that further aid that can be appropriated will be provided (Easterly, 2001; Hillman, 2002). The political classes lack an interest in economic growth because higher incomes for the general population would increase demand for broad political participation, which would result in transparency and accountability in government (Welzman, 2010). There are social costs because of rent-seeking incentives associated with contestability of aid (Svensson, 2000). The aid continues because of utility from expressive generosity. Expressive utility declines when donors are asked to respond to the evidence that the aid benefits only the political elites in poor countries and – through utility from expressive generosity – the donors themselves.[33]

4.4 The benefits and costs of expressive generosity

We conclude with respect to the benefits and costs of expressive generosity:

[32] Where "aid" is predicated on a reciprocal benefit, there is no presumption of generosity. See Younas (2008) on trade as reciprocating aid and Dreher, Thiele, and Nunnenkamp (2008) on reciprocation of US aid in UN General Assembly voting.

[33] Catherine Weaver (2008) describes the dilemma confronting the World Bank because of the disparity between aid rhetoric and development outcomes.

Proposition 8

Expressive generosity benefits donors through expressive utility but can impose social costs.

5. Expressive behavior in experiments

If people are influenced by expressive utility, expressive behavior will be revealed in experiments. We begin with experiments on expressive voting.

5.1 Experiments on expressive voting

Although individual voters are not decisive in real-life voting in usual elections, in experiments voters can be informed that they will be decisive with indicated probabilities.[34] Both deceptive expressive voters and expressively generous voters vote to give money away when the probability of being decisive is low. The two types of voters behave differently when their vote is decisive. A deceptive expressive voter obtains expressive utility through the pretense of wishing to give and will veto giving if decisive. Decisive expressively generous voters will vote to give, subject to not having to give up too much. Carter and Guerette (1992) presented students from economics and accounting classes at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester in

[34] Voters may be under the illusion that their vote is decisive (see section 9). Sobel and Wagner (2004) attributed greater redistribution of income in larger U.S. states to a smaller likelihood that an individual voter will be decisive. Because the probability of being a decisive voter is objectively negligible when the size of the electorate reaches that of the least populated U.S. state, it appears that the sizes of the electorates in different states influenced inaccurate subjective perceptions of the probability of being decisive.

Massachusetts with the choice between keeping $6 or $9 for themselves and giving $2 to charity. The sums of money were small but giving to charity was relatively costly. A student was assigned a probability of being decisive in a majority-voting outcome. Deceptive expressive voting would be revealed if the likelihood of voting to donate to charity increased as the probability of being decisive declined. Only "weak support" was indicated for deceptive expressive voting: students tended to vote to donate to charity even if decisive. The behavior was consistent with expressive generosity. The students did not know – and indeed did not seem to care – to whom they were giving charity.[35] Preeminent in their choice of behavior was confirmation of generous identity. In conversations with friends and family, there would have been loss of expressive utility in describing their participation in the experiment and reporting that "I took the money where possible for myself and did not care about donating to charity". Jean-Robert Tyran (2004) conducted a similar experiment in which students were given the equivalent of $6 and were informed of their probability of being decisive in a majority vote on alternatives of keeping the money and giving the money "to charity". In a first experiment, if a majority voted in favor of charity, all students were obliged to donate their money without regard for how they had personally voted. In a second experiment, if a majority favored giving to charity, students could keep their money for themselves if they had personally voted against donating the money. Deceptive expressive voting predicts that students would vote in favor of giving to charity in the first experiment but not in the second. There was however no significant difference in behavior in the two types of

[35] The students could have voted to take the larger sum for themselves and independently donate more than $2 to charity, thereby effecting a Pareto improvement. Carter and Guerette noted that the presence of true charitable intentions would have had a "confounding" effect on their experiments. They viewed a claim of intending to give charity from the larger personal sum as "rationalizing" a vote for personal money.

experiments. Whether a student voted to be charitable did not depend on whether the outcome of majority voting would oblige students to be charitable (experiment 1) or being charitable was a personal decision (experiment 2). The amount of money at stake did not determine students' behavior. Students ostensibly voted in accord with identity independent of the conditions of the two types of experiments. Expressive utility thus determined behavior without regard for how the conditions of the experiment affected the likelihood of giving up money.[36] In another experiment, Feddersen, Gailmard, and Sandroni (2009) reported evidence consistent with deceptive expressive voting. They interpreted behavior when the probability of being decisive was low as exhibiting "moral bias". Reinterpreted in terms of expressive utility, the source of the "moral bias" is that people rationally perceive that, because their vote is not decisive for material utility, they might as well benefit from expressive utility that can be obtained by voting according to the identity of a moral person. An experiment reported by Fischer (1996) revealed deceptive expressive voting when students were offered the possibility of outcomes that allowed them to keep $200 for themselves: the students voted to keep the money when their likelihood of being

[36] Tyran reported that he sought to eliminate ethical considerations from the students' decisions by not informing the students of the ethical implications of their decisions: "…in the wording of the instructions as well as in our behavior during the experiment we avoided to give subjects the impression that they are somehow morally obliged to donate their endowment to the charity. Rather, we tried to appear as neutral as possible" (p. 1652). We surmise that the students understood that ethics and ethical identity were involved in the choice between taking money for themselves and donating to charity. In Tyran's experiment, students were given $3 for correctly predicting how others would vote. Tyran reported bandwagon effects and suggested that "it may be more rewarding to vote for a morally worthy cause if others are expected to do so, too". Ashworth, Geys, Heyndels (2006) found "bandwagon effects" in data on actual voting in Belgium.

decisive was high and voted in favor of giving to "charity" when their likelihood of being decisive was low.

The evidence from expressive voting experiments is summarized as:

Proposition 9a

When the amounts of money at stake are sufficiently small, students may prefer expressive utility from expressive generosity to material utility combined with uncharitable identity.

5.2 Cooperation and trust

In the single-interaction prisoners' dilemma it is rational behavior not to cooperate, yet often in experiments students achieve the efficient cooperative outcome. In repeated games, they often cooperate until the final round and sometimes on into the final round. Cooperation is predicted if the payoffs perceived by the students include expressive utility from confirmation of cooperative identity. In the public good game, which is a variation on a theme of the prisoners' dilemma, free riding to attempt to exploit the good will or kindness of others is inconsistent with confirming a generous identity.[37]

In the trust game, expressive behavior by the donor can confirm the identity of being a trusting person and the expressive behavior of the recipient can confirm the identity of being a trustworthy person. In the predicted Nash equilibrium based on material gain alone, no money is transferred. Expressive utility explains why money is transferred and also returned.[38]

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[37] On the prisoners' dilemma amended for utility from cooperative identity, see Hillman (2009, chapter 1).

[38] In a graduate class in Europe, when the trust game was being explained, a student from an East Asian country could not comprehend why she should be expected to return any money – from which we impute a utility

Proposition 9b

Expressive behavior is a source of social benefit when, in order to confirm identity, people deviate from Nash behavior to cooperate or to show that they are generous, trusting or trustworthy.

5.3 Ultimatum games

In ultimatum games, there can be affront and rejection of offers when recipients perceive unfairness, resulting in inefficient outcomes where no one has anything. Recipients who feel that they have been treated unfairly may be prepared to incur a personal cost in reacting to the perception that the donor is not a generous person. Rejection of offers perceived as unfair confirms the reciprocating identity that "I am a reasonable person provided others are reasonable in their behavior to me". Expressive utility also explains seemingly anomalous outcomes in which very high offers are rejected (see for example Chen and Tang, 2009). The high offers are regarded as an affront to pride and thus as condescending. The intended recipient would lose expressive utility if the "excessively" generous offer of the donor were accepted.

Proposition 9c

Expressive utility is part of the explanation for behavior in ultimatum games.

5.4 Dictatorship games

The dictatorship game is the purest test of expressive generosity. With the decision whether to share unilateral, people give only to confirm a generous identity. They do not know to whom they are giving and may well be giving to people who are better off than themselves. The purpose of their giving is not therefore to help people

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function with no expressive component of utility. She was a graduate student in economics, which is a distinction to which I shall presently turn.

who are less fortunate than themselves but to obtain expressive utility from expressive generosity. Eichenberger and Oberholzer-Gee (1998), using as subjects economics students at the University of Zurich and the University of Basel, reported outcomes of experiments on a dictatorship and a "bandit" game, with sums of $6 "earned" in Zurich and "not earned" in Basel. In the bandit game, a student without money could take all or part of the money of another student. Behavior was consistent with expressive generosity. "Bandit" students left some money for the other student. There could be no presumption that the other student with whom a student had been paired was deserving of charity. The behavior was a confirmation of non-completely-exploitative identity. Fischer (1996) reported that sums of money given increased when behavior was observed by others, indicating the presence of the social approval motive. Expressive utility obtained from approval from others is also indicated by outcomes in which nothing is given when the decision is completely anonymous including with respect to the researcher overseeing the experiment. Expressive utility from group approval is likewise indicated by the evidence (Cason and Mui, 1997) that donors are more generous in proposals for giving when the decision is made collectively.

Proposition 9d

Expressive utility from expressive generosity explains outcomes in dictatorship and bandit games.

5.5 Economics students

Economics students (and economists) often differ systematically in behavior from others.[39] The behavior of economics students is in general consistent with an identity of being rational, competitive, and profit-seeking. The experimental evidence indicates that knowledge of

[39] For an overview of the literature comparing behavior of economists and non-economists, see Kirchgässner (2005).

economics is correlated with being more self-interested.[40] When economics students are introduced to the prisoners' dilemma, they not only learn the concepts of dominant strategy and Nash equilibrium; they are also told that payoffs as material rewards are the sole source of utility. The inclination to behave expressively is taken out of their personal calculations. Non-economics students tend to indicate greater awareness of expressive utility and seek to confirm an identity of being generous and cooperative. The non-economics students may continue to cooperate in a repeated prisoners' dilemma when others do not if losses are sufficiently small, because of the expressive utility from confirming an identity as a nicer person than people who do not cooperate.

Proposition 9e

Economics students behave to confirm an identity that stems from exposure to models with no expressive content of utility while non-economics students are influenced more by expressive utility.

5.6 Gender differences

Behavior in experiments reveals gender differences.[41] Croson and Gneezy (2009) summarize the evidence as indicating that men and women often behave differently. However, "exceptions to the rule" are "managers and professional populations". Men and women thus have similar identities in professional roles but behavior differs by gender when identities differ. Dictatorship games in particular reveal substantive gender-related differences in behavior. Men tend to be more responsive than women to material cost when deciding whether or how much to give to others. Men thereby confirm a calculating identity while women are less responsive in decisions to give to the cost of giving (Andreoni and Vesterlund, 2001).

[40] Frank and Schulze (2000) were led to ask whether studying economics makes people "corrupt".

[41] For summaries, see Eckel (2008) and Eckel and Grossman (2008).

Proposition 9f

Expressive utility from confirmation of identity explains gender differences in experiments.

5.7 Expressive utility as a unifying explanation

Expressive utility appears to provide a unifying explanation for behavior in experiments. Behavior is rationally predicated on utility functions [8] or [8′]. People respond in their decisions not only to material utility but also to the expressive utility from the decisions whether to cooperate, trust others, be trustworthy, to be fair or ethical in sharing, and in responding when others are perceived to be reciprocally kind to them (or kind to others).

6. Interdependent utility

Expressive utility may coexist with interdependent utility. How does interdependent utility affect behavior based on expressive behavior alone?

6.1 Expressive voting

A person may decide to vote for the altruistic reason of expressing supporting democratic principles. The vote of one individual is inconsequential for sustaining democracy. Hence an individual's vote as an expression of support for democracy is inconsequential for benefit others and provides but expressive utility. Intent of malice is present if the decision for whom to vote is made to "punish" a candidate or political party.[42] An individual vote is however inconsequential in "punishing". Voting to "punish" (or to protest) is expressive.

[42] See Glazer (2008), who describes voting to anger (or please) others.

Proposition 10a

Expressive voting with altruism or malice remains solely expressive.

6.2 Expressive rhetoric

Social costs do not depend on intent. Absence and presence of malice are thus observationally equivalent when, for example, the preaching of soft power calls on particular people to forego public safety and self-defense. The majorities of European countries who indicated that they opposed a response by the U.S. to the terror attacks of September 11 could have been but exhibiting the expressive behavior that can be characteristic in survey responses. There could also have been malice in anti-Americanism.[43]

Proposition 10b

Expressive rhetoric predicated on expressive utility alone is observationally indistinguishable from expressive rhetoric that includes malice.

6.3 Expressive generosity

Altruism is a natural complement of expressive generosity. Malice has no role. Expressive generosity may create moral hazard and diminish self-reliance of recipients or may underlie ineffective aid and the social losses of rent-seeking incentives. Notwithstanding disadvantageous outcomes for others, malice is not intended.[44]

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[43] If malice is suspected, we are led to seek the sources of the emotional prejudicial behavior. See, for example, Glaeser (2005).

[44] Andreoni (1990) distinguished between "impure" and "pure" altruism in personal contributions to a public good. Altruism was "impure" when the source of utility was increased availability of the public good and "pure" when utility increased because of the act of giving independently of the personal contribution to increased availability of the public good. Using the terms of expressive behavior, utility from "pure altruism" is expressive

Proposition 10c

Expressive generosity can coexist with altruistic motives but harm is an unintended consequence.

7. Delusion and deception

George Akerlof (1989) described willful delusion in choice of bias in perception of information that trades off people's "desires to feel good about themselves" and reality. Tyler Cowen (2005) proposed that voters disregard information that is inconsistent with confirmation of self-image or that would imply that they had made incorrect decisions in the past; the delusion includes justification for making the effort to become informed about candidates' policies rather than being rationally ignorant and belief in being the decisive voter. Bryan Caplan (2007) proposed that people believe what they want to believe and choose the beliefs that give them highest utility. In these cases people delude themselves to maximize utility and the delusion is *sustained*. The deceptions of expressive behavior have more subtlety because the decision whether to persist with deception is contingent on whether individual behavior is consequential for material utility.

8. Remedies for social costs

In this final section, we consider possible remedies for social costs of expressive behavior. In the case of expressive voting, we can look to institutions for a remedy. There is disappointment when, after a majority of voters has expressively voted for an outcome that they do not want, elected representatives set out to implement the policies. The disappointment is avoided when political representatives are also expressive. Expressive voters then achieve their preferred outcome of obtaining expressive utility without incurring the personal material

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through utility from confirming generous identity and is not altruistic because the expressive donor is concerned only with own expressive utility.

costs of the policies for which they voted. Before an election, the political party supported by the expressive majority uses expressive rhetoric to make proclamations about the merits of generous sharing of income and wealth or about the need for compromise and conciliation notwithstanding supreme values of an adversary. Then, having won the election, elected representatives are aware that proceeding to implement the expressive policies will result in defeat in a future election by another political party that is expressive in rhetoric and understands that voters do not actually want the policies for which they expressively voted. The policies proclaimed before the election are therefore not implemented. Expressive rhetoric may continue and increase when rhetoric substitutes for the unwanted expressively supported policies.[45]

The rhetoric of international aid agencies and unilateral donors proclaims the merit of helping the poor in low-income countries. When aid is ineffective, the rhetoric is nonetheless the source of expressive utility for people in high-income countries for whom the rhetoric assuages guilt feelings because of relative personal well-being. The expressive rhetoric of aid agencies thereby internalizes the expressive utility of high-income people in rich countries.

When institutions do not internalize social costs, usual remedies for social costs of expressive behavior cannot be applied. Coase negotiations and Pigovian solutions cannot be used, nor can direct regulation be effective. Paternalistic solutions can be applied to children: when children uninhibitedly proclaim on being told a story or watching a movie that they are "Jack" or "Jill" or another hero or heroine, prompting by parents can lead the children to shed their

[45] An expressive political party such as "new Labor" in the United Kingdom allows the middle class to feel comfortable through expressive rhetoric – similarly the Labor Party in Australia and "social democratic" parties elsewhere. In Israel expressive voters of the upper-middle class were a mainstay of support for the Labor Party. In Greece, of two communist parties, one is used to provide expressive utility by voting of intellectuals.

expressive identities. Similar paternalistic responses cannot be readily applied to adults. There is a personal dilemma in attempting paternalistic intervention. A plea for a reasoned consideration of social costs can result in personal costs through consternation at the disregard of bounds of political correctness and through tensions when expressive utility is protected. Malice may, moreover, be revealed when previously there had been ambiguity about whether malice had been present.

Perhaps we need to rely on sufficiently salient events to curtail expressive behavior that has social costs. Personal experience of donors with moral hazard may diminish expressive utility from expressive voting and expressive rhetoric, and may limit expressive generosity, and expressive utility from soft-power conciliatory rhetoric may decline when acts of terror are not preempted or if individuals personally experience fear of terror.[46]

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[46] Thomas Moore (1551) described utopia as a communist state devoid of the inequalities of private property. The utopian communist vision was retained into the 20th century notwithstanding evidence of the terror that accompanies communism (for example, Solzhenitsyn, 1974). In 1989, the year of the beginning of the end of Soviet communism, the 13th edition of a popular textbook informed students that "the Soviet economy is proof that, contrary to what many skeptics had earlier believed, a socialist command economy can function and even thrive" (Paul Samuelson and William Nordhaus, p. 837). Expressive support for communism subsided when communism collapsed.

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