

I VOTE THEREFORE I AM:

EXPRESSIVE VOTING, ATTITUDES TOWARD GAYS AND LESBIANS, AND NASCAR
DADS & WAL-MART MOMS

By

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A Bryce Myers

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Co-Chairperson Donald P. Haider-Markel

Co-Chairperson Alesha Doan

Mark Joslyn

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The Thesis Committee for A Bryce Myers
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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ABSTRACT

In the course of American politics, the voter has been the object of intense speculation. In order to make sense of this enigma, campaigns and scholars have sought to pigeonhole the voter by organizing the electorate as a collection of stereotypes. Candidates and campaigns have jockeyed for the soccer mom vote, the Reagan democrat vote, the latte liberal vote, the list goes on. In this text, the author tests two such stereotypes: ‘Wal-Mart moms’ and ‘NASCAR dads’. After a brief demonstration of the way in which popular and academic literature has deployed these stereotypes, the author surveys the literature on ‘expressive voting’. Using ‘expressive voting’—which argues that individuals use votes to express their perceived identities—in tandem with these articulations of perceived identities, the author proposes that tests should yield that women who have children and shop at Wal-Mart, and men who have children and are NASCAR fans, should (assuming those stereotypes are accurate representations) vote to express their identities as per social expectations. Using 2006 Victory Fund exit poll data (conducted by Zogby International), the author conducts logistic and ordered logistic regressions to test the validity of these stereotypes in five contexts: partisan identification, the 2004 Presidential election, the 2006 midterm Congressional elections, approval of marriage for same-sex couples, and willingness to vote for a gay or lesbian candidate. In the end, the data indicates that there is rarely any statistically significant indicator that Wal-Mart moms, or NASCAR dads, are prone to respond a given way in any context. In fact, the only statistically significant evidence was found in relation to marriage equality and, at that, only one of those responses was what the literature indicated we should expect.

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I want to thank Dr. Donald Haider-Markel and Dr. Alesha Doan. Before this work can speak to any of my capabilities as a researcher, it must speak to their capabilities as mentors and coaches. Whether it was an academic problem, or just a general life question, I could trust these professors to give me only the best advice. It is only because of the training that these two scholars have given me that I ever had the confidence in my abilities that allowed me to evolve as an academic. I also want to thank Dr. Mark Joslyn; I was challenged to do my best work to meet the standards that Dr. Joslyn's own work routinely achieved.

My academic work has been inspired by theorists from Robert Dahl to Judith Butler. These interests are diverse, and some are quite exogenous to my specific field of study, and still each one of the aforementioned professors was able to help me see how I could use them to better my work. I have, time and again, been amazed at how this project has progressed.

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POSTCARDS FROM THE “REAL AMERICA”: AN INTRODUCTION

The advent of voter identities arose from a need to catalogue voters as “this” or “that” type of person. That political operatives could conceptualize voters as “soccer moms,” for example, allowed politicians and activists to ascribe to individuals a predetermined political attitude; this attitude—and the associated “identity”—served as a locus for campaigning for individuals’ votes.

In a rally in North Carolina, during the 2008 election, Sarah Palin referred to the constituency that she and her running-mate were courting as “the real America”—an incident for which she would later apologize to the rest of the country (Layton 2008). At another stop the evocative—if feckless—designation ‘real America’ was invoked in a more divisive fashion as Robin Hayes, a McCain supporter, “[praised Sarah] Palin. ‘Folks, there's a great American,’ Hayes said. ‘Liberals hate real Americans that work and accomplish and achieve and believe in God’” (*ibid*).

The trajectory of the use of political stereotypes in recent memory alone has laid bare the need for academia to take a greater interest in the notion that a vote is an expression of a visceral understanding of the ‘self’—as are consumer choices, casual associations, and the like. The importance of this issue, it seems, is predicated upon one simple observation: the ability to understand the rationale of political participation—the ability to ascertain why it is that individuals do or do not participate, and why they participate in the way, to the degree, and to the end that they do—is the query at the heart of political science. Moreover, in order for campaigns to strategize, to achieve success in garnering support for, or opposition to, given issues or candidates, one must be able to understand how it is that said individuals’ reason. Based off of

these observations, I believe that this project could go far in contributing to a narrative that may very well prove crucial in developing explanatory, predictive, and operative value.

To test this idea, I explored exit poll data from the 2006 elections, conducted by Zogby International. Ultimately, in order to inquire into whether individuals' political opinions express a self that is also conveyed in socio-consumer choices, I looked for respondents' opinions on given issues, in this case same-sex marriage and the propensity to vote for a gay or lesbian candidate. Then I looked for questions that speak to the respondents' identity outside of a political context, in this case consumer preferences relating to: 1) whether the individual shops at Wal-Mart, or 2) whether the individual is a NASCAR fan. These respondents were narrowed down to be consistent with two specific, frequently invoked stereotypes: 'Wal-Mart moms' and 'NASCAR dads'.

This text follows a specific roadmap. First, I establish a theoretical framework that seeks to integrate the metatheoretical literature on identity and voting as a discursive performance of an identity, then a theoretical review of expressive voting in political science literature. Second, I discuss the methodology used to analyze the data on same-sex marriage and consumer preferences, and I articulate the findings of the analysis of this data. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks on the test that was performed and the theoretical framework that preceded it. Throughout it all, it is my informed supposition that consumer choices bear a relation to voting in that both reflect underlying values and attitudes, which—taken together—constitute surface level indications of one's core self-perception.

BEING AT THE BALLOT BOX: THE THEORY OF EXPRESSIVE VOTING

A very worthy question regarding the present research is: "Why test 'NASCAR dads' and 'Wal-Mart' moms with the presumption that they will be conservative?" My supposition that

these two groups of voters will identify as Republican stems from my conceptual understanding of branding and literature, which indicates that the Republican Party has been most successful at branding itself to Wal-Mart moms and NASCAR dads. I take this understanding from Cosgrove who argues that: “Branding lets parties, interest groups, and think tanks present their ideas quickly to a public that does not always pay attention between elections, as well as in a way that will activate those parts of the audience that pay attention all the time but might not always participate (Cosgrove 2007, 32).” Given this, it is important to look at the way in which the parties have been branded to ‘NASCAR dads’ and ‘Wal-Mart moms’. Specifically, Cosgrove argues that the Republican Party has done a better job at marketing itself to middle-class, ‘everyday people’ types of voters.

What constitutes the “real America” (that is, its conflation with conservatism), as used in the introduction to this text, parallels the identities at issue here (‘NASCAR dads’ and ‘Wal-Mart moms’) as illuminated the book *What’s the Matter with Kansas*, in which Thomas Frank cites David Brooks, in noting the association between Wal-Mart and conservatism:

Brooks, who has elsewhere ascribed the decline of the Democratic Party to its snobbery, mocks blue-staters for eating at fancy restaurants and shopping in small pretentious stores instead of at Wal-Mart, retailer to the real America” (2005, 21-22).

Whether or not these ascriptions are accurate has been a matter of debate as early as 2004. Regardless of whether or not one believes in the applicability of these stereotypes, to accept them as having a potential to be applicable is to grant them an air of validity; to discuss them is to assume that they always already exist, and such a presumption seems to have purchase. By 2006, the notion of the “political stereotype” had evolved along with a body of voters that realclearpolitics.com’s Ryan Sager has referred to as “Wal-Mart Voters” (Sager 2006a, 2006b). On other popular blogs—like slate.com, for example—the particular political

associations of “Wal-Mart voters” were the topic of speculation (Gross 2006). Two years later, *TIME* would wonder “Can Obama Win Back Wal-Mart Moms?”

Mary Douglas Vavrus argues that media promulgates the notion that NASCAR dads, on the one hand, and the Republican Party, on the other, are to be associated as a result of values commonly seen to be shared between the two: namely, hypermasculinity. Vavrus notes:

Instead, NASCAR dad stories constitute a brand that attempts to regulate the conduct of a population of men in the service of corporations. By presenting two alternative masculine identities, the manly men of the GOP and the feminized “wusses” of the Democratic Party—and clearly preferring the former—TV news stories idealize a specific masculine identity (Fahey, 2007, demonstrates ample use of this feminizing tactic in news accounts of John Kerry during his 2004 campaign for the presidency). In further identifying this identity with hyper-consumerism, TV news consolidates corporate and conservative political power through the NASCAR dad brand. NASCAR dads thus become an identity brand that facilitates “governmental self formation” (Graham, 1997, p. 554) by embodying a subjectivity that directly ties to and benefits a triad of powerful institutions—TV networks, the NASCAR Corporation, and the Republican Party—yet looks as if it is naturally resonant and spontaneously generated.

Following Jeffords (1989), I suggest that the NASCAR dad is part of a project of intensive remasculinization dating back to the Vietnam War era. Since September 11, 2001, media representations have been saturated with a muscular, paternal masculinity. The constitution of NASCAR dads is an important continuation of this trend. Typical media representations—including news about the terrorist attacks of September 11 and political contests like the recent presidential campaign (Kimmel, 2006)—glorify masculine attributes of heroism, bravery, aggression, and so-called “family values.” They also render women virtually invisible—or marginal, at best. As I have noted, television news constitutes NASCAR dad as a white, conservative, deeply patriotic, family-oriented, straight, hero-worshipping patriarch. He aspires to being a “man’s man,” like his hero, Junior, and supports the military discursively if not materially. This is regressive, in that it eclipses more egalitarian constructions of masculinity. And although television news is not the only site where this process occurs, it is an important one for its open promotion of its products as simple, transparent reflections of reality. The NASCAR dad’s masculinity is the norm in mainstream media representations today, and as such lacks the defensiveness and ambivalence found in soccer mom representations. (2007, 258-259)

What Lies Beneath?: Theoretical Notions of Voting as an Attribute of Oneself

Expressive voting may well best be distinguished (particularly, distinguished from its alternative within the tradition of rational voter thought) by a simple question that the voter

might ask herself: “What do I want my vote to *do*?” (Brennan and Hamlin, 1998) For the champions of instrumental voting, the checking of the box on a ballot is an attempt to achieve an end goal of actualizing some preferred outcome: “I vote Republican because I believe Republicans will prevent a policy that I dislike”; for the champions of expressive voting, the same checking of the box is an articulation of ones preferred values: “I vote Republican to show that I am a Republican”. To construe the difference between instrumental and expressive voting so crudely is about as elucidative of the nuances of the theory now as it was when it was first articulated.

The theory of ‘expressive voting’ may just as easily be situated in the context of a broader social and philosophical literature, as may be situated in a narrower political science literature. For example, Friedrich Nietzsche noted in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, that “there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; the ‘doer’ is a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything” (1989, 45).

Erving Goffman, articulated a similar theory, but he preferred to do so by using the analogy of a staged performance. From the onset, Goffman leaves no doubt that he views the individual as an actor playing out a part on a stage, interacting with other actors playing other parts, for an audience (1959, xi). Existence (indeed, identity) was—for Goffman—a matter of suppression of a primal self: one that is coded for interpretation by others by couching it in commonly recognizable terms (1959). Goffman referred to this performance as a “part” or a “routine” (consistent with his theatrical analogy). These routines are meant to convey a self to others and impact others insofar as their recognition of a being might elicit interaction, or reaction from another (1959).

Anthony Giddens has posited that identity is the routine maintenance of a specific narrative. One's identity is the process by which one establishes and articulates their notion of 'self' and negotiates its foray into the external world (1991). Finally, Judith Butler has formulated expressive and dramaturgical theories, in her work on gender, to construct a framework of performativity, arguing that the political and social demand for the category of 'woman' operates on a presumed notion of an innate gendered self which is articulated in and through discourses that only serve to propagate the idea that such a self 'exists' (Butler 1990, 1999).

The abstract, theoretical notion that an individual is said to *be* because of that which the individual is seen to *do* has not eluded political scientists. The calling into question of the 'rationality' of a person's electoral choice serves as the locus for initial articulations and developments of a theory that said vote is, in reality, an expression (Brennan and Buchanan 1984). And, as Carter and Guerette remind us, despite subsequent explorations of it, 'expressive voting' had been "...one of the best kept secrets in public choice..." for the better part of a decade (1992).

Carter and Guerette (1992) and Fischer (1996) sought to explore the notion of expressive voting in experimental contexts, even as Brennan and Lomasky (1993) were refining the theory. Carter and Guerette, and Fischer found evidence of expressive voting, but the presence of expression in voting was hardly incontrovertible for them. Furthermore, as I have said above, these studies relied on experimental tests of expressive choice. To be sure, experimental methods are a crucial part of any scientific discipline, and serve to answer questions in ways that other methods cannot, but—conversely—other methods have strengths that only they possess.

And, while these studies were immensely instructive, any theory which is tested nearly exclusively in experimental contexts is sorely lacking in perspective.

Shortly thereafter, Alexander Schuessler (2000a, 2000b) explored expressive voting as a doctrine more fully than had previously been examined. Most succinctly, Schuessler noted that “...at least for some voters, voting is a means to express political beliefs and preferences and, in doing so, to establish or reaffirm their own political identity” (2000b, 87).

In a way Schuessler, and his analysis, harkens to the words of Friedrich Nietzsche which I have previously stated.¹ That an entity is posthumously applied to the commission of an act is the minor point of this claim; ultimately, it is worth noting that the effectual weight that the deed bears on the “doer” is defined by—and ultimately moored to—the “deed” itself. All the more apropos is this reference in light of the way that Schuessler references the being/doing distinction time and again. Channeling Nietzsche, Schuessler offers us the following:

I note that although existing economic approaches have been very successful in modeling outcome-oriented, or instrumental, human behavior, to date they have been quite unsuccessful in approaching symbolic or expressive behavior. The first realm is that of *Doing*—individuals perform X in order to *do* Y—and the second is that of identification, attachment, or *Being*—individuals perform X as this is how they *become* X-performers. (2000a, 30).

Schuessler asserts that his analysis predicates the voter as one who votes, a doing that creates a being (2000a, 29-30). In the way of an analogue, he offers us that “*Doing* pig farming contradicts *being* a ballet dancer. *Doing* gum chewing, analytically, defines the chewer’s *being* and thus represents a valid—in this particular case, critical—object of philosophical inquiry” (2000a, 29).

Gum chewing, pig farming, and ballet dancers aside, a permutation of Nietzsche’s emphasis on the retrospective attribution of being as a pathologized, identifying doing and

¹ It should be noted that Schuessler uses the *exact* same phrasing, and the *exact* same line of logic as Nietzsche, but does not credit him. Indeed, Schuessler does not mention Nietzsche’s name once in the entirety of his text.

Schuessler's discussion (however bizarre) of the importance of doing as an emblematic pathology of being engenders a new conception of political participation for political scientists to consider. In this way, the act of 'a vote' and the being of 'a voter' are not arbitrary distinctions; the voter is a being that is originated at the nexus of the person who holds a political conviction and the instance of codifying that conviction vis-à-vis participation in the political praxis.

Beyond Schuessler, the landscape of political science discourse is only peppered with discussions of expressive voting literature. Jones and Hudson (2000) argued that civic duty is satisfied by intrinsic motivation, whereas expressive voting presumes some external reward. The two are distinct, but both are involved in the act of voting, causing Jones and Hudson to emphasize the delineation between 'whether' to vote, versus 'how' to vote. Using 1988 American National Election Survey data, Kan and Yang (2001) used an econometric methodology to study the propensity of people to vote in close elections *in addition to* landslide elections. The authors find that individuals are likely to turn out in order to show approval or disapproval for candidates, even when said persons are well aware that their vote will not change the outcome. Elder and Greene (2007) and Greenlee (2010) test the notion of 'security moms' and 'NASCAR dads,' and 'soccer moms' (respectively) and find some variance on the part of political preferences of these categories of persons. Their studies, however, focus mainly on the effect of being a parent on voting, as opposed to the theoretical supposition that the vote constitutes an actualized expression of some inherent self-conceptualization.

Nevertheless, the lugubrious body of literature that exists to this point is inadequate for two reasons. In the first place, there is a void in the literature in terms of a study which analyzes the expressive dimension of party identification, *and* the expressive dimension of candidate preference, *and* the expressive dimension of issue-specific attitude formation, all at the same

time, using the same data, and in the same context. Second, Laband et al (2009) indicated, in their analysis of sports patronage as inexorably linked to political activity, that the literature on expressive voting maintains a myopic view of political activity as expressing *only* political preferences. In other words, the discipline has, hitherto, only inquired into the extent to which a voter's political choices express her political proclivities and nothing more. But what of other choices which may indicate political proclivities, or the power of political choice to explain other proclivities? Benjamin Newman and Brandon Bartels (2010) broach this topic with their discussion of consumerism as linked to political preference, but even this discussion lacks an elucidation of the role that self-expression plays in either choice.

Newman and Bartels' examination of political consumerism argued that citizens' political proclivities are intimately linked to their choice of consumer goods, and that this effect is most common in those who are politically active and informed (2010). To begin with, Newman and Bartels define political consumerism as “[t]he intentional buying or abstention from buying specific products for political, social, or ethical purposes...” (2010, 1). In my view, it is difficult to distinguish between the notion that persons buy specific products as a function of a perceived identity, on the one hand, and the act of boycotting, on the other. Certainly, boycotting is an act of political expression; for example, the Supreme Court, in NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware, unanimously and definitively protected the act of boycotting as a constitutionally protected form of political dissention (Supreme Court of the United States 1985).

Newman and Bartels analyze political consumerism within the context of the theoretical doctrine of “lifestyle politics [which] argues that the countervailing effects of individual-level variables arrayed upon the intuitional/noninstitutional participation dimension serve as the source of the drive for venturing into new arenas for political participation and for embracing new types

of political behaviors” (2010, 12). They clarify the idea by underscoring that the “...lifestyle politics perspective emphasizes the importance of initiative on the part of citizens when it comes to “politicizing the personal,” and stresses the preference for more informal, personal, and individualized forms of engagement as defining features of the practice of lifestyle politics” (2010, 12).

To scrutinize the role of consumerism in the formation of political opinions of individuals is to be called to works like Newman and Bartels’. The idea that consumer preferences are somehow a predictor of—or even simply linked to—an individual’s political attitudes is certainly fascinating, and of particular interests in inquiries such as the one presented here. In the end, however, Newman and Bartels’ work on this issue boils down to the uncontroversial observation that politically inclined persons are more willing to boycott products that do not match their political beliefs, than are those who are more apathetic. Whether or not the more quotidian (and less *obviously* political) preferences of an individual—whose consumer choices are more a function of her surroundings or socio-cultural location than a conscious political calculation—can be used to predict specific political proclivities is a question left unanswered.

As we approach the end of this text’s discussion of the theory that speaks to ‘expressive voting’, I find it necessary to return to where I (and it) began: a discussion of rationality. There are three things to be said here. The first argument that I wish to make is that common understandings of ‘rational choice theory’ alone (that is, understood merely as an instrumental theory) are woefully inadequate in accounting for voter motivation. Any single theory that seeks to account for the diffuse ways in which voters behave is necessarily incomplete, as surely some part of a voter’s psyche evades the very purview of such a theory. Such theories are often posited as objections to theories of expressive voting, thereby construing the two as mutually

exclusive (Faith and Tollison 1990). But, as Aguiar and de Francisco (2009) argue, such theories fail to come to grips with a conception of identity that always already preconfigures a social identity to be communicated, as opposed to one that is inherent and readily visible. Indeed, rational choice/instrumental voting has, historically, been anything but immune to criticism.

The second (and arguably most convincing and prominent) argument to be made is that theories of instrumental voting, and theories of expressive voting, are not obviously mutually exclusive (Brennan and Lomasky 1993; Brennan and Hamlin 1998; Schuessler 2000a, 2000b; Engelen 2006). So exhaustively—and so repeatedly—has this point been observed, and by so many scholars, that it is difficult to find a way to paraphrase them all without plagiarizing one of them. From arguing that there is a lack of evidence as to why instrumental and expressive theories of voting cannot coexist, to arguing that the two explain very different things, the permutability of instrumental and expressive theories of voter choice have been well articulated.

But, there is a third point to be made here, and it is related to the second: that any theory of instrumental voting—far from being merely *compatible* with an expressive theory—actually *depends* upon the existence of an expressive theory of voter choice. The two are mutually constitutive insofar as the deliberative process consists of both instrumental calculi and expressive motivations, each which is intimately linked to the other. As Carter and Guerette note: “[i]t is surprising to us that the theory of expressive voting has not received more attention by public choice scholars. As an extension of rational voter theory, it asserts that in large electorates, the decision of how to vote, as well as the decision of whether to vote, is a consumption choice” (Emphasis added) (1992, 258).

Expressive Voting Herein

The specific mode of deploying ‘expressive voting’ as a framework in this text requires the explanation of how I derive, from the above, a specific working conception of expressive voting. To be sure, like any body of literature, the literature on expressive voting contains internal debates and varying notions of what it means to present empirical work on voting as an expressive act. This paper turns on a notion of ‘expressive voting’ which stems from Brennan and Hamlin (1998) and is a permutation of Schuessler (2000a, 2000b) and Engelen (2006).

As alluded to above, the present research assumes that ‘expressive voting’ is not diametrically opposed to ‘instrumental voting’. It assumes that “...the two accounts do not have to be seen as rivals: they can be seen rather as distinct aspects of a more complex whole” (Brennan and Hamlin 1998, 173). Accordingly, the empirical testing I offer is unmoored from any assumption that the goal of the test, and the analysis, is to disprove rational choice theories entirely. The absence of that key assumption is a crucial building block to this particular analysis.

Second, I focus on Schuessler’s distinction between ‘being’ and ‘doing’. Schuessler informs us that: “The expressive dimension of Being is a fundamentally different motivation than the instrumental dimension of ‘Doing’ that underlies the existing economic theories of voting behavior” (2000b, 90). But a theory, such as the one advanced here, presumes that the two are intimately linked, to the degree that neither exists independently of the other. As such, Schuessler’s analysis of ‘being’ as a motivation for ‘doing’ is naturally instructive in relation to an inquiry into whether *being* a NASCAR fan, and *doing* the act of voting for a specific candidate, for a specific purpose, are inexorably linked.

Finally, the aforementioned observations lead me to prefer Egnelen’s definition of ‘expressive voting’:

In my view, people generally decide whether or not to vote based on socially shared norms, traditions and expectations about what is the right thing to do....My conception of expressive rationality enables me to think of non-instrumental aspects of human acts as rational, insofar as these are based on good reasons. Even though this builds on suggestions from Fiorina, Brennan, Lomasky, and Schuessler, I have refused to follow their strategy of reducing expressive aspects of voting to instrumental benefits one may experience in doing so [that is, purely policy based benefits]. Nevertheless, my notion of expressive rationality is intended to compliment rather than replace that of instrumental rationality (Hargreaves Heap 1989: 148-52, 172-4). (2006, 436)

My understanding, then, is a combination whereby I emphasize Engelen's argument that voting is a result of 'traditions and expectations', and Schuessler's claim that said 'traditions and expectations' revolve around an individual's location in society: who they *are*. Engelen further informs us that a theory of expressive rationality "explains [the decision to vote] as rational (the voter judges there to be good reasons to vote) without interpreting it as instrumentally motivated (the voter does not primarily consider his [or her] vote as a means toward an end)" (2006, 436). Such determinations are still accounted for in my thoughts on expressive voting, as the voter makes the same determination, but the criteria for a "good reason" originates from a social identity, which may or may not be animated by policy preference.

TESTING 'EXPRESSIVE VOTING': THE CASE OF NASCAR DADS AND WAL-MART MOMS

The possibility of testing expressive voting arises out of a 2006 Exit Poll dataset, done by Zogby International on behalf of the Victory fund. The Victory Fund's mission is to work for greater involvement of gays and lesbians in the American political praxis.² To this end, the survey asked a battery of questions about issues of specific concern to gays and lesbians. The data also inquired into some specific cultural attributes of respondents, namely: whether the respondent was a NASCAR fan, and whether the respondent was a Wal-Mart shopper. This presented the unique opportunity to analyze the political proclivities of individuals who shop at Wal-Mart and/or enjoy NASCAR.

² http://www.victoryfund.org/our_story/mission

Data and Design

From this dataset, I was attracted to a whole host of variables, which eventually became my dependent variables. First, most broadly, I wondered about how Wal-Mart moms and NASCAR dads identified themselves within the American two-party system. This was captured in a question in the survey which asked the respondent to identify as Democrat, Independent, or Republican; I coded these variables from 0 to 2, respectively (that is, Democrats were coded as 0, Independents as 1, and Republicans as 2).

Second, I wondered about how these identities translated into electoral behavior. This was captured in two separate questions. The first asked whether the individual voted for George W. Bush, John Kerry, Ralph Nader, or another candidate in the 2004 presidential election. The selections were pared down to only Bush (coded as 0) and Kerry (coded as 1). Another question asked whether the respondent voted for the Democrat or Republican candidate in the election that day. If the individual voted for the Republican, they were coded as 0; if they voted for the Democrat, they were coded as 1

Finally, I wanted to move to a specific set of political attitudes; of particular interest to me were the part of the survey pertaining LGBT issues. I was able to explore this example through two specific questions. The first offered a list of policies and asked the respondent which they felt was most appropriate for gay and lesbian couples: that they should receive no legal recognitions (coded as 0), that they should be able to obtain a civil union (coded as 1), or that they should be able to legally marry (coded as 2). An additional question asked whether the respondent would vote for an openly gay candidate; the options were that they would: “definitely vote for the gay and lesbian candidate” (coded as 0), that they would “probably vote for the gay and lesbian candidate” (coded as 1), that they would “probably vote

for someone else" (coded as 2), or that they would "definitely vote for someone else" (coded as 3).

These questions, as arranged, allowed for an exploration of Wal-Mart moms,' and NASCAR dads', political opinions ranging from the most general question (regarding their self-identification), through more specific questions (their enactment of that identification), to the most specific question (their belief on a prominent, cultural issue).

Beyond these dependent variables was a litany of control variables. Whether an individual shops at Wal-Mart is coded progressively from 1-4 (never was coded as 1, 1 to 2 times a year was coded as 2, a few times a month was coded as 3, and weekly was coded as 4). Whether or not an individual was a NASCAR fan was a simple 0,1 coding with "no" coded as 0, and "yes" as 1. Ideology is a variable whereby an individual is either very liberal (coded as 1), liberal (coded as 2), moderate (coded as 3), conservative (coded as 4), and very conservative (coded as 5). In the case of age, the coding was from 18 to 94, and was simply the age (in years) of the respondent. Church attendance was a coding from 1-6 corresponding to the following six responses (respectively): never, rarely, holidays, 1 to 2 times a month, weekly, and more than weekly. Whether or not an individual classifies themselves as "born again" is a dichotomous variable, whereby individuals who indicated that they are Born-again Christians are coded as 1, and those who indicated otherwise are coded as 0. "Education" is coded between 1 and 4 corresponding to the four categories: less than high school diploma, high school graduate, some college, or college graduate/postgraduate studies. I operationalize the variable income by coding the following six categories in dollars per year: 25,000 or less (coded as 1), from 25,000-35,000 (as 2), 35,000 to 50,000 (as 3), 50,000 to 75,000 (as 4), 75,000 to 100,000 (as 5), and beyond 100,000 (as 6). "Married" represents a dichotomous variable with 0 being single, and 1 being

married; similarly, military is coded as 0 being an individual who has not served as a member of the armed forces, and 1 being an individual who has served or is serving. “Race” is also a dichotomous variable, as the goal is to establish whether or not the individual is white: if the respondent is not white, they are coded as 0, if they are white they are coded as 1. Finally, “Rural” represents whether or not the individual resides in a rural area: those outside of a rural area are coded as 0, those who do reside in a rural area are coded as 1.

In this case the independent variables are Wal-Mart mom, and NASCAR dad. The proxy for Wal-Mart mom is a term of only women, whereby I interact the aforementioned: ‘Children’ and ‘Shop at Wal-Mart’. (Wal-Mart mom = Children * Shop at Wal-Mart; where men respondents are eliminated from the model.) The proxy for NASCAR dad is a similar combination, where only men are included and ‘Children’ interacts with ‘NASCAR fan’. (NASCAR dad = Children * NASCAR fan; where women respondents are eliminated from the model.)

Results

The results were less than clear, when taken on the whole. Let us begin by looking at the partisan identification of Wal-Mart moms and NASCAR dads.

| TABLE 1A. WAL-MART MOMS’ PARTISAN AFFILIATIONS | | | |
|---|-------------|------------|--------|
| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
| Shop at Wal-Mart | .4825349 | .0336049 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | .3331125 | .1024556 | 0.001* |
| Age | .0014463 | .00247 | 0.558 |
| Church Attendance | .2062595 | .018013 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | 1.438954 | .0904392 | 0.000* |
| Education | -.3040554 | .0473174 | 0.000* |
| Income | .0986102 | .0211014 | 0.000* |
| Married | .131244 | .0658675 | 0.046* |
| Have Children <17 | -.1351165 | .1629157 | 0.407 |
| Military | .3787038 | .0776981 | 0.000* |
| Race | .5352812 | .1424983 | 0.000* |
| Rural | .0978427 | .0723804 | 0.176 |
| Wal-Mart Mom | .0659443 | .0659443 | 0.314 |
| CUT 1 | 2.333016 | .6315004 | |
| CUT 2 | 3.256891 | .632402 | |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Log likelihood | -4854.7857 |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.1340 |
| N | 5685 |
| SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk. | |

| TABLE 1B. NASCAR DADS' PARTISAN AFFILIATIONS | | | |
|---|-------------|------------|--------|
| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
| Shop at Wal-Mart | .4845583 | .0218588 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | .4426434 | .0681521 | 0.000* |
| Age | .0062935 | .00166 | 0.000* |
| Church Attendance | .1832974 | .0131821 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | .8698511 | .0651465 | 0.000* |
| Education | -.1976618 | .0363314 | 0.000* |
| Income | .0763088 | .0151328 | 0.000* |
| Married | .2984704 | .0506321 | 0.000* |
| Have Children <17 | -.0093704 | .0559934 | 0.867 |
| Military | .3297018 | .0584396 | 0.000* |
| Race | .6181632 | .0978932 | 0.000* |
| Rural | .0456235 | .0553466 | 0.410 |
| NASCAR Dad | -.0495489 | .1281282 | 0.699 |
| CUT 1 | 3.170436 | .4129205 | |
| CUT 2 | 4.317396 | .4141208 | |
| Log likelihood | -9296.4264 | | |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.1020 | | |
| N | 9631 | | |

SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk.

Tables 1a and 1b indicate some interesting findings pertaining to partisanship and the identities in question: while Wal-Mart moms are slightly more likely to identify as Republicans, according to the data, NASCAR dads are slightly more likely to identify as Democrats. We should not read too much into this, however, as neither of these effects is statistically significant. The reality proffered by partisan elites (e.g. Sarah Palin) and media elites (e.g. Thomas Frank) alike, does not hold water given an intense examination of the data at hand.

Next I move onto examining how Wal-Mart moms and NASCAR dads enacted these partisan views when it came to making specific choices at the ballot box. First, I ask about their votes in the 2004 election:

TABLE 2A. WAL-MART MOMS' VOTES IN THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|--------|
| Shop at Wal-Mart | -.5984769 | .0722919 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | -.6516948 | .2042796 | 0.001 |
| Party ID | -3.094652 | .0854902 | 0.000* |
| Age | -.0039027 | .0052738 | 0.459 |
| Church Attendance | -.2861874 | .0379637 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | -1.215911 | .1808951 | 0.000* |
| Education | .2449265 | .0981915 | 0.013* |
| Income | -.0293095 | .045423 | 0.519 |
| Married | -.4819363 | .1408291 | 0.001* |
| Have Children <17 | -1.060915 | .3491305 | 0.002* |
| Military | -.1935955 | .1611631 | 0.230 |
| Race | -.4967674 | .2995562 | 0.097 |
| Rural | .3121631 | .1500213 | 0.037* |
| Wal-Mart Mom | .3418781 | .1344569 | 0.011* |
| CONSTANT | 7.198916 | 1.351577 | 0.000* |
| Log likelihood | -1045.6712 | | |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.7026 | | |
| N | 5540 | | |

SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk.

The above table indicates that for a female respondent who has a child under the age of 17 and increasingly shops at Wal-Mart (that is, from never, to one or two times a year, to a few times a month, to weekly) we can expect an increase in the odds that the respondent would vote for John Kerry. Additionally, this finding is one of the few results which are statistically significant.

TABLE 2B. WAL-MART MOMS' VOTES IN THE 2006 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION

| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|--------|
| Shop at Wal-Mart | -.5691623 | .0710549 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | -.1872864 | .2012474 | 0.352 |
| Party ID | -2.928094 | .0812855 | 0.000* |
| Age | -.0074527 | .0052476 | 0.156 |
| Church Attendance | -.2624279 | .0371959 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | -.9886198 | .1713273 | 0.000* |
| Education | .1619672 | .0967448 | 0.094 |
| Income | -.0325084 | .0448669 | 0.469 |
| Married | -.4560491 | .1396115 | 0.001* |
| Have Children <17 | -.6755505 | .3520068 | 0.055 |
| Military | -.1361011 | .1572663 | 0.387 |
| Race | -.6015599 | .3046998 | 0.048* |
| Rural | .2154106 | .1471962 | 0.143 |
| Wal-Mart Mom | .2361748 | .1348187 | 0.080 |
| CONSTANT | 8.242369 | 1.349881 | 0.000* |
| Log likelihood | -1070.4349 | | |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.6804 | | |
| N | 5367 | | |

SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05,

denoted with an asterisk.

In the case of Table 2b, the Republican congressional candidate was coded as 0, and the Democratic congressional candidate was voted as 1. Thus, the table indicates that a woman respondent who identifies as having a child *and* increasingly shopping at Wal-Mart was more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate; but, again, this is not statistically significant.

A similar phenomenon was found in regards to NASCAR dads, in that neither result (in presidential or congressional races) was statistically significant:

| TABLE 2C. NASCAR DADS' VOTES IN THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION | | | |
|---|-------------|------------|--------|
| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
| Shop at Wal-Mart | -.5942094 | .0409993 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | -.6226661 | .1208006 | 0.000* |
| Party ID | -2.68972 | .0543977 | 0.000* |
| Age | -.0146389 | .0031751 | 0.000* |
| Church Attendance | -.2479469 | .0247403 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | -.8291461 | .1249745 | 0.000* |
| Education | .405058 | .0678324 | 0.000* |
| Income | -.0564568 | .0286309 | 0.049* |
| Married | -.334972 | .0941444 | 0.000* |
| Have Children <17 | .0037493 | .1065259 | 0.972 |
| Military | -.3071335 | .1069823 | 0.004* |
| Race | -.7457632 | .177809 | 0.000* |
| Rural | .019752 | .1020829 | 0.847 |
| NASCAR Dad | .1516602 | .2326244 | 0.514 |
| CONSTANT | 8.277737 | .8009565 | 0.000* |
| Log likelihood | -2427.037 | | |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.6163 | | |
| N | 9132 | | |

SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk.

| TABLE 2D. NASCAR DADS' VOTES IN THE 2006 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION | | | |
|--|-------------|------------|--------|
| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
| Shop at Wal-Mart | -.4643066 | .0385508 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | -.5073949 | .1128865 | 0.000* |
| Party ID | -2.493821 | .0504013 | 0.000* |
| Age | -.0134948 | .0029928 | 0.000* |
| Church Attendance | -.2053146 | .0232816 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | -.5644469 | .1113721 | 0.000* |
| Education | .3368977 | .0640487 | 0.000* |
| Income | -.0249993 | .0271338 | 0.357 |
| Married | -.288721 | .0897172 | 0.001* |
| Have Children <17 | -.0703462 | .1007187 | 0.485 |
| Military | -.2993241 | .1001498 | 0.000* |
| Race | -.6297427 | .171018 | 0.000* |

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------|----------|--------|
| Rural | -.0283806 | .095862 | 0.767 |
| NASCAR Dad | -.1763025 | .2209686 | 0.425 |
| CONSTANT | 7.638952 | .7527584 | 0.000* |
| Log likelihood | -2683.19 | | |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.5683 | | |
| N | 9014 | | |

SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk.

Here, we see that NASCAR dads were more likely to vote for John Kerry in 2004, and the Republican candidate in the 2006 congressional election, but not to a statistically significant degree. This mirrors the overall results for the same models with respect to Wal-Mart moms. The bottom line is: holding all other things constant, being a woman who is frequent shopper of Wal-Mart, or a man who is a fan of NASCAR, does not make one more (or less) likely to be conservative.

Finally, I propose to examine these identities within an even more specific context: that of a specific set of political issues. Of particular interest to me, based off of this dataset, are issues pertaining to gay and lesbian issues. Thus, let us sharpen the focus of the analysis to the view of Wal-Mart moms, and NASCAR dads, on views relating to gay and lesbian individuals, specifically: views toward same-sex marriage, and willingness to vote for a gay or lesbian candidate:

TABLE 3A. WAL-MART MOMS' ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE EQUALITY

| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|--------|
| Shop at Wal-Mart | -.3069143 | .0497333 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | -.2369949 | .150326 | 0.115 |
| Party ID | -1.169399 | .0553234 | 0.000* |
| Age | -.0272346 | .0036039 | 0.000* |
| Church Attendance | -.272491 | .0262756 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | -1.355207 | .1351144 | 0.000* |
| Education | .2318385 | .0684803 | 0.001* |
| Income | .0702279 | .0305554 | 0.022* |
| Married | -.3568095 | .0946858 | 0.000* |
| Have Children <17 | .1349675 | .2343042 | 0.565 |
| Military | -.2383113 | .1138457 | 0.036* |
| Race | .3919911 | .1886318 | 0.038* |
| Rural | .0762275 | .1046961 | 0.467 |
| Wal-Mart Mom | -.1682757 | .0951877 | 0.077 |
| CUT 1 | -9.928696 | .9367797 | |
| CUT 2 | -7.136245 | .9247775 | |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Log likelihood | -2167.4517 |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.2826 |
| N | 2882 |
| SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk. | |

TABLE 3B. WAL-MART MOMS' ATTITUDES TOWARD GAY AND LESBIAN CANDIDATES

| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|--------|
| Shop at Wal-Mart | -.2697931 | .0396946 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | -.0942354 | .1096478 | 0.390 |
| Party ID | -1.094612 | .041466 | 0.000* |
| Age | -.0206713 | .0029792 | 0.000* |
| Church Attendance | -.322272 | .0213881 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | -1.169425 | .0915851 | 0.000* |
| Education | .2981165 | .0533774 | 0.000* |
| Income | .1032116 | .0247255 | 0.000* |
| Married | -.3275145 | .0794544 | 0.000* |
| Have Children <17 | .0465044 | .2058442 | 0.821 |
| Military | -.0330622 | .0890999 | 0.711 |
| Race | .3048359 | .1627018 | 0.061 |
| Rural | .0488876 | .0829682 | 0.556 |
| Wal-Mart Mom | -.0329698 | .076588 | 0.667 |
| CUT 1 | -9.399723 | .7715592 | |
| CUT 2 | -8.578427 | .7700433 | |
| CUT 3 | -6.602932 | .7648187 | |
| Log likelihood | -3808.1119 | | |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.2597 | | |
| N | 5432 | | |

SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk.

Table 3a and 3b speak to the attitudes of Wal-Mart moms to allowing marriage for same-sex couples, and gay and lesbian candidates, respectively. In the case of the former, for women, being a frequent shopper at Wal-Mart interacts to *decrease* likelihood of the respondent supporting marriage for same-sex couples; but this is not a statistically significant effect. This conservatism—which is consistent with the literature—is short lived, however as Wal-Mart moms' support are more likely to support gay and lesbian candidates: the more likely one is to be a Wal-Mart mom, the more likely she is to support a gay or lesbian candidate; but this effect, too, is not statistically significant.

TABLE 3C. NASCAR DADS' ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE EQUALITY

| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
|------------------|-------------|------------|--------|
| Shop at Wal-Mart | -.3358733 | .0331016 | 0.000* |

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------|----------|--------|
| NASCAR fan | -.5043709 | .1027592 | 0.000* |
| Party ID | -1.177116 | .0407523 | 0.000* |
| Age | -.0259312 | .0025566 | 0.000* |
| Church Attendance | -.2794025 | .0202315 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | -1.100478 | .0985227 | 0.000* |
| Education | .3467395 | .0556499 | 0.000* |
| Income | .034201 | .0229146 | 0.136 |
| Married | -.3598361 | .077805 | 0.000* |
| Have Children <17 | -.2499325 | .0843354 | 0.003* |
| Military | -.3478644 | .0873585 | 0.000* |
| Race | .2633801 | .1428129 | 0.065 |
| Rural | -.0072763 | .0843993 | 0.931 |
| NASCAR Dad | .6099281 | .188952 | 0.001* |
| CUT 1 | -9.114721 | .6450302 | |
| CUT 2 | -6.591029 | .6367824 | |
| Log likelihood | -3851.9926 | | |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.2743 | | |
| N | 4841 | | |

SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk.

| TABLE 3D. NASCAR DADS' ATTITUDES TOWARD GAY AND LESBIAN CANDIDATES | | | |
|--|-------------|------------|--------|
| VARIABLE | COEFFICIENT | STD. ERROR | P> z |
| Shop at Wal-Mart | -.2496899 | .0240092 | 0.000* |
| NASCAR fan | -.291874 | .0693667 | 0.000* |
| Party ID | -.8796997 | .0285039 | 0.000* |
| Age | -.0223859 | .0018661 | 0.000* |
| Church Attendance | -.2283209 | .0143782 | 0.000* |
| Born Again | -.8711293 | .0624673 | 0.000* |
| Education | .3648757 | .0386113 | 0.000* |
| Income | .0737078 | .0169362 | 0.000* |
| Married | -.2976332 | .0578469 | 0.000* |
| Have Children <17 | -.0311245 | .0627264 | 0.620 |
| Military | -.1333804 | .0616924 | 0.031* |
| Race | .3929891 | .1023739 | 0.000* |
| Rural | -.0808453 | .0581706 | 0.165 |
| NASCAR Dad | .0760944 | .1279576 | 0.552 |
| CUT 1 | -8.32956 | .467881 | |
| CUT 2 | -7.566936 | .4666802 | |
| CUT 3 | -5.870797 | .4634215 | |
| Log likelihood | -8630.3177 | | |
| Pseudo R Squared | 0.1782 | | |
| N | 9160 | | |

SOURCE: Victory Fund 2006, exit poll data. Statistically significant = P<0.05, denoted with an asterisk.

Tables 3c and 3d also speak to the attitudes of NASCAR dads toward allowing marriage

for same sex couples, and gay and lesbian candidates, respectively. In the case of the former, an increase in the interaction between being a NASCAR fan, and having children under 17, (for

men) means a statistically significant increase in the likelihood of favoring the legalization of marriage for same-sex couples. This result is surprising, given the literature which indicates that NASCAR dads should be both more conservative and more masculine than other men.

However, Table 3D shows that the probability of voting *for* gay and lesbian candidates *decreases* as the respondent is more likely to identify as NASCAR fans who has a child or children under 17, but the different is not statistically significant. This is precisely the opposite of what we witness with Wal-Mart moms.

The literature above suggests that individuals vote to express an identity, of which their political preferences are but one part. Further, we are instructed that the political component of the identities known as Wal-Mart moms and NASCAR dads are more conservative, even if they are only socially conservative. This does not hold water given the above tests, which indicate that in only two circumstances was this evidence statistically significant, and both are contrary to what we should expect (e.g. that Wal-Mart moms voted Democrat in 2004, and NASCAR dads are increasingly likely to support some recognition for same-sex couples).

IF IT WALKS LIKE A DUCK, TALKS LIKE A DUCK, AND ACTS LIKE A DUCK... THEN DOES IT VOTE LIKE ONE TOO?

“More than a Feeling”: Why Expressive Voting Matters

It seems to me that there are three reasons that the present research is of particular import in studying American politics. In the first place, there is an obvious implication for the development of electoral strategy. This has been noted by previous theorists of expressive choice (Schuessler 2000a, 2000b). As a candidate, or party, attempts to brand itself toward voters, knowing what particular branding has worked in the past may make it possible for them

to know which of those to use again or which methods of branding they should model new methods after.

Second, explorations of expressive voting elucidate existing theories, for example democratic theory. As Fischer notes:

...These theories can help to explain why ideology and notions of justice are important in democratic politics, and why democratic elections show far greater stability and resilience than some simpler electoral theories would suggest. (Brennan and Lomasky, 1993) (1996, 178)

Third, and related to the above, expressive voting is intimately linked to a great number of other theories, and opens the door for a fuller discussion of political involvement than a discourse from which it is excluded. Above, I have articulated the way in which expressive voting has opened up the possibility of discussing previously neglected topics like political consumerism, and I have also highlighted the way in which theories of rational choice are incomplete and insufficient to the extent that they suppress (or repress) discussions of the expressive dimension of voting. Expressive voting introduces an expansive body of literature which has—hitherto—been untapped. This is so because notions like ‘expressive voting’ can serve as a locus for analyzing the nexuses between topics like politics and sports (Laband et al 2009), and politics and consumer choices (Newman and Bartels 2010).

By Way of a Conclusion

The evidence above is rarely statistically significant; and both times, when it was statistically meaningful, it was contrary to what we would expect. I worried that these results translated into two years’ worth of work coming up with nothing. But upon further reflection, I believe that it is precisely the fact that I came up empty handed that is so fascinating.

The central crux of this inquiry is: does the “Wal-Mart mom” or the “NASCAR dad” exist in any meaningful way? The answer is a qualified: yes. The phantasmagoric entity that is

“Wal-Mart mom” or “NASCAR dad” is a discursive creation: the denouement of a necessity to typologically organize individuals by perceived cultural attributes, and to locate them within a larger social praxis. To the extent that we can conceive of “Wal-Mart moms” and “NASCAR dads” as rhetorical constructions, empty of any meaningful and intrinsic substantive foundation, then we can conceive of these persons as “real”.

But the answer to the question shifts, if we conceive of the question as being: is there something about “Wal-Mart moms” and “NASCAR dads” that is so endogenous to their very being that they are predisposed to participate in the electoral franchise in a specific way? The answer, in this instance, is a qualified “no”. Far from being compulsorily performed actualities, the “Wal-Mart mom” and the “NASCAR dad” is a moniker applied to a group of persons who—according to this data—very rarely vote in any particularly consistent way. As “a political identity,” the utility of these categories—it seems to me—are exceeded by their novelty and convenience.

“Wal-Mart mom” and “NASCAR dad” exist as a narrative: a trope which is routinely invoked as a means to index voters and a metric to determine the efficacy of a given campaign. But this is certainly not a reason to believe that there is no necessity for further research. The fact that “Wal-Mart moms” and “NASCAR dads” *do* exist in the sense that they are apocryphal categories by which we may catalog “everyday people” does not mean that they bear no relation to the concept of political participation. In the first place, that commentators, strategists, and (yes, even) academics have seen fit to deploy these artifices, all the while assuming that they exist as inherent ‘realities,’ should be of great interest to scholars of politics.

I do not claim that the idea of expressive voting is useless or otherwise fatally flawed; I could no more make, nor sustain, that claim than I could argue that expressive voting is *always*

right had these tests come out differently. Instead, I argue—and the present tests support—that expressive voting did not occur in any meaningful way in this particular context. At bottom, it is clear that ‘expressive voting’ has not yet come to grips with the extent to which the expression that animates the vote is a phantasmagoric façade, constructed by commentators and strategists, and is empty of any preexisting, innate quintessence.

Additionally, political psychologists should take concern that some individuals assume these categories to be instructive to their own self-perception, so much so that they take them as political cues. Gender theorist Judith Butler referred to sex and gender as ‘regulatory fictions’ noting that constant invocations of these categories compels individuals to comply with them. To the extent that the categories at issue here are politically “regulatory” fictions for some, for example, is an area rich in possibilities for political research. Finally, the case made above is but one case: it studies one set of data in one context. Further research could take these conclusions as a challenge to dispute, or further, the claims made herein. The evidence here is one iteration in (what should be) an ongoing discourse. The findings in this text echo a previous claim that: “The increasing use of consumer preferences by political strategists to identify voting groups may in fact have some validity. Although narrow slices, such as NASCAR dads, appear to be largely fabrications, my analysis does indicate that consumer preferences may in fact be associated with political preferences that are not captured by the standard array of socioeconomic characteristics (Haider-Markel 2009, 21).

Indeed, further research *is* needed, and discourses from within—and without—the discipline could greatly contribute to a body of literature that would shed great light on whether or not votes express ontologically prior notions of ‘self’ that are embodied within (and defined by) such expressions.

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