

Political Research Quarterly

<http://prq.sagepub.com/>

Politics at the Checkout Line: Explaining Political Consumerism in the United States

Benjamin J. Newman and Brandon L. Bartels

Political Research Quarterly published online 25 August 2010

DOI: 10.1177/1065912910379232

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://prq.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/08/18/1065912910379232>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

The University of Utah



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH

Western Political Science Association



Additional services and information for *Political Research Quarterly* can be found at:


Email Alerts: <http://prq.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://prq.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Politics at the Checkout Line: Explaining Political Consumerism in the United States

Political Research Quarterly
XX(X) 1–15
© The Author(s) 2010
Reprints and permission: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>
DOI: 10.1177/1065912910379232
<http://prq.sagepub.com>


Benjamin J. Newman¹ and Brandon L. Bartels²

Abstract

Political consumerism is the intentional buying or abstention from buying specific products for political, social, or ethical purposes. We develop and test hypotheses regarding the individual sources of political consumerism in the United States. Analysis of survey data shows that similar to voting, education, political interest, and citizen duty promote political consumerism. Akin to protest behavior, political consumerism is enhanced by political distrust and general discontent. In contrast to turnout, political consumerism significantly decreases with age. Given the extraelectoral and self-initiated nature of political consumerism, citizen initiative and a proclivity for individualized forms of activism are significant sources of political consumerism.

Keywords

political consumerism, political participation, activism, lifestyle politics

“Fair Trade.” “Sweatshop Free.” “Buy Local.” “Not Tested on Animals.” “Environmentally Friendly.” “Buy American.” These are just some of the slogans and product labels that prompt American citizens to “be political” during the course of everyday consumer activity. The intentional buying or abstention from buying specific products for political, social, or ethical purposes constitutes the core of what has been labeled *political consumerism*. The notion and practice of using consumer purchasing power as a political device is not a new development and has several significant precedents in American history: the boycotting of British goods through the formation of nonimportation and nonconsumption pacts during the American Revolution (B. C. Smith 1994); the National Consumer League’s white label campaign from 1898 to 1918 that encouraged consumers to purchase nonsweatshop goods (Sklar 1998); the well known Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 (McAdam 1982); the boycott launched against Nestle in 1977 in protest of their marketing of infant formula to developing countries (Keck and Sikkink 1998; M. Friedman 2004); and the boycotting of Nike running shoes during the Nike sweatshop labor campaign that culminated in the mid-1990s (Bennett 2004). More recently, gay rights activists boycotted various California businesses that contributed money in support of the anti-gay-marriage state ballot measure, Proposition 8 (Ostrom 2008); and a boycott was called against Whole Foods Market by universal health

care advocates due to the company CEO’s public opposition to a single-payer health care system in the United States. (E. Friedman 2009).

In addition to its historical record and persistence over time, there is evidence that politicized consumer behavior, such as boycotting, has been on the rise in the United States and other Western industrial democracies beginning in the mid- to late 1970s (M. Friedman 1985; Norris 2002; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005; Dalton 2008). In terms of political consequentiality, the efficacy of political consumerism as a form of political action has been observed in the form of policy changes by targeted firms and the precipitation of desired forms of government intervention and regulation of targeted industries (Emmelhainz and Adams 1999; M. Friedman 1999, 2004; Micheletti 2003; N. C. Smith 2001) as well as the registering of economic impacts in the form of declines in the stock prices of targeted firms (Pruitt and Friedman 1986; Pruitt, Wei, and White 1988; Rock 2003). Despite its historical recurrence, increased prevalence, and observed efficacy, political consumerism has received little direct

¹Stony Brook University, NY, USA

²George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA

Corresponding Author:

Brandon L. Bartels, George Washington University, 2115 G Street, NW, 440 Monroe Hall, Washington, DC 20052, USA
Email: bartels@gwu.edu

scholarly attention from the political participation and citizen activism research fields within American political science. Most work on political consumerism has been done by European social scientists within a handful of European countries (see Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004) or by American scholars working within disciplines other than political science and employing mostly theoretical (Arnould 2007; Schudson 2007), case study (Nelson, Rademacher, and Paek 2007), or nonquantitative approaches (Lyon 2006). What we argue to be particularly lacking within the American political behavior literature is an in-depth theoretical account and empirical analysis of the individual-level factors that create the impetus for citizens to engage in this novel form of extraelectoral political participation. The scant quantitative research within the United States that does exist most often includes only brief or indirect mention of political consumerism (Norris 2002; Dalton 2008), confines the scope of investigation strictly to environmental or “green” buying habits (Mainieri et al. 1997), or focuses on the role of media consumption and communication practices at the expense of a more concentrated motivational account rooted in an analysis of individual-level factors (Shah et al. 2007).

In the present study, we seek to generate an explanation of the individual-level sources of political consumer behavior in the United States that is firmly grounded within the political participation literature. The purpose of the current research is twofold. First, we hope to add to the nascent literature on political consumer behavior by developing and testing several hypotheses regarding the individual-level sources of political consumerism in the United States. By identifying a diagnostic set of key individual-level variables, a more refined profile of the political consumer can be generated. Second, by theoretically and empirically comparing political consumerism to other forms of political participation, namely voting and protest, we intend to further our understanding of where political consumerism should be situated relative to other long-standing and long-studied forms of political behavior. The core of our theoretical analysis involves locating political consumerism relative to voting and protest based upon three theoretical dimensions of participatory political behavior: (1) whether participation is institutionalized or noninstitutional, (2) whether participation is individualized or group based, and (3) the level of civic initiative required by the citizen to engage in an act of participation. These dimensions serve as the foundation of our theoretical framework, and we draw upon the literature on “lifestyle” politics for the derivation of testable hypotheses.

Ultimately, the ground gained from this analysis, we hope, should add to the existing literature on citizenship and political participation within the United States. In addition to furthering our understanding of a seldom-studied and politically consequential form of mass political

behavior, we contend that understanding what causes citizens to engage in one participatory behavior versus another reveals something important about the responsiveness of the formal democratic process. As the following analysis will reveal, political consumerism relies upon the simultaneous possession of two sets of individual-level variables that are oppositely arrayed upon the institutional/noninstitutional dimension. Thus, unlike voting or protest, the motivation for engaging in political consumerism has its origins in the tension produced by the possession of some of the primary ingredients traditionally linking citizens to electoral participation, on one hand, and a key set of variables traditionally driving them away from electoral participation and toward protest behavior, on the other hand. We argue it is this dynamic that provides the impetus for citizens to seek out extraelectoral routes of political expression and influence, such as the politicizing of one’s routine consumer behavior.

Consumer Choice as Political Action

A question that comes to mind when encountering the term political consumerism is: *What makes it political?* After all, it is not as though there are explicitly advertised Democratic or Republican brands of clothing or food, nor do many people actually believe our elected officials look to retail and grocery sales figures for policy guidance. How, then, can buying something be political if the product is not explicitly linked to a political identity or group and if the political system is not wired to translate mass purchasing behavior into a policy signal for those in government? These represent the primary questions of conceptual definition that initial research on political consumer behavior set out to address (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004; Shah et al. 2007; Schudson 2007).

Political consumerism is commonly defined as the intentional use of consumer choice over products and producers within the marketplace as a means of expressing policy preferences and achieving political objectives (Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004; Schudson 2007; Shah et al. 2007). The first step in the conceptual defense of political consumerism as political involves an expansion of our understanding of the “political,” and thus what constitutes political participation. In their classic work on participation in America, Verba and Nie (1972, 2) define political participation as “those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take.” Yet, the authors concede the narrowness of this definition by acknowledging that political participation can more generally be understood as behaviors enacted by citizens meant to “influence the authoritative allocations of values for a society, which may or may not take place through governmental decisions” (Verba and Nie 1972, 2).

From the standpoint of this more general understanding of political participation, the definition of acts political can be expanded to include those behaviors directed at a larger set of non-state-oriented targets, such as private actors or firms within a marketplace, that are intended to influence the allocation of values within the society. On these definitional grounds, political consumerism qualifies as a form of political participation because it attempts to influence the priority given to particular societal values—humanitarianism, environmental protection, economic justice, and so on—and to shape the distribution of these values in the political and economic outcomes throughout society.

A second defense for the “political” in political consumerism centers on shifting our theoretical perspective toward a citizen-centered view of participation (Dalton 2008). The principal political components of political consumerism are rooted within (1) the subjective political meaning given to consumer choice and (2) the political purposes behind these choices. First, consumer behavior becomes political to citizens when considerations beyond the use-related properties of a product, such as “justice or fairness, or an assessment of business or government practices” enter into the calculus of a purchasing decision (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005, 246). The notion that political motives can be present in shaping consumer behavior is well supported by the historical record on politicized consumer action in the United States (Glickman 2009). Further, studies of consumer behavior and marketing identify politically tinged moral and ethical considerations as staple motivations underlying consumer behavior (Westbrook and Black 1985; Stone 1954) and find that consumers in Western nations have become more concerned with the political, social, and ethical dimensions of firm behavior and consumer choice in recent years (Doane 2001; Mason 2000; Creyer and Ross 1997). Second, consumer behavior becomes politicized by citizens when the purchasing or abstention from purchasing of a product is intended to exert influence over the decisions and behaviors of other actors (Sapiro 2000; M. Friedman 2004; Andersen and Tobiasen 2004; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005). Existing studies of consumer boycotts identify the intent to communicate displeasure with targeted firm policies and to *coerce* targeted firms to modify their policies as defining motivational features of this type of consumer action (M. Friedman 1985; Garrett 1987). This latter feature of political consumerism from the citizen’s perspective—the intention to cause another to behave in line with one’s own preferences—clearly links the motive underlying political consumerism to standard notions of the exercise of power as a central feature of politics. In short, consumer choice is politicized when used as a means of expressing policy preferences and as a vehicle for exercising influence over the behavior of others

in order to obtain specific political and economic outcomes.

Electoral, Protest, and “Lifestyle” Politics

The question, “what are the sources of political consumerism?” is to a considerable extent embedded within the question, “what kind of political participation is political consumerism?” This latter question leads us to the identification, as Verba and Nie (1972, 47) put it, of “some general dimensions along which citizen acts can be arrayed.” In line with established conventions, we employ a theoretical framework for comparing different *forms* of participatory political behaviors (Verba and Nie 1972). Our cross-behavioral framework relies upon situating political consumerism relative to other forms of participation along three theoretical dimensions of political action: *institutional/noninstitutional, individualized/group, low/high initiative*.

We use the terms institutionalized and noninstitutionalized to contrast those forms of participation that operate within well-established, institutionally structured, routinized, and legal channels of interest articulation and conflict resolution with participatory behavior not routinely structured, mediated, or sanctioned by political institutions and authorities (McAdam 1982). The second theoretical dimension highlights the distinction between individualized and group-based forms of participation (Klandermans 2003; Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2003). This dimension is used to distinguish those forms of political participation that center around processes of individual choice and enactment from the more group-based and socially dependent forms of participation that rely upon a mobilizing group or social network in order to be carried through. The third theoretical dimension is the degree of civic initiative involved in the political act. Political acts vary in terms of the “difficulty of the act” (Verba and Nie 1972), with some requiring less time and effort to carry out and others more. Thus, acts requiring citizens to expend more time, effort, or resources are assumed to indicate a higher degree of civic initiative than those political acts involving less such expenditure.

To aid in our effort to theoretically situate political consumerism upon the institutional/noninstitutional, individualized/group, and low/high initiative dimensions, we will compare it to two forms of participation with relatively clear placement on these dimensions: voting in national elections and protesting. Voting in presidential elections is a prominent example of an institutionalized and individually based form of political participation. Further, voting has been argued to be “unique in requiring less initiative” than many other acts of participation (Verba and Nie 1972, 53); thus, we place the act of presidential voting as low initiative. On the other end of all three

dimensions, protesting will be used to represent a noninstitutionalized, group-based, and higher initiative form of political behavior. Though not uncommon, protesting is not a mass socialized, quadrennially exercised, or institutionally structured form of political participation within America.

Existing scholarship has focused primarily on institutionalized modes of participation, which revolve around electoral and civic participation, and noninstitutionalized participation, which centers primarily on contentious forms of protest behavior. Emerging from the literatures on electoral participation and protest are distinct sets of prominent individual-level predictors of known importance for engagement in each mode of participation. Prying open a middle ground between these two bodies of literature is a growing body of research positing the emergence of new modes of citizenship and engagement (Rimmerman 2001; Norris 2002; Dalton 2008). Within this developing literature, one extant theoretical perspective for linking the key individual-level factors identified within the bodies of research on electoral and protest participation to hypotheses regarding their expected impact on political consumerism is the nascent body of literature on what has been termed "lifestyle politics" (Bennett 1998). The term "lifestyle politics" is used to describe the practice of "politicizing the personal," whereby citizens identify the political implications of everyday personal recreational, fashion, and consumption choices and attempt to alter them in expression of political preferences and to affect political change (Bennett 1998; Sapiro 2000; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005; Shah et al. 2007). The practice of lifestyle politics reflects the movement away from institutionalized modes of political participation toward modes of political expression and engagement that are more individually based, informal, and available for day-to-day implementation. Political consumerism is posited as a form of political participation that embodies the practice of lifestyle politics.

The theory of lifestyle politics provides a framework for linking the broad societal changes brought about by globalization and postindustrialization to observed changes in patterns of citizenship and participation in the United States. The lifestyle politics perspective is founded upon the theories of risk society (Giddens 1991), subpolitics (Beck 1997), and postmaterialism (Inglehart 1971), which together chart the following historical backdrop for the rise of lifestyle politics: (1) globalization and postindustrialization led to a displacement of the structure and practice of political life under industrial society (Giddens 1991; Beck 1997); (2) postmodernization also resulted in large-scale shifts away from materialist concerns toward postmaterialist concerns and values (Inglehart 1971, 1997); (3) accompanying these changes was reduced confidence

and trust in the capacity of governments to address emerging societal problems, large-scale safety risks, and the shifting concerns of many citizens (Giddens 1991; Beck 1997; Inglehart 1971); and (4) despite declining levels of political trust, increases in education among younger cohorts of Americans, as well as the growth of postmaterialist concerns, helped to stabilize and even slightly expand interest in politics and public affairs (Bennett 1998). The rise in the practice of lifestyle politics beginning in the late twentieth century is viewed as a direct result of these combined forces (Bennett 1998; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005) and can be characterized by the composite thesis that younger generations of politically interested yet distrusting Americans will move away from the strict practice of conventional politics and seek out new arenas for and ways of practicing "politics by other means" (Ginsberg and Shefter 1990; Bennett 1998; Sapiro 2000).

Hypotheses

The work on lifestyle politics provides a theoretical guide for generating hypotheses regarding the effects of individual-level variables of known importance to electoral and protest participation on the probability of engaging in political consumerism. Through this process, we can begin to produce a clearer sense of what kind of participation political consumerism is and how it should be situated related to behaviors like voting and protesting.

Institutionalized forms of political participation in the United States are those that link citizens to democratic government via the electoral process. Using the lifestyle politics perspective as a theoretical guide, political consumerism should be distinguishable from voting on the institutional/noninstitutional dimension through the following variables: general discontent, political distrust, strength of partisanship, and age. The theory of lifestyle politics posits discontent and political distrust as central causal forces: recognition of some perceived problem or objectionable state of affairs, along with lack of faith in government and the efficacy of conventional routes of influence, culminate to create the impetus to locate alternative routes of political expression and engagement. This in turn, leads individuals to politicize personal behaviors (Sapiro 2000; Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004). In line with this perspective, we argue that general discontent regarding the status quo in one's life should be an important motivational source of political consumerism (*Hypothesis 1*). Scholarship on political protest undoubtedly reveals the privileged position of discontent among classical collective behavior and social movement theories as a primary cause of political protest (McAdam 1982; Klandermands 2003). Theories of structural strain, frustration/aggression, and relative deprivation posit an

important causal role for personal grievances and discontent in engagement in contentious political behavior (Smelser 1963; Gurr 1970; Garner 1997). Given this conventional wisdom, we expect general discontent to have a positive effect on engagement in protest but do not expect it to exert any noteworthy influence on voting.

Political consumerism scholars argue that many of the problems the behavior is directed toward are those where formal government action is deemed absent or insufficient (Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004; Shah et al. 2007). Distrust toward government increases the perceived value and efficacy of extraelectoral and noninstitutionalized routes of citizen influence relative to those organized and mediated by government. Most importantly, the link between political distrust and engagement in political consumerism has been demonstrated with survey data collected in Canada, Belgium, and Sweden (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005). Thus, we hypothesize that political distrust should increase the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism in the United States (*Hypothesis 2*).

The connection between political distrust and engagement in institutionalized forms of participation such as voting has been in dispute. Most of the evidence suggests distrust does not significantly depress electoral participation (Citrin 1974; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Timpone 1998). Thus, we expect political distrust to have no significant effect on voter turnout. Political distrust, however, is intimately linked to noninstitutionalized protest behavior (McAdam 1982), and recent research has shown that citizens who engage in various forms of protest activities, compared to those who do not, are more skeptical of government, believe that corruption is more widespread, and hold greater doubt toward the honesty and fairness of elections (Dalton 2008). Therefore, political distrust should be an important source of engagement in protest behavior. We view the hypothesized effects of both general discontent and political distrust on political consumerism in the United States as serving to pull political consumerism away from voting and toward noninstitutionalized forms of protest behavior.

Given the extraelectoral nature of political consumerism and the hypothesized importance of political distrust, we expect that the strength of partisanship, which traditionally connects individual citizens to the electoral process (Campbell et al. 1960; Verba and Nie 1972; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), should not exert any significant effects on political consumerism (*Hypothesis 3*). Further, and for similar reasons, we do not expect partisan identification strength to have a significant effect on engagement in protest. Age is the final variable upon which political consumerism can be differentiated from institutionalized participation. A conventional wisdom within the literature on protest behavior is

that younger people have higher potential to engage in protest (Jenkins and Wallace 1996). In addition, the lifestyle politics perspective essentially advances the generational effects hypothesis that younger cohorts of better educated and politically disaffected citizens in America will increasingly embrace more noninstitutional and assertive modes of political engagement (Bennett 1998). This claim is further supported by recent explorations of citizenship and patterns of political behavior that observe direct, individualized, and nonelectoral forms of participation to be more prevalent within the political action repertoires of younger Americans (Norris 2002; Dalton 2008). In contrast to voting and most other forms of electoral participation, which tend to increase with age (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Timpone 1998; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 2007), engagement in political consumerism should be more common among younger citizens. Given that political consumerism involves how individuals use their own income, there is reason to believe that political consumerism may entail higher start-up costs for college-age citizens than young adults who are incorporated into the working world and earn more substantial incomes. Thus, we hypothesize a concave, nonmonotonic effect for age (*Hypothesis 4*). Together, discontent, distrust, and age exert the “push” on political consumerism away from voting and toward protest behavior on the institutional/noninstitutional dimension.

Countervailing the influence of these variables, the lifestyle politics perspective argues that increasing education, the persistence of interest in politics, and a concern over social problems, serve as individual-level variables that keep younger, discontented, and distrusting citizens from abandoning politics altogether (Bennett 1998). A major tenet of the practice of lifestyle politics is the notion of citizen responsibility taking (Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004; Jordan et al. 2004; Shah et al. 2007), which involves citizens taking responsibility for how their actions relate to social and political problems and for how changing these actions can play a role in the reduction of these problems. Central to the process of responsibility taking, we believe, is education, interest in politics, and citizen duty. Education has been observed to go hand-in-hand with interest in politics (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995) and is known for enhancing the level of political information possessed by citizens (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), the awareness of issues (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), and engagement in issue-based political behavior (Carmines and Stimson 1980). By increasing the likelihood of awareness of social and political problems, their possible links to individual behavior, and the propensity to engage in issue-based behavior, education and political interest serve as crucial antecedents for responsibility-taking behavior and should thus be

important sources of political consumerism. We therefore hypothesize that both education and interest in politics should enhance engagement in political consumerism (*Hypothesis 5* and *Hypothesis 6*).

Citizen duty refers to an individual's perceived sense of obligation to be knowledgeable of public affairs and participate in politics (Campbell et al. 1960; Almond and Verba 1963). Underlying the notion of an obligation to participate in politics is the more general concept of an obligation to others (Kam 2007). Indeed, recent work emphasizes that an important dimension of citizenship in the United States is characterized by broad concern for the welfare of others (Dalton 2008). Citizen duty, by its general allusion to the motive of helping others and constructively engaging in civic life, should increase the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism (*Hypothesis 7*).¹ In line with prior research, we expect education, political interest, and citizen duty to enhance voter turnout.

Now we turn to the initiative dimension of political participation. Given that centralized political bodies are often unwilling to address or are incapable of addressing the full range of interests of all citizens, many citizens attempt to take matters into their own hands by locating alternative routes of influence within their means (Bennett and Entman 2000; Shah et al. 2007). Political consumerism reflects a bypassing of traditional, governmentally mediated routes of citizen influence on policy making and operates in a manner completely detached from the electoral process—it is an extraelectoral form of mass political action (Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004). More important though, it is individually initiated and voluntary. The extraelectoral and self-initiating features of political consumerism suggest that it requires a high degree of civic initiative on the part of the citizen (*Hypothesis 8*). This contrasts with the act of voting, which Verba and Nie (1972, 53) argue is “unique in requiring less initiative” than many other acts of participation. We believe that voting does not require a substantial measure of civic initiative on the part of the individual citizen, given the presence of substantial extrinsic motivation to turn out flowing to the individual voter from campaigns, the media, and mobilizing groups.

Finally, the lifestyle politics literature suggests that political consumerism may be distinguished from forms of noninstitutionalized behavior, such as attending an illegal protest or public demonstration, due to its emphasis on the personalization of the goals of movement organizations (Lichterman 1996) and a preference for individualized forms of activism (Bennett 1998; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004). Prior research on political consumerism has linked the hypothesized preference for individualized forms of activism with involvement in informal, distant, “checkbox” types of associations (Wollebak and Selle 2003), as

well as other more individualized political acts, like signing a petition or wearing a political T-shirt (Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2004). We contend that the emphasis placed on individualized activism should serve to distinguish political consumerism from traditional forms of noninstitutionalized participation, such as protest. We believe that a protest is fundamentally a group-based event where the costs of individual participation are dampened by the mobilizing group and solidarity incentives (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), as well as social identity and organizational commitment goals (Klandermans 2003), play an important motivational role. In short, engagement in individualized forms of political activism should serve as an important source of political consumerism (*Hypothesis 9*), but fail to exert significant effects on protest.

In sum, the theory of lifestyle politics provides a novel framework for understanding the unique individual-level causal dynamics of political consumer behavior. The theory emphasizes the volatile coexistence of institutional and noninstitutional variables within the individual citizen and its causal link to the adoption of new forms of political participation. Education, interest, and duty, which traditionally pull citizens toward electoral participation, combined with general discontent, political distrust, and youth, which traditionally push them away from it, create the hydraulic pressure required to propel citizens into extraelectoral forms of participation. Civic initiative and a preference for individualized forms of political activism serve as the final pieces of the puzzle, channeling the aforementioned pressure into the practice of lifestyle politics and engagement in political consumerism.

Data and Method

The data for the present study are taken from the 2005 United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID) Survey conducted by the Center for Democracy and Civil Society at Georgetown University (Howard, Gibson, and Stolle 2005).² This national survey is comprised of 1,001 face-to-face interviews of adults throughout the contiguous United States.³ Interviews were conducted between May 16 and July 19, 2005. The survey employed a cluster sample design and achieved an overall response rate of 40 percent.

We first discuss the measurement of our three behavioral dependent variables: political consumerism, voting, and protest. Political consumerism can take on two forms. The first involves the intentional purchasing of products for specific political, environmental, social, or ethical purposes. The second form involves the deliberate abstention from purchasing certain products for the same reasons. The 2005 CID Survey contains two items that we firmly

believe are valid measures of political consumerism. Respondents were asked whether or not, in the last twelve months, they had “boycotted certain products,” and “deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons.” These two survey items are very similar to measures used in leading works on political consumerism (e.g., Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005; Shah et al. 2007).

The precedent established within past work on political consumerism is to collapse measures of boycotting and political purchasing into a single dependent variable (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005; Shah et al. 2007). Through the use of factor analytic methods employed on survey data across multiple national contexts, leading work on political consumerism has found that separate measures of boycotting and political purchasing load on one single dimension (Stolle et al. 2007). Despite the distinct nature of these two consumer acts and the use of questions whose wording often includes reference to both political and ethical motives, the finding that these items load on a single dimension strongly suggests that one factor, and thus one presumably homogeneous set of motives underlying the behavior, are accounting for variation in observed responses to these types of survey items. This strongly bolsters our confidence in using the two items from CID as indicators of one underlying political consumerism concept and collapsing them into a single measure of political consumerism.

Empirically, the two forms of behavior have comparable frequency distributions and show a fairly strong relationship.⁴ Most importantly, logistic regression analyses performed on each behavior separately reveal that, while there are some minor differences in coefficient estimates and their *p* values, the sign and significance of the impact of the core predictors are largely the same when the measures are collapsed into one dependent variable or run in separate equations.⁵ In short, there is little to indicate that the profile of boycotters is significantly distinct from that of political purchasers, thus bolstering our confidence that running the remaining analyses on a combined measure will not distort our effort to gain a clear profile of political consumers. Our measure of *political consumerism*, then, is a dichotomous variable coded “1” if the respondent had engaged in at least one of these forms of political consumerism, and “0” if they had engaged in neither form.⁶ Within this sample, slightly over 28 percent of respondents reported having engaged in at least one form of political consumerism. This nontrivial figure confirms the status of political consumerism as a significant form of mass political behavior.⁷

We obtained a dichotomous *turnout* variable from an item in the CID survey asking respondents whether they had voted in the 2004 Presidential election. The CID

contains two dichotomous items tapping protest behavior, the first asking respondents to report whether or not they had taken part in a public demonstration, and the second whether they had participated in any illegal protest activities. We generated a dichotomous *protest* variable coded “1” if the respondent had engaged in at least one of these forms of protest behavior and “0” if they had engaged in neither. From this measure, we find that about 5 percent of the sample report participating in some form of protest within the year prior to being surveyed. While we are primarily interested in assessing the individual bases of political consumerism and comparing them across the three participatory behaviors, it is interesting to note the relationship between the political consumerism and both voting and protest. Cross-tabulation results reveal that individual Americans who engage in political consumerism are also significantly more likely to vote ($\chi^2 = 25.61$, $p < .001$) and to engage in protest ($\chi^2 = 81.15$, $p < .001$). Among those who are not political consumers, 67 percent reported voting in the 2004 presidential election, while 83 percent of political consumers turned out to vote. For protest, just 1 percent of nonpolitical consumers engaged in protest activity, while 15 percent of political consumers did so. We suspect that the strong relationship between political consumerism and voting and protest is in large part due to the shared individual-level sources described in the previous section.

We now discuss measurement of our main independent variables. To measure citizen duty, we combined four items into a summative scale. Respondents were asked: “To be a good citizen, how important would you say it is for a person to be active in politics?” The same question was asked in regard to voting, serving as a juror, and being active in voluntary organizations. For the resulting scale ($\alpha = .73$), higher scores indicate a greater sense of citizen duty. Our education variable is based upon a categorical item asking respondents to indicate the highest grade of school or year of college completed, and political interest is based upon respondents’ reported level of interest in politics. To measure political distrust, we combined two items from the CID tapping the degree of perceived corruption among public officials in the United States.⁸ General discontent is measured via the following survey item: “All things considered, how satisfied are you with life as a whole nowadays?” Higher values indicate greater dissatisfaction. *Age* is measured in years; respondents in the survey ranged from eighteen to ninety years of age.

Our four-category measure of strength of partisanship is the folded standard seven-point party identification scale, ranging from pure independents to strong Democratic or Republican party identifiers. To measure civic initiative, we rely on a survey item asking respondents whether or not they individually had ever tried to get their neighbors

Table 1. Models of Political Consumerism, Voter Turnout, and Protest

Variable	Political Consumerism			Voter Turnout			Protest		
	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>
Education (+)	1.024	0.385**	.008	2.503	0.379***	.000	0.530	0.718	.461
Political interest (+)	1.714	0.395***	.000	0.297	0.352	.399	1.500	0.682*	.028
Citizen duty (+)	1.575	0.613*	.010	1.454	0.581*	.012	-0.888	0.924	.336
Partisan strength (no effect)	0.107	0.280	.703	1.370	0.274***	.000	0.486	0.549	.376
Political distrust (+)	0.888	0.431*	.039	0.493	0.421	.242	1.810	0.861*	.036
General discontent (+)	1.248	0.471**	.008	0.707	0.451	.117	1.345	0.732†	.066
Age (+)	1.140	1.466	.437	2.023	0.433***	.000	-4.128	1.019***	.000
Age squared (-)	-4.141	1.783*	.020						
Civic initiative (+)	1.194	0.248***	.000	0.130	0.288	.652	0.868	0.412*	.035
Individualized activism (+)	2.571	0.695***	.000	-1.028	0.811	.205	1.522	1.195	.203
Control variable									
Group membership	2.048	0.686**	.003	1.612	0.900†	.073	0.041	1.141	.971
Church attendance	-0.338	0.363	.352	0.742	0.374*	.047	0.307	0.670	.647
External political efficacy	-0.308	0.387	.427	0.271	0.398	.496	0.823	0.798	.303
Internal political efficacy	-0.260	0.368	.480	0.428	0.357	.230	-0.029	0.597	.962
Trade union	0.480	0.387	.214	0.043	0.494	.930	0.463	0.707	.513
Income	0.064	0.413	.877	0.433	0.415	.296	-0.050	0.635	.937
White	0.741	0.229**	.001	0.563	0.212**	.008	-0.508	0.357	.155
Gender	-0.066	0.193	.733	0.081	0.192	.673	0.232	0.335	.488
Ideology	-1.152	0.419**	.006	0.265	0.441	.549	-1.395	0.796†	.080
South	-0.042	0.194	.830	0.116	0.197	.556	-0.318	0.396	.422
Constant	-4.694	0.706***	.000	-5.032	0.704***	.000	-3.735	1.083**	.001
N		831			827			829	
Pseudo R ²		0.228			0.209			-	
Proportion correctly predicted		0.773			0.771			-	
Proportional reduction in error		0.232			0.160			-	

Signs next to variable names indicate hypothesized effects for the Political Consumerism model.

†*p* < .10. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

to work together to fix or improve something in their community. This variable ranges from “1” for respondents who have made such attempts more than once, “.5” for those who have attempted only once, and “0” for those who have not made any such attempt.⁹ Research on the personalization of politics and political consumerism has identified participation in checkbook type political organizations as an important marker of individualized activism, due to its informal, sporadic, socially passive, and individualized nature (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005). Our measure of individualized activism was obtained by combining whether or not respondents donated money across a range of organizations in a single summative scale.¹⁰

Last, we included income, race, gender, region, membership in a trade union, internal and external political efficacy, ideology, church attendance, and organizational membership as control variables.¹¹ For ease of interpretation, all of our independent variables were coded to range from 0 to 1. We estimate our models for political consumerism and voter turnout via logistic regression. Given the disproportionate of respondents reporting having participated in

protest activism (5.05 percent) relative to those who did not (94.05 percent), we estimate the protest activism model using a rare events logit (King and Zeng 2001).

Results

The results for the logistic regression of political consumerism, voter turnout, and protest are displayed in Table 1. For the predictors in which a hypothesis was made, the expected sign of the effect of the variable on engagement in political consumerism is listed next to the variable. Table 1 reveals that each of the hypotheses is supported by the results. Increases in education, interest in politics, and citizen duty each increase the probability of engaging in political consumerism. Strong identification with one of the two parties in the electorate, however, exerted no significant effect. Increases in political distrust and general discontent significantly increase the likelihood of political consumerism. Respondents demonstrating civic initiative in their neighborhood were more likely than those lacking such initiative to engage in political consumerism.

As hypothesized by the theory of lifestyle politics, engagement in more individualized, “checkbook” types of political and social engagement significantly increases the probability of politicizing one’s consumer behavior. Last, the results reveal that age has a nonmonotonic effect, with the negative and significant coefficient for the squared term indicating that the probability of engaging in political consumerism has a concave shape. Further analysis, which we detail further in the next section with the presentation of predicted probabilities, reveals that the probability of engaging in political consumerism increases slightly from age eighteen to twenty-eight, at which point it is maximized. After age twenty-eight, the probability declines.

The results provide strong support for the lifestyle politics thesis and confirm its usefulness as a theoretical framework for taking individual variables of known importance within the literature on electoral participation and protest and generating directional hypotheses regarding their effects on political consumerism. Put together, an interesting initial profile of the political consumer in the United States emerges. The American political consumer is someone who is educated, interested in politics, and feels a strong sense of duty to engage in political life, but does not necessarily place his or her trust in government and elected officials as a means of achieving all of his or her policy goals. The political consumer is relatively young and likely possesses a high level of general discontent. The political consumer is someone who tends to embrace informal and individualized forms of engagement with political and social issues and groups. Last, the political consumer is someone who has a high level of civic initiative and is willing to expend a good deal of effort in engaging in participatory acts. This initial profile highlights an interesting “tension” underlying political consumerism that is stipulated in the lifestyle politics literature as the primary causal dynamic giving rise to the practice of lifestyle politics. Individuals high in political interest and citizen duty on one hand, and political distrust and discontent on the other, are driven by this hydraulic tension to “take matters into their own hands” and seek out new arenas for practicing politics, utilizing personal, individualized forms of behavior to express political concerns and promote desired political outcomes.

Of the control variables, race, ideology, and group membership each significantly enhanced engagement in political consumer behavior. Interestingly, income failed to produce any significant effects. Given that many “fair-trade,” environmentally friendly, and locally manufactured products in the marketplace tend to cost significantly more than their environmentally and politically “less desirable” counterparts, one may have expected income to be related to a form of activism that often involves the sacrificing of consumer surplus for political expression. One

explanation for the null finding for income is that our dependent variable is simply whether or not the individual has engaged in at least one form of political consumerism, and not a *count* of how many times they have done so. This latter variable may very well be highly influenced by income, but the verdict on this is left to future research. The results for the controls refine our profile of the political consumer by adding that they are most likely white, ideologically liberal, and hold membership in a variety of political and social organizations.

Given the centrality of social welfare, environmental, and global justice (postmaterialist) concerns to many acts of politicized consumer behavior, it was not unexpected that being ideologically liberal would increase the probability of political consumerism. We do not believe, however, that political consumerism should be deemed the explicit purview of liberal citizens; in fact, this finding may be linked to the lack of differentiation in the types of reasons for political consumerism within the CID survey items. Many forms of political consumerism, such as “Buying American” or supporting locally owned businesses over corporate chain stores, need not, we believe, have any particular affinity with liberal ideology. On the contrary, it would not be out of step with prior findings about the connection between nationalism and ideological conservatism (Schatz and Lavine 2007) for there to be a connection between buying American and conservatism. For future research, it may be useful to develop items that probe respondents’ engagement, or willingness to engage, in political consumerism based upon a wider share of concerns. Such measures could provide better information about the range of issues that motivate liberals and conservatives to bring their own personal politics into the checkout line.

Comparing Political Consumerism to Voting and Protest

Up to now, we have shown that political consumerism is promoted by individual-level variables linked to voting and protest in prior theory and research. Further, we have demonstrated the importance of two novel variables—civic initiative and individualized activism. We expect civic initiative to differentiate political consumerism and protest from voting through their requiring of high levels of initiative. In addition, we expect individualized activism to differentiate political consumerism from protest on the grounds of the former constituting a more individualized form of participation and the latter being more of a group-based form of political behavior. In this section, we will present the results from our voter turnout and protest models in order to compare and contrast the effects of our primary independent variables across the different forms of participation.

Beginning with a comparison of political consumerism to voter turnout, the results presented in Table 1 reveal that, as expected, education and citizen duty together constitute a strong mutual basis for political consumerism and voting. Political interest, while registering a positive effect on turnout, failed to attain a conventional level of statistical significance. An additional overlap in the sources of these two political behaviors comes from the mutually positive effects of group membership. Beyond this, there is little overlap between political consumerism and voter turnout in terms of the constellation of variables that comprise their individual foundations. Moving on to the distinctions between political consumerism and voting, we see that the bases upon which the former diverges from the latter to a large extent serve as a basis for common individual-level origins between political consumerism and protest. Political distrust and general discontent did not exert any effects on voter turnout that were statistically significant. However, increases in political distrust and discontent significantly enhance the probability of engaging in either political consumerism or protest. In line with conventional wisdom, turnout significantly increases with age. An increase in age,¹² however, is associated with a significant decrease in the likelihood of engaging in protest, which parallels a mostly diminishing return for age when it comes to engaging in political consumerism. These results reveal the internal tension of political consumerism upon the institutional/noninstitutional dimension of participation: while two primary individual-level variables exert a pull toward electoral participation, three important countervailing individual-level variables introduce a push toward engaging in protest.

As expected, a high degree of civic initiative is not a requisite feature of the likely voter, nor is the tendency to engage in individualized forms of social and political activism. Initiative, as expected, did serve as a common basis for political consumerism and protest, indicating that both political acts require a higher degree of effort on the part of the citizen than turning out to vote. And last, the results demonstrate that individualized activism serves to differentiate political consumerism from both voting and protest. We believe that the individualized/group dimension of political participation constitutes the basis upon which this variable distinguishes political consumerism from protest.

Predicted Probabilities for Political Consumerism

While the results in Table 1 confirm the hypotheses by providing information about the sign and significance of the effect of our key variables of interest upon engagement in

Table 2. Effects of Changes in Key Predictors on the Predicted Probability of Engaging in Political Consumerism

Key Predictors	Predicted Probability	Δ
Education		
Low	.208	
High	.383	.175
Political interest		
Low	.125	
High	.436	.311
Citizen duty		
Low	.193	
High	.372	.179
Political distrust		
Low	.224	
High	.332	.108
General discontent		
Low	.220	
High	.403	.183
Civic initiative		
Low	.241	
High	.512	.271
Individualized activism		
Low	.244	
High	.497	.253
Age (in years)		
18	.311	
28	.328	
38	.311	
48	.262	
58	.192	
68	.119	

Entries are predicted probabilities at specified levels of the key predictor variable, holding all other variables at their means. Low = the predictor is set at its 5th percentile value. High = the value of the predictor at the 95th percentile.

political consumerism, they do not lend themselves to direct interpretations of the magnitude of effects. The best way to get a sense of the effects of these independent variables is to present postestimation analysis of predicted probabilities. Generating predicted probabilities allows us to observe how changes in the value of a given predictor produce changes in the probabilities of engaging in political consumerism. Table 2 lists the effects of changes in the values of the eight key predictors upon the predicted probability of engaging in political consumerism. In generating each predicted probability, all variables other than the variable of interest were held at their mean values. We calculate the predicted probability of political consumerism going from low to high values of each of these variables. Given the low density of cases at the lowest and highest possible values for several of these variables, the predicted probabilities at the low and high values for each will be the predicted value of political consumerism obtained when

these variables are set to their 5th and 95th percentile values. Civic initiative is defined as low when it equals 0 and high when it equals 1, thus separating those who have taken initiative to solve a neighborhood problem multiple times from those who have not. The predicted probabilities for age are listed at ten-year intervals.

Beginning with education, Table 2 reveals that the difference in the probability of engaging in political consumerism between those high in education (.383) and those low in education (.208) is substantively large (.175). Being very interested in politics, as compared to very uninterested, increases the probability of being a political consumer by about .311—the largest effect observed in this set of variables. Individuals with a strong sense of citizen duty are about .179 more likely to engage in political consumerism than individuals with a low sense of duty. For those high in political distrust the probability of engaging in political consumerism is .332, compared to that of .224 for more politically trusting citizens, yielding a difference of .108. The predicted probability of engaging in political consumerism among the discontented is .403, while the probability among those relatively content decreases to .220. The results show a large substantive impact for civic initiative. Those who have displayed civic initiative are about .27 more likely to engage in political consumerism than those who have not. And finally, the difference in the probability of engaging in political consumerism among citizens who engage in a high level of individualized activism .497 and those who rarely engage in such individualized acts .244 is .253. For age, the results reveal the nonmonotonic pattern in the probability of engaging in political consumerism as a function of age. The probability maximized at age twenty-eight, and then slowly declines until the late thirties, after which there is a more dramatic decline in this probability. For people in their late fifties and late sixties, the probability drops to between .10 and .20. Overall, the results suggest that those in their late teens, twenties, and thirties are the individuals most likely to engage in political consumerism. In general, the results of the predicted probabilities reveal that each of these eight key predictors exerts a substantively large effect on the probability of engagement in political consumerism, with political interest, civic initiative, and individualized activism exerting the largest effects.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore a significant yet previously understudied mass political behavior and to take a solid step toward developing and testing a theory of its individual-level sources. In this article, we defend the

political nature of political consumerism by utilizing an expanded conceptualization of what constitutes political participation in collusion with a citizen-centered view of participation. Transcending the more restrictive view of political participation as those acts exclusively directed at influencing the behavior of elected and appointed officials in government, political consumerism gains its status as a form of political participation because it is intimately tied up with the allocation of values in society. Acts of politicized consumer behavior are meant to express politically relevant values and policy preferences and to shape how these values are embodied in real world political and economic outcomes by exerting influence over the behavior of mostly private actors within a politicized marketplace.

Our primary theoretical and empirical interest was in identifying the individual demographic and attitudinal factors that motivate citizens to politicize their consumer choices, thereby bringing politics into the checkout line. To gain some leverage in constructing a profile of the political consumer, we utilized an analytic approach that involved comparing and contrasting political consumerism to voting and protesting based upon three theoretical dimensions of participation, the institutional/noninstitutional, individual/group, and low/high initiative dimensions. Due to the understudied nature of political consumerism within the mainstream political participation literature, we turned to the nascent body of theory on the practice of lifestyle politics to guide our thinking about the foundations of political consumerism. Using this theoretical framework, we were able to take key individual-level variables of known importance within the literature on electoral and protest participation and generate hypotheses regarding the existence and expected direction of effects for these variables upon political consumerism. The results of the preceding analyses have rendered a rather comprehensive profile of the political consumer, which strongly centers upon a defined set of key individual-level factors, as well as a handful of significant control variables.

An important secondary objective of this research was to locate political consumerism in the larger context of other participatory acts, such as voting and protest. Comparing the sources of political consumerism, voter turnout, and protest, provided us with some basis for locating political consumerism relative to these other well-studied participatory acts. From our comparative analysis, we find that political consumerism may best be viewed as occupying some middle ground between voting and protest on the institutional/noninstitutional dimension of participation. Similar to institutionalized forms of political participation, like voting, political consumerism is enhanced by education, political interest, a strong sense of citizen duty, group membership, and racial status. Unlike institutionalized participation, but similar in theory to noninstitutionalized

protest-type behaviors, political consumerism is enhanced by youth, political distrust, and a deep-seated discontent regarding the current state of things in one's life. We view this finding as one of the most theoretically intriguing features of political consumerism. Further, it is in line with the literature on lifestyle politics that 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.

Our comparative analyses further revealed that political consumerism may best be understood as an individualistic and high-initiative form of political participation. 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. This emphasis is validated by the results of our analysis, which revealed that variation between citizens in civic initiative and engagement in other individualized forms of activism were indeed consequential for their likelihood of engaging in political consumerism. The combined importance of high initiative and the propensity for individualized activism to political consumerism suggests a predisposition on the part of political consumers for "taking matters into their own hands."

One underlying intention for this study is to spark more scholarly interest and attention to politicized consumer behavior in the United States. We believe that more leverage could be gained on understanding the different types of political consumerism if better survey items were used. Such items could tap more completely the diverse range of reasons why citizens decide to bring political considerations into their consumption routines and are willing to sacrifice consumer surplus in many instances for the expression of political preference.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Financial Disclosure/Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

Notes

1. Recent work by Dalton (2008) demonstrates the existence of two theoretically and statistically distinct dimensions of citizens' orientation toward public life—what he labels "citizen duty" and "engaged citizenship." We acknowledge

this important distinction and theoretical advance over the conventional singular concept of citizen duty in the literature. However, for the purposes of the present research, we use a singular conceptualization that combines elements of Dalton's two concepts, but we retain the term citizen duty to denote the individual citizen's degree of internalization of the participatory norms existing within the United States.

2. Data are available for download at the Web site of the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), Study No. 4607. www.icpsr.umich.edu/
3. Interviews were conducted by International Communications Research in Media, Pennsylvania.
4. Eighteen percent of the sample reported having boycotted a product, and 23 percent reported having engaged in a political purchase. Among those who engaged in at least one act, 48 percent engaged in both acts, 17 percent engaged in boycotting a product only, and 35 percent engaged in political purchasing only. The relationship between the two variables is strong and statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 310.19, p < .001$). The percentage of individuals engaging in political purchasing is just 12 percent among those who did not engage in a product boycott, yet this percentage jumps up to 73 percent among those who did engage in a product boycott.
5. Results from these models are included as supplemental materials on the *Political Research Quarterly* Web site (see Table at <http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>).
6. Another potential concern centers on our binary measure of political consumerism as opposed to an ordinal or nominal operationalization of political consumerism. For instance, a three-category ordinal measure would capture the degree of political consumerism (no consumerism, one of the two acts only, or both acts); an ordered logit/probit model could then be estimated. One could also operationalize consumerism as a four-category nominal measure (no consumer behavior, boycotting only, political purchasing only, or both) and estimate a multinomial logit model. In comparing our model with these alternatives, we did not find there to be significant value added by running these more complex models compared to our more simple—and we think more powerful—model. The core substantive conclusions are not fundamentally altered, and we found that the added complexity in the results of the two alternative models detracts from our effort to achieve the central goals of our theoretical inquiry.
7. It is interesting to note how engagement in political consumerism in the United States compares to figures for political consumer behavior in European countries. The 2004 European Social Survey (round 2) asked respondents across twenty-five different European countries whether or not they had boycotted a product within the previous twelve months. Using the 2005 CID estimate of 17 percent for the percentage of Americans who had boycotted a product, we see that boycotting is more prevalent in Western European

- countries such as Sweden (35 percent), France (29 percent), Finland (29 percent), Denmark (28 percent), Switzerland (26 percent), Norway (23 percent), and Great Britain (21 percent). Boycotting in the United States, however, exceeds that for several Eastern European nations, such as the Czech Republic (7 percent), Hungary (5 percent), Poland (5 percent), Estonia (4 percent), and the Ukraine (2 percent).
8. Unfortunately, the CID survey did not contain the four standard political trust items from the National Election Study (NES) surveys. The CID does contain two items that closely approximate the crooked item from the NES trust scale: "If corruption means the abuse of public office for private gain, in your opinion, how widespread is corruption in the United States?" and "Do you think corruption by public officials in the United States is more widespread than it was a few years ago, less widespread, or about the same?" The ordered response categories for the first item range from 1 (*hardly anyone is involved*) to 5 (*almost everyone is involved*), and those for the second range from 1 (*more widespread*) to 3 (*about the same*). In line with how the NES trust scale is constructed (Hetherington 2005), we arrayed the responses to each item such that the most trustful is the highest value, recoded each to range from 0 to 1, then totaled each respondent's score for the two items, and took the mean. We reverse scored the scale to run from 0 (*low*) to 1 (*high*) political distrust.
 9. We chose this item as our measure for initiative because of its neutrality on the institutionalized/noninstitutionalized dimension, referring to neither an electoral nor protest type behavior, and its seeming capacity to separate low and high civic initiative citizens. The original conceptualization of initiative as the "difficulty of the act" (Verba and Nie 1972) alludes to an Item Response Theory perspective. It would have been possible to generate a summative scale from individual participation items in the survey that vary according to their "item difficulties" and generate scale scores to indicate respondent's level of initiative. Many of participation items in the CID, however, refer to behaviors that are specifically oriented toward electoral participation (campaign or party activity) or protest participation (sign a petition).
 10. Donations were from fourteen types of organizations, ranging from environmental, human rights, political, social, consumer, and hobby-based organizations; these dichotomous items were summed in a scale, $\alpha = .69$.
 11. Income is based on an adjusted ordered categorical variable indicating respondents' total annual household income. Ideology was based upon respondent's self-placement upon an eleven-point liberal-conservative scale. Internal and external political efficacy was based upon items labeled PLTCARE and POLCMPL. Dummy variables were used to indicate respondent's race (1 = white), gender (1 = male), region (1 = south), and membership in a trade union (1 = member). Church attendance measures the frequency of church attendance, and organizational memberships is a count variable for membership in various types of social, political, and civic organizations, both recoded from 0 to 1.
 12. We tested for a quadratic effect for age on both the protest and voter turnout models. Results revealed no significant nonmonotonic effects like what was found in the political consumerism model.

References

- Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde. 2007. *Change and continuity in the 2004 and 2006 elections*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. 1963. *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Andersen, Jorgen G., and Mette Tobiassen. 2004. Who are these political consumers anyway? In *Politics, products, and markets: Exploring political consumerism past and present*, eds. Michele Micheletti, Andreas Follesdal, and Dietlind Stolle, 203–22. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Arnould, Eric J. 2007. Should consumer citizens escape the market? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611: 96–111.
- Beck, Ulrich. 1997. *The reinvention of politics*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Beck, Ulrich, and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. 2002. *Individualization: Institutionalized individualism and its social and political consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bennett, W. Lance. 1998. The uncivic culture: Communication, identity, and the rise of lifestyle politics. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 31: 740–61.
- Bennett, W. Lance. 2004. Branded political communication: Lifestyle politics, logo campaigners, and the rise of global citizenship. In *Politics, products, and markets: Exploring political consumerism past and present*, eds. Michele Micheletti, Andreas Follesdal, and Dietlind Stolle, 101–26. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Bennett, W. Lance, and Robert M. Entman. 2000. Mediated politics: An introduction. In *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy*, eds. W. Lance Bennett and Robert M. Entman, 1–32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. Beyond SES: A resource model of political participation. *American Political Science Review* 89: 271–94.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American voter*. New York: John Wiley.
- Carmines, Edward G., and James A. Stimson. 1980. The two faces of issue voting. *American Political Science Review* 74 (1): 78–91.
- Citrin, Jack. 1974. Comment: The political relevance of trust in government. *American Political Science Review* 68: 973–88.

- Creyer, Elizabeth H., and William T. Ross. 1997. The influence of firm behavior on purchase intention: Do consumers really care about business ethics? *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 14: 421–32.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2008. *The good citizen: How a younger generation is reshaping American politics*. Washington DC: CQ Press.
- Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Doane, Deborah. 2001. *Taking flight: The rapid growth of ethical consumerism*. London: New Economics Foundation.
- Emmelhainz, Margaret A., and Ronald J. Adams. 1999. The apparel industry response to “sweatshop” concerns: A review and analysis of codes of conduct. *Journal of Supply Chain Management* 35 (3): 51–57.
- Friedman, Emily. 2009. Health care stirs up Whole Foods CEO John Mackey, customers boycott organic grocery store. ABC News Online/Money, August 14, 2009. Available at <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/story?id=8322658&page=1>.
- Friedman, Monroe. 1985. Consumer boycotts in the United States, 1970–1980: Contemporary events in historical perspective. *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 19: 96–117.
- Friedman, Monroe. 1999. *Consumer boycotts: Effecting change through the marketplace and the media*. New York: Routledge.
- Friedman, Monroe. 2004. Using consumer boycotts to stimulate corporate policy changes: Marketplace, media, and moral considerations. In *Politics, products, and markets: Exploring political consumerism past and present*, eds. Michele Micheletti, Andreas Follesdal, and Dietlind Stolle, 45–62. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Garner, Roberta. 1997. Fifty years of social movement theory: An interpretation. In *Social movement theory and research: An annotated bibliographical guide*, eds. Roberta Garner and John Tenuto, 1–58. Pasadena, CA: Scarecrow Press.
- Garrett, Dennis E. 1987. The effectiveness of marketing policy boycotts: Environmental opposition to marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 51 (2): 46–57.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Ginsberg, Benjamin, and Martin Shefter. 1990. *Politics by other means: The declining importance of elections in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Glickman, Lawrence B. 2009. *Buying power: A history of consumer activism in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gurr, Ted R. 1970. *Why men rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hetherington, Marc J. 2005. *Why trust matters*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Howard, Marc Morjé, James L. Gibson, and Dietlind Stolle. 2005. *United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy Survey*. Washington, DC: Center for Democracy and Civil Society, Georgetown University. Available at www.icpsr.umich.edu/, the Web site of the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Study No. 4607.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1971. The silent revolution in Europe: Intergenerational change in post-industrial societies. *American Political Science Review* 65: 991–1017.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1997. *Modernization and postmodernization*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Jenkins, J. Craig, and Michael Wallace. 1996. The generalized action potential of protest movements: The new class, social trends, and political exclusion explanations. *Sociological Forum* 11: 183–207.
- Jordan, Andrew, Rudiger K. W. Wurzel, Anthony R. Zito, and Lars Bruckner. 2004. Consumer responsibility-taking and eco-labeling schemes in Europe. In *Politics, products, and markets: Exploring political consumerism past and present*, eds. Michele Micheletti, Andreas Follesdal, and Dietlind Stolle, 161–80. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Kam, Cindy D. 2007. When duty calls, do citizens answer? *The Journal of Politics* 69: 17–29.
- Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- King, Gary, and Langche Zeng. 2001. Logistic regression in rare events data. *Political Analysis* 9: 137–63.
- Klandermans, Bert. 2003. Collective political action. In *Oxford handbook of political psychology*, eds. David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis, 670–709. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. *The American voter revisited*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lichterman, Paul. 1996. *The search for political community: American activists reinventing commitment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyon, Sarah. 2006. Evaluating fair trade consumption: Politics, defetishization and producer participation. *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 30: 452–64.
- Mainieri, Tina, Elaine G. Barnett, Trisha R. Valdero, John B. Unipan, and Stuart Oskamp. 1997. Green buying: The influence of environmental concern on consumer behavior. *Journal of Social Psychology* 137: 189–204.
- Mason, Tania. 2000. The importance of being ethical. *Marketing*, October 27, 27.
- McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political process and the development of black insurgency, 1930–1970*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Micheletti, Michele. 2003. *Political virtue and shopping: Individuals, consumerism, and collective action*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Micheletti, Michele, Andreas Follesdal, and Dietlind Stolle, eds. 2004. *Politics, products, and markets: Exploring political*

- consumerism past and present*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Nelson, Michelle R., Mark A. Rademacher, and Hye-Jin Paek. 2007. Downshifting consumer = upshifting citizen? An examination of a local freecycle community. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611: 141–56.
- Norris, Pippa. 2002. *The democratic phoenix: Reinventing political activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ostrom, Mary A. 2008. Prop. 8: The fight goes on. *San Jose Mercury News*, Article ID: 1038241.
- Pattie, Charles, Patrick Seyd, and Paul Whiteley. 2003. Citizenship and civic engagement: Attitudes and behaviour in Britain. *Political Studies* 51: 443–68.
- Pruitt, Stephan W., and Monroe Friedman. 1986. Determining the effectiveness of consumer boycotts: A stock price analysis of their impact on corporate targets. *Journal of Consumer Policy* 9: 375–87.
- Pruitt, Stephan W., K. C. John Wei, and Richard E. White. 1988. The impact of union-sponsored boycotts on the stock prices of target firms. *Journal of Labor Research* 9: 285–89.
- Rimmerman, Craig A. 2001. *The new citizenship: Unconventional politics, activism, and service*, 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Rock, Michael T. 2003. Public disclosure of the sweatshop practices of American multinational garment/shoe makers/retailers: Impacts on their stock prices. *Competition & Change* 7: 23–38.
- Rosenstone, Steven J., and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, participation, and democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan.
- Sapiro, Virginia. September 2000. *Economic activity as political activity*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC.
- Schatz, Robert T., and Howard Lavine. 2007. Waving the flag: National symbolism, social identity, and political engagement. *Political Psychology* 28: 329–55.
- Schudson, Michael. 2007. Citizens, consumers, and the good society. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611: 236–49.
- Shah, Dhavan V., Douglas M. McLeod, Eunkyung Kim, Sun Young Lee, Melissa R. Gotlieb, Shirley S. Ho, and Hilde Breivik. 2007. Political consumerism: How communication and consumption orientations drive “lifestyle politics.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611: 217–35.
- Sklar, Kathryn K. 1998. The consumers’ white label campaign of the National Consumers League, 1898–1918. In *Getting and spending: European and American consumer societies in the twentieth century*, eds. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judd, 17–36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smelser, Neil. 1963. *Theory of collective behavior*. New York: Free Press.
- Smith, Barbara C. 1994. Food rioters and the American Revolution. *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series* 51: 3–38.
- Smith, N. Craig. 2001. Changes in corporate practices in response to public interest advocacy and actions: The role of consumer boycotts and socially responsible consumption in promoting corporate social responsibility. In *Handbook of marketing and society*, eds. Paul N. Bloom and Gregory T. Gundlach, 140–61. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stolle, Dietlind, Marc Hooghe, and Michele Micheletti. 2005. Politics in the supermarket: Political consumerism as a form of political participation. *International Political Science Review* 26: 245–69.
- Stone, Gregory P. 1954. City shopper and urban identification: Observation on the social psychology of city life. *American Journal of Sociology* 60: 36–45.
- Timpone, Richard J. 1998. Structure, behavior, and voter turnout in the United States. *American Political Science Review* 92: 145–58.
- Verba, Sidney, and Norman H. Nie. 1972. *Participation in America*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Westbrook, Robert A., and William C. Black. 1985. A motivation-based shopper typology. *Journal of Retailing* 61: 78–103.
- Wollebak, Dag, and Per Selle. 2003. The importance of passive membership for social capital formation. In *Generating social capital*, eds. Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle, 67–88. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.