

RUNNING HEAD: EXPANSION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political Consumerism: Boycotting, Buycotting, and the Expansion of Political Participation in
the United States

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Abstract

There are several reasons to believe that political consumerism—the deliberate purchase or avoidance of products or brands for political or ethical reasons—constitutes an alternative form of participation, not another political tool people use to affect change. However, empirical work on this point is limited. The present paper tackles this problem by examining whether people who engage in political consumerism are more or less likely to engage in other forms of political action. Using an original, nationally-representative survey dataset, I find that political consumers are significantly more likely than non-political consumers to engage in electoral, individualistic, and civic forms of political participation. These results demonstrate that political consumerism represents another tool through which people strive to affect change, not a substitute for conventional participation.

Keywords: political consumerism; political consumption; boycotting; buycotting; political participation; civic engagement; postmaterialist values; engaged citizenship norms

Introduction

An ongoing debate in the social science literature involves the extent to which citizens in established democracies participate in politics. Since the 1970s, social scientists have lamented a decline in the frequency with which citizens engage in conventional participation and civic engagement.¹ There are a variety of accounts to explain this decline. However, these accounts overlook the rise of unconventional and direct forms of political participation that began in the 1970s—the same time when participation in conventional activities declined.

Historically speaking, it is true that the frequency with which people engaged in unconventional and direct forms of participation increased during the same time that conventional participation decreased. What might be termed the engaged paradigm takes these trends one step further to argue that political behaviors are not so much in decline but changing shape (Bennett, 1998; Dalton, 2008; Norris, 2002; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). In this view, people may be less likely to engage in conventional participation, but they participate in unconventional and direct forms of participation frequently.

Just as scholars posit why people turned away from conventional participation beginning in the 1970s, there are also several accounts to explain the rise of unconventional participation in the second half of the twentieth century. According to these accounts, people who engage in unconventional participation are less likely to engage in conventional participation. The frequency with which people engage in political consumerism—which has been conceptualized as a direct, unconventional, or extra-representational form of participation—illustrates this point.

¹ Conventional political participation refers to “those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or their actions” (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 2). Four broad types of conventional participation include: voting, working for a political party or candidate, joining an association or political organization, and contacting public officials.

Today, published estimates of the percentage of the proportion of Americans and Europeans who engage in boycotting and buycotting—which collectively comprise political consumerism—range from 22 to 47%, which is more than engage in many other forms of political and civic engagement, such as contacting public officials, participating in a rally or political meeting, or contributing to a campaign (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2013; Forno & Ceccarini, 2006; Neilson, 2010; Neilson & Paxton, 2010; Newman & Bartels, 2011; Strømsnes, 2009).

However, it is not necessarily the case that people who engage in political consumerism do so at the expense of other political activities. According to the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), participation in any form of politics places demands on people's resources, and some people can bear these costs more easily than others (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001; Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2012; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Therefore, there are reasons to think that people who engage in unconventional participation may be more likely to engage in conventional participation than those who do not. This puzzle raises two related questions. First, which people are more likely to engage in political consumerism in the U.S.? Second, does political consumerism constitute a substitute for—or a complement to—conventional forms of political participation?

To answer these questions, I use original, nationally representative U.S. survey data, which includes an extensive set of questions about people's political consumption, their socio-demographic attributes, socio-political beliefs, and their orientation toward the political system. In contrast to scholars who conceptualize political consumerism as an alternative form of participation that appeals to people who are otherwise disengaged from politics, I theorize and find that political consumers are significantly more likely than non-political consumers to engage in electoral, individualistic, and civic forms of political participation. Therefore, political

consumerism represents another political tool through which people strive to affect change, not an alternative to conventional forms of participation. Additional findings and implications are discussed.

Theoretical Framework

Between the 1970s and mid-1990s, citizens in established democracies became less likely to engage in conventional forms of political participation, such as voting in elections, attending political meetings, participating in rallies and demonstrations, volunteering for political parties, and contacting public officials (Macedo & Alex-Assensoh, 2005; Putnam, 2000). For example, between 1974 and 1994, Americans were 34 percent less likely to attend a political rally or speech and 42 percent less likely to work for a political party (Putnam, 2000). During this time period, citizens also became less likely to identify with one of the major political parties; between 1952 and 2008, the percentage of Americans who identified themselves as independents increased from 23 to 40 percent (Dalton, 2013).

Social scientists have explained the decline in conventional participation in a variety of ways. Several of these accounts focus on the relationship between political trust and participation, mostly because participation in conventional activities decreased at the same time skepticism of public officials and government institutions increased (Dalton, 2013; Norris, 2002). Between 1964 and 2008, for example, Americans became significantly less likely to believe that public officials were honest and that they could trust the government to do what is right (Dalton, 2013). Relatedly, Putnam (2000) attributes the decline in conventional participation to the erosion of social capital. According to this account, citizens are less likely to participate in government and in civil society because they are less likely to be embedded in

social networks that build norms of reciprocity and trust, and which facilitate coordination and cooperation aimed at social and political goods.

Another set of accounts attribute the decline in conventional participation to changes in the media environment. According to Prior (2007), in the 1960s people watched television for entertainment but had little control over the programs to which they were exposed. As a result, television viewing exposed viewers to news programming routinely. In contrast, emergence of a high-choice media environment—with cable television in the 1980s and the Internet in the 1990s—facilitated selective exposure to political information, such that people who have a high preference for entertainment become less knowledgeable about, and less likely to participate in, politics.

The Expansion of Unconventional Participation

Although the decline thesis has been fairly well-documented, it neglects the rise in unconventional and direct forms of participation that began in the 1970s—the same time during which participation in conventional activities declined. Using cross-sectional data from the Political Action/World Values Survey (WVS), Norris (2002) shows that the percentage of people who signed petitioned and demonstrated in established democracies, including the U.S., increased substantially between 1975 and 1995.² More recent data from the 2006 WVS show that these upward trends have continued (Dalton, 2009). Not only has participation in protest activities increased, but so too has participation in consumer boycotts (Norris, 2002).

² In 1975, for example, 32% of people signed a petition.² This percentage increased to 46 in 1981, 54 in 1990, and 60 in 1995. Similarly, while 9% of people engaged in a lawful demonstration in 1975, 14% of people did so in 1981, and roughly 18% did so in 1990 and 1995. Similarly, while 9% of people engaged in a lawful demonstration in 1975, 14% of people did so in 1981, and roughly 18% did so in 1990 and 1995.

To explain why the frequency with which people engaged in unconventional and direct participation increased in the 1970s, several social scientists posit theories of value change. Inglehart (1997) theorizes that cohorts who were socialized during the post-war era were more likely to emphasize postmaterialist or quality of life concerns, such as the environment and civil rights. Moreover, because they valued autonomy and self-expression, they did not want to participate in hierarchical, membership-based organizations; they preferred to engage in direct, or elite-challenging, forms of political action, like strikes, marches, and boycotts. Similarly, Dalton (2008, 2009) contends that as a result of expansion of educational opportunities, changes in occupational and social structures, and the growth of urban populations after World War II, people were more likely emphasize engaged citizenship norms. Unlike duty-based citizenship norms, which emphasize allegiance to the state and voting in elections, engaged norms emphasize the importance of participation in non-electoral activities, such as donating money, signing petitions, protesting, and boycotting.

According to each of these theories, citizens participate in public life as much as they did in the 1960s, but they do so through extra-institutional channels. Both Inglehart (1997) and Dalton (2008, 2009) characterize young adults' preference for unconventional participation as a generational shift between approaches to citizenship. Whereas older generations are more likely to emphasize materialist values and duty-based norms, younger generations are more likely to emphasize postmaterialist values and engaged norms. The result is a shift in participation styles, such that older generations are more likely to participate in conventional participation, while younger generations are more likely to participate in unconventional and direct participation. Moreover, as generational replacement occurs, the expression of postmaterialist values and

engaged norms through unconventional forms of participation should become the norm. In fact, Inglehart (1997) goes so far as to argue that conventional participation should become obsolete.

Political Consumerism

Political consumerism lies at the heart of this debate. Political consumerism refers to “consumer choice of producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices,” and it includes two types of activities: boycotting and buycotting (Micheletti, Føllesdal, & Stolle, 2004, p. xiv). Through boycotts and buycotts, people can deliberately avoid or purchase products or brands to punish companies for undesirable behavior or reward them for favorable behavior. For example, people may boycott Beyond Petroleum because of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Simultaneously, people may also purchase alternative-fuel vehicles to demonstrate their opposition to the use of oil for fuel.

Boycotting and buycotting are not new political tools. In fact, they are at least as old as the boycotts of British goods in the pre-revolutionary period (Breen, 2004). However, the frequency with which people engage in boycotting and buycotting has increased over time. According to the WVS, participation in consumer boycotts in established democracies increased steadily over time from 5% in 1975 to 15% in 1995 (Norris, 2002). Since then, these figures have increased dramatically; in 2006, 53% of people in established democracies engaged in consumer boycotts.³ This figure is slightly higher, though consistent with, published estimates of the percent of Americans and Europeans who engage in political consumerism, which range from 22

³I calculated this figure using WVS data from Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, the US, Italy, Switzerland, and Finland. This is consistent with Norris (2002), with the exception of Austria.

to 47% (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2013; Neilson, 2010; Neilson & Paxton, 2010; Newman & Bartels, 2011; Strømsnes, 2009).

Political consumerism provides a great vehicle through which we can more closely examine political participation trends because most of the literature situates consumer activism as an alternative or substitute for conventional participation. The literature situates consumer activism as an alternative to conventional participation for three main reasons. First, most of the literature attributes the expansion of political consumerism to the rise of postmaterialist values and engaged citizenship norms in established democracies in the decades following World War II (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti, et al., 2004; Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005). According to these theories, people who have postmaterialist values and/or engaged citizenship norms prefer to participate in elite-challenging forms of participation, which are characterized by looser ties, and focused on lifestyle politics (Bennett, 1998; Dalton, 2006a, 2007, 2008; Inglehart, 1997). Said another way, these theories suggest that people with postmaterialist values and/or engaged citizenship norms eschew conventional participation in favor of unconventional and direct forms of participation.

Risk-society theorists add that direct forms of political action like political consumerism represent a reaction against the state; when people believe they cannot trust governments to address social and political problems effectively, they opt out of conventional political activity in favor of direct forms of political action like political consumerism (Beck, 1992, 1997; Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994). According to these theories, the emergence of technological and environmental risks in postindustrial societies calls for a new kind of politics (i.e., subpolitics), which goes beyond representative institutions associated with nation states, emphasizes the importance of coalition building between non-state actors, and calls upon individuals to manage

and take responsibility for their personal and collective well-being. For example, people may use data from non-profit organizations and information from labeling schemes to deliberately purchase food that minimizes their exposure to environmental risks (Beck, 1992, 1997; Halkier, 2004). They may also boycott companies whose policies pose a threat to the environment. In the mid-1990s, for example, consumer boycotts in northwestern Europe prompted Shell Oil to change how it would dispose obsolete oil rigs (Beck, 1997).

Finally, consumer activism has been conceptualized as an activity that appeals to people who feel alienated or marginalized from traditional political settings (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti, et al., 2004). Throughout U.S. history, marginalized groups have utilized consumer activism to articulate political preferences and demands. Prominent examples include colonists' boycotts of British goods during the pre-revolutionary period, women's use of buycotts to promote fair labor conditions for working-class women during the Progressive era, and African Americans' use of the boycott to fight segregated seating systems on city buses during the civil rights movement. In each of these examples, people resorted to boycotts and buycotts because they could not address social and political grievances through conventional channels.

Today, several studies theorize and find that political consumerism still appeals to women because women have traditionally been excluded from representative political institutions. In Micheletti's (2010, p. 18) words, "because women have historically been excluded from institutions of the public sphere and their issues seen as nonpolitical, they have been forced to create other sites to express their political worries and work for their political interests." In this vein, many empirical studies theorize and find that women are more likely than men to engage in political consumerism (Forno & Ceccarini, 2006; Mainieri, Barnett, Valdero,

Unipan, & Oskamp, 1997; Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010; Micheletti & Stolle, 2005; Stolle, et al., 2005).

Political Participation Today

Although these bodies of literature posit that political consumers eschew conventional participation, resource-based models of participation suggest otherwise. According to the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), people are more likely to participate if they have resources, such as time, money, and civic skills (Burns, et al., 2001; Schlozman, et al., 2012; Verba, et al., 1995). They are also more likely to participate if they are interested in politics, if they believe their participation matters, and if they feel a personal connection to an issue. These factors should not be exclusively associated with institution-directed behavior, such as volunteering for political parties. Instead, many of the same factors that are associated with conventional participation should also be associated with political consumerism.

Like other forms of political participation, political consumerism requires resources and psychological engagement. In many cases, political consumerism requires financial resources, such as when people purchase hybrid cars to reduce their carbon footprint. Political consumerism also requires the time and interest to learn about company practices with which they agree or disagree and then to locate alternative companies to shop or different products to buy. For these reasons, we should expect that the same resource biases associated with conventional participation should also be associated with unconventional and direct forms of participation like political consumerism.

Empirical support for this conjecture comes from Schlozman, Verba and Brady (2012). In their study of inequalities in political participation in the U.S. over time, they find that people

who are better educated and earn more money are not only more likely to participate in a wide array of conventional political acts, but also more likely to engage in protests and boycotts. For example, while 8% of people in the lowest socio-economic (SES) quintile engage in boycotts, 27% of people in the highest SES quintile engage in boycotts.⁴ Individual studies of political consumerism also show that better educated people are more likely to engage in political consumerism (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2013; Marien, et al., 2010; Neilson, 2010; Neilson & Paxton, 2010; Shah et al., 2007; Strømsnes, 2009). Some studies also find a strong positive relationship between income and political consumerism (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2013; Newman & Bartels, 2011; Shah, et al., 2007; Strømsnes, 2009). Overall, these results demonstrate that resources significantly increase the probability of engaging in conventional participation and in political consumerism. These results also suggest that political consumerism is an additional form of political activism through which people strive to effect change, not an alternative to conventional participation.

The picture becomes less clear, however, when we turn to psychological or political engagement. In *Voice and Equality*, Verba et al. (1995, p. 343-355) operationalize psychological engagement as political interest, political information, political efficacy, and partisan strength, and they find that each of these items significantly increase the likelihood of conventional participation. Many studies show that political interest also increases the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2013; Forno & Ceccarini, 2006; Marien, et al., 2010; Newman & Bartels, 2011; Strømsnes, 2009). Similarly, studies that include political

⁴ To operationalize socio-economic status, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady (2012, p. 7) ranked respondents “in terms of the sum of their educational attainment and family income.” Then they divided respondents into quintiles, or five equal groups.

knowledge as an independent variable find a strong positive relationship between political knowledge and political consumerism (Baek, 2010; Forno & Ceccarini, 2006).

The relationship between political consumerism and political efficacy, however, is mixed. While some studies find a strong positive relationship between political efficacy and political consumerism (Marien, et al., 2010), others do not (Copeland, 2013; Newman & Bartels, 2011; Stolle, et al., 2005). The results of Stolle et al.'s (2005) study of undergraduate students are especially striking. While people who engage in political consumerism are significantly more likely than non-political consumers to believe individualized participation matters, they are significantly less likely to believe conventional participation effects change. Finally, political consumers are significantly less likely to identify with a political party (Copeland, 2013). In brief, although political interest and political knowledge are important predictors of conventional participation and political consumerism, political efficacy and partisan strength are not.

In addition, some studies find postmaterialist values, engaged citizenship norms, and political distrust increase the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism. First, many theoretical accounts posit that people who have postmaterialist values are more likely to engage in political consumerism (Bennett, 1998; Dalton, 2006a; Micheletti, 2010; Stolle, et al., 2005). Some empirical work is consistent with these accounts. Using a sample of undergraduate students in Canada, Belgium, and Sweden, Stolle et al. (2005) find that postmaterialist values significantly increase the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism. Second, people who emphasize engaged citizenship norms should be more likely to engage in extra-institutional activities, such as political consumerism, as the expense of conventional activities. Both Copeland (2013) and Dalton (2008) find that engaged citizenship norms significantly increase the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism. Finally, compared to non-political

consumers, political consumers are significantly less likely to trust government officials and institutions. Using the 2005 Citizen, Involvement, Democracy study, Newman and Bartels (2011) find there is a strong positive relationship between political distrust and political consumerism. These results are consistent with other studies conducted in the U.S. (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2013; Shah, et al., 2007) and elsewhere (Forno & Ceccarini, 2006; Neilson, 2010; Neilson & Paxton, 2010; Stolle, et al., 2005). Each of these findings imply that political consumers engage in direct and unconventional participation at the expense of conventional activities.

Although theories of value change and risk society may posit that people who engage in direct and unconventional do so at the expense of conventional participation, they are inconsistent with the resurgence of conventional participation that began at the turn of the twenty-first century. Since the 2000s, conventional participation has been characterized more by stability, growth, and volatility more so than it has by decline (Bimber & Copeland, 2013). According to time-series data from the 1952-2008 American National Election Studies (ANES), participation in some conventional activities reached an all-time high in the 2000s.⁵ These activities included donating money, persuading others how to vote, and attending a political meeting or rally.⁶ Finally, voter turnout has also increased since 1996, from 52% of the voting-

⁵ The following discussion is drawn from my own interpretation and analysis of the ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior, available at www.electionstudies.org.

⁶ In 2004 and 2008, the percentage of people who donated to a political party, candidate, or group reached an all-time high at 13%, one percentage point more it was in 1960. The percentage of people who tried to influence how others vote also peaked in 2004 and 2008, at 48% and 45%, respectively. In 1960, by contrast, only 33% of people tried to influence how others voted. Finally, the percentage of people who attended a political rally or meeting has increased from 5% in 2000 to 9% in 2008. To put these figures in perspective, there were only three other presidential elections in which 9% of people attended a political meeting or rally—1964, 1968, and 1972.

eligible population (VEP) in 1996, to 54% in 2004, 62% in 2008, with a slight decrease in 2012 to 58% (McDonald, 2012). Said another way, political participation is no longer in a state of decline. These data suggest that even as people in established democracies come to emphasize postmaterialist values and engaged citizenship norms—and engage in direct and unconventional participation at higher rates—they still engage in conventional participation. These observations and inconsistencies lead me to the following research questions:

RQ1: What predicts the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism in the U.S.?

RQ2: Does political consumerism increase or decrease the likelihood of engaging in other forms of political participation?

Data and Methods

To answer these questions, I use original survey data collected in the US between December 7 and 21, 2011 by a survey research firm, YouGov. YouGov generated a representative sample of 1300 U.S. adults by drawing a random sample of respondents from the 2007 American Community Study and matching members from its opt-in online panel based on gender, age, race, education, party identification, ideology, and news interest. YouGov also surveyed an additional 900 political consumers based on gender, age, race, education, party identification, ideology, and news interest to reflect as closely as possible population parameters determined in previous studies of political consumers in the U.S. (The Economist/YouGov Poll, 9/17/2011 and 12/10/2011).⁷

⁷ To qualify as a political consumer, respondents must have boycotted a product in the past 12 months for political, ethical, or environmental reasons, selected an item to boycott in the past 12 months for political, ethical, or environmental reasons, or have engaged in both of these activities.

To create the final dataset, YouGov created an indicator variable to identify whether the respondent was a member of the general population sample or the political consumer oversample, after which they merged the general population and political consumer oversample together. In total, the survey achieved an overall response rate of 42%.⁸ The final sample size is 2,200. Compared to US census data, the sample has more females and is slightly better educated. Nevertheless, the sample is comparable to surveys that use random digital dialing, like those conducted by the Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012). The descriptive statistics are weighted to reflect general population parameters.

Dependent Variable

The main dependent variable is political consumerism. The survey instrument included two sets of binary measures of political consumerism, one for boycotting and one for buycotting. To measure boycotting, respondents were asked: “During the past 12 months, did you boycott a product, service, brand, or company for ethical or political reasons?” In addition, respondents who answered “no” were asked whether they boycotted for environmental reasons. Responses to each of these questions were collapsed into one variable for boycotting. To measure buycotting, respondents were asked: “In the past 12 months, did you purchase one product or brand over another for ethical or political reasons?” Similarly, respondents who answered “no” were also asked if they boycotted for environmental reasons. Responses to each of these questions were collapsed into one variable for buycotting. These measures are consistent with other studies,

⁸ The response rate is based on the American Association of Public Opinion Research’s (AAPOR) RR3 formula (AAPOR 2011). The formula for RR3 is $(\text{complete interviews}) / [\text{complete interviews} + \text{incomplete interviews} + \text{refusals} + (\text{eligibility rate} * \text{nonresponse})]$.

which conceptualize political consumerism as boycotting or buycotting for political, ethical, or environmental reasons (Stolle et al., 2005).

Following the standard practice in the literature, I collapsed my measures of boycotting and buycotting into a single dependent variable coded “1” if the respondent engaged in at least one form of political consumerism and “0” if they engaged in neither (Newman & Bartels, 2011; Shah, et al., 2007; Stolle, et al., 2005; Strømsnes, 2009). When I weight the data to reflect the general population parameters, descriptive statistics show that 47 percent of respondents are political consumers (n = 1,045). This figure is comparable to other studies of political consumerism in the U.S. (Baek, 2010; Newman & Bartels, 2011).

Independent Variables

There are two main sets of independent variables in this study. The first set of variables is related to the CVM. These variables include: *education, income, political interest, internal efficacy, external efficacy, and partisan strength* (Burns, et al., 2001; Schlozman, et al., 2012; Verba, et al., 1995). Descriptive statistics for all independent variables are displayed in Table 1.

<Table 1 about here>

Respondents were asked to report the highest level of education completed and family income. Political interest was captured by a single question asking respondents how often they paid attention to the news and public affairs. To measure internal political efficacy, respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: “Public officials care about what people like me think.” The scale ranged from 0 (“Strongly disagree”) to 4 (“Agree strongly”). Similarly, external political efficacy was measured by asking respondents to indicate how much they feel they can affect what the government does. The scale ranged from 0 (“Not at

all”) to 4 (“A great deal”). Partisan strength is a folded four-category measure of the standard seven-point party identification scale, ranging from pure independents to strong party identifiers (Verba, et al., 1995).

The second set of variables is related to changing values, citizenship norms, and theories of risk society. These variables include: *postmaterialism*, *duty-based citizenship norms*, *engaged citizenship norms*, and *environmental concern*. To measure postmaterialism, I utilized the original four-item index Inglehart (1971) created for his first article on the subject.⁹ In this vein, respondents were asked the following question: “For a nation, it is not always possible to obtain everything one might wish. Several goals are listed. If you had to choose among them, which two seem most desirable to you? Please rank your top two choices.” The list of goals included two materialist items: “maintaining order in the nation” and “fighting rising prices.” It also included two postmaterialist concerns: “giving people more say in government decisions” and “protecting freedom of speech.” I coded material goals as “0” and postmaterialist goals “1.” Next, I created an additive index of postmaterialism, with scores ranging from 0 (“materialist”) to 2 (“postmaterialist”).

To operationalize duty-based and engaged citizenship norms, I factor analyzed seven measures of “good citizenship” Dalton (2006b). These measures were worded as follows: On a scale of 0 (“Not at all important”) to 4 (“Extremely important”), respondents were asked: “To be a good citizen, how important would you say it is for a person to...? Help people who are worse

⁹ This measure is controversial for a variety of reasons. Though a discussion of these critiques is beyond the scope of this paper, the following papers summarize some of the debate that has ensued: Inglehart and Abramson (1994, 1999) and Abramson, Ellis and Inglehart (1997). Here, I use the standard measure of postmaterialism so as to be consistent with other studies of value change.

off than themselves; Vote in elections; Always obey laws and regulations; Form his or her own opinion independently of others; Be active in politics; Report a crime that he or she may have witnessed; Serve in the military when the country is at war.” Two factors were extracted using principal components analysis with varimax rotation, as Table 2 shows.

<Table 2 about here>

The factor analysis supports the existence of two sets of norms, as predicted by Dalton, which I use as independent variables. The first factor, *Engaged Citizenship Norms*, included the following items: be active in politics, form his or her own opinion independently of others, vote in elections, and help people who are worse off than themselves (Eigenvalue = 2.48 ; see Table 2).¹⁰ The second factor, *Dutiful Citizenship Norms*, includes the following items: always obey laws and regulations; report a crime that he or she may have witnessed; and serve in the military when the country is at war (Eigenvalue = 1.12; see Table 2).

To measure aversion to environmental risks (i.e., “risk aversion”), I used an abbreviated version of the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) Scale (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000; Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, & Kalof, 1999). Existing work shows that the NEP is one of the best predictors of environmental worldviews (Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Pierce, Lovrich, Tsurutani, & Abe, 1987; Schultz, Shriver, Tabanico, & Khazian, 2004; Steger, Pierce, Steel, & Lovrich, 1989). According to Stern et al. (1999), people who score high

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that voting loads with Engaged Citizenship Norms. In his occasional paper, Dalton (2006b) finds that voting loads more strongly with duty-based norms (0.56), but also loads nicely with engaged norms (0.43). Theoretically, voting should be associated with traditional, dutiful citizenship. However, voting participation in presidential elections has been increasing in the US for several election cycles, despite the underlying shift away from other forms of dutiful citizenship. More research is needed to understand the circumstances under which voting may have multiple normative associations or may be a special category of political behavior.

on the NEP are more likely than others to perceive environmental threats. They are also more likely to believe they can reduce their exposure to these threats (Stern, 2000; Stern, et al., 1999). The abbreviated scale includes five items, with the second, third, and fifth items worded so that agreement indicates more environmental concern, and the first and fourth items worded so that disagreement indicates more environmental concern.¹¹ To make the scale consistent, I reverse coded the first the fourth items. Next, I generated an additive scale ranging from 0 to 20 points, with higher scores indicating more environmental concern ($\alpha = 0.88$).

I tabulated political trust by combining two items into an additive scale. On a scale of 1 to 10, respondents were asked how often they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right and the extent to which they think public officials are corrupt. The resulting scale ranged from 0 to 18, with higher scores indicating more trust. Finally, I controlled for *age* and *gender* (Baek, 2010; Burns, et al., 2001; Forno & Ceccarini, 2006; Neilson & Paxton, 2010; Newman & Bartels, 2011; Schlozman, et al., 2012; Stolle, et al., 2005; Strømsnes, 2009; Verba, et al., 1995). Each respondent was asked to report his or her age in years. Gender was coded “1” for male.

Results

The first research question asks: *What predicts the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism in the U.S.?* To answer this question, I estimated a logistic regression model using the binary political consumerism described above. The results for the logistic regression model of political consumerism are displayed in Table 3. To make better sense of these results, I also

¹¹ The statements were as follows: “The so-called ‘ecological crisis’ facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated.” “The earth is like a spaceship with limited room and resources.” “If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.” “The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrial nations.” “Humans are severely abusing the environment.”

estimated predicted probabilities using Clarify (King, Tomz, & Jason, 2000). This allows better interpretation of the magnitude of each variable's effect on the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism. To generate each probability, I varied the predictor of interest from its minimum to its maximum value, holding all other variables to their means. The results are displayed in Table 4.

<Tables 3 and 4 about here>

The first set of variables in the logistic regression model is related to the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM). The results show that people who are better educated and earn more money are significantly more likely to engage in political consumerism by about 0.370 and 0.180, respectively. Political interest and external efficacy also increase the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism by about 0.369 and 0.104, respectively. However, partisan strength decreases the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism; people who engage in political consumerism are less likely to identify with one of the major parties by about 0.102. Overall, these results are consistent with the CVM, which theorizes that people who participate in politics have more resources, higher levels of political interest, and the belief that their participation matters (Burns, et al., 2001; Schlozman, et al., 2012; Verba, et al., 1995). These results also suggest that, with the exception of partisan strength, the same predictors of conventional participation also work for political consumerism.

The second set of variables in the regression model is related to changing values, citizenship norms, and theories of risk society. People with postmaterialist values are roughly 0.276 more likely to engage in political consumerism. Moreover, people who emphasize duty-based citizenship norms are about 0.314 less likely to engage in political consumerism, while people who emphasize engaged citizenship norms are about 0.447 more likely to engage in

political consumerism, the largest effect size in the model. In addition, people who are more risk adverse are about 0.260 more likely to engage in political consumerism, as are people who do not trust government officials and institutions by about 0.248. With respect to the control variables, age and gender are also significant. People who are younger are about 0.215 more likely to engage in political consumerism. In addition, women are slightly more likely to engage in political consumerism than are men ($p < .10$).

These findings are consistent with the theoretical frameworks Inglehart (1971, 1997) and Dalton (2006b, 2008, 2009) utilize to explain the expansion of unconventional and direct forms of political participation in the second half of the 20th century. The results are also consistent with theories of risk society, which posit that as people become more sensitive to the risks associated with technological and environmental degradation, they become more likely to take individual responsibility for their personal and collective well-being because they do not trust government to do so for them (Beck, 1992, 1997; Beck, et al., 1994). Finally, the results for age and gender suggest that political consumerism may appeal to those people who feel alienated or marginalized from traditional political settings (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti, et al., 2004).

Given the importance of resources and psychological engagement for political consumers, political consumerism should represent another form of political activism through which people strive to effect change, not an alternative to—nor a substitute for—conventional participation. However, the importance of postmaterialist values, engaged citizenship norms, and risk aversion to political consumerism call this proposition into question. This leads me to the second research question: *Are people in the U.S. who engage in political consumerism more likely or less likely to engage in other forms of political participation?*

Political Consumerism as an Additional Form of Political Participation

In order to see whether political consumerism constitutes an additional tool through which people can effect change, not a substitute for conventional participation, it is important to see whether political consumers are actively engaged across multiple forms of participation. In their classic study, Verba and Nie (1972) identify four modes of political activity which differ in four main ways: 1) whether they influence electoral outcomes; 2) the amount of conflict involved; 3) the scope of the outcome (i.e., collective versus particularized); and 4) the amount of initiative required. This typology is advantageous because it allows me to analyze whether there is a relationship between political consumerism and other forms of civic and political participation. It also allows me to assess whether political consumers may be drawn to some types of activities more than others.¹²

Based on this typology, I constructed four main sets of dependent variables. The first dependent variable is voting. The second set of dependent variables captures campaign activities and includes: attending a political meeting or rally, displaying a political message, and volunteering for a political group or cause ($\alpha = 0.77$). The third set of dependent variables relates to civic engagement and includes: volunteering for a non-political group or cause, as well as working with others in your community to solve a problem ($\alpha = 0.69$). The final set of dependent variables refers to individualized forms of activism. This set of variables includes: donating money, contacting a public official, and signing a petition ($\alpha = 0.74$).¹³

¹² It does not, however, allow me to make any claims about the direction of causation, nor do I intend to.

¹³ To measure the frequency with which respondents vote in elections, respondents were asked: "When Presidential elections take place, do you vote?" to which respondents could answer: Always (coded 3); "Usually" (coded 2); "Sometimes" (coded 1); "Rarely" or "Never" (coded 0) ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.03$). The question wording for each of these items was as follows: "Some people are more involved in politics and their communities than others. Here are some different

Next I calculated a series of one-way analysis of variances (ANOVA) to compare the frequency with which political consumers engage in these activities compared to people who do not engage in political consumerism. The results are displayed in Table 5.

<Table 5 about here>

Table 5 reveals that political consumers are significantly more likely to engage in all modes of political and civic engagement compared to people who do not engage in political consumerism. Compared to non-political consumers, political consumers are significantly more likely to vote; attend political meetings or rallies; display political messages; volunteer for political causes; volunteer for non-political causes; work with others to solve neighborhood problems; contact public officials; donate money; and sign petitions. These results confirm that people who engage in political consumerism do so *in addition to* other forms of political participation and civic engagement—not at the expense of other political activities.

Boycotting vs. Buycotting

forms of political and social action that people can take. Please indicate how often you engage in each activity.” The list of civic and political activities included eight items: sign a petition ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 1.46$); attend a political meeting or rally ($M = 0.45$, $SD = 0.99$); wear a political button, put a political sticker on your car, or place a political sign in your window or in front of your house ($M = 0.62$, $SD = 1.19$); contact a politician or public official to express your views ($M = 1.17$, $SD = 1.45$); donate money or raise funds for a social or political fund ($M = 0.85$, $SD = 1.29$); work or volunteer for a non-political group or cause ($M = 0.79$, $SD = 1.38$); work or volunteer for a political group or cause ($M = 0.38$, $SD = 0.96$); and work with others in your community to solve a problem ($M = 0.74$, $SD = 1.24$). The scale ranged from 0 to 4, with higher scores indicating more activity. I coded respondents who never engaged in each activity, as well as respondents who had engaged in the activity but not in the last year, as “0.” People could also indicate whether they engaged in an activity “once in the last year” (coded 1); “about every 6 months” (coded 2); “about every three months (coded 3), and “about every month” (coded 4).

Although these results show that political consumers are significantly more likely to engage in other modes of civic and political participation than are non-political consumers, they do not shed light on how one's participatory repertoire might vary according to the type of consumerism. Although most of the literature has treated boycotting and buycotting as homogeneous with one another, reflecting a single mode of behavior (Newman & Bartels, 2011; Shah, et al., 2007; Stolle, et al., 2005; Strømsnes, 2009), recent work has identified key theoretical and empirical distinctions between boycotting and buycotting (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2013; Neilson, 2010).

Copeland (2013) finds that boycotting is more strongly associated with dutiful citizenship norms, while buycotting is more strongly associated with engaged citizenship norms. Neilson (2010) finds that altruism and participation in voluntary associations increases the likelihood of buycotting, but not boycotting. Each of these findings suggest that boycotting may have more in common with traditional, interest-based politics, while buycotting may have more characteristics in common with civic engagement. In addition, Baek (2010) finds that people who engage in boycotts and buycotts are more knowledgeable about politics than people who only engage in boycotts or buycotts. Collectively, these findings suggest that people who engage in boycotts and buycotts (i.e., "dualcoters") should be the most active in politics, followed by boycotters and buycotters.

To examine whether participation varies across boycotters and buycotters, I created a categorical political consumerism variable that can take on four values: "nocotter," for respondents who do not engage in boycotting or buycotting (coded 0); "boycotter" for people who engage in boycotting but not buycotting (coded 1); "buycotter" for people who engage in buycotting but not boycotting (coded 2); and "dualcotter" for people who engage in boycotting

and boycotting (coded 3). Descriptive statistics show that 12% of people are boycotters, 9% boycotters, and are 27% dualcoters. In addition, there is a negative correlation between people who only boycott and people who only boycott groups ($r = -0.11, p < .001$). For this reason, we should suspect that there are key differences between these two groups.

Next I calculated a series of one-way ANOVAs with a Bonferroni familywise comparison to compare the frequency with which nocoters, boycotters, boycotters, and dualcoters participate in other civic and political activities. The results are displayed in Table 6.

<Table 6 about here>

Beginning with voting, dualcoters vote more regularly than all other groups. There are no significant differences between boycotters and boycotters. With respect to campaign activity, all three groups of political consumers are more likely to participate compared to nocoters. However, there are some key distinctions among the three groups of political consumers. First, dualcoters are more likely than boycotters and boycotters to participate in all campaign activities. Second, boycotters are more likely than nocoters to volunteer for political causes, but boycotters and nocoters volunteer at equal rates. These results provide support for the theoretical proposition that dualcoters should be the most active in other forms of politics, followed by boycotters, boycotters, and nocoters.

Moving on to civic engagement, the results show that all political consumers are more likely to volunteer for non-political causes and to work with others to solve neighborhood problems than are nocoters. Contrary to expectations, however, boycotters do not participate in civic acts more frequently than boycotters. Instead, dualcoters engage in civic acts more frequently than do boycotters or boycotters. Finally, Table 6 reveals that there are several key differences among nocoters, boycotters, boycotters, and dualcoters with respect to

individualized activism. Dualcoters contact public officials, donate money, and sign petitions the most frequently, followed by boycotters, buycotters, and nocotters, and these differences are significant. In addition, boycotters are significantly more likely to sign petitions than are buycotters or nocotters. Overall, Table 6 shows that with the exception of voting, all subgroups of political consumers engage in nine of the ten civic and political acts more frequently. These results demonstrate that political consumerism is a political tool people use in addition to other civic and political acts, not an alternative to other forms of participation.

Discussion

Since the 1970s, social scientists have been concerned with the decline in conventional participation rates, as well as a decline in certain kinds of organized community involvement (Putnam, 2000; Macedo & Alex-Assensoh, 2005). Another school of thought counters that participation is so much in decline as it is changing shape (Bennett, 1998; Dalton, 2006; Zukin et al., 2006). In this view, people's political practices are changing, and so a complete picture must include more than the details of declines in traditional ways of participating politically.

Political consumerism lies at the heart of this debate because it is associated with postmaterialist values, engaged citizenship norms, and theories of risk society, all of which suggest that although people are engaged in politics, they no longer participate through conventional channels. However, like other forms of political action, political consumerism requires resources, such as time, money, and civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Therefore, there are reasons to believe that political consumers should be among the most politically engaged citizens; they should participate in consumer boycotts and buycotts *in*

addition to conventional forms of participation, such as voting, working for political parties, and contacting public officials.

In this vein, this paper addressed two related research questions. The first question asked: *What predicts the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism in the U.S.?* I found that postmaterialist values and engaged citizenship norms significantly increase the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism, while duty-based citizenship norms significantly decrease the likelihood of engaging in political consumerism. In addition, people are significantly more likely to engage in political consumerism if they are risk averse and do not trust government officials or institutions. Finally, younger people are significantly more likely to engage in political consumerism, and women are slightly more likely to engage in political consumerism than are men. Collectively, these findings are consistent with the theoretical framework researchers use to explain which people are drawn to political consumerism and why (Bennett, 1998; Dalton, 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2009; Inglehart, 1971, 1997; Micheletti, et al., 2004; Norris, 2002; Stolle, et al., 2005; Zukin, et al., 2006).

I also found that people who are better educated, wealthier, more interested in politics, and more efficacious are significantly more likely to engage in political consumerism. These findings are consistent with resource-based models of political participation, which posit that participation in any form of politics requires resources and psychological engagement (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). These findings are consistent with other studies of political consumerism (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2013; Forno & Ceccarini, 2006; Neilson, 2010; Neilson & Paxton, 2010; Newman & Bartels, 2010; Shah, et al., 2007; Stolle, et al., 2005), and they suggest that political consumers have the resources required to engage in other forms of political action. The answer to this question provided empirical support for this theoretical conjecture.

The second research question asked: *Are people in the U.S. who engage in political consumerism more likely to engage in other forms of political participation?* I found that political consumers are significantly more likely than non-political consumers to engage in all forms of political participation and civic engagement, including voting; attending a political meeting or rally; displaying a political message; volunteering for a political cause; volunteering for a non-political cause; solving a neighborhood problem; contacting a public official; donating money; and signing petitions. I also examined whether participation in these activities varies across dualcotters, boycotters, buycotters, and nocotters. I found that dualcotters—people who engage in both boycotts and buycotts—participate in politics more regularly than other groups, followed by boycotters, buycotters, and nocotters. With few exceptions, such as volunteering for a political cause and signing petitions, there were no significant differences between boycotters and buycotters.

Collectively, these findings point to need for researchers to combine traditional theories of participation with those associated with the transformational school of thought in order to understand contemporary political participation. These findings also speak to a larger debate in the political science literature about the extent to which people participate in politics. Since the 1970s, political scientists and pundits alike have lamented a decline in the frequency with which citizens engage in conventional participation and civic engagement. More recently, the engaged paradigm has argued that people may be less likely to engage in conventional participation, but they are active in unconventional and direct forms of participation. In large part, these two schools of thought have talked past each other, and neither has acknowledged the resurgence of conventional participation that began in the 1990s. This paper represents an effort to bridge that gap, and it suggests the importance of incorporating theories of value change, norm change, and

risk society into traditional models of political participation in order to understand contemporary forms of political participation like political consumerism.

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Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Education	3.14	1.45	1	6
Income	7.06	3.61	1	14
Political interst	2.21	0.94	0	3
Internal efficacy	1.40	1.16	0	4
External efficacy	1.95	1.22	0	4
Partisan strength	1.91	1.11	0	3
Postmaterialism	1.17	0.64	0	2
Duty-based citizenship	-0.03	0.72	-3.35	1.02
Engaged citizenship	-0.14	0.78	-3.60	1.05
Risk aversion	12.10	5.16	0	20
Political trust	6.07	3.61	0	18
Age	46.16	15.88	18	90
Gender	0.49	0.50	0	1

Notes: Data are weighted to reflect general population parameters.

	Engaged	Dutiful
Being active in politics	0.72	0.16
Form own opinion	0.65	0.07
Vote in elections	0.64	0.38
Help people who are worse off	0.57	0.03
Serve in the military	0.16	0.68
Report a crime	0.25	0.69
Always obey laws and regulations	-0.02	0.84
Eigenvalue	2.48	1.12
% Variance	35.42%	15.95%

Extraction method: principal components analysis. Rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization. Primary loading of variable is indicated by boldface type. N=2157.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Political Consumerism			
	Coef.	SE	<i>p</i>
Education	0.31 ***	0.04	0.000
Income	0.06 ***	0.02	0.001
Political interest	0.54 ***	0.08	0.000
Internal efficacy	-0.02	0.06	0.745
External efficacy	0.10 *	0.05	0.041
Partisan strength	-0.14 *	0.05	0.011
Postmaterialism	0.57 ***	0.10	0.000
Duty-based citizenship	-0.31 ***	0.10	0.001
Engaged citizenship	0.46 ***	0.10	0.000
Risk aversion	0.05 ***	0.01	0.000
Political trust	-0.06 **	0.02	0.002
Age	-0.01 **	0.00	0.002
Gender	-0.21 †	0.12	0.086
Constant	-2.84	0.36	0.000
N	1802		
LR chi-square (12)	490.45 ***		
Pseudo r-square	0.20		

Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients. All data are weighted to reflect general population parameters. Significance levels: † $p < .10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 4. Effects of Changes in Predictors on the Predicted Probability of Engaging in Political Consumerism

	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Education	0.33 (0.02)	0.70 (0.03)	0.37
Income	0.40 (0.03)	0.58 (0.03)	0.18
Political interest	0.22 (0.03)	0.59 (0.02)	0.37
External efficacy	0.44 (0.03)	0.54 (0.03)	0.10
Partisan strength	0.55 (0.03)	0.45 (0.02)	-0.10
Postmaterialism	0.33 (0.03)	0.60 (0.02)	0.28
Duty-based norms	0.73 (0.07)	0.41 (0.03)	-0.31
Engaged norms	0.17 (0.05)	0.62 (0.03)	0.45
Risk aversion	0.33 (0.03)	0.59 (0.02)	0.26
Political trust	0.57 (0.03)	0.32 (0.05)	-0.25
Age	0.57 (0.03)	0.36 (0.04)	-0.22

Note: Data are weighted to reflect general population parameters. Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 5. Participation in Voting, Campaign Activity, Civic Engagement, and Individualized Activism by Non-Political Consumers and Political Consumers

	Non-Political Consumers (N=1155)	Political Consumers (N=1045)	
	Mean	Mean	Test Statistics
Voting			
Vote	2.21 (0.04)	2.69 (0.02)	$F(1, 2194) = 131.13$ ***
Campaign Activity			
Attend a political meeting or rally	0.23 (0.03)	0.69 (0.03)	$F(1, 2195) = 130.64$ ***
Display political message	0.32 (0.03)	0.96 (0.04)	$F(1, 2197) = 167.88$ ***
Volunteer for political cause	0.21 (0.03)	0.57 (0.03)	$F(1, 2191) = 84.03$ ***
Civic Engagement			
Volunteer for non-political cause	0.47 (0.04)	1.15 (0.04)	$F(1, 2190) = 137.15$ ***
Solve neighborhood problem	0.48 (0.04)	1.01 (0.04)	$F(1, 2193) = 104.51$ ***
Individualized Activism			
Contact public official	0.64 (0.04)	1.76 (0.04)	$F(1, 2191) = 385.92$ ***
Donate money	0.46 (0.04)	1.29 (0.04)	$F(1, 2194) = 262.38$ ***
Sign a petition	0.80 (0.05)	1.91 (0.04)	$F(1, 2194) = 369.10$ ***

Notes: Cell entries are means with standard errors in parentheses. All data are weighted to reflect general population parameters. Significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 6. Participation in Civic and Political Activities by Nocotters, Boycotters, Buycotters, and Dualcotters

	Nocotter	Boycotters	Buycotters	Dualcotters	
	(n=1155)	(n=256)	(n=188)	(n=601)	Test statistics
Voting					
Vote	2.21 _a	2.59 _a	2.58 _a	2.77 _b	$F(3,2192) = 50.07^{***}$
	(1.15)	(0.89)	(0.91)	(0.69)	
Campaign Activity					
Attend meeting	0.23 _a	0.58 _b	0.44 _b	0.82 _c	$F(3,2193) = 53.67^{***}$
	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.04)	
Display message	0.32 _a	0.74 _b	0.60 _b	1.16 _c	$F(3,2195) = 72.56^{***}$
	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.05)	
Volunteer: political	0.47 _a	0.96 _b	0.84 _{ab}	1.32 _c	$F(3,2189) = 38.97^{***}$
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	
Civic Engagement					
Volunteer: non-political	0.21 _a	0.43 _b	0.33 _b	0.71 _c	$F(3,2188) = 54.39^{***}$
	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.05)	
Solve problem	0.49 _a	0.86 _b	0.81 _b	1.14 _c	$F(3,2191) = 40.34^{***}$
	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.05)	
Individualized Activism					
Contact official	0.64 _a	1.60 _c	1.20 _b	2.01 _d	$F(3,2189) = 152.23^{***}$
	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.05)	
Donate money	0.45 _a	0.99 _b	0.97 _b	1.51 _c	$F(3,2192) = 106.02^{***}$
	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.05)	
Sign a petition	0.80 _a	1.68 _c	1.42 _b	2.17 _d	$F(3,2192) = 145.00^{***}$
	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.05)	

Notes: Cell entries are means with standard deviations in parentheses. Means having the same subscript are not statistically different at 0.05 using a Bonferroni familywise comparison. All statistics were weighted. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.