

DOLLARS AND SOCIAL CHANGE:
POLITICAL CONSUMERISM'S CHALLENGE TO CITIZENSHIP AND
COLLECTIVE ACTION

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Dollars and Social Change: Political Consumerism's Challenge to Citizenship and

Collective Action

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Over the past three decades, the market has come to take an increasingly central role in public, as well as private, life. This shift has in many ways impacted political participation, with citizens turning to the market to address serious political issues in greater numbers and intensity than the past. While political citizenship remains a relevant aspect of public life, market-based consumer citizenship, of which political consumerism is representative, signals the diffusion of citizenship into hitherto private arenas. Using political consumerism, consumer activists organize collectively, subverting institutions of the market to effect social change. The questions engendered by a more market-based form of citizenship and political engagement, as well as collective action responses to it, challenge understandings of social movements and present opportunities for advancements in theory. While scholars have begun to more seriously explore political consumerism and its implications, it remains undertheorized. This thesis provides a conceptual framework with which scholars can better understand political consumerism, and how it relates to central concepts of social science.

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1

Introduction

In the summer of 2014, a company that develops mobile applications, Spend Consciously, released a new application called “BuyPartisan.” It allows consumers to scan products in stores and find out how company executives, Board of Directors, and employees spend on political campaigns. The company’s website poses the question, “Wouldn't it be great if you could spend how you believed?” (Spend Consciously, Undated). BuyPartisan is not the first application of its kind. “Buycott” and “2nd Vote” also challenge consumers to put their money where their political beliefs are. Western political and consumer discourse has become inundated with calls to “vote with your dollars.” The popular and Academy Award nominated 2008 documentary, Food Inc., which outlines the oligopolistic food industry in the United States and its impacts on opportunity and safety in food production, concludes with calls for consumers to cast their dollar votes for organic food. Private companies have also spread the message that consumption can be used to promote social change. For instance, Whole Foods Market, whose products are marketed primarily to health and socially conscious consumers, frequently suggest that shopping at their stores will benefit society at large. Their website states, “At Whole Foods Market®, ‘healthy’ means a whole lot more. It goes beyond good for you, to also encompass the greater good... We offer a place for you to shop where value is inseparable from values” (Whole Foods Market, Undated).

How do these mobile applications, messages, and practices, those of consuming politically, fit into understandings of political participation, citizenship, activism, and social movements? What does their cultural relevance imply for who participates politically and what it means to act collectively towards social change? What exactly constitutes “political” consumerism? This thesis addresses these questions, arguing that these forms of consumption must be understood as political, and that this understanding challenges how citizenship and collective action are perceived.

Repertoires of political participation are always evolving. Over the past three decades, the market has come to take an increasingly central role in public, as well as private, life. This shift has in many ways impacted political participation, with citizens turning to the market to address serious political issues in greater numbers and intensity than the past. While political citizenship remains a relevant aspect of public life, market-based consumer citizenship, of which political consumerism is representative, signals the diffusion of citizenship into hitherto private arenas. Using political consumerism, consumer activists organize collectively, subverting institutions of the market to effect social change. The questions engendered by a more market-based form of citizenship and political engagement, as well as collective action responses to it, such as those explored in this thesis, challenge understandings of social movements and present opportunities for advancements in social movement theory.

However, while scholars have begun to more seriously explore political consumerism and its implications, it remains undertheorized. This oversight is particularly pronounced in social movement studies, a field that has much to gain through insights from an examination of political consumerism. Where market-oriented action is

discussed in this literature, it is often done only insofar as to acknowledge its existence, explore its impact, or the conditions under which it makes an impact. A thorough examination of its implications for participation and what constitutes collective action, however, have yet to be adequately addressed.

This thesis primarily explores politically-motivated consumption, targeting private businesses or other market entities. It is important to note that I only peripherally examine the labor movement's political consumerist activity. Soule (2009) makes the distinction between tactics of insiders, such as employees and shareholders, and outsiders, such as consumers, targeting companies. This thesis focuses primarily on the latter, as it tends to be less thoroughly studied and increasingly relevant when compared to labor action, such as strikes and collective bargaining by a targeted company's employees.

In this thesis, I argue that political consumerism is a collective form of participation, representative of a particular type of citizenship, in which consumption can be employed as a political practice. It exemplifies the diffusion of citizenship into spaces beyond the state, and is viewed by many as a form of democratic participation in the market, though this characterization is not without fault. Political consumerism, while thought of as a democratic tool for voicing interests and opinions, is deeply inequitable in access and practice. I argue that political consumerism is highly exclusive, with access limited to only those consumers with particular socioeconomic and other characteristics. Lastly, the practice must also be considered fundamentally collective, despite understandings of it (Micheletti 2003) as an "individualized" form of participation.

Treatment of it as collective opens opportunities to reevaluate concepts of collective action.

What is Political Consumerism?

Political consumerism can be understood as the deliberate and collective leveraging of purchasing power to catalyze, facilitate, counteract, or otherwise influence change in the policies, practices, or existence of businesses, multinational corporations (MNCs), markets, and other market actors. Consumers act in concert with others to use purchase as a means to effect social change. Political consumerism commonly takes two forms: the boycott and the “buycott.” A boycott is the collective act of deliberately refraining from consumption or purchase of a particular product or set of products on the basis of ideological or political beliefs. A buycott, its inverse, is the collective and intentional support of particular products, firms, or industries through consumption, on the basis of ideological or political beliefs.

Despite their reputation as novel forms of political participation made popular only in recent years, these practices are not new. Indeed, consumption has often been closely linked to matters of politics for centuries. As is examined in greater length in the following chapter, boycotts and buycotts have been employed in countless social justice, revolutionary, and anti-colonial struggles. However, political consumerism today is practiced differently than it was a century ago. In its current form, it is widespread, promoted primarily by private rather than government forces, globally-focused, and often closely linked to self, in addition to public, interest.

Political consumerism must also be distinguished from ethical consumerism. Though the two terms are often thought of as synonymous, they must be treated as defining two related but different practices. Ethical consumerism is simply consumption motivated by one's ethical beliefs. Political consumerism on the other hand is consumption, motivated by political beliefs, and intended to effect social change. This distinction is important in understanding how political consumerism fits into citizenship and collective action, and is addressed at greater length in chapters 4 and 5.

The Value of Studying Political Consumerism

Many scholars have noted the supposed "rise" of political consumerism (Micheletti 2003; Davis & Zald 2005; Johnston 2008; Stolle et al 2005; Simon 2011; De Bakker et al 2013; Ferrer-Fons & Fraile 2013; Lekakis 2013A). It is viewed as a novel form of political participation, a new way for disempowered citizens to voice political concerns through purchasing power. This assumption is only true to a limited extent. Consumption and politics have been intertwined for many years. Political consumerism is neither new nor is it universal. It is in fact heavily concentrated in developed countries and regions. However, it has grown significantly in recent years. By nearly all measures, these practices, while not new, have been increasing. This growth has to a great extent outpaced the scholarly work on it. While popular media and certainly private companies have certainly taken notice, the attention devoted to political consumerism in political science literature, particularly in social movement studies, is still dwarfed by that paid to matters of state. The increasing relevance of political consumerism makes it a deserving topic of in-depth study.

In addition to its relevance to contemporary politics, political consumerism is rich with opportunities to expand and rework understandings of basic concepts in the disciplines of social science. The practice of political consumerism has the potential to challenge concepts as foundational to political science as citizenship. As is explored in great depth in Chapter 4, political consumerism is emblematic of a “consumer citizenship,” in which matters of rights and civic obligations are tied to consumption. Additionally, the use of consumption, an activity traditionally considered “private,” in activism undermines understandings of collective action and what “collective” truly means. Lastly, the study of political consumerism can provide insights into participation, and how certain modes of participation are more widely accessible than others.

Lastly, political consumerism’s impacts are significant. There are two means by which political consumerism can affect the companies or industries they target: 1) by imposing costs through disruption; and 2) by shaping public perception (King 2008). King explains that both of these effects can be powerful, but the latter is particularly effective, especially if amplified by media and other organizations. Scholarship on the effects of movements employing consumption-based tools have provided countless other examples of these impacts. Balsiger’s (2010) study of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) in Switzerland offers one such example. He finds numerous successes pressuring companies to support fair labor practices. Harrison and Scorse (2010) find that anti-sweatshop action, targeting companies in Indonesia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was correlated with significant relative increases of wages, of 10-20%. King and Soule (2007) find that action against corporations reported on in the New York Times between 1962 and 1990 correlated with a 0.4-1.0% decline in stock price. These are just a few of

many examples of the impacts that consumption-based political action has had on companies and everyday lives of workers.

Subsequent Chapters

This thesis explores political consumerism in great depth, and the multitude of questions it raises for political theory. In the next chapter, I provide an overview of the history of political consumerism. Despite the treatment of political consumerism as a novel form of political participation, it in fact has a long and complex history. Consumption has been used as a political tool for centuries, but has evolved over time. In the chapter, I outline the ways in which political consumerism today looks different than it did even fifty years ago. These changes are in large part linked to the dominance of neoliberalism and spread of economic globalization over the past several decades, processes which are more thoroughly examined in the chapter.

In Chapter 3, I situate the study of political consumerism in several bodies of literature. The chapter delves into marketing, social movement, and citizenship literatures. All three of these bodies offer useful insights into political consumerism and its larger implications. However, they all also neglect certain aspects of consumption and its political uses. In particular, the chapter critiques social movement literature for a bias for movement action that targets the state and state actors and its relative neglect of market-based tools of contention. This critique is lodged in part because social movement literature has much to gain from the study of political consumerism. Additionally, this literature has a host of useful concepts and theory that can be applied to the study of political consumerism to better understand its practice.

Chapter 4 explores further the relationship between consumption and citizenship. In it, I examine how citizenship has evolved and how political consumerism fits in. I argue that it is representative of a form of consumer citizenship, one of numerous types of citizenship that exist currently. This analysis is embedded in an understanding of the late 20th and early 21st centuries bringing significant changes to governance, political power, and the organization of civic life. In this chapter, I also further distinguish between ethical and political consumerism, and their respective roles in consumer citizenship.

Although it is often considered an individualized form of political expression, I argue in Chapter 5 that political consumerism must be considered a collective practice. One can observe a host of collective influences on political consumerism. From political and economic opportunity structures to social capital to religion, the practice is far from a wholly individual, autonomous practice, as it is characterized by numerous theorists. Additionally, political consumerism is often deeply intertwined with social movements, understood to be inherently collective. Movements provide templates and tools that enable consumers to “vote” through consumption. Lastly, the practice of political consumerism must also be understood as necessarily collective in that what makes it *political* is that it is consumption with a broader message, beyond market elements like cost and quality. In order for such a message to be articulated and projected, to go beyond the thoughts of an individual, it must be collective. This analysis holds implications for how collective action is conceptualized and how ostensibly private practices, such as consumption, are used by social movements.

Chapter 6 explores the various ways in which political consumerism has offered a means of participation for some, but, more often, excluded others. I detail the importance

of inclusion in political action forms, arguing that it provides increased information, legitimacy, and better responsiveness to public needs. I then document how political consumerism has been useful for certain excluded groups such as some youth and women. However, it is also inaccessible to many others, based on education level, geography, social class, and income. Political consumerism is a notably exclusionary form of political participation, and must be considered carefully by those who wish to advocate for it.

The topics explored in this thesis do not represent an exhaustive list of the potentially fruitful questions regarding political consumerism. For instance, scholars can explore the conditions under which political consumerism is adopted as a tool of contention, how effective it is drawing concessions from organizations of varying sizes, or how emotions are tied to the practice. This thesis is intended to contribute to a scholarly conversation on the politics of consumption, and encourage further research on the topic. The observations and analyses put forth are a starting place for more in-depth empirical research, and pave the way for related theoretical questions.

2

The History of Consumption as Politics

In much scholarship and journalistic writing on political consumerism, the phenomenon is considered to be novel -- a new way for politically disenchanted citizens to voice their concerns. However, consumption's ties to politics and collective action are far from new. Indeed, the use of the market and purchasing power has been interwoven with politics and activism for centuries. From the Boston Tea Party to the Indian independence movement to food strikes by 20th century Western housewives, consumption (or the absence of it) has often been leveraged as a tool to effect social change. It has been used in activism, strikes, and revolutionary movements.

Although purchasing power has been leveraged for political purposes for centuries, the form that it has taken has transformed and evolved. The political consumerism of the 18th century looks different than it does today. Today's variant has been shaped in large part by the related forces of globalization and neoliberalism, giving it its global character and its emphasis on self-interest. In this chapter, I provide an overall history of consumption in politics, boycotts and buycotts specifically, consumption's relationship with citizenship, and how contemporary political consumerism was formed. I then offer insights into the growth in globalization and neoliberalism, and their impact on political participation and consumerism.

The Evolution of Consumer Action

Gabriel and Lang separate the history of consumer activism, or what they call “active consumerism,” into four waves that shaped how consumption was conceptualized (Gabriel & Lang 2005, 38). The first phase involved the use of worker cooperatives in 19th century northwestern England, where industrialization was in full swing, to combat poor quality, high priced food. Placing cooperation rather than self-interest at the heart of both production and consumption, the cooperative movement sought to disrupt local monopolies and challenge capital’s control over production. Despite its success in growing both in England and globally, the movement eventually became diluted, leading to the models of cooperatives seen today.

Emerging in the early 20th century, the second wave is often thought of as the “value for money” phase (Gabriel & Lang 2005, 44; Johnston 2008, 6). Bolstered in many ways by Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, which exposed the jarringly unsanitary conditions of Chicago meat-packing plants, activists in this wave sought to empower consumers through information and greater influence in the market. Unlike in the first wave, Johnston (2008) points out, activists during this time mobilized around a distinctly consumer identity. There are numerous signs of the value for money phase’s legacy today, most notably in the form of consumer reports (Gabriel & Lang 2005).

The third wave took shape in the 1960s United States, and was heavily influenced by the work of activist and movement figurehead, Ralph Nader. Just as Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* was central to the second wave of consumer activism, Nader’s (1965) *Unsafe at Any Speed* shaped, to a great extent, the philosophy of the third wave. In it, he exposed the car industry’s profit-maximizing corner-cutting with safety, bringing consumer activism beyond a consumer identity, and rather encouraging consumers to also be

engaged as citizens. To break out of a rigged system, favoring production over consumption, Nader argued, necessitated more than purchase, but an active citizenship that challenged the state to regulate the activities of business.

The fourth and current wave is that of “alternative consumption.” This consumer activism has favored identity, values, and ethics over class-based politics, which was more influential in preceding waves. The philosophy central to alternative consumption is that it is acceptable to consume, but it should be done responsibly and consciously. The emergence of the alternative consumption wave was the result of a host of political, economic, and social factors, as is explored in great detail below.

The History of the Buy/Boycott

Arguably the most prevalent tactic of consumer activists, both today and throughout modern history, has been the boycott. The boycott, or “negative consumption” (the deliberate absence of consumption) has been seen in some form for centuries. As Simon states, “Consumers started boycotting the moment they started buying” (Simon 2011, 151). However, the term “boycott” has its roots in 19th century western Ireland, in which businessmen, farm laborers, and other citizens attempted to ostracize land agent Charles Boycott for his unilateral decision to hike rents and for low wages for local peasants. Shortly thereafter, the name “Boycott” came to be used as a verb and its use spread globally (Micheletti 2003; Johnston 2008; Simon 2011).

There are numerous other instances of influential boycotts in world history. The American Revolution grew out of the boycott of British goods. This same strategy was replicated by Mahatma Gandhi centuries later in colonial India. Among other prominent

examples in the 20th century include the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the United Farm Workers union boycott of grape growers, anti-apartheid boycott organized against the South African products, the anti-sweatshop campaigns organized against Nike shoes, and the boycott of Nestlé products for the company's aggressive and dangerous marketing of baby formula in underdeveloped countries. There have also been boycotts organized on the political right, often against companies thought to support same sex marriage and other gay rights issues (Simon 2011, 153).

Despite notions that such practices are relatively new or novel, boycotts too have been organized for many years (Balsiger 2013). One such example is the White Label campaign of the early 20th century, which encouraged women to only purchase certified sweatshop-free underwear (Stolle et al 2005). In the 1930s, the League of Women Shoppers and other groups organized a campaign to boycott Japanese silk and boycott alternative fabrics, growing out of a sympathy for the Chinese in its conflict with Japan (Glickman 2005). Additionally, as early as the 1870s, labor unions started adopting consumption-based tactics, including the use of "union labels" to encourage boycotting of union-made products. Consumption has frequently been leveraged as a political and economic tool by the labor movement (Frank 2003).

Consumption and Citizenship

Indeed, the roles of consumer and citizen have often been connected. As Cohen states, "Rather than isolated ideal types, citizen and consumer were ever-shifting categories that sometimes overlapped, often were in tension, but always reflected the permeability of political and economic spheres" (Cohen 2003, 8). Cohen goes on to track

the history of the overlap between these two roles in the 20th century United States. During the Great Depression, for instance, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt began to advocate for placing consumers, rather than producers, at the center of economic and political life. The citizen consumer, Cohen argues, emerged, as advocacy on behalf of consumers and the working class became more commonplace. In line with what Gabriel and Lang (2005) refer to as the second wave of consumer activism, the “value for money” stage, citizens used information about consumer products during this time to advocate for working class interests.

During World War II, consumers were encouraged to save or invest in war bonds to make their impact on the war effort. In the immediate aftermath of the war, mass consumption was promoted as a civic responsibility, through which “purchaser consumers” could stimulate the economy and create jobs. Purchasing power was seen as a means of exercising political or social power. In the latter half of the 20th century, mass consumption as a civic virtue gave way to what Cohen calls the “consumerization of the republic” (Cohen 2003, 344). Citizens began to view the market and mass consumption as the best means with which to deliver the promises of democracy. The perception of consumption as voting linked even more closely the roles of citizen and consumer.

How Consumer Activism Has Changed

Many have argued that political consumerism has been on the rise in recent decades (Micheletti 2003; Davis & Zald 2005; Johnston 2008; Stolle et al 2005; Simon 2011; de Bakker et al 2013; Ferrer-Fons & Fraile 2013; Lekakis 2013A), and consequently, so have companies’ attention to and marketing around political

consumerism (Carrigan & Attalla 2001; King 2008; King & Pearce 2010; Jaffee 2012).

There are indications that this growth is indeed real, at least to some extent. As Balsiger (2013) points out, much of the supposed growth in political consumerism is related more to the improvement of tools for measuring (surveying in particular), than the explosion of growth that scholarly advocates of political consumerism often assume. Nonetheless, as Balsiger acknowledges, on top of the imagined growth attributable to more sophisticated systems for measuring it, political consumerism has seen considerable real growth.

Fair trade products have seen some of the most noticeable growth. It is thus more likely that the purchase of fair trade products is truly linked to political consumerism, rather than shifting consumer preferences toward healthy foods or better quality apparel. The global fair trade movement has grown in size and prominence since its formation a half-century ago. Over that time, sales in certified fair trade products have increased exponentially, with estimates of certified and unofficial fair trade products surging to over \$7 billion in 2012. Sales in the United Kingdom alone topped \$2 billion in 2011, up from \$160 million just eight years prior (Doherty et al 2013).

This phenomenon is perhaps most clearly evidenced by sales of fair trade coffee. Large companies like Starbucks and Nestlé began to take note of a market for fair trade, aggressively pursuing certification and marketing of their products as such. In 2000, approximately 1% of Starbucks coffee was certified. By 2009, the number had grown ten-fold to over 10%, with the stated goal of achieving full certification. Over this time, Starbucks also grew from 2,300 to 11,000 stores in United States, making this growth even more profound (Jaffee 2012). Some critics argue that the expansion of fair trade products to new large suppliers like Starbucks, among many others, have diluted the

standards of fair trade (Raynolds & Long 2007; Bacon 2010; Jaffee 2012; Doherty et al 2013). Regardless of the impacts of this increase, however, it is nonetheless facilitated by increasing levels of political consumption. Additionally, this growth is unlikely to be attributable to perceived product quality; whereas increased sales in other products that are boycotted by political consumers, such as certified organic or vegan and other alternative foods, can be argued to be tied to refined taste and a notion of higher quality.

In addition to increases in the practice of political consumerism, there are a number of other characteristics that distinguish contemporary political consumerism from variants of the past. As stated above, consumption has often been linked to politics and social issues. This practice is not new. It has, however, undergone noticeable changes, with the political consumerism today being one variant, albeit with increases in participation and a greater role in public life than many variants of the past.

First, political consumerism today occupies a unique position in that, unlike many consumption-based campaigns of the past, it is simultaneously widespread and promoted by private forces. Unlike the use of union labels or cooperatives of the past, political consumerism today is solidly in the mainstream. As fair trade activists and scholars (Jaffee 2012; Lekakis 2013A) are quick to point out and many times criticize, labeling schemes like fair trade or organic have gone through a process of “mainstreaming.” As these products are increasingly offered in many supermarkets, retail stores, and coffee shops throughout the Global North, both supply and demand of them has grown significantly. However, political consumerism today is also simultaneously promoted primarily by private forces like civil society organizations, corporations, and individuals, rather than government representatives, such as the federal government of the United

States promoting consumption after World War II. In cases like the latter, consumption as politics was certainly widespread and mainstream. However, it was articulated and promoted in large part by state agents. Today, it is promoted by social movement organizations (SMOs), companies' marketing, and individuals. This combination of characteristics has implications for how social movements and collective action are viewed. The simultaneously broad-based and private sphere driven nature of political consumerism today suggests the need to reevaluate understandings of these concepts so as to accommodate the reality of political participation through consumption.

Secondly, today's variant of political consumerism is markedly more global in focus than its predecessors. Whereas consumption-based participation in the past often concerned domestic issues or targeting an individual state, as in the case of Indian boycotts of British products in the early 20th century, political consumerism today is generally outwardly facing. This shift is in part a function of the issues being addressed. For instance, many consumption-based campaigns relate to the rights of workers and small-scale producers around the globe, such as those organized by the fair trade and anti-sweatshop movements. Other campaigns, like those pushing consumers to "shop green" or "buy organic," seek to protect the planet in its entirety. As will be explored in more detail below, this global orientation is in some ways unsurprising given globalization and the spread of MNCs.

Lastly, another characteristic of today's political consumerism is its heavier emphasis on self-interest -- doing good for oneself while also doing good for the world. While it no doubt maintains a public-spirited focus, discourse surrounding political consumerism also emphasizes the benefits to oneself in shopping ethically. Johnston

(2008) addresses the apparent contradiction between the two roles of the self-interested consumer and civic-minded citizen in her discourse analysis and case study of Whole Foods Market. In it, she points out the dual messages promoted by the company, representing the somewhat contradictory nature of the “citizen-consumer.” Whole Foods Markets promotes itself as an ethical protector of the environment and workers’ rights. However, it simultaneously emphasizes consumer choice in its diversity of “real food” with “amazing flavors.” There exists a tension in today’s political consumerism, between ethical and political convictions on the one hand, and self-interest and consumer choice on the other. Both considerations are embraced in mainstream discourse on political consumerism, especially in the marketing materials of MNCs promoting themselves as ethical, and who to a great extent shape this discourse. This tension raises questions about social movements and how self-interested action may fit in. Additionally, the central emphasis on self-interest also has implications for who participates in political consumerism. For whom is self-interest aligned with shopping at Whole Foods, and for whom is it not?

Just as previous waves of consumer-based action were influenced by political factors like struggles for independence, macroeconomic factors like industrialization or the Great Depression, or factors related international affairs like World War II, contemporary political consumerism is the product of a confluence of historical forces. Most heavily influential have been the forces of globalization and neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism, Globalization, and their Impact on Political Participation

Much of the prevalence of political consumerism, as well as the form it has currently taken, is attributable to rise of neoliberalism and accelerating globalization over the past 30 years. As noted above, political consumerism today is more global, dominated by private forces, and oriented around self-interest than variants of the past. These characteristics can all be seen as symptomatic of global capitalism in the age of neoliberalism, which shares these attributes. Additionally, political consumerism is by nature more in line with neoliberal values than other forms of contentious, political action. Purchasing power is a means of influencing the market, a central precept of neoliberalism, which emphasizes the efficient functioning of supply and demand in global capitalism. The history of neoliberalism is thus an important element in the story of political consumerism.

Neoliberalism can be defined as an economic ideology, which stresses that human well-being and prosperity is best achieved, “by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005, 2). There are a number of key assumptions of neoliberalism, as outlined by McNevin (2011). First, the market, not the state, is the most efficient way to allocate resources. The state should have minimal involvement in matters of the market. Second, growth should be prioritized over equity, as growth will ultimately provide the greatest prosperity. Lastly, the individual is more centrally emphasized than the collective.

As Keynesian economics began to fall out of favor in the early 1970s in Western liberal democracies, and unemployment and inflation crawled upwards, neoliberalism was seen as a preferable alternative. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, and the

economic policy for which they advocated, came to shift economic and government policy in much of the globe -- whether through choice in the Global North or coercion in the Global South (McNevin 2011, 42-46).¹ Even on the other side of the globe, Deng Xiaoping took steps to liberalize the “communist” economy of China in the late 1970s (Harvey 2005). Throughout much of the world, state-run industries and services were privatized and the market was deregulated. Neoliberalism, in a variety of forms, had come to dominate economic and government policy, and continues to do so (McNevin 2011).

What has made the current period of trade liberalization, through neoliberalism, particularly significant and lasting is its institutionalization. There have certainly been periods of trade liberalization in the past. However, neoliberalism has become embedded in international institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization. This institutionalization has subsequently led to the prioritization of markets over citizens by states (Kütting 2004, 13-14).

The above outline of principles of neoliberalism is not meant to suggest that these values are embraced by contemporary political consumers. In fact, many political consumers would suggest that their motivation stems from a perceived failure of the market in delivering prosperity and fair allocation of resources to the world’s disadvantaged populations. Additionally, many political consumers would cite the failure of the market to self-regulate in advocating for labeling and certification schemes like

¹ See the many writings regarding the Washington Consensus, on the use of the International Monetary Fund and other international organizations to enforce a new orthodoxy of neoliberalism. In particular, see Williamson (1990) for its original, written articulation, or the criticism of the Washington Consensus offered by Stiglitz (1998; 2005; 2008).

organic and fair trade. Nonetheless, the rise of neoliberalism plays an important role in both the growth of political consumerism as a form of participation, and the contemporary variant of it.

Closely tied to the spread of neoliberalism, whose execution has been undeniably global in focus, is globalization. Globalization, defined by Davis and Zald as “the increasing cross-border flow of capital, goods, and labor” (Davis & Zald 2005, 337), is certainly not a new phenomenon. Like trade liberalization, there have been numerous periods of increased globalization throughout history. However, it has nonetheless seen considerable growth in recent years (Kütting 2004). Measured in strictly economic terms, the acceleration of globalization is considerable. The past 30 years have seen increased global trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), and dramatic growth in financial flows. For instance, in 2012, companies based in the United States invested nearly \$330 billion in FDI, up from \$210 billion annually in the mid-2000s (UNCTAD World Investment Report 2013). Globally, FDI is estimated to have grown over twenty-fold between 1980 and 2012, from \$51.6 billion to \$1.7 trillion, adjusted for inflation (Léonard et al 2014).

The Impacts of Neoliberalism and Globalization on Political Participation

The rise of neoliberalism and acceleration of globalization are perhaps best exemplified by the spread of MNCs. Over this period, MNCs have become ubiquitous and steadily grown in power, having done extraordinarily well in the context of economic globalization (Kütting 2004). As a result, their position in society has shifted, and by extension, social movements and other forms of participation targeting MNCs have also grown, as is explored below. MNCs wield great economic power as global trade

increases. They have come to employ a significant numbers of workers. While specific statistics on employment by MNCs vary widely, because of the many factors that must be considered to arrive at such a number, estimates are placed in the range of over 100 million direct employees (Marginson & Meardi 2009). The size of MNCs has also grown remarkably. Soule (2009) notes that from 1998 to 2000, there were over \$4 trillion in mergers, causing the exponential growth of MNCs. Soule goes on to note that the value of these mergers was greater than the past 30 years combined. The tremendous economic power held by large MNCs makes them targets to activists. In fact, King (2008) finds that the larger the corporation, the more likely a social movement is to target it, regardless of its probability of success.

However, in addition to economic power, MNCs are also seen as centers of political power. As Davis and Zald (2005) point out, corporations are more than employers or producers of goods and services. As they have grown, they have come to increasingly be treated as political entities, or even their own polities. Corporations craft regulations, provide services, have their own policies, and are forced to respond to the voices of their “citizens.” They have become increasingly similar to states, blurring the lines between private and public. As MNCs exercise greater influence on individuals’ lives, the market has become an arena of politics.

In response to the growing political role played by MNCs, collective action has come to challenge them in significant ways, as the arena of contestation has spread considerably to the market. As Simon states, “Increasingly, conversations about the social good are not going on at candidate forums or at political rallies or on Sunday morning talk shows, they are taking place at the point of purchase” (Simon 2011, 150). The

repositioning of MNCs in the world of politics has contributed to the rise of political consumerism and other market-oriented social action, both in light of corporations' ever-growing role as a political force and the changing role of global citizens. The growing political presence of MNCs has affected political participation in a number of ways. Corporations interact with more than economic agents, but also non-market agents, and affect how societies are governed.

Beyond their oft-referenced influence on traditional politics via financing political campaigns and lobbying of legislators in democratic states, MNCs can also directly influence official state policy of democratic and nondemocratic states alike through their immense power and wealth (Simon 2011). Corporations have positioned themselves to play a significant role in shaping politics and political sentiments directly, with many corporations and corporate executives tying themselves to particular political and social causes (de Bakker 2013). For instance, despite their frequent refusal to admit to being anything as politically neutral, companies like Starbucks and Whole Foods regularly tout their "advocacy" for fair trade and environmental sustainability (Johnston 2008; Simon 2011).

Corporations can themselves directly fuel "grassroots" (sometimes, pejoratively, "astroturf") activism. Walker (2009) documents the rise of grassroots lobbying campaigns performed on behalf of corporations, often by trade associations, favoring deregulation or opposing regulation of the associated industry. Stauber and Rampton (1995) point to a triad of tools employed by corporations in the face of major issue: public relations, grassroots mobilization, and lobbyists. Walker found that the former two tools rose in prominence in the latter half of the 20th century. Riding on the positive

associations with “grassroots” activism, corporations paid (and continue to pay) grassroots lobbying firms to “subsidize” political participation by providing templates for citizens to lobby on their behalf. Walker makes clear that, beyond traditional lobbying efforts, corporations have placed themselves at the center of political life. As corporations emerge as clearly political actors, they are opened up to political contention.

Root (2007) argues that the hegemony of neoliberalism ushered in a form of “market citizenship,” arguing that the social safety net of state provision has been replaced by a “market state.” While this characterization may treat this transformation as more universal and all-encompassing than reality, many responsibilities of the state have been outsourced to corporations, with the increasing use of public-private partnerships presented as the “Third Way” between markets and welfare “dependency culture” (Root 2007, 51). It is for this and other reasons that a shift in how political change is pursued is unsurprising. As markets come to more prominently play a role in the allocation of resources, they are seen as legitimate targets of collective or individual political action.

Additionally, with the spread of globalization and MNCs, there are jurisdictional issues regarding the policing of corporate behavior. As MNCs have extended their reach globally beyond state jurisdictions, states have lost to some extent the ability to effectively regulate them. Instead, MNCs “self-regulate” and have their own sets of policies, which can become the target of concerned citizens (Davis & Zald 2005). Regardless of the efficacy or strength of traditional state governance, reliance on the state is inadequate in remedying global issues, particularly those related to the market. A citizen in Great Britain, for instance, cannot rely on the British government to make a significant impact on unsafe working conditions of garment factories in Bangladesh

providing clothing for Swedish retailer H&M. However, a consumer can easily boycott H&M or sign a petition asking H&M to end relationships with contractors that endanger their workers.

International organizations like the International Labor Organization and the European Union, among others, may wield influence over such issues. However, the consumer is many steps removed from these large global government bodies, which many also perceive to be rather ineffectual globally, thus undermining their connection to individuals seeking to effect social change. It is easier to instead target corporations directly than through international organizations or trade agreements (Soule 2009). As Micheletti et al (2004) point out, many international governmental, as well as nongovernmental, organizations themselves have come to rely on the market in achieving their missions. Relatedly, while many countries were seeing deregulation of markets in the late 20th century through today, organized labor in the Global North has also lost power (Soule 2009). Historically seen as a counterweight to the interests of business, unions have seen a decline in membership and influence over policy over the past 30 years, due to a complex set of reasons, including a global economic regime that has systematically weakened them. This decline has made targeting of corporations directly through practices of political consumerism an even more appealing option.

Additionally, the relationship between citizens and consumers on the one hand, and states and corporations on the other, has shifted. Many authors have argued that the shrinking power of governments and the disembeddedness of citizens from them have contributed to the politicization of the global market (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti et al 2004; Davis & Zald 2005; Root 2007; Walker 2009; King & Pearce 2010; Simon 2011;

Lekakis 2013A; Zamwel et al 2014). Indeed, measures of traditional forms of politics, such as rates of party membership and voter turnout, have dropped considerably over the late 20th and early 21st centuries in much of the Global North, where political consumerism is most prevalent (Root 2007; Birch 2010, Konzelmann et al 2012; Blais & Rubenson 2013). As the power, effectiveness, and trust of government institutions are diminished, the targeting of the private sector becomes more appealing.

In her examination of consumption-based campaigns of the labor movement historically, Frank (2003) finds that a decline in traditional politics is often associated with an increase in such consumer action targeting corporations. This trend has in effect created a “rough democracy of buying,” it is argued, as politics is “out-sourced...from the voting booth to the supermarket” (Simon 2011, 147). Additionally, Haenfler et al find that, under conditions of unfavorable political opportunity, such as distrust of government institutions, lifestyle movements, those movements that involve embedding participation in everyday life, tend to be viewed as a “refuge” for voicing political beliefs (Haenfler et al 2012, 13). Political consumerism often does involve everyday participation, like Haenfler et al’s lifestyle movements, contrasting with the episodic practice of voting. Meanwhile, the appeal for citizens to target MNCs and the market is great. In a globalized world, MNCs emerge as powerful, influential economic and political entities. They are capable of impacting not only markets, but working conditions, gender relations, the environment, public health, and more. With states, international organizations, and unions all only having limited impacts on the practices of corporations, direct contention targeting business is seen as a meaningful way to make an impact.

This distrust of government institutions, often cited as a variable contributing to the appeal of political consumerism, is in part linked to neoliberalism's impact on the priorities of the state, in addition to its power. Not only has the way that citizens view the state been impacted by neoliberalism, so too has the way state actors view citizens. As Kütting (2004) describes, through the institutionalization of neoliberalism, states often prioritize their economies over citizens. In line with the neoliberal principle of growth over equity, it is believed that an improving economy will benefit all citizens. Other policy issues, like environmental degradation or unjust labor practices, therefore take a backseat to the market. These other issues, and activism surrounding them, thus get pushed out of traditional government-sponsored mechanisms for change.

There exist countless examples of the impact of markets and market actors on government. One can point to the "revolving door" that exists between public office, regulatory bodies, and the executive offices of large firms. There is also the influence of money from large companies and their top executives on elections, exacerbated in the United States by the controversial 2010 "Citizens United" ruling by the Supreme Court. For countries outside of the Global North, the impact of private companies can also be profound. As has been noted, competition to attract large MNCs among states can lead to shifts in government policy on taxation, environmental regulation, labor, and other standards. The impact of this reality is actually likely more profound than any shrinking power that the state faces in light of neoliberalism. As states are seen as colluding with MNCs to promote economic growth, citizens who view growth as secondary to environmental, gender, labor, and other concerns may turn away from the state as an agent of desired social change.

However, in addition to a growing distrust of and disengagement from traditional government institutions, the global market, while increasingly powerful, is seen by many as inefficient in the fair allocation of resources. It thus becomes the role of activists to insert ethics, fairness, and justice into the market. According to Karl Polanyi (1944), the Industrial Revolution disembedded production from the social and moral contexts of which it had been a part, through the growth of the self-regulating market. Jaffee (2012) argues that the fair trade movement seeks to remedy this “disembeddedness” of the market from social and moral relations. Like the social welfare state that arose in the early to mid-20th century, fair trade attempts to again re-embed economic transactions in social and moral relations (Jaffee 2012, 96). The movement poses a fundamental challenge to the conceptualization of the global market as being self-regulating or that it must be detached from social considerations. Political consumerism thus becomes an attractive means to effect change. Activists can ostensibly shape the behavior of large, powerful institutions in pursuit of a fair and ethical end that is consistent with their political beliefs.

Regarding globalization specifically, Koos (2012) studied the impact of globalization, among many other variables, on likelihood of political consumerism in approximately 20 European countries. He found that a country’s level of globalization (measured by international trade or relative increase in international trade) has an insignificant impact on likelihood of political consumerism in that country. More predictive variables include the affluence of the country, structure of the retail sector, variety of products, and levels of statism. However, where globalization can be seen to have had a significant impact is in the form that political consumerism takes today. As

noted above, contemporary political consumerism has a strong global orientation, which can be linked to increased globalization. From the perspective of the Northern consumer, who is most likely to engage in political consumerism, increasing amounts of production are happening elsewhere. Rather than a good being made at a local union shop, it may be made in Guangdong Province. This shift in production is in line with the shift from union labels to fair trade in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Additionally, globalization has raised environmental concerns. For instance, as Kütting shows, the globalizing garment and cotton industries are two of the most “socially and environmentally degrading industries in existence” (Kütting 2004, 87). The intensification of agricultural production, linked to the globalization of these industries, has led to increased pesticide use and subsequently to severe health and environmental impacts. As globalization increases concerns about sustainability and climate change, environmental issues are pushed to the fore of political consumerism. The clothing one purchases is seen as having implications for ecosystems elsewhere in the world.

Conclusion

Political consumerism has a long history. However, as it has been impacted by neoliberalism and globalization, it has seen both growth and significant change, raising a number of questions about political consumerism and how people participate politically. With the shifting political landscape engendered by neoliberalism, how does participation through political consumerism impact conceptions of citizenship? How does political consumerism fit into understandings of collective action in the context of a focus on the individual? Lastly, what does a focus on market-based solutions to social problems imply

for who can and does participate politically? These questions are explored in depth in subsequent chapters.

3

A Review of Relevant Literatures

Though the practice of political consumerism has been around for hundreds of years and despite its broader implications, studies of it are relatively new. The practice relates to a number of aspects of public life and political participation. It raises questions about collective action, has implications for marketing and business practices, and speaks to changes in citizenship and how social change is pursued. As such, there are a number of literatures that have begun to offer insights into political consumerism, some with greater attention paid than others. This thesis draws primarily from three bodies of literature that merit further examination: marketing, social movements, and citizenship.

These bodies of literature treat political consumerism, and consumption in general, with varying degrees of attention. Social movement literature lags the farthest behind, despite the use of political consumerism in social movements. These gaps present opportunities for strengthening of theory. In this chapter, I first outline marketing literature, its relationship with consumerism and ethics, and its contributions to contemporary scholarship on the subject. Next, I delve into social movement literature, its shortcomings regarding political consumerism, scholarship on social movements and markets, and the opportunities for growth in social movement theory. Lastly, I explore the evolution of writings on citizenship through the 20th century to critical examinations of the past 25 years, and on the relationship between citizenship and consumerism specifically.

Marketing Literature

Business marketing is critical to a thorough examination of political consumerism for numerous reasons. First, much of the growth in political consumerism can be tied to changes in business practices. Ideas surrounding social responsibility have grown in marketing since the mid-20th century, as companies have sought to align themselves with growing consumer activism of the period. Before this time, purchases were often thought of as an even exchange (Carrigan and Attalla 2001). This notion changed with activists like Ralph Nader suggesting that consumers were getting the short end of the deal. As companies more aggressively pursue marketing strategies that cast them as ethical or philosophically aligned with a set of political beliefs, political consumption spreads to new venues. Somebody who wants to shop fair trade no longer needs to go to the independently owned, mission-driven fair trade shop, but can rather go to the nearest Starbucks or major supermarket. This mainstreaming effect has implications for the reach of political consumerism and its appeal as a tool of contention.

Additionally, marketing can in fact also shape perceptions of responsibility for consumers. Jacobsen and Dulsrud (2007) argue that discourse on consumer activism has shifted from rights to responsibilities.¹ What these responsibilities entail is in part determined by “supply side drivers,” such as marketing. Numerous authors have shown that national context informs what products are targeted, positively or negatively, by political consumers (Kjærnes et al. 2007); this is in large part due to marketing of corporate social responsibility (CSR). As companies market their products as ethical,

¹ This transition can be seen as having occurred between Gabriel and Lang’s (2005) third and fourth waves of consumer activism. Whereas Nader’s Raiders sought to enhance the power of consumers, “alternative consumers” seek to use their power to influence suppliers.

understandings of legitimate targets of political consumerism are impacted. Holt (2012) proposes that markets often have associated “consumption ideologies.” These ideologies are shaped by the marketing of firms. Which type of produce is considered best for small-scale suppliers or automobile is considered the most environmentally friendly is heavily influenced by how companies market their products. For instance, a hybrid car may actually do more environmental damage because of its electric battery than a small, efficient sedan, running entirely on gasoline. However, the marketing of hybrids as environmentally friendly may nonetheless sway environmentally-conscious consumers.

Third, as Balsiger (2013) points out, marketing scholars tends to be more interested in the constraints on political consumerism, as well as skeptical of its rise, than political scientists. Because the intended audience of marketing literature tends to more often be business professionals, the literature emphasizes empirical evidence of the trend and its implications. Marketing scholars are tasked with assessing the size of the market for ethically sourced products. For instance, Carrigan and Attalla (2001) and Auger and Devinney (2007), writing for business and marketing publications, examine the lengths to which consumers are willing to go to align purchasing with political or ethical beliefs. Relatedly, King, a management scholar, has written extensively on the conditions under which corporations are targeted by consumer activists and their impacts (King & Soule 2007; King 2008; King & Pearce 2010). In addition to providing insight into the relevance of political consumerism, marketing literature can also speak to its limits, particularly for certain populations. Studies that consider the priorities of consumers suggest that consumer choice may not be as universal as many advocates of political consumerism in scholarship suppose.

Lastly, scholars and activists have often expressed concern about the use of marketing to co-opt political consumerist movements. Critics point to practices like “greenwashing” or mainstreaming of fair trade as diluting standards what it means to be considered an ethical product (Jaffee 2007; Jaffee 2012; Lekakis 2013A). As marketing defines to a great extent how consumers view products, it ultimately greatly influences what is considered to be a legitimate target of consumer support. Therefore, marketing literature can provide insight into how companies are promoting themselves as ethical, and what standards, if any, they apply in justifying the characterization. Additionally, these practices that dilute standards, and the co-optation of consumer movements through marketing, also speak to the need to include political consumerism in studies of social movements. Co-optation has long been considered a legitimate subject of research by social movement scholars (Gamson 1975; Selznick 1948; Trumpy 2008). However, this research is often restricted to movement co-optation by the state. By researching marketing of supposedly ethically sourced products, one can examine how social movement targets in the private sector can also co-opt movements.

Philip Kotler and the Societal Marketing Movement

Marketing literature on political consumerism can be traced back to early writings of Philip Kotler, who was a founder of the “societal marketing movement” (Carrigan & Attalla 2001, 561). The 1970s brought a number of changes to marketing scholarship. Due to a perceived difference between the ethical frameworks of marketers and citizens, college courses on marketing and ethics began to focus on the so-called “ethics gap” between the two groups (Hunt & Vitell 2006, 1). In 1972, Kotler directly addressed consumer movements in his piece for the Harvard Business Review. Contemplating

movements of the time, Kotler suggests that public-spirited consumerism would be enduring and continue to impact how businesses should market themselves (Kotler 1972).

Contrasting with many in the business world at the time, who believed Naderism was drummed up by radicals to damage the workings of the economy, Kotler argues that political consumerism (or as he referred to it, simply “consumerism”), could be beneficial and profitable for business (Kotler 1972, 49). Like Nader, Kotler argues that greater power lies with the producer than the consumer. The flourishing of consumer activism at the time was indicative of this underlying problem. Drawing on social movement literature, he argues that protest movements, like those embodied by political consumerism, are social indicators of issues and should not be ignored or dismissed as radical nonsense by marketers.

Recognizing the interest of businesses in conforming to a new reality in which consumers sought to promote the social good through consumption, Kotler argues that the private sector needs to consider the long-term impacts of their practices. Companies must reformulate products for both the short- and long-term benefits of the consumer and society, and then market both sets of benefits. This line of thinking can be seen in the marketing of many businesses today. For instance, companies like Whole Foods Market will promote the short-term benefits of their products (good quality, nutritious, safe to consume) alongside long-term benefits (environmentally sustainable, benefiting charitable causes).

Marketing Literature Today

Since the 1970s, marketing literature has continued to address questions about political consumerism and ethical consumption more broadly. Growing directly out of the climate of the 1970s and the growing consumer activism of the 1980s, Hunt and Vitell (1986) propose their framework for ethical decision-making in marketing, which has been used extensively since. Also in the 1980s, marketing scholars began to study the implications of growing instances of boycotts for the field of marketing and business more generally. Garrett (1987) stresses the importance of studying boycotts in marketing, and explores the various determinants of boycott success. Scholarship on how marketing could appeal to ethical consumers continued to flourish through the 1990s, establishing additional frameworks for ethical decision-making (Laczniak & Murphy 1993), assessing ethics in advertising (Murphy 1998), and developing marketing strategies to align marketing with the ethics and politics of consumers (Smith 1995).

In recent years, marketing scholars have begun to more heavily focus on the consumer, rather than strategies for the producer. While the latter is important to the study of political consumerism, marketing scholarship's insights into the behaviors of consumers is particularly enlightening. Marketing scholarship, more so than other literatures under examination, closely assesses the motivations behind political consumerism, as well as the extent to which it is truly a matter of free and open choice or rather constrained by other factors. For instance, Klein et al (2004) examine the motivations of boycotts, and their implications for marketers, among other groups. They recognize four factors linked to the likelihood that an individual would participate in a boycott: 1) a desire to effect change; 2) "self-enhancement" to the individual (ex. absolution of guilt, feeling good about one's purchase) 3) counterarguments to

boycotting; and 4) the costs of participating. In addition to elucidating various collective aspects of boycott behavior, this piece, and other marketing literature, empirically evaluate costs and benefits of such behavior. There are aspects of boycott behavior that are overlooked by Klein et al (ex. the impacts of availability of ethically-sourced goods, or geography and social class, on likelihood of participation). However, they nonetheless more systematically examine the costs that may impede one's decision to participate than other literatures. Similarly, there have been a number of marketing and business pieces that have examined the extent to which political beliefs genuinely influence consumer choice (Carrigan & Attalla 2001; Auger & Devinney 2007). Marketing literature, more so than those on social movements or citizenship, highlight this point. It approaches the topic largely from the perspective of business. This perspective, while useful, is inadequate in examining the implications of political consumerism on citizenship, collective action, and social movements.

Social Movement Literature

Literature on social movements is central to the study of political consumerism. However, it has consistently lagged in its recognition of market-oriented collective action and the arguably "individualized" action of political consumerism. Scholarship on the labor movement and its use of consumption-based tactics notwithstanding, the literature has failed to fully assess collective action through consumption. This neglect of consumption-based politics limits the insights of social movement studies into contemporary collective action.

There are two biases in social movement literature that have contributed to this lapse. First, the field has traditionally examined movements targeting states, with a state target sometimes being tied to the very definition of what constitutes a social movement (McAdam et al. 2003; King & Pearce 2010; de Bakker et al 2013). While political consumers can certainly target states and other public entities (ex. Montgomery Bus Boycott), they often seek to directly influence the conduct of corporations. The targeting of corporations is often overlooked, or at the very least undertheorized. Second, social movement literature tends to focus on explicitly collective action, such as public demonstrations, strikes, and marches. Micheletti refers to political consumerism as “individualized collective action” (Micheletti 2003, 312). While there is much to take issue with in this characterization, as is done in Chapter 5, it does speak to the practice of political consumerism operating at the individual level. Political consumerism, while nonetheless collective, is also practiced at the individual level. This fact has often placed political consumerism outside of the view of social movement scholars.

There has, however, been a growing sub-literature on market-oriented movements in recent years. Scholars have begun to recognize the profound effect that the market has on the lives of individuals, and collective responses to this ever-growing presence. Additionally, they have come to address the impact that political consumerism has had on businesses and their practices. In the sections below, I outline recent social movement literature and its relationship to market-oriented movements. I then offer a critique, suggesting opportunities for growth in social movement theory in through the study of political consumerism.

The Market and Social Movements

Social movements and other forms of collective action have been the subject of study for many years. However, it was not until the 1960s that scholars began to study social movements as political, and often rational, forms of political action. Prior to this point, extrainstitutional tactics like public demonstrations were analyzed by social psychologists, who often viewed this unrest as a result of social strain or characteristics (and, as was often argued, personality deficiencies) of participants (Snow et al. 2004; McAdam & Scott 2005). During the middle of the 20th century, coinciding with the much of the social unrest seen in the postwar West, scholars like McCarthy, Gamson, Tilly, Zald, and others began to examine social movements differently. They looked at movement organizations and the social and structural factors that enabled their emergence and success (Snow et al. 2004).

Social movement literature had often been focused primarily on those movements that targeted the state and representatives of it. This perspective was bolstered by the development of the concept of “contentious politics” since the late 1990s (Snow et al. 2004). Contentious politics, as outlined by Snow et al., is conceptualized as collective, episodic, public, and “manifestly political” (Snow et al. 2004, 5; McAdam et al 2001, 5). This final criterion, which limits the definition of contentious politics to only action targeting the government institutions, is particularly problematic. As “contentious politics” came to be used interchangeably with “social movements,” scholars often overlooked this limiting definitional requirement (Snow et al. 2004). Not only does such a definition overlook the cases of political consumerism under examination here, it also defines out those movements that seek to impact culture (ex. many facets of the feminist movement), religious institutions (ex. anti-Scientology movements), or individuals (ex.

self-help movements). Van Dyke et al (2004) provide evidence for the need for a more inclusive definition, finding that of over 4,500 protest events in the mid- to late 20th century, a significant number of them targeted non-state institutions. Least likely to target the state were civil rights, LGBT, and women's movements. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), who developed the concept, actually note this shortcoming of their conceptualization of contentious politics, indicating that it may be too rigid to be used broadly.

In response to the narrowness of "contentious politics," Snow (2004) proposes a broader, more flexible definition of social movements than these scholars offer. He suggests that they should be defined as "collectivities acting with some degree of organization...and continuity... primarily outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging extant systems of authority, or resisting change in such systems, in the organization, society, culture or world order of which they are a part" (Snow 2004, 11). Snow points out that there is certainly research done on collective challenges to systems of authority besides the state, but that such research is not used to refine conceptualizations of social movements. The more inclusive definition offered by Snow can encompass collective action targeting corporations, like political consumerism, and thus provides a strong basis for this thesis. However, as is done in subsequent chapters, it still must be substantiated that such action is indeed collective.

Additionally, "new social movement" scholars have heeded the challenge of redefining social movements to encompass more than state-oriented action. This school of theory was developed by Habermas, Melucci, Offe, and Touraine, among others, beginning in the 1980s (Lentin 1999). It focuses on post-industrial or "post-material"

movements, which are oriented around shared values, identities, beliefs, and social norms (Van Dyke et al 2004, 31; Mandaville 2011, 12). In other words, this body of work departs from theories focusing on movements strictly defined by political or economic identity, or in their relationship to the state, in favor of those that are constituted on shared beliefs. New social movement theory has been critiqued for a number of reasons, not least of which is the contention that “new social movements” are not actually all that new. Additionally, new social movement theory falls short of describing political consumerism, in that it downplays both collectivity of movement action and social and economic class (Barker & Dale 1998). As is explored in subsequent chapters, both of these elements should be central to the study of political consumerism.

In addition to definitions by Snow, new social movement scholars, and others making an explicit attempt to include action against corporations in conceptualizations of social movements, there have been some further advancements in noting this link in movement literature. Over the past decade, social movement studies has to some extent converged with organizational theory (McAdam & Scott 2005; Soule 2009; Walker 2012). This convergence indicates a recognition that social movements interact with not just states, but also private organizations. There had been some overlap in theoretical advancements for decades, such as McCarthy and Zald’s (1977) pivotal piece on social movement organizations and resource mobilization. With the fields emerging around the same time, the related topics have been referred to as “twins separated at birth” (McAdam & Scott 2005, 11).

However, little had been said about social movements’ impacts on organizations until recent years. This shift was in large part due to the making of MNCs into large,

transnational politics, social movement responses, and the growing prevalence of CSR (Davis & Zald 2005; Walker 2012). Still, though social movement scholars have noted overlap between these two bodies of literature, it has primarily been explored insofar as social movement theory can inform studies of corporate and other organizational forms (Davis & McAdam 2000; Rao et al 2000; Davis & Zald 2005; Walker 2012), rather than how social movements themselves are adapting to target private organizations. With just a few exceptions, discussions of political consumerism have stayed out of social movement journals, and lived primarily in business, organizational studies, citizenship, marketing, consumer, and occasionally general political science or sociology journals.

Opportunities for Social Movement Scholarship on Political Consumerism

There is much that is missed by social movement literature regarding political consumerism that can be potentially valuable to theoretical understandings of movements. For instance, in neglecting political consumerism, social movement literature overlooks an opportunity to more clearly define what is meant by “collective” action. In social movement literature, movements are often defined with an explicit criterion of collectivity. Goodwin and Jasper, for instance, define a social movement as “a collective, organized, sustained and non-institutional challenge to authorities, power holders, or cultural beliefs and practices” (Goodwin & Jasper 2009, 4). Tarrow defines social movements as “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (Tarrow 1994, 3-4). Countless other definitions refer to collective purpose, identity, and action.

Political consumerism can often conform to these definitions. However, they to some extent, undermine them. Many studies view the growth of market-oriented social movements and their use of political consumerism as depoliticization; whereas, others view them as an extension of collective action and renewal of civic engagement, shifted into the private sphere. Balsiger (2010), among others (Holzer 2006; Haenfler et al. 2012; Koos 2012), argues however that there is significant overlap between the public and private spheres, and that collective action and more individualized action can complement one another in a social movement.

The public/private and collective/individual dichotomies have become blurred with globalization, commodification, and other trends. There is clear disagreement on where political consumerism fits into collective action, and even what “collective action” means in light of political consumerism. As I argue in subsequent chapters, political consumerism should be considered collective. However, the role that individual action plays in its practice suggests an opportunity for scholars to revisit definitions of social movements. This imperfect fit of political consumerism suggests that it is an important topic for social movement studies scholars to examine.

Additionally, political consumerism offers insights into who is able to participate in social movements. Theory on exclusion from movement participation in social movement literature is underdeveloped. There are numerous pieces on the exclusion of certain social groups, particularly women, in social movements (Robnett 1996). Social movements and collective action are often viewed as “weapons of the weak” in movement literature (Scott 1985). However, there is ample evidence of inequalities and barriers to participation for “the weak,” in various forms of political activism, particularly

political consumerism. Exclusion based on factors outside of race or gender can be seen in political consumerism, such as exclusion tied to geography, class, income, or education level. Ferrer-Fons and Fraile (2013) document the patterns of social class-based inequality in political consumerism participation. Caínzos and Voces (2010) find a similar incongruity between classes specifically for boycotting. Stolle and Hooghe (2009) find that education level significantly impacts participation in political consumerism and other “emerging” forms of political participation. This finding has been substantiated by numerous other scholars (Strømsnes 2005; Andersen & Tobiasson 2006; Koos 2012; Ferrer-Fons & Fraile 2013). These analyses could be incredibly valuable to social movement studies. Studying political consumerism can deepen understandings of participants in social movements and associated constraints on participation. By extension, these insights can be of value to activists, who can tailor movement strategies based on these insights when attempting to incorporate new participants.

Citizenship Literature

The study of citizenship is a robust and long-standing field in social science. Indeed, as Turner (1993) notes, citizenship has been an important aspect of political thought since classical Greece. However, citizenship literature has also evolved significantly with changes in how citizens interact with one another and exercise political power. In recent years, much has been said about the erosion of traditional citizenship, in favor of a more diffuse version, often tied to the forces of the market. In what follows below, I provide a general outline of citizenship literature as it relates to political consumerism. I then offer an explanation for why this literature is particularly illuminating in the study of political consumerism.

Liberalism, Political Citizenship, and T. H. Marshall

Concepts of liberal citizenship, which influenced thought throughout much of the 20th century, can be traced in its modern form back to Hobbes and Locke in the 17th century. Proponents of this view suggested that land was given to man by God, and that a right to private property was a function of putting one's labor into this property. Self-interest was beginning to be seen as directly linked to rationality, and a strong state was seen as anathema to the spirit of citizenship and rights of man. Here, in the origins of modern, liberal citizenship, one can find the roots of neoliberal citizenship seen today (Root 2007).

Understandings of citizenship, have, however, evolved significantly. Central to 20th century thought regarding citizenship is the work of Thomas Humphrey Marshall. His work focuses on what is often referred to as "political citizenship," understood as being marked by the relationship between a governing state and a citizenry, to whom the state responds, grants rights, and enforces obligations. In the immediate postwar era, Marshall (1950) laid out three dimensions of citizenship: civil, political, and social rights. Civil rights are seen as individual rights, such as a right to free speech or due process. Political rights include the ability to participate in free and fair elections. Social rights refer to a social safety net and other economic rights.

Marshall's writings are in line with a tradition of seeing citizenship as a status, which bestows rights. There also exists an obligations-based tradition, viewing citizenship as representing a set of duties or responsibilities. Marshall has in fact been criticized for not considering the obligations that citizenship often entails (Turner 2001).

In the associated “duties discourse,” citizenship is tied to work and other obligations (Lister 2003). For instance, Van Houdt et al (2011) speak of a neoliberal “earned citizenship” in Europe, in which immigrants must prove themselves through a combination of language proficiency, paying taxes, and assimilation.

Relatedly, civic republicanism proposes that citizenship be viewed as political obligation. However, it differs from other duties discourse in its emphasis on the importance of political participation. Political activity is viewed as an end in itself with benefits for the common good, but also allows “the Self” to “fulfill its full potential” (Lister 2003, 25). Though these pieces on obligations-based citizenship look specifically on traditional, political citizenship, there also exists significant overlap with a consumption-based citizenship. As is explored in greater detail in Chapter 4, political consumerism can be thought of as to some extent representative of the obligations of consumer citizenship, with particular overlap with civic republicanism.

Citizenship in a Neoliberal World

In the 1990s, there was an explosion of interest in citizenship, due in part to the end of the Cold War, globalization, and social movements that emerged over this period (Isin & Turner 2002). Scholars began to question whether political citizenship was the best object of study, noting many changes in how citizens interacted with government, changes in migration, and the increased role of the market. These changes have led to some suggesting an outright decline of citizenship (Falk 2000). Others have merely noted its evolving nature (Turner 2001; Miller 2002; Jubas 2007; Root 2007; McNevin; Van Houdt et al 2011; Lekakis 2013A). The political citizenship seen in the works of Marshall

and others, that between citizens and a state that responds to their interests, is seen as dated (Lekakis 2013A, 47).

Indeed, citizenship is far from gone. In addition to the continued importance of political citizenship, citizens also engage through other channels. “Citizenship is not dead or dying, but found in new places, in life-politics...and in consumption” (Scammel 2000, 351). In particular, scholars have noted how globalization and neoliberalism have impacted citizenship, and how one should conceptualize it. For instance, Root (2007) noted the existence of a market citizenship, driven in large part by principles of neoliberalism. The rules and expectations of citizenship, she argues, are defined not by a social safety net or Marshallian social rights, but by self-interest and choice. Citizenship has migrated from the realm of government to that of the market. This has been facilitated by outsourcing of government functions to companies, and public-private partnerships. With declining voter participation, traditional politics has moved from discussions of class to “kitsch” (Root 2007, 70). Root’s analysis may to some extent overstate the changes in citizenship, in light of the continued importance of the state in social decision-making. However, it does reflect certain realities of political consumerism, such as, particularly, an emphasis on consumer choice. Markets and the ability to select from different goods and services are viewed as a means for pursuing social justice.

Similarly, Van Houdt et al (2011) note the rise of “neoliberal communitarian citizenship,” in which citizenship is earned rather than an assumed right. In many parts of Europe, they note, immigrants must earn citizenship through a combination of cultural assimilation, language proficiency, and proving economic utility. Citizens must “assume

responsibility in regulating themselves, their children and their neighborhoods” (Van Houdt et al 2011, 411). The authors’ neoliberal communitarian citizenship pertains to political, state-sponsored citizenship, rather than a citizenship tied to the market. However, it does speak to the evolving nature of how people conceptualize citizenship. Even political citizenship has come to include personal responsibility as a central component. Citizenship is not a status or *prima facie* right, but rather something to be earned, adopting a market-based logic.

Political consumerism can be viewed as a response of the trends that Root and Van Houdt et al describe rather than emblematic of it. Many of the central principles of market or neoliberal communitarian citizenship and what one might call “consumer citizenship” overlap, particularly an emphasis on choice, the centrality of markets, and the responsibility of the individual. However, the latter, of which political consumerism is a part, suggests that consumers should actively shape market outcomes in the public interest, rather than assuming the efficiency of the market in lifting all boats. It is a consumer-focused form of citizenship, in which citizens use purchasing power to voice their beliefs.

Citizenship Literature and Political Consumerism

Citizenship literature presents a number of empirical and theoretical insights that are particularly useful in the study of political consumerism. For instance, citizenship literature recognizes the relationship between the individual and the collective. Status and rights are granted to both individuals and collectives, and participation as a citizen is viewed from both lenses as well. As Glenn (2011) notes, at its most basic definition,

citizenship entails membership of an individual in a community. This perspective makes it well-suited for discussing political consumerism, which has been seen as both “individualized” (Micheletti 2003) and “collectivized” (Holzer 2006) action.

Additionally, writing on citizenship has thoroughly explored general trends in political participation over the past half-century. As noted above, scholars have looked into how globalization, neoliberalism, and changes in governance have impacted citizenship. This story is closely linked to that of political consumerism, which, in its current form, is in many ways a product of these same forces. While social movement scholars have noted how repertoires of contention evolve and shift depending on historical context, the practice of political consumerism is not only a tactic of pursuing social change. Rather, as is argued in Chapter 4, political consumerism is also representative of a contemporary form of consumer-based citizenship.

Lastly, citizenship literature makes clear that political consumerism should be considered a legitimate form of political participation. Numerous scholars have noted that it is often used as a substitute for political citizenship and associated practices of voting and lobbying (Jubas 2007; Simon 2011; Lekakis 2013A). Practices of dollar voting must be examined as a form of political participation, and relatedly, boycotts and other organized consumer action, targeting private companies, must be understood in terms of a legitimate tool of contention.

The three bodies of literature under examination in this chapter all offer insights into political consumerism, how it functions, its impacts, and what it means for political participation more broadly. While marketing literature prioritizes rather narrowly a

business perspective, it provides insights into limits of and constraints on political consumerism. Though it does not offer many studies of political consumerism specifically, social movement literature provides a wealth of information relating to collective action and matters of inclusion in political participation. Literature on citizenship is particularly useful in a theoretical framing of political consumerism. In the following chapter, I explore the relationship between citizenship and political consumerism, highlighting how the latter can be used to better understand changes in citizenship. The subsequent discussions of political consumerism as a highly exclusionary form of collective action are embedded in this context of evolving citizenship or, more accurately, citizenships.

4

Citizenship and Political Consumerism

Today's political consumerism has been shaped by a particular historical context, one in which citizenship has in many ways shifted. What citizenship means, in many parts of the world, is evolving. Citizenship in the modern era was primarily defined in terms of the relationship between individuals, collectivities, and a nation-state, through which citizenship rights and obligations were granted and enforced. Generally, citizenship was conceptualized as being tied to a status. This status was granted and legitimized by state authority, and would carry with it a certain set of rights or obligations (Isin & Turner 2002).

Political consumerism exemplifies a departure from a state-centric version of citizenship, in which citizens are granted rights and obligations by a state. It is rather a means by which groups seek out social change through private organizations. It is in this context that political consumerism must be understood, as a means of participating politically, engaging with actors traditionally not viewed as "political." In subsequent sections, I detail concepts of citizenship and how they have evolved, the changing nature of primary actors in citizenship, its ties to consumption throughout modern history, its relationship with rights, and, specifically, how political consumerism relates to rights. I conclude by developing "consumer citizenship" and exploring how consumption can be political.

Marshall and Modern Citizenship

Citizenship in the modern era, as Marshall (1950) characterizes it, was linked to civil, political, and social rights. These types of rights, however, emerged as distinct at various points in history. Civil rights, he argues, developed in the 18th century, during which freedoms of the press and property, among others, were strengthened in Western Europe. It should also be noted that the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution, which delineated many of what are now considered core civil rights, were also ratified during this time. The 19th century brought the expansion, though not full realization, of political rights in the West, which had hitherto been very narrowly enjoyed by privileged segments of the population. During the 19th century, steps were taken that expanded, if only marginally, access to processes of democracy. Social rights, those regarding economic empowerment and a social safety net, were developed in the 20th century in the postwar West.

While Marshall's outline of citizenship, as well as the rights it entails, is an important contribution to understandings of modern citizenship, it has also, rightly, been critiqued. He fails to look at causes that lead to the expansion of citizenship, such as social movements and other forms of activism. Citizenship is treated as universal and uniform, disregarding the wide variation between and within national contexts. He does not speak of any of the obligations or duties that are often tied to citizenship. Lastly, formal rights are examined to the detriment of substantive rights, and how citizenship is practiced in reality (Turner 2001).

Most importantly, however, Marshallian citizenship, that of status-linked rights imbued by a nation-state, is to a great extent dated. More broadly, political citizenship, tied to the state, has been contested with shifting political, economic, and social realities.

One can observe not only the importance of political citizenship, which undoubtedly persists, but a multitude of citizenships. One such variant of citizenship is tied closely to consumption. As outlined below, this relationship is not new, between consumption and citizenship. However, it has grown in recent decades, and is in many ways exemplified by political consumerism.

Citizenship & Its Actors

The past half-century has seen significant changes in who is involved in citizenship and how. Most notably, the state is no longer seen as the sole authority through which rights and obligations of citizenship are bestowed. Concepts of political citizenship, through which the government prescribes rights and responsibilities, must be expanded to accommodate a new reality of citizenship and political participation. Critical to the story of political consumerism, consumption is viewed as a tool of citizenship, a way for individuals to practice politically and impact the lives of others.

State institutions and recognized governments of course continue to play an important role in practices of citizenship. However, as is often noted, political party membership and voter turnout rates have been on the decline in much of the developed, democratic world. Additionally, participation has moved noticeably well beyond national borders. Through global migration, international travel, increased economic liberalization, the prevalence of international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and cultural globalization, the authority of the state in matters of citizenship is undermined (Lekakis 2013A, 47-48). This is to some extent attributable to larger shifts in patterns of political and social participation.

Liquid & Solid Modernity

Lekakis (2013A) identifies the shift in the arena of participation as being aligned with the “melting” of what Zygmunt Bauman refers to as “solid modernity” to “liquid modernity.” Bauman (2000) identifies deregulation of markets, tax reforms, and economic liberalization, among other factors, as contributing to the melting of solid modernity. With this shift, “system” has moved to “society, “politics” to “life-politics” and a “macro” to “micro” level of “social cohabitation” (Bauman 2000, 7). Participation in solid modernity includes voting, involvement in political parties or campaign groups, and public demonstrations (Lekakis 2013A). For Bauman, the rigidity and order of modernity, with its official government channels of participations, has dissolved into private politics. With this change comes the shift from political citizenship, which is seen as being tied to commitment, to a host of cultural citizenships, tied to choice (Lekakis 2013A; B).¹ Bauman takes a pessimistic view of this change, suggesting that the melting of solid into liquid modernity signals a time of apolitical materialism (Scammell 2000; Lekakis 2013B).² However, political consumerism and its prevalence suggests that consumption need not be apolitical.

Bauman recognizes the deterritorialization of citizenship, which was closely tied to “settlement” during solid modernity. Statelessness during this time would result in exclusion from the rights that citizenship provided. This reality has changed in recent

¹ Citizens in liquid modernity can choose from and simultaneously embody several cultural citizenships. As Lekakis (2013A) notes, an ecological citizen can for instance also be a consumer citizen, and often is. Indeed, Bauman remarks, “In its contemporary liquid-modern rendition, belonging to one entity may be shared and practiced simultaneously with belonging to other entities in almost any combination, without necessarily provoking condemnation or repressive measures of any kind” (Bauman 2008, 23).

² However, political consumerism and its prevalence suggests that consumption need not be apolitical.

years, Bauman writes at the turn of the 21st century, with citizenship expanding beyond state borders. “The era of unconditional superiority of sedentarism over nomadism and the domination of the settled over the mobile is on the whole grinding fast to a halt” (Bauman 2000, 13). The “global elite,” he writes, are no longer burdened by managing territory, but can be seen as “absentee landlords” (ibid).

This deterritorialization of power resonates with the global and at times diffuse challenges to that power. Political consumerism in its current form exemplifies this orientation toward an “absent” elite, not bound by state borders, with the frequent targeting of MNCs. In fact, political consumerism itself is more spatially diffuse than other forms of contention, particularly collective forms of action. Whereas marches, demonstrations, and civil disobedience are often centralized, with many individuals participating within the same geographical spaces, political consumerism takes place at countless locations. While activists may gather for a demonstration in Washington DC, London, or Athens, political consumers take their contention to supermarkets, coffee shops, or clothing stores around the globe. This diffuse practice often leads to the mischaracterization of political consumerism as “individualized.” As is explored in great depth in the next chapter, it is in fact a collective practice, but simply exemplifying the diffuse, globalized citizenship types of contemporary times.

Citizenship’s shift into liquid modernity has implications for its actors. There exists significant distrust of political institutions of solid modernity. “If the politics of solid modernity are in crisis,” Lekakis poses, “what kind of politics are thriving in liquid modernity?” (Lekakis 2013B, 321). In short, the politics of the market are well-suited to the realities of liquid times. While voter turnout has declined, political consumerist

movements like fair trade have flourished. The distrust and move away from institutions of citizenship of solid modernity reorders the relevant actors of political participation. Political parties, government officials, and labor unions, while undoubtedly still relevant, compete for relevance with consumption and markets. The deterritorialization of politics can also bring contention from the steps of city hall to the aisles of Kroger, Tesco, or Wal-Mart.

Citizenship & Consumption

As shown in Chapter 2, there have often been close ties between consumption and citizenship, though until recent years, there was little acknowledgment of this relationship in academic literature. Jubas (2007) attributes this oversight to an overemphasis on production over consumption. This disposition toward production, Jubas explains, is partially attributable towards a patriarchal bias in early modern citizenship literature, as consumption was seen as an aspect of women's social role. Public (masculine) life is linked to production, and private (feminine) life is linked to consumption. The notion that consumption could be public, and in fact political, did not enter into much literature on citizenship.

Additionally, it was not until the 19th century that "consumer" began to develop into an identity. A "rare and at best descriptive category in earlier centuries," (Trentmann & Taylor 2006, 71) struggles over the affordability of water, among other necessities, in parts of Europe brought consumption clearly into the realm of citizenship. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in interest in the relationship between consumption and citizenship, partially due to real-world increase in its practice. The

concept of “citizen-consumer,” as well as “consumer citizenship,” is now more widely used.

The Six Rs of Citizenship

Faulks (2002) outlines five components of citizenship, what he terms the five Rs: rights, responsibilities, resources, recognition, and residence. Jubas (2007), who adds a sixth, “resistance,” points to the links between all of these aspects of citizenship and consumption. Regarding *rights*, Jubas notes, since early modernity, consumption was a particularly useful tool for the expansion of rights for women, who were often excluded from traditional channels of participation and, while considered responsible for shopping, could not hold credit. In the 19th century, British women used shopping and consumption in a struggle to expand their rights in the marketplace, often through cooperatives. Additionally, as noted below, political consumerism can be seen as representative of contemporary struggles for rights. These examples are not meant to suggest that these rights are broadly and universally granted, nor that consumption is an equitable means of achieving rights, as is explored in greater detail in subsequent sections and Chapter 6. However, consumption has historically been a useful tool for women to expand rights, and continues to be today.

On the topic of *responsibilities*, Jubas points out that a right to credit also carries with it the responsibility to pay back what is borrowed. Also, as Cohen (2003) notes, consumption was seen as civic duty and a responsibility of citizenship in the postwar United States. More centrally to political and ethical consumerism, however, is the notion of one’s personal responsibility to reconcile one’s buying habits with ethical or political

beliefs. In fact, with the globalized focus of political consumerism today, responsibilities spread beyond state boundaries (Barnett et al 2005). A consumer is responsible not only for citizens in his or her own country, but those around the globe.

Resources play an important role in citizenship, relating directly to Marshall's "social rights" (Faulks 2002). Citizens are guaranteed a certain minimum of resources and material comfort with social rights, and the social safety net that they enable. Consumption-based efforts have been made to provide resources to the world's least advantaged. Agricultural cooperatives and the fair trade movement seek to lift the poor out of poverty, compensating for the decline of social rights during the past half-century. Though political consumerism has been used to more equitably allocate resources than neoliberalism on its own might allow, the relationship between consumption-based politics and the allocation of resources is also deeply problematic. Indeed, this tension is at the heart of many of the complications of consumption as politics. As is explored more thoroughly in Chapter 6, political consumerism often favors the political voices of those flush with resources to the disadvantage of those with few.

Citizenship generally carries with it *recognition* of a certain status. One must be recognized as a citizen to receive associated benefits. In the case of consumerism, one can examine the identity construction that it enables. Consumption allows the purchaser the opportunity to construct, reject, or bolster identity. Consumption is part of a process of "continuous renegotiation" of identity today, Bauman notes, as consumers seek recognition for ever-evolving identities (Bauman 2008, 13). Political consumerism, in particular, can often be used to bolster identity and recognition of this identity.

Residence, seen as a criterion of political citizenship, is less integral to a citizenship tied to consumption. However, one can observe the impacts of residence in the politics of consumption. For instance, consumer campaigns to support producers within a particular community, whether at the national, subnational, or local level, may be linked very closely to residence. One prominent example today is the local food movement, which encourages consumers to support local agriculture, both out of environmental concern and as an attempt to bolster the local economy. Issues surrounding residence also enter into a consumer citizenship in the constraints on consumer choice that residence imposes. As explored in greater detail in Chapter 6, residence can have impacts on ability to voice concerns through consumption.

Lastly, *resistance*, as Jubas (2007) notes, is central to citizenship. Most directly, resistance is critical in shifting, expanding, and reshaping citizenship. The study of resistance explains the changes of citizenship. Resistance through consumption, as previously noted, has expanded the rights of women. It was also integral in the expansion of rights of African Americans through the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Indians in their independence movement from the British, and Black South Africans through anti-apartheid boycotts, to name just a few of countless examples. Consumption and the political practice of it are thus present in all of six aspects of citizenship that Jubas and Faulks outline.

Citizenship & Rights

The Struggle for Rights

The topic of rights and the struggle for them requires further elucidation, due their central role in citizenship. Foucault (1982) describes three types of social struggles, against domination, exploitation, and subjection. He characterizes struggles against domination as ethnic, social, and religious. Economic struggles, those that address the separation of the individual from the product of his or her labor, as in Marx's theory of alienation, are seen as targeting exploitation. Struggles against subjection concern attempts to bring about greater autonomy of self and equitable social participation (Knight 2007, 308).

Knight (2007) points out that each of these struggles can be seen as representing the pursuit of certain sets of rights. Domination-targeting struggles attempt to expand political and civil rights. Those struggles opposing exploitation seek the development of social or economic rights. Challenges to subjection, which both Knight and Foucault argue characterize contemporary struggles, focus on cultural and personal rights.

These sets of goals align with what Hernández-Truyol and Gleason (2002) describe as the "generations" of rights. First generation political and civil rights were pursued in the 18th and 19th centuries under the auspices of "negative rights," those that granted freedom *from* government interference. Social and economic second generation rights emerged in light of socialist revolutions of the early 20th century, resulting in calls for greater "positive rights," through the recognition of which, state intervention could offset exploitation of the market. The social safety net seen in much of the developed West in the 20th century is the clearest example of these struggles' results. Third generation rights, which are pursued currently, refer to the solidarity among people and human rights. This delineation of historical struggles and generations of rights is certainly

a simplification, as the authors themselves point out. Undoubtedly, one can find examples of all three types of struggles throughout modern history. However, this outline does characterize shifts in the struggles of citizens and their relationships with the state.

There exists a clear parallel between these struggles and generations of rights and Marshall's concepts of civil, political, and social rights. Marshall to great extent misses the "struggle" component that brings about these changes. However, he does identify civil and political rights ("first generation") developing in the 18th and 19th centuries, and social rights ("second generation") largely emerging in the 20th century. However, because Marshall published *Citizenship and Social Class* in 1950, his writings do not address the third generation, that has since come into being.

Rights Today

Numerous authors have conceptualized the struggles for rights today. Hernández-Truyol and Gleason (2002) offer one perspective, speaking of the third generation of rights. This generation emerged out of postwar anti-colonial struggles and the resulting independence of nations. These struggles brought to the fore conversations about human rights and the right to self-determination, consistent with Foucault's understanding of struggles against subjection. They also emphasized solidarity, most notably, between peoples living in different parts of the globe. Central to this generation of rights is its focus on freedom from the foreign aggression, giving it a distinctly more global orientation than previous generations. Whereas first and second generation struggles, those against domination and exploitation, were often focused on the national level, third

generation rights, as Hernández-Truyol and Gleason define it, are often meant to guarantee national sovereignty from foreign powers.

Turner (2001) argues that Marshall's three types of rights have been replaced by three new ones: environmental, aboriginal, and cultural rights. Citizenship, he states, must be viewed as a process for the allocation of entitlements, rather than a fixed framework or status. These entitlements are based on principles. For citizenship in the mid-20th century, when Marshall was writing, entitlements were based on principles of war service, work, and reproduction, all of which carried with them certain benefits. These principles have been diminished by, among other factors, "Third Way" strategies of governance, declining union membership, erosion of the welfare state, and the inability of nation-states to take unilateral action on global issues. Class conflict and mobilization for warfare have been replaced by social movements and identity. For instance, environmental rights, suggestive of ecological citizenship, relate to a global concern about the degradation of the environment by accelerated global capitalism, and the distrust in governments taking meaningful action. The result has been greater participation in environmental groups. Calls for aboriginal rights are similarly linked to relatively unrestricted global capitalism, and its impacts on native populations, in pursuit of industrialization of developing countries. Cultural rights are tied to identity and concern the ability to maintain language and shared cultural heritage with a community. All three of these types of rights, Turner points out, are "post-national" and are in part a response to the perceived inability of the nation-state to provide adequate protection from global threats (Turner 2001, 207).

Another understanding of the struggle of rights today concerns the rights of future generations. Numerous scholars have written about the rights of future generations to live on a safe and habitable planet (Baier 1981; Bandman 1982; Weiss 1990; Weiss 1992; Gaba 1999; Gosseries 2008). These authors ponder the rights of generations of the future. What rights, if any, do unborn generations have? Can they be defined as rights, or simply interests (Gosseries 2008)? Regardless of the answers to these theoretical questions, it is clear that many citizens and activists view future generations as having something akin to rights, even if these future individuals are not yet “citizens” in any traditional sense. Closely linked to environmental rights, citizens struggle to create a safer planet for not only themselves, but for generations to come.

There exists a multitude of perspectives on struggles for rights today. However, there are several discernable commonalities among them, notably their global orientation, emphasis on solidarity between peoples, a focus on individual choice, and a basis in identity. They are all markedly global in orientation. Human rights are viewed as universal, by definition extending to all humans regardless of nation of origin or state-sanctioned “citizenship status.” Struggles for expansion of environmental and future rights seek to protect all from the destruction of natural ecosystems. These understandings of how citizens are seeking to guarantee rights often contain an element of multi-cultural, generational, or territorial solidarity. Citizens are seen as being partners in bringing about greater human rights, environmental protection, and self-determination of peoples. Additionally, these struggles emphasize individual choice and the ability of the individual to make a collective impact. This focus is most clearly seen in attempts to

expand environmental rights. The decisions of the individual are seen as a way of asserting one's right to a clean planet.

Lastly, these categories of rights, and the attempts to gain them, are often linked to identity. The goals of these struggles are often seen "postmaterialist." The idea that movements and other social or political struggles today are "postmaterialist," has deservedly been critiqued (Barker & Dale 1998; Knight 2007). "New social movements" often seek material goals. However, identity does indeed play a significant role. For instance, unlike first and second generation rights, which were asserted to bring about greater political and economic equality, the rights described above, like aboriginal and cultural rights, are more closely linked to identity than material disadvantages. These characteristics of contemporary struggles to expand rights can be seen in the practice of political consumerism. Indeed, political consumers seek to expand many of the rights outlined.

Political Consumerism & Rights

The practice of political consumerism embodies many of the values of these rights. As people use the market to expand and exercise rights, they are embracing the principles of contemporary citizenships, which emphasize these rights. The focus of political consumerism in the 21st century is often global. Common issues addressed through political consumerism are environmental sustainability, fair treatment of suppliers and workers in developing countries, and the disproportionate power of MNCs. All of these issues transcend national boundaries, and reflect an attempt by consumers to exercise influence over global issues. There are, of course, exceptions to political

consumerism being global. The “Buy American” movement and boycotts of companies over stances on domestic political issues are distinctly less global in ambitions than the fair trade movement. However, political consumerism of the late 20th and early 21st centuries is, overall, significantly more global than its predecessors, which is representative of changes in larger political and economic trends, as well as citizenship.

Solidarity between peoples has played a critical role in political consumerism, as well as the collective rights that Hernández-Truyol and Gleason (2002) describe. This is particularly the case in the development of the fair trade movement, which calls on Northern consumers to support small-scale producers of goods like coffee, flowers, and bananas in the Global South. The consumers of the North and producers of the South are seen as working together towards a sustainable and better future. In fact, Equal Exchange, the first fair trade coffee roaster in the United States, directly drew inspiration from the Nicaraguan revolution and solidarity movement in the mid-1980s (Jaffee 2012). Similarly, environmentally-focused political consumerism can be said to seek solidarity cross-generationally. Recognizing future generations’ “rights,” consumers seek to create a better world for subsequent generations.

The role of individual choice, and its collective impacts, is clearly central to political consumerism. Regardless of the movement utilizing it, political consumerism is viewed as a way for an individual to use purchasing power to expand the rights of others. Purchasing fair trade certified coffee over uncertified coffee is thought to be a way to improve living conditions and meet a right to development. A consumer can respect the human rights of workers by purchasing sweatshop-free garments. These choices are attempts by individuals to expand the rights of others.

Like the rights they recognize, consumption-based struggles often have a strong identity-based element. Identity is seen as a key component of “subpolitics,” developed by Ulrich Beck, who describes politics at the level of individual, everyday participation. Political consumerism has often been thought of as representative of subpolitics. The concept subpolitics has rightly been criticized for, among other shortcomings, its removal of collective influences on social action, conceptually over-individualizing politics. However, it is correct in identifying the role that identity can play in political consumerism. Those who choose to consume or not consume products for political reasons often have a strong, related identity. This fact can readily be seen in the voluntary simplifier movement, whose participants choose to minimize consumption and therefore minimize their environmental footprints. Zamwel et al (2014) note that voluntary simplifiers often strongly identify themselves as such, and take pride in this identity.

In addition to third generation rights outlined above, political consumerism can be seen as a way to ensure the administering of Marshall’s three sets of rights. As Crane et al (2004) point out, corporations currently provide civil, political, and social rights in a number of ways. MNCs often fill the void of unstable or weak states in providing civil rights. Regardless of their efficacy, political rights are provided through the market, with political consumerism and labor action seen as channels to voice concerns. The granting of social rights can be seen in the CSR policies of companies, as well as public-private partnerships, which directly provide services and benefits to citizens.

Consumer Citizenship

One can observe today a citizenship closely tied to the market. As market forces have gained increasing economic and political power, in light of globalized neoliberalism and diminishing government involvement in social rights, corporations are seen as allocating resources, granting rights, and providing opportunities for civic engagement. Nowhere is this fact more clear than in the practice of political consumerism. Consumption as political participation is in fact perfectly suited for evaluating citizenship in its contemporary context. Through interaction with market forces, consumers seek to wield influence over these large and powerful institutions.

It is necessary to distinguish between ethical and political consumerism. Though these terms are at times used interchangeably, they do have different connotations and implications for consumer citizenship. Ethical consumerism, the practice of consuming based on ethical beliefs, can be thought of as essentially an individual practice, and need not necessarily seek social change. An example of such a practice could be as simple as supporting a local, family-owned grocery store over a big box store based on the ethical belief that the friendliness and ambition of the family should be rewarded over the already successful big box store.

Political consumerism on the other hand, though it is also often linked to ethics, is at its essence collective and deliberate. As previously defined, one may therefore define political consumerism as the deliberate, collective leveraging of purchasing power to catalyze, facilitate, counteract, or otherwise influence change in the policies, practices, or existence of businesses, multinational corporations, markets, and other market actors. An important distinction between the “ethical” and “political” is that the latter must be practiced in concert with others. While the consumer supporting a local, family-owned

grocery store may not communicate this intention to either the family or the big box store, a *political* consumer participating in a boycott of a big box store must do so along with a collective messaging to the targeted company. That deliberate effort to effect change is at the heart of what makes such actions “political.” There exist numerous other reasons to understand political consumerism as collective, as explored further in Chapter 5.

This distinction is important in an understanding of consumer citizenship. Lister refers to the socially contextual “vocabularies of citizenship” (Lister 2003, 3). Indeed, the language used in understanding democratic, political citizenship can only loosely be applied to consumer citizenship. Ethical consumerism can, roughly, be thought of as civic participation. While it is publicly-spirited, it need not be contentious, collective, or represent the deliberate voicing of a set of beliefs. Many analogies have been offered of political consumerism and processes of democratic, political citizenship. The most common of these is the comparison of the former to voting. The concept of dollar voting pervades academic literature (Nava 1991; Schmookler 1993; Schudson 2007; Johnston 2008; Neilson & Paxton 2010; Simon 2011) as well as mainstream discourse, with some being more critical of the tactic than others. To some extent, this analogy holds, in that purchasing power is used to “vote” for or against the behavior of a corporation, market actor, or set of actors. However, these analogies of political consumerism, or consumption in general, to voting breaks down for three reasons.

First, the act of consuming or not consuming a product cannot be seen, in itself, as voting. When one casts a vote at a polling place, this action alone communicates which candidate or policy the voter supports. Political consumerism, on the other hand, requires

the additional practice of communicating the motive of that action. One refraining from shopping at Wal-Mart, while such inaction may be motivated by ethical beliefs, cannot be seen as a vote for any particular behavior of the company in the absence of additional communication. The intention of a vote for candidate in a political election is itself clear; whereas the intention of buying one product over another is not. The choice to consume or not consume could just as easily be read as nothing more than taste.

Relatedly, for consumption to be political, it must be to some extent collective. As more extensively argued in the following chapter, political consumerism cannot be seen as wholly individual. The casting of a “vote” through consumption requires collective messaging to endorse or condemn institutions or behaviors. Certainly voting in an election is collective as well. However, for consumption, this collective element is more essential, as previously noted. It is collective messaging that turns a purchase into a vote.

Lastly, there exist numerous contradictions between consumption and citizenship. Whereas the former is thought to be self-interested, an activity meant to fulfill one’s needs and interests, the latter relates to community and social needs (Johnston 2008). Certainly, consumption can be publicly-spirited. Few would deny that fair trade is, at least to some extent, an effort to address social needs through consumption. However, there exists an incongruity between the two concepts that does not exist in formal political citizenship, particularly regarding the role of democracy. Citizenship through buying, unlike formal voting, has no formal promise of equality of one person, one vote. While equal access to traditional political participation (voting and what Caínzos and Voces (2010) call “conventional” action, such as contacting politicians) is often far from an empirical reality, there exists at least a de jure, formal equality. However, through

political consumerism, one's number of votes is determined by the number of one's dollars. This reality is substantiated by studies like Caínzos and Voces (2010), Marien et al. (2010), Stolle and Hooghe (2011), and Ferrer-Fons & Fraile (2013), whose studies find that political consumerism and other "emerging forms" of participation tend to be more linked to social class, income, and education level the practice than voting. This inequality is explored further in Chapter 6. Because political consumerism lives in the market, self-interest inevitably places limits on who participates. When one is face with a tradeoff of gaining basic necessities and voting on corporate behavior, the former will win out.

It is clear that consumer citizenship must be seen as something quite different from democratic, political citizenship, despite some similarities. The role of collective action and the inequalities of participation that exist in a citizenship based on consumption also have implications for social movements. Social movements, like other forms of social and political participation, take different forms and in fact reflect different definitions depending on context. An important aspect of this context is the citizenship regime under which the movements operate. Just as a social movement may look different when operating in a country with strong democratic protection than under an authoritarian government, so too do movements look different in a context of consumer citizenship. In the following chapters, I explore some of the implications of consumer citizenship for social movements and collective action.

5

Collective Consumption

The “individualized” nature of political consumerism is central to what many scholars consider novel about it. It is, they suggest, a means by which conscientious but disenchanting individuals can make a difference in an era of distrust of government institutions. Collective politics has evolved into individualized subpolitics. These scholars range from the optimistic cheerleaders of the perceived trend of individualization (ex. Micheletti, Beck) to its pessimistic detractors (ex. Bauman). Regardless, there is a consensus among these scholars that society has become more individualized, and that political consumerism is representative of this trend.

To some extent, this analysis makes sense. As has been argued in previous chapters, the practice of political consumerism is performed individually. It is a means of expressing political beliefs that is considerably more oriented around the individual than a strike or mass demonstration. However, political consumerism is in fact deeply, and often deceptively collective. While consumption takes place at the level of the individual, political consumerism is collective. Not only is it informed by collective efforts of SMOs and embedded in social, national, economic, and cultural contexts, it is also *essentially* collective.

There exists a debate in the literature on the collectivity of political consumerism. Micheletti has referred to the practice as “individualized collective action” (Micheletti

2003, 24). This claim has been echoed by numerous other scholars (Neilson & Paxton 2010, 7; Bennett 2012; Haenfler et al 2012, 2; Koos 2012, 38). Attracted by “looser, egalitarian, and informal structures,” Micheletti argues that people turn to the flexibility of political consumerism (Micheletti 2003, 24). Individualized collective action is seen as the confluence of self-interest and public-spiritedness.

Micheletti distinguishes individualized collective action from “collectivist collective action” in that the latter is seen as being structured and oriented towards the formal political system. Action is channeled into established structures and institutions. Those practicing individualized collective action, on the other hand, create “their own political home,” rather than letting outside structure and membership organizations define their interests. She goes on to characterize individualized collective action as taking place at the level of the individual, stating that, “Political engagement and citizenship is, thus, a task that people must deal with on an increasingly individual basis” (Micheletti 2003, 25). Additionally, individualized collective action is seen as detached from overarching ideological narratives, and satisfying both a responsibility to oneself and others in daily private life. For more on the differences between the collectivized and individualized collective action ideal types, see Figure 1.

Micheletti’s distinction between individualized and collectivist collective action presents a false choice, with the latter necessarily targeting the formal political system and being “top-down,” and the former taking place at the individual level and being “bottom-up.” Missed in this dichotomy is collective, consumption-based challenges to MNCs and other market actors. Certainly the varieties of collective action Micheletti presents are meant as ideal types, rather than inflexible categories into which all

collective action falls. However, the treatment of these two types of action as distinct, and political consumerism representing the “individualized” variant, is problematic. Political consumerism, in fact, does not fall into either ideal type Micheletti sets forth. While political consumerism, as has been noted repeatedly, need not target traditional political institutions, it also must be seen as collective. As is explored in greater depth in this chapter, Micheletti’s concept of individualized collective action fails to accurately describe political consumerism for a number of reasons.

First, unlike the ideal type of individualized collective action, political consumerism undoubtedly operates within and with the support of established organizations, institutions, and other collective influences. Critical to the spread of consumption-based campaigns have been SMOs, religious groups, and labor unions, despite the suggestions of many who view political consumerism as “individualized.” Additionally, political consumerism is not free from outside structural constraints, as Micheletti suggests. It is in fact deeply impacted by political, economic, and cultural institutions, rather independent from them and operating at the level of “subpolitics.” One can in fact argue that the assumption that such a realm of “subpolitics,” one outside of politics and collective influences, exists is in and of itself false.

Second, individualized collective action is seen as being independent of grand ideological narratives. Political consumerism can be issue-based, rather than ideologically driven (just as electoral voting, demonstrating publicly, or lobbying can be). However, it can and often is driven in part by the very ideological narratives individualized collective action supposedly eschews, rather than “self-reflexivity.” For instance, much of the discourse within the fair trade movement is steeped in language

about the inability of free trade to equitably allocate resources. The Trade Justice Movement, a UK-based coalition of political consumerist organizations, for instance, explicitly define their mission as opposing the forces of trade liberalization. Those that contribute to the movement see themselves as countering the destructive forces of neoliberal globalization for the world's poor. This action is no less ideologically driven than campaigning for a charismatic politician, a practice that Micheletti would consider to be well within the realm of collectivist collective action.

Third, the “individualized collective action” that Micheletti describes cannot include *political* consumerism. Political consumerism is distinct from ethical consumerism, in that it must be both deliberate and collective. Pateman suggests that the political sphere is “brought into being whenever citizens *gather together* to make political decisions” (emphasis added; Pateman 1989, 110). Ethical consumerism can certainly be seen as individualized. Making a purchase decision based on one's ethical beliefs need not be particularly collective. However, it is the embedding of a purchase decision within collective meaning that makes that decision *political*. As is argued at greater length below, the practice of political consumerism is, at its essence, collective action.

Holzer (2006) offers a very different perspective on political consumerism, referring to it as “collectivized individual action” rather than inverse. For Holzer, political consumerism does not represent the combination of shopping and politics, but rather politics *through* shopping. Individual choice is leveraged towards collective, political goals, rather than preexisting preferences of individuals being acted upon through purchases. The emphasis must not be about the individual consumer, but rather about transforming individual choices into collective statements.

Holzer's collectivized individual action seems to ring true more so than individualized collective action. The former suggests that political consumerism represents the leveraging of choice towards collective, political aims. Unlike Micheletti and others, Holzer contends that these actors are not unconnected individuals, free from ideology, and operating outside of external influence or institutions. Rather, political consumers act in a coordinated manner, and through the collectivization that SMOs allow, broadcast beliefs in hopes of effecting change. This concept of collectivized individual action serves as a starting point for subsequent sections, in which I provide further elucidation of the collective factors of political consumerism.

Collective Influences on Political Consumerism

Political consumerism does not represent the wholly individualized experience that Micheletti presents. Political consumers do not create their own political space out of their beliefs, independent of outside influences. Decisions in political consumerism are in fact heavily influenced and constrained by a host of factors. Koos (2012) refers to these influences as "contextual factors" of political consumerism, in his examination of how a variety of social, political, and economic factors impact the likelihood of practicing politics through consumption. In the subsequent sections, I outline some of these influences.

Opportunity Structures

Koos (2012) explores the variety of contextual factors that impact levels of political consumerism at the aggregate level. He conceptualizes these factors as "opportunity structures." Political and other opportunity structures have often been

applied to understandings of social movement emergence (McAdam 1982; Kitschelt 1986; Miller 1994; McCammon et al 2001; Schurman 2004). Introduced by Eisinger (1973) and later developed by Tarrow (1983) and McAdam (1982; 1996), the concept of opportunity structures has been used to examine the favorability of political context to movement emergence, success, and decline (Kriesi 1995). However, the concept of opportunity structures has primarily been applied to matters of the state -- how government openness and stability impact likelihood of movement mobilization (Schurman 2004). Where the concept of political opportunity structures had been applied to matters beyond the state, it was done so without adequate conceptual clarity (ex. McAdam 1982). Understandings of opportunity structures have since been expanded to account for economic, cultural, and other factors.

The concept of opportunity structures is not without issue. For instance, its proponents have been accused of “structural bias,” treating contextual factors impacting movements as more fixed than they often are. As Goodwin and Jasper state, these approaches overemphasize “factors that are relatively stable over time and outside the control of movement actors” (Goodwin & Jasper 1999, 29). Nonetheless, articles by Koos and others that look at the “structural” factors impacting political consumerism provide unambiguous evidence of the many factors impacting political consumers. In his piece, Koos examines the roles of political, economic, and cultural opportunity structures on levels of political consumerism across Europe. Economic opportunity structures are thought of as supply (availability of “cause related” goods), demand (resources for consumption), and structure of the retail sector. Political opportunity structures include the openness of government to civil society, SMOs, and relative levels of statism (by

which the state is seen as the sole legitimate authority) as compared to “societal authority” (with more decentralized structures of authority). Cultural opportunity structures encompass values and norms, civic culture, and levels of trust.

Koos uses logistic multi-level models to test the impact of these variables, several of which were highly correlated with political consumerist activity. Among the most significant factors were the affluence of country, the variety of products available, fragmentation of retailing (negatively correlated), and levels of statism (negatively correlated). The impact of these factors is significant in understandings of the “individualization” of collective action through political consumerism. Political consumerism, the findings suggest, is highly impacted by a host of societal factors. Activist-consumers are not the independent individuals that Micheletti discusses. They are in fact engaged in constant discourse and interaction with other activists, state and market targets, and society at large.

Market Influences

Similarly, Schurman (2004) looks at “industry opportunity structures” and their impact on consumer activism against genetically modified organisms and the agricultural biotech industry. Industry opportunity structures relate to four factors: 1) economic and competitive behavior of firms, 2) relationships between actors within the industry’s sector, 3) corporate cultures broadly (at industry level), and 4) firm cultures more specifically (at the firm level). Schurman argues that by exploiting industry vulnerabilities and these opportunity structures, as well as using a coordinated, collective strategy, the anti-biotech movement was able to strike significant blows to the industry.

This argument also undermines the idea of political consumers acting as individuals. Market forces and organizations interact with consumers, and have significant implications for who participates in political consumerism and the efficacy of such actions.

Holt (2012) also adopts a “market constructionist paradigm” to examine how certain markets become appealing targets of consumer action. He identifies “ideological lock-in” of markets as contributing to unsustainable consumption. Markets have associated consumption ideologies that impact how consumers interact with them. Change and variation in political consumerism is not caused by individual consumers but by markets themselves. Holt provides two useful examples to illustrate consumption ideologies. The first is of SUVs, which were seen as family-friendly, functional vehicles throughout the United States in the 1980s. It was not until environmental SMOs condemned the vehicles as environmentally damaging that consumers began to view SUVs as inconsistent with certain political beliefs. The other example is of plastic water bottles, whose growth in popularity throughout the late 20th century is attributable to a number of health-related scares regarding tap water during this period. Bottled water, despite its myriad of negative environmental impacts, continues to be viewed as safer than tap water today. Activists, Holt explains, have only made a small dent in perceptions of bottled water. This is in part because of SMOs’ concentration on individual consumer choice and stigmatization on college campuses of purchasing bottled water, which resonates with only a small cultural elite, rather than focusing on market ideology.

Holt’s argument about market ideologies is consistent with empirical variation in levels of political consumerism in different national contexts. Balsiger (2013) points out

how certain products tend to be the target of political consumerist action in some countries but not in others. For instance, Canada and Switzerland have strong anti-sweatshop movements, and activists in these countries often target clothing companies. In the United States, there is an emphasis on food and its production. These industries have different associated ideologies, in each national context.

Marketing has also been seen to have a significant impact in the practice of political consumerism. It can shape market ideologies, impacting what products, companies, or industries are seen as meriting challenges. It can also impact the standards that are applied in labeling schemes like fair trade and organic. As Jaffee (2012) argues, companies have to some extent diluted these standards in an effort to market their products as being ethical, deserving of support rather than protest. By shifting standards, companies can market themselves as ethical without having to change behavior. These marketing techniques would fall into what Jacobsen and Dulsrud (2007) refer to as “supply side drivers” of political consumerism. This process has a fundamental impact on political consumerism, as what political consumers consume is in part a result. These different contexts shape how activists interact with the market. They do not simply select which issues are most important to them and act accordingly, but are instead influenced by market ideologies and understandings of which products are deserving targets of action.

Social Capital

The relationship between social capital and political consumerism is closely examined by Neilson and Paxton (2010). Motivating this research, the authors explain, is

the oversight in much of the literature on political consumerism of contextual factors (like social capital), in favor of individual factors (like income or gender). However, the authors find a meaningful link between social capital and political consumerism, suggesting the latter is influenced by factors beyond individual consumer behavior. It is in fact deeply embedded in social relations.

Neilson and Paxton define social capital as the network of trusting, positive ties among individuals. Social capital can enable political consumerism, they hypothesize, in that it increases access to information that then leads to political consumerism, and creates greater motivation to act on this information. As they point out, social capital is an important factor in social movement participation. It is necessary in order to receive the information offered by social movement action. One must be sufficiently connected to have some knowledge that such activism is taking place and why (McAdam & Paulsen 1993; Neilson & Paxton 2010). It is also necessary to motivate participation. Numerous studies have noted, for instance, that those who have ties to activists already involved in a movement are significantly more likely to also participate than those who do not (Snow et al 1980; McAdam 1986).

Neilson & Paxton (2010) ultimately find that individuals with greater social capital and those in regions with higher average levels of social capital are more likely to participate in political consumerism. They make use of several indicators of social capital, both at the individual and societal levels, and find significance for both sets. Generalized trust, trust in institutions, association involvement, and frequency of social meetings are all significant factors influencing levels of political consumerism. These findings, that for instance involvement association membership and involvement are

linked to higher levels of political consumerism, undermine the contention that the practice is an individual act. It can instead be seen as an outcome of social relationships and connections.

Religion

Religion can also impact participation in political consumerism. The influence can come in several different forms. It can be very direct, as through church and other religious groups advocating for political consumerism. As Lekakis (2013A) notes, political consumerist events are often organized by church groups, particularly in Western Europe. In the United States as well, there is a tradition of religious groups becoming involved in consumer activism. For instance, during the Vietnam War, the Clergy and Laity Concerned about the War in Vietnam coordinated action against chemical and weapons manufacturing companies, and other defense contractors, who were seen as supporting the war. This coalition of religious organizations and churches played an important role in mobilizing a popular boycott and shareholder divestment among its constituents (Vogel 2004).

The impact of religious institutions can be less direct, and more foundational. Representative of variation in larger patterns of civic participation and cultural difference, Bozonnet (2010) finds correlation between specific religious differences and levels of political consumerism in Europe. Those countries with a strong history of Protestantism, which Bozonnet associates with cultural liberalism, are more likely to see higher levels of political consumerism than predominantly Catholic countries. Generally, in the latter, private and public spheres tend to be kept more separate than the former, making

countries with a history of Protestantism prone to a civic tradition more conducive to political consumerism (Balsiger 2013, 14). One must certainly not over-essentialize these differences. Certainly, these cultures are fluid and the product of much more than simply religious tradition. However, this correlation does speak to the way in which some of the most established institutions, like those of religion, can influence whether or not activists use consumption as a political tool.

Social Class and Education

As will be explored in depth in the following chapter, both social class and levels of education have been found to have a significant impact on levels of political consumerism. For instance, Ferrer-Fons and Fraile (2013) challenge scholars who have heralded the “decline of social class” with their findings of impact of social class on levels of political consumerism in Europe. Performing a multilevel statistical analysis of European Social Survey data, the authors find that individuals are far more likely to be political consumers if they conform to certain characteristics pertaining to social class, income, and education levels. Several authors affirm the findings that class impacts political consumerism (Koos 2012; Caínzos & Voces 2010). Marien et al (2010) also find the large impact that education has on levels of political consumerism, considerably more so than more “institutionalized” forms of participation.

These contextual factors that shape, constrain, and facilitate political consumerism are not insignificant. They severely undermine the assumption that the decision to participate in political consumerism is one solely resting with the individual. Like other forms of political participation, traditionally conceived as collective, the

actions of boycotts and buycotts are influenced by external variables and imbued with collective meanings. As Lekakis states, "...individuals appear to have the choice to use a variety of tools to carve out the substance of their imagination, but in reality, the tools, patterns and canvas have already been selected for them" (Lekakis 2013A, 75).

Social Movement Organizations

SMOs also have a profound impact on the practice of political consumerism. The centrality of SMOs to political consumerism is neglected by many theorists on the subject. Balsiger (2010), however, points out that social movement activity is deeply intertwined with political consumerism, and that collective campaigns are often at the heart of these efforts. These campaigns, he explains, use framing processes to publicize often ignored issues. SMOs imbue consumer choices with political meaning.

Holzer (2006) refers to SMOs as "transmission belts" that translate monetary resources into political power (Holzer 2006, 407). Holzer draws on Snow et al's (1986) writings on framing, arguing that SMOs bring about frame transformation in order to translate individual acts of consumption into public, collective action. Producers do not generally know the preferences of consumers. They operate based on information about other producers, their competitors, rather than the motivations of consumers. Political consumerism however, through the collective politicization of consumption, becomes highly visible, turning choices of individuals into an "instrument of public influence" (Holzer 2006, 413). Collectivization of consumer choices thus serves as a sort of inverted market research, in which consumers communicate their preferences directly to producers.

As Holzer also points out, SMOs also impact political consumerism through frame bridging process. Snow et al refer to frame bridging as, “linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” (Snow et al 1986, 467). In other words, SMOs can connect two separate complementary frames. One can observe frame bridging in fair trade organizations’ use of environmental frames. In addition to pushing for better treatment of small-scale agricultural producers, many fair trade organizations have advocated for certification of products as organic. Purchases of fair trade products, activists suggest, can directly benefit agricultural producers, workers, and communities, but also local ecosystems.

Balsiger (2010) examines a case study of the CCC in Switzerland, an international anti-sweatshop campaign. Among the many examples that Balsiger offers of how these collective efforts informed political consumerism in the targeted areas, perhaps the clearest is the “ethical shopping map” the CCC created of sections of Zurich. The group provided these maps to residents to encourage consumers to support only those stores that conformed with certain labor-related standards. This consumption-based approach was combined with public demonstrations. Activists set up stands in front of noncompliant businesses to spread the word and influence the company’s practices. It was the work that this SMO put into producing an ethical shopping map that enabled consumers to “vote with their dollars” for those shops that aligned with their political beliefs. What this example illustrates is the important role that organizations play, even in the supposedly “individualized” practice of political consumerism.

Micheletti (2003) opens her book *Political Virtue and Shopping* with the story of Jonah Peretti. In 2001, then a student at MIT,¹ Peretti famously ordered customized Nike shoes with the word “sweatshop” on them, and then engaged in a lengthy email exchange with the company when it refused to make the shoes. This exchange then went viral, a strong example according to Micheletti, of “culture jamming,” undermining Nike’s own marketing about the freedom of expression with its customizable shoes (Micheletti 2003, 12). Micheletti characterizes this exchange and its subsequent spread as a departure from a politics of the past. “A classical political response on the part of the MIT student would have been to directly approach politicians and interest groups for better government regulation...or to become a card-carrying member of a social movement or interest group mobilizing citizens” (Micheletti 2003, 14).

This interpretation of the story, however, leaves out several important aspects, most notably, how it is that the exchange came to spread. Balsiger (2013) explains that the spread was not random nor was it the result of Peretti simply passing the exchange along to friends. It was only once activists involved in the anti-sweatshop movement, including those involved in student, church, and labor groups, that the exchange truly began to spread widely. It is this element, that of SMOs, that took the actions of an individual sending emails to a customer service representative and turned them into a political and public act of defiance. Additionally, as Balsiger goes on to point out, Peretti was likely only aware of and targeting Nike’s unjust labor practices because of the very active anti-sweatshop movement organizations around the turn of the century. What Micheletti characterizes as a novel and individualized form of practicing politics is truly

¹ Peretti has since gone on to co-found the popular websites BuzzFeed and the Huffington Post.

the story of established social movement groups using the actions of an individual to amplify a message.

Social movements continue to use political consumerism as one tool to leverage purchasing power against their targets. Even those scholars who suggest that political consumerism conforms to a new, individualized, lifestyle-based form of voicing political concerns have not failed to acknowledge the role of social movements. For instance, Haenfler et al (2012), who write about the emergence of “lifestyle movements,” note the importance of environmental SMOs like the Sierra Club and Audubon Society in facilitating political consumerism. These groups, the authors explain, offer tips for green living and recommendations of environmentally sustainable seafood. Centralized and professional campaign organizations are necessary to make consumerist action possible in a way that is truly political.

Political Consumerism without Collectivity?

In addition to the many factors and institutions beyond the individual that impact and shape political consumerism, the practice must also be considered *essentially* collective. Collectivity is in fact what makes such action political. Whereas an individual may consume or not consume for ethical or political reasons, this fact alone does not make it political. Balsiger states:

Politically or otherwise collectively framed activities contain all sorts of personal motivations for participation. What makes these practices political is their collective framing as such, not individual motivations of participants. Political consumerism, in this respect, is no exception (Balsiger 2010, 326).

There are several reasons why this fact is the case. First, collective efforts are necessary for framing consumption as political. As explored above, SMOs are often

critical in this process. The action of individual consumption, in the absence of a collective framing, cannot be considered “political,” regardless of motivation. This is not to suggest that one can never act politically as an individual. Holding a picket sign outside of city hall alone and casting a vote in a voting booth can both certainly be considered political actions. However, political consumerism is unique in that the act of consumption itself serves many purposes beyond the political, from obtaining necessities to satisfying personal preferences or desires. Consumption is in fact often assumed to be a self-interested behavior. It is necessary then for additional framing of such an action, primarily through collective efforts, to make it political. This framing imbues an individual’s consumption with collective meaning. While an individual may decide to purchase only fairly sourced garments, it is the collective anti-sweatshop movement that gives that action meaning beyond the individual, and establishes it as more than simply consumer preference.

Relatedly, one cannot be said to boycott or, especially, boycott alone. In addition to framing, the action itself must be done collectively. Not only must two or more people refrain from consuming in a boycott, it is necessary for there to be some degree of coordination. If two individuals refrain from consuming a particular product, there is no effect beyond depriving the company of those profits, which cannot be said to be political, as no claims have been made. Coordination allows for such actions to be interpreted as a boycott campaign. It is through the collective effort that claims can be made, messages projected, and change of policies or other practices made possible.

Third, one must consider the assumption of shared costs of political consumers. Boycotting a company tends to impose costs on the boycotter. As Klein et al (2004)

argue, the individual benefits of boycotting are generally low, but could carry meaningful costs. Purchasing fair trade or organic items from a specialty store, for instance, is considerably more costly than purchasing uncertified products at a nearby big box store. However, it is the assumption that others will act in concert that motivates the boycotter to take action. Without the assumption of collectivity, there would be little appeal to boycott, and even less expectation that such action will have political implications. In fact, Sen et al (2001) and John and Klein (2003) both find that the expectations that the likelihood that a consumer-activist will engage in a boycott is highly dependent on the expectation that others will also do so, indicative of this assumption that costs will be shared.

Lastly, political consumerism can be seen as “individually enacted” but “collectively effective” (Lekakis 2013A, 76). Collective action is necessary for political consumerism to be effective. King (2008) identifies two types of impacts that boycotts can have on a company: 1) depriving it of revenue, and 2) damaging its reputation. An individual can impose both of these costs to a limited extent. However, one consumer-activist alone, no matter how vocal or passionate, cannot extract concessions from a company without, at the very least, the assumption that such action will attract others to the cause. Concessions are driven by the projection that to do otherwise would lead to greater costs or losses in revenue. No such projection can be made if consumers are not acting in concert with one another. The need for collective action is affirmed by the political consumers that Lekakis interviews, who acknowledge the necessity of collective efforts to engender social change through political consumerism. Lekakis states, “in its immediate manifestation, political consumerism appears to be an individual act, but it can

only have political repercussions when it is the sum of collective individualities acting at the same time, on the same subject, with the same agenda” (Lekakis 2013A, 72).

Implications for Collective Action

In light of these considerations, how then should political consumerism be situated in collective action? Where does it fit into understandings of social movements? As has been argued in this chapter, it is clear that political consumerism must be considered a form of collective action, albeit one with greater emphasis on the individual than other types of collective behavior. It is useful here to draw upon Balsiger’s (2010) description of collective action existing on a spectrum of levels of collectivity and coordination between participating actors. He describes action forms ranging from the most collective, what he refers to as “protest”, to the most individual, “consumerist,” with “conventional” action falling in between. Despite manifesting itself at the individual level, Balsiger acknowledges that even consumerist action forms are collective, for several reasons explored in this chapter. This understanding of action forms existing on a spectrum is beneficial to the study of political consumerism. It suggests that action should not be classified on the sole basis of the level at which it is practiced. At its most basic, collective action is simply a group of people working to achieve a common objective. Political consumerism certainly conforms to this broad definition. However, the study of social movements and political action necessitates greater precision.

The practice of political consumerism suggests that scholars should define the collectivity of action based on three considerations: 1) practice, 2) external influence, and 3) levels of coordination. All three characteristics impact whether or not an action form

can be considered collective. Though political consumerism is practiced at the level of the individual, it is subject to a range of external influences and high levels of coordination. Understandings of collective action must be fluid, and satisfaction of fixed criteria should not be the basis for labeling an action form as “collective.” These characteristics nonetheless must all be examined in classifying action forms.

In understanding political consumerism, which is practiced individually, as collective action, one must also revisit understandings of social movements. Tarrow defines social movements as, “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (Tarrow 1994, 3-4). In light of the argument posed in this thesis, political consumerism can be seen as conforming to this definition. However, political consumerism should not itself be considered a social movement, but rather market-oriented tool of social movements. Like petitions, rallies, street theater, and other action forms that fall on Balsiger’s spectrum of collective action, political consumerist forms should be viewed as methods by which movement actors can challenge authorities, often of or relating to the market, to pursue a common goal. For instance, the CCC, part of a larger anti-sweatshop movement, created market-based tools for contention, like the ethical shopping map, to leverage consumer power and alter local supply chains (Balsiger 2010).

As Lekakis points out, the relationship between individual and collective action in political consumerism is neither straightforward nor uncomplicated (Lekakis 2013A, 71). It is because of this complexity that the concept of political consumerism is particularly useful in the study of collective action, in that it challenges and reshapes the concept of collectivity. This tactic also challenges understandings of how social movement action is

practiced, with political consumerism being manifested at the level of the individual. Implications for future study are numerous. Political consumerism as a collective, social movement tactic raises questions about so-called “lifestyle movements” or other arguments pertaining to the individualization of political participation. How individualized are these modes of participation? To what extent are they attributable to SMOs and other pre-existing institutions and organizations? It also suggests that social movement scholars should explore other actions that are practiced at the individual level, such as giving to charity, blogging, or voicing political opinions via social media.

Additionally, acknowledging the politics of consumption as an element of social movement action has implications for the boundaries of movements. Where does a social movement “end”? As argued in this thesis, those social movements that employ consumerist tactics can be said to extend to the level of consumer. Participants need not be diehard enthusiasts, but can nonetheless contribute through the purchase decisions. The consumer, who may not be willing to go to a rally, can be willing to purchase one product over another. This consumer, if deliberately acting in pursuit of the collective goal of a social movement, is part of that movement. Movements are therefore expanded beyond the realm of the “public” to include what is traditionally considered the private realm of purchase.

Political consumerism must be seen as collective for a host of reasons. It is embedded in historical and political context that shape its practice, a fact that is downplayed by proponents of so-called “individualized collective action.” It is given meaning and coordinated through the campaigns of SMOs and other groups. Lastly, the collective messaging and defining of political consumerist behavior is essential to what

makes it truly political. This classificational argument is not simply an esoteric or abstract exercise. Rather, it holds meaningful implications for how scholars, as well as activists themselves, think of social movements, the politics of consumption, and the role and necessity of collective coordination in political action.

6

Exclusivity of Participation in Political Consumerism

The use of political consumerism as tool of social movements and activism has a number of troubling implications for participation. Many scholars applaud the supposed rise of political consumerism as a means by which consumers in the developed Global North can make an impact on social issues, despite disenchantment with the traditional political process. Political consumerism broadens the pool of potential participants to include those who are typically excluded from the halls of political power. Micheletti notes, “People excluded from such policymaking communities as corporate board rooms, diplomatic circles, and legislative arenas, can use their market choices as a means for political expression and as political action” (Micheletti 2003, 12). She argues that this expansion is attributable in part to the inability to regulate consumer behavior, unlike other channels of participation, allowing consumers to introduce new issues to the public agenda. Consumer citizenship, as represented by political consumerism, could therefore be thought of as expanding the field of potential active participants, relative to traditional political citizenship.

Political consumerism can certainly be said to open opportunities for some consumers and activists. Boycotts and buycotts can be effective tools to impact behavior of market actors (King & Soule 2007; King 2008; King & Pearce 2010; Harrison & Scorse 2010). Additionally, as is explored in greater depth below, political consumerism has allowed traditionally excluded groups, like women and young people, greater

opportunities to voice political concerns. However, the practice is overall significantly more exclusive than other political action forms. A social movement adopting political consumerist action forms effectively restricts participation on the bases of education level, income, social class, and geography, all of which have been seen to impact a tendency towards political consumerism.

The increase in political consumerism over the past half-century and its emphasis on self-interest, doing good for oneself as well as society, makes this exclusion particularly troubling. Inclusion of a diversity of activists allows for greater innovation, legitimacy, and responsiveness to the needs and concerns of would-be activists. There have been numerous studies done on exclusion from social movements on the bases of gender, sexuality, and race, from exclusion of women from the Black Civil Rights Movement to lesbians from the women's movement to immigrant groups from the labor movement (Robnett 1996; Robnett 1997; Gamson 1997; Armstrong 2002; Frank 2003; Naples 2012). However, the topic of the inclusiveness of certain social movement tactics over others has been severely underdeveloped by social movement studies. Political consumerism offers an opportunity to explore how certain approaches to activism impact who can and does participate in a social movement.

Other action forms undoubtedly limit participation through a variety of constraints, costs, and other limitations. For instance, highly public protest action, like marches and rallies, often requires significant inputs of time, effort, and, at times, risk. These resources are not enjoyed evenly or broadly by all potential participants. Additionally, traditional forms of participation, such as voting, are far from equitable or wholly inclusive. There is de jure exclusion, such as disenfranchisement of individuals

who are currently or formerly incarcerated, in parts of Europe, the United States, and less democratic states like China. There also exists de facto exclusion, through policies such as those proposing voter identification requirements, which tend to disproportionately impact certain demographic groups, or the ability of the economically powerful to sway voters through political spending.

However, the exclusion in political consumerism is more fundamental than many other action forms. Unlike voting, for which there is in most cases a formal promise of equality, there is no one person, one vote presupposition in so-called “dollar voting.” At its core, political consumerism is the use of one’s relative economic power to pursue political or social change. Economic power thus is the basic currency of action; therefore, there exists a direct relationship between economic and political power. What proponents of political consumerism view as enhancing and expanding democracy to the private realm of purchase is in fact deeply and fundamentally inequitable.

Political consumers frequently note their skepticism of the democratic nature of Western political systems (Micheletti 2003; King & Pearce 2010; Lekakis 2013A; Zamwel et al 2014). This distrust of the political process is to a great extent merited. The corrosive impact of money, the politics of fear, short-sightedness of elected officials, and indirectness of democratic representation all appear to be legitimate criticisms of the current state of Western formal political processes. Tools like dollar voting are seen as a way of enhancing democratic participation. Political consumers see themselves as challenging to some extent traditional political institutions, whose democratic nature have been undermined by any number of interests, particularly those of the economic elite. However, ironically, political consumerism is no more democratic. In fact, it is shaped by

many of the same forces that are criticized for usurping traditional political power. The impacts of marketing, corporate influence, and market ideologies over political consumerism, as noted in Chapter 5, undermine the idea of consumers as autonomous, independent actors. More essential is the undemocratic incongruity of opportunity that political consumerism allows. A far cry from a “rough democracy of buying” (Simon 2011, 149), political consumerism is fundamentally exclusionary, restricting participation on the bases of education, geography, and class.

Value of inclusion

Diversity and inviting the voices of a variety of peoples can lead to increased information and innovation in action, wider legitimacy, and greater responsiveness. However, striving for inclusiveness in social movements must be valued in its own right. This fact is particularly true of progressive movements. Those movements that are said to pursue progressive goals must also embrace progressive action forms, rather than those forms whose political potency is directly commensurate with economic privilege, like political consumerism. That being said, there are also a number of practical reasons that social movement actors should embrace inclusivity.

Putnam (2000) makes the distinction between social capital that is bonding and that which is bridging. The former is exclusive social capital, reinforcing existing identities, such as social capital embodied in ethnic or religious organizations. The latter pertains to inclusive networks and involves a diversity of peoples. Bonding social capital is beneficial to those individuals who are able to participate in these exclusive groups. However, bridging capital, Putnam explains, cannot only create more progressive and

inclusive identities, but is also crucial in information diffusion. Rather than having information circulate among an elite, vanguard, or any other exclusive grouping, bridging social capital allows for the freer, more lucrative flow of information.

Putnam's bridging social capital speaks to the value of inclusivity in social movements to information and innovation. Greater inclusion of a diversity of perspectives facilitates the flow of information among activists and allows creativity and innovation to flourish. Schlosberg (1999) demonstrates the importance of pluralism and a diversity in perspectives in the environmental movement, which leads to collaboration and innovation. As he states, "diverse understandings are bred by varied experience" (Schlosberg 1999, 123). Pertaining to consumer campaigns specifically, particularly those that seek to benefit the poor of the Global South, Frank (2003) points out that workers in Southeast Asia, Central, and South America actually have a more successful history of labor struggles than many in the Global North. These groups have skills and knowledge that would be valuable to a movement targeting the negative impacts of globalization. Additionally, McAdam (1983) identifies "tactical innovation" as a necessary means by which activists can overcome relative powerlessness to bring about social change. As new protest tactics were developed during the Black Civil Rights Movement, movement activity peaked. By empowering a wide variety of voices, social movements get better information and are better able to innovate.

The role of a social movement is to respond to or express the concerns of a population or set of populations. By empowering a diversity of voices, a movement can better respond to those concerns. Frank (2003), who argues that consumer-based, labor-related campaigns must do a better job of including the voices of workers, provides an

example of why inclusion is important in responding to concerns. When the poor, sweatshop-like conditions of maquiladoras in northern Mexico came to light in the late 20th century, those in the United States sympathetic to the workers moved to boycott products made in these plants. The workers had to insist that they did not do so, as it would lead to significant job loss. By opting for a boycott, consumer-activists left out the voices of the Mexican workers, who could not have been expected to be in a position to themselves participate in a consumption-based campaign. The boycott tactic elevated the voices and preferences of consumers over workers. Though such working conditions were abhorrent, taking action without considering those whom the action was meant to benefit may have ultimately led to greater suffering. A more inclusive approach, perhaps involving a true consumer-worker alliance, would have far better responded to the issues at hand.

Relatedly, by enabling more people to join a social movement, it gains greater legitimacy. A movement that only facilitates the participation of an exclusive group of activists can be easily dismissed as not truly representing people's interests more broadly. For instance, can a social movement truly be said to represent the interests of the poor, in the face of their exclusion from the benefits of neoliberal globalization, if the poor are excluded from participation? An exclusive movement, more so than one with greater diversity, will have greater difficulty making the case to the public or the entity being targeted that it is representative of broader interests. Holt (2012) touches on this point in arguing that the only modestly successful anti-bottled water movement impeded its own progress by focusing too narrowly on shifting consumer choice. This approach enabled participation from only a small subset of the general population, namely an elite of

college students. The movement came to be seen as limited only to college campuses, rather than addressing environmental concerns that impact the population more broadly.

Political Consumerism's Successes

It must be acknowledged that although political consumerism is highly exclusive in certain regards, it has notably been successful in including certain groups generally seen as left out of traditional modes of political participation -- namely women and youth. Marien et al (2010) use data from the International Social Survey Programme to analyze equality in patterns of participation. In their study, they compare "institutionalized" participation, such as voting, and "non-institutionalized" participation, in which political consumerism is counted. They find that non-institutionalized participation tends to see greater inequality when compared to institutionalized variants vis-à-vis education and class. However, women and young people actually participate more than men and older cohorts in non-institutionalized forms, as opposed to the inverse seen in many institutionalized forms.

Inclusion of Youth

While the trend has not been linear, young adult voter turnout has generally been significantly lower than older cohorts in most elections in North America and Europe over the past half-century. However, non-institutionalized action forms enjoy relatively high popularity among young adults. There are a number of potential explanations for the proclivity toward political consumerism among youth. Marien et al (2010) speculate that non-institutionalized participation, like political consumerism, might be less intensive than activities like voting. However, they admit that their study does not account for any

measures of intensity of action forms. It seems that this explanation is unlikely, based on the authors' own data. In addition to finding a higher likelihood of political consumerism among young people, their "non-institutionalized participation" also includes activities like public demonstrations, which are generally more time-consuming and higher risk than voting. Low intensity thus does not appear to be a strong motivator of young people. Additionally, Micheletti (2003) supposes that the higher participation in political consumerism among young people is due in part to the appeal of "individualization." However, as is argued in Chapter 5, it does not appear that political consumerism is significantly more individualized than other political action forms.

Ward & de Vreese (2011) attribute young people's tendency towards political consumerism in part to the internet and "new media." This contention is supported by a correlation between "socially conscious consumption" and internet usage. Kann et al (2007) also emphasize the role of the internet in facilitating youth political consumerism. They identify the internet as making consumer action more accessible. Online, young adults have access to "action kits," which enable them to more easily start a boycott and other consumption-based campaigns locally. The authors explain that buying guides are also widely accessible on the internet to assist in identifying which corporations merit consumer action. Other online tools make political consumerism easier, such as Delocator.net, a website on which users can search for local shops in their neighborhood as an alternative to patronizing large corporations like Starbucks.

It stands to reason that the disproportionate use of the internet by young people would encourage relatively high levels of political consumerism in that information about consumer boycotts, the impacts of consumption, and unethical behavior of corporations is

more widely available online than in traditional media. Political consumerist mobile applications like Buycott, BuyPartisan, and 2nd Vote all support this contention. Internet users also have access to online quizzes like the Slavery Footprint survey, which tells users how many slaves likely work to enable their consumption. However, while youth internet usage may explain the ease with which political consumerism is practiced, it does not account for its relative appeal over traditional participation like electoral voting. After all, several studies have noted the role of the internet in engaging young people in formal elections as well, particularly in the 2008 US Presidential election season, which to a great extent took place online when compared to past elections (Garcia-Castañon et al 2011; Vitak et al 2011).

Hargittai and Shaw (2012) identify two competing narratives that exist in academic literature on youth political participation. One school, what the authors refer to as “disaffected citizenship,” argues that youth are withdrawing from public life, measured by voter turnout and similar indicators. The second, “cultural displacement,” suggests that the participation is simply taking place elsewhere. Based on interviews with political consumers performed by Lekakis (2013A) and Zamwel et al (2014), it appears that both schools of thought reflect certain empirical realities. Political consumers express disaffection with traditional politics, but also enthusiasm for alternative forms of participation. Additionally, one can observe aggressive marketing of “ethical” products to youth and a tendency towards non-traditional forms of political participation among youth historically.

Inclusion of Women

Unlike youth, women are not known as being apathetic toward political participation. Indeed, in many cases, women more regularly vote in large elections than men in many of the world's liberal democracies, which most frequently see political consumerism. They are, however, seen as being less involved in traditional politics than men, particularly in light of lower membership in formal, hierarchical civic organizations (Stolle & Micheletti 2006; Marien et al 2010). Despite this trend, women are actually more likely to participate in political consumerism than men. This fact has been documented repeatedly by studies of political consumers (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti 2004; Andersen & Tobiasson 2006; Stolle & Micheletti 2006; Marien et al 2010; Stolle & Hooze 2011; Ferrer-Fons & Fraile 2013). Stolle and Hooze (2011) find that in 1972, 23% fewer women than men boycotted. By 2002, 14% more women than men boycotted. This difference is even greater when examining boycotts, which are much more frequently carried out by women.

Micheletti (2003) proposes three reasons for the attractiveness of political consumerism to women. First, women are still often considered responsible for regular, everyday shopping trips for their families, making them more cognizant of and thoughtful about product quality. However, being more thoughtful about product quality does not necessarily encourage political consumerism. After all, political consumerism involves putting ideology and concerns about others above more self-interested concerns like quality and price. The frequency of everyday shopping by women nonetheless likely has an impact on levels of politically-motivated consumption, if not because of greater awareness of product quality. As Stolle and Micheletti (2006) note, it is likely that women score higher in surveys on political consumerism because they simply shop, on

average, more often. The authors performed a survey of women and men in Sweden. The results substantiate the assumption that women are still more often responsible for everyday shopping than men. Surveys used in political consumerism studies often ask questions that inquire whether or not the respondent has purchased or not purchased products for political reasons. It thus stands to reason that those who more frequently purchase groceries and other necessities would more often answer in the affirmative.

Second, Micheletti explains that women have a “lower risk perception threshold” (Micheletti 2003, 18) than men. Females perceive risk at lower levels than males, making issues like climate change and pollution seem more urgent to women than men. It seems unlikely that this factor plays a significant role. It over-essentializes differences between men and women by assuming that they respond to perceived threats differently. Additionally, even if this premise were accepted, it would not speak to the higher levels of participation among women in non-institutionalized relative to institutionalized forms. If women did perceive social issues more acutely, not only would one expect to see higher levels of political consumerism for women, but also greater participation in lobbying and any other form of publicly-minded civic participation. This contention then seems to be inadequate in explaining the so-called “gender gap reversed” in political consumerism (Stolle & Micheletti 2006).

Lastly, political consumerism is seen as a refuge for women, who have traditionally been excluded from formal politics. Politics through the consumption thus becomes more attractive as a means of airing grievances. In light of the history of women’s use of the market for politics, this explanation seems to be most compelling. Women have often been deeply involved in revolutionary and political struggles in which

consumption played a significant part (Micheletti 2004; Jubas 2007). During the American Revolution, women played a significant role in consumer boycotts of British goods through the “subscription list movement,” through which they popularized and sought commitment to the boycotts (Micheletti 2004, 246). Jubas (2007) notes the use of consumer-based action in expanding women’s rights. Abolitionist campaigns of the 18th and 19th centuries heightened British women’s understanding of their own political exclusion. These struggles gave way to cooperatives, largely run by women, and other consumer campaigns to expand women’s rights in the marketplace. As Jubas notes, these struggles enabled women, who were generally excluded from traditional participation forms, to voice their concerns. In the Indian struggle for independence from the British Empire, consumer campaigns, and women’s role in them, were critical to the success of the Swadeshi movement, the anti-colonial struggle’s economic wing (Micheletti 2004). Many women played a central role in constructing and popularizing the Swadeshi movement’s consumerist campaigns (Taneja 2005). The relative popularity of political consumerism among women thus make sense. In the context of exclusion from traditional forms of political power, politics through the market becomes an appealing means with which women can voice political preferences. Today, though women have won the formal right to vote in many countries in which political consumerism is most popular, women continue to be underrepresented in major political office and large political organizations, as well as facing a number of other forms of political discrimination. Non-institutionalized participation forms have therefore not lost their appeal.

Political consumerism, however, is not unilaterally or even widely accessible to either women or young adults. As is explored in subsequent sections, the practice of

using purchasing power as a political tool remains feasible only for some. Education, geography, income, and class all impact an individual's likelihood and potential of participating in politics of the market. While it may be a useful tool for those who have access to it, political consumerism is a highly exclusive form of political action.

Bases of exclusion

Political consumerism has opened opportunities for certain social groups to participate, such as young adults and women. Additionally, institutionalized forms of political participation, such as voting, lobbying, and membership in political organizations are marked by discrimination and inequality of practice. As Marien et al (2010) note, education level, class, gender, and age all correlate with institutionalized participation, with some segments of the population participating more than others. The authors find that institutionalized participation is more frequently practiced by men than women, highly educated than those with little or no formal education, and older adults than younger. These findings are substantiated by a number of other studies (Verba et al 1995; Hooghe & Stolle 2004; Scheufele et al 2004; Matland 2005; Teorell et al 2007). However, political consumerism remains troublingly exclusive. Unlike other forms of participation, such as voting, there exists no formal promise of equality. Political consumerism is fundamentally exclusive in that its practice is based upon consumer choice, which is not broadly accessible. This distinction is important. The formal political process is open to reform that would make it more accessible. Additionally, while other forms of activism, such as public demonstrations, may require time and the taking on of risk, these action forms too can be made more widely accessible by minimizing time

commitments. However, political consumerism's relationship with exclusivity is more fundamental.

Education

Education level has been found to be highly correlated with the practice of political consumerism. Numerous studies have documented the significant impact that education has on propensity towards political consumerism (Strømsnes 2005; Andersen & Tobiasson 2006; Koos 2012; Ferrer-Fons & Fraile 2013). The practice is exceedingly more popular among those who are highly educated than those who have less formal education. Indeed, Koos (2012) finds that a post-secondary education is more highly correlated with political consumerist behavior than any other variable examined, including gender, income, generalized trust, or interest in politics.

In all of these studies, the correlation between political consumerism and education level is strong. This incongruity of practice, between those with many years of formal education and those without, is attributable to several factors. Ferrer-Fons and Fraile (2013) identify three aspects of education level that may impact likelihood of political consumerism: skills, information, and predisposition. Another likely factor is education level's correlation with other variables, such as class or income.

Education brings with it a number of skills relevant to political participation. It equips citizens with tools that can be harnessed towards a political or civic end, what Verba et al refer to as "civic skill," (Verba et al 1995; Koos 2012). In addition to promoting democratic values, trust in political process, and tolerance of others and their perspectives, civic education is also linked to a deeper understanding of current events,

social issues, and how to make an impact on those issues (Galston 2004). This is not to suggest that those with fewer years of formal education do not have civic skills, nor that they lack information about purchasing goods and services, required for political consumerism. However, those with less formal education may not have the same access to the skills and tools that enable the politicization of those purchases, such as communication skills that can be used to effectively message a boycott, or political consumerist technologies.

Access to information is also critical to the practice of political consumerism, and central to education's impact on it. Formal education, and the participation in institutions of higher learning like college campuses, exposes consumers to information about the practice of corporations, the impact of certain products on the environment, and global labor practices. This information is often necessary in motivating the targeting of one company or industry over another in political consumerist action. One must be exposed to information about the impacts of one's consumption choices in order to alter them for political purposes.

Additionally, Ferrer-Fons & Fraile (2013) speak of the predisposition of those with more formal education towards political consumerism. The practice may simply appeal more to individuals with higher levels of formal education, who are more likely to be surrounded by political consumerist messaging. Spending time on college campuses, which are hotspots for consumerist action, exposes college-educated individuals to this form of action. Those who have attended institutions of higher learning have a greater likelihood of this exposure, and therefore a greater likelihood to see these tools as means with which one could wield influence.

Lastly, education level is closely tied to income and class, which are both determinants of political consumerism. As is explored below, income and class are critical to its practice. Those who have post-secondary education are more likely to get into higher paying careers, and therefore more likely to have the disposable income with which to augment purchase decisions. Conversely, those who have greater access to wealth, predictive of political consumerism, are also more likely to be highly educated. For these reasons, education is closely linked with a proclivity towards political consumerism. Consumption-based political tools therefore become most appealing and accessible to an educated elite.

Geography

Several authors have explored the constraints on political consumerist practice, questioning the assumption of consumer choice (Holzer 2006; Balsiger 2013). How much power do consumers have when their options are limited? Geography is one way in which these options are often limited. Strømsnes (2005) finds a close connection between one's place of residence and likelihood of participating in political consumerism. In her study, she finds the practice most frequently appeals to urbanites. This finding has been noted in several other studies (Forno & Ceccarini 2006; Neilson & Paxton 2010).

There are numerous reasons for this disparity in the practice of political consumerism. Perhaps most centrally, the thought that underlies political consumerism, what Holt (2012) refers to as the "ethical values paradigm," assumes choice. If one company's products are made using sweatshop labor and another's are not, an ethical or political consumer should purchase from the latter. However, geography, where one

lives, has significant implications for consumer choice. In densely populated regions, generally, there is a greater selection of shops and products than in rural areas, which may have very few options. Tools like an ethical shopping map, such as that developed by the CCC in and around Zurich, really only hold utility in the context of choice. Political consumerism is therefore inaccessible to those whose choices are limited.

Secondly, Koos (2012) documents the significant impact that the structure of a region's retail sector can have on political consumerism. As he explains, in Northern Europe, where large supermarkets offer myriad options of products, political consumerism is high; whereas, fragmented retail sectors like those of Southern Europe, with smaller shops offering fewer choices, political consumerism is low. In many cases, large supermarkets are more widely accessible in urban areas (Lindén 2004). In addition to the range of choices offered by the density of urban life, the structure of retail sector of these areas also enable choice, and therefore political consumerism.

Lastly, one must acknowledge that not only can urban settings facilitate political consumerism, but political consumers can also be attracted to urban life. Part of the correlation between these two factors is related to the draw of cities to these consumers. In their ethnographic study of the Bristol Fairtrade City Campaign, Malpass et al (2004) note the phenomenon of "fair trade urbanism." Fair trade consumers, they explain, are drawn to "hotspots" of fair trade activity, largely in cities. Those who strongly wish to participate in the fair trade movement or promote environmental sustainability by using public transportation over gas-consuming automobiles, will tend to gravitate towards urban centers.

The relationship between geography and political consumerism is multifaceted, and deeper than can be described in this thesis. However, what is clear is that place and residence can significantly constrain or facilitate political consumerism. Those with a greater number of choices are able to far more easily become political consumers than those whose setting restricts consumer choice. This dependence on population density and retail sector structure for consumer choice is likely to be alleviated in part as increasing amounts of commerce is done on the internet. However, regional internet penetration will then become a constraining factor on consumer choice. Nonetheless, the impact of geography on the ability to participate in political consumerism remains significant.

Income and class

Most fundamentally, political consumerism excludes on the bases of income and particularly social class. Those in higher or more elite classes participate in political consumerism more frequently than those who are not. This finding has been well-documented by a number of scholars (Frank 2003; Caínzos & Voces 2010; Koos 2012; Lekakis 2013A; Ferrer-Fons & Fraile 2013). In fact, Caínzos and Voces (2010) find in a study of forms of political participation and their relationship with class, the practice of boycotts is the most lopsided, with much greater occurrence among those of upper and middle classes.

Caínzos and Voces specifically examine the role of social class in political consumerism. Challenging the “death of class” perspective that social class is no longer relevant to politics, the authors find its significant impact on numerous forms of

participation, regardless of how class is measured. Particularly significant is when social class is defined by occupation, with a large difference between what the authors refer to as “sociocultural professionals,” who generally practice relatively high levels of protest activity, and the self-employed and manual laborers. There are numerous reasons for this relationship between social class, income, and political consumerism. First, social class and income are often tied to other variables that impact political consumerism, such as education level. As noted above, greater formal education is often associated with likelihood of participating in political consumerism. Education level is also correlated with social class and income, which are generally mutually reinforcing.

Second, income and social class are also related to geography. While it has been noted that regions with greater population density generally see higher levels of political consumerism, one must also account for the economic conditions of the region. Low-income areas, whether rural, urban, or suburban are more likely to be “food deserts,” with few options for groceries and other types of shopping (Cotterill & Franklin 1995; Smith et al 2010). Additionally, Koos’ (2012) finding that a fragmented retail sector constrains political consumerism is also informative. Low-income cities are known for the prevalence of small corner stores, rather than large supermarkets. Koos identifies this fragmented structure as limiting consumer choice and by extension political consumerism. The impact of the dearth of shopping options is amplified by the product options available. Specialty stores and restaurants that offer organic, fair trade, or ethically-sourced options do not frequently set up shop in low-income areas. This absence makes sense, due to the significant cost these products often carry (Johnston 2008).

Lastly, income and class can act as a direct constraint on political consumerism, whose “dollar voting” is less accessible to those with fewer dollars than those with more. Political consumerism is, at its core, a form of buying political influence, or using the threat of not buying to wield influence. For those with less access to monetary resources to leverage, this action form is not only unappealing but at times wholly inaccessible. Proponents of political consumerism assume some degree of discretionary income, with which consumers can pay a premium on ethically sourced products. For those receiving government-funded, supplemental income or living paycheck to paycheck, affordability and product quality take precedence over political consumerist concerns. Several studies have confirmed that when faced with a true and serious trade-off, consumers rarely put political concerns over price (Carrigan & Attalla 2001; Auger & Devinney 2007; Holt 2012).

It should be noted that there have been contradictory findings on the relationship between political consumerism and income, specifically. For instance, Strømsnes (2005) finds that income has only a minor impact on likelihood of political consumerism. Koos (2012) finds that income does have an impact on boycotting, but less so for boycotting. However, several others have spoken to the impact of income on political consumerism practice (Marien et al. 2010; Balsiger 2013; Ferrer-Fons & Fraile 2013). More evidence is needed to establish how income impacts this action form. However, it remains clear that social class and, albeit to a lesser extent income, do in many cases influence political consumerism.

Implications for Social Movements and Political Participation

Exclusion in political consumerism has implications for citizenship. As argued in Chapter 4, political consumerism is representative of consumer citizenship. However, political consumerism cannot be equated with democratic political participation, such as voting. It is a practice that is only feasible for a subset of the population. As Lekakis states, “While political consumerism might be political under certain conditions, it cannot be viewed as democratic under any conditions” (Lekakis 2013A, 60). For many liberal democracies, the more political participation takes place in the marketplace, the less democratic it can be considered.

The study of political consumerism and how it impacts who is involved in social movements allows scholars an opportunity to explore the value of more inclusive tactics. Though studies have documented the benefits that are stimulated by a greater diversity of participants in institutionalized, democratic politics (Skocpol 2003; 2004) and civil society (Putnam 2000), this discussion is largely absent from social movement studies. Scholars can examine the impacts on participation of a movement organization adopting a consumerist approach to action, and subsequently, how the organization’s policy orientations and legitimacy among activists are affected.

Though political consumerism is particularly exclusive as a form of political action, it is not unique. Forms of political participation allow for varying levels of inclusion. From voting to strikes to civil disobedience, all action forms have associated costs and barriers to involvement. Political consumerism is just one example of how promoting a particular action form can impact who is able to participate. Indeed, political consumerism can actually enable greater participation of certain segments of the population. Social movement scholars must more thoroughly examine the inclusiveness

of movements, not just on the basis of explicit discrimination in membership, but also in how strategic decisions impact who is able to participate. Much can be gained in scholarship, as well as by activists, by establishing how different action forms affect who is in and who is left out of a movement. Not only will this study advance the field theoretically, it could also aid in movement recruitment by giving movement leaders tools to determine how best to incorporate a diversity of voices.

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Conclusion

This thesis sets out to explore the implications of political consumerism for political participation, citizenship, and collective action. In it, I have argued that political consumerism is representative of a form of consumer citizenship, in which citizens wield influence via consumption. Because of this relationship, between political and economic power, the practice tends to be highly exclusionary, restricting participation to only those with adequate financial resources and a great degree of consumer choice. Additionally, I argue that despite understandings of political consumerism by some scholars as an individualized practice, it is in fact, like many other forms of political participation, deeply collective.

Political consumerism must be understood in historical context. In its current form, it is emblematic of the globalized world in which we live. The dominance of economic liberalization, neoliberalism, and globalization, as well as a move towards “liquid modernity” (Bauman 2000), have shaped political consumerism, and the mainstreaming of its use. In this context and because of changes in citizenship, the appeal of political consumerism is perhaps unsurprising. The “emergence” of political consumerism in its current form and the reasons for it are outlined in Chapter 2. Regardless of its appeal as a tool of contention, it is nonetheless necessary for scholars and activists to fully understand and evaluate the merits of practices such as dollar voting.

As is shown in Chapter 6, such methods can have problematic implications for who can have access to channels for pursuing political and social change.

The arguments in this thesis serve three main purposes. First, the study of political consumerism, despite an increase of scholarly interest in recent years, remains undertheorized. Scholars of citizenship, government, and political participation continue to focus primarily on the state and citizens' interactions with them. This bias has been particularly pronounced in social movement literature. Though social movement literature has certainly contributed to the conversation about political action targeting market entities, the attention paid to political consumerism has been commensurate neither with the prevalence of the practice nor the theoretical tools that this literature could offer to its study. This thesis seeks to fill some of these gaps, bridging the study of social movements, citizenship, and consumption-based political action. By doing so, future scholarship can build on these arguments and take up the questions posed.

Political consumerism, however, has not been neglected by scholarship entirely. This thesis also seeks to dispel some myths prevalent in literature on political consumerism, namely the assumptions that it is an individualized form of participation and that it is more inclusive than other forms. These arguments, that political consumerism expands participation beyond the realm of traditional politics to a subpolitics, where individual consumers can have a voice, are common among proponents of this form of action. They neglect to acknowledge the many ways in which political consumerism is collective, and how it fundamentally restricts participation to certain subsets of the world's population. In addition to filling gaps in certain bodies of

literature, it is also important to evaluate those theories and concepts that have been proposed.

Lastly, the arguments put forth in this thesis hold implications for the practices of social movements and activists. Despite a move towards consumer citizenship and an emphasis on the individual in political action, this thesis proposes that activists need to seriously evaluate tools like political consumerism before promoting them. Such practices can at best alienate and at worst prohibit other would-be activists from participating. Additionally, this thesis calls on both scholars and activists to question the assumption of the individualization of political action, and acknowledge the important role of collective social influences and other forces. In doing so, activists may alter their identities, beliefs about effecting social change, or behaviors, encouraging greater support of SMOs and collective efforts.

The conceptual framework developed in this thesis opens up a number of opportunities for future research. There are several topics and approaches that are not addressed in the thesis, as they were beyond the scope of this project. For instance, I do not put forth an empirical study of political consumerism. As the thesis is conceptual, it has primarily focused on theoretical understandings of political consumerism and its implications for citizenship and collective action. Additionally, numerous questions remain unanswered regarding political consumerism, many of which are beyond the scope of this thesis. For instance, how has consumer citizenship impacted traditional political citizenship? If political consumerism is to be considered a form of collective action, as is proposed in this thesis, how should other supposedly “individualized” behaviors, such as political blogging or donating to charities, or even self-interested

behaviors, be conceptualized? How does a SMO promoting consumption as a tool of contention impact who supports that organization, if at all? How do levels of economic or political inequality within a geographical space affect the practice of political consumerism?

These omissions are meant to spark further scholarly discussions on political consumerism. All of these questions can and should be explored in greater depth. A comparative study could be done of two similar SMOs, one that adopts the discourse of dollar voting, and one that avoids it. Such a study could offer insights into how political consumerism impacts membership in SMOs, the composition of the membership base, or the issues that those organizations ultimately address. One can also approach concepts such as dollar voting through an historical genealogy, exploring the ways in which it has been molded by a variety of forces, from activists to MNCs, throughout its history. This thesis seeks to provide a basis upon which these questions can be asked. It is through acknowledging the collective influences on political consumerism and the constraints associated with its practice, such as income, that scholars can address these deeper empirical and theoretical questions.

The need for future research projects on political consumerism like those proposed is great. While in this thesis I contend that political consumerism is not new, it has by many measures grown considerably in recent decades. This increase has shown no signs of abating. Additionally, with the continuing dominance of neoliberalism in global economic practice, the role of the market in public life is likely to continue to grow. This trend is exacerbated by increased feelings of distrust of the traditional political institutions in much of the Global North. As the role political consumerism continues to

grow, scholarship must keep up. In this thesis, I argue that political consumerism has troubling implications for political participation, in its close interweaving of economic and political power. Scholarship can play a role in minimizing these negative impacts by proposing alternative forms of participation or bringing to light successful attempts to elevate the voices of those who would otherwise be excluded from the practice.

This thesis has exposed political consumerism's implications for a number of related social phenomena. It is representative of a market-based form of citizenship, which I have referred to as consumer citizenship, through which consumption is used as tool of political power. Political consumerism is also a collective tactic. As a behavior that is practiced at the level of the individual, yet highly influenced and often determined by collective forces, it challenges and undermines conceptions of collective action. An understanding of political consumerism as collective challenges scholars and activists to reevaluate the importance of SMOs and the necessity of collective coordination. Lastly, this thesis has shown the troubling implications of political consumerism for political participation. The practice, which is tied directly to an activist's personal wealth and availability of choice, limits the field of potential participants. When this analysis is examined alongside the knowledge that such practices as dollar voting are increasing relative to other forms of contention, the implications become even more troubling. These findings are all suggestive of the need for additional analytical focus on political consumerism and other market-based forms of political contention. While there has been increased scholarly attention on the subject, much remains to be explored.

Appendix

Figure 1:

Collectivist collective action	Individualized collective action
<i>First modernity</i> collective action: identity with structures and social positions, <i>unitary identity</i> that follows life paths, role models	<i>Late modern</i> collective action: identity and social position not taken for granted, map out your own life path, be your own role model, <i>serial identity</i>
Participation in <i>established political homes</i> such as membership-based interest groups and political parties	<i>Use of established political homes as base and point of departure</i> to decide own preferences and priorities and create and develop individualized political homes, e.g., home pages
Participation in <i>territorial-based</i> physical structures focusing on the <i>political system</i>	Involvement in networks of a variety of kinds that are not based in any single physical territorial level or structure, <i>subpolitics</i>
Participation that is channeled through <i>grand or semi-grand ideological narratives</i> (traditional political ideology)	Involvement based on self-authored individualized narratives (<i>self-reflexivity</i>)
Participation in <i>representative democratic</i> structures <i>Delegation</i> of responsibility to leaders and officials	<i>Self-assertive</i> and direct involvement in concrete actions and settings Responsibility is not delegated to leaders and officials, it is taken personally and jointly, <i>self-actualization</i>
Member interests and identity filtered, adapted, and molded to political preferences of these <i>interest articulating and aggregating</i> institutions, <i>socialization</i> <i>Loyalty to established structures</i> , acceptance of organizational norms, values, standard operating procedures, and so on	Dedication and commitment to <i>urgent causes</i> rather than loyalty to organizational norms, values, standard operating procedures, and so on <i>Responsibility-taking</i> for urgent causes, <i>active subpolitics</i>
<i>High thresholds</i> for active participation in established organizations; <i>high costs</i> for active involvement in terms of time, seniority, socialization, and other resources	<i>Everyday activism</i> in variety of settings; <i>low thresholds</i> for involvement; urgent involvement may be <i>high cost</i> in terms of being time-consuming and requiring considerable effort on the part of individuals

(Figure directly from Micheletti 2003, 27).

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