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Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation

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ABSTRACT. Both anecdotal and case-study evidence have long suggested that consumer behavior such as the buying or boycotting of products and services for political and ethical reasons can take on political significance. Despite recent claims that such behavior has become more widespread in recent years, political consumerism has not been studied systematically in survey research on political participation. Through the use of a pilot survey conducted among 1015 Canadian, Belgian, and Swedish students, we ascertain whether political consumerism is a sufficiently consistent behavioral pattern to be measured and studied meaningfully. The data from this pilot survey allow us to build a "political consumerism index" incorporating attitudinal, behavioral, and frequency measurements. Our analysis of this cross-national student sample suggests that political consumerism is primarily a tool of those who are distrustful of political institutions. However, political consumers have more trust in other citizens, and they are disproportionately involved in checkbook organizations. They also tend to score highly on measures of political efficacy and post-materialism. We strongly suggest including measurements of political consumerism together with other emerging forms of activism in future population surveys on political participation.

Keywords: • Civic engagement • Consumer behavior • Political consumerism • Political participation • Survey measurements

Introduction

In the early months of 2003, the French government, together with the governments of Germany, Belgium, and Russia, firmly opposed the approval of a UN Security Council resolution allowing the use of military force against Iraq. The position of President Jacques Chirac and his government was greeted with hostility

by a significant cross-section of US public opinion. This anti-French sentiment did not lead to any form of political involvement, at least not if we limit our consideration to the standard repertoire of political participation in contemporary industrial societies. There was no street violence before the French embassy, the newspapers did not report any demonstrations against President Chirac, nor were there any other protest events. Therefore, the mainstream approach to the study of political action and participation would seem to argue that nothing of significance happened at all (Koopmans and Rucht, 2002). Nevertheless, this approach to the study of political behavior misses an important part of the story. A number of US restaurants dropped French wine from their menus; various shops decided to stop selling French cheese; and some food-outlets even rechristened "French fries" as "freedom fries." Americans opposed to the French position apparently did not take to the streets to express their views, and instead decided to use their purchasing power to hurt French exports (Barroux, 2003).

These kinds of consumer boycott campaigns have become commonplace in recent years. Some of them, such as the example discussed above, use business targets to voice criticism of government actions (Linton, 2003). Other consumer boycotts focus specifically on the policies and practices of corporations. The oil multinational Shell has been repeatedly targeted because of its environmental practices and human rights policy in Nigeria as well as its use of oil tankers that do not conform to international safety standards (Jordan, 2001). Nike, in addition to other footwear and clothing companies, have been taken to task for their use of child labor as well as the poor working conditions their workers face in various Asian countries. Israel, France, the USA, and South Africa have at one time or another been targeted by political boycott campaigns. The use of consumer decisions as an instrument in political campaigns can also result in a call to *buy* certain goods and services that conform to the aims of the campaign in question. Labeling schemes for organic food, fair-trade products, environmentally friendly products and production methods, and ethical banking are examples of this positive face of "political consumerism" (Levi and Linton, 2003; Micheletti, 2003a).

When people engage in boycotts or "buycotts" with the aim of using the market to vent their political concerns, they are said to engage in the act of political consumerism. This, for our purposes, can be defined as *consumer choice of producers and products based on political or ethical considerations, or both* (Micheletti et al., 2003). Political consumers choose particular producers or products because they want to change institutional or market practices. They make their choices based on considerations of justice or fairness, or on an assessment of business and government practices. Regardless of whether political consumers act individually or collectively, their market choices reflect an understanding of material products as embedded in a complex social and normative context, which can be called the politics behind products (Micheletti, 2003a).

Political Consumerism as a Form of Activism

Political consumerism certainly is not a new form of activism. In the early part of the 1900s, the White Label campaign, an anti-sweatshop labeling scheme, appealed to American women to buy cotton underwear for themselves and their children that was certified "sweatshop free" (Sklar, 1998). In the 1960s, the United Farm Workers successfully employed consumer boycotts to put pressure on

Californian farmers and landowners (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977). African-Americans have also used the market as an arena for racial politics. They repeatedly incited boycotts to further the civil rights movement, with the Montgomery bus boycott as the best-known case (Friedman, 1999; Goldberg, 1999; King, 1999). In the 1970s and 1980s, boycotts were used as a tool in the worldwide campaign against the apartheid regime in South Africa (Seidman, 2003). Part of the globalization movement deliberately uses consumer behavior as a political tool (Bové and Dufour, 2001).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the use of political consumerism has been on the rise in recent decades, partly as a result of globalization processes. Although there is hardly any survey material on consumer boycotts and "buycotts," scholars have shown that several forms of political participation, including boycotts, have increasingly been used as a political tool (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2003; Inglehart, 1997: 313; Norris, 2002: 198; Petersson et al., 1998: 55). Scholars also claim that the number of boycotts organized worldwide is increasing (Friedman, 1999). The various waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) are a prime data source for detecting trends in political participation behavior during the past two decades. Although there is only one relevant question in the World Values Surveys on participating in consumer boycotts that can be used longitudinally, we can extend the time series by comparing WVS data with results from the 1974 Political Action Survey (Barnes and Kaase, 1979). In Figure 1, we compare trends for participating in boycotts with trends for the signing of petitions, demonstrations, and for occupation of buildings.

Clearly, together with several other emerging forms of political participation, boycotts have risen in countries where we can compare participation trends over time. The signing of petitions was very widespread at the end of the 20th century, and a large proportion of citizens also participated in demonstrations. The involvement in boycotts has steadily increased over time as well, and, in fact, it is
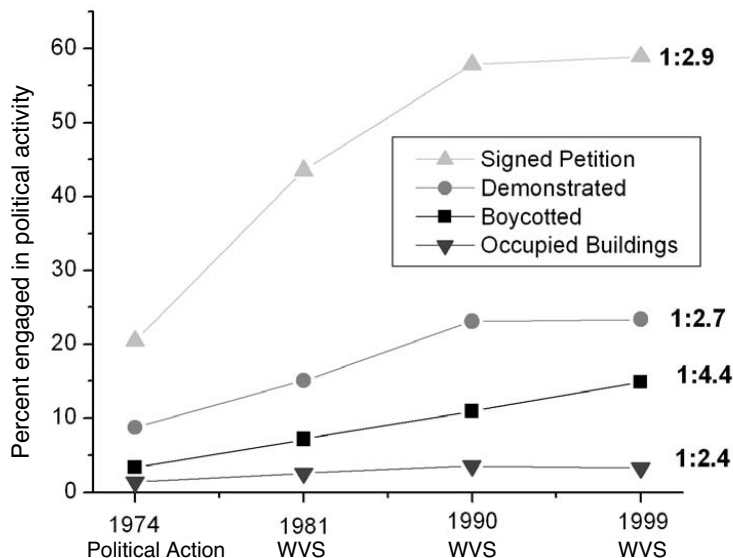

FIGURE 1. *The Rise of New Forms of Political Participation*
Note: The ratios compare changes in the action repertoires to 1974 figures.

the form of political participation that experienced the strongest growth over time, as the ratios in Figure 1 indicate. Participation in boycotts is more than four times as likely in 1999 compared to 1974, whereas for all other forms growth has been at a lower rate.

Political consumerism is particularly visible in Scandinavia, where scholars have studied the phenomenon for several decades. The Swedish Study of Power and Democracy found that using boycotts for societal and political purposes (within the past 12 months) had increased from 15 percent in 1987 to 29 percent in 1997 (Petersson et al., 1998: 55). Boycotting ranked third as a form of political participation in both the 1987 and 1997 surveys, making it a more frequent form than contacting civil servants, a civil society association, a politician, or a media actor, or working in a political party or civil society association. It was outranked only by signing a petition and contributing financially to a cause (Petersson et al., 1998: 55). By 2002, it was found that 33 percent of Swedes had boycotted a product in the past 12 months, and 55 percent had deliberately bought a product for political, ethical, or environmental reasons (European Social Survey, 2002). However, political consumerism is not evenly spread in western democracies, a fact which itself merits further investigation.

These survey data clearly indicate that a growing number of citizens are turning to the market to express their political and moral concerns, but do not tell us whether political consumerism can also be considered as a meaningful or effective form of political participation. For this, we turn to historical examples, which show that political consumer activism can be an effective way of changing both corporate and governmental policy and behavior. Political consumerism clearly has had an impact on industry standards, pushing awareness about the need for codes of conduct and labeling schemes. Advocacy and public disclosure campaigns are proving successful in the global garment industry (Rock, 2003). Some boycotts (for instance, the famous 1955 Montgomery bus boycott in protest against racial segregation in the USA) have broken "the cycles of history" by opening up agendas and arenas for alternative visions and information (Friedman, 1999; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Micheletti, 2003a). A well-known effective boycott occurred against Nestlé (1977–84) for its marketing of baby milk substitute or infant formula in the third world. This boycott mobilized consumers globally, and this mobilization, along with the publicity it received, brought Nestlé, a corporation promoting itself as oriented toward family values and with a high market visibility, to the World Health Organization and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund negotiating table. In 1981, the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes was adopted. However, political consumerist groups were not satisfied with the code's implementation and reinstated the boycott in 1988 (Bar Yam, 1995; Sikkink, 1986).

Boycotts, public disclosure, and advocacy work that have been instigated by fair-trade and anti-sweatshop groups because of working conditions in the global garment industry are also starting to pay off. Studies show that the apparel industry is very sensitive to this kind of political consumerist criticism. Public disclosure of firms' sweatshop practices not only mobilizes consumers who contact industry representatives directly and engage in protest activities, but can also affect firms' stock prices negatively, which encourages them to respond by announcing their own codes of conduct and by participating in associations that work with corporate social responsibility. These endeavors are a kind of "good" news that leads to a more positive market response (Rock, 2003: 26, 29). In particular, Nike

has been affected by both political consumerist activism and the publicity it has received in the media. Watchdog groups have forced Nike to follow Indonesian law and raise its wage levels, change its sourcing of soccer balls to avoid child labor, increase the minimum age of its factory workers abroad, and insist that all outsourced footwear suppliers adopt US occupational safety and health standards for indoor air quality (Locke, 2003: 11–19). In the USA, political consumerist activism has spurred the government to take legal and legislative actions as well as forge partnerships between business, the anti-sweatshop movement, and consumers (Adams, 2002; Emmelhainz, 1999).

Given the effectiveness and the steady rise of political consumerism in advanced industrialized democracies, it is even more puzzling that the phenomenon has been almost entirely neglected in most contemporary discussions of political participation and involvement (Dalton, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Schlozman, 2002; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999; Verba et al., 1995; see also, however, Pattie et al., 2003). With this article we address this gap in political participation research. Our core argument is that acts of political consumerism should be included in future research on civic and political participation. An exclusive focus on traditional forms of participation that target the political system per se entails the risk that innovations in the participation repertoire of citizens remain unnoticed; this in turn could lead to the false conclusion that political participation in general is in decline (Dalton et al., 2004). Political consumerism is on the rise and merits more systematic research. Of course, the claim that political consumerism has become part of the political participation repertoire of western populations requires systematic evidence that an individual's choice of purchases can be rightfully seen as a politically motivated and consistent form of behavior, and one that can be measured and studied in a reliable manner. To build this proof, we will rely on the results of a pilot survey we conducted among 1015 respondents in Canada, Belgium, and Sweden.

In the next section, we first offer a theoretical argument as to why political consumerism should be considered a form of political participation, and why it is relevant to the current debate about the nature and character of political participation. Second, we develop an index to identify this phenomenon as a multidimensional, yet consistent, form of political action. Subsequently, we use this index in a multivariate analysis to examine the political character of this form of participation, as well as the characteristics and motivations of political consumers.

The Challenge of Studying Emerging Forms of Political Participation

Political consumerism and other emerging forms of participation are essential, though often neglected, elements of the current debate about the decline of civic participation. Traditional or conventional forms of engagement are losing ground, most notably in the USA, but to some extent also in other western democracies (Putnam, 1995, 2000, 2002a). Citizens in many countries not only refrain from voting and joining political parties, but they also tend to participate less actively in all kinds of voluntary associations and other social activities (Blais et al., 2004; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Petersson et al., 1998; Putnam, 2002a; Wattenberg, 2002). However, several arguments have emerged to counter the claims of a decline (Stolle and Hooghe, 2005). One of the fundamental lines of critique is that the promoters of the decline thesis capture only one side of a more complex social trend because they focus exclusively on the disappearance of

traditional forms of participation while neglecting the participation styles and methods that are rapidly replacing the old (Gundelach, 1984). These critics of the decline thesis argue that citizens today, and especially the younger generations, prefer participating in looser and less hierarchical informal networks as well as various lifestyle-related, sporadic mobilization efforts (Bennett, 1998; Eliasoph, 1998; Lichterman, 1996); often, such participation is directed toward spheres distinct from traditional politics (De Hart et al., 2002; Dekker and Hooghe, 2003; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Lowndes, 2000; Putnam, 2002a; Wuthnow, 1998). These doubts about the exclusive use of measurements of formal memberships and organizations have been echoed by scholars working in the field of gender and politics, who maintain that the exclusive focus on participation in traditional politics misses how marginalized groups of the population participate in social and political life more informally (Williams, 1998). Both historical and contemporary studies of consumer activism show that, for example, women, and particularly housewives, were and are predominantly involved in this activity (Ackelsberg, 2003; Bohstedt, 1988; Burns et al., 2001; Micheletti, 2003b; Orleck, 1993; Young, 1994).

Recently, agreement has been expressed that the decline of formal and traditional groups is "offset at least in part by increases in the relative importance of informal, fluid, personal forms of social connection" (Putnam, 2002b: 411). Participation in informal local groups, political consumerism, involvement in transnational advocacy networks, the regular signing and forwarding of email petitions, and the spontaneous organization of protests and rallies are just a few examples of the growing importance of informal organization, individualized action, and network mobilization (Ayres, 1999; Bennett, 2003; Deibert, 2000; Eliasoph, 1998; Halkier, 1999; Norris, 2002; Peretti and Micheletti, 2003; Sörbom, 2002; Wuthnow, 1998). However, no systematic data sources have so far captured these kinds of social and political engagement (Dalton et al., 2004).

The study of such sporadic and individualized forms of participation poses four major problems. First, aside from a few unsystematic measurements, we do not really know how many people engage in these emerging acts. How widespread are these forms of involvement? Do they in fact substitute numerically for the loss in conventional engagement? To answer such questions, we must first develop reliable cross-national instruments to measure such forms of participation. Gauging the perhaps irregular and informal involvement of political consumerism poses some important methodological problems that apply also to other action repertoires which we discuss below.

Second, and related to the difficulty of measuring the concept, what is the *political character* of these kinds of participation? Some scholars argue that we must restrict our definitions of politics and political participation to activities that are directly and explicitly carried out in the political realm. According to these authors, any other option risks a dangerous evolution toward a "theory of everything" (Van Deth, 2001). Others, however, argue that political scientists must be open to strong evidence showing that people are leaving the traditional political realm to find new ways of expressing themselves in a politically relevant manner (Gundelach, 1984; Inglehart, 1997; Sörbom, 2002). The challenge for empirical research on such forms of political participation is to develop a concept of participation that distinguishes the political sphere from other spheres of action without narrowing down the definition in such a way that it no longer reflects current social and political reality.

Third, the study of these forms of participation forces us to reconsider where we locate political participation. Traditional forms of participation link citizens to democratic government. Even in recent revisions of the political participation literature both the government and the state are seen as the ultimate targets for political action (for example, Dalton et al., 2004: 127–8). However, as states tend to lose control or meet with competition from other spheres over the authoritative allocation of values in society, citizens seek new arenas for political participation. Political shopping, the forwarding of political emails about companies' labor practices, culture jamming (the use of humor and symbolic images from the corporate world to break corporate power), and so on are examples of political action repertoires through which citizens circumvent traditional channels for political participation to address the market and companies directly. The example of political consumerism makes clear that citizens use political values and goals to target selected companies, international organizations, or simply public attention. The goal is not always national legislative change, as national governments are not equipped to regulate international labor practices successfully. The study of political consumerism and other such action repertoires therefore forces us to expand the number and types of political targets citizens choose for their engagement.

Fourth, do citizens who use these forms of participation turn away from national politics and national political institutions? In other words, do citizens adopt these modes of participation because they feel alienated from the political system, which would in effect mean that such behavior is the weapon only of outsiders? Theories of risk society or sub-politics and post-materialism explain the occurrence of emerging forms of political action by highlighting how citizens increasingly develop a lack of trust in the capacity of government (Beck, 1992; Inglehart, 1997). Citizens fear that government either does not understand or cannot control new uncertainties and risks that characterize society today and search for new ideas, arenas, and methods to work on these important political problems (Shapiro and Hacker-Cordón, 1999). As a result, they choose to take on this responsibility themselves rather than delegating it to professional political actors (Beck, 1997). Concerns about governability and ungovernability therefore can motivate citizens to venture into new or simply different forms of political participation. These theoretical investigations offer several hypotheses and research questions regarding the value orientations of citizens who utilize these action repertoires.

Research Questions in the Study of Political Consumerism

These theoretical challenges apply to all emerging or so far understudied forms of political participation; in this article, we focus on one form that is systematically left out: political consumerism. Despite the current rise in political consumer activities, little is known about their emergence and their political nature (Linton, 2003) or about the profile of activists (see Lewis, 2002). We distinguish five areas of inquiry into political consumerism, each of which will be pursued in this article: measurement issues, micro-predictors, attitudinal and behavioral correlates of political consumerism, the crowding-out thesis, as well as issues of political alienation and distrust.

First and foremost, how should we measure political consumerism? How, in other words, can we successfully distinguish those citizens who regularly purchase products on the basis of political or ethical considerations from those who do not?

This is a critical issue for any further analysis of the concept. Acts of political consumerism are less organized, less structured, and more transient than conventional political participation, which makes any kind of standard measurement very difficult (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 19). A few case studies of contemporary political consumerism including interview as well as focus group methods have already been conducted (Baetens and Hooghe, 2004; Lewis, 2002; Micheletti et al., 2003). General population survey research is scarcer, although a few questions on boycotting and using labeling schemes have been employed in Denmark (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001, 2003; Goul Andersen et al., 2000), Sweden (Petersson et al., 1998), Britain (Pattie et al., 2003), in the World Value Survey (Inglehart, 1997: 313), and most recently in the European Social Survey. Opinion poll institutes such as Mori and Gallup have also studied certain examples of boycotts. However, the survey questions in all of these studies are at best limited and do not adequately capture citizen participation in political consumerism. In sum, more systematic measures and deeper survey analyses of this phenomenon are de rigueur if we are to take adequate stock of its incidence in society.

The second issue we will address concerns the micro-predictors of political consumerism. Who are political consumers? What are their values? What is their socio-demographic background? Indicators for conventional political participation are related to socioeconomic resources and gender, usually showing a gender gap in various participation acts. Do these relationships hold for political consumers? One of the few research efforts that has taken up these questions, based on a survey recently conducted in Denmark, found that in contrast to various standard forms of participation, more women than men believe that political consumerism is an effective method to influence decisions in society (Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001). In addition, it is plausible to assume that income makes a difference here; citizens with deeper pockets might be able to afford ethical products or items which otherwise conform to their political views, while those with more limited budgets might not.

The third area of inquiry examines the value orientations and social embeddedness of political consumers. We argue that political consumerism, from a theoretical perspective, draws on both the postmodernization and social capital literatures. The process of postmodernization and the related shift to more post-materialist values (concerns for the environment, values of equality and personal integrity, inclusion of minorities, human rights, sustainable development, and so on) encourage citizens to find new venues to express their private and public interests and identities. Post-materialist values are also increasingly linked to demands for more individual autonomy, self-expression, choice among products and services, and political action (Bennett, 1998; Inglehart, 1997). A general hypothesis is that the shift toward post-materialist values motivates political consumerism.

Social capital theory offers another point of entry for this concern. Proponents of social capital theory suggest that embeddedness in voluntary associations makes it easier for citizens to learn to overcome collective action problems (Hooghe and Stolle, 2003; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Networks and associations facilitate recruitment for political participatory acts (Almond and Verba, 1963). If this observation holds for political consumerism, this would imply that political consumers are better integrated and embedded in such associations and networks, particularly traditional face-to-face associations that are at the heart of social capital theories

(Putnam, 2000). This hypothesis can be juxtaposed to the claim of other authors in the social capital framework that the effects of passive or checkbook activism can be just as strong (Wollebaek and Selle, 2003).

Fourth, does political consumerism crowd out other, more traditional forms of participation? This discussion is not new: in the 1960s and 1970s, too, several authors worried that the new unconventional acts that were on the rise in that period would replace or crowd out conventional forms of participation. The *Political Action* study, however, firmly established the fact that people participating in unconventional action were exactly the same individuals participating in conventional forms (Barnes and Kaase, 1979). Sidney Tarrow (2000) seconds this conclusion; after exploring decades of social movement literature, he concludes that the repertoire of participation has widened to include both contentious and institutional politics. The underlying question in our analysis is basically the same: are political consumers alienated from society and the political system, inciting them to resort to new and imaginative approaches of participation exclusively? Alternatively, do they use it as an additional tool in their expanding political action repertoire?

Finally, we carry this idea further to explore the political character of political consumerism. Are political consumers frustrated citizens who are fed up with national institutions? From the perspective of risk society and sub-politics, we would expect that political consumers are less trusting of political institutions and therefore utilize new or different ways of making their voices heard. To test this hypothesis, we identify the political attitudes and particularly the level of political trust of political consumers in the analysis below. We also examine whether political interest is related to political consumerism, and whether citizens perceive political consumerism as an effective tool in the political decision-making process.

Surveying Political Consumerism

There is, to date, no population survey available that includes a variety of measurements of political consumerism. We therefore resorted to the method of a first cross-national exploration and conducted a pilot survey using a questionnaire that measures acts of political consumerism and other forms of political participation.[1] The survey was administered to social science (and particularly political science) students in three countries: Belgium, Canada, and Sweden.[2] A total of 1015 students answered the survey: 179 in Belgium (Brussels), 458 in Canada (Montréal), and 378 in Sweden (Stockholm). The surveys were either administered during class time or (in Canada) as a web survey.[3] Although participation was voluntary, few students declined to take part in this pilot study, thus reducing the risk of respondent self-selection. The survey included 112 questions and took approximately 25 minutes to complete. It was administered in Dutch (Brussels), English (Montréal), or Swedish and English (Stockholm).[4] It is important to note that the students were not explicitly taught about the concept of political consumerism before the study.

The samples selected for this three-country pilot survey are by no means representative of the populations in the three countries, and we cannot even assume that they are representative for the student population of these countries or universities. Given the fact that this is a pilot survey, meant to explore the possibility of measuring political consumerism acts in a meaningful way, this was not even our ambition. We therefore cannot make any claims about how

widespread the phenomenon of political consumerism is in the populations at large, or among young people. Rather, our intention is to examine whether political consumerism can be considered both a consistent attitudinal and behavioral pattern and also as a form of political participation. University students are an ideal sample for this purpose. The relatively high education level of the sample allows us to assume that the respondents have had a chance to familiarize themselves with a variety of political participation tools. Their age also constitutes an advantage, as research shows that young people are disproportionately attracted to this mode of political action (Andersen, 2000: 213; Goul Andersen and Tobiasen, 2001; Sörbom, 2002). Young people have not yet developed an ingrained pattern of consumer choice, which makes them more amenable to at least considering label campaigns and so on. More highly educated young citizens, such as university students, should therefore have the chance to make motivated consumer decisions. In short, the expectation is that political consumerism, both with regard to behavior and attitudes, can be found and examined in a student sample. It is self-evident that university students, especially in the social sciences, are more prone to utilize this form of action, but this is exactly why they serve as an ideal sample. If we do not find a consistent form of consumer behavior in this group, we can conclude that political consumerism is not a consistent behavioral pattern in the population at large. In addition, the fact that this survey was conducted simultaneously in three different countries adds to the strength of the study, as the phenomenon can be tested beyond the idiosyncrasies of a specific national setting.

Measuring Political Consumerism

One of the main goals of this pilot study is to explore the possibility of developing a reliable survey instrument to study political consumerism. Unfortunately, it will never be possible to measure this phenomenon with a single-item question in the same way that one measures, for example, party or union membership. Political consumerism offers a typical example of "lifestyle politics," in which the ordinary, day-to-day decisions of citizens acquire a political meaning (Giddens, 1991). Lifestyle politics inevitably blurs the distinction between the public and the private realms, rendering it much more difficult to determine the prevalence, the importance, and the political character of these acts. Of course, political consumerism and even traditional political participation behavior might be motivated by personal or private concerns (Downs, 1957; Putnam, 1993). Buying organic food, for example, may or may not have a political meaning, depending on the motivations for and the effects of that act. Therefore, the measurement of behavior that reflects lifestyle politics, such as political consumerism, will inevitably have to cover more dimensions than simply registering, voting or holding party membership.

Three conditions have to be taken into account in any meaningful analysis of "political consumerism": behavior, motivation, and frequency (Stolle and Hooghe, 2003). The first condition refers to *behavior*: it is self-evident that political consumers actually buy or boycott certain goods and services. This implies that people who never make any consumer decisions (because they do not live independently, for example) cannot participate in this form of behavior. Most existing studies only include items measuring boycott actions, but as we argue above, deliberately buying products for political or ethical reasons is also an act of political consumerism, and should therefore be included in our measurement.

The second condition refers to a consumer's *awareness and motivation*: it is entirely possible that people buy fair-trade products simply because they prefer the taste or because they are on sale. Other people never go to US hamburger outlets, not as a protest against US cultural hegemony (Bové and Dufour, 2001), but simply because they do not eat hamburgers. It can be argued that the label of political consumerism only applies if people are motivated by ethical or political considerations, or at least by the wish to change social conditions, either with or without relying on the political system.

The third condition refers to *frequency and habit*: an isolated act of political consumerism might be important by itself, but it can hardly be called a distinct behavioral pattern. We propose that a person's regular involvement in political consumerism needs to be distinguished from rare or sporadic engagement, as it taps into ingrained and habitual commitment to this particular form of engagement.

These considerations clearly demand that political consumerism should be considered a multidimensional phenomenon including both attitudinal and behavioral elements. Therefore, the index on political consumerism proposed here includes various measurements. The attitudinal measures capture whether respondents believe in the political effectiveness of buying certain products and services, in addition to their view on whether citizens in general have the responsibility to choose the "right" company (ethically or politically speaking that is) from which to buy products and services. However, a respondent's professed belief in the importance of political consumerism does not necessarily tell us whether he or she actually takes part in it. Therefore, it was asked more directly how important ethical considerations (the environment, trade, or health, for example) were to them with respect to a variety of different purchases that are generally important in a student's life. In addition, the respondents were asked whether they had actually boycotted or "buycotted" any products, and how frequently they did so when making purchases (see Table 1).

First of all, our results show that political consumerism is quite prevalent in our sample: a majority of undergraduate students surveyed state that they purchase products on the basis of ethical, political, or environmental considerations (at least periodically). About 72 percent of all respondents in the overall sample state that they have chosen products based on ethical considerations in the past year, whereas 63 percent say that they have boycotted a product. It is important to note here that the question on the deliberate buying of products results in a higher percentage than the question on boycotting products, which thus far has been used in most studies as the only indicator of the phenomenon of political consumerism. Political consumerism seems particularly widespread in Sweden and least developed in Belgium when captured with these general questions.[5]

Table 1 also contains questions about the specific areas in which political consumerism might be practiced. Political and ethical considerations for grocery shopping proved to be most important, an observation that is valid for all three cases. Similar considerations for clothing seem to be a prime area for political consumerism in Canada. Political and ethical considerations for soaps and detergents are most important in Sweden, while Belgium stands out with regard to the choice of a bank (a Dutch-based "ethical bank" has been present quite visibly in that country for a number of years). National campaigns and institutional windows of opportunity might be reflected in these country differences. Advocacy campaigns with a strong online presence, such as the "No Sweat" movement active

TABLE 1. *Measures of Political Consumerism Index*

	Canada (%)	Belgium (%)	Sweden (%)	All (%)	Factor load	Cronbach's α without item
Percentage of respondents who believe in:						
Effectiveness of boycotts	66	51	69	65	.46	.87
Personal responsibility to choose the "right" company	70	53	73	69	.50	.86
Percentage of respondents who use ethical considerations when buying*:						
Groceries	57	62	71	63	.75	.85
Soaps and detergents	43	45	68	53	.70	.85
Restaurants	50	51	39	45	.58	.86
Paper for school	34	49	52	44	.62	.85
Clothes	50	37	34	41	.73	.85
Shoes	41	30	29	34	.71	.85
Banks	33	46	29	34	.49	.86
Percentage of respondents who made purchases based on ethical or political considerations in the preceding 12 months:						
Buying some products over others	72	52	82	72	.63	.85
Boycotting products	65	42	70	63	.65	.85
Frequency of buying products for political/ethical reasons (buying nearly every time they go shopping)	13	8	27	17	.80	.85
Frequency of boycotting (boycotting nearly every time they go shopping)	13	7	21	15	.76	.85

Notes: * Results show the percentage of those who answered 6–10 on a scale of 1–10 that asks about the importance of ethical (environmental, trade, health, etc.) considerations for buying certain items.
Factor loads are based on Principal Component Analysis, revealing two factors: (1) Eigenvalue 5.5, with 43 percent explained variance and (2) 1.7 with 13 percent explained variance. Only the first factor is reported; no clear pattern emerged from the second factor. Cronbach's α of the 13 items: .86.

in North America, raise public (and particularly young people's) awareness of the issues of child labor and inferior working conditions that have long been tied to the global garment industry. They entice people to become political consumers and thus may account for the emphasis on clothing in the Canadian case. The high Swedish results with respect to soaps and detergents can be explained by the presence of high-profile institutionalized eco-labeling schemes that certify common household goods available in neighborhood shops. That many Swedes decide to choose eco-labeled products reflects that country's high public awareness of environmental issues and its strong emphasis on individual citizen responsibility for resource use (recycling and ecological footprinting).

The results on frequency are also impressive, and they introduce more fine-grained distinctions in political consumer behavior within the samples. More than 15 percent of the respondents indicate that they use ethical and political considerations every time or nearly every time they go shopping.

Our first question for the empirical analysis involved the possibility of measuring this phenomenon reliably. The reliability tests of a summated rating scale, reported in Table 1, prove that this is the case: Cronbach's alpha for the entire battery of 13 items stands at .86, and not a single item is out of line in this respect. This is already the first evidence that political consumerism can indeed be considered a consistent phenomenon. The factor analysis (PCA), however, reveals a number of difficulties, despite the fact that a dominant factor is extracted. The more reflexive questions about whether respondents see boycotting as an effective tool and as a moral responsibility display low factor loadings. This is also the case for ethical considerations when choosing banks, restaurants, and paper. As expected, attitudes do not load as strongly on the political consumerism scale as behaviors. Furthermore, the inclusion of 13 items appears to be a complex way of measuring political consumerism, particularly for national polls and surveys which always suffer from financial and time constraints regarding their questionnaires. We therefore decided to trim down this measurement scale to a manageable item battery that taps into the most important aspects of political consumerism.

Methodological and theoretical considerations have guided the necessary reduction of the political consumerism scale. First, it is self-evident to opt for items with the highest factor loadings (DeVellis, 1991). The items with regard to frequency and the use of ethical considerations when buying groceries and clothing are obvious examples. Second, following Stolle and Hooghe (2003), it seems important to include all three elements (behavior, motivation, and frequency) in a measurement scale. In other words, political consumerism measures need to include basic behavioral items about whether respondents have actually "buycotted" or boycotted certain products, and this consideration overrules the fact that the factor load of these items (respectively .63 and .65) is not all that impressive.

These considerations lead to the construction of a more concise index of political consumerism, consisting of six items that prove to be one-dimensional and reliable (see Table 2). An important conclusion to be gathered from Table 2 is

TABLE 2. *An Index for Political Consumerism*

	Factor loads				Cronbach's α without item
	All	Canada	Belgium	Sweden	
Did you participate in buying some products over others (buycott)?	.74	.75	.68	.72	.81
Did you participate in boycotting products?	.77	.79	.72	.74	.80
Ethical considerations for groceries	.70	.65	.68	.80	.81
Ethical considerations for clothes	.62	.70	.68	.62	.82
How often do you "buycott" for political/ethical reasons?	.87	.89	.82	.87	.78
How often do you boycott for political/ethical reasons?	.87	.88	.79	.86	.77
Eigenvalue factor	3.52	3.6	3.2	3.6	
Explained variance (%)	59	61	53	59	
Cronbach's α					.82

Note: Entries are factor loads resulting from a Principal Components Analysis.

that the scale proves to be one-dimensional in all three societies studied, giving further evidence of its usefulness. Our final scale for political consumerism, which will be used in the remainder of this article, consists of the factor loading on these six items, leading to a scale ranging from −1 to +1, with a mean of zero.[6]

Who are Political Consumers?

Using this scale based on the factor loadings of the six items, the characteristics of political consumerism are examined in more depth. Who participates in political consumerism? What are the attitudinal and behavioral correlates of this phenomenon? How political is this activity? How does political consumerism relate to some of the assumptions in the current debate about the decline or trans-formation of civic engagement? These questions will be taken up in a multivariate analysis, using the index on political consumerism as a dependent variable. A full summary of the variables used in the regression can be found in the Appendix.

First, we look at the background variables and characteristics of those engaging in political consumerism. Given the fact that the sample is very homogeneous, this effort remained limited in scope and subsequently the explanatory power of Model I ("Background") in Table 3 is rather small. It is important to note, however, that women have a stronger preference for this form of participation than men (Stolle and Micheletti, 2005). As can be seen, this relationship remains robust in the additional models, even after including various other variables. This finding is interesting by itself, since it is quite exceptional that women are actually participating more than men in *any* form of political participation (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).[7] A counter-argument could be that women are more active in political consumerism simply because they go out shopping more often than their male counterparts. Therefore, we also included a question on how often the respondents went out shopping, but we did not observe any differences between male and female students with regard to the frequency of shopping. Other factors must be responsible for the gender differences: perhaps women do more food shopping; they might be generally more interested in labeling schemes; or else might be more motivated by the issues and values behind political consumerism. We will come back to this gender aspect in the conclusion to this article.

Second, it is obvious that neither the religion nor the educational status of the respondents' parents have any effects whatsoever on their propensity to engage in this form of behavior. However, the country variables are highly significant, with Swedish respondents showing more involvement in this activity than Canadian and much more than Belgian respondents. Of course, these findings cannot be generalized; it is impossible to ascertain whether the student body of these three universities is in any way representative of all students in these countries, let alone an entire age cohort, although simple measures of boycotts confirm that political consumerism is also most prevalent in Scandinavia.[8] Furthermore, our interest in this analysis is not related to the absolute level of participation (this would require a representative survey), but to the underlying structure of political consumerism.

One of the most frequently mentioned arguments against the democratic potential of political consumerism is that it could be seen (like many other forms of participation) as elitist; not only does one need money to participate in it, but the general rule also tends to be that "politically correct" products or products with a special label tend to be more expensive. The resulting claim could be that political consumerism is only within reach of those who are relatively well off.

TABLE 3. *Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation*

	Model I Background	Model II Income	Model III Crowding out	Model IV Attitudes	Model V Post-materialism	Model V In Canada	Model V In Belgium	Model V In Sweden
Gender (0 = male, 1 = female)	.16***	.14***	.16***	.10**	.09**	.06	.01	.18**
Age	.08	.02	.05	.02	.01	.05	−.03	.03
Religion (0 = none, 1 = any)	−.01	−.03	−.01	−.02	.01	.01	−.04	.02
Country								
Canada (0 = not, 1 = Canada)	.23***	.27***	.17***	.13**	.13**	−	−	−
Sweden (0 = not, 1 = Sweden)	.33***	.38***	.31***	.27***	.27***	−	−	−
Education level of parents (both parents combined)	.02	.01	−.02	−.03	−.04	−.05	−.09	−.01
Family income	−	−.10*	−	−	−	−	−	−
Membership in face-to-face organizations	−	−	−.01	−.02	.00	.06	−.10	.03
Membership in "distant" organizations	−	−	.16***	.15***	.13***	.17**	.16*	.03
Conventional participation	−	−	.02	.03	.06	.04	.14	.04
Unconventional participation	−	−	.28***	.18***	.14***	.22***	.10	.03
Individualistic participation	−	−	.08*	.05	.03	.02	.07	.08
Political interest	−	−	.08*	.08*	.06	.03	.06	.06
Belief in the effectiveness of:								
Conventional participation	−	−	−	−.10**	−.10**	−.13*	−.09	−.07
Unconventional participation				.16***	.13**	.15**	.15	.09
Individualized participation				.16***	.16***	.16**	.19*	.15*
Trust in institutions	−	−	−	−.12***	−.08**	−.04	−.15*	−.09
Generalized trust	−	−	−	.09**	.04	.06	.07	.01
Post-materialism	−	−	−	−	.25***	.22***	.19**	.36***
adj. r^2	.09	.08	.27	.34	.39	.37	.35	.32
Number of respondents	924	669	897	830	827	372	187	284

Notes: *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05
Entries are standardized regression coefficients resulting from an ordinary least-squares regression.

University students, of course, are not the best sample on whom to test this argument. First of all, they tend to be rather privileged, and, second, since most of them do not earn their own money, we get into all kinds of measurement problems. Nevertheless, we also included a question on family income. As only 706 respondents answered this question, we must acknowledge a missing data problem. Keeping this in mind, Model II ("Income") shows that there is, however, a negative relation: the wealthier the parents are, the less likely it is that students are engaged in political consumerism. So, with the limited data at hand, we could not confirm the notion that political consumerism is a distinctly elitist form of participation, at least not with regard to income. However, this hypothesis needs further scrutiny in future studies. Because of measurement problems and the resulting high number of missing cases, this variable was dropped from the other models.

Attitudinal and Behavioral Correlates of Political Consumerism

Subsequently, theoretically relevant attitudinal and behavioral variables are tested. Model III addresses the question of whether political consumerism is crowding out other forms of political involvement or relates to specific types of social interaction. More specifically, we want to know whether political consumers are embedded in social and political networks and associations, and whether they are active in other forms of political participation as well. In this analysis, we include both traditional and more recent forms of participation (see the Appendix for the items in these scales). To start with, the explained variance in this model rises considerably, while it also becomes more obvious who participates in political consumerism. It is clear that crowding out does not occur: there is not a single significant negative relation with other forms of political participation. So the fear that those who are no longer attracted to political and social life resort to this "low-cost" and individualistic form of behavior is not warranted. However, the relation with conventional forms of participation is almost non-existent: membership in political parties, participation in student elections, or contacts with political officials are not an important concern for political consumers. They do not avoid these forms of participation, but they do not engage in them more often than other people. It is striking, however, that they participate more in distant, checkbook-like types of associations, while they also have more experience with unconventional forms of participation (demonstrations, culture jamming, and civil disobedience), especially in Canada and Belgium. These relations within our pilot sample at least demonstrate that political consumerism reveals itself not as an entirely new phenomenon, but as part of an array of activist performances that serve to broaden the spectrum of politics. These insights have been confirmed in other studies in which selected aspects of political consumerism were analyzed alongside other forms of individualized political participation (Pattie et al., 2003).

In order to investigate the motivations of political consumers, Model IV ("Attitudes") includes other relevant attitudinal variables. While political con-sumers participate in conventional participation acts just as often as others, they are skeptical about the effectiveness of these methods, and this corresponds to the fact that, in general, they have less trust in established institutions. Although the significance of these variables diminishes in the separate country samples, probably because of sample size, the signs of the coefficients for belief in the effectiveness of conventional participation and for trust in political institutions are

negative in all cases. This finding is therefore in line with the assumptions expressed in recent scholarship on risk society and sub-politics (Beck, 1997, 2000). On the other hand, they believe in the effectiveness of unconventional political acts (for example, demonstrations), and most strikingly in the effectiveness of individualistic participation methods (such as signing a petition or donating money), a relationship that holds in all the country samples. This result indicates that among the students in the sample, political consumerism is practiced by those who do not expect national institutions to fix their problems, but who are more likely than others to believe that individualized actions may lead to the solution of political grievances.[9]

Does this imply that political consumers are alienated and distrusting? We do not think so: while they are critical and even distrusting of political institutions, at the same time, they have a rather trusting and positive outlook toward other people, as shown by the positive relation with generalized trust, although the significance of the relationship disappears when post-materialist attitudes are included. The results here are in line with the "critical citizens" argument made by Norris (1999) and other authors: political consumers are not alienated; they have a strong feeling of internal efficacy, but at the same time, they are critical of political and other institutions. In line with the recent literature on globalization and questioning of the nation-state, it was plausible to assume that political consumers would be more trusting of international institutions such as the United Nations, as opposed to national institutions. However, this is not the case (results not shown for lack of space). All institutions, including the international ones, are treated with the same kind of distrust. The picture that emerges is that these consumers seem to be in a kind of "anti-institutional mood": all forms of institutionalized power and authority are regarded critically, irrespective of whether they operate on a national or international level (Zijderveld, 2000).

Lastly, we investigate the relationship between political consumerism and post-materialism. Indeed, post-materialist values emerge as an important variable leading to a model in which nearly 40 percent of the variance is explained, but it is striking to note that besides generalized trust most other independent variables keep their significance. Model V ("Post-materialism") therefore offers the most complete picture of the characteristics of political consumerism. Political consumerism reveals itself as a consistent form of behavior that is strongly related to post-materialism and a critical mood toward all institutions. It is practiced together with unconventional and individualistic forms of political action, but not necessarily with conventional political acts. Political consumerism is practiced more intensely in Sweden, while the Belgian respondents seem to have less interest in this type of involvement.

To ascertain whether this model is cross-culturally valid, in the last three columns of Table 3, Model V is repeated for the three national samples separately. Some national differences do become visible: the gender difference is strongest in Sweden and the relationship between political consumerism and unconventional participation is strongest in Canada. No real inconsistencies were found, however, and all the signs of the coefficients perform as expected, which points to the cross-cultural validity of using this kind of analysis to examine political consumerism.

It is only fair, however, to acknowledge that our findings also show the limits of political consumerism as an instrument to bring about political and social change. Even those practicing these acts most rigorously do not believe that political consumerism is the most effective way of bringing about political and social

TABLE 4. *Belief in the Effectiveness of Various Participation Acts*

Act	Canada	Belgium	Sweden	All	Low consumerism	Middle consumerism	High consumerism
Voting	7.2	7.2	6.8	7.1	7.1	7.3	6.9
Volunteering	6.9	6.2	6.4	6.6	5.8	6.6	7.4
Donating money	6.5	5.9	5.9	6.2	5.5	6.3	6.7
Joining a party	5.6	4.9	6.4	5.8	5.5	5.8	6.0
Joining a demonstration	5.8	5.3	5.5	5.6	4.9	5.5	6.4
Political consumerism	**5.2**	**4.8**	**5.2**	**5.1**	**3.8**	**5.0**	**6.7**
Contacting an organization	5.4	4.1	5.2	5.1	4.6	5.1	5.6
Signing a petition	4.8	5.0	4.5	4.8	4.1	4.7	5.3
Civil disobedience	4.6	2.9	4.0	4.2	3.4	3.9	4.9
Culture jamming	4.6	3.1	3.7	4.1	3.3	3.9	4.9
Internet campaign	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.6	3.0	3.5	4.3
Average of these 11 acts	5.2	4.8	5.2	5.2	4.6	5.2	6.0

Note: Average scores on a scale of zero (not effective at all) to 10 (very effective). Low, middle, and high consumerism: respondents were divided into three equal groups based on their score on the Political Consumerism Index.

change; they too see voting and volunteering as more effective ways to influence society (see Table 4). Political consumers seem to be quite realistic about the potential effectiveness of this participation instrument; it is an *addition* to their political participation repertoires, and does not replace more conventional participation acts.

The most striking element in Table 4, however, is that for each and every act, political consumers give higher effectiveness ratings; they clearly believe that citizens can make a difference with regard to the way society is being run. Resorting to political consumerism might be considered as a manifestation of distrust toward institutions, but it certainly cannot be interpreted as a manifestation of a lack of internal or personal political efficacy. Political consumerism therefore is not only a weapon of "critical citizens," but also seems to be a weapon of self-confident and efficacious individuals.

Conclusion

This pilot survey demonstrates that political consumerism has become an integral part of the political action repertoire of social science students in three distinct western societies, and we would expect of young and critical citizens more generally. The analysis has shown that this phenomenon reveals itself in a measurable and consistent pattern. Therefore, our claim is that political consumerism should receive more explicit attention in any future research on political participation. It is quite striking to observe that entire bookshelves have already been filled with studies on the use of the Internet as a political tool, while political consumerism thus far has rarely been studied in a systematic fashion. We

are, of course, fully aware of the limitations of this pilot survey: the fact that it involved a highly selective group of social science students at universities automatically implies that these findings cannot be generalized, and there was no intention to do so. What we have shown, however, is that this phenomenon can be studied in a meaningful way in survey research, a step that thus far had not been taken. The index we have constructed can be used in a general population survey and it has produced significant and robust results in a multivariate analysis.

Our survey also confirms that political consumers are not as disconnected from political processes as we might have expected, given the current debate on postmodernization and the decline of civic engagement. In fact, among students at least, political consumers are more or equally active in other forms of participation and group involvement. It is correct, however, that they are frustrated with mainstream political institutions and they value the efficiency of conventional forms of participation less than we would expect. Considering earlier accounts on the emergence of a new generation of "critical citizens," it is likely that we will find a similar pattern for other emerging forms of unconventional participation. Yet, when compared with most other forms of participation, the phenomenon of political consumerism appears to be more individualized in nature, although it may be embedded in collective societal and political values more generally, and is closely related to everyday activities and lifestyle politics. Moreover, political consumerism focuses less directly on influencing the governments of democracies and more on changing corporations, international organizations, and general labor and production practices.

Another important conclusion is that women are more strongly inclined to participate in this kind of action than men. This is particularly true for Sweden, where political consumerism seems most widespread. The difference is significant (a standardized coefficient of .10 in Model IV). Although not confirmed in the other two countries, political consumerism therefore might be considered as a more woman-friendly way of participating in political life, a kind of participation that thus far has been overlooked in most of the research on participation (Hooghe and Stolle, 2004; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Lowndes, 2000; Stolle and Micheletti, 2005).

The surveying of citizens' use of the market as a political arena in the fashion presented in this article allows social scientists to avoid some of the theoretical and methodological pitfalls that currently characterize the participation debate. Our study broadens the concept of politics to include survey questions on less formal kinds of political involvement that acknowledge the role of the market and market actors in mobilizing participation. These issues are rarely tapped in quantitative research. At the same time, we are careful about including too much in our conception of politics. We avoid the problem of classifying all sporadic or even once-only mobilization events as meaningful acts of political participation by applying our criterion that political consumerism acts recur frequently. Our demand that shopping choices are motivated by ethical and political considerations avoids the problem of including all consumer motivations as political behavior. With these theoretical and methodological pitfalls out of the way, we can, on the basis of our findings from this pilot survey, conclude that at least this group of citizens has extended its political participation repertoire to include hitherto understudied acts. These citizens are not alienated: they continue to engage in conventional forms of participation, although they are aware of their limitations. Our conclusion therefore closely mirrors that of Barnes and Kaase

(1979): conventional and unconventional forms of participation are combined by politically active citizens, and this repertoire is extended even further as compared to the 1960s and 1970s. Not just political institutions and systems can be targeted by these participation acts, but also various market actors. This new location of political action poses a new challenge to our definitions of political participation.

Appendix

Gender	Male = 0 (n = 392); Female = 1 (n = 593)
Age	Continuous, range 17–59 years
Religion	None = 0 (n = 427); Any religion = 1 (n = 554)
Country	Canada (n = 458); Belgium (n = 179); Sweden (n = 378)
Education of parents	Sum scale of education level of mother and father of respondent
Income	Eight income groups
Face-to-face organizations	Membership in organizations "in which members meet regularly," e.g. sports, music, student councils, etc.
Distant organizations (checkbook membership)	Membership in organizations where membership "might just consist of sending a check to the organization," e.g. humanitarian organizations, peace, consumer union, etc.
Conventional participation	Did you take part in … during the past 12 months? Student voting, political party, contacting politician or organizations, appearing on media (No voting because of age of respondents)
Unconventional participation	Did you take part in … during the past 12 months? Demonstration, culture jamming, Internet campaign, civil disobedience, globalization advocacy
Individualistic participation	Did you take part in … during the past 12 months? Signing petitions, wearing T-shirts
Effectiveness scores	Rate the political effectiveness of: Conventional acts (voting, party membership, voluntary association) Unconventional acts (demonstration, culture jamming, civil disobedience, Internet campaign) Individualistic acts (signing petition, giving money)
Trust in institutions	Trust in politicians, police officers, business, national government, and UN. One-factor Eigenvalue 2.5, 51 percent explained variance; Cronbach's α: .75
Generalized trust	Two items: "Most people can be trusted," "If you are not always on your guard, other people will take advantage of you"
Post-materialism	What two goals should be most important for your country (four-item post-materialism battery)
Political consumerism	Six-item scale on ethical consideration, behaviour, and frequency of political consumerism (see Table 2).

Notes

1. The Swedish and Canadian pilot studies were financed by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) through a project entitled Political Consumption – Politics in a New Era and Arena that involves Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle. The Belgian survey was not financed.
2. In Canada, the survey was administered as a web survey in an introductory political science course. Of 588 students in the class, 458 filled in the questionnaire (response rate 77.9 percent). In Sweden, the survey was administered in the classroom; of 493 students registered for the classes, 378 filled in the questionnaire (76.7 percent). In Belgium, too, the survey was administered in class, with 193 students providing 179 forms that could be used in the analysis (92.7 percent). We want to thank Dr Jonas Nordqvist and Professors Tommy Möller, Nadia Molenaers, and Patrick Stouthuysen for giving us the opportunity to administer the survey in their classes, Lisa Nevens for designing, formatting, and coding the Canadian web survey, Lucas Pettersson for formatting and coding the Swedish survey, and Susanna Lindberg for translating the questions into Swedish.
3. Access to the website was restricted to students taking an introductory course in comparative political science. Every student could fill in the questionnaire only once.
4. A slightly shorter version of the questionnaire, with 104 questions, was administered in the Canadian setting.
5. References to "Belgium," "Sweden," and "Canada" should be read as referring only to the students in our sample. Self-evidently we do not assume these students to be representative of the population of their country.
6. All further results presented in the remainder of this article are based on this six-item scale. They are very similar to results obtained with a 13-item scale. Results are available from the authors; see also http://www.essex.ac.uk/ECPR/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/edinburgh/ws8/StolleHoogheMicheletti.pdf.
7. Sweden is perhaps the exception here. Survey research over the past two decades has shown that more women than men are involved with boycotts, signing petitions, and wearing campaign buttons (Petersson et al., 1998). Recent results of the Swedish youth survey confirm these findings for young women between the age of 16 and 19, who were found to discuss politics more than young men of the same age group (Amnå and Munck, 2003).
8. This derives from the authors' own analysis of the World Value Survey and European Social Survey. See also Ferrer-Fons (2004).
9. It should be added that, self-evidently, the belief in the effectiveness of political consumerism itself was not included in these measurements.

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