

DISSERTATION

AN ANALYSIS OF ETHICAL CONSUMPTION PARTICIPATION AND  
MOTIVATION

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED  
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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MOTIVATION

Consumption is part of everyone's lives. Throughout history the act of consumption was used exclusively for material needs satisfaction and, for some, as a mechanism to display wealth. However, in contemporary society, an increasing number of people are using consumption choices to support issues and causes. This growing trend is often referred to as ethical consumption.

This study explores who participations in ethical consumption and why they choose to do so. I recommend a new methodological approach for the study of ethical consumption that focuses on ethical behaviors and the motivations for that behavior. I demonstrate that ethical consumption is prevalent in Colorado using a state-wide mail survey and focus groups. Bivariate and multivariate analyses of survey data and focus group discussions show that liberal political affiliation, higher levels of education and holding postmaterialist values are significantly related to higher levels of participation in ethical consumption.

The findings also highlight the different motivations of individuals for engaging in ethical consumption. I find two major categories of values-based consumers: ethical consumers who use their purchasing decisions to support broad issues and more directed political consumers who strive to create social change with their consumption choices.

Finally, I discover that some ethical consumers create a collective identity with other ethical consumers. The results highlight how many individuals use non-economically rational consumption choices to engage with social issues.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

Consumption engages people every day. Neoclassical economics suggests that consumers seek out products that satisfy their needs, at the lowest cost possible. However many American consumers appear to be selecting items, sometimes at higher costs, because they are grown locally, are not causing harm to the environment or their body, or because producers are receiving fair compensation for their goods (BBMG 2007; French and Rogers 2007; LOHAS 2009). This growing trend of purchasing decisions based primarily on non-economic values is increasingly referred to as “ethical consumption.”

Consumption is often viewed as an instrumental process for the satisfaction of material needs; however, consumer behavior is also shaped by larger societal values, including the caring for others (Barnet et al. 2005:17). I argue that ethical consumption is a tool for social change in the twenty-first century as people become more fragmented in the globalized world. I suggest that increasing participation in ethical consumption necessitates that academics and activists rethink how individuals promote societal change.

### ***Consumption and Sociology***

Business and marketing researchers conduct the majority of consumption research to more accurately understand consumer motivations and determine what products consumers will buy. To date, consumption is understudied in sociology. Early social theorists treated consumption as an afterthought. Marx (1932)[1972] referred to consumption as a “commodity fetish,” a social need that resulted from the capitalist mode



of production. Weber (1904)[1958] in his analysis of the “Protestant ethic,” suggests that overconsumption is linked to hedonistic tendencies. Simmel (1904)[1997] noted that fashion, shopping and mass consumption are methods of self expression in modern urban life. And perhaps most famously, Veblen (1899)[1959] developed the concept of the “leisure class,” where consumption is used to denote high social standing and class.

Contemporary sociological investigations into consumption practices begin with Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of “cultural capital,” which explains how individuals employ consumption to demonstrate social status and Ritzer’s (1996) theorization of the “McDonaldization of society,” where he argues that modern consumption is rationalized by large corporations. More recently scholars are increasingly analyzing non-economically rational consumption practices. A subset of consumers uses purchasing decisions to support issues they feel strongly about, and in some cases use consumption as a political tool (Michelletti 2003). These consumers, who make non-economically rational purchasing decisions to support social issues, are engaging in ethical consumption (Pelsmacker et al. 2003; Tallontire et al. 2001).

### ***Ethical Values and Consumption***

The study of ethics has a long history, beginning with classic works like Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 B.C.E.)(2002). Over time, subfields of ethics arise as the world becomes more complex. Religion (Porter 2001), medicine (Hope 2004; Veatch 1997) and business (Kaptein and Wempe 2002) are highly influenced by ethics. This analysis extends a new branch of ethics, ethical consumption (see for example Brinkmann 2004; Crane 2001; Harrison et al. 2005). I investigate one form of ethical consumption: consumers who purchase ethical products.

The study of ethical purchasing practices is highly compatible with a virtue ethics framework as people's self interest in others is necessary for success. As Barnett et al. (2005:17) note, "virtue ethicists try to awaken us to our enlightened self-interest in caring for others." From this vantage point, our consumption choices can reflect our desires to enact positive social change. Scholars that employ an ethical virtue-based perspective have sought to identify the qualities (such as empathy and justice) derived from helping those who are less fortunate (Foot 2001; Hursthouse 1999). Social change based on ethical consumption requires that many people engage in ethical based purchasing.

### ***Fair Trade Certified, Organically Grown & Locally Grown Food***

In this study I focus on three different, but related facets of ethical consumption in the food sector: (1) Fair Trade certified, (2) organically grown and (3) locally grown foods. These agro-food products are selected because of their rising popularity and central position in a new food consumption ethics. I use organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food as case studies to unpack the integration of ethical and political values into consumption choices.

The Fair Trade movement dates back to the 1940s when development organizations and faith-based groups started purchasing handicrafts directly from disadvantaged Southern producers and sold them directly to consumers. In the late 1980s, the certified Fair Trade commodity was introduced; in 1997 Fair Trade labels were unified by the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO). Thirteen categories of food products are currently available for Fair Trade certification (FLO 2009). Fair Trade certified products provide an opportunity for ethical consumers to help disadvantaged Southern producers through strategic purchasing decisions. The Fair

Trade strategy is to use the market to help disadvantaged producers, while simultaneously critiquing unequal terms of trade resulting from the free market strategy of comparative advantage (Raynolds et al. 2007).

The organic movement is older and has extensive mainstream acceptance (Raynolds 2000, 2004). Consumers turn to organics to reject pesticide use and genetic modification of food. The organic certification process guarantees food is grown and produced in an environmentally, socially and economically sound manner (IFOAM 2009). Scholars argue that organically grown food is beneficial to health (Klonsky and Greene 2005), the environment (Kortbeck-Olenen 2002) and provides a critique of the agro-industrial food system (DuPuis 2000).

Consumers are also purchasing an increasing amount of local food. Supporting local farmers' markets, direct market purchases and Community Supported Agricultural farms helps local economies, and protests food sector domination by large corporate supermarkets that often pay little to food producers. The main arguments for increasing local food consumption are reducing "food miles" so less pollution is created in transportation of food and less preservatives are necessary (LaTrobe and Acott 2000; Pirog et al. 2001) and that local food systems are integral parts of communities where strong links between local producers and consumers help local economies economically and socially (Baker 2005; Lyson 2004; Seyfang 2006).

Together, these three agriculture movements provide excellent case studies to unpack the complex process of integration of ethical values into consumption choices. Organic, Fair Trade and local food are all categorized as "alternative agriculture," in comparison to traditional large-scale conventional agriculture. However, each addresses

different values of interest to ethical consumers. Organic agriculture focuses on environmental impacts of the production process and reducing chemical inputs in food production, Fair Trade certification addresses unequal terms of agricultural trade by returning more money to producers, and locally grown agriculture stresses the need to support local farmers and local economies. In sum, the focus of organics is environmental, the locus of Fair Trade is social, and the local food movement stresses the importance of community.

### ***Research Questions***

In this study I seek to understand ethical consumption. Ethical consumers use purchasing decisions for reasons beyond the economically rational process of material needs satisfaction. Ethical consumption is a multifaceted process, and it is also a relatively new area of inquiry. Therefore I employ an exploratory mixed-methods approach to address these broad questions:

- 1) What is the level of knowledge and participation in ethical consumption by Colorado residents?
- 2) What factors are associated with higher levels of participation in ethical consumption?
- 3) What are the motivations of consumers who engage in ethical consumption?

### ***Outline of the Study***

I organize this study around different empirical issues in ethical consumption. First, however, in Chapter 2, I document historical developments which create a market for ethical products and theoretical breakthroughs that inform my analysis of ethical

consumption. The decline of the Fordist mode of production, which was based on a cycle of mass production and mass consumption, laid the foundation for new market segments that focus on quality and values-based products. Increasing societal risk leads many consumers to pay more attention to their food, buying organic, Fair Trade and local food products in increasingly large quantities. I review the literature on the use of consumption to support ethical issues and as a method of political engagement. Many previous studies on ethical consumption use the Theory of Reasoned Action, which argues that positive attitudes predict behaviors. I argue that this approach is problematic for studies of ethical consumption because people desire to be seen as virtuous, so they often lie when asked if they purchase ethical products. I propose an alternative methodology for the study of ethical consumption that focuses on factors associated with participation in ethical consumption and motivations of consumers for purchasing ethical products.

In Chapter 3, I describe the methodological procedure that I use for the empirical analysis of ethical consumption. I gather survey and focus group data to understand ethical consumers. Chapter 4 begins the empirical investigation of ethical consumption. I use survey and focus group data to inventory Colorado consumer knowledge and participation in ethical consumption. The results indicate a high level of organic, Fair Trade and local food consumption in Colorado. Specifically, I find that female, more educated and politically liberal consumers participate in ethical consumption in higher percentages. I also discover a split among local food consumers that parallels political party lines.

Chapter 4 establishes that Colorado consumers engage in ethical consumption. In Chapter 5 I examine factors associated with higher frequency of participation. I use multivariate regression analyses to reveal how demographic variables and indicators of postmaterialist values are related to ethical consumption. This is the first step in the new methodological approach to the study of ethical consumption outlined in Chapter 2. Concern for environmental and social issues, being active politically in the community and liberal political affiliation are associated with high levels of participation in ethical consumption.

In Chapter 6, I turn to the different motivations of consumers of ethical products. I argue there are two main categories of ethical consumers. The first are ethical consumers who use consumption to indicate support for a variety of issues including caring for others, environmental concerns and helping their community. The second category is political consumers who are dedicated to social change through consumption. The second portion of the chapter is devoted to uncovering what factors are associated with participating in political consumption. Postmaterialist values and liberal political orientation are strong predictors of political consumption.

Chapter 7 continues to unpack motivations of ethical consumers. In this chapter I discover that many people undertake participation in ethical consumption for collective reasons. Believing they are part of an “imagined community” of collective consumers, dedicated individuals use consumption to create social change, with an understanding that their fellow community members have the same goal.

I conclude, in Chapter 8, that ethical consumption is prevalent in Colorado and that consumption-based social action is on the rise. Consumption is no longer just for the

satisfaction of material needs, rather it is used by many people to support issues, initiate change and create community. The new methodological approach that I suggest for the study of ethical consumption has numerous advantages over simply relying on consumer attitudes and intentions.

## **Chapter 2 - Background and Theoretical Perspective**

### ***Introduction***

Consumption in the twenty-first century is undergoing a transformation. Many consumers use purchasing decisions to support or voice displeasure with various issues. A broad category of ethical consumers incorporate a wide range of values, in addition to price, into their purchasing decisions. This chapter outlines a new market segment: the conscious consumer economy. I focus on consumer motivations and consumption patterns in ethical consumption, emphasizing three types of alternative agriculture: organic, Fair Trade and locally grown food.

The decline of the Fordist mode of production altered consumption in the United States. This chapter documents the breakdown of the Fordist model of mass production-mass consumption. Now, consumers integrate postmaterialist values into consumption choices. Health, environmental and social concerns are important to many individuals and consumption is a method for expressing support for these issues. Ethical consumption is prevalent in the United States where consumers engage in ethical consumption for personal, political and collective reasons. I argue that a new method of analysis is necessary for understanding ethical consumption. This chapter introduces a new methodological approach for studying ethical behavior that does not just rely on consumer attitudes and behaviors. I argue that this new approach is better than existing methods because ethical behavior is complex and multifaceted. The methodology I outline in the chapter is able to provide a well-rounded understanding of who participates in ethical consumption and why individuals choose to do so.



## ***The Decline of Fordism, the Hollowing Out of the State and Risk Society***

### ***Fordism***

The Fordist mode of production dominated the United States from the end of World War II until the late 1970s. Fordism was characterized by mass production of consumer durable goods. Capital accumulation occurred through a cycle of rising production, productivity, wages, consumption and profits. The economy of scale model was used by large monopolistic corporations to maximize production volume and reduce the overall product price. Workers were paid high wages that allowed them to consume in large amounts (Jessop 1994; Jessop and Sum 2006).

Extending this argument to agriculture, Harriet Friedmann documented how US national policies used food aid to create new markets for US grain in the Global South (1978, 1980, 1987, 1993). New markets were necessary because Fordist mass production created large surpluses of US agricultural products. US industrial food production was focused on “durable foods” and “intensive meat production” (Friedmann and McMichael 1989). Fordist large agro-industrial firms sourced inputs from cheap, convenient sources, often using ecologically destructive processes.

Fordism was successful from World War II through the 1970s. Rapid large-scale production, high wages and Keynesian welfare state government policies ushered in an era of mass consumption. Companies mass produced goods and consumers purchased goods in large amounts. The Fordist cycle of mass production-mass consumption fell apart due to increased international competition and the relatively high cost of US labor (Jessop 1994). Consumption under Fordism was an economically rational act. Consumers satisfied material needs by choosing the lowest cost products. Fordism has

been replaced with flexible production. Many consumers are now more concerned with quality rather than quantity and value non-economic attributes of products.

### *The Theory of Postmaterialist Values*

Ronald Inglehart (1977, 1990, 1997) developed the theory of postmaterialist values to explain why upper-class citizens in post-World War II America incorporated non-economic factors into their lifestyle decision making processes. Many individuals now had enough money to easily meet material needs and this impacted value formation. Inglehart observed a shift from materialist economic values and physical security, to postmaterialist values such as freedom of speech, citizen participation, environmental concern and quality of life. Postmaterialist values can focus on the individual (e.g., health), on the quality of the physical world (e.g., concern for the environment) or on people that are less fortunate (e.g., caring for other in the Global South). One strand of postmaterialist values is a reaction to citizens' desires to deal with increased societal risk.

### *Risk Society*

Beck (1992, 1995, 1996) argues that contemporary society is dominated by risk. Complex technologies reduce an ordinary citizen's understanding of the production process of the majority of consumable goods. Without full access to information, people are unable to assess specific risks and make informed decisions about what products are healthy, safe, environmentally friendly and where workers are properly treated. A result of increasing societal risk is a new market segment containing products that provide consumers more information about the production history of the product. For example, organic, Fair Trade, and local food certification and labeling inform consumers about the environmental production conditions, who produced the product and where the product

originated. Consequently, contemporary consumption practices reflect postmaterialist values and living in a risk society.

### ***Hollowing-Out of the Nation-State***

Political changes also impact consumption practices. Jessop (1994: 251) argues that the nation-state is “hollowed out.” Specifically, “there is a tendential ‘hollowing out’ of the national state, with state capacities, new and old alike, being reorganized on supranational, national, regional or local, and translocal levels”. A “hollowed out” nation-state fundamentally alters the political landscape. Less regulation and power leaves ordinary citizens searching for novel methods to manage risk since traditional political avenues are less effective. Ethical consumption is an ideal method of risk management for ordinary citizens. Ethical products carry less risk to consumers and society because more is known about the production history.

### ***Ethical Consumption and the Conscious Consumer Economy***

The “reflexive” consumer is concerned with the production processes of food. Some reflexive consumers alter their consumption patterns and organize against producers and retailers (DuPuis 2000; Giddens 1991; Goodman and DuPuis 2002; Morris and Yound 2000). DuPuis (2000) argues that agriculture is especially important for reflexive consumers. Food consumption is very personal since it has direct health impacts for the consumers.

The ethical consumer, who views a direct link between consumption and social issues, is becoming more prevalent in society. Ethical consumers are concerned with environmental degradation, animal welfare, human rights, and labor conditions in the Global South (Tallontire et al. 2001). Ethical consumers use purchasing decisions to demonstrate commitment to a just society (De Pelsmacker et al. 2003).

Incorporating ethics and values into consumption is done in several ways. In this study I focus on consumers that choose ethical alternatives. A second type of ethical consumption, voluntary simplicity, occurs when consumers drastically reduce overall consumption (Shaw and Newholm 2002). Finally, boycotts, where individuals refuse to buy products from a company that is associated with unethical practices also qualifies as ethical consumption. The focus of this study, however, is on consumers who chose to purchase products with ethical attributes.

The integration of non-economic values into purchasing decisions traces its roots to the “socially conscious consumers” described by Anderson and Cunningham (1972) and Brooker (1976). Most research on values-based consumption is concentrated in ethics, sociology, political science and geography. Recently though, the study of ethical consumption has gained more widespread interest in other fields of study. This has been most notable in business where Brinkmann (2004) issued a call asking business scholars to pay more attention to ethical shopping. Consequently, the study of ethics in business now addresses ethical business models (Manning et al. 2006) and what factors cause a product to be classified as ethical (Crane 2001).

Coff (2006) and Early (2002) argue for a separate field of “food ethics.” The agro-food system is central to the lives of all people. Questionable agricultural practices, including genetic modification, pesticide use and unequal terms of trade, necessitate a subfield of ethics focused on food. Food ethics has several uses. Coff (2006) wants to provide consumers with knowledge of the production history of agricultural goods so they are fully informed when making purchasing decisions. Early (2002) suggests that

food ethics be used as a decision making tool by food industry personnel and consumers to judge product adequacy.

### *The Increase in Ethical Consumption*

Ethical consumption has increased rapidly during the last decade. Existing studies suggest that many individuals value ethical concerns over price when making purchasing decisions. For example, a recent study reports that 88% of Americans identify themselves as “conscious consumers” and 88% also self-identified as “socially responsible” (BBMG 2007). In the United Kingdom, the Cooperative Bank (2003) estimates sales of ethically produced goods to be \$5.6 billion and of that \$3.2 billion in sales derives from food products. The US market for sustainable products is very large at \$118 billion (LOHAS 2009). This figure translates to roughly 35 million US shoppers that now consider health and sustainability issues when making shopping decisions (French and Rogers 2007). A survey of Minnesota college students finds that 79% buy Fair Trade items when available and moreover, 49% are willing to pay more than conventional products for these items (Suchomel 2005). In an experiment, Prasad et al. (2004) discover that nearly one out of four consumers are willing to pay up to 40% more for ethically labeled apparel.

The increase in ethical consumption is not limited to individual consumers. Businesses in production, wholesale and retail of ethical products report steady increases in overall sales (FTF 2008, 2009). Third-party certification systems are an increasingly common mechanism used by organizations and businesses to ensure consumers those products are produced and handled in an ethical manner (Raynolds et al. 2009). Interestingly, several studies report that commitments to ethics and sustainability, in addition to social and environmental benefits and positive public relations, actually help the economic bottom line. Businesses with true commitments to sustainability

outperform peers and are more capable of weathering the global economic recession (A.T. Kearney 2009; Boston Consulting Group 2009).

The popularity of ethical consumption in the mainstream media is also growing. Over the last 20 years, numerous popular press best-sellers have extended knowledge of ethical consumption to regular consumers (see for example Elkington and Hailes 1988; Klein 2000; Schlosser 2002). In fact, Clark and Unterberger (2007) recently wrote a guide for consumers who desire to shop ethically.

Ethical consumption is prevalent in food and agriculture. In particular, organically grown, Fair Trade certified, and locally grown food are ethical agricultural products. The following section provides an overview of the organic, Fair Trade and locally grown sectors and reviews debates on consumption patterns and consumer motivations.

## ***Ethical Consumption in Agriculture***

### ***The Organic Agriculture Sector***

The official International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) (2009) definition of organic production states: “Organic agriculture is an agricultural system that promotes environmentally, socially and economically sound production of food, fibre, timber etc. In this system soil fertility is seen as the key to successful production. Working with the natural properties of plants, animals and the landscape, organic farmers aim to optimize quality in all aspects of agriculture and the environment.” The United States is a major importer and exporter of organic foods (Haumann 2003), and started organic certification in the 1980s (Guthman 1998; Klonsky 2000). The United States has the world’s largest organic food and beverage market, with

retail sales valued at \$19 billion in 2007 and a market growth rate of 25 percent per year (Progressive Grocer 2008). Additionally, the United States is the world's largest producer of organic foods with land devoted to organic agriculture increasing around 30 percent per year (Willer and Yussefi 2007: 15). Consumption of organics is widespread in the United States as 69 percent of US consumers buy organic products, with approximately 25 percent purchasing these items weekly (Hartman 2008).

It is clear the US organic sector is well established. In fact, the sector is growing so rapidly that large producers and retailers now dominate the market. This rapid growth questions the alternative nature of organic food. The "conventionalist" thesis posits that the production and retail of organics is becoming similar to traditional agro-industrial models. Therefore, the original alternative movement principles of organics are being threatened (Guthman 1998; Tovey 1997). A result of the corporate co-optation of the organic food movement is that ethical shoppers are turning to local community supported agricultural farms to get fruits and vegetables (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007).

The majority of sales growth of organic food is not the result of an increase in marketing. Halpin and Brueckner (2004) and Richter et al. (2001) note that organic foods receive relatively little market promotion. The usual explanation for rapid market growth in organic foods is strong consumer demand stimulated by a lack of trust in conventional food systems created by numerous food safety scares (Lockie 2006).

### *Consumption Patterns & Consumer Motivations in Organics*

The consumption of organically grown products has been studied extensively. Demographic and attitudinal/values variables are used to model organic consumption, resulting in a variety of competing conclusions. The high cost of organically grown food

is often given as the primary reason many consumers do not purchase organic products (Fromartz 2006; Hartman 2004, 2006). Thompson (1998) finds that wealthier consumers purchase more organic products; however, recent marketing studies find no relationship between income and organic purchases (Hartman 2004, 2006). Stevens-Garmond et al. (2007) and Dettman and Dimitri (2007) further complicate the income-organic relationship with weak positive and curvilinear findings, respectively. Although empirical evidence of the income-organic relationship is mixed, retailers operate as if the link exists. Whole Foods Market, the largest retailer of certified organic items in the United States opens new stores in high income areas (Lockie 2009).

In addition to income, researchers use other demographic variables to model organic consumption. Thompson and Kidwell (1998) find that age, gender and education are not associated with purchasing organics. Conversely, Briz and Ward (2009) report education level and age have strong relationships with organic consumption. Females consistently report higher levels of purchase and consumption of organic products (Cunningham 2001; Lea and Worsley 2005; Lockie et al. 2004).

Attitudes and values of consumers also impact the propensity to purchase organically grown food. Many studies demonstrate the superior power of attitudinal/value variables, compared with demographics in modeling organic purchases and consumption (Botonaki et al. 2006; Dreezens et al. 2005; Jolly 1991; Lockie et al. 2004).

Agricultural economists use the Willingness to Pay (WTP) approach to predict organic consumption. Studies find that gender, income level, positive attitudes about organics, animal welfare, health concerns and safety issues all impact a consumers'



willingness to pay for organic products (Ara 2003; Fotopoulos and Kystallis 2003; Likoropolou and Lazaridis 2004; Loureiro et al. 2002; McEachern and Willock 2004). In short, consumers provide a variety of reasons for purchasing organically grown food.

Many people consume organic food because it is safer than conventional products (FAO 2000). Marketing surveys reveal that health concerns, rather than environmental ones motivate the majority of organic food consumers (Klonsky and Greene 2005). However, environmental issues are also important for some organic consumers (Kortbeck-Olenen 2002). Finally, some consumers report social motivations for purchasing organics (DuPuis 2000). The plethora of research on organic consumption produces a variety of results, indicating many different types of people purchase organics.

### *The Fair Trade Sector*

Fair Trade began in the 1940s. Religious organizations started purchasing handicrafts from poor Southern producers and sold them directly to consumers. In the 1980s and 1990s Fair Trade grew rapidly leading to a need for transnational regulation and third-party certification. In 1997, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) formed to oversee the Fair Trade certification process. There are two models of Fair Trade, products that receive FLO certification and more informal alternative trade where products do not undergo third-party certification (Raynolds and Long 2007). This project focuses on FLO certified products because the vast majority of Fair Trade agricultural products are this variety.

The Fair Trade system critiques trade inequalities between the Global North and South. Disadvantaged Southern producers are linked with ethical consumers in the North creating an alternative commodity network stressing fairness in the marketplace

(Raynolds et al. 2007; Raynolds 2009). Fair Trade certification helps producers and workers in the South in several ways. Producers receive a guaranteed price for their products, access to democratic representation is a requirement, a portion of the overall sale price is allocated to social development projects, and production and marketing training is provided (Murray and Raynolds 2007).

There are currently 19 Fair Trade labeling initiatives that cover 23 countries in Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Sales of Fair Trade products are rapidly increasing and are currently valued at over \$4 billion (FLO 2009). This growth includes the United States which is now the largest market for Fair Trade certified products.

Fair Trade is a more recent phenomenon than organics. However, it is beginning a similar process of potentially watered down values that accompanies mainstream acceptance. Debates about marketing strategies of Fair Trade products are increasingly common. Marketing Fair Trade products requires balancing increasing sales with retaining social movement values. Scholars hold different views on what marketing approach is best for Fair Trade products. Low and Davenport (2005a, b) believe caution is necessary in the race to integrate Fair Trade into the mainstream. Successful mainstream marketing risks the loss of radical aspects of the Fair Trade movement and may undermine the ethical nature of the products. Similarly, Golding and Peattie (2005) posit that it is best to eschew more traditional commercial marketing in favor of marketing with an expressly social orientation. Conversely, Hira and Ferrie (2006) want to overcome the challenges to Fair Trade mainstream integration. The most common

rationale for this view is summed up by Linton et al. (2004) who argue that rapid Fair Trade market growth is the best method for helping the most people.

### *Consumption Patterns & Consumer Motivations in Fair Trade*

The academic study of Fair Trade consumption is in its infancy, however foundational research exists. Tanner and Kast (2003) examine the barriers to consumption of Fair Trade products. De Pelsmaker et al. (2005) find that Belgian consumers place a higher priority on the Fair Trade message compared to other ethical labels. In addition, Littrell et al. (2005) discover generational differences in marketing Fair Trade apparel. de Ferran and Grunert (2007) note that the type of store, supermarket or specialty store, is important for understanding motives for purchasing Fair Trade products. Doran (2009) finds that personal values are highly associated with Fair Trade consumption, while demographic variables have no relationship with Fair Trade purchases.

The purchase and consumption of Fair Trade products faces a number of challenges. Chatzidakis et al. (2007) explore the neutralization process that occurs in the supermarket as consumers who hold positive attitudes about Fair Trade products rationalize not buying them once they are in the store because of higher costs and a lack of belief that the Fair Trade system actually benefits poor producers. Raynolds (2007) describes issues with cosmetic appearance, perishability and engaging with multinational corporations that retail and consumption of Fair Trade bananas faces in the United States. Barrientos and Smith (2007) study the introduction of “own brand” Fair Trade items in UK supermarkets and discuss the repercussions of further mainstreaming Fair Trade through partnerships with large corporations.

Fair Trade addresses highly entrenched historic inequalities and predictably a number of problems and unanticipated issues arise and force the movement to adapt. Two things are clear from this brief overview of Fair Trade consumption: 1) The Fair Trade movement needs to continue to adapt to new challenges, and 2) there is a lacuna in Fair Trade research focusing on consumption patterns and consumer motivations.

### *The Local Food Sector*

Local food sales in the United States increased 59% between 1997 and 2007 and reached \$1.2 billion in 2007 (USDA 2009). The rising demand and popularity of locally grown food is a frequent topic in the media (Kingsolver 2007; Pollan 2006, 2008). The reduction of fossil fuel inputs for food transportation is the most common contemporary argument for increasing local food consumption. An increasing focus on local agriculture reduces “food miles,” the distance food travels from production site to consumers table (LaTrobe and Acott 2000; Pirog et al. 2001).

A more recent rationale for supporting local food is the benefits local agriculture has for increasing community participation and for fostering ethical approaches to food referred to as “food citizenship” (Baker 2005), “ecological citizenship” (Seyfang 2006) and “civic agriculture” (Lyson 2004). These terms suggest that local food systems are socially and economically intertwined with local communities. The social benefits of farmers’ markets include: building relationships with producers, information exchange, and fun and entertainment (Griffin and Frongillo 2003; Hunt 2007). However, critics note that many local food projects reach a population limited by income, education level and occupation and have difficulty reaching the wide audience they claim is necessary to reshape the food system (Hinrichs and Kremer 2002).

The marketing of local foods is understudied, but some research exists. For example, Bills et al. (2000) note that local agriculture offers farmers the advantages of a market for high-value products and the opportunity to cut out the middle-level handler and capture more of the product price. Arthur Little (1985), the Minnesota Project (1986), and Campbell and Pearman (1994) find that a combination of three components are necessary for successful marketing of locally grown products: the establishment of a regional identity based on high quality products, increased cooperative marketing strategies and importance of quality among buyers. Widespread adoption of local food systems is difficult without these three key variables.

#### *Consumption Patterns & Consumer Motivations in Local Food*

Numerous studies examine the consumption patterns and consumer motivations of local foods. Selfa and Qazi (2005) identify three attributes that define and create value for local foods: geographic location or distance, quality of food and relationships between participants. Researchers note that a food system centered on local food production addresses concerns of environmental sustainability, food safety and economic health (Fonte 2008; Starr et al. 2003). Weatherell et al. (2003) find a growing number of “concerned consumers” in the United Kingdom who purchase locally grown food, sometimes at higher costs, to participate in an alternative food system stressing environmental and social benefits.

Demographic variables are often weak predictors of local food purchases. However, Thilmany et al. (2008) find that whites purchase more direct market produce than minorities, and consumers in the Rocky Mountain region buy more local produce than consumers in other areas of the United States. Population density is positively correlated with local food sales. Several studies report that the majority of local food

sales occur in and near cities because of the large market size (Lyson and Guptill 2004). Local food sales are also associated with higher income (Lyson and Guptill 2004). The importance of attitudinal predictors in local food consumption is explored in various studies and findings indicate the superior predictive power of attitudinal variable compared to demographics (see for example, Bruhn et al. 1992; Burrell et al. 2000; Harris et al. 2000; Jekanowski et al. 2000).

Researchers note there are several competing reasons that people provide for supporting locally grown or produced food. Similar to the reasons consumers give for purchasing organic and Fair Trade products, consumers of local foods report that they are healthier and that purchasing these products provides a critique or protest against the highly industrialized corporate nature of the agro-food system (Gilg and Battershill 1998; Hinrichs 2000, 2003; Marsden et al. 2000). However, a very different, equally dedicated group of local consumers exists who engage in what Winter (2003) calls “defensive localism.” These consumers purchase local foods to support local producers and have a fear of “outsiders.” Hinrichs (2003) reports a similar dichotomy in US local consumption, finding two categories of local food consumers she names “defensive localization” and “diversity-receptive localization.” “Diversity-receptive localization” is based on Sach’s (1999: 107) concept of “cosmopolitan localism,” which looks “to amplify the richness of a place while keeping in mind the rights of a multi-faceted world. It cherishes a particular place, yet at the same time knows about the relativity of all places.” Diversity-receptive local consumers might also participate in Fair Trade, to simultaneously support local and global alternative trade systems.

Consumers in Winter's (2003) category of "defensive localists" purchase local foods to support their particular local farmers, not the more abstract version of "local farmers" envisioned by "diversity-receptive" local consumers (Solan 2002). This split of local consumers is not paralleled in organic and Fair Trade consumers, making it a unique area of inquiry.

The validity of empirical evidence on ethical purchasing is potentially suspect since most people wish to be perceived as virtuous. A strand of social science literature attempts to document the extent of the gap between consumers' intentions/attitudes and actual behavior.

### ***Consumer Behavior, The Theory of Reasoned Action & The Attitude-Behavior Gap***

The Theory of Reasoned Action states that intentions are strong predictors of behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein 1970, 1974, 1977; Fishbein 1963). If a behavior has positive consequences, it is assumed that the person performing the behavior has a positive attitude about the behavior. The Theory of Reasoned Action is used extensively in consumption, ethical behavior and food studies. Researchers examine the Theory of Reasoned Action hypothesis in studies involving grocery shopping (Hansen et al. 2004), genetically modified food (Silk et al. 2005) environmental attitudes (Trumbo and O'Keefe 2005), food choice behavior (Conner and Armitage 2002), energy conservation (Black et al. 1985), recycling (Guagnano et al. 1995), environmentally friendly purchasing (Thøgersen 1996), organics (Thøgersen 2002) and fair trade (De Pelsmacker et al. 2005).

The findings from Theory of Reasoned Action based studies are far from definitive. In interviews, people say they want to act virtuously, but some measurements of behaviors tell us that they do not (Swann and Pelham 2002). Others note that attitudes are often poor predictors of behavioral intention or marketplace behavior (Ajzen 2001). The empirical evidence is mixed. For example, Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) find that the Theory of Reasoned Action is supported in a study of sustainable food consumption, while Chatzidakis et al. (2007) conclude that intentions to purchase Fair Trade items do not significantly predict purchases. When the Theory of Reasoned Action is not empirically supported, it is referred to as the “attitude-behavior gap,” or the “intention-behavior gap.” A definitive conclusion has not been reached about the existence (or lack thereof) of the attitude-behavior gap. It is sufficient to note that it needs to be considered in studies on consumption that use the Theory of Reasoned Action framework.

In addition to documenting who participates in ethical consumption, understanding the motivations of ethical consumers is equally important. Ethical consumption motivations are complex; the following sections detail how citizens strategically use consumption to support ethical issues and political causes.

### ***Political Consumerism***

The emergence of risk and postmaterialist values have ramifications in the political arena. Theories of risk society and postmaterialism help explain new forms of political action by noting that citizens have less trust in the government to address their concerns (Beck 1992; Inglehart 1997). A growing fear that government lacks the ability to properly handle new uncertainties and risks in contemporary society leads citizens to



search for other methods to address these issues (Shapiro and Hacker-Cordon 1999).

Therefore, consumers choose to take on this responsibility themselves rather than leave risk identification and management to politicians (Beck 1997).

Although the relationship between consumption and politics is receiving increased attention, it is not a new phenomenon. The civil rights movement in America used early forms of consumption-based politics. Citizens organized “sit-ins” in Southern communities to protest separate sections in stores for whites and blacks. These are precursors for the major early form of consumption based protest, the boycott. Boycotts, or negative political consumerism, are organized efforts by consumers to abstain from buying products from a store or company. Boycotts are increasingly used as a political tool (Andersen and Tobiasen 2003; Inglehart 1997; Norris 2002). A number of highly publicized boycotts include those against Nestle for selling baby formula in the developing world, Coca-cola for mistreatment of workers in South America and Africa and Nike for unfair labor practices in manufacturing plants (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti and Stolle 2008).

More recently we see the use of positive political consumption, which is often referred to as “buycotts.” This is the process of consumers purchasing certain products because of values attributed to the product or to the producer of the product (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti et al. 2003). Buycotts are the embodiment of Giddens’ (1991: 214) concept of “life politics.” According to Giddens, citizens have numerous ways to participate in the political process. One method consists of individual citizens enacting practical choices in their personal lives to support their political views. The more traditional approach to politics involves engaging the government through voting. Voter

apathy and dissatisfaction with political parties is increasing, while, participation in voluntary associations has declined (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Wattenberg 2002). Citizen participation in informal groups and other individualized forms of political organization and involvement is rising (Ayers 1999; Bennett 2003; Deibert 2000; Eliasoph 1998; Halkier 1999; Norris 2002; Peretti and Micheletti 2003; Wuthnow 1998). A more formalized version of life politics is referred to as political consumerism.

Michelletti (2003) defines a political consumer as “a person who makes value considerations when buying or refraining to buy certain goods or products, in order to promote a political goal.” Why politicize the market? Because, for some people, existing political institutions are inadequate to address their concerns leading them to search for other methods of engagement. Values-based consumption is perhaps the most efficient method for expressing political beliefs as “most people consume everyday but vote only once every four years” (Gendron et al. 2008: 73). Beck (2000) goes as far to argue that consumers are the primary agents of democracy in the world. This is because everyone in the world is a consumer, so the aggregate power of the group is unmatched. Beck (1997) argues that democracy was once oriented to producers, but now focuses on consumers, where “citizen-consumers” provide balance to the power of transnational corporations. Political consumerism encourages academics and ordinary citizens to rethink the function and meaning of political engagement and participation, as an increasing number of citizens turn to the market to express their political views (Michelletti et al. 2003: 4).

Citizenship through consumption is receiving increasing attention in agriculture. Baker (2004) coined the term “food citizen” to describe people who are highly supportive

of alternative food networks, and especially local food production and consumption. This approach identifies and rejects unequal power relations in commoditized food production, trade and consumption and contrasts it with consumers and a food system that reintroduces social relations in the agro-food production-consumption network (Barnett et al. 2005). Food citizens, then, are consumers who “vote” with food purchases.

### ***Everyday Politics***

The field of “everyday politics” (or “everyday form of resistance”) was established by scholars to study how agency of less powerful actors in society can be used successfully (de Certeau 1984; Kerkvliet 1977, 1991, 2005; Lefebvre 1991; Scott 1976, 1985, 1990). While these authors recognize that elite actors and institutions have the majority of power in the world; they dismiss completely structural explanations of society in favor of one where the agency of everyday people has the potential to create social change. These forms of resistance are often more subtle, and therefore often more effective since they do not bring about a collective response by the dominant group.

Hobson and Seabrooke (2007b: 15) define everyday politics as “acts by those who are subordinate within a broader power relationship but, whether through negotiation, resistance or non-resistance, either incrementally or suddenly, shape, constitute and transform the political and economic environment around and beyond them.” Everyday politics can be conceptualized on a continuum of levels of directness of resistance and engagement. Defiance, on one end, is overt resistance such as protest. In the middle is mimetic challenge which “involves everyday actors intentionally adopting the discourse and structures of the dominant in order to challenge the legitimacy of what they perceive

to be an unjust system” (Hobson and Seabrooke 2007c: 197). And, on the other end, is axiorational behavior which is “reason-guided behavior that is neither purely instrumental nor purely value-oriented ... and while these actions are not immediately dramatic and are often not ‘political’ in motive, their political impact can nonetheless be profound” (Hobson and Seabrooke 2007c: 197).

Ethical consumption is either a mimetic challenge or axiorational behavior, depending on the mindset and the motivations of the individual consumer. The more dedicated and politically minded ethical consumer conceptualizes values-based consumption as a mimetic challenge to the unjust system of conventional production, consumption and trade. Utilizing the market to change the current production-consumption network is emblematic of mimetic challenge where the language and mechanisms of the dominant entity are used to challenge its legitimacy. The most engaged, politically-minded consumers use ethical consumption to mount a mimetic challenge against the conventional market-based system.

On the other hand, many consumers of ethical products are not as dedicated to change, so their behaviors are categorized as axiorational: not completely value-oriented, or completely instrumental, but having elements of both. Some axiorational ethical consumers do not have overtly political motives, but the sum total of their actions, intentional or not, have political ramifications. This is important for the prospects of consumption-based social change. Everyday political acts of consumption can lead to change, even if the individual engaging in the consumption act is not completely motivated by politics.

A distinction between the concepts of “ethical consumption” and “political consumption” is necessary at this juncture. Ethical consumption is a more broad term that encompasses values-based consumption practices motivated by a myriad of reasons such as unhappiness with production processes of food, general caring for others and solidarity with like-minded consumers. Political consumption is a much more deliberate process where the consumer uses purchasing decisions to support a political position, and hopefully initiate change.

This study of ethical and political consumption analyzes organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food. These alternative agricultural systems are excellent case studies of ethical and political consumption because consumers typically choose these more expensive products for non-economic reasons. The next section briefly reviews social movement theories and their applicability to ethical and political consumption.

### ***Social Movements, Collective Identity and Imagined Community***

Social movement literature is voluminous and a thorough review of the literature is not necessary for this study. However, a brief discussion of the social movement theoretical trajectory over the last four decades is helpful. Resource Mobilization Theory emerged in the 1970s as a new approach to study social movements that was quite different from the collective behavior approaches that preceded it (Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978). Resource Mobilization Theory analyzes social movements in terms of conflicts of interest, just like other forms of political struggle. Central to this approach is the importance of control over resources that allows organizations to successfully mobilize.

Social movement organizations are very important in Resource Mobilization Theory as they are the primary vehicle for mobilization. McAdam (1982) extended Resource Mobilization Theory and created the Political Process Model which analyzes how social movements obtain resources, and the complex interaction between the movement and the larger social environment.

Both the Resource Mobilization Theory and the Political Process Model were created during the time of “traditional” social movements that focused on civil rights and labor issues. New social movement theories have different logics of action based on politics, ideology and culture which correspond to different sources of identity, including ethnicity, gender and sexuality (Buechler 1995). This change of focus opened the door to new organizational forms. Traditionally social movements have an organizational base, where resources, recruitment, information dissemination and social action are coordinated. Recent literature notes that social movements are now more decentralized (Gusfield 1999; Melucci 1989) and use different ways of organizing (Buechler 2000; Melucci 1996).

This new approach to social movements is useful in the study ethical consumption. Consumption-based social action primarily uses economic methods to respond to social issues (Gendron et al. 2008). The economic means and decentralized organization of many new social movements has ramifications for participants’ notions of collective identity. Theories of collective identity are helpful for unpacking how ethical and political consumers organize and create new patterns of community.

Social movement scholars are turning to theories of collective identity to address the shortcomings of Resource Mobilization Theory and the Political Process Model

(Polletta and Jasper 2001). Collective identity is a “shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their actions as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their actions take place” (Melucci 1989: 34). It is also defined as “an individual’s cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285). Collective identity theory focuses less on recruitment and mobilization of actors and more on how individuals formulate attachments to others with similar goals.

This project uses collective identity theory to further understand ethical and political consumption. Consumption-based collective identity does not need formal organization; rather it relies on individuals making common choices based on shared ethical and political values. The “imagined community” concept is a useful theoretical tool to link collective identity and consumption.

Benedict Anderson (1983) created the concept of imagined communities to advance the study of nationalism. Anderson shows how citizens come to strongly identify with each other based strictly on shared national citizenship, even though the vast majority never meet face-to-face. Imagined communities are, “larger than face-to-face societies, the communal bonds felt by their members are imagined, that is, exist in their minds...it is imagined because the members will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in their minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1983: 6-7).

Applications of the imagined community concept focus on forms of national identity (McCrone et al. 1998; Pakulski and Tranter 2000); social causes and

consequences of national identity (Knudsen 1997; Phillips 1996); national identity in a cross-national perspective (Hjerm 1998; Jones and Smith 2001), ethnicity (Albrow et al. 1994) and territoriality (Schlishinger 1991). These authors treat the nation as the locus of communal attachment.

The notion of imagined communities can be applied in wide variety of social forms such as religion, place, gender, politics, and even consumption (Thompson and Cockuner-Balli 2007). Through an imagined community, collective identity based on consumption practices is possible. Ethical and political consumers are spread throughout the United States and the world. Ethical and political consumers construct a vision of community and identity that is imagined. Food is personal and important to everyone so it is perfect for the study of a consumption-based imagined community. If some consumers create a collective identity around consumption, food would be central. Furthermore, many people are particularly passionate about organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown given issues of risk and trust, and various postmaterialist values.

It is documented that everyday forms of politics are effective (see for example Herod 2007; Sharman 2007), whether the actors are involved in overt mimetic challenges like political consumption or axiorational behavior like ethical consumption. Everyday political actions may have more power if disparate participants are linked with a common collective identity. Going beyond the aggregate of individual purchasing decisions and shopping patterns, it implies there is a subset of consumers who embrace a collective identity based on consumption and this identity encourages political action. An imagined community of collective consumers has political implications. The potential for political



consumption to create social change is bolstered if consumers conceive of themselves as part of a larger imagined community because there is a belief that others are making similar choices for similar reasons.

Political consumption in which participants conceptualize themselves as part of an imagined community enhances the potential of consumption-based social change. This is the case for two reasons: 1) if an individual consumer believes others are participating in political consumption, it is more likely the individual consumer is going to continue to engage since larger numbers of consumers leads to greater social change potential, and 2) the collective identity that political consumers create helps form a sense of community that provides continuing motivation to practice everyday politics, because consumers do not want to let other community members down.

### ***A New Methodological Approach to the Study of Ethical Consumption***

In the case of ethical consumption understanding why people actually purchase ethical products is complicated by the fact that people like to be perceived as virtuous, making the reliance on attitudes problematic and even misleading. Most consumers express ethical and virtuous attitudes when asked, however, when making actual purchasing decisions at the store, (where no one is observing them) some consumers do not follow through with ethical intentions, instead they purchase lower cost conventional products. Studying ethical consumption thus, cannot rely only on consumer attitudes and intentions. Instead, a methodological approach stressing the factors that explain engagement in ethical consumption and the overall motivations for participation is more applicable.

Studies of ethical consumer behavior should encompass not only rational economic consumer behavior and *if* some people make purchasing decisions that are not economically rational, but *why* people decide to make decisions based on factors other than price. This is a two-step process. First, analyze the factors associated with higher propensity to be an ethical consumer. Second, identify the motivations for consuming ethically.

Understanding the ethical consumption process begins when a consumer decides to purchase a product because of an associated postmaterialist value such as safety, concern for the environment, concern for others, etc. While the selected product is very similar to the alternative “conventional” product, the conventional product costs less. The added value to the consumer, motivating payment of the higher price lies in the product’s postmaterialist value. Once the choice to purchase the higher cost product is made, determination of motivation for purchase is the next step. The two categories of motivations are 1) broad commitments to ethics resulting in axiorational behavior or 2) more directed political motives driven by the desire to mount a mimetic challenge. The final step is to determine to what extent consumers have a consumption-based collective identity. This methodological approach is useful for explaining and understanding the reasons individuals use consumption for more than the satisfaction of material needs.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter documents the existence of a new market segment: the conscious consumer economy. This new economic sector emerged due to a combination of factors including the decline of Fordism, the “hollowing out” of the nation-state, increasing

societal risk and disillusionment with current methods of political participation. An overview of the consumption patterns and consumer motivations of organic, Fair Trade and locally grown food demonstrates their appropriateness as case studies for the analysis of consumption as a non-economic purposive action. Ethical and political consumption allow citizens to enact their democratic rights through non-traditional means. Everyday forms of politics are effective methods for citizens who desire to support or voice displeasure with the current production, trade and consumption networks. I suggest Anderson's (1983) concept of "imagined community" as a method for conceptualizing consumption-based collective identity. The chapter culminates by outlining a new methodological approach for understanding non-economically rational consumption practices.

## **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

### ***Overview of the Study Procedure***

This study on ethical consumption uses a mixed-method approach. First, I administered a mail survey of a random sample of Colorado residents. Preliminary analysis of the survey data left some issues unanswered and posed new questions. I explore these complex issues in focus groups. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provides a complete picture of ethical consumption in Colorado.

### ***Survey***

#### ***Development of Survey***

I constructed a survey in order to explore consumers' attitudes toward organic, Fair Trade and locally grown food (a full copy of the survey is located in Appendix A). Several questions are taken and adapted with permission from a consumer survey of fair trade handicraft purchasing conducted by Littrell and Halepete (2004). However, I created the majority of questions and survey design.

#### ***The Sample***

The samples for the pilot test and survey were obtained from Survey Sampling International (SSI). The specified requirements were that respondents are over 18 years of age and the sample was random. SSI provided full address records and phone numbers.

#### ***Survey Mailing***

I created a preliminary version of the questionnaire and mailed 500 pilot surveys in June 2007 to a random sample of Colorado residents. One-hundred ninety six of the

500 pilot surveys were returned. Respondents commented on errors, unclear wording, and problems with question order. Based on this feedback, I altered the unclear language, question order and added some additional questions.

I use the Dillman (2000) method to maximize the response rate for the survey. In July 2007, I mailed 1,000 surveys to a random sample of Colorado residents. Ninety-seven mailings were either undeliverable or refused, resulting in a total usable sample of 903 respondents, of which 312 returned completed surveys. Eighteen days after the initial mailing, I sent a postcard to all 903 people to remind them to fill out and return the survey, if they had not done so already. I mailed a second survey to the 591 people who did not return the first survey. The second mailing generated an additional 151 responses. The total response rate for the survey is  $463/903$ , or 51.3%.

### ***Structure of the Survey***

#### *Organically Grown, Fair Trade Certified and Locally Grown Survey Questions*

The first portion of the survey contains three identical sections. I ask the same set of survey questions for organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food. The questions assess consumer knowledge, popularity and motivations for purchasing organic, Fair Trade and local food.

#### *General Ethical Consumption Questions*

In the next section of the survey I ask consumers more general shopping and consumption questions. These questions are not limited to organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food. I use these questions to assess general shopping philosophies.

### *Attitudinal/Values and Demographic Questions*

In the final section, I ask respondents to rate their level of agreement with numerous socio-political statements. I adapt these statements from Littrell and Halapete (2004). The survey finishes with demographic questions.

### ***Survey Demographics***

The following tables contain summaries of the survey demographics. I ask respondents to identify their gender, race/ethnicity, age, education level, household income and political beliefs. A few respondents refuse to answer the demographic questions; however this does not impact the results.

The gender division is relatively even, with slightly more female (52.5%) than male respondents. The 2000 Census gender figures for Colorado, 50.4% male and 49.6% female are very similar. The respondents are overwhelmingly white (87.7%), the state-level census data has very similar figures as 82.8% of the 2000 Colorado population was white. Latino/as, who make-up the second largest ethnic group in Colorado are underrepresented in the sample with only 4.2% of the respondents. Due to low percentages of minorities, I reduce the race/ethnicity variable to “Whites” and “Minorities” in the analyses. The age of the sample is positively skewed. The majority of respondents are 38 and older. Household income is also positively skewed. The 2005 Colorado mean household income from census projections was \$71,001, which is close to the survey sample data. The political orientation of respondents closely resembles a normal distribution, skewed slightly in the conservative direction.

**Table 1: What is your sex/gender?**

	Percent	Frequency
Male	47.5%	200
Female	52.5%	221
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	421

**Table 2: What is your race/ethnicity?**

	Percent	Frequency
White/Caucasian	87.7%	379
Black/African-American	2.1%	9
Latino/a	4.2%	18
Native American	1.6%	7
Asian	0.7%	3
Don't know/Not Applicable	1.4%	6
Other	2.3%	10
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	432

**Table 3: What was your age on your last birthday?**

	Percent	Frequency
Under 18	1.4%	6
18-27	3.7%	16
28-37	10.0%	44
38-47	17.6%	77
48-57	27.4%	120
58-67	20.8%	91
68 and over	18.3%	80
Don't know/Not Applicable	0.8%	4
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	438

**Table 4: What is the highest level of education that you have completed?**

	Percent	Frequency
Less than High School	1.2%	5
High School/GED	21.7%	92
College	42.2%	179
Graduate/Professional Degree	34.4%	146
Don't know/Not Applicable	0.5%	2
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	424

**Table 5: What is your total household income?**

	Percent	Frequency
Under \$20,000	7.3%	29
\$20,000-\$39,999	14.6%	58
\$40,000-\$59,999	18.6%	74
\$60,000-\$79,999	18.1%	72
Over \$80,000	34.2%	136
Don't know/Not Applicable	7.2%	29
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	398

**Table 6: How would you describe your political beliefs?**

	Percent	Frequency
Very liberal	9.0%	36
Somewhat liberal	21.4%	86
Moderate	27.6%	111
Somewhat conservative	26.6%	107
Very conservative	11.9%	48
Don't know/Not applicable	3.5%	14
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	402



## ***Quantitative Data Analysis***

I analyze the survey data in several ways. First, I perform a number of crosstabs on a selection of survey questions with the demographic variables. These crosstabulations discover initial relationships between demographic variables and levels of participation in ethical consumption.

Next, I model ethical and political consumption and collectivity with multivariate prediction equations. I use Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Thompson 2004) to create indicators of consumer attitudes and postmaterialist values from socio-political statements. The 15 statements reduce to four value factors. Ordinary least squares, binary and ordinal logistic regression (Agresti and Finlay 2009; Long 1997) are used to create the ethical and political consumption and collective behavior equations.

## ***Focus Groups***

I assemble four focus groups ranging in size from three to eight consumers to collect qualitative ethical consumption data. Focus groups, often used in marketing, are increasingly used in sociology (Morgan 1996). Focus group data complement the survey data through exploration of issues too complex for survey data alone and questions that emerge from preliminary survey data analysis.

## ***Recruitment***

I recruited focus group participants in several ways. First, several acquaintances agreed to participate. Next, I hung fliers at Colorado State University, and in coffee shops and convenience stores throughout Fort Collins and Loveland, Colorado. Finally, several survey respondents asked to see preliminary results of the survey. I asked them if

they would like to participate in focus groups on a similar topic, and several eagerly participated. After a total of 28 people were recruited, I organized four focus groups. Groups of eight, seven, six and three were conducted over a period of five weeks between March and April 2008, with a total of 24 people in attendance.

### *Conducting the Focus Groups*

I conducted two focus groups in a private residence and two in a classroom at Colorado State University. I provided food and drinks to the participants, but no other incentives were given to participants. All participants were required to sign an informed consent document and all agreed to be audio taped. I moderated the focus groups and an assistant took notes during the discussions. I encountered no major problems during the groups as all of the participants were relatively cooperative and polite.

### *Guide for Focus Group Questions*

The focus groups took the form of large group semi-structured interviews. I asked initial questions to stimulate discussion and conversations usually developed from the questions. Below is the preliminary question guide for the focus group questions.

- Please tell me what are the major factors that go into your grocery shopping decisions?
- How much does your personal/family economic situation factor into your grocery shopping decisions?
- Are you willing to pay more for food products knowing that more money is returning to the disadvantaged producers who have created it? Why or why not?
- Are you willing to pay more for food products that were produced under environmentally friendly conditions?
- Are you willing to pay more for food products that were produced locally?
- What is more important to you, supporting local farmers or helping poor Third World producers?
- What are your opinions of the Fair Trade movement? (without explaining what the concept of Fair Trade is)
- What are your opinions of the Fair Trade movement? (after a short definition/discussion of what Fair Trade is)

- Do you feel that organically grown, Fair Trade and locally grown food support similar or different values? Why?
- Do purchasing these types of food products reflect your political values?, ethical values?
- Do you feel that you could be a part of a social movement (or at least contribute to social change) based just on what you buy? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that you would be (or are) part of a social movement based on purchasing organic, Fair Trade and locally grown food?

### *Transcribing the Focus Group Data*

I transcribed the audio tapes of the focus groups. The focus group notes are also helpful to provide context to the exchanges, and keep straight which participants took part in the discussions.

The mixed-method approach proved essential for providing a well-rounded understanding of ethical consumption. Chapter 4 begins the empirical documentation of ethical consumption in Colorado.

## **Chapter 4 - Ethical Consumption in Colorado**

This chapter begins the section of empirical investigation of ethical consumption in Colorado. First, I provide an assessment of the level of consumer knowledge of organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food in Colorado. Next, the chapter evaluates the level of involvement in ethical consumption, descriptively and with bivariate crosstabulations with demographic variables. I then examine the level of convergence and divergence between organic, Fair Trade and local food consumers. This chapter identifies the scope of the Colorado conscious consumer economy. To utilize the methodological approach discussed in chapter 2, I must first demonstrate that ethical consumption is prevalent in Colorado.

### ***Knowledge of Organically Grown, Fair Trade Certified & Locally Grown Food in Colorado***

The tables below provide descriptive survey results on knowledge, propensity to purchase and reasons for purchasing organic, Fair Trade and local foods. I also report focus group discussions to provide depth and context for this inventory of Colorado ethical consumption.

Table 7 reports that almost everyone in the survey sample is familiar with organically grown (96.3%) and locally grown (96.6%) food. However, less than half (43.0%) of the respondents have heard of Fair Trade certified food. This result is not surprising because Fair Trade is less well known, newer and receives less media attention than organic and local food. The focus groups showed similar results with the vast

majority of focus group participants having some knowledge of organics and local food. Fewer focus group participants are familiar with Fair Trade, but after I gave an overview of the Fair Trade system, a few more participants mentioned that they had basic knowledge of Fair Trade.

**Table 7: Have you ever heard of Organic/Fair Trade/Local food?**

	Percent Yes	Frequency
Organic	96.3%	421
Fair Trade	43.0%	217
Local	96.6%	411

Many focus group participants feel more information on ethical consumption is needed, particularly in regards to Fair Trade certified food. This parallels the finding in Table 7 which shows that a much smaller number of people report knowledge of Fair Trade. As a mid-forties female notes in one of the focus groups:

There needs to be more information in the stores as to what products are Fair Trade, the small label is not enough. There needs to be displays that help educate the consumers, so they know that these products exist and what the Fair Trade mission is. If more people knew about Fair Trade, more people would think about buying these things.

The lack of information on Fair Trade often translates into misunderstandings with the Fair Trade mission. In fact, several survey respondents and focus group participants confuse Fair Trade with free trade, which is quite different.

In the past it was difficult to regularly purchase ethical agricultural products, but now organics and local foods are much easier to regularly buy, as a 26 year old female notes:

The supermarkets seem to try and have some organic and local produce to choose from, even the regular supermarkets like King Soopers and Safeway, not just Whole Foods and Sunflower Market.

The consensus from the survey and focus groups is that knowledge of organic and local foods is widespread in Colorado. Some consumers are familiar with Fair Trade, however many people do not accurately understand what Fair Trade certification guarantees.

A clarification of the survey data and the following set of tables are necessary.

The survey questions that produce the results in Table 7 include all of the survey respondents. However, Tables 8 through 12 report consumer responses of length of knowledge and frequency of purchase of organic, Fair Trade and locally grown food. These five tables contain data only from respondents who answered “yes” to the question in Table 7. The sample sizes for the organically grown and locally grown food results do not change much, however the *n* for the Fair Trade results is substantially smaller.

**Table 8: How did you first hear about Organic/Fair Trade/Local food?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Word of mouth	21.3%	94	14.2%	31	25.2%	104
In the press	23.5%	104	31.7%	69	20.6%	85
School	4.3%	19	4.1%	9	1.0%	4
At a place of worship	3.2%	14	6.9%	15	3.4%	14
In a store	19.0%	84	12.8%	28	15.3%	63
Other	10.9%	48	10.6%	23	15.6%	64
Don't know	17.8%	79	19.7%	43	18.9%	78
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	442	100.0%	218	100.0%	412

Table 8 reports that “word of mouth,” “in the press,” and “in a store” are the most common ways that survey respondents first heard about organic, Fair Trade and local

food. A large percentage of respondents (31.7%) report first hearing about Fair Trade in the press, which is the largest percentage of any of the categories. The high percentages of consumers of all three types of ethical consumption in the “word of mouth” category is interesting as personal networks appear to be a common method for spreading knowledge of ethical consumption.

Focus group participants report that word of mouth and knowing someone who has a direct connection to local food production are the most common ways they were introduced to local food. Focus group participants indicate that the media and their family and friends are how they first discovered Fair Trade products. Interestingly, several focus group participants note that those who introduced them to Fair Trade were often misinformed about the guarantees the Fair Trade system provides producers and consumers.

**Table 9: When did you first hear about Organic/Fair Trade/Local products?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Less than 1 year ago	1.8%	8	14.9%	30	7.1%	30
1-3 years ago	17.0%	75	40.8%	82	10.5%	44
4-6 years ago	21.6%	95	24.4%	49	11.6%	49
More than 6 years ago	59.6%	262	19.9%	40	70.8%	298
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	440	100.0%	201	100.0%	421

Table 9 reports the length of consumer knowledge of organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food of Colorado consumers. Organically grown and locally grown food are well established in Colorado with approximately 60% of respondents reporting long-term knowledge (more than 6 years) of organics and 71% indicating long-term knowledge of local food. The majority of respondents heard of Fair

Trade within the last 3 years. These results, in combination with Table 7, demonstrate long-term knowledge and acceptance of organic and locally grown products in Colorado, while most consumers are only recently aware of Fair Trade.

Many focus group participants could not recall how they first heard of organically grown food, remarking that it seems like organics have been around for a long time.

Focus group participants agree with survey findings that, Fair Trade is much newer to Colorado consumers, than organics and local food. For example, a 31 year old male states:

I feel like I have started to hear about Fair Trade a couple of years ago, I am still not really sure what it means, it sounds good, but you never know. I don't recall ever seeing any Fair Trade stuff in my supermarket, but I have never looked for it.

The survey and focus group data on knowledge of organic, Fair Trade and local food in Colorado are consistent. Colorado consumers have accurate longstanding knowledge of organic and local food, while knowledge of Fair Trade is less widespread and more varied.

### ***Engagement in Consumption of Organic, Fair Trade and Local Food***

The previous section establishes the consumer knowledge base of organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food in Colorado. In this section, I examine the level of effort Colorado consumers put into and the reasons they give for purchasing organic, Fair Trade and locally grown products.

Table 10 explores the central question of the chapter: “Do consumers in Colorado make an effort to buy organic, Fair Trade and locally grown food products?” Local food consumption is the most prevalent, with 69.0% of survey respondents indicating that they



make an effort to purchase local foods. Forty-three percent of Colorado consumers report making an effort to buy organics and 34.9% make an effort to buy Fair Trade. It is clear from this data that ethical consumption is prevalent in Colorado.

**Table 10: Do you make an effort to buy Organic/Fair Trade/Local food?**

	Percent Yes	Frequency
Organic	43.1%	179
Fair Trade	34.9%	73
Local	69.0%	280

The focus group participants discuss whether they make an effort to buy organic, Fair Trade and local food. Several participants indicate that the large increase in the number and availability of organically grown food over the last few years left them wondering why I introduced organic food as “alternative” agriculture. In their opinion, it was simply a “health” food. Most of the focus group participants indicate that they purchase at least some organic food and many also report making an effort to buy local products.

Fewer focus group participants make an effort to buy Fair Trade products. Focus group discussions on buying Fair Trade products often center on availability. Many consumers argue that it is futile to try to regularly purchase Fair Trade products because most stores do not carry them, and in those that do, only a few types of Fair Trade products are available. Others focus group participants disagree to an extent, noting an increase in Fair Trade offerings in supermarkets. The following exchange highlights this issue:

When you are talking about Fair Trade, what is there to make an effort to buy, I shop at Whole Foods and they have some coffee and tea, and sometimes bananas, but that is all I have ever seen.

In response

I shop at Whole Foods too and that is not entirely true. Besides that stuff [coffee, tea, bananas], they have chocolate, rice,...I think I have seen sugar, it seems like they are expanding their selection as time goes on.

However, most focus group participants who say they make an effort to buy Fair Trade products admit it is usually coffee or tea.

For this study, the reasons people purchase organics, Fair Trade and local food are as important as the degree of purchasing. Table 11 reports data on six reasons that consumers purchase organic, Fair Trade or locally grown food. In this question, respondents are asked to select multiple answers so the totals do not add up to 100%. Health reasons (78.0%) are quite important for organic consumers. Many respondents also believe that local (47.9%) and organic (37.0%) food tastes better. As one person remarked: “To be completely honest, I just think the organic produce tastes better, that’s why I buy it.”

**Table 11: Which of the following are reasons that you buy Organic/Fair Trade/Local food? (choose all that apply)**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Health reasons	78.0%	195	8.7%	14	20.4%	83
The food tastes better	37.0%	94	7.4%	12	47.9%	195
Protest large food corporations	14.5%	36	21.2%	34	14.2%	58
It is better for the environment	50.2%	126	21.9%	35	21.3%	86
Help local economies	34.1%	86	46.2%	74	68.8%	282
Support local farmers	45.6%	113	50.6%	81	74.8%	305

Protesting large food corporations is the least common overall rationale for buying ethical agricultural products on the survey, but a few focus group participants talk about not wanting to support large agricultural corporations. For example one person says: “In these tough economic times, it is really important to help out the local economy as much as possible, keep the money local, why give it to large corporations.” Helping local economies is a common reason for purchasing ethical products. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents indicate that they purchase locally grown food to support the local economy, followed by 46.2% of Fair Trade consumers and 34.1% of organic consumers who purchase with the local economy in mind. Almost half of the respondents indicate that they purchase Fair Trade products to support local economies, demonstrating that these consumers understand the Fair Trade mission well. Fair Trade supports disadvantaged producers in the Global South with the aim of helping the local economies of the producers. Along these same lines, supporting local farmers is also a very popular reason consumers give for purchasing organics, Fair Trade and local food. In fact, supporting local farmers is consistently the most common reason given, with 74.8% of local consumers, 50.6% of Fair Trade consumers and 45.6% of organic consumers indicating that supporting local farmers is important to them.

Focus group participants discuss why they choose to purchase organic, Fair Trade and local food. The most common reasons given for purchasing these products are health and safety concerns, a desire to support local producers and the local economy, wanting to have a connection with who produced their food, political motivations, solidarity with other consumers, and anger with large agro-food corporations. The combination of the

focus group discussions and the survey data in Table 11 address the issues of trust, risk society and postmaterialist values outlined in chapter 2.

Both the survey and the focus group data indicate the primary reasons consumers choose to buy organic products are health concerns and lack of knowledge of food production processes. Food safety scares, resulting from large agro-business firms cutting corners to save money at the cost of safety measures, lead many people to wonder about the safety of their food. One female notes:

You hear about all the bad things that happen where food companies cut corners, like mad cow and that peanut company, it's hard not to think about that stuff, especially for somebody like me who has three kids. You wonder what you are feeding the kids, so organic and local food seem healthier than the other stuff.

In addition, many large firms use chemical-intensive agriculture production to increase crop yield. Widespread use of pesticides leads some consumers to purchase organics so they feel safer about their food. As one woman remarks: "The last thing I want to do is put more chemicals in my body, who knows what they are doing to some of the food, organic is the only way to go."

Lack of trust in the conventional food system leads many consumers to take control of their food through careful purchasing decisions. These consumers require more information about the production history of their food so they increasingly purchase organically grown food (Coff 2006). This is a risk management technique used by consumers. Purchasing organics to increase knowledge of the production history is helped by the rise of supermarkets, like Whole Foods, that specialize in organic food. Many focus group participants point out how the existence of Whole Foods in Fort Collins really opens up a variety of food possibilities that they did not know existed. Focus group participants also remark that locally produced food is a safer alternative to

conventional food since it is produced by smaller, less-industrialized farms and travels shorter distances so long-term preservation, with added chemicals, is not necessary.

The most common reason survey respondents and focus group respondents give for regularly purchasing local food is to help support local farmers and the local economy. Clearly, many consumers hold the postmaterialist value of caring for and helping others. Focus group participants note that purchasing local food is a matter of community pride and responsibility; so many consumers feel that it is their duty to buy local products. Additionally, consumers with a nuanced understanding of the Fair Trade mission realize that Fair Trade is designed to help local farmers and local economies in other countries. Specifically, the social development premium that is part of the Fair Trade product price is used to fund community projects and the guaranteed price returns money to the local economies of producers.

Coff (2006) discusses returning the production history of food products in his formulation of a “food ethics” discipline. Focus group participants desire a closer connection with their food. This was a major reason why consumers are very supportive of local food, because it came with a “story.” The “story” is a romanticized version of the production history. Ethical consumers want to know where, by whom and how their food is produced. Food is very personal because it is put into the body, so many consumers desire to know as much as possible about their food.

Focus group participants recall the enjoyment they receive from attending farmers’ markets. Interacting with farmers provides an additional component of the production history since consumers come in direct contact with producers. Consumers

also report enjoying farmers' markets because they are fun to attend. One woman in the focus groups remarks:

I love buying local stuff. I go to the farmers market that they have in the Kohl's parking lot on Harmony. Not only is the food great, but I like the atmosphere too...it is a fun thing to do on a Saturday when the weather is nice.

The main reasons for consuming ethical foods survey respondents and focus group participants provide are too little information about how their food is produced and who produced their food. A definite lack of trust in the agro-industrial food system exists for many consumers. To combat increased risk and the lack of trust in the conventional food system ethical consumers are proactive with their purchasing decisions.

In Chapter 2, I discuss that intentions to engage is an imperfect measure of actual behavior. Table 12 contains survey data on consumers' organic, Fair Trade and local food purchasing the last time they went grocery shopping. Just under half of the respondents note that they purchased zero Fair Trade products, which is to be expected, as many of these products are not available at some grocery stores. Approximately one-quarter and one-fifth of consumers did not purchase any organic or local products, respectively. The majority of survey respondents that did purchase organic, Fair Trade and local products the last time they went grocery shopping bought between one and five items. The data in Tables 10 and 12 document regular purchasing of ethical agricultural items. Although these questions arguably provide more accurate information than general consumer attitude and intention questions, no measure of consumer behavior is totally accurate.

**Table 12: In your most recent grocery shopping trip, how many Organic/Fair Trade/Local products did you purchase?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Zero	24.5%	65	44.6%	53	20.6%	71
1-2	30.9%	82	37.8%	45	39.7%	137
3-5	23.4%	62	10.9%	13	28.1%	97
6-10	10.6%	28	2.5%	3	7.0%	24
11 or more	7.9%	21	3.4%	4	3.2%	11
All were ..	2.7%	7	0.8%	1	1.4%	5
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	265	100.0%	119	100.0%	345

Table 13 contains data from all survey respondents, including those that are unfamiliar with organically grown, Fair Trade certified or locally grown food. If a survey respondent answers “No” to: “Have you heard about organic/Fair Trade/locally grown food,” they then skip several questions and are brought to a definition of organic, Fair Trade or local food. The questions summarized in Table 13, follow these definitions. The survey respondents are provided five choices regarding what would prompt them to purchase, or purchase more organic, Fair Trade and local products. In this question, respondents are asked to select multiple answers so the totals do not add up to 100%. Better prices is the main reason given for organics (54.5%), indicating that many consumers decide not to purchase organic products because of higher costs compared with similar conventional products. Many respondents (42.2%) would be more inclined to purchase Fair Trade products if they are provided with more information about what “Fair Trade” means and what it supports. Availability is the impediment to broader consumption of locally produced products. Focus group participants are in agreement

that if a wider range of local products are available at more convenient locations, they would be more inclined to regularly purchase local foods.

**Table 13: Which of the following changes would most motivate you to start buying or buy more Organic/Fair Trade/Local food? (choose one)**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Better product variety	13.2%	55	8.5%	35	19.9%	84
Better product quality	10.5%	44	7.3%	30	17.0%	72
More info about what org/FT/local means and what it supports	7.9%	33	42.2%	174	6.9%	29
Broader availability	13.9%	58	18.4%	76	37.1%	157
Better prices	54.5%	228	23.6%	97	19.1%	81
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	418	100.0%	412	100.0%	423

The focus group discussions are dominated with discussions on availability and price. Several focus group participants express ambivalence about Fair Trade after initially being enthusiastic due to perceived lack of availability. A 25 year old female describes her experience with Fair Trade coffee:

A few of my friends call me a coffee snob, I don't know if that's true but I am very particular about the coffee I drink and I really like different specialty coffee beans. I got into Fair Trade awhile back and began looking for it, however, I never really saw any other products besides coffee and tea in the coffee shops that I went to. I never saw anything in the supermarkets that I shopped in, so I just figured that Fair Trade was just a coffee and tea thing.

A 33 year old African-American female echoes this statement:

I was psyched initially when I heard of Fair Trade, but only a few products are available, it is tough to be committed [to ethical consumption] because it is impossible to avoid large companies in your shopping. I mean, they have their greedy hand in everything and only some products have other [ethical] choices available, so I have become more discouraged.



This discussion resembles points made earlier in the chapter. Many consumers confuse the Fair Trade message and others have difficulty in locating Fair Trade products in grocery stores. These factors combine to discourage some consumers from looking for and purchasing Fair Trade products. Focus group participants do not complain about lack of product variety or quality in local and organic foods. Several participants do note that they wish local produce and other local products like artisanal breads and cheeses are more widely available.

Focus group participants' most common complaint about ethical agricultural products is that they are more expensive than similar conventional products. A 22 year old male remarks:

It seems like for all of these, cost is a big issue. I have to admit that I am not as familiar with Fair Trade, but I can't buy organic and local stuff that much because it is just too expensive, I am on a very tight budget.

In summary, focus group participants' main barriers to increasing purchases are locating local and Fair Trade products, and the high cost of organics and local products

The first two sections cover Colorado consumers' knowledge and popularity of and motivations for purchasing organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food. Almost all survey respondents and focus group participants indicate some familiarity with organic and local products, while just under half report that they have heard of Fair Trade products. Most Colorado consumers that have heard of Fair Trade found out about it recently, while most consumers of organic and local products have known about these products for over six years. There is considerable support for these three ethical products. Colorado consumers give a number of reasons for purchasing organic, Fair Trade and local products, some that are individual (health) and others that

are collective (support for local economies and farmers). Finally, Colorado consumers indicate that better prices for organics, more information on Fair Trade and broader availability of locally grown products would encourage them to increase their level of purchasing.

The next section explores several of the above questions in bivariate crosstabulations with demographic variables. The following bivariate results provide the first step in answering the question: What does an ethical consumer look like?

### ***Demographic Differences in Organic, Fair Trade & Local Food Purchasing***

This section analyzes the questions “Do you make an effort to buy organic/Fair Trade/local food?” by demographic categories. I report crosstabs for all demographic variables except race/ethnicity due to its lack of variability. These tables show bivariate patterns in ethical consumption purchases in Colorado.

Table 14 demonstrates that there is a clear gender differential in ethical consumption. Females are much more likely to purchase organically grown (9.1% difference,  $p<0.10$ ), Fair Trade (15.4% difference,  $p<0.05$ ) and locally grown (22.2% difference,  $p<0.01$ ) than males. Similarly, women in the focus groups are more supportive of organic, Fair Trade and local food consumption, and are generally more involved in the discussions.

**Table 14: Gender and Do you make an effort to buy Organic/Fair Trade/Local food?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Male	37.8%	68	25.7%	26	54.8%	110
Female	46.9%	99	41.1%	39	77.0%	157
<b>Chi-square</b>	3.318*		5.177**		13.303***	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

While gender's relationship with ethical consumption is straight forward, age is more complex. Younger people purchase organic and Fair Trade products in higher percentages, however large numbers of older consumers purchase locally grown food. This finding is partially on account of the length of time these food items have been available. Local products, in one form or another, have been around for a long period of time, while organically grown and Fair Trade certified food are newer phenomena. Consumption practices are engrained at a young age and people tend to continue to purchase what they have in the past. This contributes to the higher percentages of older consumers that report purchasing local products.

**Table 15: Age and Do you make an effort to buy Organic/Fair Trade/Local food?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Under 38	54.1%	33	42.3%	11	58.1%	36
38-57	46.7%	84	37.4%	34	69.8%	125
58 and over	35.0%	57	28.4%	25	71.6%	11
<b>Chi-square</b>	8.338**		2.477		3.979	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

The age range of focus group participants is similar to the age distribution of survey respondents. In general, younger focus group participants are the most supportive of ethical consumption.

The data in Table 16 examine the relationship between education and purchasing organic, Fair Trade and local food. In general, having a college or advanced degree is associated with purchasing organically grown, Fair Trade certified and local food in higher percentages. However, in all three crosstabs, the chi-square value is not significant, indicating statistical independence of the variables.

**Table 16: Education and Do you make an effort to buy Organic/Fair Trade/Local food?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
High School or less	34.8%	31	22.2%	8	64.4%	56
College	47.0%	79	37.2%	32	69.5%	116
Grad/Professional	43.4%	59	33.8%	25	72.9%	97
<b>Chi-square</b>	3.541		2.592		1.821	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Table 17 demonstrates that income does not have a consistent relationship with participation in ethical consumption. Because of the higher cost it is assumed that only wealthy consumers are able to purchase these products. An inspection of Table 17 demonstrates this is not true. Consumers that have a total household income under \$40,000 are quite engaged in the purchase of all three product categories. In the case of organics and Fair Trade, higher household income is associated with higher percentages of consumers engaged in purchasing ( $p < 0.10$ ). However, this association disappears in the analysis of local products. The percentages are nearly identical across all income categories, with in fact, the lowest category, having a slightly higher percentage of local consumers.

**Table 17: Income and Do you make an effort to buy Organic/Fair Trade/Local food?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Under \$40,000	41.0%	34	31.7%	13	71.8%	56
\$40,000-\$79,999	38.8%	54	42.9%	27	67.9%	93
\$80,000 and over	52.4%	65	41.2%	28	68.8%	88
<b>Chi-square</b>	5.362*		1.418		0.368	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Some focus group participants are unwilling to disclose their incomes; however, of those that do, there is no apparent pattern between income and effort to buy organics, Fair Trade and locally grown food. In fact, several of the most ardent supporters of all three product types are relatively poor students or recent college graduates that do not report having much income. At the same time, numerous older focus group participants also report high levels of purchasing organic, Fair Trade and local food.

Table 18 completes the demographic analysis of purchasing ethical food products. Political affiliation is not a true demographic variable; rather it is an indicator of a person's broad set of values. I group political affiliation with other demographic variables for the sake of the argument I present in subsequent chapters. Consumers who identify themselves as politically liberal are far more engaged in ethical consumption than political moderates and conservatives. The percentage differences between liberals and conservatives are quite large in all three cases; organic (25.2% difference,  $p < 0.01$ ), Fair Trade (27.3% difference,  $p < 0.01$ ) and local (11.9% difference,  $p < 0.10$ ). It is clear the liberal end of the political spectrum is associated with higher engagement in ethical consumption. However, the percentage difference between liberals and conservatives for local food is much smaller than organic and Fair Trade. This is an indication that local

food and political affiliation have a different relationship than organic and Fair Trade when analyzed by political affiliation.

**Table #18 Political Beliefs and Do you make an effort to buy Organic/Fair Trade/Local food?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Liberal	57.9%	66	53.3%	32	77.2%	88
Moderate	39.8%	41	31.0%	13	65.3%	66
Conservative	32.7%	48	26.0%	20	65.3%	94
<b>Chi-square</b>	17.185***		11.597***		5.147*	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

A clear split exists between liberals and conservatives in the focus groups.

Organic and especially Fair Trade consumers disproportionately self-identify as politically liberal. The focus group discussions on local food purchasing mirror the two categories of local consumers “defensive localization” and “diversity-receptive localization” (Hinrichs 2003). Politically conservative focus group participants are in the defensive localization camp and liberals are in the diversity-receptive localization category. Conservatives who are dedicated to local food consumption express concerns over job losses overseas, have a strong sense of nationalism and some argue that it is wrong to support people in other countries, when many locals need help (or at least US nationals). The focus group finding that many conservative consumers are frequent purchasers of local food supports the survey data reported in Table 18 that shows conservatives are much more engaged in purchasing local foods than purchasing organics and Fair Trade.

In a heated focus group discussion, several participants converse about local food and the importance of supporting local farmers. The conversation starts with a self-identified conservative who states:

Why would I help some foreigner in Mexico or Brazil or some other place like that, when there are Americans, Coloradoans, who need my money just as bad. That is completely ridiculous.

A self-described liberal responds:

You can support local food and something like Fair Trade simultaneously. A lot of the Fair Trade stuff are things like coffee, tea and bananas that aren't grown in the US.

The conservative who starts the conversation begins to get visibly agitated and an argument ensues that quickly moves beyond Fair Trade and local can coexist vs. local for defensive reasons, to broader issues of politics. This is clearly a sensitive issue because a full discussion on political ideology breaks out. The philosophical differences that create the two local food camps, defensive localization and diversity-receptive localization, are well-entrenched, ideological belief systems.

The local food consumption dichotomy is important to the concepts of "ethics" and ethical consumption. Ethical values are relative. One consumers' definition of "ethical consumption" can be radically different than another persons'. The local food debate clearly demonstrates this point. Both groups are driven by ethical values and the desire to help people; however they have very different ethical frameworks.

This section highlights the associations between demographic variables and consumer effort in purchasing organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food. In summary, females, people with higher levels of education and self-identified political liberals participate in ethical consumption in Colorado in larger percentages. The relationships between ethical consumption and age and income are more

complicated. Younger consumers are more likely to purchase organic and Fair Trade products, while older consumers purchase local food in higher amounts. Wealthier consumers purchase organic and Fair Trade products in higher percentages, but local food purchases do not have an association with income.

The survey data provides a general overall picture of ethical consumption in Colorado. The focus group discussions support and substantiate the survey findings. The issue of defensive localization vs. diversity-receptive localization emerges from focus groups as an integral debate in the Colorado local food system. A large number of Colorado consumers are very passionate about purchasing and consuming local foods, however two ideologically opposed groups exist that are equally dedicated to local foods.

### ***Convergence & Divergence***

Organically grown, locally grown and Fair Trade certified foods address different values, however each can be described as alternative agriculture compared against the larger conventional food system. Sharing the characteristic of being “alternative” suggests the possibility of a convergence of organic, Fair Trade and local food consumers since they have similar values. However, focus group discussions demonstrate that this may not always be the case. The two groups of local food supporters are ideologically opposed to one another, and one group, defensive localists, have a worldview that conflicts with the values that the Fair Trade system is founded upon.

Table 19 reports permutation tetrachoric correlation coefficients for the “do you make an effort to buy” questions. Tetrachoric correlation measures the direction and strength of association of binary categorical variables. Long et al. (2009) developed a permutation version of tetrachoric correlation that provides exact probability values. I



use the permutation tetrachoric correlation to test for convergence and divergence among organic, Fair Trade and local food consumers.

**Table 19: Permutation Tetrachoric Correlation Coefficients for “make an effort to buy”**

	Organic	Fair Trade	Local
Organic	1.000	0.604***	0.372***
Fair Trade	-	1.000	0.311**
Local	-	-	1.000

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

The results of Table 19 provide evidence of a convergence between consumers of organic, Fair Trade and local food. There is a very strong correlation between organic and Fair Trade consumers, followed by a strong correlation between organic and local food consumers (both correlations are significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level). The correlation between local and Fair Trade is somewhat weaker, but still statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Descriptive survey data and focus group discussions suggest that the Fair Trade – local relationship is different depending on consumers’ political orientation. When I separate the sample into three categories of respondents, those who identify themselves as liberal, moderate and conservative and the correlation between Fair Trade – local is calculated, this difference is apparent. The relationship is quite different depending on political affiliation, i.e. for liberals the tetrachoric correlation between Fair Trade and local is 0.4924 ( $p < 0.01$ ) which is a very strong positive relationship and the Fair Trade-local correlation for moderates is 0.6321 ( $p < 0.01$ ) which is also a very strong positive relationship. However, the Fair Trade-local correlation is 0.0457 ( $p = 0.529$ ), for conservatives, indicating no association. These correlations provide evidence of both convergence and divergence in the case of local food consumers. Liberal and moderate

local food consumers converge with other ethical consumers, while conservative local food consumers diverge with other ethical consumers.

The findings in Table 19 and in the political affiliation subsamples reported in the text are important. This is the first quantitative evidence of convergence and divergence in ethical consumption and of what types of consumers make up the diversity-receptive and defensive localist categories. Previous studies have relied on interviews and focus group discussions to formulate the two categories of local food consumers. The survey data that I report here validates this point with generalizable quantitative findings. Interestingly, liberals and moderates appear to have similar approaches to ethical consumption, believing in the ability to support both local and global ethical food systems, while conservatives make up the majority of the defensive localist category.

The convergence – divergence debate adds another element to the complex process of understanding who participates in ethical consumption and what are their motivations. Many people consume ethically in multiple ways and to support numerous causes, however other consumers exist who are particularly passionate about one specific issue and focus their ethical consumption efforts on that issue.

## ***Discussion***

The rise in ethical consumption found in other recent studies (BBMG 2007; French and Rogers 2007; LOHAS 2009) is supported by the findings I report in this chapter on ethical consumption in Colorado. Many Colorado consumers are familiar with and regularly purchase organic, Fair Trade certified and locally grown products. Descriptive survey results reveal that females, higher levels of education and liberal political affiliation are associated with higher participation in ethical consumption. This

data begins to answer the question: What does an ethical consumer look like? However, focus group data shows the complexity of these relationships. Availability, uncertainty of the movement's message and price can be impediments to purchasing organic, Fair Trade and local food, and can complicate the decision making process for consumers. It is also clear that local food consumption is a different, more complex, phenomenon than organics and Fair Trade. Some local food consumers converge with consumers of organics and Fair Trade, while others diverge and only support local food.

The demographic bivariate findings of consumers who report making an effort to buy organic, Fair Trade certified and local food support and dispute existing findings. I find a weak curvilinear relationship between income and organic food consumption which corresponds to Dettman and Dimitri's (2007) findings. Lyson and Guptill (2004) show that higher income is associated with greater propensity to purchase local food, however I find that local food consumption is uniform across income categories. I also find that females are more likely to purchase organic, Fair Trade and local food, which is consistent with previous findings (Cunningham 2001; Lea and Worsley 2005; Lockie et al. 2004). The paucity of studies on Fair Trade consumption makes my findings useful for understanding who purchases Fair Trade agricultural products.

Ethical consumers' lack of trust in large agro-industrial corporations is what initially attracted them to purchase ethical agricultural products on a regular basis. Food safety scares attract large amounts of media attention and cause consumers to actively participate in risk management through consumption. Lack of production history knowledge of agricultural products leaves consumers without full information about their food. Alternative agricultural products like organics, Fair Trade and locally grown food,

help restore the production history so consumers can make fully informed consumption decisions (Coff 2006). Living in a “risk society” necessitates finding ways to manage the increased everyday risks, and some individuals choose to do so with more detailed attention to their consumption practices (Beck 1992, 1995, 1996).

This chapter documents a high level of participation in ethical consumption in Colorado. Now I turn my attention to detailing the factors associated with increased participation in ethical consumption. The next chapter models ethical consumption through multivariate methods. This is the first step in the methodological approach for studying ethical consumption that I have outlined in Chapter 2.

## **Chapter 5 - Unpacking Ethical Consumption**

In Chapter 4 I illustrate that many Colorado consumers regularly participate in ethical consumption. This chapter examines the factors associated with higher participation in ethical consumption. First I present descriptive and bivariate survey results of consumer opinions on the integration of ethics and purchasing decisions. Next, I use multivariate analysis to model ethical consumption with demographic and postmaterialist value variables. The chapter uses the first step of my methodology for studying ethical consumption, modeling the factors that explain participation in ethical consumption.

### ***Postmaterialist Values & Ethical Consumption***

This section details links between postmaterialist values and participation in ethical consumption. I ask survey respondents their opinions on integrating ethics and consumption. Table 20 reports the results of the survey question: “Do you think that people should take ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions?” Many people do agree with integrating ethics into consumption decisions, as 41% of the sample agreed compared with 28.5% that disagreed.

**Table 20: Do you think people should take ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions?**

	Percent Yes	Frequency
Strongly Agree	24.2%	104
Agree	16.8%	72
Neutral	30.5%	131
Disagree	11.7%	50
Strongly Disagree	16.8%	72
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	429

I examine this question in crosstabulations with demographic variables and find significant relationships with education level and political affiliation.<sup>1</sup> Respondents with higher levels of education support integration of ethics and consumption in higher purchases. For example, 50.2% of respondents with a graduate degree either agree or strongly agree with the question compared with 29.4% of respondents who have a high school degree.

**Table 21: Education and Do you think people should take ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions?**

	High School or less		College		Grad/Professional		Total
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	Freq.
Strongly Agree	17.5%	16	24.3%	43	26.4%	37	96
Agree	12.0%	11	14.1%	25	23.6%	33	69
Neutral	19.7%	18	40.7%	72	27.1%	38	128
Disagree	17.4%	16	9.0%	16	10.0%	14	46
Strongly Disagree	33.4%	31	11.9%	21	12.9%	18	70
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	92	100.0%	177	100.0%	140	409
<b>Chi-square</b>	40.812***						

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

<sup>1</sup> All crosstabs are calculated, only significant relationships are reported.

Table 22 reports that higher percentages of liberals believe that ethics should be integrated into purchasing decisions as 57% of liberals agree with the question compared to only 31.6% of conservatives. To accurately model ethical consumption it is necessary to use multivariate methods.

**Table 22: Political Beliefs and Do you think people should take ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions?**

	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	Freq.
Strongly Agree	38.0%	46	21.5%	23	17.1%	26	95
Agree	19.0%	23	15.9%	17	14.5%	22	62
Neutral	28.9%	35	27.1%	29	36.8%	56	120
Disagree	4.1%	5	15.0%	16	14.5%	22	43
Strongly Disagree	10.0%	13	20.5%	22	17.1%	26	61
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	122	100.0%	107	100.0%	152	381
<b>Chi-square</b>	27.070***						

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

I test demographic and postmaterialist value variables through a series of nested regression models that first uses demographic variables, and then in a subsequent model includes the value covariates. This methodological approach allows for comparison of the two categories of variables. The demographic information comes from the survey. I create the postmaterialist value variables through data reduction. I discuss this process in the following section.

### *Postmaterialist Value Predictors*

Attitudes and values of consumers are important in determining what product attributes individuals value (Blackwell et al. 2001). Numerous studies have determined that values are superior to demographics in the creation of consumer profiles (see for example, De Pelsmacker et al. 2005; Kennedy et al. 1988; Prakash and Munson 1985).

Empirical results in ethical consumption and food studies have demonstrated the predictive power of attitudes and values on: energy conservation (Neuman 1986), ethical consumption (Shaw et al. 2005), fair trade consumption (De Pelsmacker et al. 2005), food choices (Goldsmith et al. 1995), pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Dietz et al. 2002; Karp 1996; Schultz and Zelenzy 1998), purchase of healthy foods (Homer and Kahle 1988) and restaurant selection (Boote 1981).

Littrell and Halapete (2004) conducted a survey of consumers at several fair trade retail locations. A list of socio-political statements measured on five point Likert scales (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree) was included in the survey. I adopt and use a subset of those statements here. The list of the statements is below:

- I prefer buying environmentally friendly products
- I look at where a product has been manufactured before buying it
- I prefer to buy goods made in the US, rather than products made in other countries
- I buy as much as possible at sale prices
- I carefully plan most of my purchases
- I consider myself to be part of a larger global community
- I am concerned about sweatshop conditions
- I am concerned about conservation issues (water, energy, etc.)
- I am active in local or state politics
- It is important to take care of poor people in the US before we give attention to conditions in the rest of the world
- I am a community activist
- I think about social issues before making purchasing decisions
- I think about environmental issues before making purchasing decisions

I use these statements as indicators of respondents' attitudes and values. The list is too long for each individual statement to be used as single predictors, and by themselves do not adequately capture the multifaceted nature of postmaterialist values. I use data reduction to create four value indicators that I later use in regression models.



### *Factor Analysis*

Data reduction of the socio-political statements is necessary to create indicators of respondents' attitudes. I perform Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on the socio-political statements to isolate unique factors. Four factors result from the EFA, utilizing varimax rotation and a principle component extraction method. The four factors are listed in Table 23, with the factor loadings, eigen-values and percent of explained variance. I require factor loadings to have a minimum value of 0.5 and eigen-values to be greater than 1.0.

**Table 23: Factor Loadings, Eigen-values and Percent of Explained Variance for the Exploratory Factor Analysis of Postmaterialist Value Variables**

<b>Factors and Items</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Eigen-values</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>
<i>Social/Environmental Concern</i>		3.027	23.3%
I prefer buying env. friendly products	0.620		
I consider myself to be part of a larger global community	0.755		
I am concerned about sweatshop conditions	0.699		
I think about social issues before making purchasing decisions	0.645		
I think about env. issues before making purchasing decisions	0.772		
I am concerned about conservation issues (water, energy, etc.)	0.666		
<i>Local Activism</i>		1.706	13.1%
I am active in local or state politics	0.860		
I am a community activist	0.817		
<i>Utilitarianism</i>		1.542	12.3%
I buy as much as possible at sale prices	0.786		
I carefully plan most of my purchases	0.745		
<i>Importance of Origin</i>		1.395	10.7%
I look where a product has been manufactured before buying it	0.671		
I prefer to buy goods made in the US, rather than products made in other countries	0.842		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis  
Rotation Method: Varimax

The factors, in order of eigen-values, are: Social/Environmental Concern (SEC), Local Activism (LA), Utilitarianism (UT) and Importance of Origin (IO). The UT factor is an indicator of economically rational consumption behavior. The other three factors are indicators of postmaterialist values. SEC measures concern about social and environmental issues<sup>2</sup>, LA measures political and community involvement and IO measures how important the origin of a product is to the consumer. I use these four factors as indicators of purely economic consumer behavior (UT) and postmaterialist values-based consumer behavior (SEC, LA, IO) in subsequent data analyses.

### ***Modeling Ethical Consumption***

In this section I model ethical consumption with ordinal and binary logistic regression equations. Each table in this section contains two models of the dependent variable, the first contains the demographic predictors, and the second contains the demographic predictors and adds the value factors.

Many of the demographic variables are categorical requiring a number of dummy codes. I report the comparison groups in a note in the table. Ethnicity is recoded into a dichotomous variable where “White” = 1 and “Minority” = 0 because of the low frequencies of individual minority ethnicities. This allows me to include ethnicity in the models.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I group concern for social and environmental issues together because some of the socio-political statements cannot be clearly separated into a “social” or “environmental” category. For example, “I consider myself to be part of a larger global community” has both social and environmental components; therefore I group social and environmental concerns into one factor.

<sup>3</sup> I should note that all models have been separated several ways to examine possible differential effects of finances. Separate models were estimated for 1) High and Low income categories and 2) Do you take your financial situation into consideration when making your purchasing decisions (Yes/No)? This is done to account for the fact that many people can only think of their financial situation when making purchasing

Table 24 reports models of the dependent variable, “Do you think people should take ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions?” A higher score of the dependent variable corresponds to higher levels of agreement with the statement. Model 1 contains the demographic predictors, and education level and liberal political orientation ( $p < 0.01$ ) are significant positive predictors of taking ethics into consideration. Therefore higher education levels and liberal political beliefs are associated with an increased belief that ethics should be part of the purchasing decision making process. However, in Model 2, which adds in the value factors, all of the demographic effects disappear (with the exception of borderline significance of the highest age dummy variable,  $p < 0.10$ ). The value factors, SEC ( $p < 0.01$ ), LA ( $p < 0.05$ ) and IO ( $p < 0.05$ ) are significant predictors. The equations suggest that postmaterialist values are predominately responsible for indicating how strongly a consumer feels about the integration of ethics into purchasing decisions. Postmaterialist values also account for a large increase in the model fit as the Nagelkerke  $R^2$  increases to 0.401 in Model 2, from 0.123 in Model 1. The three significant postmaterialist value coefficients are positive, indicating that increased likelihood of holding these postmaterialist values leads to higher levels of agreement with taking ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions. It is clear from Models 1 and 2 that the majority of predictive power originates from the value factors while the demographic variables add little to the model.

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decisions. Therefore, many cannot take other factors like ethics, attitudes and philosophies into purchasing decisions. This is a potentially large hurdle to the accuracy of the regression models, however, the split models were very similar to the models that include all respondents. Furthermore, the coefficients from the split models are tested against each other for significance, utilizing the method recommended by Paternoster et al. (1998), and none are significantly different from one another. It is then reasonable to conclude that the issue of finances has not affected the models in a noticeable manner, and the inclusion of income dummy variables as predictors is sufficient to account for differential buying ability due to finances.

**Table 24: Ordinal Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Taking Ethics into Consideration when Making Purchasing Decisions.”**

Independent Variables	Equation			
	Model 1 Demographics		Model 2 Demographics & Attitudinal Factors	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.177 (0.838)	0.231	-0.173 (0.841)	0.238
Ethnicity (White = 1)	0.225 (1.253)	0.376	0.086 (1.092)	0.448
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	-0.024 (0.976)	0.323	-0.446 (0.640)	0.360
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	-0.120 (0.887)	0.337	-0.665* (0.514)	0.384
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.832*** (2.300)	0.289	0.430 (1.531)	0.336
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.962*** (2.617)	0.309	0.559 (1.749)	0.362
Income - \$40,000-\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	0.074 (1.077)	0.290	0.322 (1.380)	0.335
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	0.206 (1.230)	0.301	0.300 (1.350)	0.352
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	1.101*** (3.008)	0.256	0.069 (1.072)	0.311
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	0.129 (1.138)	0.255	-0.403 (0.669)	0.291
Social/Env. Concern factor	-	-	1.336*** (3.805)	0.153
Local Activism factor	-	-	0.269** (1.308)	0.124
Utilitarian factor	-	-	0.041 (1.042)	0.128
US Origin factor	-	-	0.255** (1.290)	0.125
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.123		0.401	
Likelihood Chi-Square	39.29***		132.55***	
<i>N</i>	315		275	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

Tables 25-27 present prediction models of whether the respondent makes an effort to buy organically grown, Fair Trade certified or locally grown food. Table 25 reports Models 3 and 4 modeling making an effort to purchase organic food. Model 3 contains demographic predictors and the length of time the respondent has known about organic foods. The earlier a consumer learned about organic food, the more time they have to decide whether or not they would like to purchase organics. Increased length of organic knowledge should significantly positively predict the dependent variable, and it does at the  $p < 0.01$  significance level. In addition, liberal political orientation ( $p < 0.01$ ) and females ( $p < 0.10$ ) significantly predict making an effort to buy organically grown food. When I add the value factors into the equation in Model 4, “When did the respondent first hear about organic” remains significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), however the remaining significant predictors from Model 3, lose explanatory power. The highest age group dummy becomes significant at the  $p < 0.10$  level with a negative coefficient, indicating that the youngest age group dummy positively predicts making an effort to buy organically grown food. Most of the predictive power of Model 4 originates from the value factors. The SEC ( $p < 0.01$ ), LA ( $p < 0.10$ ) and IO ( $p < 0.05$ ) factors all positively predict making an effort to purchase organics, while the UT factor ( $p < 0.10$ ) negatively predicts the dependent variable. Therefore, if you have concern for social and environmental issues, are politically active locally and/or you care about where your food comes from; you are more likely to purchase organically grown food. However, if you carefully plan your purchases and make purchasing decisions based primarily on price, you do not make an effort to buy organically grown food. Many consumers who score high on the UT scale

actively avoid organics because of price concerns. The model fit increases from Model 3 (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.199$ ) to Model 4 (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.314$ ).

**Table 25: Binary Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Do you make an effort to buy organically grown food?”**

Independent Variables	Equation			
	Model 3 Demographics		Model 4 Demographics & Attitudinal Factors	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.492* (0.612)	0.269	-0.418 (0.658)	0.308
Ethnicity (White = 1)	-0.180 (0.835)	0.494	-0.002 (0.998)	0.587
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	-0.301 (0.740)	0.413	-0.530 (0.589)	0.463
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	-0.544 (0.580)	0.420	-0.874* (0.417)	0.482
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.463 (1.589)	0.363	0.290 (1.336)	0.437
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.412 (1.510)	0.386	0.222 (1.248)	0.470
Income - \$40,000-\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	-0.041 (0.960)	0.371	0.117 (1.124)	0.441
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	0.497 (1.643)	0.386	0.631 (1.879)	0.466
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	0.881*** (2.413)	0.313	0.247 (1.281)	0.387
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	0.317 (1.372)	0.322	-0.160 (0.852)	0.376
When did first hear about org. grown foods	0.811*** (2.250)	0.195	0.933*** (2.542)	0.235
Social/Env. Concern factor	-	-	0.515*** (1.674)	0.168
Local Activism factor	-	-	0.287* (1.333)	0.159
Utilitarian factor	-	-	-0.310* (0.734)	0.164
US Origin factor	-	-	0.342** (1.408)	0.159
Constant	-3.304** (0.37)	0.961	-3.368*** (0.035)	1.164
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.199		0.314	
Chi-Square	47.758 (df=11)***		69.797 (df=15)***	
<i>N</i>	298		261	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

Models 5 and 6 in Table 26 model whether respondents make an effort to purchase Fair Trade certified food. In the demographics only model (Model 5), females are significantly more likely to purchase Fair Trade products than males ( $p < 0.10$ ). Politically liberal respondents are significantly more likely to make an effort to purchase Fair Trade food products than those who are conservative ( $p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, the length of time that respondents have known about the existence of Fair Trade is a significant positive predictor ( $p < 0.01$ ) of the dependent variable. After the value factors are added into the equation in Model 6, all significant effects disappear, with the exception of length of time. SEC ( $p < 0.01$ ), LA ( $p < 0.05$ ) and IO ( $p < 0.10$ ) are significant positive predictors of making an effort to purchase Fair Trade certified food. The model fit for Models 5 and 6 are Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.268$  and Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.389$  respectively. Again, the postmaterialist value argument is supported as the value factors provide the majority of the explanatory power in the two equations modeling making an effort to buy Fair Trade.



**Table 26: Binary Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Do you make an effort to buy Fair Trade food?”**

Independent Variables	Equation			
	Model 5 Demographics		Model 6 Demographics & Attitudinal Factors	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.765* (0.405)	0.415	-0.791 (0.453)	0.490
Ethnicity (White = 1)	0.766 (2.152)	0.789	1.327 (3.769)	1.020
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	0.863 (2.370)	0.734	0.585 (1.794)	0.842
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	0.541 (1.718)	0.734	0.218 (1.244)	0.852
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.630 (1.877)	0.695	0.787 (2.196)	0.859
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.409 (1.506)	0.700	0.750 (2.117)	0.869
Income - \$40,000-\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	0.312 (1.366)	0.608	0.657 (1.929)	0.736
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	0.213 (1.237)	0.603	0.410 (1.507)	0.736
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	1.439*** (4.218)	0.472	0.624 (1.866)	0.590
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	0.514 (1.672)	0.509	-0.133 (0.875)	0.608
When did first hear about Fair Trade foods	0.720*** (2.055)	0.230	0.449* (1.567)	0.266
Social/Env. Concern factor	-	-	0.644*** (1.904)	0.251
Local Activism factor	-	-	0.581** (1.787)	0.249
Utilitarian factor	-	-	-0.352 (0.703)	0.255
US Origin factor	-	-	0.455* (1.576)	0.256
Constant	-4.513*** (0.011)	1.418	-4.328** (0.013)	1.818
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.268		0.389	
Chi-Square	30.628 (df=11)***		41.813 (df=15)***	
<i>N</i>	139		123	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

Table 27 contains Models 7 and 8 predicting whether consumers make an effort to buy locally grown food. Model 7 contains the demographic variables, and gender ( $p < 0.01$ ) and when the respondent first heard about locally grown food ( $p < 0.01$ ) are significant predictors. Females are significantly more likely to purchase locally grown food. This finding is the strongest demographic result from Tables 25-27, as the relationship strengthens when the attitudinal predictors are introduced into the equation in Model 8. Education is also significant as both education dummies have significant (college –  $p < 0.05$  and graduate degree –  $p < 0.01$ ) positive coefficients. In addition, length of time also remains significant in Model 8. The only significant value predictor in Model 8 is the IO factor ( $p < 0.01$ ), which is not surprising as those people who make an effort to purchase locally grown food are concerned about the origin of their food. Interestingly, SEC and LA do not significantly predict the dependent variable. The model fit for Model 7 is Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.172$  which increases to Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.275$  in Model 8.

These findings support the claim in Chapter 4 that consumption of local foods is a more complicated and different phenomenon than organic and Fair Trade consumption. Local food engagement increases with education level and females are more likely to consume than males. But, local food consumption is less influenced by postmaterialist values. Another important distinction between the local regression models and the organic and Fair Trade models is the absence of significant political effects. This indicates that consumers across the political spectrum purchase local foods in similar amounts, while liberals purchase organics and Fair Trade food more frequently.

**Table 27: Binary Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Do you make an effort to buy locally grown food?”**

Independent Variables	Equation			
	Model 7 Demographics		Model 8 Demographics & Attitudinal Factors	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-1.041*** (0.353)	0.288	-1.176*** (0.309)	0.340
Ethnicity (White = 1)	0.384 (1.468)	0.475	0.347 (1.415)	0.548
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	0.605 (1.832)	0.416	0.233 (1.263)	0.463
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	0.613 (1.847)	0.429	0.019 (1.019)	0.492
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.452 (1.571)	0.362	0.938** (2.554)	0.438
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.627 (1.873)	0.395	1.281*** (3.600)	0.486
Income - \$40,000-\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	-0.286 (0.751)	0.396	-0.721 (0.486)	0.486
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	-0.305 (0.737)	0.418	-0.507 (0.602)	0.517
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	0.307 (1.360)	0.343	-0.102 (0.903)	0.442
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	-0.285 (0.752)	0.327	-0.650* (0.522)	0.389
When did first hear about locally grown foods	0.591*** (1.805)	0.161	0.561*** (1.752)	0.184
Social/Env. Concern factor	-	-	0.273 (1.314)	0.172
Local Activism factor	-	-	0.168 (1.183)	0.172
Utilitarian factor	-	-	-0.041 (0.060)	0.168
US Origin factor	-	-	0.718*** (2.050)	0.176
Constant	-4.328** (0.013)	1.818	-0.973 (0.955)	0.966
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.172		0.275	
Chi-Square	39.012 (df=11)***		56.509 (df=15)***	
<i>N</i>	300		262	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

It is clear from the regression models above that the majority of explanatory and predictive power of the equations results from the value factors. The importance of postmaterialist values in modeling ethical consumption is demonstrated by these models. The majority of significant demographic relationships disappear when the value covariates are entered into the models. Three of the attitudinal value factors test for the existence of postmaterialist values. The SEC, LA and IO factors each address a different postmaterialist value relevant to ethical consumption. The SEC factor measures concern for the environment and social causes, LA is a proxy measure for community involvement and political engagement, and IO captures the importance a consumer places on location of production. These are postmaterialist values, since they are concerns that are above and beyond the pure economic cost of the product. Consumers of organic, Fair Trade and locally grown food are willing to pay more for ethical products than for conventional products because they hold a set of values and attitudes that they can exercise through consumption choices.

### ***Consumers' Views on the Integration of Ethics and Consumption***

To further understand how consumers integrate ethical values into consumption through postmaterialist values it is important to hear how consumers frame ethical consumption. In the focus groups, I ask respondents if and how they integrate ethics into their purchasing decisions. This is not a simple question for most participants. For example, one participant remarks: "This is a difficult question to answer, in many ways, I think people define ethical behavior differently."

Several other participants admitted that they never think about ethics when doing their grocery shopping, and in fact, one person said that "this was the most he had ever

thought about shopping in his life.” However, there are others who clearly think about ethical issues quite a bit when doing their shopping. One woman states:

I am very proud of where I live, I have lived in Fort Collins all of my life and I am in my forties. You want to talk about ethics...I feel ethically bound to support local farmers and merchants because it is the right thing to do. I want to help my community and you might call that ethical behavior, or something else. I don't really care, but helping out your neighbors and community is what people should do.

This respondent frames consuming locally as the “right” thing to do. This was a common justification for participation in all types of ethical consumption. For many ethical consumers, participation is a moral obligation. Focus group participants often link ethics and local food consumption. Similarly, focus group participants associate consumption of Fair Trade products with ethical behavior. Interestingly, very few focus group participants link ethics with purchasing organically grown food.

Some focus group participants talk about finances and frame ethical consumption as a luxury for those that can afford it, while many people, like themselves, could not. Most people, including those who do have the financial ability to regularly purchase ethical products, agree with this point.

The final ethical consumption framework focus group participants use is that consumption is a method for expressing a viewpoint. Purchasing and consuming ethically is not just the “right” thing to do, but it is also a mechanism for involvement. Several respondents use the phrase “voting with your checkbook,” remarking that consumption gave them an opportunity to make their opinions known, without expending a lot of energy.

Consumers that integrate ethical values into their purchasing decisions acknowledge that this is a practice that necessitates financial resources. When those

resources are available, ethical consumers feel that it is the “right” thing to do and some extend this to a framework of politics, where they view their consumption choices as a method of political engagement.

## ***Discussion***

The regression models in this chapter demonstrate a clear link between postmaterialist values and participation in ethical consumption. Postmaterialist values are more important than demographics in modeling ethical consumption. This is consistent with the majority of previous explanatory research on ethical consumption (Botonaki et al. 2006; Bruhn et al. 1992; Burrell et al. 2000; Doran 2009; Dreezens et al. 2005; Harris et al. 2000; Jekanowski et al. 2000; Lockie et al. 2004). Inglehart (1977, 1990, 1997) argues that those who can afford to meet their economic and material needs can turn attention to postmaterialist values. The findings in this chapter support Inglehart’s hypothesis. The postmaterialist values I examine in this chapter are concern for environmental and social causes, community and political activism and importance of product origin. These are a few of the many postmaterialist values that US citizens hold, however these are integral to the study of ethical consumption. The three postmaterialist values indicators significantly positively predict participation in ethical consumption. A second interesting finding is the disappearance of the demographic relationships when the postmaterialist values are added into the regression equations. A major exception to this finding is the case of local food. Women and consumers with higher levels of education are much more likely to engage in local food consumption than men and consumers who have a high school degree or less. Postmaterialist values are also less important for prediction of local food consumption compared with organics and Fair Trade food. This

supports findings in Chapter 4 indicating that local food is a different phenomenon than organics and Fair Trade.

The statistical models demonstrate that holding certain postmaterialist values are essential to participation in ethical consumption. However, the focus groups provide insight into how consumers frame engagement in ethical consumption. Some consumers claim that consuming ethically is simply the “right” thing to do. Although some did not specifically define what they meant by “right,” it is clear that it is an argument based on moral obligation. Since products are available enabling consumers to directly support issues they feel strongly about, it is their duty to regularly purchase these items. A second group notes that it is great for consumers who can afford to buy ethical products, but since they cost substantially more money, ethical consumption is a “luxury” or as one male focus group participant put it, “elitist.” Some focus group participants have a hard time with this concept because ethical consumption is meant to help, but the process for helping excludes potential participants. This contradiction is complicated since some types of ethical consumption, like Fair Trade, is necessarily more expensive because some of the valued-added is the extra money of the product price.

The third way consumers in the focus groups frame ethical consumption is as a mechanism to support issues and “vote with your checkbook.” These ethical consumers are very dedicated, as they are politicizing consumption. Buying certain products and avoiding others, enables consumers to use their money as a political tool. Consuming ethically becomes a method of expressing views and lending or withdrawing support for a variety of issues. Chapter 6 expands the empirical investigation into using consumption as a political tool.

The findings in this chapter are important for several reasons: they validate previous research that indicates the superior predictive power of attitudes and values, they demonstrate how consumers frame participation in ethical consumption and most importantly for this project, use the first step in the methodology I propose for studying ethical consumption, uncovering factors associated with higher rates of participation in ethical consumption. It is clear from the regression models in this chapter that the integration of ethics into consumption is driven by the values and attitudes of consumers. Chapters 6 and 7 address the second step in the new methodological approach to ethical consumption, the motivations behind participation in ethical consumption.



## **Chapter 6 - Everyday Politics and Consumption**

Chapter 4 examines the extent of ethical consumption in the state of Colorado, while Chapter 5 demonstrates the importance of postmaterialist values in predicting participation in ethical consumption. In Chapter 6, I examine the political motivations of consumers. Focus group discussions reported in Chapter 5 indicate that politics is a motivation for participation in ethical consumption. In this chapter I report descriptive, bivariate and multivariate analyses of survey data and focus group discussions that analyze the integration of politics and consumption.

### ***Everyday Politics and Ethical Consumption***

Giddens' (1991) concept of "life politics" and the more recent idea of political consumerism posited by Michelletti (2000, 2003) take the idea of ethical consumption one step further. Here consumption is argued not only to derive from postmaterialist values, but to act as an agent of political participation and action. So-called "everyday politics," popularized by Scott (1975, 1985, 1990) and further developed by Hobson and Seabrooke (2007a) is a useful framework to analyze consumption-based politics. The everyday politics continuum, discussed in Chapter 2, locates ethical consumers in either the mimetic challenge or axiorational behavior categories. More dedicated and overtly political consumers belong in the mimetic challenge category, while less politically-minded consumers, who regularly purchase ethical products are exhibiting axiorational behavior.

The following results are based on survey questions that ask about overall shopping patterns and attitudes, not just organically grown, Fair Trade certified and

locally grown food. Similar to Chapter 4, all results in this chapter are broken down in demographic crosstabs, however I only report notable relationships.

**Table 28: Purchasing decisions influenced by:**

	Percent Yes	Frequency
Economic (financial) situation	73.9%	320
Ethical Values	49.5%	213
Political Values	24.1%	104

Table 28 summarizes three questions on what influences consumers' decisions.

Almost 75% of respondents take their financial situation into account when making their purchasing decisions. Finances are very important to most people. A 32 year old

Hispanic male sums up this sentiment:

This whole conversation on ethics and shopping has been a waste of my time. I don't have much money, so I buy my groceries at Wal-Mart because it is the cheapest, simple as that. The only thing that matters at all to me is how much this stuff costs.

This focus group respondent is somewhat offended by the entire conversation noting that he feels "looked down on" for not being an "ethical" shopper, just because he could not afford it.

Half of the respondents indicate that their ethical values influence their purchasing decisions. Table 28 shows that ethical shopping is quite popular in Colorado. Roughly, one-quarter of respondents report that their political values influence their purchasing decisions.

Both ethical and political consumption practices can produce political results. Based on Hobson and Seabrooke's (2007a) everyday politics schema, the data in Table 28 demonstrate great potential for consumption-based social change. Half of Colorado consumers are ethical consumers using axiorational behavior, who make purchasing

decisions that are not always politically motivated but, “their political impact can nonetheless be profound” (197). One-quarter of survey respondents indicate that political values are part of their consumption decision making process. These political consumers are engaging in a mimetic challenge to dominant production-consumption networks. Colorado consumers integrate ethical and political values with consumption in high percentages; therefore the potential for everyday consumption-based political change exists.

Table 29 reports the percentages of a crosstabulation of education and whether purchasing decisions are influenced by finances and ethical and political values. Little difference exists between education levels and finances; however, ethics and political values are quite different. For instance, 56.6% of respondents with a graduate degree take their ethical values into account, compared to 40.0% of respondents with a high school degree. Furthermore, 31.4% of respondents holding a graduate degree are influenced by their political values in comparison to only 17.9% of respondents with a high school degree. Based on Table 29, it appears that political consumption is more prevalent among those with higher levels of education.

**Table 29: Education and purchasing decisions influenced:**

	Financial situation		Ethical Values		Political Values	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
High School or less	71.3%	67	40.0%	36	17.9%	17
College	77.7%	136	50.0%	88	23.2%	41
Grad/Professional	72.5%	103	56.6%	81	31.4%	44
<b>Total</b>		306		205		102
<b>Chi-square</b>	1.752		6.122**		5.988**	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Table 30 examines the same questions broken down by political beliefs. The influence of finances does not vary by political orientation. The influence of ethical and political values is significantly associated with political beliefs. Liberal respondents are more likely to have their purchasing decisions influenced by their ethical values (16.3% difference with conservatives) and are more likely to integrate their political values into consumption compared with conservatives (28.9% difference). The utility of political consumption depends on political orientation, as liberals are much more likely to engage in political consumption than moderates or conservatives. I now test these findings in multivariate models.

**Table 30: Political Beliefs and Are purchasing decisions influenced by:**

	Financial situation		Ethical Values		Political Values	
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.
Liberal	72.0%	85	61.0%	72	42.7%	50
Moderate	75.2%	82	46.3%	50	18.9%	21
Conservative	72.8%	110	44.7%	67	13.8%	21
<b>Total</b>		277		189		92
<b>Chi-square</b>	0.320		8.018**		32.526***	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Table 31 presents three binary logistic regression equations modeling values that influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Model 9 reports that females ( $p < 0.01$ ) and lower income levels are the demographic categories that are the strongest predictors of placing importance on financial situation when making purchasing decisions. Model 10, which contains the regression equation for ethical values, demonstrates that whites ( $p < 0.05$ ), younger consumers ( $p < 0.05$ ) and politically liberal consumers ( $p < 0.01$ ) are positively significantly related to the integration of ethical values into purchasing decisions. Finally, Model 11 reports that only political liberals ( $p < 0.01$ ) are significantly

related to the integration of political values and purchasing decisions. The liberal variable has a very large odds ratio (4.97), indicating the odds are 5 to 1 that liberals have their consumption choices influenced by their political values compared with conservatives.

**Table 31: Binary Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of What Values Influence Purchasing Decisions**

Independent Variables	Equation					
	Model 9 Financial		Model 10 Ethical		Model 11 Political	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.992*** (0.387)	0.293	0.204 (1.226)	0.245	0.307 (1.359)	0.290
Ethnicity (White = 1)	0.604 (1.830)	0.477	1.082** (2.950)	0.466	-0.395 (0.674)	0.479
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	0.102 (1.107)	0.483	-0.206 (0.814)	0.379	0.067 (1.069)	0.456
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	-0.563 (0.569)	0.483	-0.855** (0.425)	0.391	-0.309 (0.734)	0.476
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.689* (1.993)	0.375	-0.023 (0.977)	0.322	-0.029 (0.972)	0.400
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.553 (1.739)	0.392	0.238 (1.269)	0.345	0.665 (1.944)	0.415
Income - \$40,000- \$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	-0.683 (0.127)	0.436	-0.019 (0.982)	0.339	0.423 (1.526)	0.432
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	-1.270*** (0.281)	0.453	0.110 (1.116)	0.356	0.409 (1.506)	0.447
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	-0.231 (0.794)	0.340	0.783*** (2.188)	0.297	1.603*** (4.966)	0.346
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	-0.118 (0.889)	0.345	0.076 (1.079)	0.286	0.442 (1.556)	0.368
Constant	1.740**	0.752	-0.946	0.652	-2.003***	0.767
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.128		0.093		0.168	
Likelihood Chi-Square	28.16 (df=10)***		22.638 (df=10)***		37.88 (df=10)***	
<i>N</i>	313		319		311	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

The previous tables provide a glimpse of three major factors I argue influence consumers purchasing decisions: finances, ethical values and political values. I now turn

to the relationship between ethical and political consumption. Table 32 provides a crosstabulation of respondents whose consumption choices are influenced by ethical values by those consumers who are influenced by their political values.

**Table 32: Purchasing Decisions Influenced by Ethical Values by Purchasing Decisions Influenced by Political Values**

		<b>Purchasing Decisions Influenced by Ethical Values</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Purchasing Decisions Influenced by Political Values</b>	<b>Yes</b>	42.4% (89)	7.1% (15)
	<b>No</b>	57.6% (121)	92.9% (196)

Notes: *n* in parentheses; chi-square = 70.396 ( $p < 0.01$ )

Table 32 demonstrates that out of the 421 respondents for the two questions, 210 indicate that they take ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions, while 104 take political values into consideration. Interestingly, just under half (42.4%) of those who report taking ethics into consideration, also take politics into consideration. The data shows that political consumers are a subset of ethical consumers. Calculated another way, 89 out of the total 104 political consumers also take ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions, so 85.9% of political consumers also report being ethical consumers.

In Chapter 5 I provide insight into factors associated with higher levels of participation in ethical consumption and I also report that one motivation for participation in ethical consumption given by focus group participants is to “vote with their checkbook,” which indicates political motivation. The beginning of this chapter juxtaposes the impacts of consumers’ financial situation, ethical values and political values in their purchasing decisions. In the remaining portion of this chapter, I focus on

political consumers because as Table 32 demonstrates, political consumers are to a large extent, a subset of ethical consumers.

### ***Engagement in Political Consumption***

This section focuses on the level of political consumption in Colorado. Table 33 reports the results of whether people believe they should take political beliefs into consideration when making purchasing decisions. The total percentage of people who agree is roughly 20%, substantially less than those who agree with taking ethical values into consideration. The consumers who respond affirmatively to integrating politics into purchasing decisions are those who believe in the power of and engage in everyday politics. These individuals use consumption as a mimetic challenge to the dominant system of conventional production and trade.

**Table 33: Do you think people should take political beliefs into consideration when making purchasing decisions?**

	Percent Yes	Frequency
Strongly Agree	11.3%	48
Agree	8.0%	34
Neutral	26.7%	113
Disagree	18.4%	78
Strongly Disagree	35.6%	150
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	423

Focus group participants discuss using consumption as a political tool. I first provide a brief overview of political consumption to the focus group participants so everyone is able to contribute to the discussion. Some focus group participants are very interested in political consumption. A handful of participants are very supportive of

political consumption and feel like it is a way for “their voice to be heard,” however others argue that individuals can make no noticeable impact through political consumption and as one male put it, “grocery shopping, to make a political difference...wow...unbelievable...that is one of the most insane things that I ever heard.”

Based on the focus group discussions, it is clear that individuals perceive the integration of politics and consumption to be qualitatively different than the integration of ethics and consumption. Even if an individual reports not participating in ethical consumption, most understand why others choose to engage. However, many people are not convinced that consumption can be politically effective. The focus group discussions provide compelling evidence that ethical and political consumption are distinctly different and that political consumers are a subset of ethical consumers. People are much more comfortable with mixing ethics and consumption than politics and consumption. However, those that do integrate politics with purchasing decisions are very dedicated and firmly believe that it is an effective method of political participation.

The differences between ethical and political consumption are highlighted in motivations for buying alternative agricultural products. One participant remarks: “I buy locally because I want to support local farmers and Colorado, I don’t really have any political motivations.” This is an ethical consumer, but not a political consumer. In contrast, a second consumer states:

I buy a lot of Fair Trade and local products. I don’t buy this stuff just to feel good or because it tastes better, I buy it because I feel like I am contributing directly to a cause that I feel strongly about, helping those who need it. These big corporations are always taking peoples’ money and not giving enough of it to those who grew the crops, it makes me sick. I want to make sure our Colorado farmers and poor farmers in other countries get what they deserve. By buying these types of products I am putting my support behind those people and letting the big corporations know that they are doing things the wrong way and hopefully over time we will be able to change their horrible practices.



Both these individuals consider themselves ethical consumers, but only the second is a political consumer. The last sentence of the political consumer's quote is crucial to the distinction between ethical and political consumption. She remarks that she is "letting the big corporations know that they are doing things the wrong way and hopefully over time we will be able to change their horrible practices." This statement implies that she perceives something wrong and hopes to change the problem using consumption. This is political consumption.

I now examine factors that impact participation in political consumption. I first report the two significant demographic crosstabs, education and political orientation. In the education and integration of political beliefs crosstab in Table 34, a higher percentage of respondents with a high school degree disagree or strongly disagree with taking political beliefs into consideration than compared to those with higher education levels. Interestingly, the percentages of survey respondents who agree with integrating political beliefs into purchasing decisions is roughly equal for all education levels, the differences come from the disagree vs. neutral categories.

**Table 34: Education and Do you think people should take political beliefs into consideration when making purchasing decisions?**

	High School or less		College		Grad/Professional		Total
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	Freq.
Strongly Agree	11.1%	10	11.2%	20	9.6%	13	43
Agree	7.8%	7	7.3%	13	9.6%	13	33
Neutral	17.8%	16	28.1%	50	30.9%	42	108
Disagree	14.4%	13	21.3%	38	18.4%	25	76
Strongly Disagree	48.9%	44	32.1%	57	31.5%	43	144
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	106	100.0%	178	100.0%	136	420
<b>Chi-square</b>	17.623*						

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Table 35 reports that a larger percentage of politically liberal respondents strongly agree or agree that people should take political beliefs (33.4%) into consideration compared with moderates and conservatives. The percentage differences are large, for example, the difference between liberals and conservatives is 24.0% ( $p<0.01$ ). This is consistent with earlier findings on ethical consumption where liberal political orientation is also a big factor associated with higher levels of participation.

**Table 35: Political Beliefs and Do you think people should take political beliefs into consideration when making purchasing decisions?**

	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	Freq.
Strongly Agree	19.2%	23	8.6%	9	6.0%	9	41
Agree	14.2%	17	7.6%	8	3.4%	5	30
Neutral	29.2%	35	21.9%	23	27.5%	41	99
Disagree	15.8%	19	23.8%	25	18.8%	28	72
Strongly Disagree	21.6%	26	38.1%	40	44.3%	66	132
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	120	100.0%	105	100.0%	149	374
<b>Chi-square</b>	33.987***						

Note: \*\*\* $p<0.01$ , \*\* $p<0.05$ , \* $p<0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Table 36 contains multivariate results for factors explaining increased involvement in political consumption. The models in Table 36 demonstrate that it is more difficult to predict political consumption than ethical consumption. Liberal political orientation is the only significant demographic predictor in either model. The SEC and LA factors are significant in Model 13 indicating the postmaterialist values are also important for the explanation of political consumption. Consumers who identify as politically liberal, are active in the community and exhibit concern for environmental and social causes are more likely to engage in politically motivated consumption.

**Table 36: Ordinal Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Taking Politics into Consideration when Making Purchasing Decisions.”**

Independent Variables	Equation			
	Model 12 Demographics		Model 13 Demographics & Attitudinal Factors	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.009 (1.009)	0.218	-0.016 (0.984)	0.239
Ethnicity (White = 1)	-0.284 (0.752)	0.386	-0.628 (0.534)	0.429
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	-0.113 (0.893)	0.332	-0.312 (0.732)	0.353
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	-0.372 (0.689)	0.344	-0.666* (0.514)	0.374
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.118 (1.125)	0.297	-0.104 (0.901)	0.342
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.160 (1.174)	0.319	0.024 (1.024)	0.370
Income - \$40,000-\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	0.300 (1.350)	0.307	0.352 (1.422)	0.345
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	0.295 (1.345)	0.315	0.283 (1.328)	0.355
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	1.278*** (3.481)	0.263	0.707** (2.029)	0.306
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	0.230 (1.259)	0.258	-0.006 (0.994)	0.285
Social/Env. Concern factor	-	-	0.389*** (1.475)	0.129
Local Activism factor	-	-	0.313** (1.368)	0.123
Utilitarian factor	-	-	-0.043 (0.958)	0.124
US Origin factor	-	-	0.097 (1.102)	0.124
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.102		0.160	
Likelihood Chi-Square	31.56***		44.42***	
<i>N</i>	309		270	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

Table 37 presents results from two questions on the ability of ethical shopping to impact social change and the environment. Although the language in the question refers to “ethical shopping” these questions are about the potential of political consumption. Political consumption implies a desire for change or improvement in a perceived injustice or exploitive practice. The following two questions provide an assessment of the possibility of political consumption in a broad case, i.e., social change, and a more narrow issue, i.e., the environment. Respondents believe that ethical shopping can have more of an impact on the environment as 49.8% of survey respondents either strongly agree or agree with the question. The percent who agree with making an impact on social change is lower (37.9%), however both percentages are large enough to conclude that many residents of Colorado believe that ethical shopping has transformative power.

**Table 37: Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on:**

	Social Change		The Environment	
	%	Freq.	%	Freq.
Strongly Agree	19.3%	82	26.3%	111
Agree	18.6%	79	23.5%	99
Neutral	26.7%	113	21.3%	90
Disagree	18.4%	78	14.9%	63
Strongly Disagree	17.0%	72	14.0%	59
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	424	100.0%	422

The descriptive results indicate that many consumers believe political consumption can be effective. In crosstabulations with demographic variables, education and political orientation have the strongest relationships with the ethical shopping questions. Tables 38 and 39 examine the power of ethical shopping by education levels.

Respondents who hold a college or graduate degree are more likely to agree that ethical shopping has potential to make impacts on both social change and the environment.

**Table 38: Education and Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on social change?**

	High School or less		College		Grad/Professional		Total
	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	Freq.
Strongly Agree	12.4%	11	21.9%	39	18.1%	25	75
Agree	11.2%	10	24.2%	43	17.4%	24	77
Neutral	31.5%	28	24.7%	44	26.1%	36	108
Disagree	23.6%	21	16.3%	29	18.8%	26	76
Strongly Disagree	21.3%	19	12.9%	23	19.6%	27	69
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	89	100.0%	178	100.0%	138	405
<b>Chi-square</b>	14.424*						

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

**Table 39: Education and Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on the environment?**

	High School or less		College		Grad/Professional		Total
	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	Freq.
Strongly Agree	13.6%	12	29.2%	52	27.4%	38	102
Agree	26.1%	23	29.2%	52	16.9%	23	98
Neutral	23.9%	21	18.0%	32	24.9%	34	87
Disagree	15.9%	14	12.4%	22	16.9%	23	59
Strongly Disagree	20.5%	18	11.2%	20	13.9%	19	57
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	88	100.0%	178	100.0%	137	403
<b>Chi-square</b>	17.855**						

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Tables 40 and 41 support findings in previous chapters that self-identified political liberals believe that ethical and political consumption have potential to make an impact in much higher percentages than conservatives.

**Table 40: Political Beliefs and Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on social change?**

	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	Freq.
Strongly Agree	27.7%	33	21.5%	23	13.3%	20	76
Agree	21.0%	25	18.7%	20	15.3%	23	68
Neutral	23.5%	28	30.8%	33	26.7%	40	101
Disagree	16.0%	19	15.0%	16	21.3%	32	67
Strongly Disagree	11.8%	14	14.0%	15	23.4%	35	64
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	119	100.0%	107	100.0%	150	376
<b>Chi-square</b>	17.036**						

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

**Table 41: Political Beliefs and Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on the environment?**

	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	Freq.
Strongly Agree	36.8%	43	25.9%	28	18.8%	28	99
Agree	22.2%	26	25.9%	28	24.2%	36	90
Neutral	23.1%	27	22.2%	24	20.1%	30	81
Disagree	10.3%	12	16.7%	18	16.8%	25	55
Strongly Disagree	7.6%	9	9.3%	10	20.1%	30	49
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	117	100.0%	108	100.0%	149	374
<b>Chi-square</b>	20.356***						

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Table 42 contains Models 14 and 15 which predict “Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on social change?” Model 14 uses only demographic variables and Model 15 contains both demographics and the postmaterialist value factors. Education (only the college vs. high school comparison –  $p < 0.01$ ) and political beliefs (liberal vs. conservative –  $p < 0.01$  and moderate vs. conservative –  $p < 0.05$ ) positively predict the dependent variable. In Model 15, with the inclusion of the value covariates, political orientation loses significance. Age and income become

significant in Model 15. The older age group dummy variable is a significant negative ( $p < 0.05$ ) predictor of the dependent variable, indicating that compared with the youngest age group (under 38 years old), the oldest age group has a negative view of the potential for social change based on ethical shopping. The middle income category (\$40,000-\$79,999) has a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable.

Furthermore, the value factors add a great deal of predictive power to the model as the model fit, measured by the Nagelkerke  $R^2$ , increases from 0.109 in Model 14 to 0.331 in Model 15. SEC ( $p < 0.01$ ), LA ( $p < 0.05$ ) and IO ( $p < 0.10$ ) are positive significant predictors of the dependent variable. Positive social/environmental concern, local activism and importance of origin predict higher belief in the transformative power of ethical shopping. Interestingly, when the value factors are entered into the equation, the impact of political orientation disappears. Although political orientation has a large effect on the dependent variable, this is not the case when all the value factors are in the equation. The power of postmaterialist values in the prediction of political consumption is substantial.

**Table 42: Ordinal Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on social change?”**

Independent Variables	Equation			
	Model 14 Demographics		Model 15 Demographics & Attitudinal Factors	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.342 (0.711)	0.213	-0.172 (0.842)	0.236
Ethnicity (White = 1)	-0.119 (0.888)	0.372	-0.421 (0.657)	0.430
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	-0.117 (0.890)	0.327	-0.548 (0.578)	0.363
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	-0.421 (0.656)	0.336	-0.876** (0.416)	0.382
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.736*** (2.088)	0.277	0.489 (1.630)	0.324
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.274 (1.315)	0.303	0.072 (0.931)	0.353
Income - \$40,000-\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	0.369 (1.447)	0.287	0.733** (2.082)	0.328
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	0.049 (1.051)	0.295	0.186 (1.204)	0.339
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	0.875*** (2.400)	0.255	-0.059 (0.943)	0.305
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	0.582** (1.790)	0.251	- 0.008 (0.992)	0.281
Social/Env. Concern factor	-	-	1.059*** (2.885)	0.146
Local Activism factor	-	-	0.297** (1.346)	0.123
Utilitarian factor	-	-	0.182 (1.199)	0.129
US Origin factor	-	-	0.209* (1.232)	0.125
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.109		0.331	
Likelihood Chi-Square	34.45***		103.76***	
<i>N</i>	311		272	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.



Table 43 contains regression equations modeling perceived impact of ethical shopping on the environment. In Model 17, a negative association exists between age and impact on the environment with the 58 and over category ( $p < 0.01$ ). Older consumers do not think political consumption can have an effect on environmental issues. As with earlier models, the postmaterialist value predictors explain the majority of the variance in the dependent variable. And again, the effect of political orientation disappears from the equations when the value factors are included in the model.

**Table 43: Ordinal Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on the environment?”**

Independent Variables	<u>Equation</u>		<u>Equation</u>	
	<u>Model 16</u> Demographics		<u>Model 17</u> Demographics & Attitudinal Factors	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.367* (0.693)	0.213	-0.227 (0.797)	0.239
Ethnicity (White = 1)	0.226 (1.254)	0.369	-0.028 (0.973)	0.418
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	-0.084 (0.919)	0.324	-0.580 (0.560)	0.362
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	-0.610* (0.543)	0.333	-1.328*** (0.265)	0.381
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.597** (1.817)	0.276	0.527 (1.694)	0.329
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.426 (1.532)	0.301	0.382 (1.466)	0.359
Income - \$40,000-\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	-0.161 (0.851)	0.288	-0.042 (0.959)	0.333
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	0.096 (1.101)	0.300	0.076 (1.079)	0.354
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	1.067*** (2.906)	0.260	0.140 (1.150)	0.310
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	0.583** (1.791)	0.249	-0.104 (0.902)	0.282
Social/Env. Concern factor	-	-	1.318*** (3.736)	0.156
Local Activism factor	-	-	0.076** (1.079)	0.126
Utilitarian factor	-	-	0.231 (1.260)	0.129
US Origin factor	-	-	0.327** (1.387)	0.128
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.116		0.403	
Likelihood Chi-Square	36.53***		132.54***	
<i>N</i>	310		272	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

The multivariate models of political consumption demonstrate that it is more difficult to predict than ethical consumption. However, the importance of postmaterialist values is clear and arguably more important to prediction than in general ethical consumption due to the absence of significant demographic effects in the political consumption models.

## ***Discussion***

This chapter begins with a juxtaposition of three major factors that influence purchasing decisions: finances, ethical values and political values. Three-quarters of respondents, indicate they must account for finances when making purchasing decision, roughly half responded they incorporate ethical values, and one in four report taking political values into consideration when making consumption choices. In multivariate models, consumers who have a liberal political orientation are much more inclined to integrate ethical and political values into consumption.

I then unpack the differences between ethical and political consumers. Using survey and focus group data I argue that political consumption is a subset of ethical consumption. Ethical consumption is a broad category in which consumers have various motivations for participation, compared with political consumption where consumers mix overt political motives into their purchasing decisions. The findings suggest there is a qualitative difference between purchasing products to support issues (ethical consumption) and using purchasing decisions to affect social change (political consumption). The data indicate that a larger percentage of consumers are willing to support issues through ethical consumption compared to creating change with political consumption practices.

The concepts of life politics (Giddens 1991) and political consumerism (Michelletti 2003) explain how people use consumption as a political tool. Using personal choices to support political viewpoints is becoming common. Many citizens view political consumption as the most efficient method for expressing political beliefs (Gendron et al. 2008; Michelletti et al. 2003: 4). I use a combination of political consumerism and everyday politics to explain how some ethical consumers take the next step, and use purchasing as a political tool.

I use the everyday politics theoretical approach to frame the discussion of ethical and political consumption. Hobson and Seabrooke (2007a) expand Scott's (1975, 1985, 1990) concept of everyday forms of resistance to a typology of forms of everyday politics. A mimetic challenge, like political consumption, uses the discourse and mechanisms of the dominant to critique and refute it. Ethical consumption is axiorational behavior which is not completely value-oriented, or completely instrumental, but having elements of both. A mimetic challenge approach to consumption implies people use consumption as a mechanism to indicate displeasure by challenging, for example, the dominant agro-industrial food system by purchasing organic, Fair Trade and local food. The desired result from mimetic challenge-based political consumption is social change. Axiorational behavior is less direct. Ethical consumers buy products because they want to support causes, feel good about themselves and do the "right" thing; however the primary motivation is not political.

Hobson and Seabrooke (2007a) argue that the location of an act on the everyday politics continuum does not necessarily shape how large a political impact it can have. Overt defiance, mimetic challenge and axiorational behavior are all effective tools for

creating change. This is a crucial point for the potential of both ethical and political consumption. I posit in Chapter 2 that consumer motivations determine the type of everyday political involvement. Political consumers undertake mimetic challenges against large corporations and the exploitive tendencies of the free market, while those consumers who do not have political motivations exhibit axiorational behavior. Hobson and Seabrooke (2007a) believe both types of everyday politics are effective, because the end result is the same. This is especially true of ethical and political consumption, if products are purchased in higher amounts, the greater the critique and protest against the dominant actors. The key is that although axiorational ethical consumers may not have political motivations, the results of their actions are political.

In this chapter, I continue to employ the methodological approach to the study of ethical consumption diagramed in Chapter 2. I focus on different motivations of consumers that purchase products in a non-economically rational manner. I compare the integration of ethics and politics into consumption and I conclude that political consumption is a subset of ethical consumption. Some consumers use consumption as an arena for political participation. Next, in Chapter 7, I examine whether some ethical consumers conceptualize themselves as part of a larger community of consumers holding similar values.

## **Chapter 7 - Collective Identity & Consumption**

In Chapter 6 I establish that political consumers are a subset of general ethical consumption. Political consumers are more dedicated and their consumption practices are politically motivated. In this chapter I argue that some ethical consumers also form a collective identity with other like-minded consumers. I use survey and focus group data to examine factors associated with consumption-based collective identity, the process of identity formation and the relationship between political consumption and collective identity.

### ***Individual vs. Collective Behavior***

Several focus group participants stress the importance of “time” when discussing participation in ethical consumption. Focus group participants note that they would like to be more involved in social and environmental causes, but because of hectic work schedules and family responsibilities, there is not enough time in the day to attend meetings, go to rallies, etc. for causes that they believe in and would like to support. These focus group participants are particularly engaged in buying organic, locally grown and Fair Trade certified products because it enables them to be part of a larger group of people who are committed to positive social change. Ethical consumption is perfect for them because it requires no additional time to feel committed to a cause. For example, a forty-six year old mother of four, remarks:

I have very little free time in my life to dedicate to things other than my family. However, I would like to get involved in some social causes, you know. When I was younger, like in college, I volunteered at a homeless shelter and then after I graduated I went into the Peace Corps and worked in Kenya for two years. I really miss that involvement, but I just don't have the time. I like the idea that through my grocery shopping choices I can

contribute to positive social causes. About three years ago, I learned about Fair Trade and have been actively searching out Fair Trade products since then. I also try to purchase organic and locally grown food for the same reasons.

Several other focus group participants have similar opinions about the desire to get involved in social and environmental causes but do not have time to do so. Some of these participants currently buy Fair Trade, locally grown, or organically grown food, but of those that do not several note that they would now consider purchasing ethical products.

The 46 year old woman who introduces the discussion on “time,” continues to speak about her use of consumption and a connection with a larger movement and other consumers.

The more I buy these things, the more I get into it, you know. I feel like I am more involved and I feel like I am part of a larger group or community, or whatever you want to call it, that wants to and has power to make a difference.

This quote illustrates how some dedicated consumers of ethical products conceptualize their engagement with political consumption as a collective rather than purely individual act. The repercussions for the impacts of consumption-based politics are large. A consumption-based collective identity for consumers strengthens the power of political consumption and the resolve of consumers to continue to engage. In the following analysis, I examine the extent of the collective mentality of Colorado ethical consumers.

Table 44 reports results of three questions I ask respondents about whether purchasing organically grown, Fair Trade and locally grown food is part of a collective activity with people with shared values, or if it is just a matter of individual preference. The percentages of survey respondents who believe ethical purchasing decisions have a collective element are large. Fair Trade is the highest (50.3%), followed by organically

grown (34.9%) followed closely by locally grown (30.8%). Interestingly, the majority of the individual vs. collective focus group discussion centers on local food. Focus group participants argue that local food consumption is a collective activity because local food has physical location and community as organizing principles. The results in Table 44 support the idea that many people believe individual choices can lead to a collective identity.

**Table 44: Is purchasing Organic/Fair Trade/Local food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.
Collective	34.9%	120	50.3%	88	30.8%	117
Individual	65.1%	224	49.7%	87	69.2%	263
<b>Total</b>	100.0%	344	100.0%	175	100.0%	380

When I ask focus group participants if they feel consumption decisions are completely individually motivated or if they buy some products because they want to be part of a collective group with shared values, I receive a myriad of responses. A 28 year old African-American male said: “I do not have a lot of money so I almost predominately look for sales, I cannot afford the luxury of thinking of anything else in my shopping.” Not surprisingly, this sentiment was echoed by many people in the focus groups.

Focus group participants hold various opinions on collectivity. Opinions range from complete denial of collectivity and arguing that is a “completely ridiculous idea,” to embracing collective identity with other consumers based on consumption choices. As a twenty-five year old female states:



When I talk about these things with my family and friends, they usually think that I am nuts. Why would you think that what you buy at the grocery store could make any kind of difference?, is what they always say. I tell them, you are not thinking like I do, millions of people think like I do – that can make a difference.

I now analyze the collectivity questions in crosstabulations with demographic categories. Table 45 shows no significant gender differentials in opinions of collectivity. However, Table 46 reports sizable percentage differences in age when crossclassified with collectivity. The largest differences are between the lowest and highest age categories. The percentage differences between the “under 38” age group and the “58 and over” are 9.9% for organics, 21.0% for Fair Trade and 5.9% for local. Younger survey respondents are more likely to view purchasing ethical food products as a collective activity.

**Table 45: Gender and Is purchasing Organic/Fair Trade/Local food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.
Male	31.6%	43	42.5%	31	27.8%	44
Female	26.9%	43	42.9%	30	26.2%	49
<b>Total</b>		86		61		93
<b>Chi-square</b>	0.802		0.002		0.118	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

**Table 46: Age and Is purchasing Organic/Fair Trade/Local food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.
Under 38	33.3%	16	52.4%	11	30.9%	17
38-57	32.4%	44	52.5%	31	29.1%	46
58 and over	23.4%	29	31.4%	22	25.0%	36
<b>Total</b>		89		64		99
<b>Chi-square</b>	3.083		6.776**		0.964	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Education level has a strong relationship with the collectivity question. Higher levels of education are associated with high percentages of collectivity. Table 47 shows that respondents with a college or graduate degree are more likely to respond positively to the collective question. However, in all cases, larger percentages of survey respondents with a college degree feel that engaging in ethical food consumption is a collective activity done by people with shared values, compared to those with an advanced degree. This indicates a curvilinear relationship exists between education and collectivity.

**Table 47: Education and Is purchasing Organic/Fair Trade/Local food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.
High School or less	16.1%	10	28.0%	7	17.1%	14
College	32.8%	43	50.0%	31	32.4%	47
Grad./Professional	30.8%	32	38.9%	21	26.7%	32
<b>Total</b>		85		59		93
<b>Chi-square</b>	6.104**		3.858		6.285**	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Total household income is examined in the next collectivity cross-classification table. Table 48 demonstrates that there is a relationship between collectivity and income. As household income increases a greater number of respondents believe in collectivity; however, none of the chi-square values are significant indicating statistical independence between the pairs of questions. The percentage differences between the lowest and highest income categories are 10.0% for organics, 7.2% for Fair Trade and 6.6% for locally grown food.

**Table 48: Income and Is purchasing Organic/Fair Trade/Local food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.
Under \$40,000	21.7%	13	47.5%	16	24.3%	17
\$40,000-\$79,999	28.6%	30	45.2%	19	30.2%	38
\$80,000 and over	31.7%	32	54.7%	29	30.9%	34
<b>Total</b>		75		64		89
<b>Chi-square</b>	1.877		1.079		0.913	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

The final crosstab with the collectivity question examines political orientation. In all cases, liberals answer “yes” to collective activity in higher percentages than moderates and conservatives. Fair Trade is the most dramatic difference, with a 25.2% difference ( $p < .05$ ) between liberals and conservatives. In addition a 12.1% difference exists between liberals and conservatives in organics and 9.2% in local food.

**Table 49: Political Beliefs and Is purchasing Organic/Fair Trade/Local food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?**

	Organically Grown		Fair Trade		Locally Grown	
	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.	% Collective	Freq.
Liberal	33.7%	29	60.4%	29	33.0%	31
Moderate	31.3%	26	51.6%	16	28.9%	28
Conservative	21.6%	22	35.2%	19	23.8%	31
<b>Total</b>		77		64		90
<b>Chi-square</b>	3.886		6.678**		2.302	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

In the focus groups, income and education level of participants have little impact on views of collectivity. Conversely, younger, politically liberal, and female focus group participants are more supportive of consumption-based collective identity. However, local food is more complicated. First, more focus group participants feel that a collective identity can exist based on local food consumption because of its smaller, place-based focus. A focus group participant elaborates this point:

I can see what you are talking about [collectivity] with local foods because of the community feel that it has and you know people in your community and you are helping some of those same people out with your purchases. I can feel the collective identity, as you call it, in this case, but I have a hard time seeing it in other cases that don't have the local, community feel to it.

Because local food consumption is a smaller, less abstract concept compared to a collective group of Fair Trade or organic consumers, it is easier for participants in the focus groups to conceptualize a collective identity based on local food consumption.

A second unique factor of local foods is the dichotomy between diversity-receptive localists and defensive localists. Supporting the survey finding, many of the focus group participants who believe in collective identity based on Fair Trade and organic consumption consider themselves politically liberal. However, liberals and

conservatives both speak of collective identity based on local food consumption. Interestingly, this conversation again focuses on the tangible nature of the local community and local farmers. It is clear from focus group discussions that the place-based nature of local food and that the consumers are members of the community, plays a role for people in the conceptualization of collective identity.

Focus group discussions of consumption-based collective identity produce an array of opinions; however, many participants indicate that people purchase ethical items for collective reasons. Therefore, collective identity is a necessary component for a complete understanding of ethical consumption.

### ***Motivations for Collective Conceptualization of Consumption***

The issue of consumption-based collective identity is not straightforward rather, for many people the existence of collectivity depends on the specific social or ecological issue in question. This section examines several broad issues of interest to political consumers.

Table 50 reports data on specific issues and if consumers feel that they are part of a collective effort to promote these issues through purchasing decisions. Environmental issues are the highest, with 52.6% of people responding affirmatively. This high percentage is undoubtedly due to the diffusion of “green consumerism” that is prevalent in the media and is often part of government and Non-governmental organization agendas. Human rights is the next highest on the list with 34.3% choosing “yes,” followed by labor issues (26.3%), local social justice (22.0%) and finally global social justice (18.4%).

**Table 50: Through your purchasing decisions, do you see yourself as part of a collective effort to promote:**

	Percent Yes	Frequency
Global social justice	18.4%	75
Local social justice	22.0%	90
Labor issues	26.3%	108
Human rights	34.3%	140
Environmental issues	52.6%	211

Tables 51 and 52 contain crosstabs of political beliefs and education with the question: “Through your purchasing decisions, do you see yourself as part of a collective effort to promote global social justice, local social justice, labor issues, human rights and environmental issues?” I report only the education and political orientation crosstabs; all other demographic relationships with collectivity issues are not significant. Education by collectivity issues is also not significant; however I report the findings because all previous crossclassifications with education are significant. It is important to show that even though education is significantly associated with the integration of ethics and politics into purchasing decisions, it is not significantly associated with collectivity in bivariate tables.

The relationship between education and the list of collectivity issues is not straightforward. Survey respondents who hold a college degree have the highest positive response percentages for global social justice, local social justice and environmental issues, while those respondents with a high school degree or less have the highest collectivity response for labor and human rights. This is due in part to the fact that labor and human rights issues affect those respondents with low levels of education at a higher

rate, so they are more sympathetic to these causes. Table 52 supports the previous findings that liberals are much more willing to engage in political consumption.

**Table 51: Education and Through your purchasing decisions, do you see yourself as part of a collective effort to promote:**

	High School or less		College		Grad		Total	Chi-square
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	Freq.	
Global social justice	12.5%	11	20.7%	35	17.4%	23	69	2.687
Local social justice	18.2%	16	23.8%	40	20.3%	27	83	1.219
Labor issues	28.4%	25	26.6%	45	22.4%	30	100	1.185
Human rights	37.5%	33	36.3%	61	29.3%	39	133	2.164
Environmental issues	47.1%	40	55.4%	92	52.6%	70	202	1.577

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

**Table 52: Political Beliefs and Through your purchasing decisions, do you see yourself as part of a collective effort to promote:**

	Liberal		Moderate		Conservative		Total	Chi-square
	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	% Yes	Freq.	Freq.	
Global social justice	28.0%	33	17.5%	18	10.0%	14	65	14.027***
Local social justice	31.0%	36	21.2%	22	13.7%	19	77	10.788***
Labor issues	39.8%	47	28.6%	30	15.0%	21	98	20.217***
Human rights	44.1%	52	38.5%	40	22.3%	31	123	14.713***
Environmental issues	73.3%	85	57.8%	59	36.7%	51	195	34.743***

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

Focus group participants are the most supportive of collective purchasing efforts for environmental issues. Most participants report a familiarity with media and political discussions focusing on “green” or environmental issues. Many other participants feel

that the other issues on the list are more abstract and have a more difficult time linking purchasing decisions directly to these issues. The discussion eventually returns to local food and numerous respondents agreed that they think collectively for local issues. We discuss the global social justice and human rights survey categories in the focus groups and most respondents indicate that Fair Trade consumers are part of a collective effort for global and human rights issues.

I frame focus group discussion in a very similar manner to the survey questions, using the same categories (global and local social justice, labor issues, human rights and environmental issues). A fifty-five year old woman identifying herself as conservative and “pretty religious” made an interesting observation. She says that the language choice of “social justice” may not be value-neutral, remarking that “it sounds like a liberal wrote the questions.” She continues to speculate that the smaller percentages of conservatives claiming to be part of a collective effort through purchasing decisions for local social justice would have been “much, much larger” if the question is worded, “Do you see yourself as part of a collective effort to help and support your local community?”

A variety of motivations exist for consumers to think collectively, but the environment is the most common. In addition to the environment there are a number of causes that consumers report thinking about collectively. Many consumers are more likely to think collectively about local issues because the results are more concrete and potentially affect themselves and people they know. I now turn to how consumers create collective identity.



## ***Collective Identity Through Consumption***

In this section I focus on consumers who conceptualize themselves as part of a larger collective group with similar values. I have documented that some consumers create a collective identity as a ethical or political consumer, this section looks at how that identity is created and maintained.

Many focus group participants are skeptical of collective identity, but more participants in the focus groups are able to conceptualize collective identity based on local food consumption. The small perceived distance and the tangible and attainable nature of helping local community, rather than national or global, influences some undecided participants.

Focus group participants also think collectively when making Fair Trade purchases, with some participants believing the entire Fair Trade system is built around collectivity, caring for others and trust. For example, one participant remarks:

If I understand it right, Fair Trade is basically a system to help the poor farmers in poor countries get more money and have more rights. This is all based on people in the US and Europe deciding to buy Fair Trade products which cost more. Anybody who really thinks about the Fair Trade system needs to believe that many other people will feel the same way and buy these things also, cause otherwise, it wouldn't be effective.

This consumer takes the position that Fair Trade implicitly requires consumers to have a collective identity in order for the Fair Trade system to be successful.

## ***Collective Identity Formation***

I ask focus group participants that have a collective identity based on consumption choices to elaborate on how they develop the identity. Focus group participants recount three paths to collectively which I refer to as 1) gradual, 2) network

and 3) time. These paths overlap in places, however enough distinct issues exist that I treat them as separate groups.

“Gradual” consumers discover ethical products on their own and slowly start to integrate them into regular purchasing decisions. These consumers gradually increase the purchasing of ethical products and eventually become a “local consumer,” a “Fair Trade consumer,” or more broadly, an “ethical consumer.” Once gradual consumers reach a high level of participation in ethical consumption it brings a heightened awareness of ethical issues and eventually gradual consumers begin to think broadly about ethical consumption and the power of consumption to create change. Focus group participants that take the gradual path to a collective conceptualization of consumption note that it takes them some time to get to their present level of participation in ethical and political consumption. Gradual consumers eventually realize that consumption based politics and “voting with your checkbook” requires a large number of dedicated participants to make a noticeable impact. This realization takes them the final step from ethical/political consumer to adopting a collective orientation toward consumption. One woman sums up this pathway through a description of her process of becoming an ethical consumer that eventually adopts a collective orientation to consumption:

I started buying organic food a number of years ago for health reasons mostly, then I really started looking at labels more and reading stuff and just seeing what kind of food products were out there. Now, like 7-8 years later I buy all kind of local stuff, Fair Trade coffee and bananas, organic, natural all that stuff. Our food is so messed up, it ridiculous that most regular people don't know how chemically treated and processed most food is and that most of the money goes to the big corporations, not the people who actually grew the stuff or made it. After I learned about it, I just became all about it, you know what I mean? Then I realized that I am probably not the only one who is like this, which makes me feel good for a couple of reasons, I feel less like a freak...hahaha...for being so psycho about how the food was grown, but I also feel like we can do some good here and maybe eventually change some stuff, since other people are doing the same stuff. A

big group of us will make a difference, and it makes me feel like I am part of something, you know?

I refer to the second category of consumption-based collective identity as the “network” pathway. Consumers in the network pathway rely on existing networks of friends and an orientation toward helping others and activism. Consumers already involved in social movement organizations and who have social networks including people who are involved with social causes often take this pathway to collective consumption. These consumers are first introduced to ethical products through their networks ties and regularly talk about ethical and political consumption with others in their network. At some point, most of these consumers indicate they shift from talking about ethical consumption with people they knew, to a more outward orientation toward the larger community involved in consumption-based action and politics. In this case, the consumption-based collective identity grows from an existing interest in social issues, but eventually extends beyond that to the larger community of ethical consumers. The experience of a 32 year old male is emblematic of this pathway to collectivity:

I started working for Greenpeace when I was in college and I met some friends there. We talked a lot about environmental issues at work and I really got into the movement. When I graduated I started to work at this small NGO that was involved in helping inner-city kids find jobs. A bunch of my co-workers were really into community and urban gardens, farmers markets and stuff like that. They started to get me into it and pretty soon, I was really into the local food scene. After awhile, I realized that there are a lot of people out there who are into local food as much as me, and even though I don’t know a lot of them, I feel so good that I am part of the group of people who are really dedicated to their local food system.

I refer to the third category of collective identity formation as the “time” pathway. This path is used by consumers who do not have enough time in their life to dedicate to involvement in social movement activities and community organizing, although they

have a desire for involvement. I briefly describe this process earlier in the chapter. A focus group participant spoke of her desire to be involved in social movement organizations, but her family and work responsibilities take up all of her time. So, her desire for involvement is met through consuming ethically and politically. Using political consumption as a substitute for direct involvement necessitates a collective orientation of consumption. For this category of consumers “involvement” is directed toward instigating social change through consumption and consumption is their primary outlet for engagement with larger social issues that otherwise might be done collectively. The ability to construct a collective identity and collective community through consumption helps this group achieve both of these goals.

Anderson (1983) created his concept of “imagined community” to describe how millions of people create a shared national identity, even though the vast majority never meets each other. I describe a similar process of identity creation with focus group participants who participate in ethical and political consumption practices for collective reasons. These consumers view themselves as part of a larger like-minded group that makes individual choices for collective reasons. The imagined-community of collective consumers allows them to be a member of a group that works toward goals that are important to them, without direct face-to-face contact and without knowing the vast majority of other participants.

### ***Political Consumption and Collectivity***

In previous sections I have implicitly made the link between political consumption and the likelihood of individuals conceptualizing themselves as part of a larger collective community. I argue that consumers who are members of an imagined

community primarily think collectively for political reasons. Thinking collectively is the result of a belief in the effectiveness of social change through consumption. The collective formulation of the act of consumption promotes political goals in two ways: 1) it provides consumers with incentive to continue participating because other like-minded consumers are doing so and to discontinue would hurt the larger collective, and 2) the existence of a larger community increases the potential success of the movement. The following tables examine the relationship between consumers who integrate their political values into consumption with those who have a collective orientation towards consumption. I also test the factors associated with the likelihood of a collective conceptualization of consumption.

**Table 53: Integration of Political Values into Purchasing by Collective Effort when Purchasing Organically Grown Food**

		<b>Integration of Political Values into Purchasing</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Collective or Individual Motivation when Purchasing Organics</b>	<b>Collective</b>	45.8% (33)	23.5% (55)
	<b>Individual</b>	54.2% (39)	76.5% (179)

Notes: *n* in parentheses, the chi-square value (13.399) is significant at ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 54: Integration of Political Values into Purchasing by Collective Effort when Purchasing Fair Trade Food**

		<b>Integration of Political Values into Purchasing</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Collective or Individual Motivation when Purchasing Fair Trade</b>	<b>Collective</b>	66.7% (32)	32.7% (33)
	<b>Individual</b>	33.3% (16)	67.3% (68)

Notes: *n* in parentheses, the chi-square value (15.288) is significant at ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 55: Integration of Political Values into Purchasing by Collective Effort when Purchasing Locally Grown Food**

		Integration of Political Values into Purchasing	
		Yes	No
<b>Collective or Individual Motivation when Purchasing Local Food</b>	<b>Collective</b>	47.6% (40)	21.6% (59)
	<b>Individual</b>	52.4% (44)	78.4% (214)

Notes: *n* in parentheses, the chi-square value (21.679) is significant at ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Tables 53, 54 and 55 report crosstabulations of political values and collective motivations for consumption of organic, Fair Trade and locally grown food. In all three cases large percentage differences exist (at least 20%,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that consumers who integrate political beliefs into purchasing decisions, also believe in a collective orientation of consumption.

I now present multivariate models to further unpack collective consumption.

Table 56 contains Models 18, 19 and 20 modeling, “Is purchasing organic/Fair Trade/locally grown food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?” The results of these models are consistent with previous analyses, with education and political beliefs the main significant predictors in all models. In the organic model, the college and graduate school dummies are both positive, significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) predictors, as well as both the liberal and moderate political variables ( $p < 0.05$ ). In Model 19, containing the Fair Trade equation, education is less important (college dummy –  $p < 0.10$  significance), but the political variables remain important predictors, especially liberal ( $p < 0.01$ ). The local model indicates that education is a very strong predictor of belief in collective activity

surrounding local food purchases, college ( $p<0.01$ ) and graduate degree ( $p<0.05$ ) are both positive significant predictors. In general, it appears that higher levels of education and having liberal (and sometimes moderate) political views are associated with stronger beliefs in collective activity based on purchasing decisions.

**Table 56: Binary Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Is purchasing organic/Fair Trade/local food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?”**

Independent Variables	<u>Model 18</u>		<u>Equation</u>		<u>Model 20</u>	
	<u>Organic</u>		<u>Model 19</u>		<u>Local</u>	
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>b</i>	SE
	(OR)		(OR)		(OR)	
Gender (Male = 1)	0.327 (1.387)	0.325	0.227 (1.255)	0.446	0.121 (1.129)	0.290
Ethnicity (White = 1)	-0.501 (0.606)	0.549	-0.463 (0.629)	0.834	-0.166 (0.847)	0.513
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	-0.012 (0.988)	0.499	0.592 (1.807)	0.799	0.132 (1.142)	0.462
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	-0.098 (0.906)	0.511	0.041 (1.042)	0.772	0.290 (1.336)	0.472
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	1.073** (2.924)	0.508	1.093* (2.983)	0.661	1.161*** (3.194)	0.445
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	1.179** (3.250)	0.533	0.831 (2.296)	0.684	0.983** (2.673)	0.466
Income - \$40,000 -\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	0.421 (1.524)	0.489	-0.096 (0.908)	0.615	0.577 (1.780)	0.456
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	0.489 (1.631)	0.496	0.154 (1.167)	0.606	0.522 (1.685)	0.472
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	0.890** (2.435)	0.390	1.193** (3.298)	0.511	0.430 (1.537)	0.347
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	0.867** (2.380)	0.404	0.948* (2.581)	0.559	0.381 (1.464)	0.345
Constant	-2.458*** (0.086)	0.928	-1.448 (0.235)	1.338	-2.622*** (0.073)	0.838
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.107		0.165		0.077	
Likelihood Chi-Square	17.546 (df=10)**		18.263(df=10)**		16.856(df=10)**	
<i>N</i>	227		128		270	

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

Table 57 provides crosstabulations of integrating political values into consumption choices with the list of issues on the survey in which respondents are asked if they feel they are part of a collective group to promote through consumption. Specifically, the question asked: Through your purchasing decisions, do you see yourself as part of collective effort to promote \_\_\_\_\_? Five issues are given and the respondents are



asked if they felt like they are supporting these things with their shopping decisions. The issues are: global social justice, local social justice, labor issues, human rights and environmental issues. Table 57 provides further evidence of a link between political consumption and collective identity. All of the crosstabulations are significant at the  $p<0.01$  level, indicating a strong association between political consumption and collective consumption. The strongest relationship is between politics and collectivity for global social justice, while the weakest is between politics and collectivity for environmental issues.

**Table 57: Integration of Political Values and Through your purchasing decisions, do you see yourself as part of a collective effort to promote:**

		<b>Integration of Political Values?</b>		<b>Chi-square</b>
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Global social justice</b>	<b>Yes</b>	43.3% (45)	9.7% (29)	58.008***
	<b>No</b>	56.7% (59)	90.3% (270)	
<b>Local social justice</b>	<b>Yes</b>	41.3% (43)	15.7% (47)	29.413***
	<b>No</b>	58.7% (61)	84.3% (253)	
<b>Labor issues</b>	<b>Yes</b>	47.1% (49)	19.3% (58)	30.831***
	<b>No</b>	52.9% (55)	80.7% (243)	
<b>Human rights</b>	<b>Yes</b>	56.7% (59)	26.8% (80)	30.684***
	<b>No</b>	43.3% (45)	73.2% (219)	
<b>Environmental issues</b>	<b>Yes</b>	67.3% (68)	48.1% (142)	11.125***
	<b>No</b>	32.7% (33)	51.9% (153)	

Notes:  $n$  in parentheses, \*\*\* $p<0.01$ , \*\* $p<0.05$ , \* $p<0.10$  significance (two-tailed).

I then use the five issues to construct an additive scale for use in multivariate analysis. The scale is made by giving a point for each issue that the respondent

collectively supports. A score of five is the highest possible collectively score and zero is the lowest.

Table 58 models the additive collective issues scale with two equations, a demographics model (Model 21) and a demographics and postmaterialist value factor model (Model 22). The political orientation variables are significant in the demographic model ( $p < 0.01$ ). With the addition of the postmaterialist values factors the liberal variable remains significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), but moderate loses significance. The highest income dummy has a negative significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) relationship with the collectivity scale, indicating that respondents with lower income levels are more likely to purchase for collective issues. Finally, the SEC factor ( $p < 0.01$ ) and to a lesser extent, the LA factor ( $p < 0.10$ ) are significant positive predictors and the UT factor is a significant negative predictor ( $p < 0.05$ ) of the collective issues scale. Concern for social and environmental causes and being locally active positively predicts collectivity, while making purchases from a utilitarian perspective is associated with individual purchasing motivations.

**Table 58: Least Squares Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (*b*), Standardized Coefficients (Beta) and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of the Collective Issues Scale**

Independent Variables	<u>Equation</u>			
	<u>Model 21</u>		<u>Model 22</u>	
	Demographics		Demographics & Attitudinal Factors	
	<i>b</i> (Beta)	SE	<i>b</i> (Beta)	SE
Gender (Male = 1)	-0.068 (-0.022)	0.182	0.105 (0.033)	0.178
Ethnicity (White = 1)	-0.103 (-0.018)	0.331	-0.173 (-0.028)	0.330
Age – 38-57 <sup>a</sup>	0.139 (0.044)	0.284	-0.053 (-0.017)	0.266
Age – 58 and over <sup>a</sup>	0.333 (0.104)	0.291	0.112 (0.034)	0.277
Education – College <sup>b</sup>	0.382 (0.121)	0.243	0.359 (0.113)	0.249
Education – Grad/Prof. <sup>b</sup>	0.188 (0.056)	0.259	0.179 (0.053)	0.270
Income - \$40,000-\$79,999 <sup>c</sup>	-0.329 (-0.103)	0.251	-0.265 (-0.820)	0.251
Income - \$80,000 and over <sup>c</sup>	-0.306 (-0.095)	0.265	-0.584** (-0.182)	0.270
Political beliefs - Liberal <sup>d</sup>	1.243*** (0.367)	0.215	0.542** (0.159)	0.228
Political beliefs - Moderate <sup>d</sup>	0.630*** (0.184)	0.218	0.153 (0.044)	0.213
Social/Env. Concern factor	-	-	0.735*** (0.457)	0.095
Local Activism factor	-	-	0.162* (0.098)	0.088
Utilitarian factor	-	-	-0.187** (0.095)	0.095
US Origin factor	-	-	0.145 (0.089)	0.089
Constant	0.937*	0.491	1.520***	0.501
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.128		0.334	
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.098		0.295	
<i>F</i>	4.223***		8.724***	
<i>N</i>	297		259	

Notes: \**p*<0.1; \*\**p*<0.05; \*\*\**p*<0.01, two-tailed. a = comparison group – under 38, b = comparison group – high school or less, c = comparison group – under \$40,000, d = comparison group – conservative.

## ***Discussion***

The chapter completes the empirical analysis of ethical consumption in Colorado using the methodological approach recommended in Chapter 2. The second part of the methodology requires understanding the motivations of consumers for regular participation in non-economically rational consumption. In this chapter I investigate the extent of existence of a consumption-based collective identity.

With survey findings I establish that large percentages of organic, Fair Trade and local food consumers feel part of a community of collective consumers. The crosstabulations suggest that more educated and politically liberal consumers are more likely to think about consumption collectively. Multivariate models indicate that liberal political orientation is important in predicting collective approaches to organic and Fair Trade, while higher levels of education contribute to a collective mindset for all three forms of ethical consumption. I also demonstrate that environmental and social concern and local activism postmaterialist values are significant predictors of a collective approach to consumption.

Consumers think collectively for environmental causes in large percentages, while the smallest percentages report thinking collectively about consumption for global social issues. The lack of a collective mindset for global issues is supported by focus group discussions in which many consumers remarked that they can conceptualize local food consumption as a collective issue, but this is less clear for organics or Fair Trade. The rationale for collective local food consumption is that it helps a consumer's own community, so there are tangible benefits. This makes it easier for more consumers to

identify with a collective group. For some of the same consumers, the idea of collectivity was too abstract in the cases of organic and Fair Trade.

Theories of collective identity are useful for understanding how consumers can envision themselves as part of a large group committed to similar goals. Polletta and Jasper's (2001: 285) definition of collective identity states "an individual's cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution," is applicable in this case. The "practice" of consumption creates a "moral and emotional" connection for individuals who are regular participants in ethical and political consumption. Although the vast majority of ethical and political consumers never meet, they are able to create a collective identity. They do this by conceptualizing a community that is "imagined," similar to how Anderson (1983) describes citizens developing national pride.

Consumers describe three main methods for envisioning an "imagined community of consumers." Some describe a gradual integration of ethics into consumption and over time through increased purchasing and familiarity with ethical issues realize that other consumers act similarly, and as a community they can create change. A second pathway to collective identity is existing networks and connections, where people discuss ethical and political consumption, which eventually leads to a collective identity with a more abstract network that is broader than face-to-face contacts. The third process is where ethical and political consumption is the primary method of involvement in social and environmental issues for people, because of a desire to be part of a larger cause, involvement for them is necessarily collective.

A collective identity based on ethical and political consumption increases the potential for social change as a larger community has increased power and leverage. Participants in the imagined community of consumers do not want to let other members down by decreasing their own participation, and conversely, consumers are encouraged to keep participating to retain membership in the community. This combination of factors make collective identity based on ethical and political consumption a vital part of the process of using consumption to create change.

In the final section of this chapter I empirically analyze the relationship between political consumption and envisioning oneself as part of a collective community based on consumption. Political consumers are also those who agree that purchasing organic, Fair Trade and local food is an activity that is done by a collective group. This finding indicates that political consumers envision a collective group of consumers their power to create change.

Using my new methodology for the study of ethical consumption, I uncover the motivations and rationales consumers use for participating in values-based consumption. In this chapter I document the existence of an “imagined community of consumers.” Some ethical consumers not only politicize consumption, they also envision themselves as part of a larger group of consumers with the same values trying to create change with their purchasing decisions. In the following chapter I bring together all of the empirical findings and discuss the direction future studies on ethical consumption should take.

## **Chapter 8 - Conclusion**

### ***The Changing Role of Consumption***

Consumption in the twenty-first century is no longer simply for material needs satisfaction, rather many consumers use consumption as a vehicle for expressing opinions, supporting causes and initiating social change. Studying consumption for more than marketing purposes and as an indicator of social status is increasingly common in contemporary social science. Production studies have dominated social science, beginning with Marx's (1887) [1992] analysis of historical materialism and creation of the labor theory of value. Recently, however, important developments in the study of consumption by Beck (1997, 2000), Giddens (1991) and Michelletti (2003) bring much needed focus to the importance and power of consumption.

For most of recorded history, consumption had two primary purposes, 1) meeting material needs, and 2) displaying wealth to signal high social status. Studies of consumption now focus on additional issues including, crafting ones personal image, contributing to the rationalization of society (Ritzer 1996) and the ethical uses I outline in this study. Consumption is a vital component of the social world, worthy of comprehensive sociological investigation. The research I report here goes beyond consumer marketing studies by theoretically outlining and empirically documenting how consumers use consumption in non-economically rational means.

An increase in offerings of ethical products makes regular participation in ethical consumption easy for consumers. However, as focus group participants note, the higher

prices of most ethical products compared to conventional products, makes adequate finances a necessity to consume ethically.

Ethical trade systems are created by individuals who believe that providing knowledge of the production history to consumers will alter the conventional production-consumption networks. Society is dominated by large corporate producers, wholesalers and retailers. Consumers are integral to challenges of the corporate domination of production and retail. Ethical products provide opportunities for consumers that want to understand what they are buying. The extra information that ethical products provide about the production history is vital for a complete understanding of what an individual consumes.

The agro-food sector is an excellent example. Large-scale food production's increasing pesticide use and genetic modification, and lax oversight, results in food safety scares. Many consumers have a heightened awareness of the increased risk in contemporary society (Beck 1992, 1996) and have lost trust in traditional political institutions to properly regulate the food industry. Consumers turn to ethical products, like organics, Fair Trade and local food, to increase their ability to manage risk through increasing knowledge of the production history of food. Ethical food products are rapidly becoming popular because of the extra information they provide to consumers. Whether it is an assurance that chemicals and genetic modification are not used in production, that the workers who produce the food receive fair compensation, or that local farmers and communities benefit from the purchases, consumers of ethical products have more information about what they buy.



## ***Ethical Consumption in Colorado***

As I demonstrate in Chapter 2, many studies have documented the rise in ethical consumption throughout the Global North (BBMG 2007; French and Rogers 2007; LOHAS 2009). Through survey and focus group data I establish the prevalence of ethical consumption in Colorado. Many consumers report they regularly make an effort to buy organically grown, Fair Trade certified and locally grown food. Furthermore, many Coloradoans agree that people should integrate ethical values into consumption choices. Female, more educated and politically liberal consumers purchase ethical products in higher percentages, and multivariate analyses demonstrate the importance of the postmaterialist values of concern for social and environmental causes, community political activism and the importance of product origin for understanding what leads to increased participation in ethical consumption.

I demonstrate the importance of postmaterialist values and liberal political affiliation for explaining participation in ethical consumption. As I briefly indicate in Chapter 4, political affiliation is more complex than other demographic variables; it is an indicator of a larger set of values that shape an individual's outlook on life. The social and environmental concern and local political activism postmaterialist value indicators are highly correlated with liberal political orientation. Liberals disproportionately hold the postmaterialist values that are important for predicting ethical consumption. Although I group political affiliation with the demographic variables in the empirical analyses, it is an indicator of a person's broad values. It is a significant predictor in many of the models, lending support to the argument that ethical consumption is primarily a function of values, not demographic characteristics.

Another major finding of this study is the uniqueness of local food consumption in Colorado. Consumers in Colorado are huge supporters of local food, more so than Fair Trade and organics. This is the result of a wider, more receptive consumer base. Many politically conservative consumers are frequent purchasers of local food. However, conservatives do not purchase Fair Trade and organics in large percentages. Local food consumption allows liberals, moderates and conservatives to exercise their own sets of postmaterialist values. I discover a similar split of local food consumers to Hinrich's (2003) diversity-receptive localists and defensive localists. I find that liberal and moderate local food consumers are diversity-receptive localists who believe they can simultaneously support local and global food movements, whereas, conservative defensive localists argue that consuming ethically entails supporting your local community and farmers. This dichotomy of local food consumers highlights the relativity of ethics. People define ethical values differently; being an ethical consumer can mean different things to different people.

### ***Ethical vs. Political Consumption***

In chapter 6, I argue that ethical and political consumption are different phenomena. I posit that ethical consumers use purchasing decisions to support a variety of causes, while political consumers are more dedicated than ethical consumers desiring to create change through consumption. The survey and focus group data support this hypothesis, almost all survey respondents who integrate political values into consumption choices, also integrate ethical values. However, many focus group participants have a harder time understanding political consumption than ethical consumption. Even consumers who did not purchase ethical products, understood why people choose to

purchase them, however many did not believe in the power of consumption to create social change.

Giddens (1991), Beck (1997, 2000) and Michelletti (2003) argue that consumers have power in contemporary society to affect change. Every person in the world is a consumer, so the aggregate power of organized consumers is huge. Michelletti describes the transition from early political consumption, where consumers boycotted products and companies to protest unethical practices, to the increased use of “buycotts,” the purchasing of ethical products. Purchasing ethical products for political reasons is the future of political consumption. Availability of a wide array of ethical products is rapidly increasing, so it is easier to participate in political consumption. The increase in availability of ethical products increases general consumer knowledge of political consumption, leading to an increase in the number of people who mix politics and consumption. Hobson and Seabrooke (2007a) allude to an important point about the power of political consumption. I equate ethical consumption with axiorational behavior and mimetic challenge with political consumption to distinguish the different motivations of ethical consumers. However, the success of political consumption actually relies on ethical consumers. Although axiorational ethical consumers may not have political motivations, their purchases support the changes that political consumers work toward. This is important for the prospects of political consumption. One-quarter of Colorado consumers report integrating politics with consumption, but one-half integrate ethical values into purchasing decisions. The addition of ethical consumers doubles the number of consumers whose purchasing decisions have political ramifications.

## ***An Imagined Community of Collective Consumers***

Survey and focus group data document the existence of a collective identity between ethical consumers. Ethical consumers are creating what Anderson (1983) calls an “imagined community,” where people who never meet face-to-face become part of a larger community. The majority of ethical consumers will never meet, but though an imagined community, can be members of a group of like-minded people who have similar values.

The relationship between community and consumption has been studied in the past (Arnould and Thompson 2005), however much of the previous research focused on “brand communities” where consumers organize around a specific brand name (O’Guinn and Muniz 2005) and “fan communities” in which fans of television shows, movies, comic books, etc. find global communal ties through the internet (Kozinets 2001). Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007), discuss the applicability of the imagined community concept to brand communities and their own case study of Community Supported Agriculture farms. They argue that “imagined brand communities” are “conducive to existential doubts that arise from heightened consumer sensitivities toward the unintended consequences and systemic risks that almost inevitably plague complex systems” (149). They argue, instead, that the communal satisfaction, achievability of outcomes and direct participation of Community Supported Agriculture farms, is a superior type of consumption community compared to an imagined consumption community based on brands.

Although Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007) make an interesting point, I argue that they are describing two different phenomena. Imagined consumption communities

link millions of people throughout the world, while Community Supported Agriculture farms usually have fewer than 1,000 participants. While participation in Community Supported Agricultural may have more tangible benefits and be enjoyable and rewarding to hundreds of participants, imagined consumption communities, with their large membership, have potential to impact social change globally. Therefore, I argue that in the case of ethical consumption, an imagined community of collective ethical consumers is very important for the prospects of consumption-based social change.

A collective orientation toward consumption bolsters the potential of political consumption because group members do not want to let each other down so they continue to purchase ethical products. Social movement organizations become more effective as membership increases, the same applies for an imagined community of consumers. As more consumers approach ethical and political consumption collectively, the likelihood for consumption-based social change increases.

The imagined community of consumers is a novel approach to consumption research, but it also indicates the central position consumption has in many people lives. The fact that people organize around consumption provides further evidence that consumption is a legitimate arena for political involvement.

### ***Empirically Documenting and Understanding Ethical Consumption***

Complete reliance on consumer attitudes and intentions to empirically study ethical consumption produces inconsistent results at best, and at worst leads researchers to draw inaccurate conclusions. The attitude-behavior gap is empirically documented in consumption studies; this indicates that a new approach to values-based consumption is

necessary. I propose a new methodology for studying and analyzing ethical consumption.

This new approach to the study of ethical consumption is a two-step process. First, document the level of participation in ethical consumption and then model the factors associated with higher levels of engagement. Second, uncover the motivations of consumers who participate in ethical consumption. Using this process reduces the possibility of erroneous conclusions stemming from consumers who are less than honest with researchers. The study of motivations is equally important to a full understanding of ethical consumption. Simply reporting and modeling who participates and what are the important variables in the equations, does not unpack the entire ethical consumption process. It is vital to understand why consumers engage in ethical consumption, in addition to who are the regular participants.

Understanding that consumer behavior research can never be perfect, because some respondents will be less than honest, this new approach reduces some of the error associated with attitude and intentions questions. I argue that people should be asked about actual consumption behavior. Some respondents will also lie about their behaviors, but this approach is superior to reliance on attitudes. Predicting behavior with suspect independent variables (i.e. attitudes and intentions) multiplies the potential errors in the results.

Focusing on the motivations consumers give for participating in ethical consumption is an important addition to the new methodology. Understanding why consumers choose to purchase more expensive products provides further insights into the complex process of ethical consumption. Axiomatically ethical consumers are different

than political consumers who hope for consumption-based social change. Furthermore, those consumers who have a collective identity-based on consumption practices are much more invested in ethical consumption than those consumers who base their consumption decisions totally on individual preferences. Grouping these consumers (ethical, political and collective) into one broad category of values-based consumers loses information and interesting distinctions between the groups.

The study of ethical consumption also benefits from a mixed-methods approach. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data produces a complete account of ethical consumption. Quantitative survey data provides generalizable findings about knowledge, participation and motivations for participation in ethical consumption. Qualitative interview and focus groups data complement the survey data by unpacking the complex reasons and motivations that people do or do not participate in ethical consumption. Without both types of data, many questions will be left unanswered.

### ***Limitations and Future Research***

I have already noted that studies of consumer behavior are difficult, because even the most well thought-out and designed studies are impacted by some amount of respondent lies. This is compounded when the topic is value-laden, like ethical consumption, where respondents are even more likely to misrepresent their true attitudes and behaviors because they wish to be perceived virtuously by the researchers. Although, I use my new methodology for studying ethical consumption to help reduce the errors associated with lying, the results are undoubtedly impacted by some respondents who have not been totally truthful. An additional problem originates from the terms “ethical consumption” and “political consumption.” Both phrases are value-laden and

their meanings are interpreted differently by different consumers, impacting the results. These problems are expected in an exploratory study like this one. Defining concepts, locating problems and laying the groundwork for future studies are some of the main functions of exploratory studies.

Overcoming the potential biases associated with asking and discussing “ethical consumption” and “political consumption” can be done by not labeling behaviors “ethical” and “political.” Rather, in future survey and focus group research on values-based consumption, I recommend constructing an instrument of questions, socio-political statements and behaviors that, through item analysis and data reduction, can categorize a respondent as an “ethical consumer,” “political consumer,” or a “utilitarian consumer.” This process can remove a layer of bias from the results and further refine the methodological procedure for understanding and studying value-laden phenomena like ethical consumption. Although all bias from consumer behavior studies will never be removed, continued methodological refinement will help researchers get as close as possible to the truth.



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## Appendix A

### CONSUMERISM SURVEY

This survey covers 5 areas: Organically grown, Fair Trade Labeled, locally grown food products, general shopping patterns and demographic information.

Thank You.

#### ORGANICALLY GROWN FOOD

1. What does “organic” mean to you?

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2. Have you ever heard of organically grown food?

☐ 1 Yes      **If “YES” continue to question 3**

☐ 2 No      **If “NO” skip to question 9**

3. How did you first hear about organically grown food? (please select one)

☐ 1 Word of mouth      ☐ 4 At a place of worship

☐ 2 In the press      ☐ 5 In a store

☐ 3 School      ☐ 6 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 9 Don’t know

4. When did you first hear about organically grown products?

☐ 1 Less than 1 year ago      ☐ 3 4-6 years ago

☐ 2 1-3 years ago      ☐ 4 More than 6 years

5. Do you make an effort to buy organically grown food?

☐ 1 Yes      **If “YES” continue to question 6**

☐ 2 No      **If “NO” skip to question 8**

6. In your most recent grocery shopping trip, how many organic products did you purchase?

☐ 1 0      ☐ 4 6-10

☐ 2 1-2      ☐ 5 11 or more

☐ 3 3-5      ☐ 6 all were organic

7. Which of the following are reasons that you buy organically grown food? (please check all that apply)

- ☐ 1 Health reasons
- ☐ 2 The food tastes better
- ☐ 3 Protest large food corporations
- ☐ 4 It is better for the environment
- ☐ 5 Help local economies
- ☐ 6 Support local farmers
- ☐ 7 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Is purchasing organically grown food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?

- ☐ 1 Collective                      ☐ 2 Individual
- ☐ 3 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Organically grown food can be defined as: products that are produced without the use of pesticides and genetic modification.**

9. Which of the following changes (check one) would most motivate you to start buying or buy more organically grown food?

- ☐ 1 Better product variety
- ☐ 2 Better product quality
- ☐ 3 More information about what “organic” means and what it supports
- ☐ 4 Broader availability
- ☐ 5 Better prices

#### **FAIR TRADE LABELED FOOD**

10. What does “fair trade” mean to you?

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11. Have you ever heard of Fair Trade Labeled food?

- ☐ 1 Yes                      **If “YES” continue to question 12**
- ☐ 2 No                        **If “NO” skip to question 18**

12. How did you first hear about Fair Trade Labeled food?

- ☐ 1 Word of mouth      ☐ 4 At a place of worship  
☐ 2 In the press      ☐ 5 In a store  
☐ 3 School      ☐ 6 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ 9 Don't know
- 

13. When did you first hear about Fair Trade Labeled products?

- ☐ 1 Less than 1 year ago      ☐ 3 4-6 years ago  
☐ 2 1-3 years ago      ☐ 4 More than 6 years
- 

14. Do you make an effort to buy Fair Trade Labeled food?

- ☐ 1 Yes      **If "YES" continue to question 15**  
☐ 2 No      **If "NO" skip to question 17**
- 

15. In your most recent grocery shopping trip, how many Fair Trade Labeled products did you purchase?

- ☐ 1 0      ☐ 4 6-10  
☐ 2 1-2      ☐ 5 11 or more  
☐ 3 3-5      ☐ 6 all were Fair Trade
- 

16. Which of the following are reasons that you buy Fair Trade Labeled food? (please check all that apply)

- ☐ 1 Health reasons  
☐ 2 The food tastes better  
☐ 3 Protest large food corporations  
☐ 4 It is better for the environment  
☐ 5 Help local economies  
☐ 6 Support local farmers  
☐ 7 Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

17. Is purchasing Fair Trade labeled food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?

- ☐ 1 Collective      ☐ 2 Individual  
☐ 3 Other \_\_\_\_\_
-

**Fair Trade is often defined as: a system of trade that guarantees favorable prices to producers, community development funds for producers and environmentally friendly production practices.**

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18. Which of the following changes (check one) would most motivate you to start buying or buy more Fair Trade Labeled food?

- ☐ 1 Better product variety
  - ☐ 2 Better product quality
  - ☐ 3 More information about what "Fair Trade" means and how it operates
  - ☐ 4 Broader availability
  - ☐ 5 Better prices
- 

Please rank each item in question 19 on a scale from 1-5 (1 = very unimportant, 5 = very important)

19. How important to you are the following aspects of the Fair Trade movement's mission?

- \_\_\_ 1 The workers who produced the product have been fairly paid
- \_\_\_ 2 The product has been produced under safe working conditions
- \_\_\_ 3 The workers who have produced the product are treated with respect
- \_\_\_ 4 My purchase is helping to alleviate poverty
- \_\_\_ 5 My purchase is helping to create a better world
- \_\_\_ 6 I am contributing to environmental sustainability

20. Which of the following Fair Trade Labeled items do you buy, or would consider buying? (check all that apply)

- ☐ 1 Coffee
  - ☐ 2 Chocolate/cocoa
  - ☐ 3 Tea
  - ☐ 4 Bananas
  - ☐ 5 Any Available
  - ☐ 6 Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 

21. How important is it that Fair Trade Labeled products also be organic? Would you say...

- ☐ 5 Very important
  - ☐ 4 Somewhat important
  - ☐ 3 Neutral
  - ☐ 2 Somewhat unimportant
  - ☐ 1 Very unimportant
  - ☐ 9 Don't know
-

## LOCALLY GROWN FOOD

22. What does “locally grown” mean to you?

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23. Have you ever heard of locally grown food?

☐ 1 Yes      **If “YES” continue to question 24**

☐ 2 No      **If “NO” skip to question 30**

24. How did you first hear about locally grown food? (please select one)

☐ 1 Word of mouth      ☐ 4 At a place of worship

☐ 2 In the press      ☐ 5 In a store

☐ 3 School      ☐ 6 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ 9 Don’t know

25. When did you first hear about locally grown products?

☐ 1 Less than 1 year ago      ☐ 3 4-6 years ago

☐ 2 1-3 years ago      ☐ 4 More than 6 years

26. Do you make a conscious effort to buy locally grown food?

☐ 1 Yes      **If “YES” continue to question 27**

☐ 2 No      **If “NO” skip to question 29**

27. In your most recent grocery shopping trip, how many locally grown food products did you purchase?

☐ 1 0      ☐ 4 6-10

☐ 2 1-2      ☐ 5 11 or more

☐ 3 3-5      ☐ 6 all were locally grown

28. Which of the following are reasons that you buy locally grown food? (please check all that apply)

- ☐ 1 Health reasons
- ☐ 2 The food tastes better
- ☐ 3 Protest large food corporations
- ☐ 4 It is better for the environment
- ☐ 5 Help local economies
- ☐ 6 Support local farmers
- ☐ 7 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

29. Is purchasing locally grown food simply a matter of individual preference or is it part of a collective activity by people with shared values?

- ☐ 1 Collective                      ☐ 2 Individual
- ☐ 3 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Locally grown food is often defined as food that has been grown close to where it is sold.**

30. Which of the following changes (check one) would most motivate you to start buying or buy more locally grown food?

- ☐ 1 Better product variety
- ☐ 2 Better product quality
- ☐ 3 More information about what “locally grown” means and how it operates
- ☐ 4 Broader availability
- ☐ 5 Better prices

#### **GENERAL SHOPPING QUESTIONS**

The following questions ask about your general shopping practices (both food and non-food items).

31. Are you willing to pay a premium for \_\_\_\_\_ in your food and non-food shopping? (check all that apply)

- ☐ 1 Premium quality
- ☐ 2 Organic
- ☐ 3 Fair Trade
- ☐ 4 Attractive packaging
- ☐ 5 Locally grown
- ☐ 6 Preferred flavor
- ☐ 7 Brand I trust
- ☐ 8 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

32. Are your purchasing decisions influenced by your economic (financial) situation?

☐ 1 Yes

☐ 2 No

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33. Are your purchasing decisions influenced by your ethical values?

☐ 1 Yes

☐ 2 No

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34. Are your purchasing decisions influenced by your political values?

☐ 1 Yes

☐ 2 No

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35. Through your purchasing decisions, do you see yourself as part of a collective effort to promote \_\_\_\_\_? (please check all that apply)

☐ 1 Global social justice

☐ 2 Local social justice

☐ 3 Labor issues

☐ 4 Human rights

☐ 5 Environmental issues

☐ 6 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please rank each item in question 36-39 on a scale from 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

36. \_\_\_\_ Do you think people should take ethics into consideration when making purchasing decisions?

37. \_\_\_\_ Do you think people should take their political beliefs into consideration when making purchasing decisions?

38. \_\_\_\_ Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on social change?

39. \_\_\_\_ Do you think ethical shopping has the potential to make real impacts on the environment?  
Please rank each item in question 40 on a scale from 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

40. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your shopping habits in general?

\_\_\_\_ I prefer buying environmentally friendly products

\_\_\_\_ I try to keep my life simple, as far as my material possessions are concerned

\_\_\_\_ I look at where a product has been manufactured before buying it

\_\_\_\_ I prefer to buy goods made in the US, rather than products made in other countries

\_\_\_\_ I buy as much as possible at sale prices

\_\_\_\_ I carefully plan most of my purchases

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Please rank each item in question 41 on a scale from 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

41. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

- ☐ I regularly recycle household products
- ☐ I consider myself to be part of a larger global community
- ☐ I am concerned about sweatshop conditions
- ☐ I am concerned about conservation issues (water, energy, etc.)
- ☐ I am active in local or state politics
- ☐ I feel responsible for helping to meet the needs of the poor
- ☐ I consider myself a religious person
- ☐ It is important to take care of poor people in the US before we give attention to conditions in the rest of the world
- ☐ I am a community activist
- ☐ I think about social issues before making purchasing decisions
- ☐ I think about environmental issues before making purchasing decisions

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**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS**

42. What is your sex?

- ☐ 1 Male
- ☐ 2 Female

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43. What is your race or ethnicity?

- ☐ 1 White/Caucasian
  - ☐ 2 Black/African-American
  - ☐ 3 Latino/a
  - ☐ 4 Native American
  - ☐ 5 Asian
  - ☐ 6 Other
  - ☐ 9 Don't know/Not applicable
-

44. What was your age on your last birthday?

- ☐ 1 Under 18
  - ☐ 2 18-27
  - ☐ 3 28-37
  - ☐ 4 38-47
  - ☐ 5 48-57
  - ☐ 6 58-67
  - ☐ 7 Over 68
  - ☐ 9 Don't know/Not applicable
- 

45. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- ☐ 1 Less than High School
  - ☐ 2 High School/GED
  - ☐ 3 College
  - ☐ 4 Graduate or Professional degree
  - ☐ 9 Don't know/Not applicable
- 

46. What is your total household income?

- ☐ 1 Under \$20,000
  - ☐ 2 \$20,000 - \$39,999
  - ☐ 3 \$40,000 - \$59,999
  - ☐ 4 \$60,000 - \$79,999
  - ☐ 5 Over \$80,000
  - ☐ 9 Don't know/Not applicable
- 

47. How would you describe your political beliefs?

- ☐ 1 Very liberal
  - ☐ 2 Somewhat liberal
  - ☐ 3 Moderate/Middle of the road
  - ☐ 4 Somewhat conservative
  - ☐ 5 Very conservative
  - ☐ 9 Don't know/Not applicable
-

48. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your shopping patterns?

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**Thank you for your participation in this survey.**