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Abstract

The case is made for the merit of discovering and owning the ideological and paradigmatic underpinnings of consumer-related education initiatives. After briefly profiling two camps of dominant and contending/emergent world views (ideologies and attendant paradigms), two ideological maps of consumer education are developed and applied, providing a scaffold for future deliberations about the import of worldviews in consumer education.

Consumer education is one of the three themes of the Journal (along with consumer policy and consumer sciences and their application). During the last decade, less than five percent (5%) of the 380 papers published in the Journal dealt with consumer education. Of the theories reflected in this 10 year collection, consumer education theory was one of the least mentioned areas (McGregor, 2007b). Despite an absence of consumer education-related scholarship in the Journal, consumer education is experiencing a resurgence in many parts of the world, especially in the European Union. McGregor (2005b) identifies many such initiatives and characterizes them as conventional in their approach. She provides evidence that government, industry and consumer educators tend to understand consumer education as a way to empower people to access information so they can take advantage of a competitive marketplace. To offset and augment this conventional approach, she tenders the idea of sustainable consumer empowerment through critical consumer education, framed in a new typology of four different approaches to consumer education; her intent is to foster paradigm shifts in consumer education.

Through this lens, McGregor (2007b) determines that only within the last three years have any of the papers published in the Journal augmented the conventional approach to consumer education with a citizenship, global and sustainability perspective, as well as an empowerment focus (see Benn, 2004; Haanpää, 2007). As a caveat, there *are* papers in the Journal that deal with these topics. But, few relate them *directly to consumer education* and fewer still actually move beyond the conventional notion of consumer education. Even though they employ the notions of empowerment, sustainability and citizenship, Brennan and Ritters (2004) and Coppack and Brennan (2005), for example, do not generate an empowerment approach to consumer education as envisioned by McGregor (2005b). They do, however, move consumer education away from the conventional approach by drawing on the principles of citizenship and sustainability, thereby constituting a paradigm shift.

For the most part, the current consumer education milieu reflects consumer educators comfortably entrenched in *particular* ideologies and paradigms. In effect, they lean towards a conventional stance, wherein they assume that people will be empowered if they are given information, facts and advice, and are taught that they have rights, responsibilities and a voice,

relative to the power of producers. This is not good or bad; rather, it has implications on the kind of consumers prepared for the marketplace (McGregor, 2005b). This is why it is important that consumer educators gain a healthy respect for, and become cognizant of, which ideologies and paradigms inform their practice. Consumer educators' worldviews (whether critically examined or not) have power; they truly do influence the character of education tendered about the consumers' interest vis-a-vis that of government, the market, civil society, other citizens, species and the earth. After providing an overview of prevailing and emergent world views, the discussion will turn to how different ideological orientations deeply inform consumer education initiatives, leading to different socialization processes for people into their consumer role.

Overview of Prevailing and Emergent Worldviews

Ideologies shape the assumptions that consumer educators hold about power relationships, preferred market dynamics, presumed rights and responsibilities and how people make sense of their role as a consumer. Paradigms give meaning to life lived within the ideologies. In a bit more detail, an ideology is the set of values, beliefs and notions of truth that is held by a social group, often unquestioned, and seldom critically examined (Ady, 2000). These values, beliefs and notions of truth inform the nature of politics, economics, culture, the media, education and other social institutions, thereby profoundly shaping every day life. Ideologies are understood to be *the* ruling ideas of the times, prescriptions for a preferred way to live day-by-day. Ideologies also are views of power, and how that power can be used (Dillman, 2000; Heath, 2003). Some people liken paradigms to observatory towers from which people are able to see the whole picture, and discern meaningful interactions and useful patterns in daily life (Zube, 2002). Paradigm is from the Greek root *paradeigma*, meaning 'to compare.' Paradigms help people make sense of these observations (actions and decisions) by *comparing* them to the prevailing values, ideals and notions of truth (the ideologies) (Heath, 2003) (see Figure 1).

The general consensus is that there are two overarching ideological camps¹ right now, one camp comprising the successful dominant ideologies and another camp containing the emergent contenders (Ekström, 2003; Elgin & Drew, 1997; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; International Forum on Globalization, 2003; Korten, 1998; Marsden & Littler,

Figure one - The power of ideologies and paradigms

A small example illustrates the power of an ideology and the meaning attached to human actions taken in a world shaped by that ideology. When calculating pension income for retired citizens, most national retirement pensions and income security policies do not *count* unpaid caregiving work done by women in the home and community. This type of work it is not captured in the national accounts (GDP) of countries because, from this observation tower (paradigm), only work that people get paid for "counts". The result is that women lose their income security as they age because their care giving work was not valued by policy makers who adhered to the belief systems of the market economy: competition, scarcity, profit, individualism (an ideology). Because these women contributed more to the informal economy than to the formal economy, it is assumed that they do not deserve to benefit from public monies accumulated for 'hard working retired citizens.' Because most people in society have come to accept this situation as the norm, they do not question the policy makers' decisions. Instead, they assume that the women are not worthy, that they have to go without, because they chose to engage in less valued reproductive and care giving roles rather than the more valued 'productive' role of members of society. It is assumed that woman's place has always been in the home and should remain so. This work was never salaried because it was never considered to be a contribution to the economic wealth of a nation.

¹ The author acknowledges that some prefer not to use this dualistic approach, to create two separate camps. In effect, the camp metaphor incorporates the multitude of different ideologies and paradigms shaping the world (pluralism), while also providing a simple language to further dialogue and engagement with a complex idea.

1999). These camps are labeled dominant and contenders for a reason. The dominant camp exercises control, power and influence on every aspect of daily life. Adherents of these ideologies are the power brokers in society. Unwitting followers of this camp are usually blind to the control. The other camp contains contenders, often seen as champions who: (a) strive against the influence of the dominant players, (b) expose and oppose their power, and (c) struggle against difficulties arising because of the exercise of this power (Breton & Largent, 2002; Pendergast & McGregor, 2007).

Ideological camps become successful and powerful because they: (a) explain people's place in nature, society and history; (b) contain beliefs and values that people accept as true and worthy; (c) are plausible enough to mesh with common sense understandings of facts about social reality; and, (d) are useful in serving the needs and interests of those in power, and useful in justifying that they *stay* in power. Again, see Figure 1 for an illustration of these four criteria of successful ideologies (in this case, Patriarchy, social Darwinism (survival of the fittest) and neoliberalism). When any ideology becomes so ordinary that it turns invisible, it is said to be overwhelmingly successful. If people cannot *see* these ideas, they will not question them, meaning the ruling ideas of the time go unchallenged (Adams, 2000; Duerst-Lahti, 1998). Life is lived superficially, some say with deserving consequences.

Dominant Ideological Camp

The successful, dominant world ideologies shaping the world today include: patriarchy, economic neoliberalism, political conservatism, Social Darwinism, capitalism, corporate-led globalization, consumerism, and postmodernism (popular culture and deconstructive). The attendant, supportive paradigms are: materialism (and industrialism), positivism, empiricism, reductionism, relativism and transmissional and transactional perspectives. These embrace the values of: competition, scarcity, efficiency, transactions, the winning/losing approach to success, profits and wealth, individualism, and self-interest. They respect linear fragmentation, facts over values, mastery versus stewardship, categories and specializations, quick fixes, and the machine metaphor (Elgin & Drew, 1997; Marsden & Littler, 1999) (see Table 1).

Emergent Ideological Camp

The contending, emergent ideologies include: humanistic and feminist (a society of equality); people-focused, sustainable networks and livelihoods; participatory democracy; egalitarianism, pluralism and diversity; mindful markets and other forms of people and eco-centered economies; localization plus globalization from the bottom up, led by civil society; alternative forms of consumption; dialecticism, and postmodernism (narrative, liberatory and constructive). The attendant and supportive paradigms are the new sciences (chaos theory and quantum physics), living self-organizing systems, narrative and interpretative research, critical reflection, contextual holism and dialectical critical science, as well as transformational and emancipatory perspectives. They embrace the values of: cooperation, abundance, efficacy, moving ahead together, values *and* facts, stewardship, and temporal fixes within life metaphors. These paradigms respect chaos, patterns, structures, processes, dynamics, reflection, stories and narratives, meaning making, relationships, holism, placing things in context, emergent properties, and emancipatory transformation (Elgin & LeDrew, 1997; Marsden & Littler, 1999) (see Table 1).

Table 1 Comparison of Dominant and Contending Ideological Camps

Dominant Ideological Camp	Contending Ideological Camp
A. Patriarchy	A. Humanist and feminist (society of equals)
B. Economic neoliberalism	B. People-focused development, sustainable networks and livelihoods
C. Political Conservatism	C. Participatory democracy
D. Social Darwinism	D. Egalitarianism, pluralism and diversity
E. Capitalism	E. Mindful markets and other forms of people and eco-centered economies
F. Corporate led Globalization	F. Localization and bottom-up globalization, led by civil society
G. Consumerism	G. Alternative forms of consumption
H. Postmodernism (especially popular culture and deconstructive)	H. Dialecticism (plus narrative, constructive and liberationist postmodernism)
Attendant Dominant Paradigms	Attendant Contending Paradigms
1. Newtonianism	1. New sciences
2. Materialism and Industrialism	2. Living systems
3. Positivism	3. Narrative and interpretive
4. Relativism	4. Critical reflection
5. Reductionism	5. Contextual holism and dialectical critical science
6. Transmissional and Transactional	6. Transformational and emancipatory

Ideological Maps of Consumer Education

Readers are encouraged to explore the plethora of literature that contrasts dominant and emergent paradigms and ideologies, including those used for this paper (Ekström, 2003; Elgin & LeDrew, 1997; Gabriel & Lang, 1995; International Forum on Globalization, 2003; Korten, 1998; Marsden & Littler, 1999). There is also a healthy body of discourse about ideologies and paradigms in consumer research, insights that were drawn on to elucidate the ideas shared in this paper (Arndt, 1986; Beckman & Elliot, 2000; Ekström, 2003; Hunt, 1991; Marsden & Littler, 1999; Mick, 2005; Murray, 2006; Murray & Ozanne, 1991; Lowe, Carr & Thomas, 2004; Lowe et al., 2005; Lutz, 1989).

For this paper, two ideological *maps* were developed as a way to help consumer educators reflect on the import of ideological camps on their educational efforts (see Table 2). The following text shares two narratives that attempt to present a detailed account of consumer education informed by the dominant camp (left column) and the emergent camp (right column). The author appreciates that consumer education is sufficiently complex that people often have their feet in both camps, a strong indicator that it is not always a matter of either one or the other ideologies (see Figure 2, adding some levity to the conversation). Although not yet informed by empirical or interpretive research, the construct validity of the maps was affirmed at a roundtable during an American Council on Consumer Interests (ACCI) conference (McGregor, 2005a). The consumer

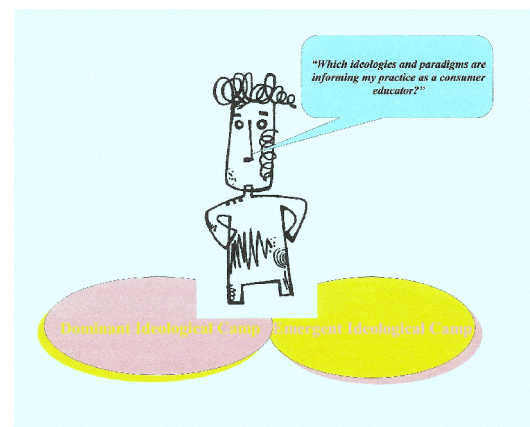


Figure 2 - Consumer Educator with Feet in Both Ideological Camps (Image used with permission from National Communications Resource Team)

educators at the roundtable felt comfortable using the information in Table 2 to draw inferences about what consumer education would look like from either ideological camp, or both. The information in the table (the maps) resonated with their lived experiences as consumer educators; they could see their work through the lens provided in Table 2. As well, these two ideological maps are informed by the author's 30 years of experience in consumer education, and attendant paradigm shifts.

Table 2 Ideological Maps of Consumer Education

Dominant, Conventional Map of Consumer Education	Contending, Emergent Map of Consumer Education
consumer rights (individual rights)	consumer social responsibility (human responsibilities while consuming)
consumer self-interest	mutual, citizen interests
consumer education	global education and consumer citizenship education
consumer protection (from self and business)	Majority world citizens' protection from Northern consumption; also protect Northern consumers from oppression in consumer society
sustainable economic development	sustainable human and social development
classical economic theory	feminist, ecological, behavioral and developmental economy theory
business as BIG business (Trans-national corporations (TNCs))	business as small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as TNCs
consumer decision making	ethical and moral consumer decision making
formal economy	informal economy
production	reproduction and care
financial security	human security of self and others
capitalism (corporate, globalized managed or government managed "Western" capitalism)	non-Western versions of capitalism; capitalism that reclaims the commons
consumerism	ethical, participatory, sustainable consumerism
consumer society and culture	culture of peace in a consumer society
business accountability (Corporate Social Responsibility)	consumer accountability
growth, profit, and master	sustainability, stewardship and peace
consumer issues	social justice and human rights arising from excessive consumption
consumer socialization	socialization to be global citizen
free market economy	mindful markets, living economies and covenants of care
corporate-led globalization	bottom-up globalization
consumer policy	other policy areas that affect consumption like trade, foreign affairs, military and fiscal

consumer movement	consumer movement aligned with civil society movement for justice and solidarity
violence in some products we consume	consumerism as a form of structural violence (system is organized so that people are marginalized, oppressed, exploited, and disadvantaged)
consumer empowerment (have product and service information, know their rights, lots of market competition)	help people find their inner power (me-power) and social potential to challenge the status quo
economic development	human and social development
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as progress indicator	Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) and Human Development Index (HDI) as progress indicators
patriarchy	beyond Patriarchy to include humanism, feminism, even fraternity (society of equality)
value neutral	value rich and dependent on values
scarcity mentality (not enough to go around)	abundance mentality (have to be creative in using what we have to find synergy)
static systems thinking (mechanistic)	living systems thinking (holistic, integral)
draws heavily on scientific paradigm and empirical method for research and policy work	draws on other ways of knowing, in addition to the scientific method, for scholarly and policy work (includes spirituality and sacred)

Dominant Ideological Map of Consumer Education

When the collection of ideas in the left column of Table 2 are used to understand consumer-related educational initiatives, educators assume that practitioners enter the world of work and society with a particular set of assumptions to guide their professional behavior. At a bare minimum, they assume that people are individual consumers striving to protect and advance their self-interest, especially their financial security and their economic quality of life. Consumers have rights, relative to business, that need to be entrenched in law and protected. Consumer issues reflect failures in marketplaces that become evident when these consumer rights are not respected: issues with information, safety, choice, voice, redress, education, health, services, and a healthy environment (consumer rights). Governments' roles are to provide a counterpoint to potentially harmful business activities that can infringe on consumers' rights. The consumer movement is understood to be a social phenomenon that addresses this imbalance. Within this worldview, consumer education focuses on teaching people about their rights, about efficient money and resource management, how to use their voice to protect their interests, and complain if there are problems.

Business is understood to be *big* business, an assumption reflected in most consumer and corporate affairs policy frameworks. Consumers are understood to be empowered if they have information, have their rights protected, and have choices in the marketplace. Relationships among consumers, businesses and governments are viewed through the lens of the economic paradigm (competition, wealth, growth, profit, success, scarcity). Growth is measured with the economic growth indicator, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The focus is on the formal, capitalistic economy that is dependent on a society of consumption in order for it to prosper and grow. Globalization led by corporations is an accepted advancement, and seen as a natural progression for economic evolution (capitalism and neo-liberal economic principles of

individualism, privatization, decentralization and deregulation). Businesses are mainly accountable to their shareholders, and their employees, customers, and partners. Economic theory posits that businesses are held in check by the threat of losing their market positions to the competition if they do not engage in responsible business practices that yield profits. Negative social costs stemming from their production activities (e.g, pollution and labour exploitation) are unfortunate but expected events, accounted for by classical economic theory.

Emergent Ideological Map of Consumer Education

When the collection of ideas in the right column of Table 2 are used to understand consumer-related educational initiatives, educators value human rights, social justice, responsible citizenship, sustainability, stewardship and human security. Practitioners appreciate the role of civil society in marketplaces, value different connotations of consumerism, and respect a culture of peace. They embrace different notions of: (a) capitalism (e.g., non-Western capitalism); (b) economics (e.g., feminist and ecological economics); and, (c) consumer decision-making (e.g., ethical and moral).

Consumer empowerment means finding one's inner power to become an effective change agent, working for mutual interest, and striving for sustainability. The voices of marginalized people, small and medium-sized businesses, and aligned policy sectors all have a place in this camp. Consumers are held accountable, as are people in corporations (corporate social responsibility) and people in governments. New market configurations are preferred. Free-market capitalism is replaced, at least augmented, with non-Western models of capitalism or, even more radically, with mindful markets, living economies, and notions of sustainable localization. Different indices of progress and well-being are used to balance the conventional GDP, including the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) and the Human Development Index (HDI). The concept of security expands beyond securing financial wellness and personal health to include human security (justice, peace, culture, political, and the like). Development takes on new meaning, moving from economic to include human and social development, the glue and context for the development of economies.

Consumer education takes on a global citizenship perspective, and the term *consumer* is replaced, at least augmented, with the concept of *consumer-citizen*. Research and practice concerned with consumer decision making takes on moral and ethical overtones. Mass consumption as a way to absorb the vast outputs from mass production is replaced with conscious consumption. A focus on the formal economy is balanced with attention to the informal economy (reproduction and caring). Because everything is assumed to be connected, policy expands beyond consumer and corporate policy to include foreign, trade, health, transportation, immigration, labour, military, and fiscal policies. As well, the notion of consumer protection expands to include protecting citizens in Majority world countries from Northern consumption fallout and protecting Northern consumers from the oppressions of a consumer society. Along the same lines, those in the consumer movement partner with people in civil society to work together for justice, rights, freedom, security, peace, resiliency, non-violence, sustainability and solidarity.

Both McGregor (2007b) and Stein and Rha (2004) fully believe that emergent contenders are necessary. Those practicing consumer education in the contending camp take issue with the continued persistence of glaring disparities and inequities, poverty, insecurity and instability stemming from the "globalization of" economies, trade, finances, services, labor, and communications - the dominant camp. They call for the necessity of justice, sustainability, peace, security, non-violence and equality. They acknowledge the juggernaut of corporate led

globalization at the same time that they affirm the necessity of framing a new vision that encompasses a more compassionate, humane, and sustainable view of the world. They appreciate the need to be responsible social change agents, with the interest of other citizens, species and the environment foremost in their minds. They work for the interest of consumer-citizens, striving to avoid harm, and do good. Their responsibility extends beyond the shareholder to include the common good and common humanity (McGregor, 2007a).

Consumer educators living in the contenders camp advocate for the reflective development of an ethical value system that extends beyond the relationship between businesses and governments, or business and local consumers. They blend critical knowledge with values and ethics to mobilize organizational, political and social change that results in the betterment of the human condition. They strive to become leaders rather than just managers, leaders who work from a position of integrity to envision strategies, programs, and policies that are socially responsible, and empowering (McGregor, 2007b; Stein & Rha, 2004). They try to include courses and professional development initiatives that challenge and clarify the prevailing ideologies and paradigms, so that practitioners can make informed choices about which world view they consciously choose to embrace as they function in the world of work, life-long learning, and citizenry engagement. Consumer educators in the contender's camp are aware of what type of scholar and researcher they are and can express this clearly.

Discussion

The basic premise of this paper is that consumer educators need to be cognizant of the ideologies and paradigms shaping their work. This mindfulness includes an awareness of the ideological maps of their practice. Given that the dominant camp has held sway since the inception of the discipline (Ekström, 2003; Stein & Rha, 2004), it is likely that people feel very comfortable and secure in this worldview. Indeed, McGregor (2007b) discovered that nearly all of the research studies published in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies* between 1997-2006 fell into the positivistic, empirical paradigm (the dominant camp)². Reynolds and Abdel-Ghany (2001) found the same pattern for the Journal between 1980 and 1999. McGregor found that only five papers out of 380 actually contained the words ideology or paradigm. Just three authors (out of 900) literally used the words narrative, interpretative or phenomenological in the description of their research (the contending camp). Abdel-Ghany (2001) found that consumer scholars failed to place their scholarship within any historical, social, institutional or economic context (as would happen in the contending camp because context is everything).

Marsden and Littler (1999) offer a very compelling ideological analysis of the evolution of consumer-related research. They explain the fall out of past adherence to the dominant camp, postmodern ideology and the mechanistic paradigm (which respect the principles of isolation, fragmentation, discontinuity, passivity, randomness, stasis, and abstraction from the whole). This approach to consumer scholarship “left, as a great legacy, the habit of observing consumer processes in their isolation, detached from the whole vast interconnection of things, thus producing a specific narrow-mindedness [of what it means to do consumer-related research]” (p.343). This legacy reaffirms the imperative shaping this paper, that it is crucial that consumer

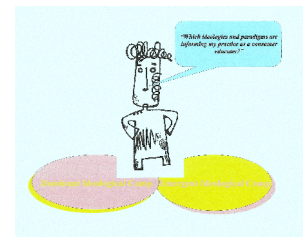
²About one fifth of the papers (18%) were original, applied research, and 15% were discussion papers. Eight percent (8%) involved conceptual or theoretical work (including principles, taxonomies, typologies, models, conceptual frameworks), and five percent (5%) were of a pedagogical nature e.g., evaluating a teaching strategy). One paper was philosophical in its approach, and 4% were coded as other (n=14).

educators critically examine whether they are satisfied with how the particular ideologies and paradigms they employ generate insights and solutions that serve to advance the consumer interest as they understand it. Said another way, how is their understanding of the consumer interest and appropriate consumer-related education initiatives informed by the two ideological camps, or some combination? Are they satisfied with respecting and protecting consumer rights while they ignore human responsibilities? Are they comfortable with ensuring economic security of local consumers at the expense of the human security of other citizens? Is providing millions of consumers with choice in their local markets enough when this entails exposing billions of citizens to exploitation and oppressive labour? Does the consumer educators' reality created through one of the ideological camps, and observed from their watchtower, resonate with their inner beliefs, values and assumptions of truth? Is their practice paradigm aligned with market reality, or do they see other potentials?

Right now, the standard against which practice within consumer education is compared seems to be the dominant camp (McGregor, 2005b, 2007b). More telling is that submissions to the Journal, and recent consumer education initiatives, reflect little ideological tension for consumer education practitioners; rather, it seems that most contributors are entrenched in the dominant camp. The tone of their initiatives indicates the author(s) are quite comfortable there. There are, in all likelihood, ideological tensions when consumer education priorities are being set by policymakers. But, seldom is this dynamic articulated and critically explored in the consumer education literature. For an example, see McGregor, Klingander and Lown's (2001) discussion of ideologies informing consumer education initiatives within bankruptcy policy.

Tolerant Pluralism of Ideological Camps

Consumer educators will be in different states of intellectual readiness for the ideas in this paper, some more comfortable than others. But, when more people begin to make observations of a disconnect, as expected by McGregor (2005b, 2007b) and Stein and Rha (2004), tensions will surely arise. Paradigm shifts and slippage are usually uncomfortable experiences; people do not like to be moved from their comfort zone (Adams, 2000; Barker, 1993; McGregor, 2006). And, it will be natural for people to find themselves somewhere in the middle, with elements from both camps in their practice (see Figure 2 again). Some consumer practitioners *are* looking down from their observation tower and concluding that something is wrong with the consumer world. An example is the Consumer Citizenship Network (CCN) initiative in Europe, www.hihm.no/concit. Publications stemming from CCN's work were recently reviewed by McGregor (2008), who found them to be pushing ideological boundaries, straddling both camps.



Indeed, Heath (1992) argues that multiple ideological camps have a great deal to offer consumer-related research. This paper used the camp metaphor to provide a common language to discuss the two overarching ideological stances (and attendant paradigms) with the expectation that future dialogue will expand to embrace critical pluralism (as advocated by Hunt, 1991). Consumer educators need this pluralism within their conceptual and moral space, where ideas compete to become the temporary standard of thought and value in the field (Larsen & Wright, 1993). Belk (1995) agrees that tolerant pluralism, manifested in the acceptance of numerous view points, is the way forward. This pluralism ensures a respectful dialogue about ideologies and paradigms, and about the implications on the nature of consumer educators' practice and resultant consumer socialization. Lowe, Carr and Thomas (2004) concur that a creative tension between

alternative perspectives is developmental and has the power to move us forward. It is more productive to conceive consumer education experiencing pluralism than a condition of incommensurability (inability to walk across the campground). Better to see consumer education evolving toward a dialogue about how to address the complexity of the consumers' world, than to align with one camp or the other. Better to see the consumers' interest as part of a living dynamic system than a static, inward focused phenomenon. Indeed, Marsden and Littler (1999) suggest that a dialectic approach can move consumer scholars and educators beyond a narrow, static, conventional perception of consumption. It respects four principles: (a) that consumption is shaped by the material environment; (b) that we live in a process of perpetual motion and change; (c) that all things are interconnected and exist in wholeness and unity; and, (d) that things exist in contradictions, causing tensions that have to be respected and managed.

Conclusion

Because there is, as of yet, little *articulated* ideological tension among consumer educators, there is a window of opportunity to be proactive. By way of a wrapping up this discussion, and as an invitation to a profession-wide dialogue, the following personal and professional related questions are posed to facilitate ongoing reflection on the import of ideologies and paradigms in consumer-related education initiatives:

Personal

- Were you familiar with the idea of ideologies and paradigms, and the attendant discussion?
- How did it feel to have your paradigms challenged, if they were?
- Were you more comfortable with the ideas contained in the left column or the right, with the dominant or contending camp, or did both resonate with you? Why?
- Are you satisfied with your current approach to consumer education? Has this discussion (a) served to further entrench you in your current camp(s), (b) given you pause or (c) moved you to make some changes?
- How will your pedagogy (process of teaching), ontology (what counts as reality), epistemology (what counts as knowledge) and research methodology (assumptions underlying research) have to change if your ideologies and paradigms change? Do you feel ready for these changes?

Professional

- What are the implications of each of the camps (or some combination of the two) on the kinds of consumer education professionals being produced and nurtured in higher education?
- What will it mean for the consumer education field if it moves from the left column to the right column; that is, changes camps, or straddles both camps?
- What do you *really* want consumer education pre-professionals (students) to learn, be able to do, and think? What do they want? What camp(s) or combination is most reflected in your answer?
- How will professional development, in-service, degree programs and other avenues of professional enrichment have to change if we move from one camp to the other, or straddle both?

Paradigmapping Consumer Education

Paradigmapping Consumer Education

This paper closes with an inspiring new conceptual evolution. Lowe, Carr and Thomas (2004) offer the concept of

paradigmapping (mapping paradigms) to facilitate new understandings of how ideologies and paradigms can frame scholarly discourse, in our case, consumer education. Taking into account the complexity of the living world, they suggest that practitioners could conceive their conversations about ideology and paradigms within the framework of networks, adaptive relationships and a healthy respect for patterns and processes emerging in a constant state of flux and change. Conceiving consumer education as *self-organizing* means we remain open to the complexity and flows of energy that nurture new order, evolution and development. This paper is a first attempt to *paradigmat* consumer education. The resultant ideological maps (see Table 2) provide a scaffold for deliberations about the future of consumer education. Consumer educators, scholars and policy makers now have the opportunity to be *self-making*, to intentionally shape their future based on a critical examination of ideological and paradigmatic underpinnings that inform their consumer-related education initiatives.

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