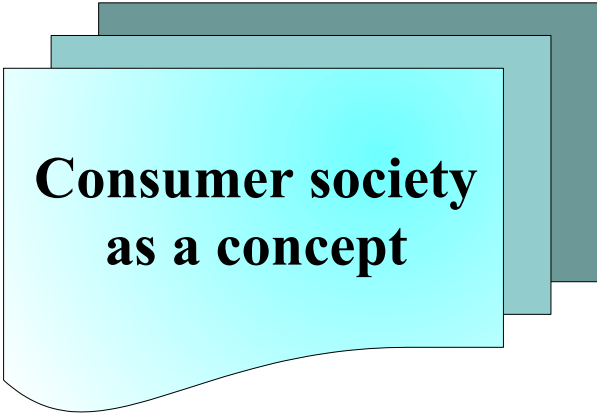


# Participatory Consumerism

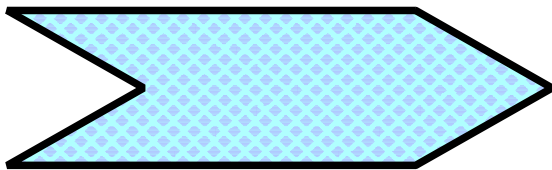


**Consumer society  
as a concept**

**plus**



**Participation as a  
concept**



***Participatory  
Consumerism***

## **Participatory Development**

*Instrumental participation* - involvement in measurable activities to an outside standard

*Transformative participation* - voluntary involvement in self-determined change of oneself, one's life or one's environment

## **Participatory Citizenship**

*Democratic participation* - deliberation on public issues among the people themselves as well as within government

*Reflective participation* - helping people think about things as they take part in civic action

## **Participatory Action Research**

*Involvement of community and its members* in any effort concerning its oppression and powerlessness leading to: (a) seeing the world differently, (b) seeing themselves in relation to others and (c) changes to their conditions and social structures as a result of reflective action

## **Consumerism as materialism**

**Vehicle for happiness, freedom and power**

## **Consumerism as way to gain social status**

**(supplement for work, faith and politics)**

## **Consumerism as globalization**

**a necessary component for capitalism**

---

**Consumerism as social movement  
(consumer power)**

**Consumerism as privatization**

*Why do citizens behave as they do when they live in a consumer society?*



**Because.....**


**“They are so indoctrinated into the logic of the market that they cannot “**see**” anything wrong with what they are doing. Because they do not critically challenge the market ideology and what it means to live in a consumer society, they actually contribute to their own **oppression** (slaves of the market and capitalism) and the oppression of others who make the goods and of the natural ecosystem.”**

# Components of a Participatory Consumerism Approach

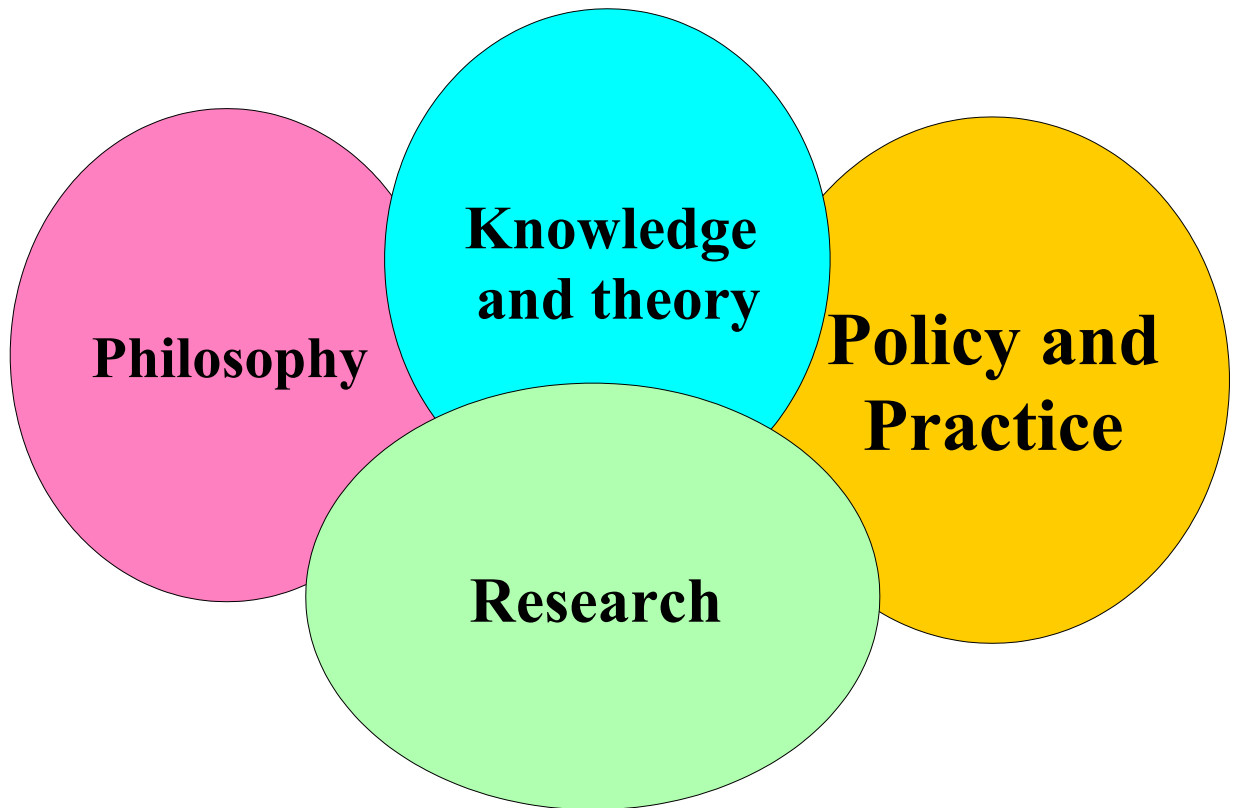
- # public discourse - discussions among people about human citizenship issues, discussions shaped by listening, talking and acting such that the world changes for the better - *expanded consumer dialogue*
- # people seeing themselves as *citizens first* and consumers second
- # consumers seeing themselves *related to a larger whole* by taking part, sharing and contributing; that is, participating in their world as citizens who consume to meet basic needs
- # people *create new knowledge* drawn from deeper insights into their mind and their heart about *why* they are consuming - reflection

- # equitable communities and societies that, for the time being, maintain a free market structure characterized by peace, social justice, security and freedom - *eventually...* strive for an *economy of care* - a moral economy
- # a dynamic consumption process of *action-reflection-revised action* due to reflective participation in the global village in one's consumption role
- # people will gain a *citizen consumer-conscience* whereby they become more human citizens not just more efficient consumers
- # includes: vulnerability, risk taking, uncertainty, trust, cooperation, public discourse, dialogue, openness with healthy suspicion, and patience with your's and others' impatience and fear

## **Participatory consumerism involves**



**unveiling the world of oppression of  
the everyday citizen in their consumer  
role and expelling the market myths  
created and perpetuated by free  
market proponents**



**How should consumer education change?**

**How should consumer research change?**

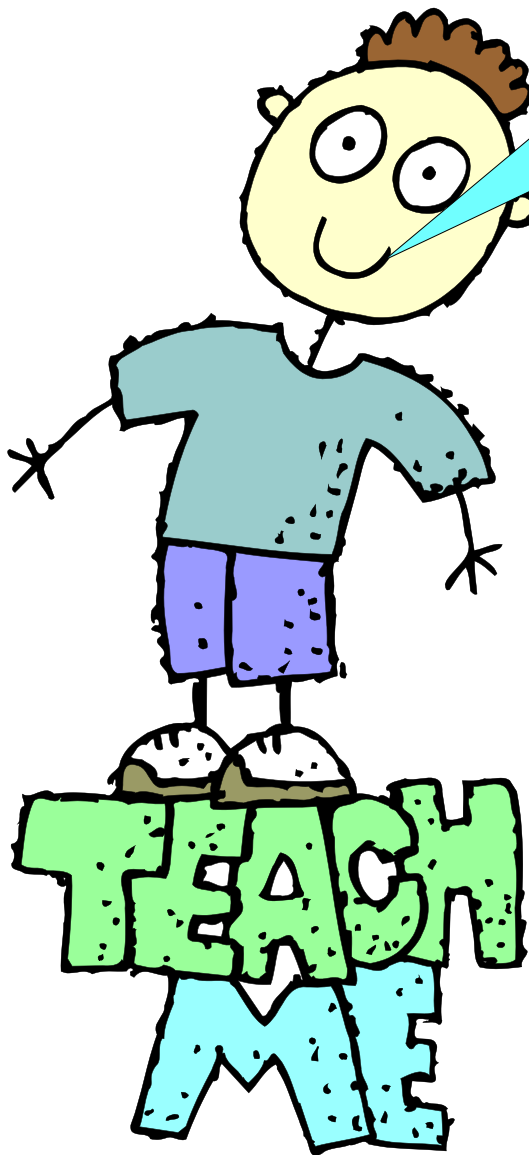
**How should consumer policy analysis change?**

**How should daily practice change?**

**How should the philosophy/mission/goals of the discipline change?**



**Oppression** - exploited people, being taken advantage of due to their circumstances, cannot flee from, or change, what appear to be, irreversible conditions



## **Living in a consumer society means...**

- # locating the meaning of one's life in acquisition, ownership and consumption (note that the word consumption used to mean a contagious disease "galloping consumption")
- # chronic purchasing of new goods and services with little attention to their true need, durability, country of origin, working conditions or environmental impact
- # people eventually begin to think that things are out of whack, their priorities are mixed up, their moral center is being lost... so, they spend more to cover up the fear
- # all problems have a material or money solution
- # people use spending and materialism as a way to build a new ego or become a new person by buying products which support their self image

# commercialization of leisure and mechanization of the home occurs concurrently (freeing up time and energy to shop and providing more things to buy (commodification - turning social activities and emotions into economic activities - measure lives by money))

# peoples' consumer choices (taste and style) are seen to be indicators of who they are as a person and of their moves within the games of class, prestige, status, hierarchy, fashionability

# **Modern consumer culture has been admonished because:**

a. large sections of the world population are excluded, exploited and oppressed, including those doing the spending!!



b. material prosperity fails to bring happiness

c. the actions taken by producers are unacceptable

d. materialism compromises spiritual values

e. a mass consumer culture is vulgar

f. environmental impact is horrific

# Critical Science

People need to think about improving their living conditions rather than accepting and coping with their present conditions. That improvement is contingent on people being conscious of social realities which exploit or dominant them and then demanding liberation from these forces. If people can be taught to recognize that their condition can be improved, they are more likely to work together to achieve this improvement, liberation, freedom. Otherwise, they continue in their passive, dependent roles blind to their power or any opportunity to change things to their benefit; they continue to accept their plight and find ways to adapt through conforming. The core of this idea is that if societal structures and conditions can be altered then human happiness and social autonomy can be attained (individual happiness *within* the community rather than happiness at the expense of the community).

A critical science perspective helps us gain (a) personal freedom from internal constraints such as biases or lack of a skill or point of view and (b) social freedom from external constraints such as oppression, exclusion, abuse of power relations. Removing these limitations to freedom and daily life involve the processes of emancipation, liberation, empowerment and transformation. Critical science is concerned with power relationships, especially distorted power relations, that make it easy for the elite to oppress others by controlling knowledge, access to power, meanings and daily practices. Uncovering this power imbalance entails finding out “what is” so you can determine “what could be.”

Exploitation

Taking unfair advantage of someone’s circumstances

Oppression

Exploited people, being taken advantage of due to their circumstances, cannot flee from, or change, what appear to be, irreversible conditions

