

# Ideological Maps of Consumer Education

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# Ideologies and Paradigms Matter



## Ideologies:

Sets of Values

Set of Beliefs

Notions of what counts as truth

If dominant, they are THE ruling ideas of the present times

Prescriptions of preferred ways of living

Views of power

## Paradigms:

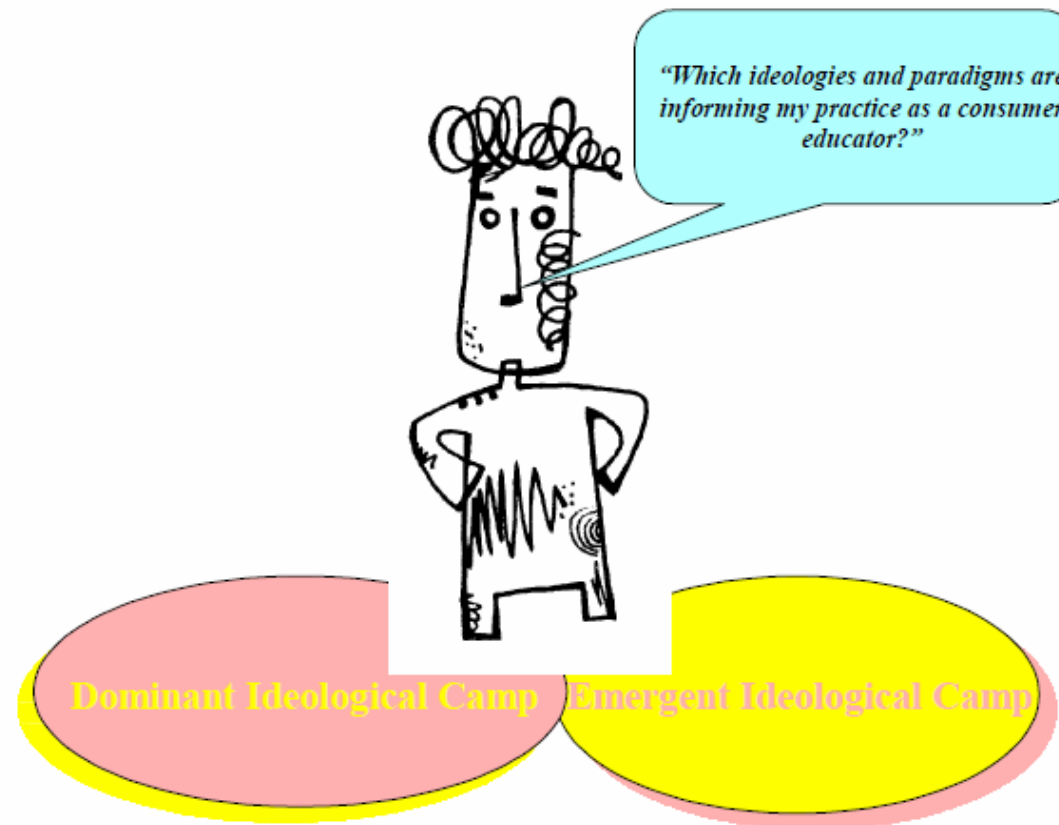
### Observatory Towers

People stand from afar and watch daily life lived out in the ideological camp (decisions and actions), and then compare what they see with their values, beliefs and notions of truth. Daily life either resonates (makes sense) or not.



# Consumer Educators Need to Discover and Own Ideological Underpinnings

Consumer Educator with Feet in Both Ideological Camps



# Dominant and Contending Ideological Camps

**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

## **DOMINANT VALUES:**

Competition

Scarcity

Efficiency

Transactions

Win/lose

Profits and wealth

Individualism

Self-interest

Control and mastery

## **CONTENDING VALUES:**

Cooperation

Abundance mentality

Efficacy

Transformations

Moving ahead together

People and nature

Community/relationships

Mutual interest

Stewardship

# Continued...

## **DOMINANT RESPECTS:**

Linear fragmentation

Facts over values

Certainty, control and  
balance

Categories and  
specializations

Quick fixes

Machine and clock  
metaphors

## **CONTENDING RESPECTS:**

Relationships and holism

Values and facts

Chaos, context and  
emergence

Patterns, structures and  
processes

Temporal fixes

Life metaphors (living  
systems)

# Consumer Education viewed from Two Ideological Camps

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



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business as BIG business (Trans-national corporations (TNCs))

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business as small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as TNCs

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consumer decision making

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ethical and moral consumer decision making

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formal economy

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informal economy

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production

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reproduction and care

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financial security

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human security of self and others

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capitalism (corporate, globalized managed or government managed "Western" capitalism)

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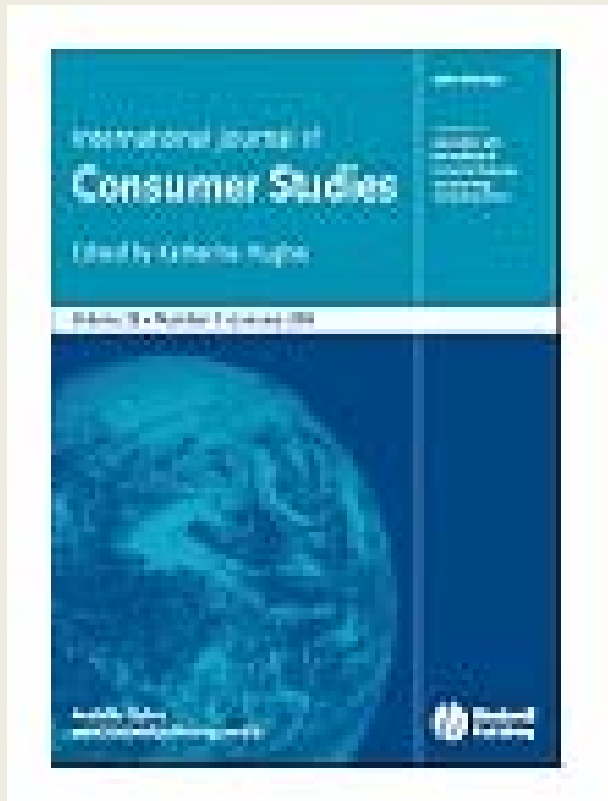
non-Western versions of capitalism; capitalism that reclaims the commons

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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)

**Little Evidence of Ideological Tension...  
we seem to be happy in our camp...**



**McGregor's 2007  
Decade Review of the  
*International Journal  
of Consumer Studies***

- Nearly all of the consumer research studies were couched in the dominant ideologies and paradigms (empirical, positivistic scholarship)
- Only 3 authors out of 900 used words from the emergent ideologies and paradigms (narrative, interpretative, phenomenological)
- Only 5 papers out of 380 even contained the words *ideology* or *paradigm*



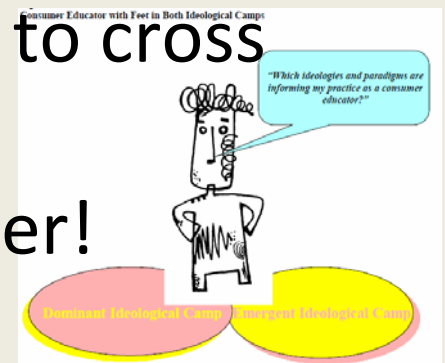
- Only in the last three years have any papers augmented the conventional approach to consumer education with citizenship, global and sustainability perspectives – this constitutes the beginning of a paradigm shift
- Special mention for the work of the **Consumer Citizenship Network** – a powerful example that consumer educators' World Views have **POWER to empower beyond conventional**

- Marsden and Littler (1999) claim that past adherence to the dominant camp has left us with a legacy - the habit of observing consumer processes in their isolation, detached from the whole vast interconnections of things, thus producing a narrow-mindedness of what it means to do consumer-related research, and by association consumer education initiatives.
- **Consumer educators need to ask themselves if they are satisfied with the curricula they create from the ideological camp they inhabit.**



# Paradigmapping Consumer Education

Lowe et al (2004) created the notion of mapping paradigms to facilitate these conversations about how ideologies and paradigms inform scholarly discourse. They call for a healthy respect for patterns and processes emerging in a constant state of flux, chaos (order emerging) and change. Despite the currents and tensions caused by this perpetual movement, we have to be able to cross back and forth from one campground to the other, so can keep talking to each other!





**Paradigmapping** provides a useful picture of how past thinking has shaped contributions to the field of consumer education.

More importantly, these ***new maps*** help us understand where consumer education **can go in the future**. They truly help us become mindful of how we frame consumer education, and the resultant type of consumers that are socialized through our consumer education initiatives.

