Postmodernism, Consumerism, and A Culture of Peace

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Abstract

This paper fleshes out modernism, five different strands of postmodernism (and what elements of modernism they refute or revise) and then explores how one's appreciation for building a culture of peace in a consumer society is dependent upon which one, or combination, of the five strands of postmodernism is used to make one's argument. Then, after briefly describing the character of a consumer society and suggesting that family and consumer sciences has been complicit in its proliferation, the paper discusses peace and human security, consumerism and human and social development (a recent sub-concept of sustainability) and suggests a new direction—participatory consumerism. The paper culminates in an examination of the emerging concept of human responsibilities which holds us accountable to respect solidarity, justice, peace, intergenerational equity, fairness and equality, non-violence, truth, security, diversity, dignity, sustainable development, community, and the plight of the vulnerable in society—***especially in our role as consumer.*** The paper concludes with the challenge to our profession to perceive that it is within its purview to contribute to the development of peace in a consumer society.

Since the mid eighties, postmodern ideas have circulated through every domain of academic discourse, challenging and transforming intellectual practice in a plethora of fields. Recognizing this shift will require a voyage into novel realms of thought and practice (Best & Kellner, 1997; Klages, 2003). This special issue of *KON FORUM* is based on the premise that we are leaving modernism and entering an epochal, paradigmatic shift to a postmodern world. KON is challenging us to reflect on what living in a postmodern world means to our profession and our practice.

This paper, in particular, will explore what it means to live in a postmodern world as we try to build a culture of peace in a consumer society. It fleshes out modernism, five different strands of postmodernism (and the elements of modernism they refute or revise) and then explores how one's appreciation for building a culture of peace in a consumer society is dependent upon which one, or combination, of the five strands of postmodernism is used to make one's argument. Then, after briefly describing the character of a consumer society and suggesting that members of the family and consumer sciences (FCS) profession have been complicit in its proliferation, the paper discusses peace and human security, consumerism, and human and social development (recent sub-concepts of sustainability) and suggests a new direction for the profession to explore, that of participatory consumerism. The paper culminates in an examination of the emerging concept of human responsibilities and suggests a new facet for our practice: we need to perceive that contributing to the development of a culture of peace in a postmodern consumer society is within our range of interests and activities.

What is modernism?

To more clearly understand the term postmodern, a brief discussion of what is considered "modern," even "pre-modern," is useful. Pre-modern, medieval cultures were based on a religious or sacred worldview wherein people tended to live at the mercy of their environs, or their guiding spirits, religions, and/or gods (Scheurich, 2001). During the18th century, in Europe, pre-modern times gave way to modern times.

The great watershed in European history was the 18th century enlightenment period when the key intellectuals of Europe emphasized the need to base a "modern" society on a more secular worldview (less grounded in religious doctrine) that theorized, or idealized, the concepts of rationality and inevitable social progress through the emerging sciences and the scientific method. This new modern age valued individuality and had faith in human thought (rather than an established authority who told people what to think), valued cumulative social progress aided by scientific endeavours, and valued human self-determination (Elkind, 1995). It was also characterized by a manifest mastery over nature and the magnification of efficiency, everywhere. Universal natural laws were developed using the scientific method (e.g., Newton's laws of physics, Darwin's theory of biological evolution, the construction of the chemistry periodic table) and these replaced medieval laws that had been determined by the divine right of the ruling

church officials or kings. If the Enlightenment era brought with it the development of natural science, then the subsequent Renaissance brought with it the rise of market capitalism, the development of transnational banking, and the development of the nation-state (formerly there were hundreds of fiefdoms with a prince ruling each one). From this perspective, modernity dates from 1450 to 1945.

The later stages of modernity have several defining features including ubiquitous technology and science (technoscience), mass production and industrial efficiency, the origins of the middle class (formerly there were just aristocrat and peasant classes), central governments with centralized power, and economics organized around consumption instead of production—consumerism (Scheurich, 2001; Shepherd, 2000). In the 1950s, people came to believe that they lived in a modern secular society that was "better" than earlier societies because of modern scientific advances. This modern society believed that progress is built on reason, education using the three R's, and absolute science. The supernatural, outer space, or faith phenomena were considered myths that could be explained away by science. The modern refers to a post-Enlightenment notion of the individual subject free of state and church, yet regulated and disciplined by increasingly powerful apparatuses of bureaucracy and surveillance. The modern is marked by faith in progress and technology to improve the lots of individuals, even as they begin to critique the impact of this progress and technology on public life (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001).

Modernism seeks the singular, totalizing narrative: the grand unified theory through which all human activities may be anticipated and, potentially, influenced. Modernists believed that one grand theory of thought could apply to all levels of society (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Grand narrative (what one has always been told and taken for granted) means the collection of "modern ideas" we have come to know that profoundly affect the way society is organized, our roles in that society, and the power relationships between institutions in that society (government, labour market, consumer market, economic system, education, health, transportation, religion, the media and the family). This overarching narrative is perpetuated through: patriarchy (male domination), colonialism, gender roles and divisions, subjectivity, empiricism, representation, technological and economic progress, history (rather than a story or herstory), etc.

Unintended fallout of modernism

As noted, modernism represented a new social order that emerged in the late 1800's, a society that believed in social progress, the potential of human reason, scientific rationality, and technology in an economy driven by capitalism and consumption. Unfortunately, the *progress* manifested itself in material progress, the production of "things," the exploitation of workers and the natural environment, and the development of a massive amount of objective, value free scientific knowledge at the same time that the masses remained ignorant and spiritually impoverished. Community resilience declined, family strength and connectedness suffered, and

individuals lost direction and began to define themselves by what they owned rather than by their value as fellow global citizens (Baldwin, 2002). A new social formation has emerged which is generated by random activities of lost individuals trying to make sense of the world and their place in it. They feel that the social fabric is dissolving and that the bonds that once held them together are no longer accepted without question. Governments' attempts to erase differences between people and to impose national identities have backfired, leaving a fragmented populous seeking leadership and focus. The long-term growth of the consumer culture during modernism led to the belief in the rightness of the endless pursuit of new experiences and values via consumption rather than reliance on familiar and traditional, albeit imposed, values and dogma. Political mentality is inspired by consumer choice, diverse life styles, and spectator curiosity in front of the TV (Best, n.d.). The global market is characterized by the proliferation of identical goods and a growing consumer monoculture (easier to sell things to). We have become dependent upon technology and industry and addicted to consumerism; we value competition in a free market economy as a good thing; and we highly value our individualistic society (Notess, 2001). These unintended side effects of modernization, merging with growing consumerism during the 1960s, have lead us to the emergence of postmodern thinking (Wikipedia, 2003a,b).

What is Postmodernism?

Postmodernism, which became an area of academic study in the mid eighties (Klages, 2003), is a term used to designate the era beyond modernity. In review, the Premodern (medieval) age was called the *age of faith and superstition*, followed by the modern age, the *age of reason, empiricism and science*. The postmodern age of *relativity* and, recently, the newest form of postmodernism, *the age of holism and interdependence,* followed. Respectively, the guiding metaphors are the created organism, the machine, the text, and the self-organizing system (de Quincy, 2002). Modernism has been introduced as a benchmark for the discussion of postmodernism, and two related terms, postmodern and postmodernist. Before proceeding further, it is important that we distinguish among these similar terms:

> ***Postmodernism*** refers to the intellectual mood and cultural expressions that are becoming increasingly dominant in contemporary society. These expressions call into question the ideals, principles, and values that lay at the heart of the modern mind-set. ***Postmodernity***, in turn, refers to the era in which we are living, the time when the postmodern outlook increasingly shapes our society. The adjective ***postmodern***, then, refers to the mind-set and its products. ...***Postmodernity*** is the era in which ***postmodern*** ideas, attitudes, and values reign—when the mood of ***postmodernism*** is molding culture. This is the era of the postmodern society. (Grenz, 1996, pp. 12-13)

There is wide disagreement about whether we are in a postmodern age, and if we are, how

we define it. Some say it is a historical and cultural condition (Lyotard, 1984) and others say it is a movement in art and culture that corresponds to a new configuration of politics and economics, late capitalism, and globalization (Jameson, 1985). The latter use such terms as post-industrial, consumerism, multi-and trans-national capitalism, and the global village phenomena via the globalization of cultures, races, ideas, images, capital, and products in an information age. They also refer to artistic and stylistic eclecticism, mixing different styles, cultures, and time periods to create art, fashion, architecture, and literature (Irvine, 1998).

Kellner (2003) suggests that we are in an interregnum period (a time between periods when something was dominant or powerful but now there is no reigning power) between an aging modern and an emerging postmodern era. He says we are in a period of transition in the borderlands between two epochs or periods of time marked by great influence, with each time frame characterized by the prevalence of similar conditions on the earth. Along the same line of thinking, some claim that postmodernism is actually the late stage of modernity (Eckersley, 1999; Griffin, 1993). Others claim that postmodernism has already occurred, equating it with an earthquake and we are now living with the aftershocks in a world that is forever changed (Trotter & Burke as cited in Wallace, 2003). Others claim that there is no such thing as postmodernism. And, still others claim that postmodernism is a set of ideas that has run its course and, as a project, is morphing into the emerging project of globalization. What once began as an economic concept is now becoming a new *category of thinking* (Richter, 2003). This paper will operate under the assumption that we are in a period of transition, that we are experiencing shocks from a massive paradigm shift, and that globalization is a key factor in this transition.

Individuals often speak of "*the*" postmodern way of looking at issues, when, in fact, an assortment of postmodern agendas exists. Oord (2001) shares a very useful overview of the five prevailing approaches to understanding postmodernism, prefacing his discussion with the following comment, ". . . some notions flying under the postmodernism flag oppose or contradict other notions under the same banner. . . . how does one decide which is authentic? [This] proves to be difficult" (pp. 1-2). Most authors gloss over these differences saying something like: for our purposes, we can assume that the postmodern movement represents a fundamental paradigmatic shift in our abiding worldview (e.g., Elkind, 1995). This author will take the time to tease out these different approaches because they all provide a different interpretation of the challenges inherent in building a culture of peace in a consumer society.

Oord (2001) identifies five strands of postmodernism: (a) popular culture, (b) deconstructive, (c) constructive (revisionary), (d) liberationist, and (e) narrative. Each will be discussed, followed by a section that explores of how each one provides different interpretations of what it means to build a culture of peace in a consumer society.

Popular Culture Postmodernism

Although there are many competing theories and approaches to the new study of popular

culture (Storey, 2000), for the purposes of this paper popular culture postmodernism is defined as being preoccupied with the idea of *novelty* and is fascinated with the current (latest, most recent), with contemporary innovations, and with whatever happens to be in vogue (Oord, 2001). Ironically, the very concept of newness (novelty) has been commodified by the postmodern consumer culture to such an extent that genuine innovation seems increasingly difficult to imagine. In the face of a steady supply of new and improved cars, dish detergents, and (fill in the blank), newness itself becomes a ruined word; only a repetition of the idea of newness in which nothing actually is novel (Berry & Siegel, 2001). Popular culture is obsessed with technology, mass communications, mass marketing, the therapeutic orientation, and conspicuous consumption—all tools for the propagation of newness, novelty, and consumerism (Horton, 2003). Since nothing is constant in a postmodern world, except for the relentless pace of change, this type of postmodernism can be summed up as a growing distrust and disrespect of authority and rationality and a widespread sense of consumer entitlement (Sacks, 1996). Indeed, popular culture postmodernism embraces consumerism and claims that anyone who resists it is unable to come to grips with the paradigm shift that we are experiencing (Burman, 1998).

Deconstructive postmodernism

Deconstructive postmodernism, the most widely known form of postmodernism, is not interested in replacing the old modern system with a better one (see constructive postmodernism); rather, its proponents want to undermine all of the old worldview, what counts as knowledge and the language centres of the old modern era, by overturning and displacing them. Bringing about the downfall of modernism is the main goal of deconstructive postmodernism—hence, the label *de-construct*. Deconstructive postmodernism rejects the main tenets of modernism: it rejects the doctrine of the supremacy of reason, the notion of one Truth, and the belief that man and society can be perfect through continual progress. Whereas modernism held that the only way of knowing that matters is gained through logic and reason (the rational, empirical scientific method), postmodernists posit that knowledge is subjective and open to interpretation—there is no one Truth, a multiplicity of voices exist. Instead of knowing truth, we express opinions, indicate preferences, or go with our gut or instincts (Berry & Siegel, 2001; Shepherd, 2000). Also, because postmodernists reject the grand narrative, they cannot acknowledge anything common to all of us.

Modernism was obsessed with classifications, groupings, and order. Postmodernists believe that one thing leads to another and that there is no neat pattern. They use the term rhizomes to refer to this lack of pattern, like a mass of roots. A rhizome has no beginning or end, it is always in the middle, between things with one point connecting to another point via lines—there is no predictable order (Berry & Siegel, 2001; Shepherd, 2000).

In a modernist culture, the state mandated and controlled the market on behalf of all citizens. The economy was organized around production, not consumption. Profit and competition were not suspect because of the counterbalance provided by the state. In postmodern

times, with the advent of global telecommunications, mass media, information technology, and transportation, corporations gained power, states lost power, citizens became consumers, and economies organized around consumption (Kellner, 2003; Richter, 1996).

Deconstructive postmodernism is also characterized by nihilism and relativism. Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated with certainty, that all is illusion—there is no reality. A true nihilist would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and have no purpose—life itself is meaningless. Closely linked to nihilism is relativism, which assumes that each thing is relative to some particular standpoint and that no standpoint is uniquely privileged above the others. All points of views are equally valid, all belief systems are equally true, and all moralities are equally good. Said another way, "however I see things, that is actually true- for me. If you see things differently, then that is true- for you." There is no separate or objective truth apart from how each individual happens to see things—everything is relative!

Liberationist postmodernism

Liberationist postmodernists seek emancipation from things they associate with modernism. Specifically, *postmodern feminists* focus on gender and want to be out from under the modern language that perpetuated ways of being that imply that women are inferior, asking people to speak in ways that empower rather than oppress women. *Ethnic postmodernists* focus on race and culture. They want to be out from under the modernist assumption that being biologically alike provides equality and prefer that we assume that cultural uniqueness establishes one's value and that this uniqueness is the basis for one's *voice*. Finally, *ecological postmodernist*s focus on the environment and seek to be out from under the modernist assumption that the earth is in need of human domination. They call for the assumption that humans need to responsibly nurture the earth and its resources. Many liberationist postmodernists reject also deconstructive postmodernism because of its nihilism and relativism, claiming that they subvert any attempts to instigate deliverance from oppression (Oord, 2001). They reject the deconstructive perspective that it is impossible to value liberation from oppression and the voices of those at the margins, who want to be liberated, do not have any legitimacy.

Narrative postmodernism

Because the community one lives in so profoundly shapes one's point of view and perspective on life, people's stories are actually variations of their community's overarching narrative. That is the basic essence of narrative postmodernism, intended to overcome two traditions of modernism—relativism (individualism) and positivism. Narrative postmodernists do not accept the modern assumption that each person decides the meaning and truth (relativism) or that only knowledge garnered from the scientific method is valid (positivism). Instead, knowledge, meaning, and truth are sociologically constructed in communities and reflected in people's stories. Empirical verification is not required nor desired. The stories and narratives can have meaning when used in the context out of which they arose and that limitation is alright

because they came out of the community we live in on a daily basis. So they must be valid. Narrative postmodernists also reject the modern assumption that there is one grand narrative (story) that accounts for all of our stories; but they replace this with the notion that the culture-specific myths define what is right and true and full of meaning. From this standpoint, authority shifts from the individual to the community.

Critics of narrative postmodernism claim that "stifling communitarianism is even more devastating than [modern] uninhibited individualism" (Oord, 2001, p. 16). Furthermore, critics claim that, if each community has its own unique story, then there is no room for interfaith dialogue since each religious community finds meaning exclusively in its own traditions. Finally, critics are left with the question: Is there a story big enough to be told by everybody (grand narrative) when there are so many micro-narratives?

Constructive postmodernism

Constructive (revisionary) postmodernism, the most recent strand, tries to overcome five features of modernity. First, it rejects the notion of unnatural fragmentation and compartmentalization of knowledge (e.g., many different subject matters in school, separate university disciplines), substituting instead a holistic, interdisciplinary perspective. This form of postmodernism claims to offer a new unity among scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious institutions. Second, constructive postmodernism conceives of societal structures as organic and having a purpose instead of the modern view that living things are mechanized by nature, mindless machines without purpose, with humans the most advanced purposeless mechanism. Third, constructivists offer a worldview that is viable for our time instead of one that has just one interpretation of "how things work," the grand narrative or theory. Fourth, constructive postmodernism allows for nonsensory perception (memories, dreams, and visions) as a form of knowledge instead of just accepting knowledge gained from the five senses. Finally, constructive postmodernism rejects the notion of isolated individuals and the dualisms of modernity and assumes that everything is interrelated and in relationship with all living organisms on earth (we know this as systems and ecosystems theory). The purpose of constructive postmodernism is to imagine a better, less destructive order beyond the modern world. This worldview is organic (Oord, 2001). It calls for a fundamental openness to other beings and holds that all entities are interwoven in webs of interdependency. In contrast, modernism saw otherness through *differences,* leading to alienation, apathy, hostility, arrogance, and dominance (Phipps, 2002).

How We Define Postmodernism Affects Attempts to Build a Culture of Peace

Earlier in this paper, it was noted that the five different strands of postmodernism all provide different interpretations of the challenges inherent in building a culture of peace in a consumer society. Because postmodernism has five distinct strands, each with its own assumptions, it is very hard to gauge its impact on any initiative to build a culture of peace in a consumer culture. From one perspective there may be hope and from another, that hope is dashed.

It is an interesting exercise in speculation and forecasting, to say the least. What follows is an initial exploration of this idea, a stream of freethinking if you will.

Deconstructive postmodernists are consciously involved in the process of de-masking pretensions, becoming aware of one's cultural self in history and accelerating the process of self-consciousness (Witcombe, 2000). If this is the case, we can make an argument that postmodernism provides an opportunity to encourage citizens to be self-reflective and to take a hard look at the impact of the prevailing neoliberal mind-set on them in their role as consumer.

The possibility that humankind is standing on the threshold of *a new age*, informs constructive postmodern thought (Witcombe, 2000). If this is true, then we can make the case for urging people to take the next step across the threshold and see themselves as citizen-consumers and, ultimately, citizens first and consumers second.

Whereas modernism is concerned with conclusions and closure, postmodernism is concerned with "the process" and "with becoming" (Witcombe, 2000). If this is an aspect of living in a postmodern time, then we can expect that people could embrace the notion of "becoming a citizen rather than a consumer" and welcome this process of transition, rather than closing their eyes to the impact of their consumption decision on others and the environment.

If constructive postmodernism seeks to offer a *new unity* of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious traditions (rather than keeping them all separate) (Witcombe, 2000), it is logical to assume that people living in a postmodern world are open to perceiving themselves as self-organizing systems (the new science) evolving towards a state of holism that respects the synergy between ethics (the moral quality of a course of action), the ability to discern what is appropriate or pleasing (good taste), and a diversity of religious traditions. This new unity of science, morality, appropriate taste, and religious diversity leads to a sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and human conditions and experiences, necessary components of peaceful cultures.

The narrative postmodernist stresses the power of language over the power of science (Jessup, 2001). It offers a strong focus on emotions, feelings, intuitions, refection, speculation, personal experiences, customs, metaphysics (the science about other forms of knowing other than knowledge generated using the scientific method), magic, myth, and mystical experiences. This focus is reinforced by the constructive postmodern perspective that holds that nonsensory perceptions are just as valid as the truth we know from our five senses (Oord, 2001). This aspect of postmodernism opens the door for respect for indigenous knowledge (often transferred via stories, songs, dances), respect for the emotional daily life experiences of human beings and their human condition, and a respect for traditions, customs, and other ways of "knowing" aside from the facts generated through science. If consumers can gain this level of respect, they can begin to reflect on the impact of their decisions of others and on future generations.

In a deconstructive postmodern world, an idea of what is right or wrong becomes a matter of personal taste, emotional preference, community standards, or cultural choice (Jessup, 2001). This stance paves the way for consumers to focus on their own self-interest and to focus on rights

instead of responsibilities. It is a legitimate way for them to desensitize themselves of the implications of their consumption behaviour on others and the environment.

The deconstructive postmodern world is one of many questions and no clear answers, exacerbated by ambiguous social, personal, and intellectual boundaries (Jessup, 2001). Ambiguous can mean one of two things, either lacking certainty or being open to more than one interpretation. This means that the answers to many consumption-related questions can be challenged and potentially dismissed, due to the many ways to interpret the answers, leading to very confused people in their consuming role. Furthermore, if we call consumerism a worldview (as does postmodernism), it means it offers a philosophy, a way of answering life's ultimate questions about meaning and purpose. If we call consumerism a moral and cultural attitude, this means that it posits standards informing our choices, including consumption choices (Beabout & Echeverria, 2002). Allowing the philosophy of consumerism to fill the sucking hole, created by the moral ambiguity and lack of answers to moral questions, perpetuates endless consumerism as an attempt to find meaning and purpose in life. We know this is creating intolerable social injustice and ecological disaster on a worldwide scale. This situation is made worse by the postmodern assumption that if we resist consumerism, we are accused of not coming to grips with the fundamental shift away from modernism (Burman, 1998). Being a consumer means we are playing the new deconstructive postmodern game, for in a postmodern world there is an endless drive to cultivate conspicuous consumption—consumerism is a postmodernism phenomenon (Baudrillard, 1985). Jessup (2001) predicts that postmodern consumerism is so ubiquitous (ever present in all places) that it will implode and collapse. This potentiality opens the door for conceiving people as citizens first and consumers second, as way to refocus human behaviour to people and away from material things.

Consumerism is more of a threat under postmodernism than modernism because it has become a process of self-identification, a process that has to be continually fed by buying more things to define who we are. We now use the products and services to define ourselves—it is all about images and illusions; our reality is recreated on a daily basis by buying things. We do this at the expense of those who make our products and the natural environment, creating injustice and ecological destruction (Baudrillard, 1985; Jessup, 2001). The flames of consumerism are kindled when the "need to need" and the "desire to desire" are cultivated resulting in a new form of exploitation because consuming becomes the opiate of the masses—the substance to feed the addition to meet unfulfilled needs and desires (Jessup, 2001). He puts an interesting twist on the meaning of desire, recommending that it be viewed as a positive energy (desire as production, making something positive for the world) rather than a lack (desire as unfulfilled needs met through relentless consumption). This perspective is more inline with liberationist postmodernism that focuses on liberating people from the oppressive conditions created by globalization, capitalism, and neoliberal development models. People living in this postmodern world might support "desire as production" because it gives something positive to the world!

Constructive postmodernism tries to reinvent premodern concepts in modern times. This idea is interesting when applied to the concept of pleasure. In premodern times, pleasure was found most fully in the life of restraint and self-denial (Beabout & Echeverria, 2002). In modern times, consumerism was not the focus of the economy; rather production was the focus with an emphasis on pleasure gained through hard work and discipline. In postmodern times, people consume for the pure pleasure of it. If we were to return to the notion of pleasure as restraint and self-denial, we open the door for introducing the notion of human responsibilities and responsible consumer citizenship, replacing the hedonistic consumption that characterizes the current postmodern world. Conversely, in a postmodern popular culture, consumerism as pleasure is not considered to be a vice that is destructive to authentic human flourishing; rather it is a desired behaviour. Thus, we have more conflicting notions and more food for thought.

With a focus on difference rather than synthesis, on diversity rather than unity, and on free will to chose instead of determinism (no free will—it is influenced by motives) (Jessup, 2001), people living in a deconstructive postmodern world are socialized to be consumers with freedom of choice in the marketplace with the intent to make themselves different from others by acquiring a diversity of goods and services as social status symbols that set them apart from others (those that do not have the same goods). Subliminally, western consumers may be striving to set themselves apart from non-western consumers as more affluent and, therefore, more deserving. If consuming to be different and superior is happening, it will be difficult to advocate for ethical consumption and for people to place their global citizenship role before that of consuming. Indeed, Schor (1999) notes that, although we used to consume to "keep up with the Joneses," we now consume to "differentiate ourselves from the Joneses," thereby reinforcing our own personal taste (which replaces truth in postmodernism) and our distinction and superiority. We gain *temporary* social status and meaning, an untenable state in a post modern world that is preoccupied with the idea of *novelty* and fascinated with the current (latest, most recent), with contemporary innovations, and with whatever happens to be in vogue (Oord, 2001). Nothing is constant in a postmodern world, so we have to continually redefine ourselves.

Most forms of postmodernism reject the modern ideas of reductionism and materialism. This means that they reject the idea that all consumer transactions can be reduced to a stimulus (advertising, peer pressure)- response (buy!) model. If materialism is rejected, then it means we cannot assume that only "matter" (in the form of material goods and services) has power (Beabout & Echeverria, 2002). These two ideas allow us to argue that citizens do have a conscience—a sense of propriety and rightness that can be cultivated in their role as consumers—and that they can strive for power *with others* in the form of ethical consumer decisions, instead of power *over others* via buying material things.

Deconstructive postmodernism holds that all things are relative. If all things are relative, that no standpoint is uniquely privileged above the others, it is hard to make a case for Western consumers to assume responsibility of the consequences of their consumption habits on others

and the environment because that one standpoint cannot take precedence over any other. If consumers can say, "*However I see things is actually true for me. If you see things differently, then that is true for you,*" then we are hard pressed to advocate that they shift to seeing all people as members of the human family and that there is a universal truth or value for social justice and freedom. From this perspective in a deconstructive postmodern world, there is little room for convincing people that others see this behaviour in a negative light. Indeed, Oord (2001) notes that relativism subverts any attempts to instigate deliverance from oppression and supports the idea that voices of those at the margins, who want to be liberated from the ills of Western consumerism, do not have any legitimacy. We can argue that narrative postmodernist also assumes this position because they claim that knowledge, meaning, and truth are sociologically constructed in communities. If consumers learn how to consume while living in their western consumer culture (their community) and if these consumer culture-specific myths define what is right and true and full of meaning, then this understanding of consumption learned in a consumer culture will adversely shape their understanding of what is acceptable consumption behaviour.

Rationalization guided the modern world (up to 1945) and comprised efficiency, predictability (discipline, order, systematization, routine, consistency), calculability (things can be counted), and control thorough replacing the human with non-human technology (Jessup, 2001). Rationalization was exemplified in the marketplace via mass production, mass marketing, mass consumption, and mass media; everything could be "mass" because it could be controlled, predicted, manipulated, counted, and run efficiently. Rationalization enables people to dehumanize people and opens up the door for nonrationality. Once postmodernism rejected rationalization, it opened the way for inefficiency, unpredictability, the ability to challenge the use of technology to control society, and the acceptance of things that cannot be quantified or measured using the scientific method. These features present challenges and opportunities for those striving to build a culture of peace in a consumer society. Respect for irrational elements (feelings, intuitions, emotions, myths) and challenges to technology open doors to make the voices of the marginalized heard as do the new respect for things that cannot be measured. Also, rejecting rationalization should mean less tolerance for dehumanizing people and for seeing them as "others" that lead to prejudice, discrimination, racism, injustice, and violence.

In postmodern consumer times, it is assumed that we should *love* things and use people to get them. Consumerism, in postmodern times, feeds on feelings of malaise, alienation, and discontent. To heal this malaise, we place a primacy on things because we have lost our trust in relationships. Things are permanent (unless obsolescence is built in) although people and relationships come and go. We want constancy in a time of constant change. We now emphasize *having* over *being* and we neglect being as we strive to get things to own. Our culture now seems morally hollow and empty so we fill the hunger with a constant feast on material things. Everything, every person and every relationship, has to be commodified (has a price for sale) to create enough things to buy. Driven by this horrible alienation and unhappiness from failed

hopes, desires, and expectations, we enter into a relentless cycle of buying to fill the gap (Beabout & Echeverria, 2002; Barrs, 2002). Asking people to shift from self-interest to mutual interest and shared responsibilities for each other is asking a lot given their current affliction with consumerism. They are very unwell and may not be able to heal themselves.

Popular culture postmodernism posits that a consumer culture creates people with a widespread sense of consumer entitlement (Sacks, 1996). If, in addition to this entitlement, deconstructive postmodernism believes in moral ambiguity (uncertainty or many interpretations), we are hard pressed to push for responsibility in consumer behaviour. It is too easy for consumers to say, "I am entitled to this product or service, and I don't care if I hurt someone else in the process." This is deeply aggravated by the tendency of people living in a deconstructive postmodern to believe that they have no loyalties and that they have no purpose—life itself is meaningless. Why would anyone feel any duties or obligations to other citizens if they held this point of view? Add to this the popular culture postmodern attitude towards a growing distrust and disrespect of authority and we are in an even more compromised position if we are calling for human responsibilities to balance consumer rights. Worse yet, postmodernism assumes that people are not capable of living by a coherent ethical code and that truth (correctness) degenerates into personal beliefs, tastes, and lifestyles where private preferences are alienated from moral convictions (Jessup, 2001). But not all is lost. Appreciating that actions can occur without purpose and calculable rewards (a tenet of postmodernism) enables us to value unpaid work, community involvement, voluntarism, and involvement in social activism as valuable, legitimate activities to advance rights and responsibilities.

Summary

If anything, this discussion has shown that, indeed, postmodernism is very hard to define. Furthermore, it has substantiated my earlier claim that how we define postmodernism profoundly affects the different interpretations of the challenges and opportunities inherent in building a culture of peace in a consumer society. Featherstone (1991) calls postmodernism schizophrenic—delusional and repressive at the same time that it is hopeful and carnivalesque (taking the risk to exceed the norm to push the margins)! In the hopeful, carnivalesque spirit, the rest of the paper is based on the assumption that we have to believe that there is a place in the postmodern world for effective resistance to the preponderant influence or authority of one individual, social group, or institution over another (hegemony). There are those who do desire to gain a measure of sovereignty (freedom) over their own consumer drives instead of having them defined and quantified by the market via globalization, capitalism, and the neoliberal agenda (Burman, 1998).

There is some hope if we approach this resistance from the constructive postmodern and liberationist perspectives. If the constructive postmodern world is organic, accepts fundamental openness to other beings, and holds that all entities are interwoven in webs of interdependency (Oord, 2001), then we have an opportunity to make the case for the ideas of consumer as citizen,

human responsibilities, and participatory consumerism. The purpose of constructive postmodernism is to imagine a better, less destructive world order. Coupled with the position of liberationist postmodernists, who seek emancipation from things they associate with modernism, we have a tenable position from which to call for people to speak in ways that empower rather than oppress women, to assume that cultural uniqueness establishes one's value and that this uniqueness is the basis for one's *voice*, and to assume that humans need to responsibly nurture the earth and its resources. The rest of the paper will flesh out this particular idea, anticipating that other scholars will wrestle with the other implications and opportunities identified in the previous discussion.

To that end, the next section will briefly describe the character of a consumer society suggesting that FCS has been complicit in its proliferation. The paper then discusses the concepts of peace and human security, consumerism, and human and social development (recent sub-concepts of sustainability) and suggests a new direction—participatory consumerism. The discussion culminates in an examination of the emerging concept of human responsibilities and concludes with a call to FSC to embrace this uncharted territory leading to a new way to interpret and view the process of building a culture of peace in a consumer society.

A Consumer Culture

We *do* live in a consumer society—a society that is organized around consumption. We also live in a contemporary moment that can be shaped by the United Nation's Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. But, building peace in a consumer society is a profound challenge (McGregor, 2002b, 2003a). In such a society, social activities and emotions are turned into economic activities (commodification), and the meaning of one's life is located in acquisition, ownership, and consumption. The consumer is placed at the center of the "good society" as an individual who freely and autonomously pursues choices through rational means, creating a society through market exercised power. Consumers engage in chronic purchasing of new goods and services, with little attention to their true need or the product's durability, country of origin, labor working conditions, or environmental impact. In a consumer society, large sections of the world population are excluded or, worse yet, exploited and oppressed in their role as laborers to make the goods we consume. In a consumer society, the market belief system co-opts aspects of humanity; to consume is perceived as the surest route to personal happiness, social status, and national success. Our social space is reorganized around leisure and consumption as central social pursuits and as bases for social relationships. People tend not to be responsible for the impact of their consumer activities on others because they do not see themselves in relation to others or the environment (Irvine, 1997; Slater, 1997; McGregor, 2001b; "Why overcoming," 1997).

When a market or consumer society emerges within a culture (as it did in North America, the United Kingdom, and other Western nations in the late 1800's)**,** human and environmental

security are threatened because the values attached to economic transactions and efficiencies invade all domains of public, private, and community life and permeate all social relations, often to the detriment of peace. Third world citizens (women and children) in sweatshops and prisons using slave labour or in free trade zones make almost all of our consumer goods in the current consumer culture. Of the nearly $4 trillion goods exchanged globally, only .01% ($400 million) is exchanged through fair trade (Fair Trade Federation, 2000). Because people living in a consumer society tend to place their personal interests before the interests of others (Goodwin, Ackerman, & Kiron, 1997; McGregor, 2002b, 2003b), it is logical to assume that the fallout from their consumption behaviour will impact the lives of other global citizens including their rights, freedoms, security, justice, sustainability, and peace.

To our discredit, family and consumer scientists have been complicit in fostering a consumer society. Key and Firebaugh (1989) tell of how, in the early 1900s, our profession began to use economic theory and the principles of capitalism to perceive families as consumers of market goods and services rather than as producers of household commodities; we jumped on the bandwagon of the Industrial Revolution. In 1929, home economist Christine Frederick published *Selling Mrs. Consumer*, a popular book that taught manufacturers and advertisers the art of pitching products to American women (Peiss, 1998). Nearly 100 years later, Brown (1993) reprimanded us for not challenging capitalism and the free market ideology and rebuked us for becoming part of the problem rather than part of the solution of what it means to live in a consumer society. She literally said, "home economists' intentions and hopes to promote the economic . . . well-being of families are commendable. But by interpreting this goal as achievable by individual persons or families *independent of the structure and conditions of the larger society* reflects a naivety that makes our efforts ineffectual" (p. 57). This paper proposes that we can learn from the legacy inherited from past family and consumer scientists and that we can have a profound impact on building peace in a consumer society *if* we embark on a deep mind shift and begin to see peace building within our purview. Ensuring peace in a consumer society involves a new approach, that of striving for human security and development by exercising one's human responsibilities when engaged in consumption decisions.

This paper will begin with an overview of the concepts of peace and human security followed by a discussion of consumerism and human and social development (a recent sub-concept of sustainability), culminating in the proposal of participatory consumerism and an examination of the emerging concept of human responsibilities. Taken together, these concepts are a significant step toward helping the profession include building peace in a consumer society within its purview of practice. It will become evident that there is a powerful synergy between this collection of concepts, providing a solid framework from which to rebuild our moral and political focus as a profession.

Peace

The field of peace and conflict studies has evolved over the last 100 years (as has the field of family and consumer sciences). In the early 1930s, peace was defined as the absence of organized war between or within nations. From this perspective, peace was conceptualized as "negative peace." If there was no overt war or organized conflict, we were at peace. Fisk (2000) notes that negative peace is the *absence* of war or other forms of violence like bullying, racism, terrorism, warfare, i.e., anti militarism. People being socialized to achieve negative peace are taught the importance of, and skills necessary to, putting out fires and stopping conflict, *after* it has broken out (Canadian Centres for Teaching Peace [CCTP], 1998). Positive peace represents the *presence* of economic, political, and cultural practices that contribute to the safe, fair, and healthy living of citizens.

In the early 1960s, Johan Galtung expanded the concept to include positive peace (presence of justice) that refers to a society built by diminishing violence and trying to prevent conflicts from breaking out in the first place. Peace requires special relationships, structures, and attitudes to promote and protect it (Gregor, 1999). Peace implies that love, compassion, human dignity, and justice are fully preserved. It entails appreciating that we are all interdependent and related to one another and are collectively responsible for the common good ("Declaration," 1994). Peace generates stability (regularity) in social interactions so that all the members of society can live in harmonious relations with each other. This balance is upset when there is structural violence, which refers to the barriers that are built into society that result in lack of adequate food, housing, health, safe and just working conditions, education, economic security, clothing, and family relationships. Worse, those adversely affected by this type of violence are not involved in direct conflict. Because they, and others, may not **see** the origin of the conflict, they feel they are to blame, or are blamed, for their own life conditions. They live a life of oppression, exclusion, exploitation, marginalization, collective humiliation, stigmatization, repression, inequities, and lack of opportunities due to no fault of their own, per se. The people most affected by structural violence are women, children, elders, and those from different ethnic, racial and religious groups, and sexual orientations.

In the 1970s and 80s, the definition of peace expanded beyond the organized macro level of war and violence built into the system to include peace at the unorganized, micro level (individual and family relationships). Called feminist peace, this approach focuses on violence and abuse within the home and at the personal level (family, women, children, elders). In the 1990-2000's, a Holistic (Gaia) peace—an outer and inner definition of peace—is evolving that includes peace within the environment and peace within oneself as well as the previous conceptualizations of negative, positive, and feminist peace. This is a holistic and contextual approach to understanding peace and conflict (Groff & Smoker, 1995).

In keeping with this trend, the newest approaches to peace and conflict are called, respectively, transformative peace and transcending conflict (Galtung, 2000; Maddava, 1994;

Toh, 1997). Both involve changes in consciousness at the personal, social, cultural, and political level via transformation, creativity, deligitimizing violence, legitimizing peace, and dealing with conflict using non-violent means. The emerging approach to peace is contextual, providing us the opportunity to appreciate that peace and conflict exist in a world characterized by globalization, raising power of transnational corporations, lessening of the state's power, and a rise in the involvement of civil society - non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and not-for-profit organizations. There is a growing respect for the interface between the private, public, and civil society sectors and the notions of governance, citizenship, participation, democracy, accountability, responsibilities, and sustainability. This approach to peace strongly mirrors the human ecological approach to FCS practice.

Human Security

Building peace involves striving for human security by taking responsible consumption decisions in one's role as a global citizen. A major new sub-concept of the overarching concept of peace is human security. Security, simply put, is protecting oneself, other people, or society from threats and challenges to safety and existence. Being secure means that risks (exposure to harm or danger) have been reduced or eliminated; feeling insecure means the risk, or the reality, of harm is still there (Nef, 1999). The concept of human security is multidimensional with many parallels to the familiar FCS concept of familial well-being (McGregor, 2001a; McGregor & Goldsmith, 1998): environmental, cultural, social, political, economic, and personal

Although national security focuses on national defense, the war and peace keeping initiatives of a *nation*, human security is concerned with the well-being of the *citizens* within the nation and within the human family. In more detail, national defense is traditionally concerned with protection of the nation-state, defense of territories and boundaries, and the preservation of political sovereignty. After the end of the Cold War era in 1989, security expanded to include the personal well-being of individuals and their ability to feel secure in the basic needs that affect their day-to-day existence: food, health, employment, population, human rights, environment, and education. (Ayala-Lasso, 1996; Nef, 1999). Heinbecker (1999) elaborates further, noting that human security complements, but does not substitute for, national security; that individual human beings and communities, *rather than states*, are the measure of security; and that the security of states is necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure individual well-being.

Consumerism in Postmodern Times

Although consumerism means different things to different people, including the social movement to balance interests between the consumer and the seller (Gabriel & Lang, 1995; McGregor, 2001b), this paper assumes that consumerism is the myth of the consumer culture. Consumerism is an acceptance of consumption as a way to self-development, self-realization, and self-fulfilment. In a consumer society, an individual's identity is tied to what s/he consumes. People end up buying more than they need for basic subsistence and end up being concerned for

their self-interest rather than mutual, communal, or ecological interest. Whatever maximizes individual happiness is best with happiness equated to accumulation of goods and use of services (Goodwin et al., 1997). Consumerism is "economically manifested in the chronic purchasing of goods and services, with little attention to their true need, durability, product of origin or the environmental consequences of manufacture and disposal" (“Why overcoming,” 1997, web citation).

Because consumerism sets persons against themselves in an endless quest for the attainment of material things (“Why overcoming,”1997), few people give thought to whether their consumption habits produce class inequality, alienation, or repressive power. They are concerned with the "stuff of life" rather than with "quality of life," least of all the quality of life of those producing the goods and services they consume. A consumer society is one in which discretionary consumption has become a mass phenomenon, not just the province of the rich or even the middle class (Schor, 1999). Consumption in a consumer society leads to materialism, defined as a culture where material interests are not made subservient to other social goals (Friedman, 1993). Durning (1992) claims that people living in a consumer culture attempt to satisfy social, emotional, and spiritual needs with material things.

Wisalo (1999) suggests that consumerism occurs because of humans' insecurity in their hearts and minds. Ironically, people allegedly consume to gain this security. He says that people feel they can become a new person by purchasing those products that support their self-image of whom they are, want to be, and where they want to go. Unfortunately, this approach to becoming a new person, to developing a sense of self, is unsustainable. People "under the influence of consumerism" never feel completely satisfied because owning something cannot help one meet the security of heart and mind, the deeper needs of humanity. Constantly spending and accumulating only gives short-term fulfilment and relief from the need to have peace and security in life. This lack of peace and security greatly compromises sustainable human development.

Sustainable Human and Social Development

Introduced in 1990 by the United Nations, “. . . sustainable human development is development that not only generates economic growth (a concept we are all familiar with) but distributes its benefits equitably; that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It is development that gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities, and providing for their participation in decisions that affect their lives. It is development that is pro-people, pro-nature, pro-jobs, and pro-women" (UNDP, 1994, p. iii). Taking direction from this definition, this paper extends the idea of sustainability to be a moral and ethical state as well as an economic and environmental state, wherein sustainable consumption patterns respect the universal values of peace, security, justice, and equity within the human relationships that exist in the global village. Put more simply, not only should consumers be concerned with the impact of their decisions on the environment but

also on the lives and well-being of other people.

There are parallels, but distinctions, between the notions of social development and family and human development. Although social development is concerned with promoting social progress relative to economic progress, human development is concerned with the empowerment of individuals and family units that make up society and are the backbone of the economy. In order to have social development, we have to have human development and vice versa—they operate in concert and are hard to distinguish; the following section will attempt to describe each one.

Sustainable Human Development

As described in McGregor (2002a), sustainable *human* development is a process that enhances the capacity of people to share visions and values, to deliberate together on the common good, to define goals collectively, and to build strategies to reach them. At its heart is the belief that human beings are the agents of change—that people must define their own development. Sustainable human development is thus rooted in people's active participation—not just to fulfill their economic and social needs but to voice their concerns and perspectives on their society and government to contribute to shaping their destinies. Building sustainable human development will require considerable changes within our own northern societies and governments. We must affect trade and finance flows, consumption patterns, regulation of transnational companies, immigration and refugee policies, and our own use of the global commons (Canadian Council for International Cooperation, 1996).

The concept of human development has two sides: (a) formation of human capabilities (human capital) and (b) use of those capabilities to lead a long and healthy life, be educated, enjoy a decent standard of living, gain political freedom, and secure human rights and self respect (Doraid, 1997). Human development is a way to fulfil the potential of people by enlarging and enhancing their capabilities and their choices, and this necessarily implies empowerment of people, enabling them to participate actively in their own development. Human development is also a means since it enhances the skills, knowledge, productivity, and inventiveness of people through a process of *human capital* formation broadly conceived. Thus, human development is people centred not goods centred nor production centred. It can be seen as an end and as a means to an end. It is about enriching lives and human well-being beyond the notion, within consumer societies, of material enrichment. Investing in the formation of human development should result in more sustainable development. It is important to note, however, that the stock of human capital (knowledge, etc. possessed by human beings) will deteriorate if not maintained and that is where social development comes in (Griffin & McKinley, 1992).

Sustainable Social Development

Social development is more than creating human capital (the objective of human development). Social development refers to the context within which human development occurs

and

> . . . implies, not only that individuals gain improved skills, increased knowledge and higher levels of physical well-being [human development], but also that they enjoy equal opportunity to employ their skills productively, and a sufficient degree of economic security to make possible stability and satisfaction in their lives. Similarly, social development is related to political freedom and stability, but is much more than formal constitutional democracy. Social development implies not only that people have a voice in government, but also that they enjoy certain basic human rights, that they live in equitable and just societies, that they are free to make choices in their personal lives, and that they are able to carry out their daily activities free from fear of persecution or crime. (UNRISD, 1993, web citation)

The World Bank (2001) says that *social* development is development that is equitable and socially inclusive; promotes local, national, and global institutions that are responsive, accountable and inclusive, and empower poor and vulnerable people to participate effectively in development processes. Table 1 profiles the aspects of daily life that have to be taken into account in order to ensure social development.

Insert Table 1 about here

Most documents generated around the Geneva 2000 World Summit on Social Development (five-year follow up to the 1995 Copenhagen Summit) tendered long lists of initiatives related to achieving social development but none referred to consumption activities of citizens. In fact, the final document that was released from the Summit (available at http://www.iisd.ca/wssd/copenhagen+5/index.html) sets out 10 Commitments for future action in Part III. As expected, there are sections on poverty eradication, employment, social integration, gender equality, education, and health. The section on a "Commitment for an Enabling Environment," within which social development can be achieved is quite revealing. There are 21 recommendations, one being the encouragement of corporate social responsibility. There is **no** mention of consumer social responsibility (see http://www.iisd.ca/vol10/enb1063e.html). Indeed, even though the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development recognized that, within the Commitment to Social Integration, there is a *crisis of responsibility,* it did so in relation to institutions, not individuals (UNRISD, 1993).

Participatory Consumerism

None of these three types of development—economic, human, and social—are sustainable in a postmodern consumer society where few people give thought to whether their consumption habits produce class inequality, alienation, or repressive power. McGregor (2001b) tendered the concept of participatory consumerism to refer to personal and social transformation for the liberation of oppressed people in their consumption role. People who are oppressed are being exploited and disadvantaged due to their circumstances and to feeling they cannot flee from or

change what appears to be irreversible conditions. In a postmodern consumer culture, people 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 the myth of consumerism, they actually contribute to their *own oppression* (slaves of the market), to the oppression of others who make the goods and services, and to the oppression of the ecosystem. Northern consumers do not see themselves as oppressed, but if they did they might resist the oppression. Southern people do see themselves as oppressed by our Northern consumption behaviour but we do not see ourselves as oppressed in the marketplace; we see ourselves as free to make choices. It is a false sense of freedom. Strong, unsustainable consumption behaviour patterns have developed, having been formed and *unchallenged* over a long period of time (paraphrased from Freire, 1985).

Participatory consumerism would involve people creating new knowledge drawn from deeper insights into their minds and hearts about why they are consuming. These insights involve reflection, value clarification, and socially responsible decisions that take into account known and unknown social, ecological, and generational consequences. Reflection involves exploring one's own experiences in a conscious manner in order to acquire new understandings and new behaviour patterns (Suojanen, 1998). Participatory consumerism would produce a compassionate culture in addition to the existing consumer culture, maybe someday replacing it. The intent of participatory consumerism would be equitable communities and societies that maintain, for the time being, a free market structure characterized by justice, peace, security, and freedom. Eventually, those people practising participatory consumerism would strive for an economy of care, a moral economy to replace the current capitalistic-driven market economy (Goudzwaard & de Lange, 1995). This type of consumerism involves vulnerability, risk-taking, trust, cooperation, public discourse and dialogue, openness with healthy suspicion, and patience with impatience (McGregor, 2001b) and simply cannot evolve unless people are more cognizant of their responsibilities as humans as well as their rights as consumers!

Human Rights and Responsibilities

This final section of the paper will begin to link peace and consumerism through a discussion of the relationship between rights and responsibilities, more specifically the dynamics of consumer and human rights and responsibilities (a discussion begun earlier by McGregor, 1999, 2003b). One is reminded that peace implies that love, compassion, human dignity, and justice are fully preserved. It entails appreciating that we are all interdependent and related to one another and are collectively responsible for the common good ("Declaration,"1994). In a consumer society, achievement of global peace is compromised because people "under the influence of consumerism" never feel completely satisfied because owning something cannot help one meet the security of heart and mind, the deeper needs of humanity. Constantly spending and accumulating only gives short-term fulfilment and relief from the need to have peace and security

in life (McGregor, 2002b). The following text explores the links between consumer rights and human responsibilities as they relate to consumerism and its impact on positive peace. Living responsibly in a consumer society means respecting the impact of exercising one's consumer rights on the well-being of others living in the global, human family.

The human spirit is restless for progress and security but also for justice and equitable improvement (Costa, 1998). To that end, volumes have been written about rights, especially human rights and consumer rights. But, little has been written about responsibilities, especially human responsibilities and consumer responsibilities, until very recently. This section will examine the meaning of rights versus responsibilities because human relations are universally based on the existence of both rights and responsibilities (Arias, 1997). Consumers' relations with sellers in the marketplace are too narrow a perspective to appreciate the impact of consumption decisions on the entire global family. Globalization of the economy is now the impetus for defining the obligations that go with the rights (Costa).

A right is something to which an individual has a just claim. A "just claim" refers to a morally correct demand for something that is due or believed to be due (Gove, 1969). Human rights are those that individuals have by virtue of their very existence as human beings (to live, eat, breath, have shelter). Civil, or legal, rights are those granted by government (e.g., the right to vote at age 18). Rights are often associated with freedom. Bannister and Monsma (1982) define a right as powers, privileges, or protections to which people are justly entitled or have been established by law.

Just as human beings have fundamental rights by virtue of their personhood, they also have human, ethical responsibilities. Indeed, the concept of rights often implies related obligations, duties, or responsibilities (Küng, 1998). Obligation refers to legally or morally binding oneself to a course of action in a situation that is bound with constraints, binding in law or conscience. A duty suggests a general but greater impulsion on moral or ethical grounds. Responsibility refers to moral, legal, or mental accountability for one's actions, conduct, or obligations (Gove, 1969). Küng further distinguishes between narrower legal obligations and ethical responsibilities in the wider sense, such as those prompted by conscience, love, and humanity. The latter is based on the insights of the individual and cannot be compelled by the government through law.

It is a sense of responsibility that makes people accountable for their actions (Arias, 1997). But, the concept of responsibility is complex. Someone can be said to "bear" responsibility for something, meaning they sustain the duty without flinching, or they can be said to "accept" responsibility, meaning they receive it with consent. Also, responsibility can be perceived as a negative thing, as a weight, or as a positive, enlightening, empowering thing. The former implies culpability, and the latter implies recognition of successes and the "attempt." Also, three conditions have to be present for someone to be act responsibly: (a) there must be a condition to which one perceives the need to respond, (b) the belief that it is in one's power to respond, and (c)

the belief that responding is not only in one's power but is to one's benefit. Conversely, a person's lack of "response-ability" could be a breakdown in any one or all of these steps (Jones cited in "Thoughts on responsibility," 1998).

McGregor (2001a) reported on many worldwide initiatives focused on human responsibilities. Three of these efforts will be examined in detail in this paper because of their scope, because of their ability to illuminate the discussion presented thus far, and because one of them finally made it to the attention of the United Nations, which recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights.

InterAction Council Initiative

First to be examined is the work of the InterAction Council (1997). The Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities the Council developed comprises 19 articles, divided into six main topics: (a) fundamental principles of humanity (4 articles); (b) non-violence and respect for life (3 articles); (c) justice and solidarity (4 articles); truthfulness and tolerance (4 articles); mutual respect and partnership (3 articles), and, as with human rights, the final article says that no one can take any one of the responsibilities out of context and use it as an excuse to violate other responsibilities in the Declaration, and that every single person, group, organization, and government is responsible for making the Declaration *work*. In more detail, the principles of humanity relate to treating everyone in a humane way and to the notions of self-esteem, dignity, good over evil, and the Golden Rule (do unto others as you would have done to you). Non-violence and respect for life also encompass responsibilities related to acting in peaceful ways and respecting intergenerational and ecological protection. Justice and solidarity encompass honesty, integrity, fairness, sustainability, meeting one's potential, and not abusing wealth and power. Truthfulness and tolerance embrace the principles of privacy, confidentiality, honesty, and a respect for diversity, and these apply to all people, politicians, business, scientists, professionals, media, and religions. Finally, the responsibility of mutual respect and partnerships includes caring for others' well-being and appreciation and concern for the welfare and safety of others, especially when it comes to children and spouses but also to all men and women in partnerships.

UNESCO Initiative

UNESCO also spearheaded a declaration of human responsibilities in 1998, undertaken by the Valencia Third Millennium Foundation. The Director General, Frederico Mayor Zaragoza, told those involved with generating this particular declaration that he promised to take their results to the relevant governing bodies at the UN for consideration. The group tendered 10 individual/personal moral responsibilities (see below) and a set of 10 global community duties (Goldstone, 1999):

- Participate and cooperate in the life of your communities

- Care for children, elders, poor, and infirm
- Live peaceably and in solidarity
- Live lives with dignity and self-respect and hold dignity of others in high regard
- Honour diverse cultures
- Reject threats, coercion, and violence in our relations with other members of human community
- Be just and equitable when dealing with others
- Avoid discrimination and intolerance
- Seek redress for wrongs
- Honour obligations to society and citizens
- Keep promises, live honestly and without deception or criminal intent.

United Nations Initiative

Finally, the UN Commission on Human Rights through its principal subsidiary organ, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, followed up on its April 2000 decision to undertake a study on the issues of human rights and responsibilities (56th session) and announced that Miguel Alfonso Martinze had been selected to the study. He released his preliminary report in March 2002 and his final report in March 2003.

At pages 20-26 of the PDF version is a 29-article Pre-Draft Declaration of Human Social Responsibilities. Martinze (2003) is convinced that the UN should develop a declaration for human responsibilities so that the right of the individual to know and act upon his/her duties can be achieved. Three of the articles relate to government's role, none specifically to the obligations of corporations, save for an inferred reference in Article 20 (do not abuse economic power). The government is charged with creating the international social order within which responsibilities can be enacted, with ensuring development of Southern countries, and with not supporting initiatives that contravene the responsibilities set out in the Declaration.

Specific mention is made of media's responsibility and of the supra-responsibility of those involved in human rights work (two articles). There are seven generic articles with two referring to the inability to opt out of being responsible and to not being able to have rights without responsibilities. Notions such as globalization, the common good, and families as democratic units are mentioned.

The rest of the articles (17 of them) are directed to every person. People are tasked to take actions that ensure that rights can be respected. They are charged to take their own initiatives and to cooperate with State authorities as each promotes, brings into effect, and protects human rights. Individuals are said to have a duty to make sure a principled human rights process is followed. All are charged with creating international peace, with supporting the common good, with protecting against terrorism, and with being friendly and brotherly with others. Every person is tasked with intergenerational ecological sustainability, with respecting religious doctrines, and

with being politically involved in their community. Persons have a duty to be responsible with their economic power (to ensure human solidarity and progress) and to protect and contribute to the vulnerable in society. People are to strive for a conflict free, harmonious coexistence and to foster and protect their cultural heritage. They are supposed to find gainful employment (to work as permitted by their abilities) and to strive to reach their full potential. Finally, persons have a duty to respect their partners and to provide for and meet the basic needs of their family, the basic democratic unit in society.

Summary and Conclusion

Building peace in a postmodern consumer society involves striving for human security by exercising one's human responsibilities when engaged in consumption decisions. If we can accept that building peace falls within the purview of family and consumer sciences (McGregor, 2003a), then we can be more receptive to taking on the challenge of critically examining the nuances of living in a consumer society and how that society negates the human security and all forms of peace. If we can see the merits of expanding our understanding of sustainable development as more than economic and environmental, we can begin to embrace the recent UN conceptualization of human and social sustainable development. Human development is people centred not goods centred or production centred, and social development is related to ensuring human security.

None of these three types of development—economic, human, and social—are sustainable in a consumer society where few people give thought to whether their consumption habits produce class inequality, alienation, or repressive power. If we can engage in a mind shift toward the notion of participatory consumerism in a postmodern society, we can instill the need for personal and social transformation for the liberation of oppressed people in their consumption role. It is obvious that this revolutionary form of consumerism simply cannot evolve unless people are more cognizant of their responsibilities as humans as well as their rights as consumers! Gabriel and Lang define a *responsible citizen* as "a **responsible consumer**, a socially-aware consumer, a consumer who thinks ahead and tempers his or her desires by social awareness, a consumer whose actions must be morally defensible and who must occasionally be prepared to sacrifice personal pleasure to communal well-being" (emphasis added) (1995, pp. 175-176).

Three powerful initiatives related to advocating for declarations of human responsibilities were shared as a stepping stone to this mind shift. All three reflect a collection of principles that have the power to redress the imbalance fostered when we focus solely on consumer rights. As fellow human beings, we have a responsibility to respect solidarity, justice, peace, intergenerational equity, fairness and equality, non-violence, truth, security, diversity, dignity, sustainable development, community, and the plight of the vulnerable in society—***especially in our role as consumer.***

The tenets of modernism serve to justify and explain the continuance of virtually all of our

social, political and economic structures and institutions (Klages, 2003). Any challenges to these institutions and structures, especially from a postmodern perspective, is seen as a threat to the status quo that serves those in power. Do not be surprised if you are accused of contributing to "a crisis of uncertainty" if you embrace some of the ideas presented in this paper. Modernists (traditionalists) critique postmodern thinkers for eroding tradition, critiquing capitalism and globalization, and embracing technology (Scheurich, 2001). This criticism can be daunting so you are reminded that the new science embraced by postmodernists, chaos theory, tells us that change brings chaos, that there is order in this crisis and chaos, and that this order leads to a new state. To transform, one has to let go of tradition and pass through the darkness of chaos, knowing in one's hearts that chaos leads to order, just that there is no predictability (Stratton & Mitstifer, 2001). In the end, we will be renewed, revitalized, and focused on human security, a culture of peace, participatory consumerism, and human responsibilities, a marked shift from our old status quo.

Although we are sorely challenged to meet these human responsibilities within a postmodern consumer society, FCS practitioners can be on the vanguard of the responsibility movement if they become receptive to viewing peace as a part of the mandate of the profession, a stepping stone to global human security. We can seize this "contemporary moment" as an opportunity to recognize the problems that result from living in a consumer society. We can strive for a morally justifiable change in our future direction so that peace, human responsibilities, and human security, which ensure sustainable human and social development, become part of our professional dialogue and practice—we can urge citizens to embrace participatory consumerism for a peaceful society.

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Table One - Dimensions of Social Development

as set out in the 1969 UN Declaration on Social Progress and Development, the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Geneva 2000 Summit (see Eurostep, 2000)

- Access to basic education, completion of primary, and closure of the gender gap
- A life expectancy of no less than 60
- Reduced mortality rates of infants and children under five
- Reduced maternal mortality
- Food security (access, safety, quantity and cultural relevance)
- Reduction of malnutrition
- Primary health care so people are healthy enough to lead socially and economically productive lives
- Productive employment in equitable and favourable conditions of work
- Income and wealth distribution
- Access to family planning and child care facilities
- Reduce malaria mortality and morbidity (occurrence and death)
- Elimination and control of major diseases
- Increase adult literacy, with emphasis on gender
- Access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation
- Affordable and adequate shelter for all
- Provision of community services
- Comprehensive rural and urban development to ensure healthier living conditions
- Transportation and communication systems
- Reduce discrimination against women
- Reduce poverty