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The Modern - Postmodern Divide. Differing Motivations of Adult Learners?

Abstract: This paper wants to discover through a comparative examination of two very different decades the differing motivations and expectations of learners from the modern and postmodern eras.

Why is it important? I believe this to be important research as we move deeper into the postmodern era. As more writers and thinkers begin to illuminate and question the difference between the modern and the postmodern paradigms, there may be important messages for modernist adult educators who continue to make up the bulk of the profession. For instance, are there essential learner motivations that adult educators (who have been schooled in the modern paradigm), must be aware of when assisting learners essentially schooled within a postmodern paradigm? Do the "Principles of Adult Learning" still apply in the same way to the postmodern generation? Therefore, this research may have implications for curriculum design, as it will concentrate on the differing motivations and technologies of the eras.

Although there have been some studies that contrast the missionary like adult/workers' education activists of the early 1900s [of the WEA school] with the HRD technocrats [of the Malcolm Knowles school] of the 1970s etc., as far as I am aware, limited work has taken place in this area of enquiry.

Research approach. In an effort to discover if indeed significant differences exist, this presentation will compare the decades 1925-1935 and 1995-2005 and in particular examine the fashions, art and architecture of both eras to draw out possible learner motivation and expectations. I believe that it is in the *public display of creativity* that most often changes of attitude and therefore, changes in motivation can be demonstrated. Clear examples of the coming of the modern era are evident in the Art Deco movement of 1925-35. Are there similar indicators to changes in thinking and motivation to be demonstrated in 1995-05?

Once examples of *public display of creativity* have been identified, I intend to use two scenarios of fictitious learners from both eras as a way of giving form to the differing learner motivations.

Chapter 1. What is Modernism?

1.1 The emergence of modernism

Implicit within our understanding of “*modern*” is a sense of newness, of motion or progression, of change and superiority especially to do with products. Indeed, *modern* as in the Oxford Concise Dictionary means “... of now, the present...” and implicitly, therefore always, the future. In a historical sense, *modern* refers to the period beginning the 15th Century. (Williams, 1983) For the purpose of this paper, however I do not use the term in this historical sense but use it to describe the movement of modernism as embodied in its beliefs and values at the turn of the 19th Century. It can be easily argued that a simple reliance on a date range could capture those who were vigorously opposed to *modern* ideas.

Our thoughts relating to modern are often associated with equipment and technology. The modernist movement emerged in the mid-19th century in France (Burn, 1991). Prominent in the ideas of modernism was a reaction to the traditional or classical. The driving force of these ideas seems to have been the pace and shock of new engineering and scientific materials and discoveries. Also, the rise of the middle class and industrialisation and ideas that sprang from the roots of Marxism. (Hughes, 1991). Proponents of the ideas seemed to feel that linkages to the past were like anchors or weights holding back “progress” and further, that progress itself was a good thing. Much of the argument promulgated by modernists suggested that to make the move forward was both inevitable and good.

1.2 Architecture

Within architecture, the term “*modernism*” is also often used to describe a particular group of architects who wanted to detach themselves from the strictures of the past. Architects such as Sullivan, Jenny and Richardson, (Hunter, 1973) active in Chicago at the turn of the 19th century, were responding to new engineering materials that allowed for new less restricted ways of designing. Prominent also was the influence of the Bauhaus School in Germany, active especially between 1919 and 1933 run by different architect-directors (Walter Gropius from 1919 to 1928, Hannes Meyer from 1928 to 1930, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe from 1930 to 1933). Gropius as founder argued that a new era had commenced at the end of the Great War and therefore a new set of artistic values and pretences was necessary. His idea was to align design more

carefully to the new techniques of mass production. He particularly developed the idea that artists should be encouraged to work with industry.

Brave to the point of arrogance, modernist architecture and the architect can be summed in Ayn Rand (1947), *The Fountainhead* in which her uncompromising architect Howard Roark, claims;

“I set my own standards, I inherit nothing. I stand at the end on no tradition. I may perhaps, stand at the beginning of one.”¹

Likewise, Le Corbusier, in a famous piece published in *Decorative Art Today*², announces a rejection of past standards, including old-fashioned artisan values as being redundant in the age of the machine aesthetic.

One of the most obvious characteristics of modernist architecture is its steadfast refusal to reference itself back in time. It is a complete and absolute break with tradition.

Ironically, the starting values of modernism in architecture, those of democracy, standardisation and the new industrial quality available through the machine age and consequently applied for the benefit of the masses, seems in retrospect to have dictated taste rather than to have reflected it. In the places where it was so uniformly incorporated, it imposed a strict systematic order and a way of living that demanded uniformity and soullessness. Internationally, it seems that the major modernist housing complexes have failed in their underlying values of social harmony and order. Indeed, at least in Australia, the debate over visual suitability of iconic buildings on the harbour foreshore such as Harry Siedler’s “Blues Tower”, continues to rage 40 years after its approval and construction. Many would have it destroyed and as many would defend its preservation.

1.3 Jeffery Smart Portrait of Clive James

“To appreciate fully a work of art we require nothing but sensibility. To those that can hear, Art speaks for itself.”³

In the early part of the 19th Century, there was a marked shift from the natural landscape with figures as the dominant subject matter of painting to that of the *Metropolis*. The rise of the machine age became apparent in paintings by many including George Grosz,

¹ Rand, A. *The Fountainhead*, (1938) Signet Press.

² Sim et al, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* p 80.

³ Bell, Clive. In Harrison, Charles (1984) *Introduction to Modernism, Problems and Methods*. Open Univ. Press.

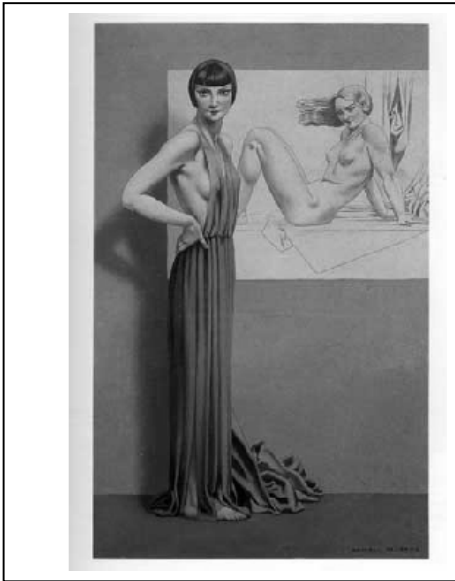


Spirit of Our Times, R. Hausmann 1921.

"*Republican Automatons*", 1920 Rudolf Schlitchter, *The Rooftop Studio* c.1922 and sculptor/painters such as Raoul Hausmann, *The Spirit of Our Time* 1921. (Hughes, 1991). We also see the rise of art movements such as the Dadaists, the Futurists, the Cubists and the Surrealists, all of which seem to have been a response to the rapidly changing times. The very fact that we have a

fragmentation of art into several competing yet complementary fronts is an indication that responses to the changing times were becoming many and varied. The importance of the writing of Sigmund Freud, the coming of the motorcar, the electric light, the telephone, the publishing of the special theory of relativity by Einstein, locomotion and the spread of the railway, photography and film, powered flight, the radio telescope all added impetus to the general feeling of forward motion.

"One did not need to be a scientist to sense the magnitude of such changes. They amounted to the greatest alienation in man's view of the universe since Isaac Newton"⁴



Significant proportions of populations were moving, emigrating and the shift from rural to urban had long been apparent. Great fortunes were being made and the middleclass was growing.

1.4 Fashion/Style

With urbanisation and increasing wealth came Art Deco, which was at once modern but not modernist purists. Clearly affluent and in some instances, decadent, pure modernists would have objected to it. Designers such as Rene

Lalique, Clarice Cliff active in the inter war years, were at the forefront of what must be described as a tangential departure from modernism. With its reliance on iconography from both classic and ancient periods, Art Deco seems to have looked backwards while going forward. A good example of this is the painting by Raphael Delmore, *La Robe verte*, oil c. 1930 (left). At once luxurious and austere, modern yet classical, a young woman stands somewhat arrogantly clad in a revealing gown referenced to classical times. She has large hands and eyes and large feet, firmly planting her in the present. Juxtaposed yet complimenting her, she stands next to a drawing of a seated nude woman of similar age. This drawing is stylised and angular reflecting the modern movement. The artist uses the hair of the model to suggest speed and progression. The hair is thrust out horizontally backward. The model is seated backward whilst apparently going forward. Art Deco is the bridge between the modern and classical times, an adaptation of the austere modernism with ornamentation of the past. An admission that to reference was both useful and unavoidable. Its symbols of speed, progression and movement are carried forward by Art Deco, well into the modern times and can still be seen in design in the 1950s.

1.5 Music

With the movement of populations from rural to the city, there is the coming of the coming of the Jazz Age instigated by African Americans. They in turn were to influence composers such as Aaron Copland, a New Yorker who studied in Paris and was also influenced extensively by Igor Stravinsky and his "*Neoclassicisms*". Also in America, Scott Joplin blended European Classical with African America rhythms to create "*Ragtime*". In 1924 as part of a concert entitled, "*An Experiment in Modern Music*", George Gershwin premiered, "*Rhapsody in Blue*"⁵ which has very clear reference to Jazz and Blues and is highly reflective of the built environment, suggestive of skyscrapers in its echoing and soaring score. We also witness the coming of the "*Big Band*" giving popular reference to the *machine age* by way of beat timings familiar in the sounds of building construction and travel in particular the steam trains. "Fascinating Rhythm" (Gershwin, 1924) is a good example of this.

1.6 Politics

⁴ Hughes, Robert. *Shock of the New*, p 15.

⁵ The Official Gershwin Site < <http://www.gershwin.com/>>

World Conflict and the rise of the *Grand Narrative*. Although it is difficult to make simple summaries of the features of politics at the beginning of or during the modernist period, it is fair to point to the rise and adaptation of the all-encompassing theory as being a predominant feature. Be it Marxist or free market, democratic or totalitarian, the idea that the world could be a better place stems from *the Enlightenment* (Grant, 2005), and is a pillar of the modernist paradigm. That is, the solid belief in systems, science and the certainty of the future. At least in part, world conflict as a feature of *modernity* can be seen as a clash of the *Grand Narratives*. We also see in the 20th Century, the rapid overtaking of small local arrangements of loose governance, with large uniifications, for instance the creation of Malaysia, Indonesia, Yugoslavia the USSR. We also see the inception and creation of the United Nations and now of course, the European Union. Although created for very different reasons, they are still examples of the unswerving faith in large, managed systems.

1.7 Table of Themes

Modern	Traditional
Objective	Subjective
Mass Produced	Individually Crafted
Democratic	Autocratic
Liberating	Constraining
Autonomous	Humanist
Detachment	Attachment
Bureaucracy	Patriarchy
Capitalism	Feudalism
Functional	Decorative

Chapter 2. What is Postmodernism?

2.1 The emergence of postmodernism

The postmodern debate has been heated and vocal over the past decade in particular. Some have argued that the postmodern condition as a paradigm is simply a logical extension of the modern paradigm, and therefore modernity in its literal sense, of now, the present. This seems simplistic given the very different characteristics cited in the table below. Others have raised more sophisticated arguments linking the condition of postmodernism to the growth of globalisation through the apparent victory of capitalism and also as

an undermining of adult education's traditional working class or cause-based organisations. (Edwards, Usher 2001). Rolled into these arguments are notions of new social movements that stride old political divides, encampments of both the left and right seem to be crumbling. What is suggested is the death of dogma and the triumph of pragmatism driven by a global economy. One of the most recognised and cited thinkers on postmodernism is Lyotard who asserts that there is a need to reject the *grand narrative* or *universal theories* because these theories have lost their credibility. (Sim, 2005)..

At the very least, *postmodernism* is a reaction to *modernist structural* ideas about knowledge and the *construction* of knowledge. The *postmodernists* challenge the view that the world was ultimately *knowable* and governed by systems. Early arguments put forward by Lyotard in "*Libidinal Economy*" (1974) claims that humans are all subjected to *libidinal drives* that can only be controlled by totalitarian measures. Thematically therefore, the writings on *postmodernism* seem to support the cult of the individual against the State. Interestingly, Lyotard argues that *postmodernist* thought should not argue against the *grand narrative* of the *modernist* traditions, but should ignore such engagements. By doing so, the old theories or grand narratives, will simply wither. Indeed to take a position is to engage in dogma. Lyotard argues that a more useful form of engagement is via the *petit recit* of *little narrative*, the put together on tactical basis by small groups or individuals. (Sim, 2005). Whether such a strategy could be adequately employed against the grand narratives as embodied in religious fundamentalism is not clear.

Postmodernist thought also rejects the idea of a predictable future. Here we see a yet another departure with the *modern tradition*. *Modernist* thought embraces the idea of a knowable future suggesting a linear trajectory. *Postmodernists* reject this claiming it to be limiting to human endeavour. We see therefore a *postmodern* trajectory not as trajectory at all but rather a multi-directional progression.

2.2 Architecture

The discussion of Architecture is an interesting place to delineate the differences between *modern* and *postmodern*. Particularly because of the apparent failure of the *modern promise*, that of a pure and pristine existence enhanced by functionality. As a comparison with the *modernist tradition*, *postmodern* architecture can be seen to

display a tendency to plurality of designs and concepts. *Modernism* - Art Deco aside - had demanded an ideology of style and design, international, without decoration and with definite boundaries. Comparatively, the *postmodern* design often confuses or blends the end of one functional space with the beginning of another, room to room, indoors to outdoors. While in the *modern* house there is only **one** place for the lamp; the place for the lamp in the *postmodern* house is where you want it to be, **today**. To highlight this juxtaposition, the Villa Tugendhat completed in 1930 by Mies van der Rohe, had the dining table fixed – bolted in position. There was definitely only one place for the table in this remarkable icon of modernity.

Charles Jencks is known as the foremost commentator on postmodern theories in architecture having published most notably *"The Language of Postmodern Architecture"* in 1977. *Postmodernism* in architecture seems to have been a reaction to the soullessness and stricture of *modernism*, and its treatment of humanity as a secondary or bit player in a perfect design. There are also arguments about consumerist and capitalist excess that became *modernism*, however others (Holloway, 1988) argues that *postmodern* design is more about pastiche and perhaps appropriation than its is about direct criticism of *modernism*.

2.3 Art

Unlike the modern period, art in the postmodern world has lost its ability to shock. There is a merging, a borrowing from all periods, a constant referencing to everything else, an ambiguity and what has been termed in early writing, a pastiche of style. Some have argued that art is over. (Kuspit, 2004). He argues that:

"Who is naïve enough today – more that century after van Gogh's death – to think that art is not rotten, at least in part?"⁶

Kuspit's position is based on his belief that art is no longer relevant because it has lost its aesthetic import and that it has been replaced by "postart".

The notion of the loss of aesthetic as the centrepiece to an argument about the eventual downgrading of art to an everyday activity practiced by all, is an interesting point to look at postmodern art. The transient nature of artistic activity, the rise of installation and conceptual art, the representation of the ordinary as art, (perhaps

⁶ Kuspit, D (2004): *The End of Art*. p 147.

started by Duchamp and the Dadaists), all point the eventual downfall of art. The prevailing feeling is that there are now no horizons for art, that it has all been done before.

2.4 Fashion

Symptomatic of what has been "termed the end of fashion", style in the postmodern era is so plural, so referential, so eclectic as to be claimed to not exist at all. However a feature that is common is a continuing reference to tribalism with tattooing and body piercing first seen as radical and anti-establishment, then being appropriated to become common or mainstream.

"Punk was trash culture gone avant-garde and/or the avant-garde gone trash, and just as Dada had tried to destroy the institution of art, so the punks seemed bent on destroying the very institution of fashion"⁷.

The shock and violence of the 70-80 punk movement have been softened and adapted into a postmodern era with hairstyles now coloured, gelled, spiked and shaven. In a postmodern world, the regularity and predictability of fashion's excesses have completely exhausted its ability to shock. Fashion and style is also fragmented at the extremes, with styles such as neo-gothic, feral-punk or urban-rasta co-existing and borrowing from each other. Many designers have taken tribal objects and ornamentation to make a strange adaptation of the natural world.

2.5 Music

Rap, sampling, and endless referencing are the dominant features of music in a postmodern world. Like punk in fashion, rap at first anti-institutional and celebratory of criminality and bravado, is now appropriated and marketed. It no longer shocks.

Sampling, a technique of electronically extracting a section of a song or tune, most often from another era, and then placing it within another composition sometimes looping it in the background so that it is barely recognisable, has been revolutionary to the development of popular music. Alongside this has been the impact of the personal computer as a tool for composition and mixing of music. Add to this the power of the Internet and we see the gradual and unforeseen erosion of the established pathways for bringing music to the public.

⁷ Wilson, Elizabeth, *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2000), p. 173.

The term “Indi Style” refers to music created *independent* of the major publishers. Downloadable music, playable in mp3 players and personal computers, have re-shaped and challenged the way major publishers package music.

The conservative social commentator, Mark Steyn said during a radio interview in Australia⁸ that in any recording made in 1938, the singer, writer and arranger were all doing what they specialised in. He went on to say that in 1998, this had changed to the one person doing all of the specialities, a reversal of the theories of Adam Smith. Although Steyn could not support this development because of what he viewed was the inevitable impact on quality, it is clear that in the postmodern era, music is now out of the hands of the few and into the hands of the many.

2.6 Politics

Leon Weiseltier wrote in The New Republic (July 1993), the postmodern politician, as demonstrated in President Bill Clinton, is not marked by non belief but by belief in everything, a belief which eliminates the rule of contradiction and leaves one with only one working principle--belief in “Process”⁹

This is indicative at least of the condition of postmodernism. The old alignments have frayed at the edges. Solidarity with cause and ideals has fragmented into many fronts where old enemies align for utility. The protests at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Canada are a good example of this. Here, neo-conservatives were seen alongside radical anarchists, agreeing to pursue the disruption of the talks for very different reasons. New single issue political parties have attracted support as traditional alignments begin to fail. Moreover, some political parties have been left floundering as the changes in public attitude stepped ahead of the old parties understanding of the new order or rather, the new disorder. In Australia, a dogmatic adherence to factionalism within the Labor Party was cited by the party's first essentially postmodern leader, Mark Latham, as the coming death of the party, something it would not recover from. Latham had himself been described as a seething mass of contradictions, a fact exploited by the Government and Media alike.

⁸ Counterpoint, 7/08/06, ABC Radio National.

⁹ New Republic, July 18 1993.

2.7 Table of themes

Modern	Postmodern
Commitment	Ambivalence
Loyalty	<i>Detachment</i>
Monogamy	<i>Singularity</i>
Linear	Multi directional
Truth	Relative Truth
Certainty	Scepticism
Authoritarianism	Free Expression
Idealism	Pragmatism
Consistency	Contradictory
Conformity	Difference

Chapter 3. Adult Education in a Postmodern World.

Motivation and expectations.

Have the learning motivations and expectations of adults changed from the *modern* to the *postmodern*? My general proposition is that adults do not consider themselves as *modern* or *postmodern* in the main. However, it is the visual references we are exposed to on a daily basis that influences how we relate the world. The best way of working through this proposition is by use of scenario.

The Modern Learner

It is 1932. Warren Gibbs is a returned soldier having served in the Middle East, and in Europe. Born in 1901, he is only as old as Australia itself is as an independent nation. He is now thirty-three and in his short lifetime has seen more change than has occurred in the previous hundred years. The building of huge ocean going vessels and resultant international travel, the rapid construction of cities, the mass movement of people, destruction and carnage on a scale not known before, the destruction of the old order, the rise of the middle class, great wealth and great poverty.

Warren has a low level of schooling, having left like many others to give support to his large family of six siblings and then to join the great adventure of WW1. Unlike his father, he is literate and numerate. The schooling he received imparted knowledge by rote acquisition, knowable facts about history, language and arithmetic. Ironically, as a child of the new nation, Warren knows many more facts about Great Britain and its history than he does about Australia

and its new Asian neighbours. Indeed, it was the association with the history of Great Britain that encourages his enlistment in the Australian Army.

Most of Warren's news comes from the newspaper and from public meetings in particular public lectures at the Railway Institute and union meetings.

All around Warren are the symbols of progress despite the great depression, now almost at an end. As he lives in Sydney Australia, the greatest and most potent of these symbols is the Sydney Harbour Bridge. For ten years from 1922, the construction of the bridge has dominated the thoughts and dreams of Sydneysiders. So much so that the *Arch* and *Pillar* elements of the bridge can be seen reflected in the features of buildings from facades to fences all through the newly expanding Sydney Suburbs and in some of the modern architecture in the City itself. Architects such as Marion Mahony and husband Walter Burley-Griffen of the USA's Prairie School are in Australia and their influence is being seen from the everyday new housing of the expanding suburbs to industrial buildings and in the very creation of the new Australian Capital city, Canberra.

With over 1200 listed venues, cinema as the new entertainment is popular. The film industry in Australia at this time is very active with over 60 films per year being made. (Pearl, 1974). Many of the new cinemas are built in the Art Deco style. Long reaching lines are prominent in the decoration, indicative of speed, wind or motion. There is also reference to classicism and antiquity, Greek, Roman and Egyptian.

Powered flight is now common with a circumnavigation of Australia having been completed 10 years earlier. Women are seen wearing trousers as part of the new fashion; the telephone network is now expanding with 500,000 connections apparent in the larger capital cities and the mainland states are connected to via telephone trunk lines. Radio broadcasting has commenced and among other things, Warren is listening to the new Jazz Music.

In his workplace in the NSW Railways, Warren is an active member of his trades union. His experience in the Great War has shaped his views about politics especially the new nation's relationship with the "Mother Country". He has managed to maintain his position at the NSW Railways throughout the Great Depression. In order to progress from Station Assistant to Station Master, Warren must undertake further study. He does this at the NSW Railway

Institute, an organisation established in line with the Philosophy of Liberal Education if biased towards the Technical. He is able to undertake courses including Accounting, Safe Railway Working, Arithmetic, Chemistry, Shorthand, Applied Mechanics, Chemistry, Electricity, Physics, Telegraphy, Typewriting, Mathematics, Mechanical Drawing, Locomotive Engine Driving, Westinghouse Brake, English and Composition and Geometrical. All classes are free to members of the Railway Institute, and on payment of five shillings per annum, Warren's sons may also attend. Ladies Classes are open to his wife and daughters to further their education with classes in Dressmaking and Cutting, Millinery, Painting, Cooking and many other skills¹⁰.

As a learner, Warren has faith and belief in his teachers. He believes he has knowledge deficits and trusts that learning *facts* and developing *expertise* is his way forward. He chooses subjects that are useful to his career and for him, the usefulness of learning is to do with that which can be known and applied. He trusts science and mechanics and has faith in the large system he is part of. He does not imagine that his working life will extend past the Railways and looks forward to a modest retirement on a Railway Pension.

The Postmodern Learner

It is 2002. Catherine Ariartis is 32 years old. She is the daughter of a second-generation Australian-Greek Doctor married to a third generation Australian-Scottish woman. Both of her parents are University educated. Catherine is single, has two degrees, the first in Business and the second in Politics. She has travelled widely and has lived overseas, firstly as part of her University studies where she lived in the USA, and second as an extended holiday in Greece where she studied Classics at a private college. She also spent time working in Northern Africa as a volunteer with "Care Australia". Catherine is non-aligned politically, but is active in two groups, "Amnesty International" and "Greenpeace".

Catherine has had a patchy working life. She did not adjust well to the commercial world and after two failed internships, she returned to University to undertake her second degree in Politics. Her major work for her honours thesis focussed on NGO's. Consequently, she has spent varying amounts of time working with cause-based

¹⁰ Adapted from NSW Railway Institute Website
<<http://www.railinst.com.au/index.php?section=History>>

organisations. Currently she job-shares two positions, one with a volunteer coordinating group and the other in a travel agency specialising in Adventure Travel. Although she cannot make a good fit with the corporate world, Catherine has no major objection to it. Work is important to Catherine, however it is not the entire focus of her life. Importantly, much of the workplace has adapted to Catherine's value system and both her employers engage her on her results and not the amount of time she spends at her desk.¹¹

Home for Catherine is a single room apartment in a converted late modern factory building the inner city. Space, unlike the twenties when her building was first built, is now at a premium. Room sizes are smaller, ceiling heights generally lower, but windows are larger. There is both a sense of privacy and exposure, of intimacy and intrusion. Here, Catherine watches television never staying long on any of the many channels available to her. Most of the news Catherine gets is from television but she views it with a sense of scepticism, as she understands the bias with which it is presented. A more important form of News for Catherine is the BLOG she maintains titled Concrete Daisies, a reference to a loose coalition of friends, all women, with whom she has maintained contact since University. Her BLOG has on-going contributions from these friends who now live in many parts of the world including Australia. Many of these friends in turn maintain their own BLOGS focussing on the interests they individually have. Catherine spends up to ten hours in any week, reading and contributing to many of these BLOGS. For Catherine, these are points of collision, where she develops ideas, discusses politics, recommends books and films and creates links to interesting places on the Internet she has found. Unlike her mother and father, Catherine's friends are from differing sides of the political spectrum and she is influenced by the merging of thoughts and ideas adding to her concept of how things *are* rather than how they should *be*.

Catherine listens to music spanning all eras. She does this in a faddish manner, sometimes spending weeks at a time listening to music of a particular decade. Less and less of her collection of music can be found on her shelves. Most is now in soft format only enjoyed via her mp3 player that she also uses to listen to radio programs and commentary from around the world.

¹¹ The Manager of the 21st Century, a Report by the Boston Consulting Group, Nicolson and Nairn 2006.

The art Catherine is most interested in is Tribal Art and she has a close artist friend who uses tribal art references to juxtapose the modern disconnection from the natural world. Her apartment is strewn with tribal fabrics and weavings she has collected.

Catherine views learning not as instrumental to her progress in life but rather her progress in life incidentally results in learning. She is influenced by many sources of knowledge and is connected to learning experiences at many points. She confidently accesses and assesses the value and validity of the sources and trusts none implicitly.

Summary

I have used the two scenarios positioned at radically differing points in time, i.e. the beginning of modernism and this postmodern moment to highlight the differences in exposure to the everyday and its many temporal visual references. Subconsciously, it is these factors that influence motivation. By no means can these scenarios be used as a complete all embracing picture. They do however, point to some of the influencing factors as I see them. I have attempted to draw attention to the fact that many factors impact on how we become who we are and therefore what we bring to the learning environment. For instance, Warren, is motivated by a sense of forward motion. All around him are the symbols of progress and the success of systems and are particularly represented in Art Deco. He has an un-erring faith in science as the solution to all problems. He believes that all things can be known and he has faith in teachers to fill his knowledge deficits. His pathway in life will be punctuated by education events, which, he will apply for instrumental vocational benefit.

Catherine, conversely, lives in what has been termed, the post industrial, late capitalist, post aesthetic era. (Milner, Thompson, Worth, 1988). Certainty is not apparent her world. She is not shocked by or impressed by science in the same way as is Warren. She does not trust in it having seen the results of much of the work of science through her activities in Greenpeace. Politically, she has lost faith in systems of all colours through her work in Amnesty International.

Whereas Warren's knowledge inputs are few, limited reading sources, public lectures etc, Catherine's are seemingly limitless. She sees herself as both a knowledge receptor and an originator of knowledge. Implicit in this understanding is a view that factual knowledge is referenced to the immediate and is, therefore, transient.

The Challenge for the Adult Educator in The Postmodern Environment.

In 1991, Robert J Blakely, the American Adult Educator and activist, mourned the death of Liberal Adult Education¹². Perhaps we see at the beginning of the 21st century, the first glimpse of the death of the Concept Adult Education per se. From a postmodern perspective, Adult Education from its various theoretical frameworks, can be seen to have failed to deliver its promise. The liberal educator's view of a utopian democratic society at peace with itself is not evident. The adult educator as social activist can also be seen to have failed as poverty, disease, social disconnection and on-going low rates of participation in the democratic process by disadvantaged people continues. Usher and Edwards (2001), point out that:

"In a situation where knowledge is constantly changing, and becoming more rapidly – almost overwhelmingly if unequally – available, globalizing processes result in a decentering of knowledge"

My example of Catherine fits well within Usher and Edwards view. Knowledge has both been decentered and made less valuable. Other recent theoretical constructions of adult education, particularly the concept of lifelong learning, have taken emphasis from the adult and placed learning more in a *cradle to grave* context. The new adult learners who will be entering a learning context, be it on-line, face-to-face or in a community setting, will have many more past learning events by comparison with learners of even the very recent past. Learning will also be for these individuals, more self motivated but less utilitarian and is likely to be short and in *sample* rather than a deep engagement.

The impact of new technologies such as the portable mp3 player which, is now delivering video, as it is combined with institutional delivery both within and across disciplines, will add dimension and flexibility never before available to learners. Further, the explosive increase in the sources of and variety of information will challenge adult education as a profession requiring and on-going assessment of the place and task of adult educators.

¹² Zacharakis-Jutz interview cited in "Philosophic shift at Mid Century, Podeschi, R & Zacharakis-Jutz, J. (Date unknown)

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