

### Background

- Although postmodernism is often identified chronologically as a reaction to the Enlightenment doctrine of the progressive era (modernism), Leffert (2007) suggests that postmodern thought is not a single factor lying along a continuum but rather a series of positions or areas addressed by postmodern tenets. In a similar fashion, Blake (1996) calls postmodernism a collection of themes in social and cultural theory.

### Problem

- Are modernism and postmodernism two distinct philosophies or opposite ends of a continuum? The current study examined responses to questions based on these doctrines and philosophies.

### Tenets of Philosophies

#### Postmodernism:

- Deconstructivism
- Pastiche
- Relativism
- Feminism
- Emergent Meaning
- Rejection of Objectivity
- Rejection of Binary Categories

#### Modernism:

- Positivism
- Materialism
- Science
- Search for truth
- Meaning
- Order
- Natural Law
- Mass Marketing and Consumption
- Objective Knowledge
- Structural Modeling

Sarup, 1993; Searle, 1993; Spiro, 1996

### Method

- 555 college students completed a 97-item survey on a Likert-type scale. The survey was designed to identify modern and postmodern beliefs. A principal components factor analysis was performed on the responses.

### Results

- An examination of variance explained an interpretive value of factor loadings resulted in the retention of two factors. Results from the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index (KMO = .772) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $p < .0001$ ) confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

### A Sample of Factor One Items

- The only absolute truth is that there is no absolute truth. ( $r = .63$ )
- Interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. ( $r = .59$ )
- Life is simulated. ( $r = .52$ )
- You should be free to choose your own sexual preference. ( $r = .46$ )

### A Sample of Factor Two Items

- Paintings should include form, pattern, and structure in their design. ( $r = .582$ )
- Voters are conservative or liberal. ( $r = .530$ )
- I prefer mass produced items over one of a kind. ( $r = .489$ )
- Some lifestyles are superior to others. ( $r = .453$ )

### Clusters loading on the factors

#### Factor One

- Subjective Reality
- Relative Truth
- Processes Over Product
- Situational Identity
- Interpretive Morality
- Feminism
- Simulated Reality

#### Factor Two

- Definition
- Form
- Structure
- Objectivity
- Dichotomy
- Authenticity
- Industry

All clusters loaded with coefficients greater than .3

### Discussion

- The principal components analysis revealed two distinct philosophies. Very few items that loaded on factor one also loaded on factor two.
- Noteworthy patterns emerged regarding views of science. The empirical search for scientific truths generally is considered a modern belief originating with the Enlightenment Era. In this study, science as a method for establishing prediction and control loaded on factor two, modernism, as expected. Science as a progressive evolution and as a source of knowledge, however, loaded on factor one, postmodernism. These findings should be examined in light of current trends including constructionism (Brown & Stenner, 2008), mediation, and mindfulness in psychology.
- The attempt to uncover components of postmodern philosophy is itself, a modern approach to research.