Modern and Postmodern Society

1. MODERNITY and RATIONALITY
Max Weber and “Rational Society”

a. Modernization is nothing more than the progressive replacement of traditional society with a more rational, goal-oriented way of thinking.

TRADITIONAL SOCIETY
Small community, rural, agricultural, primary groups, past-orientation; emerged 10,000 years ago with the Neolithic Revolution.

MODERN SOCIETY
Removed from community, urban, new, industrial, secondary groups, future-orientation. Emerged in the Industrial Revolution ~1800.
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1. MODERNITY:
   Social patterns of change linked to industrialization

b. Three characteristics of modernity:

i. Decline of small, traditional towns
   - High-tech communications put small towns in touch with the world.

ii. Future orientation and growing awareness of time
   - People living in industrialized nations tend to focus more on the future than on the past.

iii. Belief in the power of science and tech
   - Technology can solve all of our problems.

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2. POSTMODERNITY
   a. Characterized by the social patterns characteristic of postindustrial societies (Daniel Bell 1973)

   i. The bright light of progress is fading
      - Less confidence about future; as opposed to the beginning of the 20th century.

   ii. In some ways, modernity has failed to improve life
      - Much alienation and stress; declining income, increased workers' rights, inequality; growing corporations; too powerful; technology rules us more than we rule it.

   iii. Social institutions are changing (economy, politics, etc.)
      - All institutions are going through change, including the most basic, the family.

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3. With all these problems, does hope exist in a “postmodern” world? Yes!
   a. Hope exists in the individual:
      - People should act according to their “project”;
      - “Freedom is what you do with what’s been done to you.”
      - -- Jean Paul Sartre, French philosopher (1905-1980)

   b. Hope exists in the “public sphere”: people can act together (collective project) to foster positive social change (for example, the Internet creates change in this respect).
      - “For the very first time the young are seeing history being made before it is censored by their elders.”
      - -- Margaret Mead
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3. Does hope exist in a “postmodern” world? Yes!

**c. Sociology opens the door to critically examining your self, your society, and the relationship between the two.**

*Biography / Self ← KARP ➔ PROJECT ➔ Society / History*

*Participatory Sociology*

can build the new communities needed in the 21st century to overcome the injustices and social problems constructed in the last century.