SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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Summary

Social scientific research has developed in tandem with sociocultural changes and histories of humans. Different disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cognitive sciences, political science, and law have deployed particular theoretical perspectives, methodology and scientific vocabulary in analyzing the sociocultural dimensions of human development. The examination of the history of Homo sapiens that began some 100,000 years ago will show that humans use culture to adjust to environmental changes. Humans are symbol-producing creatures. They utilize many sociopolitical categories such as race, nation, and ethnicity. Different human groups have deployed these categories of race, gender, and ethnicity for achieving sociopolitical objectives.

In social sciences, human and social development has traditionally measured in terms of both quantity and quality. The characteristics of social structures strongly influence the way individuals develop their human potentiality. An institution is an enduring set of cultural ideas and social relationship that is organized in order to accomplish collective goals. The relationship between the social and cultural development indicators and the conventional economic development indicators will be discussed. Some argue that economic factors such as income and occupational profile have a direct influence on how people behave in social and cultural spheres. Others argue that social and cultural
variables directly affect economic development. And others argue that the current indicators do not adequately capture the processes of complex human activities. One growing field of social scientific studies is consumption. Scholars are studying consumption not simply as the act of satisfying utilitarian needs, but as the most common form of expressive activity related to identities and cultural expressions. Unlike the neoclassical model of the individual rational choice, sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists examine consumption as a domain in which individuals and groups reflect on social structure, cultural values, and individual identities. Other categories such as gender, race, class, and nationality directly impact consumption patterns. Much investment must be made in order to ensure equitable access to resources for all, and to encourage the development of social institutions that are particularly suitable for human resources development.

1. Introduction

Sustainability refers to societal changes that help make resources needed for a healthy quality of life accessible to all without degrading the environment. In 1987 the Brundtland Commission of the United Nation produced a report entitled *Our Common Future* in which it stated that sustainability is to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept of sustainability has been further developed within the UN system by using the term “sustainable human development” because of the realization that sustainability involves improving human life and developing human resources in terms of biological, social, economic, cultural, political, material, and ecological conditions.

Sustainable development should not mean sustained underdevelopment. In our collective efforts for environmental protection, we also need to make sure that all people have access to such important resources as education, health services, food, housing, clean water, employment, and the fair distribution of income. All people possess the fundamental rights for opportunities to realize human aspiration without compromising the needs of future generations. The human being is the central subject of and agent for sustainable development.

It is generally assumed that improving the quality of human life is a major goal of the sciences. However, owing to the diversity of values, ideologies, norms, and historical circumstances, people create different meanings of the desirable quality of life. Individuals interpret this world subjectively. One person’s definition of the quality of human life may not be the same as another person’s definition. Human thinking cannot be divorced from its socio-historical and cultural systems. Within social sciences, there is a multiplicity of opinions and views on human conditions and development. Therefore it is difficult to present one unified theory or paradigm on the social and cultural development of human resources. Instead of creating an artificial synthesis of diverse perspectives, we have decided to explore major issues related to the present theme and to examine human aspiration and sustainability from manifold viewpoints.

First we will examine a range of perspectives offered by different academic disciplines. We will briefly illustrate the important research scope of such disciplines as economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cognitive sciences, political science, and law.
Social scientists have deployed particular contextual prerogatives and reasoning in analyzing sociocultural dimensions of human development. We will clarify some of their basic presuppositions and meta-logic, as well as disciplinary orientations and methodological vistas. Their fundamental assumptions about society, people, and culture have affected the outcomes of social research and the state of their accumulated knowledge.

Secondly, we will give a precis of the *Homo sapiens* development that began some 100,000 years ago. We will pay special attention to the last century of collective human development, being mindful of categories such as the nation-state, race, and culture, as well as the current social transformation called “globalization.”

Section 4 will focus on the individual as the most vital agent and resource for sustainable development. Psychological research findings on individual motivation, decision-making and the so-called “groupthink” will be examined in some detail.

One of the most consequential meta-concepts in neoclassical economics is the notion of the individual’s rational choice. The rational choice theory defines individual propensity for optimization. This construct, as well as the notion of preference and taste, will be re-examined. We will see the overwhelming influence of this perspective on human production, consumption, and macroeconomic development. Our debate on individual rational choice will be followed by a general introduction to the currently available economic indicators and sociocultural indicators for measurement and analysis.

This paper asserts that the nineteenth century concept of social evolutionism continues to influence the way we measure and analyze societies comparatively.

Finally we will investigate in some detail the issue of global consumption, because overconsumption by some people and underconsumption by others pose one of the greatest threats to the environmental sustainability. Refuting the neoclassical theory of individual rational choice and explicating the black box of economic preference, some anthropologists and sociologists point to the dynamic relationship between taste and culture in economic decision-making such as consumption.

The set of articles in this theme collectively examines key development issues such as socio-psychological dimensions of human resource development, social ecology, space and urbanization, ethnicity, gender, health, equity, religion, labor market, family, consumption, and human and social development indicators. In examining these issues, we also need to be fully cognizant of the relationship between social sciences’ meta-logic and the basic vistas they employ for research endeavor. The subject of social sciences is humans. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz once noted that humans are cultural beings who spin their own webs of meanings. Humans constantly invent new meanings and new signs while they try to make sense of their own sustainability and to create the image of the future.
2. Different Disciplinary Approaches to Social and Cultural Development of Human Resources

Humans collectively have invented languages, religions, arts, music, logic, and ways of reasoning and communicating. Different human societies have created diverse worldviews, rhetoric, formulae, and models to make sense of daily living, and to pass their heritage on to the young. They have also sought answers to some fundamental questions concerning the environment, life, death, and the universe. Among many ways of exploring existential realities, humans have invented and developed what we call the scientific way of thinking.

Together with industrialization in the Western countries, sciences have advanced rapidly. As modernization has created many new social problems, various scientific disciplines have been founded and developed. Social sciences have relatively short histories as most of them began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but really took off only in the twentieth century. Social scientific research on society and people has been conducted and advanced in the context of specific historical circumstances and conditions. Consequently social scientific disciplines have accumulated specific themes of study, vocabularies, models, methodology, and application procedures.

It is important for us to understand what questions social scientists have asked, what research strategies they have deployed, and what reasoning tools they have used, as we explore the topic of the social and cultural development of human resources. The sets of social scientific questions have both deepened and conditioned their approaches to the problems at hand. In the following section, we will describe how economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cognitive science, political science, and law have examined human problems.

2.1. Economics

Economists usually inspect the way in which individuals, groups, business enterprises, and governments attempt to achieve efficiently any economic objective they select. They are usually concerned with human needs and motivation, perception of scarcity, the balance between supply and demand, and the macro-level state of an economy. The mode of thinking in economic terms can be traced to Aristotle and Plato in ancient Greece who wrote about problems of wealth, property, and trade. Hinduism and Taoism, for example, denounce materialism. During the Middle Ages in Europe, the Roman Catholic canon regarded commerce as inferior to agriculture. Likewise the Chinese Confucian doctrine and the Islamic codes place primary production such as farming as morally superior to commercial activities.

In Europe, classical economics began with Adam Smith, and culminated in the synthesis of John Stuart Mill. All classical economists believed in private property, free markets, and, the principle of competition. Adam Smith was quite suspicious of governmental intervention, and ardently supported the “invisible hand” which reconciled public benefit with individual pursuit of private gain.
Marxist economists sharply refuted the fundamental premise of classical economics. Marx argued that every social system of the past had been a device by which the rich and powerful few controlled the mode of production. Because of the exclusive ownership of the mode of production, these few could live well and accumulate wealth by exploiting the powerless many. However, each system was racked by moral flaws and internal inconsistency. The more productive the system became, the more difficult it would be to make it function due to the internal deficiencies. Eventually the system destroys itself, either by disintegration or by revolution.

Marx used the classical labor theory to analyze the inner workings of capitalism, and to reveal the inequities and exploitation born out of the system. Marx believed that capitalism was certain to falter because its tendency to concentrate income and wealth in ever fewer hands created more and more severe crises of excess output and rising unemployment. Marx considered that the masses of the poor would ultimately rebel against the capitalists by the proletarian social revolution. Marx and Engels believed that capitalism would be eventually replaced by communism, run by and for the people. We will examine Marxism’s influence on social development theory further in our discussion on sociology. Marxist theories explained market mechanism from the perspectives of material conditions and labor relations.

In contrast to Marxist theories, William Stanley Jevons, Léon Walras, and Karl Menger and other neoclassical economic theorists attempted to explain market mechanism by the intensity of consumer preference. For example, they argued that income disparities between the rich and the poor were due to corresponding differences between human talent, intelligence, energy, and ambition. Neoclassicists believed that individuals succeed or fail because of their personal attributes, not because some individuals have special advantages to achieve their goals. In many capitalist societies, neoclassical economics continues to explain price and income determination in supply–demand terms.

Another significant school of thought is Keynesian macroeconomics. John Maynard Keynes in Britain based his theory upon his assumption about prices, and rejected the view of Adam Smith and classical economists that, left alone, a market system generally functions well. He used concepts such as “aggregate demand”—the total spending of consumers, business investors, and governmental bodies that influence the nature of economy. Keynes considered the economy as being inherently unstable and approved governmental interventions as macroeconomic policies. Keynesian economists believe that during economic recessions, the government should use deficit spending to bring about economic recovery. The deficit spending theory was applied to the United States to create Roosevelt’s new deal policy to help the economy recover from the Great Depression. Keynesian economics started contemporary macroeconomics. Today macroeconomists tend to utilize mathematical and statistical models and simulations to explain and forecast the behavior of an entire economy. They also utilize various system approaches and flow analyses to economic problems.

Together with the rise of macro economic theories and methodology, various economic indicators have been deployed to measure the state of economies both domestic and abroad and/or the whole world. In today’s world, there is a wide range of governmental
and nongovernmental interventions on economic activities, ranging from tax, credit, contract, trade, and subsidy policies, price and wage fixings, and the state monopoly to quotas and tariffs and state economic planning.

In recent years various economic problems with global consequences have stimulated serious debate about the proper roles of private enterprise and governmental entities. Economists’ opinions diverge as to how much and what types of interventions are needed; how much regulations and governmental interventions should be placed on global businesses; and how much local initiatives versus the multilateral or international interventions should be considered. Those who promote the free market initiative emphasize the free enterprise’s ability to improve trade and commerce, technological development, crop yields, and industrial productivity. Those who argue for some intervention point to increasing inequity, diminishing resources, unchecked environmental damage, excessive military spending, and the reluctance of the rich to share their wealth and expertise with the less fortunate. As we have entered the twenty-first century, the world’s economy has become far more volatile with wide swings in stock prices, business accounts, trade and investments, all of which have global consequences.

2.2. Psychology

Like economists, psychologists are also concerned with the scientific study of human behavior and the mind through systematic and objective methods of observation and experimentation. Many psychologists focus their studies on the linkage between the individual mind and social behavior. Some psychologists conduct detailed biological studies of the brain, while others analyze specific behavioral patterns. Others investigate how humans process information, and interpret phenomena. As scientists they observe and study behavioral manifestations, and investigate both conscious and unconscious mental states that are inferred from observable behavior. The topics of psychological investigations cover an enormous range of phenomena: learning and memory, sensation and perception, motivation and emotion, thinking and language, personality and social behavior, intelligence, infancy and child development, mental illness, and much more.

Modern psychology finds its origin in the older disciplines of philosophy and physiology as well as biology and medical sciences. Charles Darwin’s influence is particularly evident in modern psychology. Darwin in 1859 published On the Origin of Species, and introduced the evolutionary process of natural selection. Darwin’s theory of evolution invited comparisons between humans and other animals, and had an important influence on the development of many scientific disciplines over the last century.

One can arguably select the three most prominent pioneers of modern psychology as Wilhelm Wundt, William James, and Sigmund Freud.

Wilhelm Wundt laid the European foundation for psychological research and experimentation in the late nineteenth century. William James, who in 1890 published On Principles of Psychology, can be considered as the father of American psychology. James discussed the stream of consciousness, the link between mind and body,
emotions, the construct of self, the formation of habits, individuality, and defined the field for psychological analyses. Sigmund Freud was an Austrian neurologist whose theories revolutionized psychology.

Two main schools of thought dominated psychological thinking during the discipline’s formative years: They were structuralism and functionalism. Structuralism was first presented by Edward Bradford Titchener, who attempted to identify the basic elements of consciousness in much the same way that physicists break down the basic particles of matter, using the investigative method of introspection. After his death in 1920s, structuralism lost its popularity, but its influence is evident in today’s cognitive psychology and social psychology, which will be discussed shortly.

Functionalism in psychology found its main advocate in William James, who was influenced by Darwin’s evolutionary theory and the concept of the survival of the fittest. James analyzed the stream of thought, attempted to characterize the concept of the self, and theorized on emotion. According to James, every thought in one’s mind is modified by every previous thought; thus states of mind are in constant flux, and human perception is always relative and contextualized.

James was interested in the functions of the adaptive human mind, rather than its structure. Psychological functionalism was further developed by James Rowland Angell, John Dewy, Harvey A. Carr, and others. The school of functional psychologists developed longitudinal research techniques that utilize interviewing, testing, and observing techniques over a long period of time to obtain detailed empirical data on how individual reacts to different circumstances over time. In contrast to Wundt and James, who studied the consciousness of the human mind, Sigmund Freud developed clinical studies of the human unconsciousness. Freud believed that people are motivated largely by unconscious forces, including strong sexual and aggressive drives. He metaphorically compared the human mind to an iceberg: The conscious part of the mind is like a small tip of an iceberg, while the vast portion beneath the surface comprises the unconscious. The unconscious plays an important role in a person’s thoughts and behaviors and it is vital for a person’s healthy growth. Freudian psychoanalysis utilizes free association techniques in which the client is encouraged to talk about anything that came to mind. Dreams are also considered as disguised expressions of deep human impulses such as sexual drive.

Alfred Adler criticized Freudian theories of sexual trauma and of dreams as sexual wish fulfillment. He believed that people are primarily motivated to overcome inherent feelings of inferiority. Consequently Adlerian psychotherapy encourages clients to overcome their feelings of insecurity and to redirect their energy towards developing self-confidence and self-enhancement that eventually lead them to be able to engage in meaningful social contribution and cooperation.

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung theorized that all humans inherit a collective unconscious that contains universal symbols and memories from their ancestral past. All humans share a pool of unconscious experiences throughout history that manifest themselves in mythology, religion, fairy tales, alchemical texts, and other forms of creative expression. The concept of archetypes is perhaps the most influential part of Jungian
theory. According to Jung, archetypes are typical modes of expression arising from this collective layer of human history. The archetypes are fundamental psychic patterns common to all humans into which personal experiences are organized. His “collective unconscious” theory finds followers among contemporary students of cultural semiotics, phenomenology, and linguistics.

Karen Horney also questioned Freudian theory of the sexual drive (libido) theory, the primacy of infantile sexuality, and the repetition compulsion. Instead she argues that the individual needs the family and the cultural context through which values, attitudes, and behaviors become organized. She theorized that humans have a basic need for love and security, and that they become anxious when isolated and alone. She emphasized the significance of the socialization process. Parental influences and other social institutions’ influences contribute substantially to how a child’s personality evolves. She stated that the most important aspect of this process concerns how cultural values become integrated in the course of childhood development. While a child in a healthy environment for socialization learns to appreciate his or her constructiveness, talents, and limitations, a child placed in a hostile environment becomes alienated from his or her real self. Negative behavioral consequences may include depression, phobic or obsessive–compulsive behavior, paranoia, acute anxiety, and an incapacity for genuine spontaneity. Horneyan therapy includes complex interactive and introspective dialogue sessions with the client to increase self-awareness and to encourage self-actualization.

Many psychologists have also developed methodological tools to uncover the human unconsciousness. Most notable are projective tests such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) or the Rorschach Inkblot Test. The TAT consists of drawings of people in ambiguous situations that are used to encourage thematically oriented story telling from the client. The Rorschach test with ink blots is used to stimulate the client’s free association.

Today, most psychologists agree on the existence of unconscious mental processes that profoundly affect human emotion, cognition, behavioral outcomes, and memory-making.

We do not always know the reasons why we get angry or sad; why we think as we do; or why we remember certain things and forget others. Some psychologists strive to find verifiable and observable methodology to explicate the behavioral outcomes of the human mind.

Edward Lee Thorndike proposed behaviorism in human psychology, which was based on the idea of the law of effect. He theorized that people repeat behaviors that are followed by positive outcome, while they abandon behaviors that produce a negative or no outcome. Because of the law of effect, positive reinforcements can be used to produce behavioral changes, Thorndike argued. Behaviorism is influential in developing theories of learning, and sparked later research on mental schemes, fears, and preferences. For example, Ivan Pavlov discovered a basic form of learning called classical conditioning in which an organism comes to associate one stimulus with another. In light of Darwinian evolution, psychologists began to use animals in empirical research. For example, James Watson considered that the behavioral
principles would generalize across all species, and advocated animal laboratory research, based on direct observation and quantitative data collection, in order to understand the cause and effect of psychology and behavior.

B. F. Skinner further developed human behaviorism, conceptualizing many behavioral reinforcement techniques. Skinnerian theories are applied to a variety of behavioral intervention programs at schools, workplaces, and medical facilities. Skinner invented the first teaching machine, which allowed students to learn at their own pace by solving a series of problems and receiving immediate feedback.

While many psychologists study behavioral manifestations, and consequences of the functions of the brain and nervous system, others are interested in the inner workings of the brain from a biological and medical perspective. When it comes to the development of human resources, psychologists pay particular attention to human socialization, cognitive and emotional development, learning, and schooling. At the same time, they examine genetic or physiological predispositions at birth to develop certain traits or abilities. Therefore, the issue of nature versus nurture is a consequential subject of continuing discussion and research among psychologists.

2.3. Sociology

Both psychology and sociology study humans and they both explore how humans behave when they are in groups. While most psychologists try to understand behavior from the vantage point of the individual, sociologists tend to focus on how behavior is shaped by social forces and social institutions. Unlike many psychologists who are interested in individual behavior, sociologists tend to study social interactions, structure, and power relations of contemporary societies. Max Weber noted that social action may occur even when only one person is present, if the behavior or anticipated behavior of others is taken into account by that person. At the same time, an absence of action or acquiescence to the actions of others should also be included as a part of social action.

One of the fundamental sociological constructs is “social interaction.” Sociologists consider that social interaction constitutes the most primary component of all relationships that make up society. Several nineteenth-century social thinkers were also influential in setting the direction of sociological knowledge accumulation in the sociological discipline.

Auguste Comte in France used the term sociology in 1838 to describe his idea of a new science to discover the laws of human society, by the methods of empirical inquiry, hypothesis testing, and scientific algorithm. Herbert Spencer in England further developed Comte’s ideas. In addition, early thinkers include Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon, John Stuart Mill. Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber were three preeminent thinkers of the sociological tradition. Karl Max and Frederick Engels’ concepts such as class, alienation, and social change continue to exert an important influence in contemporary sociological thinking. According to Marx, the social division of labor leads to a social surplus of production, and makes it possible for one class to benefit by the expropriation of another. Marx and Engels utilized this class concept to analyze the exploitative processes of capitalism and industrialization that
were just taking hold in England and Europe. For Marx and Engels, socialism was the more advanced and comprehensive system than capitalism, and communism was the most advanced stage of socialism.

In France, Emil Durkheim’s research of mechanical and organic solidarity, the construct of anomie, and role of religions in society marked significant milestones in investigating the reality of social facts as distinct from a mere aggregate of psychological attributes of individuals. Durkheim sought to discover the patterns of interconnections among them. He made extensive studies of primitive societies, and is also considered as one of the pioneers of social anthropology.

In Germany, the idea of sociology as a comprehensive science of social action was developed by Max Weber. Weber was interested in the development of society in modern times, and proposed that the fundamental feature of modernity was a shift in the motivation of individuals to take more goal-oriented, instrumental, rational approaches. Weber believed that ideas and beliefs mold social structure and other material conditions interactively. Therefore he refutes the Marxist model where material conditions determine the superstructure. Weber believed that the shift in human motivation is one of both cause and effect, and takes place interactively with social structural changes. Weber believed that bureaucracy is the distinctive mark of modern social structures, because the ideal type bureaucracy contains hierarchy, impersonality, written codes of conduct, meritocracy, division of labor, and organizational efficiency for collective goal attainment. Bureaucracy is designed according to rational principles in order to attain goals efficiently. This type of organizational coordination has become the dominant structural feature of modern societies, and has made large-scale planning and coordination possible, both for the private enterprise and for the nation-state. They reward goal-oriented rational behavior with corresponding material symbols of status, wealth, prestige, and power. The consequences of the growth in the scope of bureaucratic organizations is key in understanding our contemporary world.

In Britain, the sociological research was conducted first by those centered in the London School of Economics. British sociology combined an interest in large-scale evolutionary social change with a practical concern for problems relevant to the administration of the state.

Although sociology originated in Europe, the discipline flourished in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, as US society faced further industrialization, immigration, urbanization, demographic shifts. American sociology developed pioneering research on social problems such as crime, informal organization, immigration, and ethnic culture. George Herbert Mead, for example, stressed the origins of the mind, the self, and society in the actions and interactions of people, and established symbolic interactionism. Talcott Parsons introduced the ideas of Durkheim, Weber, and Pareto in *The Structure of Social Action* and developed functional system theory. Robert Merton attempted to unite theory with rigorous empirical field research.

The legacy of their work continues to influence contemporary sociologists. Many sociologists today are analyzing the mechanism of capitalism. The term capitalism denotes a socioeconomic system in which a large portion of ownership of and
investment in production of goods and services is carried in the nongovernmental, private sector through the process of economic competition and the incentive of profit-making and capital accumulation. As we have noted above, no capitalist economy is completely free of interventions by governments and other forces.

Partly because of the continued influence of social evolutionism, capitalism is often regarded as passing through three successive stages, starting with the stage of commercial capitalism, then to industrial capitalism, and then to the stage of finance, or financial capitalism. The above three categories of capitalism are not mutually exclusive. Another form is called state capitalism. State capitalism was originally defined by Lenin as a system under which the state takes over and exploits the means of production in the interests of the working class. On the other hand, welfare capitalism refers to a socioeconomic system in which state intervention aims at social welfare, job security, and industrial restructuring.

Sociological theories attempt to explicate human action in common spheres of social life, such as community, family, religion, leadership, communication, population, media, class, occupation, formal and informal organization, social agency, systems and group dynamics. Sociologists employ a variety of empirical investigation tools, including standardized surveys, statistical methods, and quantitative data collection tools. Today many sociologists are directly engaged in problem-solving and applied fields related to ecology and sustainability.

2.4. Anthropology

In contrast to sociologists, who tend to study Western contemporary societies, anthropologists study cultures of all types, across time and space. Just as psychologists and sociologists, anthropologists investigate behavior, but they pay particular attention to the similarities and differences between human societies and tribes around the world and over centuries. Anthropologists try to understand the full range of human diversity as well as commonality.

Anthropology is generally divided into four subdisciplines: biological anthropology, archaeology, (social) cultural anthropology, and linguistics. Although many anthropologists also use statistical and numerical data-gathering techniques, many cultural anthropologists utilize ethnographic methodology and field research of participant observation and open interviews. Ethnographic field researchers try to gain the so-called “insider’s perspective” rather than that of the observer-scientist. Anthropology examines such topics as how people have lived and are living; what they have thought and are thinking; what they have produced and are producing; and how they have interacted with their environments.

Anthropologists are interested in the human origin and cultural evolution as well as the ways of life in the past and the present. As in the case of sociology, anthropology was affected by nineteenth-century social evolutionism. Soon after the publication of Darwin’s theory, a number of intellectuals came to see culture as an extension of biological forces, a collective adaptive phenomenon that emerged to enhance the survivability and progress of the human species in non-biological ways. Herbert
Spencer, for instance, described cultural institutions as outcomes of natural selection, as classifiable and analyzable just as living things. Cultural evolutionism refers to the idea that all cultures, no matter how diverse they may seem, developed according to a regular series of predictable stages reflecting a predetermined pattern built into the genetic blueprint of the human species. Therefore the original role of comparative analysis in anthropology was to determine the different evolutionary stages of culture. Early anthropologists such as Edward B. Tylor and Henry Morgan believed that every human culture progressed through the same stages of development. In his book *Ancient Society* (1877), Henry Morgan noted that humanity had progressed by force of physical impulse from savagery, to barbarism, to civilization. Cultural evolutionists believed that the study of more primitive cultures would shed light upon the past of other more developed cultures such as that of Victorian England, which was considered to be the most advanced form of civilization. During this period, anthropological research was dominated by Darwinian environmental determinism. In environmental determinism, anthropological debates on nature versus culture focused upon the question of the impact of nature upon culture. Nature was seen as shaping or constraining culture.

During the 1970s structuralism developed theories that connected culture and human mind. Structuralism in anthropology rose under the influence of Lévi-Strauss. Structuralism assumed that certain binary oppositions (nature–culture, female–male, night–day) are universal in human thought. During the formative years of structuralism, many anthropologists went on to prove or disprove the hypothesis that the binary categories such as nature and culture are universal in human thought, or that they are characteristic of only some societies. Some anthropologists have come back from the field and argued that the oppositional categories such as nature versus culture are absent in some societies, while others have emphasized that the capacity of a particular society to develop a concept of nature depends on whether they view their environment as an integrated whole or not. Society’s categorization such as “nature” and “culture” depends on how the people live in and use their environment. A case in point can be drawn from the society of the Kubo-speaking residents of Gwaimasi village in New Guinea. The Kubo people draw extensively on the resources of their environment, combining cultivation with hunting, gathering and fishing. In the fully integrated world of the Kubo, no sphere is sufficiently distinguished from the human “cultural” world to merit a separate label of “nature.” Another anthropological example is the Chewong of the Malay rain forest, where the jungle in its material and spiritual totality constitutes a cultural space in which the Chewong move around with confidence.

In discussing Western views of nature/culture, some anthropologists such as Ellen identified three distinct senses in which nature is understood in Western society; (1) as space which is not human; (2) as a category of things, and (3) as inner essence. In the West, nature is often seen as separate from the human-made environment. In this construct, nature is seen as occupying a different space from that of the human world. Secondly, nature seen as a category of things is often taken to differentiate natural products/resources from manmade products/resources.

However, some environmentalists in the West argue that humans should be located within the natural world, as humanity is part of nature. Some anthropologists argue that a concept of nature that incorporates all the above-mentioned three meanings should be
used as a basis for cross-cultural comparison. Today, ethno-ecology has come on the scene. Ethno-ecologists ask such questions as “how are nature and culture related in the minds of the people being studied?”

The second major anthropological issue in recent years has been a debate about the universalizing framework of Western science, and a critique on the modernist dichotomies, such as body/mind, action/thought, and nature/culture. Contemporary anthropologists discuss a variety of ways humans conceive of physical, social, and natural environments, and that nature and culture are now seen as parts of the same integrated system, still separate from, but mutually affecting each other.

Another major perspective in anthropology is cross-cultural comparison. Comparative analysis in anthropology assumes that, even if cultures are separated by space and time, there are still some common features that bind all human communities, and that all cultures can be compared, or at least contrasted with one another. For instance, anthropological data on multitudes of human communities have been gathered in the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). HRAF have systematically collected information about hundreds of cultures all over the world, and have organized them according to a specific classification system for filing. Thus, if one wishes to learn about funeral rites, for instance, one can find this information for all of the cultures compiled in the HARF. One can compare the funeral rites of one culture with another relatively easily. However, criticisms have been raised about this method of cross-cultural comparison.

Cultural relativism states that one cannot take an element of culture out of its proper context. Otherwise it loses its meaning. Cultural relativism emphasizes that each element of a culture ought to be analyzed with reference to its internal signifying order. In the latter half of the twentieth century, there emerged radical cultural relativism, which implied that cultures could be understood only in their own terms. Radical cultural relativism also stressed that all cultures are equally valid interpretations of reality, so that they are all equally true. This extreme form of relativism was backed by the idea that worldviews were socially constructed and that people’s cosmology depended entirely on their experience of living in a particular society. In other words, this viewpoint suggested that people could not form a worldview except through the ideas they had received from others.

In recent years, many anthropologists have reacted against this extreme form of cultural relativism by arguing that comparison of different worldviews is not only possible but is taking place every day. These anthropologists stress the importance of comparative understanding of different cultures.

The description of the above debates illustrates the fact that theoretical perspectives employed by social scientists such as anthropologists influence how they actually identify the subject of inquiry, how they collect data and analyze them. Because the subject of inquiry is humans, it involves human values, worldviews, and fundamental philosophical questions. The differences in scientists’ orientations usually result in different research outcomes.
Anthropologists provide a unique expertise in their understanding of the role of cultural construction such as human–nature relations in our understanding of the world, because anthropology applies cognitive and epistemological questions about the ways we think as we identify sociocultural problems and solutions. Anthropology makes us re-examine our fundamental assumptions on whose basis we see problems as problems, and solutions as solutions. This self-reflexivity is useful in dealing with a variety of signifying orders.

Anthropology is also praxis-oriented. Anthropologists who are familiar with local cultural practices can be of great help in managing behavioral intervention programs, both for the local population and for the outside change agent who do not share that culture. Without knowing, for instance, the full cultural, ritual, political, economic, and symbolic meanings that the locals attached to a particular behavioral practice, it would be all too easy for outside agents to introduce programs that are unacceptable to the local population and doomed to fail.

For example, human ecology, which is related to anthropology, examines how people interact with their natural environments, such as to make a living. Human ecologists collect large amounts of data about significant features of a culture’s environment, for example, types of plants and animals, the chemical and nutritional properties of medicines, foods, and climate patterns.

2.5. Cognitive Science

Of particular relevance to the present EOLSS theme is interdisciplinary cognitive science, which combines psychology, sociology, anthropology, artificial intelligence, genetics, computer sciences, and sociology in order to study how people acquire, process, and utilize information. Cognition refers to the process of knowing and encompasses nearly the entire range of conscious and unconscious mental processes: sensation and perception, conditioning and learning, attention and consciousness, sleep and dreaming, memory and forgetting, reasoning and decision-making, imagining, problem-solving, and language. A myriad of factors influence the acquisition of the values, attitudes, and behaviors relevant to sustainable development. However, they can be roughly categorized into the individual psychology, the family, the immediate institutions, and the broader society and culture. Moreover, the influence of these sources can vary considerably both within a person’s life and between different individuals and groups.

2.6. Political Science

Political science is particularly interested in the systematic study of power. Political scientists usually describe the processes by which people and institutions exercise and resist power. Political processes are used to formulate policies, influence individuals and institutions, and organize societies. The emphasis upon government and power distinguishes political science from other social sciences, although political scientists share an interest with economists in studying relations between the government and economy, and with sociologists in considering relations between social structures in general and political structures in particular. Political scientists attempt to explain and
understand recurrent patterns in politics rather than specific political events. Political scientists also study politics in other contexts, such as how politics affects everyday life, how ordinary people think and act in relation to politics, and how politics influences nongovernmental organizations. One of the crucial issues of concern today is the role of the nation-state in social change, which will be discussed shortly. Another significant issue is the role of transnational organizations in creating changes on a global scale. The study of political science is motivated by the need to understand the sources and consequences of political stability and revolution, of repression and liberty, of equality and inequality, of war and peace, of democracy and dictatorship. Power is a complex issue. We need to recognize that the world order cannot be reorganized by simple ideological schemes without unintended consequences.

2.7. Law

Closely related to political science, is the study of law, which is the body of official rules and regulations, generally found in constitutions, legislation, judicial opinions, and the like, that is used to govern a society and to control the behavior of its members. Formal legal rules and actions are usually distinguished from other means of social control and guides for behavior such as mores, morality, public opinion, custom and tradition. The nature and functions of law have varied throughout history. Law serves a variety of functions. Laws limiting the powers of government help to provide some degree of freedom that would not otherwise be possible. Law has also been used as a mechanism for social change; for instance, at various times laws have been passed to inhibit environmental pollution and to improve the quality of individual life in matters of health, education, and welfare.

Social attitudes toward the formal law are a significant part of the law in process. For example, in Western societies, particularly the United States, trial by the court is an acceptable and commonly practiced method of conflict resolution. However, in many Asian and African societies, resort to legal resolution of a dispute is truly a last resort, with conciliation outside the court being the preferred mechanism for dispute settlement and for social control. In these societies, long-range human relationships and informal networks influence the individual code of behavior more than contractual relationships between strangers.

Studies of law include that of the so-called natural law based on culturally conditioned human belief systems. The natural law refers to ethical philosophy, theology, law, and social theory, a set of principles. The natural law is based on what are assumed to be the permanent characteristics of human nature, life, and the universe. The natural law can serve as a standard for evaluating conduct and civil laws. In some monotheistic belief systems where people believe in one almighty God, the natural law is considered fundamentally unchanging and universally applicable (because God is believed to be the Ultimate Supreme Being). The natural law, based on the Judeo-Christian belief system, has had considerable influence in the United States and other Western societies’ legal thinking. Their belief system implicitly suggests that law should serve to promote human dignity, as in the case of their legal enforcement of equal rights for all and the US creed on the pursuit of individual freedom and happiness. Muslim societies also embrace a kind of natural law, which is closely linked to the religion of Islam. The
Quranic authority justifies cooperation and striving for the happiness of the whole Islamic world. It strengthens the civic concepts of mutual aid, egalitarianism, and cooperation of the brotherhood. In contrast, polytheistic religions (where people believe in many gods) may not espouse the notion of the one and absolute truth or the canonical authority. Instead they believe that there are pluralistic ways of reaching truth. Truth(s) in this sense is/are relatively and relationally defined. Their reasoning may give an epistemological leeway of situationality and contextuality (i.e., it depends on the specific situation or context) in evaluating human conduct and civil codes.

Laws have developed in many civilizations. One historical example of law in Western societies is Roman law, which influenced most of the legal systems of Europe. For example, the Twelve Tables of Roman Law serve as a historical basis for the widespread modern and Western belief that fairness in law demands that it be in written form. These tables and their Roman successors, led to civil law codes that provide the main source of law in much of modern Europe, and South America. Their emphasis on the written forms gave the power of representation to the literate, as opposed to the mass.

Another example is the common law systems of England, and later of the US, developed in a different manner from European systems. The Anglo-Norman rulers created a system of centralized courts that operated under a single set of laws that superseded the rules laid down by earlier societies. This legal system, known as the common law of England, began with common customs, but over time it involved the courts in lawmaking that was responsive to changes in society. Increasingly in civil law countries, the subtleties of judicial interpretation and the weight of judicial precedents are recognized as involving the courts in significant aspects of lawmaking and social life. The system, with its emphasis on written codes and records, has created a large pool of legal professionals and specialists for the analysis of legal precedence and interpretation.

3. Social and Cultural Development of Human Resources

The above discussion has shown that there is a distinct pool of accumulated knowledge on the topics of human resources and sustainability in various disciplines of the social sciences. In Section 3.1, we will examine the history of the development of human society and culture. Instead of dividing discussions into regional or historical unities, we will describe the sociocultural ascent of the common family of humanity. We will investigate how humans have created and developed their collective sociocultural competence, instead of relying solely on their biological adaptation.

3.1. Homo sapiens

Archaeological evidence suggests that the first stage of human origin can be traced back to the Australopithecines, who appeared about 4.4 million years ago. They were followed by Homo habilis, known as the first tool-makers, who appeared 2 million years ago in the southern and eastern part of Africa. The third stage was Homo erectus, which came on the scene about 1 600 000 years ago. Fossil evidence indicates that hominids walked erect and had a bipedal stride. Finally, the fourth stage of human
origin can be traced to *Homo sapiens*, dating back to about 100 000 years ago. They are also known as Cro-Magnon or Upper Paleolithic peoples.

Compared to early hominids, *Homo sapiens* had an increased body size, a higher and more rounded forehead, and a larger brain. Anthropological research shows that the large brain of modern-day humans is achieved by the process of neotony, which means the prolongation of the juvenile stage of brain and skull development in newborns. Humans, in comparison to other animals, go through a long period of brain development. As a result, human infants must depend on human adults who provide care and stimuli for child brain-development for a long period of time. If a human infant is deprived of close external bonds with adult carers, this results in some forms of functional deficiency in the infant’s brain.

Humans have always lived in groups. Perhaps around 100 000 years ago, as bipedal hominids became quite adept at tool making, communicating, and thinking in symbols, they recognized the advantages of a group life based on a common system of representational and symbolic activities. Group life enhances survivability and prosperity by providing a collective form of protection and shelter against enemies and abrupt environmental changes as well as means of communication and knowledge transmission. Archaeological evidence suggests that by around 30 000 to 40 000 years ago, hominid groups developed communal customs, language, religious rites, and knowledge transmission to subsequent generations. Humans have achieved cultural adaptation by using tools and technologies, symbolic systems and means of communication. Partly because of such cultural development, natural selection seems to have favored diminished human muscles for such activities as chewing and climbing, and consequently the bones to which these muscles were once attached became less massive.

Anthropologists define cultures in myriad ways. Human culture is a way of life based on some system of shared meanings. Culture can be passed on from generation to generation because of this system of symbolic representations (such as words, gestures, visual systems), codes (language, art, music, science, religion), and texts (conversations, compositions). Humans are capable of creating signs. Signs are something that stands for something or someone else in some capacity. For example, the image of two lines, vertical and horizontal that intersect with each other at 90 degrees (“+”) is a sign that stands for a “cross” in Christianity, the number “10” in the Chinese language, and a “plus” sign in mathematics.

Human culture is made possible because of the signifying system. Signification is the process of generating meaning through the use of signs. Each human group has some form of signifying order, that is interconnection of signs, codes, and sometimes texts. Social groups create and utilize these signifying orders in order to interpret meanings and communicate with one another. According to Karl Popper, World 1 of human knowing is a state of sensory knowing. This inheres in the sensory, unreflective experiences humans have of physical objects and activities as governed by neuronal signals. World 2 of human reasoning is a state of subjective knowing that inheres in the responses individual humans have to perceptual input of information. This is the level at which a sense of self endows a person with the ability to differentiate himself or herself
from other beings, objects and events in the world. World 3 of human reasoning is a state of communal knowing that inheres in the systematic form of knowing with which culture equips human beings for coping with daily life, for living together, and for communicating together in groups.

Some human tribes became more sophisticated in expanding their signifying and reasoning orders, perhaps around 10 000 years ago, as they could meet technological, agricultural, and demographic needs. They expanded into larger territories and added more members, either by intermarriage, conquest or incorporation of other tribes within their broadening habitats. This led to the creation of super-tribes 5000 or 6000 years ago, about the same time as the first cities as dense human settlements came onto the scene. Those super-tribes constituted the first “societies.” Society in a cultural sense is a collectivity of individuals or human groups that share the signifying order of the founding or conquering tribe or tribes. A particular individual or a particular human group may belong to more than one signifying order within the same society. Anthropologists conceptualize them as subcultures.

3.2. The Fallacy of Race Category

Many peoples of the world have typically considered themselves belonging to some unique group of people with whom they have a common genetic link. However, linking these genetic linkages to such categories as race and ethnicity is scientifically problematic. Many varieties of modern humans belong to one interbreeding species with surprising little genetic difference among individuals. In fact, 99.9% of DNA sequences are common to all humans.

Therefore, from a purely biological standpoint, human beings defy further classification. Scientifically speaking, peoples all over the world belong to one category of the human being. However, the creation of taxonomy and classification are also political, sociological, and intellectual endeavors. Throughout history, humans have typically attempted to distinguish their tribe or super-tribe from others they have made contact with. Humans have frequently described these cultural others in terms of their physiological and anatomical characteristics.

Race, for example, has been used by many human groups as being a sociopolitical marker of distinction among human tribes and super-tribes. Race-related discourses were often connected with the symbolic constructs of savages, barbarians, nonhumans, and demons. While some of these classifications were linked to the perceived skin color of the other tribes, the degree of remoteness from the cultural center also corresponded to the imagined levels of savagery and physical coarseness of their cultural others. For example, in ancient China, barbarians living beyond the realm of the Chinese civilization, based on the Confucian social order, were dehumanized. In Chinese mythology, there were tribes in remote areas of one-eyed people, one-armed savages, and three-headed beasts. A mythical county in the west was inhabited by ashen-faced white people whose long hair covered their shoulders. In this form of cultural discourse, white implies death and the notion of nonliving and long hair, bestiality.
During the nineteenth century when Europeans invaded China, the Chinese labeled these foreigners as devils, ghosts, or unreal goblins. They differentiated foreigners according to their perceived skin colors such as white devils (Europeans) and black devils (referring to Indians in the British Raj).

The classification of races was a consequence of the European colonial explorations during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While the eighteenth-century Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus was the first to consider categorizing the apparent human varieties, it was Friedrich Blumenbach who first created the racial topology, based on the supposed differences in physical features and skull shapes. Blumenbach (1752–1840) classified five races: Caucasian (including west Asians, north Africans and Europeans except for the Finns and the Saami); Mongolians (including other Asian people, the Finns and the Saami, and the Inuit of America); Ethiopians (the people of Africa except those of the north); Americans (all aboriginal New World peoples except the Inuit); and Malayans (peoples of the Pacific Islands.)

During the eighteenth century, Carolus Linnaeus described the “red” Indians, as he perceived that American Indians were not only possessing reddish skin, but also painting themselves with fine red lines. He went on to describe Africans as having black skin, flat noses and being phlegmatic, relaxed, indolent, negligent, anointing themselves with grease and governed by caprice. In contrast, Europeans were described as white, sanguine, muscular, gentle, acute, inventive, having long flowing hair, blue eyes, covered by close vestments and governed by law. These dubious categories created by Blumenbach, Linnaeus, and others unfortunately became the foundation of racial classifications later adopted by Europeans and others. The term “Caucasian” came from the belief that the most perfect skulls came from the Caucasus Mountains, and that racial variation was due to the degeneration of the original “Caucasian” race. In this way of thinking, degeneration explains racial variation that in turn explains different levels of cultural development. Measurements of intellect were an important part of early studies of race, while the issues of IQ and racial profiling are the latest in the long list of dubious legitimization schemes to rank different human groups.

More scientifically informed data about human variation come from studies of genetic variation, which are quantifiable and replicable. Genetic data show that, no matter how racial groups are defined, two people from the same racial group are about as different from or similar to each other as two people from any two different racial groups. One basic principle about genetic transmission in families is that different variants are transmitted to different offspring independently. Therefore, the more generations of mixing, the more likely such heterogeneity in geographic origin of genes within the same person will become. As opposed to the common misguided assumption by many people, scientific research shows that fixed sets of traits are not transmitted across generations.

Because of the indefiniteness and arbitrariness of such demarcation, contemporary scientists dismiss racial categories and label them as scientifically invalid. And yet these terms are still used by some people for achieving political and economic purposes. The concept of race as a sociopolitical and cultural phenomenon is controversial, because
race has been used in a number of instances in human history to segregate certain people for unequal and unjust treatment.

Our recent world history reveals such cases as the Holocaust, slavery, the extirpation of American Indians, and devastating civil wars in many parts of the world, which were fought out in the name of race and ethnicity. Unfortunately the myth of race is still widespread in the contemporary world. The illusions of physical differences can lead all too easily and tragically to sterile theories of biological determinism, eugenics, and discrimination. Moreover, if we are not vigilant, race-oriented theories and discourses could be translated into gruesome, anti-humanitarian practice, exemplified in ethnic cleansing wars, invasion, slavery, rape and murder, in spite of the fact that the physical traits used for such atrocities are not even biological or scientific in origin.

3.3. The Nation-states and Modernization Projects

A civilization is a complex social system encompassing a mixture of tribal and super-tribal signifying orders. It is marked by its own civil history. The majority of written histories of civilization have been created by the literate elite and for the dominant tribe. Many people still do not have access, means or power to represent their own collective memories in written forms. Although there are many national histories, many people are without written history.

In this section, we will first explore the problematic concept of the nation-state from a sociocultural perspective. We will reveal how diverse concepts of the nation-state have been historically created and deployed, particularly for national-level modernization projects. While the nation-state in Western political science usually means sovereignty and independent territory, the term has many different meanings to different peoples.

Together with the emergence of civilizations, which first appeared in the present-day Middle East between 5000 and 3000 BC, various concepts of nation-state also came onto the scene. In Europe, for example, the first stage of the conceptualization of the nation-state can be traced back to the ancient city-states. These city-states established military and civil systems that were designed to protect their geographical territories. Battles fought for their territorial claims and political autonomy stirred the first inklings of the construct of the nation-state. In medieval Europe, the cultural life of feudal unity of a kingdom was based on the perceived common inheritance of ideas, social practices, and belief systems transmitted through the language and religion. With the breakup of feudalism, other communities and dynasties arose, fostering a new sense of nationality, which literally meant “being born into” or “birthright.” During the Reformation era of the sixteenth century, the adoption of Catholicism or Protestantism as a national religion also added an impetus for political alliance or discord on a broader scale. The French Revolution of 1789 marked a major turning point in European ideas of political unity and structure, as societies went through a fundamental shift from the feudal monarchy to the Republic. It brought forth the concept of patriotism as loyalty to the fatherland. The ascent of the nation-state in modern times coincided generally with the spread of the Industrial Revolution, scientific rationalism, urbanization, and colonialism, which promoted the evolutinal scheme of economic development toward modernity, and political ideas of social evolution toward advanced stages of governance.
In the nineteenth century social evolutionism, race, culture, and nation became the primary focal points as European powers continued to engage in colonial expansion and administration. In England and Europe, the term “race” referred mostly to the imagined skin color or physiology, while in other contexts, as we will see shortly, race referred to a group that putatively possesses a shared descent or genealogy that is made manifest in a supposedly unique culture or genius.

In Germany, for example, the construct of “das Volk” referred to the German people or race that justified the Anschluss, the movement to unify all Germans into one nation-state. It was used partly to mobilize the masses for nation-building projects. The founding of the German Reich in 1870, the Nazi ideology in the 1930–1940s, and the unification of East and West Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, were all predicated on the idea and ideology of the German people.

In the United States, the concepts of race and culture were conditioned by and intertwined with American history, including the conquest of Native Americans, the development of the western frontier, Afro-American slavery, the Civil War, immigration, industrialization, urbanization, the civil rights movement, global capitalism, and information technological advancement.

The process of ideological construction of the nation-state acquired different historical and cultural meanings in different countries. For example, Marx’s model of social development was based on historical materialism with a sequence of evolutionary states, from primitive to communism, that were primarily determined by the modes of production and technology. Like most nineteenth-century theories such as Henry Morgan’s cultural evolutionism and Herbert Spencer’s social Darwinism, Marxism contended that societies progressed through a series of developmental states, from primitive, Asiatic, feudal to modern capitalism, and finally to socialism and communism. His model of evolution follows a unilinear progression. The ultimate stage of social advancement to Marxists is communism. Officially the policy for establishing racial identification within the Soviet Union was to use the four criteria developed by Stalin: each race had to possess a common territory, language, form of economic livelihood, and psychology. In many modernization projects, this theory of social evolution was deployed for interpreting the particular past of a particular human group within the national boundary, and for positioning individual nation-states within the spectrum of advancement towards the ultimate stage of communism.

The Soviet Union that adopted Marxist-Leninism took another route to formulate race, culture, and modernism in its national projects. The newly established USSR Communist government applied the term “nationality” to various “races” within the territory of the former Czarist Russia. The central communist government endowed many of these “races” with corresponding political entities, such as the Central Asian Republics. The government acknowledged these people’s cultural heritages without granting them political power of self-determination. The Soviet Union’s race policies were implemented to control and channel the political expression of collective identities, while educating these people and assisting them in their progress toward communism. Moscow’s ultimate goal was to eventually erase nationality identities as they became more advanced in the evolutionary scheme of historical materialism, and...
evolve into the most advanced stage, namely communism under the guidance of the central government.

In contrast, racial discourse in China since at least the thirteenth century coexisted with the notion of Chinese civilization; that is, that anyone who behaved in a culturally superior Chinese fashion was and could become Chinese. The term for China in the Chinese language is “middle kingdom,” the center of the universe. The supremacy of the Han civilization as the middle kingdom was manifested in contrast to barbaric natures of non-Hans who could nevertheless be properly educated and civilized to become Chinese. During the nineteenth century, this indigenous Chinese construct of civilization was combined with the Western concept of social evolution and racism to make up the nation’s worldview on modernization. In China, the modern nation-state was conceived as an extension of imaginary lineage such as minzu, which integrated both the notion of people (min) and the fiction of descent (zu) The term minzu exerted a mobilizing force in 1908 when Chinese reformers sought a persuasive political rationale for autonomy against invading foreign powers. The term was probably the translation of the above-mentioned German Volk, which was first translated into minzoku in the Japanese. The Chinese construct of “nation” meant first the lineage of Han that shared a territory and an ancestor. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the traditional construct of minzu was further transformed to define the Chinese as a distinct human group.

Maoist Chinese ideology during the latter part of the twentieth century adopted a similar evolutionary scheme as the USSR’s Marxism-Leninism. However, Maoism incorporated the culturally appropriate symbolic meanings into Chinese historical materialism—they include the concept of the peasant revolution, rather than the urban proletariat revolution, and the nation’s need of constant class struggle against foreign imperialism and counter-revolutionaries. The Chinese version of historical materialism classified non-Han groups and Han as being positioned at different stages of historical social development.

During the formative years of the People’s Republic of China, the government established a minzu identification policy and identified a total of 55 ethnic minorities as minzu (nationalities) in addition to the Han people. The identification of diverse ethnicities encountered some difficulties as the Chinese originally utilized the Stalinist categories to define ethnicity such as a unified language, identifiable home territory, custom and sense of group identity. The categorization of the Han majority becomes problematic, owing to the internal heterogeneity of Han people, if we were to deploy the above classification method of the same language, territory, custom, and identity. For example, while the official Chinese language is based on the Beijing dialect, there are many dialects and many of them are mutually unintelligible. Major dialects include Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaisese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien), Xiang, Gan, and Hakka, but there are many others. Home territorial claims, identifiable customs and habits are also problematic in justifying a unified Han identity. The Chinese people make up about one-fifth of the world population.

In spite of the above-mentioned methodological problems, the Chinese government categorized the Han majority as one minzu, and views this “race” as the most advanced
of all the minzus within China. The Sinocentric ideas of the middle kingdom also affected the party’s position on the Han’s relations with other races. The government proposed that Han should be regarded as the older brother by China’s other less advanced races, and that they should provide assistance and guidance to their younger brothers in their evolutional progress toward the ultimate state of communism. Many non-Hans were accordingly placed within different stages of social development, from primitive to advanced.

Another example on the formation of the nation-state can be drawn from Japan’s modernization project of the nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries, when a theocratic construct of the nation-state was invented based on nationalistic Shintoism. The term nation, or “kokka” in Japanese, literally means the nation-household. The metaphor of family as a biological and corporate unit was effectively deployed for legitimizing the power of the emperor as the symbolical head of the Japanese. The emperor claimed unbroken genealogical and mythological linkage to Shinto gods. In addition, the image of racial homogeneity based on common patrilineal descent was deployed for various modernization projects.

In the period after the Second World War, successful nationalist movements sprang up throughout the world, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. By the 1960s newly established nation-states in these regions included Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Ghana, the United Arab Republic, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and many others. The concept of the nation-state carried yet another meaning for these former colonies of European powers. These newly achieved nation-states espoused the concept of nation-building sparked by post-colonial vitality.

Twentieth-century politics was heavily influenced by the nineteenth-century ideology of modernism, where racial identity was utilized for the political rationale of the nation-state, and it was often asserted that the nation’s development depended on the quality of the race upon which it was founded. As regional case studies in this volume indicate, the territorial boundaries of the newly created nations were created regardless of tribal distributions. Instead of utilizing local cultural histories and equipment, many newly independent states attempted to emulate the model of the nation-building of their former colonizers. Therefore, they too followed the unilinear construct of modernism, and social evolutionism. Today, people continue to use such terms as “advanced” or “developing” countries or “the First” or “the Third” World.

In eastern Europe in the 1990s, where nationalist passions had been held in check since the Second World War, the decline of the Soviet Union and Communist rule unleashed the pent-up separatist forces and ethnic identities that quickly turned into bitter ethnic struggles.

In competition for scarce resources people often identify with the rhetorical narratives of their imagined community.

One must reconcile differences among human groups not only in the political realms but also in the realms of meanings and signification. One of the important phenomena in the post-Cold War world order is that the nature of war itself is changing. Warfare in
Burundi, Cambodia, Georgia, Rwanda, Somalia, Tajikistan, and many other places is taking place within states rather than between them. According to the United Nations, of the 82 armed conflicts in the world between 1989 and 1992, only three were between countries. The rest were the result of internal tensions, often occurring against a background of poverty, inequality, and weak or rigid political systems.

The above discussion illuminates the fact that there is no unified model of the nation-state, and that all nation-state concepts derive from the historical and cultural circumstances. We emphasize that it is logically false to essentialize the culture of any social group as being internally consistent and homogeneous. Cultural essentialism, on any human group, whether they are the Romans, the Chinese, the North Americans, the Serbs, or the Kurds entails more than grouping internal diversity into a single, indistinguishable, monolithic, cultural mass. It also denies the commonality of humans. What is more, it means that we admit the inevitability of history, rather than consider ourselves as the creators of history.

### 3.4. Globalization

Some scholars argue that modern humans have entered a new stage of social development. According to them, one of the most significant sociocultural developments of the twenty-first century is globalization. They believe that the process of globalization is being accelerated by the activities of transnational firms, the exponential advancement of transportation and communication technologies, the penetration of capitalist market economy, and the rapid dissemination of knowledge among selected circles of the world population.

From their points of view, the rhetoric of globalization—economic, normative, and institutional—has displaced that of the Cold War. Some argue that globalization is becoming the central drama of this century. Proponents of globalization point out the remarkable growth of international trade, investment and finance, increased flows of information, labor, goods and services, the explosive growth of telecommunication and transport technology, and the rapid diffusion of culture and dissemination knowledge across the globe. They believe that there is a new worldwide network of communities that are increasingly interconnected.

Clearly the rhetoric of globalization is gaining prominence in the public eye, and the issue of sustainability is irreversibly intertwined with this type of discourse.

### 4. The Individual as Human Resource

#### 4.1. Social Agents for Individual Socialization

Achieving sustainable development will require people to behave in certain ways. A bio-psychosocial approach advocated in this theme recognizes the importance of the interconnection between biological predispositions, psychological variables, and social factors that all impact human thought, feeling, and behavior.
It is important to note that nationally focused interventions will not necessarily work to change individual behaviors unless they are complemented by local efforts. Typically, differences between regions and localities are sufficiently great that the same intervention cannot be successful in all regions and localities. A national intervention to change people’s attitudes can be used to increase awareness or focus attention, but program outcomes are generally better when program content and administration reflects local concerns and culture. We should therefore examine the role of individual motivation in creating desirable change.

4.2. Individual Motivation

Individual motivation is broadly defined as the impetus for behavior, the energizing force that underlies what people do and think. Social psychologist Nezlek in this theme (see Consumption In Affluent Societies, EOLSS on-line, 2002, knowledge in depth) discusses how during the first half of the twentieth century, the dominant approach to motivation emphasized the fulfillment of biological needs. Today, other considerations have come to the fore in social psychology. The first is the individual’s needs for a sense of prediction and control over their environments, whether they are biological, sociocultural or political. The second consideration is the individual’s affiliation needs: People need to feel connected with other people, and to the social and physical environment. They need to feel that they are not alone in this universe. Most psychologists agree that in general individuals are motivated by desires to interact effectively with their environments, both physical and social. They also need to gain a sense of prediction and control. According to Nezlek in this volume (see Consumption In Affluent Societies, EOLSS on-line, 2002, knowledge in depth), one way to enhance people’s sense of control is through participatory decision-making processes. He states that psychological research in Western societies has found that people’s commitment to decisions increase if they believe that they have had some hand in shaping these decisions. Participation in decision-making provides a sense of control over one’s destiny. Social psychologists argue that in order to implement policies for sustainable development, for example, it is imperative to include people in important decision-making processes. Such a sense of connectedness will promote the adoption of the eventual outcome of the decision.

Research on decision-making has produced a wealth of useful knowledge as to how humans make decisions. Psychological research suggests that in many cases people are not rational decision-makers. People have many limitations in their decision-making ability. For example, people are not capable of processing and understanding multiple and many-sided (pros and cons) information and to reach effective decisions. This means they prefer simple information. People also have difficulty processing probabilistic information, and mathematically based information, in order to make good decisions based on statistical accuracy. People often rely on anecdotal and oversimplistic information, rather than “scientific” information to reach decisions. The term “availability bias” means that people tend to overestimate the likelihood of rare events that receive a wide coverage in the news, and underestimate the likelihood of more common but not newsworthy events. We will come back to this idea when we examine the individual’s rational choice theory in macroeconomics.
There are many other biases that come into play when people make decisions. For example, people tend to strengthen the beliefs that are already held strongly owing to “selective thinking” mechanisms. Selective thinking is the process whereby one selects out favorable evidence for remembrance and focus, while ignoring unfavorable evidence for a hypothesis. One tends to notice and to look for what confirms one’s beliefs, rather than taking in new information. Individuals who possess strong beliefs tend to ignore or undervalue the relevance of information that contradicts these beliefs. People’s tendency for “selective thinking” over time unjustifiably strengthens a particular belief while ignoring other valid evidence.

4.3. Groupthink

Humans always live in some type of group. Many human decisions are made in group situations. Through interaction with groups, individuals develop social knowledge and codes of behavior. Groups exert strong impact on individual decision-making behavior. Social psychological research shows that human groups usually exert pressures toward uniformity of opinion or belief among members.

In many settings of group decision-making, there are people who hold minority opinions. For instance, advocates for sustainable development may represent a minority viewpoint in a group discussing regional economic development. According to Nezlek in this volume (see Consumption In Affluent Societies, EOLSS on-line, 2002, knowledge in depth), it is important for a minority to maintain a distinctive position firmly across time. He states “if the minority wavers, the majority will believe that the minority will (eventually) come to adopt the majority position.” Therefore it usually takes considerable strength and perseverance for the minority to change the majority opinion. Research also suggests that group discussion tends to polarize group opinions and decisions. Groups tend to form opinions that are more extreme than would be expected from the distribution of the opinions or decisions of the individuals prior to group discussion. As a consensus begins to emerge, a group may stop discussing alternatives and focus exclusively on information that supports the group decision or opinion.

In this context, groupthink is an important issue to keep in mind. Groupthink is a mode of thinking when the group’s strivings for consensus override individual members’ motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action. Groupthink operates particularly when people are making decisions in a tightly knit cohesive group setting. In contrast to the situation where the same individuals make decisions independently and separately from one another, groupthink tends to encourage an illusion of unanimity, the group’s sense of invulnerability, stereotyping of their cultural others, self-censorship, collective rationalization, group pressure on dissenters, and other symptoms.

Analyses of groupthink lead us to recognize the important influence of social norms and group dynamics on individual behavioral change. Individual attitudes are not divorced from the attitudinal or cognitive networks to which the individual belongs. In order to change a target attitude of a particular individual, one must examine not only that specific attitude of the person but also related attitudes and his or her social networks.
The smallest group is called a dyad, and has only two members. As group size increases beyond three, members tend to specialize in different tasks, and the group may become more formal in order to control a more complex role structure.

Nezlek in this volume (see Consumption In Affluent Societies, EOLSS on-line, 2002, knowledge in depth) shows various ways psychologists explore behavioral intervention schemes for attitudinal changes. People’s capacity to process information is limited, and attitude change interventions need to incorporate such limitations and specific psychological characteristics of the people. Nezlek asserts that in dealing with information overload, simpler messages may be more effective, and expert and trustworthy sources may get people’s attention. However, durable, long-term changes are predicated on how central the new information is to people and how they process such information.

There are three stages in the process of attitude change, unfreezing, moving, and refreezing, which also represent different stages of necessary behavioral intervention. In general, it is easier to make people re-examine their existing attitudes (unfreezing), somewhat more difficult to get them to change these attitudes (moving), and most difficult to reintegrate a changed attitude into an existing attitudinal structure to make it stick (refreezing).

Social psychologists usually describe attempts to change a person’s attitude in terms of source, message, and receiver characteristics. They consider that in order to change the existing attitude, one should employ sources that are more expert and attractive to the receiver of that information. We will come back to this issue of message transmission, including the source’s attributes, in the section on consumption (Section 8). As for the message itself, people generally understand simpler messages better than complex ones. Also messages that are moderately divergent from the receiver’s preexisting beliefs, values and attitude are likely to be more influential. Messages that make people moderately fearful are also effective because such messages can attract the attention of the receiver without causing a panic or extreme reaction. Psychologists argue that creating a moderate level of fear may help unfreeze the message receiver’s attitudes, and may encourage them to adopt new behavior. In general, it is considered as easier to develop desirable attitudes and behaviors than to make the undesirable desirable.

5. Social Development of Human Resources

We have discussed key psychological issues that may affect the individual as decision-maker. We have discussed the individual socialization, motivation, group situation, and the process of attitudinal changes. In this section, we will further explore other major categories that social scientists have used in analyzing human development in a variety of communities. We will first look at the concept of society and social structure themselves. We will describe primary institutions for socialization, such as family and school, and secondary relationships including political affiliation, media, economic enterprise, and religious organizations among others. We will explicate various concepts related to social learning.
5.1. Socialization

Parents and the immediate kin constitute the most important socializing agents for human learning and socialization. They are the primary social agent who instills in their children moral, political, and social attitudes. Although there are a variety of family forms in the world, most societies have circles of primary socialization agencies responsible for child-rearing and for providing them with skills and knowledge.

Even within the same society, subcultural norms, family values and class distinctions produce sharp differences in the methods parents use to socialize their children. For example, suppose in a highly class-oriented society, working-class parents are raising their children to be good lads who should obey parental authorities rather rigidly. In this situation, they unwittingly prepare the children to participate in the existing hierarchical order of society. On the other hand, when an upper-class father in a patriarchal society works hard to make sure that his male heir gets the best possible education, he too plays a vital role in the reproduction of the existing gender and class relations.

All societies rely on the key institutions such as family and kinship to produce, socialize, protect and care for new members. However, not all social institutions exist in all societies. While all known societies have some forms of family structure, schools are peculiar to those societies that require socialized, advanced training for their members. In more rural or tribal societies, extended kinship, neighborhoods, village and tribal councils, and other community organizations get involved in the individual’s primary socialization. In most societies, there are informal networks of reference and guidance for individuals. Both children and adults look to others for advice regarding what is appropriate and desirable, particularly when they are uncertain about some problem at hand. Individuals use various frames of reference to guide their behavior, and common reference groups can be found among their immediate kin and relatives, teachers, priests, senior or prestigious members of the community, or those with more access to resources and information. Other reference groups are friends, peer groups, and, increasingly the mass media, which may present alternative social norms and expectations to the individual.

There are also other institutions such as economic institutions that produce and distribute goods and services, and political institutions that distribute and apply collective power and governance. There are religious institutions that influence societal values and help societal members deal with moral and metaphysical questions. Most human societies have some types of religious institutions that deal with the collective ethos and affective needs of individuals, and that handle rituals and rites of passage.

The importance of these social institutions lies in their relative permanence, as social institutions are designed to accomplish goals that societies define as important and continuing. One of the major functions of social institutions is socialization of individual members and the transfer of knowledge, customs, and technology to successive generations. Developing human resources is as much a political and sociological process as a psychological and biological one.
5.2. Social Structure, Status, and Power

The sociological idea of social structure rests on the idea that a whole is more than the sum of its parts. Society is conceived as being more than a simple aggregate of individuals that can be analyzed by scientific methodology. The social structure refers to the arrangement of people in relation to one another, and these arrangements exist independently of the people who participate in them. Another aspect of social structure is the distribution of people among various social positions as well as the distribution of various kinds of rewards, such as wealth, power, and prestige. Social expectations are often reciprocal and vary from one social relationship to another. Large complex human groups have socially regulated relationships among their members and have complex division of labor and specialization among individual units.

At the core of the idea of social structure are the social positions that individuals occupy in social relationships. They are called social statuses. Social status is relational, which means that it exists only in relation to other social statuses. There are several types of social statuses. Some statuses are ascribed, which means that they are assigned to individuals at birth. Gender, birth order, caste status are some of the examples of the ascribed status. Other statuses are achieved, that is, the individual acquires these statuses during the course of his or her life. Achieved statuses include educational statuses, regional and occupational statuses, although in some societies, some occupations (such as the status of medicine men) are hereditary and ascribed. In addition to these statuses, there are also situational statuses, which are social positions we occupy only temporarily in a particular social situation. For example we take on the situational status of being a customer in a store or being a passenger on a train trip. Social status exists independently of the individuals who occupy them. We usually occupy many different statuses and each status comes with its social roles and expectations. For example, we know how to behave in a classroom or in front of elders, although we may not always follow the norm.

Together with statuses, people take on different social roles, and form a role structure. Social roles can be divided into task roles and expressive roles. The task roles are instrumental and oriented toward completing certain tasks, while expressive roles involve the maintenance of group harmony and strengthening the sense of affiliation and emotional harmony. Role structures often describe divisions of labor in social relationships. In formal organizations, role structure is often saliently organized to foster effective use of the functional task distribution and coordination among individual units in the division of labor.

When human tribal societies were small, their division of labor was simple and few people were specialists capable of performing only one particular job. By contrast, today, there are cities with more than 10 million inhabitants and the production of goods, services and information depends on complex social relationships. The role structures are highly complex and the division of labor is extremely specialized.

In addition to status and role structure, social relationships can be examined in terms of their distribution of power among the occupants of different statuses and roles. Power may be defined as the possibility of imposing one’s will upon the behavior of others.
Power structures in social relationships vary considerably. One classification of power is based on the degree to which power is evenly distributed among status occupants. Power can be distributed in an egalitarian or in an authoritarian fashion.

Power that is assigned according to social norms is called authority, and a group that distributes power in this way has a leadership structure that controls the representation of such norms. We discussed this as the dominant tribal signifying structure. Most institutions in participatory power structures have leadership structures based on authority. Power and leadership are not always the same, for leadership can represent authority supported by group norms and voluntarily accepted by members, while power may result from expertise, persuasiveness, control, or coercion.

Most human groups have both formal and informal power structures, and power is socially distributed, often along the lines of status occupants. Prestige on the other hand is the respect individuals accord one another in their social relationship. While power and prestige are similar, they are not the same. People can have prestige and be well respected by others without having corresponding high power. Likewise, a dictator may have high power, but may not have prestige and is hated by the population.

The characteristics of social structures strongly influence the way individuals develop their human potentiality. A social institution is an enduring set of cultural ideas and social relationship that is organized in order to accomplish social goals.

5.3. Birth Rates and Human Resource Development

To survive, every society must reproduce its members. However, the rate of reproduction in different societies varies enormously, partly because human reproduction is affected by cultural norms, ideas, and socially structured relationships. In many developing countries, high birth rates have been encouraged because of the lower chance of surviving childhood. In rural areas with subsistence agriculture, social norms on the usage of family and child labor in farming may encourage high birth rates.

In other situations, people produce more offspring because of the cultural conditions such as the perceived need for child labor, for the parents’ need of care when they grow old and/or for the desirability of continuing the family lineage. In patriarchal societies, the family line is often traced through men. Therefore parents tend to prefer male children.

Birth rates are also affected by governmental policies and religious beliefs that encourage or discourage childbearing. For example, the Catholic norms under the current Pope forbid the use of contraceptives and other forms of population control, thus promoting high birth rates among Catholics. On the other hand, the government of the People’s Republic of China promotes the one-child policy, and encourages lower birth rates. Chinese couples, particularly in urban China, tend to postpone childbearing not only because of the Chinese government policy but also because of economic conditions and the of adequate urban dwelling space.

Birth order affects patterns of interaction between children and parents. In the United States, for example, research on American children has found that first-borns tend to
trust authorities more than later-borns do, and that first-born men tend to conform to social pressures. Prominent leaders such as US presidents are overwhelmingly first-born. It is assumed that at least in American society, the earlier an individual enters a family group, the more attention, stimulation, and pressure he or she is likely to receive, and the more power the individual is likely to have in relation to other siblings. As adults, the higher one’s position in the birth order, the more likely one is to strive for power and achievement, to trust those in authority, to experience anxiety and guilt over personal failings, and to seek the company of others in times of stress. This finding implies that people’s positions in social structures such as family affect the development of human achievement orientation, and ideas about authority, human competence and personality.

5.4. Education

Many children, particularly in industrialized societies, learn formal studies at school to expand their cognitive and mental skills. Educational institutions not only transmit information and knowledge to the succeeding generation, they are enculturating individual children into society. Children, through experiences at school, acquire certain cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms. Enculturation helps prepare them for coping with social systems during their adult life. Such enculturation operates in both curricular and extracurricular activities at school. Informal enculturation is also significant for human development. For instance, peer groups play a major role in informal socialization. Peer group refers to people who have a similar level of social standing, especially in terms of age.

In many Western situations, adolescent peer groups often compete with both families and schools in influencing the individual’s enculturation process. The distinctive behavioral patterns (including antisocial behaviors involving alcohol, illegal drugs, etc.), specific language and vocabulary, dress codes, and popular culture items demarcate adolescent subculture from adult cultures.

5.5. The Media

The influence of the mass media on individual socialization is significant, particularly in industrialized societies. Television, radio, films, newspapers, magazines, music, videos, and the Internet offer a variety of cultural representations that were previously unavailable. Whether people are watching TV soap operas, Hollywood films, or computer screens, the media messages give hidden cultural messages, that are often aiming at the subconscious and unconscious levels of the viewer’s mind. Cultural subtexts are signs that are not salient but hidden within visible texts. For instance, commercials and advertisements are designed to make characters in the advertisement attractive, sexy and desirable, as the tacit message of the advertisement is to stimulate the individual’s need to consume the desirable object. Advertisement images are rarely value-free, as these well-crafted images are signs that work like a reflecting mirror for the Self. While watching an advertisement, the individual subconsciously compares his or her perception of the self in relation to the fantasy presented in the advertisement, which is often presented by “attractive” message carriers such as physically beautiful models. The advertisement also tells how easy and available the particular commodity is
for the self. It encourages the viewer to consume the desirable item for emulation, self-distinction, and/or satisfaction of hidden drives. The power of the mass media advertisement lies primarily in its portrayal of something beyond the physicality of an average viewer. The media often deploy virtual images and fantasy lifestyles. These images can change or even override the physical experiences and interpersonal communication of the individual as his or her primary source of knowledge about their social environment. Images presented in the mass media are often oversimplified or stereotyped, and yet these images have direct effect on people’s self–other perceptions, feelings, and behaviors. The media are one socializing agent in our increasingly complex social relations.

5.6. Formal and Informal Organizations as Social Groups

Socialization is a lifelong process with countless changes. Socialization continues throughout one’s life, and often takes the form of re-socialization as the individual adapts to a changing environment and to modify perceptions and social roles. Throughout adult life, socialization continues, for instance, through occupational training, travels, life-course events, maturing and aging processes.

As we have examined in earlier sections, the human group is a basic unit of sociological analysis for several reasons. The first reason is that individuals orient most of their lives to groups, from the primary social groups such as family and friends to more complex groups such as tribe, super-tribe, nation-state, and formal organizations. Human groups meet many basic human needs. At the same time, they can be a source of conflict, exploitation, and other problems. During the course of human history, religious persecution, racial and sexual discrimination, ethnic cleansing, tribal oppression, civil wars, terrorism, and warfare have been frequently based on specific inter- and intra-group tensions.

Different human groups structure social relationships in different ways due to diverse cultural norms and heritages. Groups often define reality, goals, and expectations in specific ways, and create membership boundaries. Reference groups become important, particularly when people are uncertain about their opinion or are torn between alternative courses of action. Individuals often use reference groups to help them make sense of reality and to reach some conclusion.

As we have seen in our discussion on groupthink, however, groups may exert various pressures upon individuals to conform to group norms. Groupthink can have debilitating consequences.

As groups grow large, members become less visible to one another than in small groups. Large groups generally have less cohesion than smaller ones. As groups continue to grow in size, more complex bureaucracies emerge. In this process toward bureaucratization, previously informal social relationships become more formally defined, and organization based on bureaucratic structure becomes more important than its individual members, any of whom can become replaceable.
Formal organization has a clearly defined hierarchy of power and prestige, with directors or administrators at the top and rank-and-file members at the bottom.

The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century sparked a tremendous impetus for specialized occupations and task performances. The twentieth century saw an accelerated speed of complex organization, urbanization, and industrialization that have fundamentally changed the everyday life of people in the world.

When faced with powerful organizational oppositional forces, human groups sometimes form coalitions, in which two or more join forces in order to increase their control, power and potential reward, and minimize the control others have over them. In doing so they realize that if they form a coalition with others, their share of any rewards may increase due to the enlarged size of the new group. Social scientists argue that coalitions tend to form when there is a decision to be made without a single concentration of the decision-making power and when no specific group has veto power. Weak groups may join strong groups in order to increase their power in relation to other weak groups. The already strong groups welcome such coalition because it increases their power while still controlling its partners. However, the most likely coalition combines the weaker groups against the strongest, as weak ones increase their power by combining with the stronger one, but when the time comes to divide up any rewards, they cannot prevent their more powerful partner from taking the major share. Therefore, by combining only with each other, the weak ones can both control the stronger one and share their rewards more equally, because their partners are equal in power. The study of coalitions is important to the current EOLSS discussion because it helps us understand how groups and organizations combine to change the existing distributions of power even when there is no centralized formal leadership structure. What is more, it suggests a possibility that weak groups can use coalitions in order to end domination by a strong group. It is through social interaction that individuals and groups achieve their goals such as sustainability.

5.7. Social Organization and Sustainability

The previous discussion has shown that there is a vast repertoire of social management tools and behavioral intervention techniques available in social sciences, and some are particularly relevant to our current concerns. An important dimension of the freezing–moving–refreezing process of any new initiative is the presence or absence of social organization and human networks that are structurally suited to manage, increase, and maintain the initial momentum. Social scientific tools such as behavioral intervention techniques can help organize atomistic sets of individuals into more interactive and culturally cohesive groups. Social groups in return can foster the individual capacity to manage resources, and enforce adequate rules, rights, and obligations. Investments must be made to nurture existing social organizations and develop new organizations that can accumulate human experience and knowledge for sustainable development. In short we need to develop social organizations as our social capital. New and growing social capital is indispensable for the sustainability of human development.

The focus on human organization means that sustainable development projects should depart from the long-used techno-centric or “rational” models of planned interventions.
It also explicitly makes space for local cultural variables. Since the core of this process resides in its human actors, it is vital to include the local people from the very beginning of the participatory decision-making process. Participatory approaches must be applied to the identification, re-examination, implementation, and maintenance of any public policy program for sustainable development. At the same time, the participatory approach must include frequent and longitudinal field research and on-site impact assessment and evaluation. We cannot overemphasize the value of on-site evaluation and direct feedback from the field to various stakeholders. Defining and redefining the roles of people within social organizations and meeting the emergent requirements of the sociocultural fabric in the community will lead to timely and culturally appropriate problem-solving, logistics adjustment, and behavioral changes.

6. Social and Cultural Development Indicators

The social and cultural development of human resources requires certain decisions as to how to measure the extent of such development at a macro level. In the past there have been a number of attempts to measure human capital and sociocultural indicators. In this section we will examine the context in which social and cultural development indicators have been discussed, created, and modified.

A wide variety of social indicators have been devised in order to monitor and measure the levels of the collective well-being of the people. Human and social development has traditionally measured in terms of both quantity and quality.

Partly because of the overwhelming influence of economic optimization ideology, the general agreement until recently was the more the resources available, the better. Consequently social and cultural developments have been often measured along this spectrum, in such areas as education, health, equity, wealth, population, social cohesion, among others. Uno in this volume (see Social and Cultural Development Indicators, EOLSS on-line, 2002, knowledge in depth) explains how a variety of measurements have been utilized by social agencies, nation-states, and international organizations. This contribution stresses that sustainable development will require a closer understanding of how the economic, sociocultural and environmental aspects of human activity interact.

Our previous discussion indicated that the nineteenth–twentieth century ideology for “modernity” influenced our theoretical underpinning based on manufacturing activities. The axial principle in the past industrialization mindset was the blind acceptance of numerical growth as the given goal of social evolution. The economic rationality theory formed meta-ideology behind the past macroeconomics use of economic indicators and influenced social science research on human development in general. Because of this econo-centric perspective, since the Industrial Revolution, we have viewed the development fundamentally in monetary or quantifiable terms such as gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP). Throughout the past century, most nations overwhelmingly supported economic expansion through investment as a matter-of-fact public policy. Many countries have striven for increasing capital either by domestic saving or foreign direct investment, portfolio investment, and borrowing. The industrial production required input of energy almost at the same pace, and this resulted
in increased dependency on fossil fuels such as petroleum. Over-dependence on fossil fuels and energy has led to excessive emission of carbon dioxide and other environmental consequences.

Some argue that economic considerations have a direct causal relationship with how people behave in social and cultural spheres. Neo-Marxists also base their arguments on the material conditions of the people. Others, on the other hand, emphasize that unless social and cultural conditions are in place, people do not have the necessary work ethic and incentive for economic activities. Adding a new perspective to the century-old debate on causality, those who study postmodern social conditions cast doubt on the usefulness of conventional indicators, social, cultural or economic, in the face of the current social transformation, namely global capitalism of the twenty-first century, because many conventional indicators are still for measuring and comparing nation-states’ performances or the international aggregate of such national efforts.

Some scholars argue that in the postindustrial society of the twenty-first century, the engine of growth has shifted from manufacturing industry to information-related activities. They tend to overemphasize the dominant and positive aspects of the so-called information, or postindustrial, society as they tend to characterize this emergent trend as the coming dominance of such sectors as knowledge industry, health, education, research, media, government, and recreation. In this new form of production, global flows of information and knowledge, and professional management of resources, play seminal roles. According to this perspective, social relations and knowledge construction become increasingly transdisciplinary and heterogeneous, connecting different units in global networks. However, this new type of lifestyle is affecting only certain human groups who are mostly located in advanced industrial nations.

The growth of capitalist penetration and information networks in the twenty-first century does not necessarily follow national boundaries. Certain elite groups mostly from selective European and American and some Asian cities transcend national boundaries to form international networks and coalitions with one another. However, there are many who do not have access to the global network of capital, labor, resources and information, and who are excluded and marginalized, even though their lives are being deeply affected by this trend. Those who are already at the sociopolitical periphery are pushed further away, even when they are physically proximate to the elite metropolitan core. One finds those marginalized people, for example in urban ghettos and poverty-stricken rural areas, within advanced industrial nations. The gap (which is sometimes referred as the digital divide) is increasing between those with access to high-tech information and those without. On a world scale the so-called North–South discrepancy is also growing at an alarming pace. However, within developing countries, the gap between the elite and the mass is often wider. In this race of globalization, a majority of human groups must experience some serious consequences of this new mode of economic “production.” Nation-states are already tackling with difficulty global forces that seem to operate beyond local control. For example, issues such as the rise of multinational corporation, mega-urbanization, refugees and population diaspora, global commodity capital markets, environmental disasters, and international competition affect peoples of the world, a majority of who have little control over the rising global tide.
In this context, it is futile to use indicators that were basically created to analyze and compare national performances. We need new conceptualizations of globalization that can adequately address the problems of human welfare as we face strife, fragmentation, and conflicts among an increasing number of people on the earth.

The desirable transition to a sustainable society requires an emphasis not on optimization, but on sufficiency, equity, and quality of life. In the light of the enormous income and power gap prevailing in the world, we have to seriously question humankind’s continuous need for optimal growth. In the next section we will examine the classical macroeconomic concepts concerning this issue of optimization.

7. Rational Choice Theory

One of the most consequential and controversial meta-concepts in neoclassical economics is the idea about the individual’s rational choice. The rational choice theory defines individual propensity for optimization. This construct, as well as the notion of preference and taste, will be re-examined in this section, because we will see the overwhelming influence of this idea on how we conceptualize human production, consumption, and macroeconomic development. Our debate on the individual rational choice will be followed by a discussion on consumption and sustainability.

For some economists, two concepts, namely “rational choice” and “rational maximization,” have been core features of individual economic behavior. The concept of rationality is still widely used, particularly in economic utility theory and in recent years, rational choice debates have been hot topics in other social scientific disciplines such as political sciences. The basic assumption behind the rational choice theory is that individuals try to make the most efficient decisions possible in an environment of scarce resources. The two key presuppositions behind this theory are that humans seek efficiency, and that humans are utility maximizers.

The assumption of utility maximization means that any human who faces any decision seeks the most benefit relative to costs. It is an instrumental theory of human behavior, attempting to explain how individuals achieve their goals rather than what those goals are per se. In this regard, rational choice has little to say about the content of individual preferences, a topic that was discussed by Douglas and Isherwood in 1980, and the topic that economists are now starting to address.

Traditionally economics employed a notion of rationality in which an action is rational as long as it has the highest expected utility for given beliefs and given information. Behind this model is the value judgment about human motivation that the human action is caused by the desires and beliefs, and the beliefs caused by consideration of the evidence for optimal results.

During the latter part of the twentieth century, scholars often attempted to explain economic phenomena in line with the above theory of individual rational behavior. In macroeconomics, for example, this effort took the form that macroeconomic relationships are the outcome of the collectivity of individuals’ optimizing behaviors, subject to the constraints imposed by their endowments, markets, and technology.
Partly because this perspective is based on the assumption of utility and profit maximization dominated macroeconomics, there has been an aversion to other possible parameters which may still explicate individual or market behavior without considering the individual as utility seekers. As we have noted, economists are only just beginning to examine other possibilities.

Critics of rational choice theory argue that rational choice is only plausible under the most ideal circumstance where one can assume perfect information processing, perfect calculation, absolute habit-formation, and perfect knowledge of one’s desires and goals. In order for the rational choice to take effect, the person must know the optimal range of alternative actions and their feasibility, and he or she must believe in the given set of information, and that the maximum level information is to be obtained. The fundamental question concerning the rational choice theory is not whether the theoretical assumption of rationality is correct or not, and but whether people actually choose optimal acts or not in practice.

While economists tend to explain human decision-making in terms of utility and optimization, psychologists see human decision caused by individual psychological orientation. On the other hand, anthropologists and sociologists tend to examine the same issue from cultural and social perspectives.

In recent years, there have been notable criticisms of the rational choice theory from many different quarters. For example, some scholars argue that people try to behave rationally, but that they do not manage to do so. Others such as Nezlek in this volume (see Consumption In Affluent Societies, EOLSS on-line, 2002, knowledge in depth) argue that people do not even try to behave rationally. Others argue that it is theoretically impossible, for example, to make rational investment decisions because we do not know how much information we should collect before we make the decision. In addition to these viewpoints, one may also argue that norm-governed behavior is not necessarily guided by prior calculation of expected benefit, and that people may also think it morally correct to follow a certain norm without calculating its cost/benefits. Cultural relativists conclude that the belief in rationality, that humans can act rationally in every situation, may itself be a cultural trait in the Western world.

There is a growing acceptance that some situations are so complex that for practical reasons humans do not manage to make rational decisions. In such situations one should rely on explanatory strategies other than rational explanations. These arguments give justification to seek alternative theories to explain human choices.

In general, sociologists and anthropologists seek to explain human behavior and aspiration based on the social values, norms, and beliefs (ideologies and theologies) that people are socialized to. Psychologists, on the other hand, approach behavior as a function of how the human mind processes external information and translates it into action. We have not come to the point of totally bridging many cognitive gaps among different disciplinary perspectives on collective human motivation, decision, and action. So our debates continue. However, we are just beginning to understand more fully the account of individual and social behaviors and the importance of investing in social capital in order to develop human capital.
8. Consumption

The unfinished business about human motivation, preference, and economic decision is most salient in social science research on consumption. Historically those who were concerned with modernization tended to privilege production as the most significant and creative social act. Therefore, consumption has often been portrayed with a negative connotation. For example, Marx described insatiable consumer desires in a negative manner, while Thorstein Veblen contrasted productive efficiency and wasteful conspicuous consumption. Veblen analyzed a cultural system of conspicuous consumption of the American upper class. He noted that consumers attached cultural values such as honor and decency to commodities and expressed their identities through consumption.

Beyond the most basic level of satisfaction of human needs, consumption is a system of human communication. While few economists may share this perspective, it is common among anthropologists and historians to explicate consumption from its normative angle. From a sociocultural perspective, consumption is regarded as the most common form of expressive activity that exists in human society today. Consumption is particularly ubiquitous in industrialized, urban societies. Pierre Bourdieu’s research into French variations in taste provided evidence that there are multiple levels of systems of taste that interact with one another. He noted that not all consumer choices are related to emulation of the practices of the upper class.

While most economists may still view human consumption from the perspective of “rational choice,” most sociological and anthropological studies argue that no individual has a process of rational choice that is divorced from culture. Therefore consumption cannot be separated from the dynamic social world that creates and develops ideas, symbols, and values of commodities. Douglas and Isherwood tackled the problem of the actual consumption preference and asserted that “good taste” that affects commodity values is an index of social connections, of reproductive fitness, of one’s ability to mobilize resources. The race to remain on the cutting edge of “good taste” becomes more significant, particularly in an affluent society more dependent on information and services than utilitarian functions of physical products. There is a dynamic linkage between consumption, individual choice, taste and culture, and much ethnographic evidence supports this thesis that consumption is more than the result of a rational economic choice by the individual.

Pierre Bourdieu showed how tastes are largely the product of certain material and social conditions. He illustrated the way in which the various tastes of French people corresponded to their class and upbringing. Based on fieldwork in South Korea during the 1990s, Laura Nelson investigated the link between Korean status, gender and consumer nationalism. Maris Boyd Gillette, on the other hand, illustrated how a community of urban Chinese Muslims in the People’s Republic of China uses consumption of food, clothes and other commodities to position its members more favorably within the Chinese government’s official paradigm for development. Gillette also shows how this minority group selectively consumes goods and adopts fashions that they view as modern and non-Chinese. Their preference for non-Chinese and yet
“modern” goods and services in daily lifestyles challenges the roles of the nation-state as the purveyor of unilinear modernism.

In this volume, Russell Belk and Geiz Ger discuss consumption in affluent societies, Josia Heyman describes consumption in developing nations, while Laurie Michaelis and Richard Welk illustrate consumption and the environment and Catherine McCoid analyzes globalization and the consumer society (see EOLSS on-line, 2002, knowledge in depth). Without referring to the details of these studies, we would like to point out that consumption patterns are directly influenced by cultural norms.

In recent years, consumption has attracted much attention from scholars as a subject of research. From the above-mentioned sociocultural perspectives, consumption is regarded as a domain in which individuals and groups create social and cultural identities. From the sociocultural perspective, consumption is considered as a means by which consumers assert or affirm their values, create their desires, and strive to advance or maintain social status and prestige. Even in a totalitarian society, consumption is one area where ordinary folk can exercise considerable control. Most consumers make individual choices as to what, where and how to shop, rent, eat, use. Their individual choice is not only idiosyncratically made, but it is also based on the way they read the signs and attach meanings to the goods, services, and information. Even window-shopping has a cultural meaning. Window-shopping is a venue for control and identity creation because window shoppers can appropriate the images and goods they have seen for creative reuse. Consumption practices are affected by a number of variables, the most obvious being monetary constraints. However, commercials, advertisements, and media culture play a role in shaping consumption, as they aim at manipulating human desires and needs.

In this contribution, we have seen how the modernization strategies of various nation-states become intertwined with individual aspirations, cultural values, and identities at local levels. Socially and symbolically constructed categories such as gender, race, and nationality directly impact consumption patterns of human groups. Although these categories are historically created and are often utilized as cultural equipment for political means, consumption, with its focus on immediate gratification, and with its material and symbolic meanings, has as much to do with the future-oriented discourse as with the past-oriented cultural tradition. Consumption as the symbolic representation of social identity is tied to notions of the future, rather than the memory of the collective past.

9. Conclusion

Social scientific research has developed in tandem with sociocultural changes and histories of this world. One of the key agents of social development of human resources has been the nation-state. Various ideologies, models, and constructs have been created to define the nation-state. The development of the concept of the nation-state was also directly related to the conceptualization of race and racial classifications. Different societies invented racial and other sociopolitical categories to demarcate themselves from others and to rank their cultural others by using some step-wise evolutionary schemes. Several models of social evolutionism continue to influence the thinking of
contemporary social scientists. Today globalization is a primary topic of scholarly and public discussion. Some see globalization in a positive light, while others point to the dark side of global capitalism, pointing out the increasing gap between the elite and the marginalized.

Compared to other animals that must rely mostly on biological adaptation, humans have created and developed culture and society. Human culture is a way of life based on some system of shared meanings and signifying order. Each human group has developed some form of interconnecting signs, codes and texts that allow them to make sense of reality and to communicate with one another. Humans have developed many sociopolitical categories. Race, for example, is used as a meaningful marker of self–other distinction. However, genetic data show that, no matter how racial groups are defined, two people from the same racial group are about as different from each other as two people from any two different racial groups. Thus race as a scientific category is invalid.

Another significant theme of this volume is the human rational choice theory and ideas about optimization. For some economists, two concepts, namely “rational choice” and “rational maximization,” have been core features of individual economic behavior. However, some psychologists argue that people have many limitations in their decision-making ability and that social relationships, norms, statuses, and power affect individual decision-making behaviors.

Power assigned according to norms is called authority, and a group that distributes power in this way has a leadership structure. Most human groups have both formal and informal power structures, and power is socially distributed among status occupants. The characteristics of social structures strongly influence the way individuals develop their human potentiality. An institution is an enduring set of cultural ideas and social relationship that is organized in order to accomplish social goals. Socialization continues throughout one’s life, and often takes the form of re-socialization as the individual adapts to a changing environment and to modify perceptions and social roles. Formal organizations and groups affect individual development of human capacity. Human and social development has traditionally been measured in terms of both quantity and quality. Such categorical domains as education, health, equity, wealth, population, social cohesion, are common areas where measurements have been taken place for inter-societal comparison. Sustainable development will require a closer understanding of how the economic, sociocultural, and environmental aspects of human activity all interact.

One of the debates concerning the social and cultural development indicators is their relationship to the conventional economic development indicators. Some argue that economic factors such as income and occupational profile have a direct influence on how people behave in social and cultural spheres. Others emphasize that unless social and cultural conditions are in place, people do not have the necessary work ethic and incentive for economic activities. It has become increasingly problematic to apply the twentieth-century concepts of localized governance and public policy-making by nation states to understand and measure the state of human welfare of the twenty-first century.
Consumption is the most common form of expressive activity that exists in human society today. Consumption is particularly ubiquitous in industrialized, urban societies. Beyond the most basic level of satisfaction of needs, consumption is a system of human communication. From the above-mentioned sociocultural perspectives, consumption is regarded as a domain in which individuals and groups create social and cultural identities.

There is a dynamic linkage between consumption, individual choice, taste and culture, and ethnographic evidence support this thesis that consumption is more than the result of a rational economic choice by the individual. We argue that socially and symbolically constructed categories such as gender, race, and nationality directly impact consumption patterns of human groups.

Glossary

Achieved status: Social status that is acquired by individuals.
Ascribed status: Social status that is assigned to the individual at birth.
Cognition: The process of knowing that encompasses the entire range of conscious and unconscious mental processes: sensation and perception, conditioning and learning, attention and consciousness, sleep and dreaming, memory and forgetting, reasoning and decision-making, imagining, problem solving, and language.
Confirmation bias: Bias whereby one tends to look for what confirms one’s beliefs, and to ignore or undervalue the relevance of what contradicts one’s beliefs.
Groupthink: A mode of thinking in a cohesive in-group when its members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.
Master statuses: Status that affects almost every aspect of individual lives in a society.
Motivation: The impetus for behavior, the energizing force that underlies what people do and think.
Power: The possibility of imposing one’s will upon the behavior of others.
Selective thinking: Process whereby one selects out favorable evidence for remembrance and focus, while ignoring unfavorable evidence.
Signification: The process of generating meaning through the use of signs.
Signs: Something that stands for something or someone else in some capacity.
Social status: Position in social relationships in a particular society that exists independently of the individual occupant of that position.
Society: A collectivity of individuals or human groups that share one or more signifying orders.
Super-tribe: An expanded grouping of people as a consequence of tribal expansion and tribal admixture.
World 1: Concept developed by Karl Popper. World 1 of human knowing is a state of sensory knowing based on unreflective experiences humans have of physical objects and activities as governed by neuronal signals.
World 2: A state of subjective knowing that inheres in the responses individuals have to perceptual input of information.

World 3: A state of communal knowing that inheres in the systematic form of knowing with which culture equips human beings for coping with daily life, for living together, and for communicating.

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Biographical Sketch

Tomoko Hamada is Margaret Hamilton Professor of Anthropology at the College of William and Mary, which is the second oldest university in the United States. She completed her BA in American studies at Vassar College, her MA in sociology at Keio University, and her Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. She has taught at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, was Director of Asian Studies at the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, and since 1988 has been a member of the faculty at William and Mary. Her publications include American Enterprise in Japan, Cross-cultural management and Organizational Culture and Anthropological Perspectives on Organizational Culture. She is the editor of Studies in Third World Societies, and is the author of numerous articles and edited volumes, the primary focus of which is the culture of complex organizations.