

**DEVELOPING BUSINESS-RELATED INSTITUTIONS:  
ABSTRACTS PREPARED DURING THE 1997-1998 ACADEMIC YEAR**

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## **PREFACE**

The Research Program in Social and Organizational Learning at The George Washington University conducts research in theoretical and applied social science. During the 1997-1998 academic year no visiting professors were hosted by the Research Program. However, three former visiting professors presented papers in Vienna, Austria.

Abstracts 1, 2, 3 and r were presented at the European Meeting on Cybernetics and Systems Research, which was held in Vienna, Austria, April 14-17 1998. Abstract 5 was presented at the World Customer Service Congress, McLean, VA, October 29-31, 1997. A theme of the abstracts seemed to be “underlying assumptions in academic fields.”

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## **Underlying Assumptions of Several Traditions in Systems Science**

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We propose a set of underlying assumptions that are generally shared within systems science but are less common in other scientific fields. The various traditions within systems science have adopted different combinations of these assumptions. We examine four traditions within systems science -- total quality management, operations research, organizational learning, and cybernetics. (Additional traditions are discussed in a longer paper available from the authors.) We then consider eight underlying assumptions – self-organization, observation, causality, reflexivity, determinism, environment, relationships, and holism. Finally, we assess where each tradition stands with respect to each of the underlying assumptions.

**Income Differentiation in Russia: Pros and Cons  
A Look from Inside**

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The importance of this article is that it presents the theoretical aspects of analysis and results of previous scientific research on population differentiation in Russia and East Siberia in the transitional social and economic period. It is essential to analyze the problems of population differentiation in order to draw conclusions about the general level of welfare achieved, the extent of stratification, and the directions of contemporary processes in Russian society.

## **Identifying the Russian Cultural Consitution**

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Just as a country's constitution is its most fundamental law, each country also has a fundamental set of beliefs and values. This set of beliefs, values, and traditions can be called the country's "cultural constitution." We identify some basic features of the cultural constitution of Russia and contrast these with beliefs and values in Europe, the U.S., and Asia. Knowledge of a country's cultural constitution is particularly important during periods of rapid social change and when attempting to implement reforms.

## **Societal Self-Awareness as an Aid to Societal Development**

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The currently developing information society is based on a new type of social communication, which is made possible by the multidimensional development of human beings. The new society will likely differ from the previous one principally in the type of social communication. This paper describes the logic of a historical process of societal development consisting of three stages. Social harmony can be achieved through violence, partnerships, or shared values. The developmental process is based on a trend toward larger social groups, more organized societies, more formal education, less violence, and communication that is more rapid. Societal self-awareness, which results from the accumulation and analysis of social experience, is one part of societal development.

## **Establishing Customer Satisfaction as a Goal in Higher Education**

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Quality improvement methods have been widely accepted by corporations and government agencies. But they have not yet been widely adopted by educational institutions. One reason for the relatively slow adoption by educational institutions is lack of clarity over how the goal of customer satisfaction can be reconciled with the beliefs by faculty members that they know more than their students and that they should evaluate student performance rather than the reverse. This article will describe the objections that faculty members make to the goal of customer satisfaction. It will discuss structural features in universities that interfere with a goal of customer satisfaction. And it will examine cases of universities that have successfully adopted a goal of customer satisfaction.