

According To Scholars Of Organizational Culture, Humans Are By Nature _____.a. Storytellersb. Subservientc.

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Understanding the Nature of Humans in Organizational Culture

The question of human nature has fascinated scholars, psychologists, and organizational theorists for centuries. When examining organizational culture, one of the most compelling perspectives is that humans are inherently storytellers. This idea emphasizes the importance of narrative, meaning-making, and shared stories in shaping organizational identities and behaviors. Conversely, some theories suggest humans are innately subservient, highlighting compliance and hierarchy within organizations. This article explores these contrasting viewpoints, emphasizing why scholars of organizational culture predominantly view humans as storytellers and how this perspective influences organizational dynamics and success.

Humans as Natural Storytellers: The Core Perspective

The Power of Narrative in Human Life

Humans have an innate tendency to create and share stories. From early childhood, stories are vital for understanding the world, transmitting values, and establishing social bonds. In organizational settings, storytelling serves as a fundamental mechanism for:

- Conveying organizational values and missions
- Building a shared identity among employees
- Reinforcing cultural norms and behaviors

- Facilitating change and adaptation

This storytelling process is not merely about entertainment; it is a strategic tool that shapes perceptions, influences attitudes, and guides actions within organizations.

Scholarly Foundations Supporting Humans as Storytellers

Several prominent scholars in organizational culture emphasize storytelling's central role:

1. Clifford Geertz: A cultural anthropologist who argued that culture is a system of shared stories that give meaning to social life.
2. Barbara Czarniawska: Highlighted the importance of narrative in understanding organizational change and identity.
3. Mary Jo Hatch: Proposed that organizational culture is a web of stories, myths, and symbols that create a collective sense of purpose.

These scholars suggest that stories are the fabric weaving together organizational members, enabling them to make sense of complex environments and navigate change.

Key Elements of Organizational Storytelling

Effective storytelling within organizations involves several key components:

- Authenticity: Genuine stories resonate more deeply and foster trust.
- Relevance: Stories aligned with organizational values reinforce desired behaviors.
- Simplicity: Clear, memorable narratives are more likely to be internalized.
- Emotion: Emotional stories create stronger bonds and motivate action.

By mastering these elements, organizations can cultivate a compelling culture rooted in shared stories.

The Role of Storytelling in Organizational Culture and Success

Building Organizational Identity

Stories help establish an organization's identity by highlighting its origins, milestones, and values. For example, a company's founding story can inspire pride and loyalty among employees, aligning their efforts with a shared purpose. These narratives serve as reference points during times of change or crisis, providing stability and continuity.

Facilitating Change and Innovation

Change initiatives often falter without a compelling narrative. When leaders craft stories around the vision for change, employees are more likely to embrace new directions. For instance:

- Narratives about overcoming adversity foster resilience.
- Success stories of early adopters encourage wider acceptance.
- Future-oriented stories inspire innovation.

Organizations that excel in storytelling can better manage transitions, motivate staff, and sustain competitive advantage.

Enhancing Employee Engagement and Loyalty

Stories humanize the workplace. Sharing stories of individual contributions, customer impact, or community involvement fosters a sense of belonging. Engaged employees are more committed, productive, and aligned with organizational goals.

Creating a Shared Culture

Shared stories form the cultural glue that binds diverse teams. They encapsulate norms, ethics, and expectations, making them accessible and memorable. This collective storytelling nurtures a cohesive environment where everyone understands their role within the larger narrative.

Contrasting Perspectives: Humans as Subservient in Organizational Contexts

While storytelling emphasizes agency and meaning-making, some theories focus on humans' subservience or compliance within hierarchical structures. This

view suggests that individuals tend to conform to organizational rules and authority, often motivated by duty, fear, or incentives rather than narrative-driven understanding.

The Subservient Viewpoint Explained

This perspective draws from classical management theories and behavioral psychology, emphasizing:

- Hierarchical authority and power dynamics
- Standard operating procedures and compliance
- Motivation through rewards and punishments
- Limited emphasis on individual agency or storytelling

Organizations, in this view, are seen as systems where humans are primarily subservient actors following prescribed roles and directives.

Limitations of the Subservient Perspective

While compliance is necessary, overemphasizing subservience overlooks the importance of meaning, identity, and engagement. Organizations that rely solely on authority and control may face challenges like low morale, resistance to change, and superficial adherence.

Integrating the Perspectives: A Holistic View of Human Nature in Organizations

Most contemporary scholars recognize that human nature in organizations encompasses both storytelling and subservience. The interplay between these tendencies influences organizational culture profoundly.

Key Points in Integration

- Stories motivate compliance: Narratives can reinforce authority and norms, guiding subservient behavior.
- Agency through storytelling: Employees craft their own stories, fostering innovation and resistance.
- Balanced approach: Effective organizations blend storytelling with structured authority to motivate and guide behavior.

Practical Implications for Leaders

Leaders should leverage storytelling to inspire and engage while maintaining necessary structures of authority. Strategies include:

- Sharing compelling stories that align with organizational goals
- Encouraging employees to develop their own narratives
- Recognizing and rewarding storytelling that exemplifies core values
- Balancing control mechanisms with opportunities for meaningful participation

Conclusion: The Dominant View – Humans as Storytellers

Scholars of organizational culture predominantly agree that humans are by nature storytellers. This innate tendency to create and share stories is fundamental to how organizations develop their identities, foster loyalty, manage change, and drive success. While the concept of humans being subservient exists within specific contexts, particularly in hierarchical structures, it is the storytelling aspect that offers a more comprehensive understanding of human behavior in organizational settings. Recognizing the power of narratives enables organizations to cultivate vibrant cultures, motivate employees, and sustain long-term growth. As organizations continue to evolve in complexity, embracing storytelling as a core cultural tool remains essential for fostering meaning, engagement, and resilience in the modern workplace.

Keywords for SEO optimization:

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- Employee engagement
- Leadership and storytelling
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- Human subservience in organizations

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Frequently Asked Questions

According to scholars of organizational culture, humans are by nature _____.

storytellers.

What is the significance of humans being storytellers in organizational culture?

It highlights how individuals share values, beliefs, and norms through stories, shaping the organizational identity and culture.

How does the concept of humans as storytellers influence leadership within organizations?

Leaders can craft and share compelling stories to motivate employees, reinforce culture, and drive organizational change.

Why is understanding humans as storytellers important for managing organizational change?

Because stories help communicate the vision and rationale behind change initiatives, making them more relatable and accepted by employees.

Are humans naturally subservient according to organizational culture scholars?

No, the prevailing view emphasizes humans as storytellers, though some perspectives may discuss subservience in specific contexts.

Additional Resources

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Introduction

According To Scholars Of Organizational Culture, Humans Are By Nature _____ .a. Storytellersb. Subservientc. This provocative statement invites us to explore the fundamental nature of human behavior within organizational settings. Are humans inherently inclined to craft and share narratives that shape their identities and cultures? Or are they naturally predisposed to subservience, aligning themselves with authority and tradition? Understanding this core aspect of human nature is vital for unraveling how organizations function, evolve, and influence individual and collective identity. In this article, we delve into the scholarly perspectives on whether humans are primarily storytellers, subservient beings, or perhaps both, and what implications these views have for organizational culture.

The Power of Storytelling in Human Nature

The Primacy of Narratives in Human Life

Scholars of organizational culture consistently highlight storytelling as a fundamental human trait. Humans are naturally inclined to create, share, and interpret stories. This tendency is deeply embedded in our cognitive and social fabric, serving as a means of making sense of the world and establishing shared understanding.

- Evolutionary Roots: From an evolutionary perspective, storytelling has been a vital tool for survival. Early humans relied on stories to pass down knowledge, warn about dangers, and transmit cultural values across generations.
- Cognitive Function: The human brain is wired to process narratives more effectively than abstract data. Stories activate multiple areas in the brain, fostering emotional engagement and memory retention.

Storytelling as a Foundation of Organizational Culture

In organizations, stories function as powerful carriers of culture. They embody the values, norms, and assumptions that define an organization's identity.

- Mythology and Legends: Many organizations have foundational stories—such as the story of their founding or pivotal moments—that reinforce core values.
- Leadership Narratives: Leaders often craft compelling stories to inspire employees and articulate vision.
- Shared Identity: Employee stories foster a sense of belonging and collective identity, aligning individual behaviors with organizational values.

The Role of Storytelling in Leadership and Change Management

- Shaping Culture: Leaders leverage storytelling to embed desired behaviors and cultural norms.
- Managing Change: During periods of change, storytelling helps articulate the reasons behind transformation, reducing resistance and fostering buy-in.
- Creating Meaning: When employees understand the purpose behind their work through stories, engagement and motivation increase.

Empirical Evidence Supporting the Narrative View

Research by scholars like David Boje and Mary Jo Hatch emphasizes the importance of stories in organizational life. They argue that organizational stories are not mere entertainment but vital tools for constructing reality, negotiating identities, and sustaining culture.

The Subservient Perspective: Are Humans Naturally Submissive?

The Viewpoint of Subservience in Human Nature

Contrasting the storytelling perspective, some scholars emphasize the subservient aspect of human nature, suggesting that humans are inherently inclined to obedience and compliance within hierarchical structures.

- Historical and Anthropological Evidence: From early civilizations to modern institutions, hierarchies have played a central role. Humans tend to accept authority, often viewing obedience as a social norm.
- Psychological Theories: Classic theories like the Milgram experiment demonstrate humans' capacity for obedience even in morally ambiguous situations.

Subservience and Organizational Hierarchies

Within organizations, hierarchies are often justified by the need for order, efficiency, and coordination.

- Authority and Control: Leaders exert authority, expecting compliance to maintain stability and achieve organizational goals.
- Standardization of Behavior: Procedures and policies enforce conformity, reducing ambiguity and fostering predictability.
- Power Dynamics: Subservience can be viewed as a natural response to power structures that delineate roles and responsibilities.

Advantages and Drawbacks of a Subservient View

- Advantages:
 - Ensures stability and consistency.
 - Facilitates clear decision-making channels.
 - Maintains social order within complex organizations.
- Drawbacks:

- Can suppress creativity and innovation.
- May foster conformity and inhibit critical thinking.
- Risks creating a culture of compliance rather than engagement.

Empirical Insights and Critiques

While obedience studies like Milgram's provide insights into human tendencies, scholars like Zygmunt Bauman and others argue that humans are not solely subservient. Instead, they possess capacities for resistance, autonomy, and rebellion, which can challenge hierarchical authority and reshape organizational culture.

The Dual Nature of Human Behavior in Organizations

Are Humans Both Storytellers and Subservient?

Most contemporary scholars agree that human nature encompasses both tendencies—storytelling and subservience—depending on context, culture, and individual differences.

- Contextual Factors: In some situations, individuals may adopt storytelling to influence or challenge authority; in others, they may exhibit subservience to maintain harmony or security.
- Cultural Influences: Cultures that value individualism may emphasize storytelling and personal expression, whereas collectivist cultures may prioritize obedience and conformity.
- Leadership Styles: Transformational leaders often inspire through stories, while transactional leaders rely more on authority and compliance.

The Dynamic Interplay in Organizational Culture

Organizations are dynamic systems where storytelling and subservience coexist and influence each other.

- Narratives Reinforcing Authority: Leaders craft stories that legitimize power structures, shaping perceptions of authority.
- Resistance Through Stories: Employees may use storytelling to challenge norms or express dissent.
- Cultural Evolution: Over time, stories can transform subservient cultures into more participative and innovative environments.

Implications for Organizational Development and Leadership

Recognizing the Duality in Practice

Leaders and organizational developers should recognize that fostering a healthy culture involves balancing storytelling and acknowledging human

tendencies toward subservience.

- Harnessing Stories for Positive Change: Use narratives to inspire, motivate, and embed cultural values.
- Managing Authority Thoughtfully: Understand that authority should be exercised transparently to foster trust rather than blind obedience.
- Encouraging Critical Engagement: Create spaces where employees feel safe to question and narrate their perspectives.

Strategies for Cultivating a Resilient Organizational Culture

- Storytelling Workshops: Facilitate sessions where employees share stories about their experiences and values.
- Authentic Leadership: Leaders share genuine stories that resonate with organizational values.
- Empowerment Initiatives: Promote autonomy and voice, reducing the tendency toward blind subservience.

Conclusion

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a. Storytellers
b. Subservient
c. The evidence suggests that human beings possess a complex and dual nature. On one hand, storytelling is an intrinsic trait that shapes identity, culture, and organizational life. On the other, tendencies toward subservience—rooted in social, psychological, and evolutionary factors—also influence behavior within hierarchical structures. Recognizing this duality is essential for effective leadership, organizational change, and cultural development. By understanding and leveraging humans’ storytelling capacity while managing the realities of social hierarchies, organizations can foster environments where innovation, engagement, and stability coexist in a balanced harmony. Ultimately, embracing the nuanced nature of human behavior allows organizations to cultivate cultures that are resilient, authentic, and adaptive to change.

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