

White

Rethinking Culture

Embodied Cognition and the Origin of Culture in Organizations

Organizational or corporate 'culture' is the most overused and least understood word in business, if not society. While the topic has been an object of keen academic interest for nearly half a century, theorists and practitioners still struggle with the most basic questions: What is organizational culture? Can it be measured? Is it a dependent or independent variable? Is it causal in organizational performance, and, if so, how? Paradoxically, managers and practitioners ascribe cultural explanations for much of what constitutes organizational behavior in organizations, and, moreover, believe culture can be engineered to their own designs for positive business outcomes. What explains this divide between research and practice? While much academic research on culture is challenged by ontological, epistemic and ethical difficulties, there is little empirical evidence to show culture can be deliberately shaped beyond espoused values. The gap between research and practice can be explained by one simple reason: the science and practice of culture has yet to catch up to managerial intuition. Managers are correct in suspecting culture is a powerful normative force, but, until now, current theory and research is not able to adequately account for cultural behavior in organizations. Rethinking Culture describes and presents evidence for a new framework of organizational culture based on the cognitive science of the so-called cultural mind. It will be of relevance to academics and researchers with an interest in business and management, organizational culture, and organizational change, as well as cognitive and cultural anthropologists and sociologists interested in applications of theory in organizational and institutional settings.



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