"Talking things through" and "Putting it in writing": Two Codes of Communication in an Academic Institution

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ABSTRACT *This study is an interpretive ethnography based on participant observation over a two-year period of time as members of one academic institution responded to a Board of Trustees' mandate to revise the system of governance. Two communication codes were identified in faculty and administration subcultures of this institution. The code of "collegiality," used by members of the faculty subculture, valued "talking things through," because this channel of communication best affirmed the individual self and facilitated personal and egalitarian relations among organizational members. The code of "professional management," used by members of the administration subculture, privileged "putting it in writing," because written codification best insured the rights and responsibilities of organizational members.*

talking and writing are not merely neutral technologies of information transmission and exchange but powerful symbolic forces that articulate broader themes including models of personhood and sociality

Increasingly, scholars of organizational culture are rejecting a view of the organization as a single-voiced system of organization-wide consensus in favor of a view of the organization as a multi-voiced mosaic of subcultures (e.g., Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1991). From the perspective of this so-called differentiation approach (Meyerson & Martin, 1987), the ethnographer's task is no longer that of describing an organization's unitary culture; instead, the ethnographer faces the complicated challenge of identifying an organization's multiple subcultures and the deeply coded voices with which subculture members speak and hear. Young (1989), for example, has described how workers in different assembly lines in a British rainwear factory sustain the

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boundaries of their distinct shop-floor identities through their enactments of various shared organizational rituals. Similarly, van Maanen (1991) has described various employee subcultures that exist at Disneyland despite the organization's extensive efforts to train employees in a uniform culture of work practices.[1] The goal of the current study is to describe two opposing codes of communication used, respectively, by faculty and administration subcultures[2] of one institution of higher education as they responded to a Board of Trustee's mandate to revise the institution's system of governance.

The study assumes an interpretive ethnographic stance, as distinct from a critical ethnographic perspective (Carbaugh, 1991; Philipsen, 1991). That is, my goal is to explicate, but not to evaluate critically from an ethical standpoint, the communication codes used by subculture participants in their sense-making of the governance issue. Like Carbaugh's (1988a) ethnographic study of discursive action at a television station, I sought to understand the actions of institutional members from their points of view by attending to the terms they used in discussing the governance task. Although an understanding of the two subcultural codes makes intelligible the responses of institutional members to the Trustee mandate, the primary purpose of this study was not to assess this organization's functioning but rather to provide a portrait of two communication codes.

A code of communication in its general sense is a coherent system of symbols, meanings, and beliefs and normative rules about communication (Philipsen, 1992). In addition, as Carbaugh (1990) has argued, a communication code entails implicit or explicit cultural models of personhood and of social relations that serve to cohere the practices and beliefs surrounding communication. The codes of the faculty and administration subcultures manifest all of these features, but particular attention will be given to beliefs and normative prescriptions about the channel of communication and the models of personhood and of social relations that are implicated in the two codes.

The central feature that defines and differentiates the two systems of code practices is a belief about the valued channel of communication; one code privileged face-to-face interpersonal talk whereas the other code valued written codification. Thus, this study is situated at the intersection of two domains within the broader tradition of the ethnography of communication: the ethnography of speaking (e.g., Hymes, 1962) and the ethnography of writing (e.g., Basso, 1974). Research on the ethnography of speaking has burgeoned over the last thirty years (e.g., Philipsen & Carbaugh, 1986), and ethnographers of writing have addressed the symbolic force of written expression, especially as it relates to social class (e.g., Heath, 1983; Hoggart, 1957/1992). However, research at the nexus of speaking and writing is quite limited to date (e.g., Keller-Cohen, 1987).

The remainder of the paper is organized into the following three sections: (1) a

1. For a recent overview of organizational ethnographies from a differentiation perspective, see Frost *et al.* (1991), particularly pp. 55-156.

2. Although the subcultures can be described as faculty and administration, these groupings were not absolute. Some faculty symbolically aligned with the administration subculture, just as some administrators symbolically aligned with the faculty subculture.

brief description of the research setting and a summary of my methods; (2) presentation of key features of the two codes of communication; and (3) concluding remarks.

THE RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODS

The organization in which I conducted fieldwork is a small, private U.S. university. In its dissatisfaction with the lack of uniform policies and procedures of governance among the university's various schools, the Board of Trustees mandated that the faculty and administration engage in a thorough revision of its governance system with the twin goals of codifying all governance practices and increasing formal coordination among the schools. An institutional Task Force was formed to perform the revision work. Although the Board of Trustees initially established a time frame of under a year to complete the task, this deadline was repeatedly extended as members of faculty and administration subcultures became increasingly embroiled in a governance dispute that lasted over two years.

Throughout the period of this study, I occupied dual roles in the faculty and in the administration. For the two years of my participant observation research, I held a fixed-term, part-time appointment in the administrative office charged with oversight responsibility for the governance revision. Although governance work was not part of my formal administrative duties, I had access to written correspondence which the office received on the subject of governance, and I was privy to official and unofficial records of meetings where governance was discussed. In addition, I came in daily contact with central administrators as they coped with the growing governance dispute. Simultaneously, I continued my membership as a tenured member of the faculty of the institution, continuing to teach and to conduct research, to attend faculty meetings where governance was usually discussed, and to discuss governance informally with faculty colleagues. My dual membership in the administration and in the faculty afforded me dual insider perspectives on the two subcultures and their respective codes of communication.

Throughout the period of research, I recorded extensive fieldnotes on activity surrounding the revision of the policies and procedures of governance. Because it was not out-of-role for me to be seen taking notes during meetings, I attempted to record verbatim those utterances which I regarded as particularly important, and I summarized key meetings at their conclusion by describing their major discursive themes. During this period, I also collected written documents which I thought were relevant. Unfortunately, I was unable to tape record actual interaction eipsodes between members of the faculty and administration subcultures; thus, the data set is limited by the absence of situated, interactional dynamics.

Several months into the study, I began a process of analytic induction (Bulmer, 1979) in which I searched for emergent patterns in my fieldnotes and collected documents. Two codes of communication appeared to organize the emergent patterns I identified in the data, and subsequent note-taking and document collection was used as a means of "testing" my tentative formulations of the two codes. Consistent with the logic of analytic induction, I made revisions in my conception of the codes as a result of such ongoing testing.

As my articulation of the two codes neared closure, I informally shared my analysis with selected members who had identified themselves with either the faculty subculture or the administration subculture in order to test the validity of my observations. I sought to achieve Carbaugh's (1988b, p. xiv) strived-for-effect of hearing these members say "That's right, but I hadn't thought of it that way." Appropriate revisions in my understanding of the two codes occurred following this validity check among subculture members.

Until the point at which I informally shared my analysis of the two communication codes, institutional members were not aware that I was collecting data as part of a participant observation study. As part of making my research project public, I informed the two top officers of the institution of my activity and received their encouragement and support to continue.

THE CODES OF "COLLEGIALITY" AND "PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT"[3]

Several iterations of draft goverance documents were developed across the two-year period, but reactions to the drafts varied little from iteration to iteration. When the Task Force charged with drafting the new governance system repeatedly produced documents that attempted to "put in writing" policies and procedures for all identifiable aspects of goverance, members of the administration subculture generally expressed their support of the drafts as exemplars of "professional management" practices. By contrast, members of the faculty subculture reacted negatively, perceiving the draft documents as overly "bureaucratic" and "legalistic." Members of the faculty subculture countered with their own governance draft proposals that articulated a system of governance characterized by organizational members "talking things through" on an issue-by-issue basis. Although these counter-proposals were overwhelmingly endorsed by the faculty because they maintained the academic tradition of "collegiality" in day-to-day decision-making, members of the administration subculture reacted negatively, claiming that such proposals perpetuated the excessive informality and inconsistency of *ad hoc* decision-making. Because the terms "collegiality" and "professional management" were frequently employed by members of the faculty and administration subcultures, respectively, in describing their beliefs, I hereafter refer to the two codes using these native terms.

Reactions to "talking things through" and "putting it in writing" were deeply coded responses that can best be understood by discussing each code's key constituent beliefs about face-to-face and written channels of communication. The two codes are mirror opposites of one another with respect to three underlying themes: models of personhood; models of social relations; and beliefs about channel effectiveness and efficiency. Each theme is discussed in turn.

3. Words and phrases appearing in quotations are verbatim instances of language use by organizational members.

Opposing Models of Personhood

Carbaugh (1990, p. 157) has suggested that what it means to be a person is everywhere coded in communication; the codes of "collegiality" and "professional management" are no exceptions. A key constituent belief in the code of "collegiality" was that the person is a unique individual whose integrity is best affirmed through the informality of face-to-face talk; by contrast, a core belief in the code of "professional management" was that the person is constituted through his or her roles, positions and category memberships and that people are best served by written codification. To paraphrase Carbaugh (1990, p. 158), the "personal me" and the "positional me" capture the two constructions of personhood implicated by the codes of "collegiality" and "professional management," respectively.

Members of the "collegiality" code believed that a uniform, written governance document would devalue the unique individuality of the person in two ways. First, they thought that such an approach to institutional governance displayed a lack of faith in the person's ability to reach decisions. Second, they thought that elaborate written governance policies and procedures would be impersonal, stripped of the contextual particulars in a given situation.

Faith in the ability of people to "talk things through" displayed "trust and respect" for the capacity of the individual to bring good sense and honesty to bear in resolving problems as they occurred. By contrast, written codification displayed "fundamental mistrust" of the individual. This particular belief was an emotion-laden one which garnered highly intense expression among members of the faculty subculture. The following excerpt from a letter written by a member of the "collegiality" code community to a top administrator illustrates this belief. The letter was written to complain about a proposed written policy for monitoring sick-leave absences and stated in part:

> The assumption on record keeping is that the employee is not to be trusted. . . . Most of us . . . have kept our preventative dental and health appointments during business hours. I usually have my hair cut every couple of months at 8 a.m., arriving at school a little after nine. I've never felt guilty about these appointments nor do I believe I've abused the school. Neither have I felt abused by middle of the night phone calls . . . and doing something work-related at home at least six nights a week. . . . The combination, it seems to me—the ability to make choices about one's time *in toto*—is part and parcel of being . . . a professional.

From the perspective of this code community member, written codification displayed mistrust of the choices made by the individual person.

An equally vivid example of the belief in the integrity of the individual person occurred in a verbal exchange I witnessed in arriving a few minutes early to a committee meeting. At the opposite end of the table, a member of the "collegiality" code community was expressing to a second person, in a voice too loud to be ignored, his feelings of "being betrayed" because the second person, following a prior meeting between the two of them, had written a summary memo of understanding. The accuser expressed feeling "insulted" because, as he expressed it, "I am a person of my word. If I *say* I'm going to do something, I will, and I don't need any [expletive] written memo on it." In short, written documentation was thought to display mistrust in the integrity of the person.

Members of the code of "collegiality" also expressed their belief that informal, face-to-face talk was "personalized" in contrast to the "impersonal" quality of written policies and procedures. To "collegiality" code users, the impersonal quality of written codification carried the danger of ignoring people's unique circumstances and needs. Written codification, according to one code community member, "stripped the affected people from the specific problem," in contrast to informal, face-to-face talk which recognized that "the issue and the process can't be separated from the person." An illustration of the centrality of the unique person was provided by one of the administrators to whom I summarized this paper for purposes of a validity check. This administrator had been present at a meeting of the faculty's curriculum committee when a proposal for a new course, submitted by a long-time faculty member, came up for discussion. The proposal had apparently been written in a hurry, because it was incomplete and left out some information requested on the course proposal form. A member of the committee, also a long-time faculty member, verbalized that all the committee needed to know about the course was the proposed instructor because "the rest was unnecessary bureaucratic detail." This faculty member endorsed the general reputation of the instructor who was proposing the new course and urged the committee to approve the proposal on that basis. The course gained unanimous approval without the submission of additional written materials by the course proposer.

In contrast to the code of "collegiality," the code of "professional management" regarded people as members of category groups (e.g., professionals, females, etc.) and as occupants of organizational positions (e.g., assistant professors, department chairs, etc.). "Professional management" code community members believed that written codification of records, policies, and procedures provided maximum protection for the rights of people, whereas informal face-to-face talk potentially jeopardized people's rights through the bias of personalized responses. Written records and policies insured "consistency of response" on the part of the organization and its members, thereby preventing "arbitrary and capricious action" through the personalized reaction of any single organizational member, whether administrator or faculty member. Arbitrary action could often occur without intent, argued "professional management" code users, especially when the organization experienced turnover in its membership. As one member of the "professional management" code community stated, "If there's no written record or guidelines, the institutional memory walks out the door when its people walk." To members of the "professional management" code community, the de-personalized nature of codified policies and procedures guaranteed that personal factors could not lead to inequitable treatment of people. As one code user expressed to me,

> It's easy to make an emotional pitch for responding to each individual person uniquely, but it's precisely such an approach that results in things like "good old boy" networks and discrimination against minorities and women. Without written policies and procedures, an organization has no way to provide fairness to its members.

"Professional management" code users believed that organizational members were "professionals," which meant that they should willingly subscribe to "nationally-accepted standards for professional management in higher education," that is, written codification of practices. The view of personhood espoused by "collegiality"

code members was translated by many "professional management" code users as a display of non-professionalism. At a weekly staff meeting among administrators, one officer of the institution remarked to fellow administrators that "The problem [here] is [the institution's] inability to accept nationally-accepted standards of professional conduct and modern management. What we have here is backwater provincialism."

The views of personhood implicated in the codes of "professional management" and "collegiality" bear close resemblance to the constructions of personhood in Philipsen's (1986, 1992) codes of "honor" and "dignity," respectively.[4] Like the two codes identified in this paper, Philipsen's two codes serve to define one another in their opposition. The code of "honor," which Philipsen found characteristic of the working-class Chicago neighborhood of "Teamsterville," was characterized by a view of the person as persona, that is, a bearer of a social identity based on roles and positions who is embedded in a hierarchically organized social order. The code of "dignity," which Philipsen found characteristic of some middle-class American discourse, valued the person for his or her unique self. Like the code of "honor," the code of "professional management" displayed a world view in which the person is framed as a holder of roles, positions, and group memberships. To "professional management" code users, people occupied the role of "professional" and thus should be willing to manage goverance in a professional way, that is, through written codification. People occupied positions in the organizational hierarchy, and the responsibilities and rights of a given position needed to be clearly spelled out in writing. People occupied group category memberships such as "female" and "ethnic minority," and such groups needed to be protected against the vagaries of people's idiosyncratic responses. By contrast, the code of "collegiality," like the code of "dignity," privileged the unique individuality of the person, challenging the legitimacy of attempts to reduce personhood to a codified set of policies and practices. Like Philipsen's "dignity" code users, for whom interpersonal communication functioned almost as an elixir, "collegiality" code users regarded informal face-to-face talk as the valued means by which problems were resolved.

Philipsen (1987, p. 245) has argued that all societies must deal with "the inevitable tension between the impulse of individuals to be free and the constraints of communal life." Although a society at a given point in time may privilege one pole of this individual-communal dialectic over the other, the individual and the communal voices are in a relationship of ongoing counterpoint. In contemporary Anglo-American society, individual action and expression, represented by the "real" or "true" Self, is perceived to be constrained by society's restrictions and role constraints, yet society's institutions and policies are necessary in enabling coordinated social action (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Carbaugh, 1988b; Katriel & Philipsen, 1981; Moffatt, 1989). The two opposing visions of personhood contained in the codes of "collegiality" and "professional management" clearly represent the two symbolic poles of the broader American cultural dialectic between the individual and the social order, respectively. The

4. I am grateful to Gerry Philipsen who read an earlier version of this paper and first pointed out to me the similarity between the two codes I observed and the codes of "dignity" and "honor."

individual-communal cultural dialectic permeates aspects of American discourse as diverse as televised talk shows (Carbaugh, 1988b) and the day-to-day talk of dormitory living among university undergraduates (Moffatt, 1989). Thus, it is not surprising to hear the voices of individuality and the communal social order in the codes of "collegiality" and "professional management."

Although the codes of "collegiality" and "professional management" are associated, respectively, with individual and communal dialectical poles, each code also contained the muted voice of the opposite pole. For example, members of the "professional management" code community sought to protect and enable persons through written codification, thereby affirming the individual pole in the individual-communal dialectic. However, the sense of the person was a position-centered one to these code members, in contrast to the unique self envisioned by "collegiality" code members. Similarly, members of the "collegiality" code community displayed a latent communal voice which legitimated the institutional social order, although the way in which this occurred was different from the sense of social order envisioned by "professional management" code users. To members of the "collegiality" code community, the institutional social order was comprised of the totality of interpersonal interactions that individual persons enacted on an *ad hoc* basis; individuals did not function autonomously but in interdependence with others. Bellah *et al.* (1985) have noted a similar muted communal voice in the talk of individualism in the broader American culture; the individual American, largely unattached to the broader society and its public roles, surrounds himself or herself with a network of personal relationships, thereby constructing social order in a manner similar to that envisioned by "collegiality" code members.

Carbaugh (1990) has suggested that models of personhood are usually embedded in broader models of sociality, that is, how persons relate to one another in the social world. The differing models of social relations implicated in the codes of "collegiality" and "professional management" are discussed next.

Opposing Models of Social Relations

Social relations can be conceptualized along two underlying dimensions: distance and power (Carbaugh, 1990). The code of "collegiality" represents what Carbaugh (1990, p. 159) has referred to as a solidarity-based system, that is, a model of social relations that features minimized social distance between persons who have equal power. By contrast, the code of "professional management" represents a deference-based system (Carbaugh, 1990, p. 159), that is, a model of sociality in which persons of unequal power maintain social distance from one another.

To members of the "collegiality" code community, social relations should be based on personalized interaction between unique selves. As one faculty member expressed to peers during a faculty meeting devoted to discussion of one of the draft goverance documents circulated by the Task Force: "I much prefer a situation in which people can act like friends and settle any differences over lunch." Reliance on written records, policies, and procedures, by contrast, was regarded by this faculty member as "appropriate to a court of law but not the academy."

To members of the "professional management" code community, social relations should be based on impersonal interaction between occupants of organizational positions. From the perspective of these code members, personal feelings between

persons, both positive and negative, had no place in organizational functioning. As one administrator expressed it, "You should treat your closest friend the same way you treat your greatest enemy while at work. If you do your job well, no one should be able to know which is the friend and which is the enemy. Of course, who you invite over to your house for dinner on Friday night is your own business." Written codification was needed in order to "hold in check" subjective positive and negative feelings between people which might otherwise bias judgments and actions.

The codes of "collegiality" and "professional management" contained different assumptions about power relations between people and the role of face-to-face talk versus written codification in empowering persons. "Collegiality" code users believed that egalitarianism was the "natural state" among persons free to solve differences through face-to-face talk and that written codification disrupted this state of equal power relations by creating an "elite" group of people who were skilled in manipulating written policies and procedures. Members of the "collegiality" code community believed that "people are equals in talking through solutions to problems." To these code users, face-to-face talk also empowered all affected parties by giving them "shared responsibility for, and ownership of, decisions." By contrast, "collegiality" code users believed that written codification was "non-democratic," "an attempt to display legal authority," and "a power trip for those who were interpreters of the written words" (i.e., the university's legal counsel and the central administration). Because written codification was framed by a legalistic mentality, it empowered those who could "play legal word games" and disenfranchised the "everyday faculty member" who didn't understand such "legal gamesmanship."

"Collegiality" code community members compared their desired governance document to the "U.S. Constitution," in contrast to the "IRS Code of Governance" supported by the administration. The "U.S. Constitution" and "IRS Code" metaphors were symbolically rich and evoked strong imagery to these code users. The "U.S. Constitution" metaphor evoked meanings of democracy and egalitarianism. By contrast, the "IRS Code" metaphor evoked images of bureaucracy, uninterpretable "legal-ese," and a system that worked against the "common man[sic]" to the advantage of the few.

Members of the "professional management" code community believed that "collegiality" code members were fundamentally naive about power relations in the absence of written codification. "Professional management" code users believed in "the power of information," and that written policies and procedures that were widely distributed throughout the organization best empowered all organizational members. To "professional management" code users, *ad hoc* face-to-face exchanges provided information only to those members who participated directly in the exchange or who were connected through their social networks to the participants. Such an "oral tradition" was regarded as "implicitly elitist because only those in the know have any power." As one administrative officer remarked to me, "When it's all there in black and white, everybody has an opportunity to use it. When a decision is made over coffee, it can remain a secret or become known to people only in bits and pieces over time."

A frequently employed metaphor used by "professional management" code users to describe governance by informal talk was the "football endrun." Without written

codification, any dissatisfied party would seek reconsideration by going to the occupant of the next higher position in the organizational hierarchy. Such "squeaky wheel endruns" placed people at the top of the organization in the awkward position of hearing "only parts of stories, out of context," thereby functioning to disempower them and the subordinate whose decision they were being asked to reconsider. Further, "professional management" code users believed that the "endrun" phenomenon successfully disempowered most of the people who were not anywhere near the top of the organization. As one code user stated, "Endruns give the power to people who are vocal and opportunistic. Who protects the quiet, little guy?"

Although members of both faculty and administration subcultures expressed a goal of "empowering" organizational members, it is clear that the term held different meanings in the codes of "collegiality" and "professional management." To members of the "professional management" code community, governance through informal talk would naturally lead to power abuse on illegitimate grounds, for example, who had the "squeakiest wheel." Written codification was necessary to empower all organizational members, that is, to create an environment in which everyone was fully informed of their position-based rights and responsibilities. To "professional management" code users, "empowerment" was a largely defensive act to prevent the violation of the rights to which a person was entitled through his or her position or place in the organization. By contrast, members of the "collegiality" code community did not legitimate power based on the rights and responsibilities associated with positions. To these code community members, power was situated in the moment and "empowerment" was proactively performed through informal, *ad hoc* decision-making.

Given the differences identified in the two codes to this point in the paper, it is not surprising that members of the faculty and administration subcultures held opposing beliefs about the effectiveness and efficiency of face-to-face talk versus written expression. The issue of effectiveness and efficiency is discussed next.

Opposing Beliefs About Channel Effectiveness and Efficiency

The "oral tradition" of face-to-face talk was widely regarded by "collegiality" code members as more efficient than written codification. Policies and procedures codified in writing were "unresponsive" because they proposed only general and abstract solutions to particular, situated problems. Even if an attempt were made to codify every conceivable condition and qualifier, the result would still be an "unresponsive" solution that would be "inefficient because people would get bogged down in the barrage of legalistic words" which would be "more obfuscating than helpful." One faculty member passionately implored colleagues on the Task Force to minimize written codification, arguing that "the more formalized the words, the greater the likelihood of misunderstanding because there's more to take issue with."

Members of the "collegiality" code community favored a short, written document of governance that basically would articulate a philosophy of "collegiality" and thereby serve as "enabling legislation" for interpersonal problem-solving and decision-making on an as-needed basis. They repeatedly objected to Task Force proposals in which standing faculty committees were identified, arguing that such

committees would feel obligated to meet and "find unnecessary things to keep them busy simply because they were named in writing." Committees, these code users reasoned, should form in an *ad hoc* manner to solve specific problems, and then they should "self-destruct." Determination of when such *ad hoc* committees would form and dissolve would emerge from "collegial exchange" among the involved persons.

The first counter-proposal of governance that was developed by a coalition of faculty members was labeled "Governance Lite" by the faculty. Inexpensive buttons were produced which had written on them "Governance Lite" against a bright green background. These buttons were distributed widely across the institution and were worn proudly by members of the "collegiality" code community. The use of the term "Lite" evoked rich imagery to these code community members, especially the connotation of good health associated with the consumption of "lite" or low caloric foods and beverages. The bright green color of the button also contributed to the vitality which "collegiality" code members associated with their streamlined governance counter-proposal. Although this particular counter-proposal was not adopted, all subsequent proposals advanced by faculty groups were also referred to as "governance lite" to underscore the greater effectiveness and efficiency that these code members attributed to their model of governance.

Members of the "professional management" code community articulated three reasons which grounded their belief in the written channel as more effective and efficient than *ad hoc* problem-solving through informal talk. First, written codification afforded clear guidelines and parameters for action; it "at least establishes the boundaries for what needs to be interpreted or argued about." By contrast, thought these code members, the "oral tradition" led perpetually to "re-discovering the wheel," activity which these code users regarded as inefficient and wasteful. Second, the "endrun" phenomenon "set up" organizational members at the top for poor decision-making based on partial information, thereby lowering the institution's effectiveness in the longrun. Last, "professional management" code users believed that written records, policies, and procedures protected the organization against external forces. One member of this code community opined that the institution could save money on attorney fees and lawsuits "if it had anything in place" that suggested "coherent and consistent institutional policies and procedures."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To members of the "collegiality" code community, "talking things through" was regarded as an elegant system of institutional governance. "Collegial talk" was viewed as respectful of the individual, personalized, egalitarian, and effective, in contrast to the opposite characteristics that were felt to typify "putting it in writing." Members of the "professional management" code community held beliefs that were the mirror opposites of those expressed by "collegial" organizational members. To "professional management" code users, written codification was standard practice in professionally-run institutions of higher education; "putting it in writing" was effective precisely because it was impersonal and recognized the differing rights and responsibilities associated with various organizational positions and roles.

The members of the "collegiality" and "professional management" code communities participated in what can be characterized as a cross-cultural encounter in which the participants were speaking the same language but using different codes of meaning. For example, both faculty and administration used the term "professional," but it did not evoke the same meaning in the two subcultures. As evidenced in the letter quoted earlier on the proposed sick-leave policy, "collegiality" code members thought that "professionals" should be trusted to make individual choices because their professionalism would never jeopardize the institution's best interests. However, to "professional management" code users, the "true professional" did not regard professionalism as license for unrestricted individual discretion. Similarly, members of both code communities espoused the goal of serving the best interests of the person, but the person was not conceived similarly in the two code communities. Further, members of both code communities sought to empower organizational members, but "empowerment" meant very different things in the two communication codes.

Members of the two code communities failed to frame their governance dispute in terms of discrepant communication codes, electing instead to engage in discursive assertions and counter-assertions that proclaimed the superiority of their own governance model and which caricatured members of the competing code community through a variety of negative dispositional attributes. Such discursive posturings are hardly surprising. As Bailey (1983) has astutely observed, reasoned argument is often lost to emotionally-charged discourse when conflicting premises are present among various factions involved in organizational decision-making. The themes that characterized the "collegiality" and "professional management" codes were mirror opposites of one another, thereby ensuring that one code community would reject what the other code community regarded as a logical premise upon which to build a well-reasoned and persuasive argument. Thus, members of the two code communities resorted to what Bailey (1983) describes as "the rhetoric of assertion," that is, emotive assertions of moral superiority designed less to promote reasoned dialogue with competing factions and more to bolster the "true believers" of one's own faction and to provoke emotional attachment from the uncommitted. In the end, this institution's Board of Trustees, convinced that the ongoing governance dispute was dysfunctional, adopted a governance system that was very close in philosophy to what had been in place prior to their mandate for change.

One possible value of an ethnographic study such as this one is the alternative understanding it could potentially provide to organizational participants who are engaged in a dispute that is deeply cultured. In framing their conflict in a different way, participants may be positioned to respond differently to it. However, it is important not to cast "understanding" naively as an elixir. Obviously, organizational subcultures may have conflicts of interest that involve organizational resources other than the symbolic resources implicated in their codes of communication. Further, it may be in the factionalized interests of organizational subcultures to sustain their bases of difference. Members of factionalized subcultures may very well understand their code differences but elect to continue their coded practices because such actions sustain subcultural identity. Thus, for example, code community members may perpetuate "collegial" or "professional" ways of conduct-

ing their organizational lives in order to sustain their respective identities as faculty and administrators.

Although many of the particulars that surrounded this institution's governance dispute and its codes of "collegiality" and "professional management" are undoubtedly unique to its circumstances, institutions of higher education are prime candidates for the development of multiple subcultures (Tierny, 1988). Because of the increased need for specialization of knowledge and expertise that characterizes higher education leadership as well as academic disciplines (Keller, 1983), faculty and administration will increasingly have limited opportunity for cross-fertilization, thereby increasing the likelihood that separate faculty and administration subcultures will develop and continue. The communication codes that are voiced by faculty and administration subcultures at other institutions remains a question for future research.

The codes of communication discussed in this paper suggest that talking and writing are not merely neutral technologies of information transmission and exchange but powerful symbolic forces that articulate broader themes including models of personhood and sociality. This ethnography contributes to our understanding of how writing and talking are viewed by members of two subcultures in one institution of higher education, but additional research is needed to explore the intersection of talking and writing among other cultural communities.

This study has attempted to provide some insight into the communication codes that members of one organization used to conduct their communicative life. It contributes to the growing corpus of scholarly work devoted to the description and interpretation of communicative meanings and practices in particular contexts, thereby increasing our empirical base of ethnographically-oriented case studies. In addition, the study supports the theoretical utility of personhood and sociality as conceptual tools by which to understand cultural codes of communication. Last, the study suggests that themes of "honor" and "dignity" are evident in communication practices beyond the boundaries of Teamsterville and middle-class interpersonal life identified by Philipsen (1992).

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