The Symphony: Organizational Discourse and the Symbolic Tensions Between Artistic and Business Ideologies

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ABSTRACT This study represents an ethnographic account of the organizational discourse that constituted, at least in part, the cultural world of a regional symphony. Within the Symphony, organizational members embraced a particular ideology that was grounded in the symbolic expression of either an artistic code or a business code, each code competing with one another for organizational prominence. The enactment of these codes revealed the fractured nature of Symphony life where musicians and their expressions of the artistic code were pitted against management and the board of directors who primarily advanced a corporate vision of decision making. Based on the routine speech of organizational members, it was argued that a business orientation prevailed much of the time and, consequently, served to diminish artistic concerns about how the Symphony should function.

KEY WORDS: ethnographic, ideology, codes, discourse

An analysis of organizational interactions from a cultural perspective necessarily implies some sharedness of symbolic activity, i.e., a “spoken system of symbols, symbolic forms, and meanings that constitutes and enacts a common sense of work-life” (Carbaugh, 1988, p. 216). This sharedness, however, does not preclude an element of opposition among cultural symbols that mediates what organizational members envision as an ideal course of action. In any concrete organizational setting, then, there are various and competing conceptions of what is fundamental to its members (Baxter, 1993; Meyerson & Martin, 1987). The present study offers an ethnographic account of one organization, a regional symphony (hereafter, the Symphony), in which the members discursively define their cultural space along two ideological lines. More specifically, this paper presents the formulation and enactment of two cultural codes, each code suggest-
ing a particular ideology towards the accomplishment of Symphony goals.² The Symphony’s communicative activities indicate that organizational members have a primary allegiance to either a “business code” or “artistic code.” That is, as members interact with one another they are guided by the ideological assumptions embedded in each code, a code that gives meaning to the way individuals advance their views about the proper functioning of the Symphony.

In the context of the Symphony, the discord between those organizational members that embraced an artistic orientation and those who adopted a business philosophy was readily apparent. One response to this condition would be to suggest that neither code is “precisely right or precisely wrong” but rather that each are like “voices, or personalities, or positions, integrally affecting one another” (Burke, 1945, p. 512). Although such a response may seem reasonable, it is necessary to heed Deetz’s (1992) cautionary note that “Not all discourses are equal or have the same power” (p. 263). Certainly within the Symphony there was a growing concern, at least from members of the artistic community, that a “corporate discourse” prevailed much of the time. From my observations and interpretation over the course of one year, it was evident that, ultimately, the Symphony’s activities and decisions were driven by assumptions inherent in a business orientation. In a variety of settings (e.g., board meetings, committee meetings, individual conversations with Symphony members) and across numerous topics (e.g., programming, selecting a new music director/conductor, long-range planning), final decisions were framed within a business ideology and by those who adopted such an ideology (i.e., primarily, management and the board of directors).

The preeminence of a business ideology in a non-corporate setting like the Symphony has the potential to encourage divisiveness and marginalize those individuals who are resistant to such a corporate orientation. In fact, it has already been reported that the relationships between musicians, management, and the board of directors at this Symphony were fractured and that they were like “boxers waiting to throw the next punch” [Ruud, 1995, p. 219]. At the Symphony, where the predominant philosophy is grounded in the assumptions of a business orientation, it is important to illustrate how other discourses may not be heard with the same force or level of inclusion. It is at the intersection between the discourse of Symphony members and the ideological meanings they produce that this study proceeds. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to (1) illuminate the nature of the two codes as they are constructed in the routine speech of Symphony members; (2) demonstrate the discursive struggle for power between those organizational members who adhere to a business code and those who adopt a business orientation; (3) extend both the analytical discussion and empirical formulation of codes to reveal the ideological underpinnings that accompany particular sets of discourses.

An Interpretive Framework for Understanding Symphony Life

This study represents a cultural analysis of a particular group of social interactants in an organizational context and, most broadly, is grounded in the traditions of interpretive research and the social construction of meanings (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bochner, 1985; Della-Piana & Anderson, 1995; Eisenberg, 1986; Grossberg, 1979; Trujillo, 1992). At one level, the concept of culture, as a resource for describing and analyzing organizational life, provides a way of understanding how members within the organization make sense out of their everyday interac-
tions. Culture, regardless of theoretical orientation, implies some sense of structure and purpose in which organizational members adhere to and discursively reproduce as part of their ongoing lives. A cultural system, when applied to organizations, suggests a coherency, purpose, and particular pattern of symbolic action that functions to bond organizational members in some meaningful and lasting way.

However, a persistent criticism of cultural studies is that organizations are inevitably portrayed as systems built on cooperation, consensus and solidarity (Alvesson, 1987; Deetz, 1992, 1995). Empirically, of course, there is ample evidence that neither cultures nor organizations live in complete harmony (cf. Bilmes, 1976; Pelto & Pelto, 1975; Rosen, 1985; Ruud, 1995; Van Maanen, 1991). Such a "harmonious" conception implies that culture represents "a world of balance, with no sense of history and without any source of change inside the society" (Craib, 1984, p. 50). The position that cultures (or organizations) achieve and maintain a unified philosophy is untenable, if researchers wish to account for the multiple voices and divergent ways in which organizational members engage one another.4

Following Deetz (1992, 1995) and others who take into account both symbols of unity and opposition, this study also highlights the discursive manner in which members of the Symphony express with greater clarity and force competing worldviews of their organization. Culture viewed in this way reframes organizational life as "contested political domains" (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 141) and, therefore, can be empirically described and theoretically examined as a discursively contested phenomenon.

A fundamental premise guiding this study, then, is that the communication of organizational members virtually creates the cultural world of the Symphony. Within this world, it is language, or more aptly "languageing" (Stewart, 1986, p. 65), that constitutes the reality of its members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Or, as Eagleton (1991) describes it, "... reality itself, before we come to constitute it through our discourses, is just some inarticulate x" (p. 203).5 Furthermore, the relationship between discourse and reality within any culture or organization is never neutral but rather "deeply political" in its expression and meaning (Deetz, 1992, p. 129). In this sense, the Symphony represents one organization in which its world "encompasses a multitude of different, incompatible language games, each with its own untransferable principles of self-legitimation..." (Lyotard, 1984, p. 52), and where discourses "vies for legitimacy and power, each one with its own resources for rationality and its own standards for evaluation" (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 174). Language, expressed in its ideological form, serves not only to promote and protect the vested interests of the organizational members who hold them, but also encompasses a relational quality where ideas and beliefs are seen in opposition to one another (Eagleton, 1991).6 In short, ideology can be described as "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson, 1990, p. 7). In the context of the Symphony, ideological preferences are expressed and power is negotiated through the situated communicative strategies of organizational members.

Ethnographic Assumptions and Procedures

As a means of documenting the ideological differences generated by Symphony members, this study embraced a methodology that adheres to the general principles of ethnographic research.7 However, like culture, the ethnographic enter-
prise employs a number of different and competing agendas. Fiske (1991), for example, claims that it is axiomatic that social inequalities exist, and, therefore, ethnographers are obligated to report them. Fiske and others who adopt some variation of "conflictual" social theories emphasize a social life that is inherently oppositional and where power and control are the natural mechanisms for maintaining social order. Under these circumstances, it is incumbent for ethnographers to assume and articulate those factors (e.g., differences in social class) that allow certain members within a social institution to acquire and maintain power over others. A countervailing position, and the perspective which is applied in this study, suggests that even though it is inevitable that such inequalities occur in any given social setting, it remains for the participants within such situations to comment on them first rather than for the researcher, a priori, to assume them (cf. Carbaugh, 1991). In this sense, ethnographers are not necessarily trying to obscure or avoid conflicts that exist (whether they are based on gender, ethnicity, social class or other factors), but rather are hesitant to report such inequities until actually observed in the behavior of communal members.

Within the Symphony, it was discursively demonstrated that organizational members recognized differences in power and influence. Consequently, it is the focus of this paper to highlight those differences as they are manifested in the discourse of Symphony members across a variety of topics and settings. It should be noted that when I began my fieldwork at the Symphony, I had very few preconceptions of what social meanings I would find and virtually no sense of favoritism for any particular group within the Symphony. That is, when I entered the Symphony, I had no particular political agenda to advance and, therefore, was not aligned with the philosophy of the musicians, the administrators, or the board of directors. However, it soon became clear that there were significant differences between these groups in terms of how the Symphony should conduct its affairs and, therefore, it became my focus to report and make some assessment of these disparate orientations.

To document and understand the ways in which ideological preferences were expressed and negotiated, particular attention was made to native expressions of Symphony members. Hidden in seemingly inconsequential instances of social interaction were forms and functions of conversation that were culturally revealing. Mumby (1988), paraphrasing Althusser, states that "ideology does not stand up and shout 'I am ideological;' it is the very nature of ideology to disguise itself against being seen as ideology" (p. 35). Utilizing Burke's (1950, 1966) general formulation of symbolic action, there was an attempt to articulate these often subtle manifestations of ideology by identifying prominent and culturally significant terms and themes that gave rise to localized meaning for members of the Symphony.

The complete ethnography involved over 400 hours of fieldwork at the Symphony offices and at various Symphony functions including, rehearsals, performances, board meetings, and social gatherings. This effort subsumed several methodological techniques including, interviews, observation, and participant observation (e.g., working with other Symphony personnel in creating public service announcements for local media, composing letters to sponsors and subscribers to the Symphony, and an assortment of other chores idiosyncratic to the Symphony). Typically, interviews were of an informal and unstructured nature.
serving two basic purposes: (1) to search for symbols and meanings that revealed relevant issues to Symphony members, which I then could pursue in more detail using other fieldwork techniques (i.e., observation and participant observation); (2) to use this type of data as one form of triangulation in an effort to confirm or disconfirm earlier interpretations. Extensive notes were taken during interviews and/or observations, so I did not have to rely on memory alone. Interactions that were audio-recorded were transcribed for content only. To supplement the face-to-face data gathering process, I distributed a brief survey to the board of directors and the musicians. The question from the survey most pertinent to this study pertained to issues that Symphony members found most troublesome as they interacted with one another. Finally, I had access to several key informants across all three groups (i.e., musicians, board members, administrators) who explained “native” terms to me, gave me guidance regarding how to pursue additional information and sources, and assisted me in confirming or disconfirming initial interpretations. The complete ethnographic record was a compilation of field notes (250 single-spaced, typed pages), newspaper accounts, organizational printed materials, and the like.

Procedurally, there was a “searching out of significant symbols, clusters of significant symbols, and clusters of clusters of significant symbols” which, in their formation, serve to define and distinguish different forms of human experience (Geertz, 1973, p. 408). In brief, reoccurring words and phrases expressed in organizational interactions were assessed in terms of their cultural “weight;” i.e., their “comparative intensity and frequency of its use, the strength and clarity of its imagery, and the frequency with which it is linked with other key terms” (Berthold, 1976, p. 303). Furthermore, it was possible to identify clusters of terms that stood in opposition to one another, forming “agon” or a “dramatic conflict” (Berthold, 1976; Burke, 1941/1973, 1984). In other words, symbols and clusters of symbols “may exist in contradiction to each other as opposites or as opponents, dominant and subordinate, marked and unmarked, stressed and unstressed, encompassing and encompassed, and so on” (Schneider, 1976, p. 218). Thus, it was in these discursive contradictions where meaningful assumptions about Symphony life was expressed and negotiated.

In this study, these contradictions were articulated as two competing codes, each code representing a different and competing interpretation of organizational life. At its most basic, codes “function in conversation to frame actions, to define contexts, to construct a coherent sense” (Carbaugh, 1990, p. 139). Presented in the form of “In context C, the unit X, counts as meaningful on another level as y, y’ . . .” (Carbaugh, 1990, p. 140), codes represent a rather benign way of understanding cultural life. For example, during a program planning meeting (context C) when a musician states that it is important to have a “good program” (unit X), it means that the program should be challenging and have artistic merit (level y). In contrast, when a board member or administrator refers to a good program, it most likely means that the program selection should have audience appeal and that artistic merit should be a secondary concern. However, the formulation of codes does more than reveal particular patterns of meanings. When placed in an organizational setting such as the Symphony, these divergent codes advance particular ideologies and, subsequently, position groups against one another.
The Symphony as Context

It has been well-documented that arts institutions, including symphonies, are in a state of crisis (McDaniel & Thorn, 1991). In recent years, a number of symphonies have declared bankruptcy (notable examples include symphonies in Oakland, Denver, Kansas City, Sacramento, and, most recently, the San Diego Symphony in 1997). McDaniel and Thorn (1991) describe this crisis in terms of "mounting debt and organizational dysfunction" (p. 10). Others point to the reduced government funding of music in our elementary and high schools. For example, Carolyn Lindeman, chair of the California Coalition for Music Education, describes school budget cuts in music education as America's "worst cultural nightmare" (Hertelendy, 1993).

Although there have been critical commentaries on the current course of arts institutions in general and of symphonies in particular (cf. Lipman, 1990; McDaniel & Thorn, 1991), as well as numerous studies in musicology, sociology, and psychology (cf. Couch, 1989; Gilmore, 1987; Laske, 1977; Lipton, 1987; Malhotra, 1981), I have not discovered any scholarly research that has communication as its fundamental theoretical and empirical focus. In short, there is ample evidence that symphonies encounter a significant amount of conflict as they struggle to survive (Ruud, 1995). Typically, however, the characterizations of these conflicts are presented primarily as material concerns (e.g., labor disputes, contract negotiations, working conditions, benefits, and the like) rather than as communicative in origin. These are all legitimate concerns, of course, and, in fact, were relevant issues at the Symphony as well. But the argument advanced in this study is that there are underlying ideologies that foreground these material disputes, and it is in the discourse that these ideologies take shape and influence organizational decisions.

There is no doubt that the communication identified in this investigation of the Symphony is framed within an historical and material set of circumstances. From its inception over 100 years ago to the present, the Symphony continues to face two fundamental and ongoing concerns, one of a financial nature and the other artistic (cf. Claude, 1973; Rudd, 1995). Financially, the Symphony is responsible for generating sufficient capital through ticket sales and fundraising efforts to meet its operating budget and to offset deficits it incurs. The Symphony also has the artistic obligation of providing music that is acceptable to the community, but that is also artistically challenging to the orchestra. Historically, Symphony members have struggled in their efforts to integrate the seemingly dichotomous financial and artistic interests. Much of this struggle was due to the different organizational priorities and philosophies of various members of the Symphony (Ruud, 1995).

The three primary "branches" that comprise the Symphony are the administration, the musicians, and the board of directors. The burden of executing the Symphony's daily activities (for example, operations, marketing, finance, development) is carried out by the administrative staff, but the very structure of this organization precludes major decisions (e.g., programming) being made without the input and approval of the musicians and the board of directors. In addition to their responsibilities as musicians, several members of the orchestra serve on committees that interact with the board and administration in addressing policy and artistic decisions. Board members are volunteers, and most are considered to be prominent members of the community, but with several notable exceptions, few of the directors would be considered symphonic music experts or professionals.
Directors are primarily responsible for raising money so that the Symphony can continue to operate, but they are also involved in major policy and artistic decisions. Ultimately, all major decisions involving personnel or finances that could affect the well-being of the Symphony have to be approved by the board of directors.

Over the years, differences between members of the Symphony led to lock-outs by management, strikes by the musicians, numerous threats of both, cancellations of opening concerts of the season, and acrimonious contract negotiations (Claude, 1973; Ruud, 1995). Musicians indicated to me that they "deserve more respect from management," and as "professionals" are "deserving of a decent wage." An administrator, on the other hand, confided in me that "I'd love to give them [musicians] more money if we had it. We don't have it." Generally, members of the administration were aligned with the board members in terms of what principles (i.e., either artistic or business) should guide organizational decisions. Consequently, there was often a clash of ideologies that pitted the musicians against the board of directors and management (Ruud, 1995). The adversarial nature of this organization became more problematic because of the interdependent relationship between the musicians, the administration, and the board of directors. Even though Symphony members were organizationally and culturally bound to preserve the Symphony, their disagreements inhibited their ability to achieve a satisfactory balance between artistic and business interests.

The Ideologies of Two Spoken Codes

There are at least two realities that surfaced in the actions of Symphony members and the discursive enactment of these realities created an environment where organizational opposition was common. The two realities, embedded in and expressed through organizational discourse, can be articulated in the form of two spoken codes, each code representing a particular "system of beliefs, values, and images of the ideal" (Philipsen, 1987, p. 249). One code reflects an "artistic" stance towards Symphony life, whereas the other code suggests a "business" orientation. Both codes symbolize the manner in which participants not only interpret meaningful activities within the Symphony, but also evaluate them. Consequently, when individuals "speak like an artist," they not only understand and agree with the implicit meanings that are conveyed in the code but they also assess the legitimacy of those organizational members who speak differently, i.e., "like a business person." That is, as Symphony members communicate, they express their organizational ideals in and through a particular code which, in turn, discursively positions them against others who speak a different code.

Each code, when analyzed as a unitary system of symbols and meanings, is "at peace" with itself (Burke, 1950). But in the context of routine speech, the two codes create an agonistic pattern as they compete with one another for acceptance within the organization.12 In one sense, this agony or opposition is between organizational members. But, theoretically as well as practically, it may be just as useful to focus on the conflict between cultural symbols rather than on the conflicts, between individuals per se. That is, from a communication theory standpoint, it became essential to analyze the discourse that precipitated the disharmony within the Symphony.

The artistic and business codes, analyzed individually or in opposition, are
meaningful in that they express, in a culturally specific manner, the way in which Symphony members experience and evaluate organizational life. Each code, whether artistic or business, presupposes a particular folk logic that organizational members rely on to make Symphony life intelligible and meaningful. However, the analysis of spoken codes reveals more than their sense-making function. A cultural code, when actualized as a spoken expression of organizational ideals, implies motivations of an ideological nature. As Burke (1935/1964) points out, “speech in its essence is not neutral. Far from aiming at suspended judgment, the spontaneous speech of a people is loaded with judgments. It is intensely moral . . .” (pp. 176–177). Each code, then, suggests a particular set of moral premises that guide organizational members as they assess past, present, and future organizational actions.

The two codes that are analyzed in this section are verbal depictions, a “complex symbolic indexing,” of the organizational ideal (Carbaugh, 1992, p. 362). Both codes attend to the same organizational entity, i.e., the Symphony, but, from a symbolic perspective, the meanings that are associated with each code reveal a rich and culturally distinct way of viewing organizational life, and which form the basis for philosophical disagreements within the Symphony.

The Ideology Embedded in an Artistic Code

Everyone who is associated with the Symphony has a vested interest in ensuring that this organization continues as a prominent arts institution in the community. However, the manner in which the organization evolves depends on those individuals who are accountable for the Symphony’s success. Although all organizational participants are sensitive to both the fiscal and musical obligations that the Symphony must meet, there are those members who symbolically foreground the importance of artistic qualities of Symphony activities. In highlighting the musical elements of organizational life, certain Symphony members communicate in a way that privileges an artistic orientation over a business one as a basis for making organizational decisions.

As Symphony participants express an opinion regarding organizational decisions, policies, or activities, there comes with it an underlying set of symbols and meanings that constitute the general code of the “artistic.” This code revolves around the following set of meanings, each meaning emphasizing a particular value that forms the basis of organizational thought and action: (1) the quality and integrity of the orchestra’s performance should be maintained; (2) the musicians should be challenged artistically; and (3) the community should achieve some sense of spiritual or emotional fulfillment as it listens to the music. The description and examples provided here illustrate how the artistic code is manifested in the speech of some Symphony members, each set of comments reflecting an artistic orientation, in some form, towards several key issues that are relevant to the Symphony’s operations.

The first meaning related to the artistic code suggests that any course of action taken by the Symphony will be evaluated according to the impact it has on the quality of the music performed by the orchestra. Members who embrace this code argue that the artistic integrity of the Symphony should not be compromised, and that organizational decisions that have the potential to affect adversely the quality
of the music should be monitored closely. Examples 1a, 1b, and 1c demonstrate the priority of preserving a certain level of artistic excellence.\textsuperscript{13}

Example 1a
Have you looked at our wage scale? It’s getting so we can’t afford to play. And if we do play under these conditions, the quality of our music is going to drop. I realize we’re faced with tough economic times, but artistic quality is important too.

Example 1b
There needs to be more attention paid to artistic integrity. Two or three rehearsals are not enough to be at our best. [For the Masterworks Series] we need four rehearsals at least. It’s not fair to us or the audience [to play without being properly prepared].

Example 1c
We need time off. We need an off-season because of the nature of the work. It’s like the off-season in sports. . . . When we’re on stage we need 100\% concentration. It’s very tiring over a long period of time. We need a physical and mental break. And if we have time off, we’ll get better artistic results.

The second meaning implicates a need for the Symphony to maintain a musical repertory that is challenging to the orchestra. To be challenging, the musical program planned for each concert season must contain compositions that are of a certain artistic standard. Generally, the compositions that are found in the Masterworks Series are considered to be the most artistically challenging, and, consequently, it is this series that the orchestra is most enthusiastic about performing. The logic underlying this thread of meaning is that the musicians will strive to achieve a greater level of artistic quality if they have the opportunity to play compositions that challenge them artistically. Examples 1d and 1e demonstrate the Symphony’s motivation for maintaining a challenging repertory that will satisfy the artistic needs of the orchestra.

Example 1d
The orchestra needs to be challenged. They’re not going to be happy if we just appeal to the audience. . . . Musicians want to play new pieces and challenging pieces. They would get bored playing POPS all the time.

Example 1e
It’s an enjoyable experience to learn a new repertoire and to re-discover pieces that I’ve already done. . . . Plus, it’s satisfying to feel that I’ve risen to the challenge of a difficult performance.

The third meaning implicates the emotional experience that is achieved by the audience when they attend a concert. Within the artistic code, the audience’s enjoyment of listening to symphonic music is sufficient in its own right. That is, when individuals speak from an artistic orientation, they do not perceive the audience as mere ticket holders, but as participants in a spiritual event. Example 1f illustrates the value of affecting the audience in an emotionally fulfilling way.

Example 1f
After a concert, when I ask people how they enjoyed the music, I don’t want a critique. I want to know how they felt when they were listening to the music. Did the music move them? That’s the most important part.

The cluster of meanings, as illustrated above, coalesces into an artistic code revealing a particular motivation for understanding and evaluating Symphony life. Within this code, the relationship between the Symphony and the audience can be characterized as a “spiritual” bond. To reach the highest levels of spiritual
fulfillment, the Symphony must ensure that the quality of the music is its first priority. Such a goal requires an organizational environment that artistically challenges the musicians, so that they, in turn, will be able to create music that the audience will appreciate and from which they gain some spiritual satisfaction. The discussion and examples provided here indicate a spoken preference for creating and maintaining a strong artistic foundation for the Symphony as this organization plans its future.

The Ideology Embedded in a Business Code

The business code implies that the Symphony, even as a nonprofit institution, should operate in essentially the same manner as a for-profit organization. Within this code, Symphony policies and decisions should be based on, as one member put it, “sound business practices.” Even when organizational members dispute what counts as “sound business practices” the underlying meaning of their discussion continues to be semantically related to the “business” realm. The symbolic domain that constitutes the business code is grounded in four interrelated sets of meaning. In essence, organizational members who espouse the business code say that the Symphony should: (1) operate like any other business; (2) make decisions based on economic principles rather than from artistic interests; (3) be market driven; and (4) treat the music as a product.

The first meaning suggests that the Symphony should adhere to the same standards of operation that any profit organization would. A general assumption within the business code is that the Symphony should not deviate from these principles simply because its product is orchestral music. As example 2a (from an administrator) indicates, members who embrace this code perceive no significant differences between the Symphony and profit organizations.

Example 2a
There’s really no difference between us and a profit organization. We’re a sales organization too. We have a department of finance, marketing, operations... Fundraising is the only significant difference, otherwise we’re like any other business.

The second meaning focuses on the need for the Symphony to base its organizational decisions on sound economic principles. Within the business code, the financial condition of the organization dictates what range of artistic decisions can be made. An interpretation of this meaning suggests that the adoption of any artistic proposals should be predicated on their financial feasibility rather than on their artistic merits. Examples 2b (from a board member) and 2c (from an administrator) highlight the importance of economic sensitivity when charting the course of the Symphony.

Example 2b
We have to run this organization on a financially sound basis. We can’t proceed down any path until we’re certain we have a safe operating foundation.

Example 2c
In some symphonies, the music director is able to say, “Forget the budget. We’ll play what I want to play.” Here we have the opposite. We look at the budget first and then try to figure out what we can play.

The third meaning refers to the role that the market (the market in this case being actual or potential subscribers to the Symphony) plays in determining what
artistic decisions the Symphony will make. A basic assumption of this meaning is that musical decisions are not evaluated according to any set of artistic standards but rather assessed in terms of the audience’s approval. Audience members are seen as consumers of a musical product, and, according to the business code, consumer needs need to be met if the organization is to be successful. As indicated in example 2d (from an administrator), the fundamental motive underlying the market-driven strategy is to discover what music the audience wants to hear and then provide it for them.

Example 2d

Basically, our strategy is to be market driven. . . . We do not have a very sophisticated audience. There’s a need to educate [the community], try some new things, but we have to play for this community. The margin for error in this market is so small. We have to be very sensitive to what the audience wants to hear.

The fourth meaning suggests that the music created by the Symphony is perceived in a similar manner as products that are produced by other businesses. That is, the “product” metaphor implies an impersonal orientation towards the music and the individuals who produce it. Such an orientation does not posit that, on occasion, organizational members cannot or do not appreciate the music at a purely emotional level. But when speaking the business code, individuals express an interest in the music as something that the public purchases. Example 2e (from an administrator) indicates how the musical elements of Symphony life are encompassed within the “product” metaphor.

Example 2e

The product is the most important thing we have to offer. The conductor, the musicians, each program, it’s all part of the product. . . . We have to sell the whole product.

When organizational members adhere to the business code they express a symbolic framework for understanding Symphony life in a particular way. Within this code, the Symphony is defined in business terms, particularly as it relates to its financial situation, the market it plays to, and the product it sells. Here, the relationship between the Symphony and the audience can be conceived of as a “business transaction.” That is, the Symphony has a musical product to sell and hopes that its consumers are interested enough to buy it. If it costs too much to manufacture the product (e.g., rising musician salaries), or if the music is unappealing to the audience, then the opportunity for a financially rewarding business transaction becomes increasingly fragile. The primary goal expressed in this code is to stay in business so that the Symphony can make future business transactions.

However, as organizational members invoke the business code as a means for conceptualizing organizational activities they encounter an opposing artistic code. Consequently, the enactment of the business and artistic codes produces an agonistic pattern that permeates Symphony discourse. In this sense, it is in everyday communication where these two codes are negotiated, and where the ideological preferences of Symphony participants are foregrounded. That is, these codes are not communicated just to others who adhere to the same code. Rather, Symphony members also “speak like an artist” and “speak like a business person” when interacting with others who embrace a different philosophy of organiza-
tional life. When these interactions occur, there is a resulting struggle to determine which code prevails.

### The Enactment of the Artistic and Business Codes:
#### A Discursive Struggle for Power

The dialectic tension between the business and artistic codes as it is expressed in the routine speech of Symphony members demonstrates how ideological differences impact the nature of organizational interactions. As I have argued previously, the symbolic domain that constitutes each code contains a particular folk logic, coherent and plausible in its own right. Furthermore, each code presupposes an underlying ideology that serves as a foundation for understanding and assessing organizational activities. When the business code and artistic code compete with one another in the context of particular speech events, an agonistic pattern is created.

Over the course of my fieldwork, it became evident that the business and artistic codes were spoken across a variety of contexts and topics (e.g., marketing, fundraising, long-range planning), although here I identify only one speech topic, that of programming, that illustrates the symbolic tension between the business and artistic codes. There are several difficulties and complexities that confront organizational members as they attempt to formulate a program for each concert season (September to June). In doing so, they produce a varied program that includes a Masterworks Series, Kickback Classics and SuperPops in order to meet a wide range of audience interests. Each series has its own requirements in terms of compositions, guest artists and so on. The following discussion will focus on the Symphony’s Masterworks Series, although references to the KickBack Classics and SuperPops Series are included when they are indexed by participants as a means of comparison.

The key issue that members of the Symphony must resolve when they are planning their concert season is the selection of compositions the orchestra will play. This process of selection involves several other concerns for Symphony members, primarily a discussion of (1) the compositions that will be on the program for each concert; (2) the order in which the compositions will be played for each concert; (3) the length of each program; (4) guest artists; and (5) the response of the audience to each concert as well as to the entire season’s program.

Although the formal setting for addressing programming takes place during the Concert Advisory Committee meetings, the above issues are discussed in informal contexts as well. As representatives from the board of directors, the orchestra, and management gather in these meetings and elsewhere to make programming decisions, the business code and artistic code begin to surface. For example, in its most general and abstract sense, everyone in the Symphony wants to have a “good” program. But what defines a “good” program depends on whether individuals are relying on a business or artistic orientation in making their programming decisions. (Hereafter, the labels “M” for musician, “A” for administrator, and “B” for board member are utilized. All of the examples are from the Concert Advisory Committee Meetings except for example 3b which took place at a monthly board meeting.)

Example 3a

**B1**: You can’t sell a bad program.
M1: What is the meaning of a good program?
B1: I meant popular. Maybe good isn't the right word.

This brief example suggests that the board member's criterion for "good" programming is whether the program will be popular with the audience. This criterion derives its ideological force from the business code, i.e., that Symphony decisions, at least as they pertain to programming, should be market driven. The essential point in example 3a is that the board member is not particularly concerned if the program is "good" in any artistic sense but, whether the public will be responsive to the Symphony's programming choices. A second example, at a different time and in a different context from example 3a, illustrates how the artistic code and business code clash over which criteria to use for determining the content of the programs.

Example 3b
B1: What is being done with programming in terms of what the audience wants to hear? We need to find out what is popular with the audience and what isn't.
A1: It's easy to give people what they want in Pops. And KickBack Classics is also fairly easy. We've done some surveys and found out what seems to generate the most interest for both of these series, but Masterworks is the most contentious because of the difficulties of having different goals. . . . We have at least three goals. One, we need to challenge the orchestra; two, we want to challenge the audience; three, we should have a program the music director wants. It's also our philosophy to have at least one anchor piece, but the difficulty is deciding exactly what an anchor piece is. It's not that easy.
B2: Have you ever polled the audience?
A1: Yes, we have, but there are so many works out there that it's hard to find out what is popular to everyone. There is a top 40 classical music list from local radio stations and from stations across the country. . . . We know Beethoven's Ninth is popular, but after that, it becomes very difficult.

The exchange in example 3b attends to both the artistic and business code in several ways. The board members (both B1 and B2) discursively index the audience as the major determinant of program selections. That is, in their speech, the board members are able to "index" or invoke a particular meaning system, as well as position themselves politically and socially within a business orientation, particularly as it relates to how the audience should influence program selections (Carbaugh, 1992, p. 362). As example 3a illustrated, such a perspective is indicative of the business code. The administrator's response to the board members, although acknowledging the business interest, included threads of meaning that are part of the artistic code, namely the need to "challenge" the orchestra musically. Musicians have noted to me in informal conversations and have expressed to the administrators and board members (see example 1d and 3e) that the SuperPops Series and even Kickback Classics are not as challenging or as enjoyable as performing the Masterworks Series. As a concession to the business interest, the orchestra generally recognizes that the SuperPops Series and KickBack Classics are necessary to the survival of the Symphony and allow them to continue to play Masterworks.16

Example 3b also shows that the manager refers to two other issues relevant to programming: the need to challenge the audience and to perform works that the music director recommends. Examples 2c and 2d, discussed earlier, address these two items. Example 2c illustrates that the budget, not the music director, dictates
what artistic decisions can be made. Example 2d indicates the need to "educate" the audience members, i.e., to challenge them to the extent that they are encouraged to listen to a more sophisticated and broader range of compositions. But example 2d also illustrates how the need to challenge the audience artistically is subordinated to a business perspective of playing what the audience wants to hear, regardless of how narrow and unsophisticated its choices may be. Finally, in example 3b, there is mention of the "anchor piece," a cultural symbol that, from subsequent examples, will be seen to contain elements of both the artistic and business codes.

There is little disagreement among Symphony members that the "anchor piece" is important to programming, but the meaning of the term itself has a number of variations. One board member described the anchor piece in terms of a "strategy for hooking the audience." Others described it as a composition that is not only recognized by the general public (not just the musically sophisticated), but a piece that the majority of people would be sufficiently attracted to so that they would attend the concert to hear it. Extending this logic over the course of the year, both board members and administrators alike argued that if there were enough anchor pieces for the year’s program, it might entice potential patrons to subscribe for the entire season. In a private conversation after a Concert Advisory Meeting, a member of the administration defined the anchor piece in the following manner:

In a way, the idea of even having an anchor piece is a joke. There are so many different conceptions of what it is. Generally, an anchor piece is in the top 40 lists of classical music stations put out. Some people think it's any piece by a well-known composer. Here, people sometimes think that if they're familiar with a piece, it will suffice as an anchor piece. But we have a few people on the board who know a lot more about classical music than the general audience. They might know the piece, but the audience doesn’t have a clue. From my experience, I think I know what’s popular with the audience. Anything by Brahms or Beethoven. I’d say yes. Dvorak, perhaps. Shostakovich. I’d say no way.

The difficulty in reaching a consensus regarding a definition of an anchor piece does not preclude discussions of its importance to programming. Example 3c demonstrates some confusion over what an anchor piece is but also highlights its significance to the "business" aspect of the Symphony.

Example 3c

**M1**: We continue to have the same discussion as to what constitutes an anchor piece.

No one seems to see the humor in it.

**B1**: I don’t think it is humorous. Anchor pieces are our business.

**M1**: Yeah, but what is an anchor piece? Nobody seems to know.

The most common conceptualization of the anchor piece is one in which the audience plays the most important part. That is, it is the responsibility of the Symphony to determine what the audience considers as an anchor piece. Examples 3d and 3e (both from the Concert Advisory Meeting) illustrate the manner in which Symphony members attempt to anticipate how the audience will respond to a particular composition. (In the following examples, I have eliminated utterances that were irrelevant to the discursive indexing of the business and artistic codes, but the sequence of comments is the same as it occurred in the actual discussion. An asterisk beginning a particular sentence indicates that I have jumped ahead to other topics in the discussion.)
Example 3d
B1: I think a program commemorating the death of Leonard Bernstein is a wonderful idea.
B2: I'm concerned about it [Bernstein's Symphonic Dances from West Side Story]. Is it an anchor piece?
B3: I think it's a great piece.
B2: I think it's great too but will it bring people in?
*B1: Will the Mahler piece [Das Lied von der Erde] bring people in? I don't think so. I don't think this set will draw.
B2: It's very heavy. Some interesting pieces, but I don't think the audience will respond to it.

Example 3d illustrates the tension between the artistic code and the business code as Symphony members attempt to situate the anchor piece into their programming decisions. Example 3d suggests that from an artistic perspective, Bernstein's West Side Story is a "great piece." In fact, board members B2 and B3 agree on this. However, there is a move to the business code when B2 shifts the meaning of an anchor piece from "a great piece" to whether or not it will "bring people in" to the concert hall. Despite agreement on the artistic merits of Bernstein's piece, one member espouses the more pragmatic interest (a business code) in catering to the audience wishes.

Example 3d also characterizes a proposed program as "very interesting" but "very heavy." In this context, music that is "very heavy" has a double meaning, one attending to the artistic code and the other to a business orientation. First, a piece that is heavy (especially a composition by a composer of the caliber of Mahler) can be construed as complex, of high artistic quality and challenging to play—meanings that are compatible with the artistic code. A second meaning, and one that adheres to a business code, suggests that audience members will not appreciate a heavy piece, and, consequently, their dissatisfaction will ultimately lead to lower attendance. B1's comment, "I don't think this set will draw" is clearly placed within the framework of a business code. The exchange between board members in example 3d illustrates the manner in which the artistic and business codes discursively compete for programming supremacy.

Although there are attempts to "weight" the business and artistic codes evenly, the above examples seem to indicate that the business code is privileged over the artistic, at least as it relates to programming. This point is made strongly by one administrator:

I would put an anchor piece on every program, but the players block it. That's why we're going down the tubes. If there were ten of me on the committee, it wouldn't be this way. Our ticket sales are okay, but they're not good enough or as good as they could be. We would increase our ticket sales significantly if our program changed to have at least one anchor piece. There's no doubt about it.

My discussions with the musicians indicated that they do not disapprove of the concept of having an anchor piece for each program, but rather with the "Top 40" definition of what constitutes an anchor piece, which they maintain is too limiting. Such a narrow definition means that over three years (twelve Masterworks concerts each year), the "Top 40" list would be exhausted. Additionally, some of the works that are on the "Top 40" list also appear on the Symphony's KickBack Classics Series. Consequently, some musicians expressed the concern
that, "We would be playing the same pieces over and over again." Their dissatisfaction of having a season of anchor pieces that may satisfy the audience but do not challenge the orchestra is pointed out in example 3e.

Example 3e

**B1:** What does everyone think about [Rimsky-Korsakov's] Sheherazade?
**M1:** We did that as a Favorite Classics [now KickBack Classics] a few years ago. I know it's a different audience, but it's the same orchestra.

*A1:* Finlandia?

**M1:** I hate to be a bore, but we just did Finlandia a year ago in Favorite Classics. Can't we use Classics for Classics and Masterworks for something more cerebral? We've moved things around before [i.e., played the same piece for KickBack Classics and also for Masterworks]. It's one thing to put together a program that the audience can relate to, but the orchestra will look at this program and say, "We've done this already."

Example 3e exemplifies the tension between the artistic code and business code in at least two ways. First, it is clear the orchestra feels it is not challenged when the program is too repetitious. Second, the reference to playing "more cerebral" pieces indicates that players are more interested in the musical merits of a composition than they are in playing a piece only to satisfy the audience. The danger, of course, is that the audience might not support the Symphony's decision to play "cerebral" music. Example 3f demonstrates the symbolic tension between offering cerebral and challenging music (meanings that underlie the artistic code) or the lighter pieces that the audience wants to hear (meanings that underlie the business code).

Example 3f

**M1:** If we push the Light Classics [currently referred to as the KickBack Classics] it'll be the same situation as a kid who likes ice cream but is supposed to eat broccoli. The kid will choose the ice cream.

**A1:** So, what's wrong with giving them [i.e., community] what they want?

**M1:** We need a balance.

**A2:** We don't have that much ice cream in our program.

**M1:** I think we do. What about Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik?

**A2:** That's ice cream?

So far, I have examined the business code in terms of a programming strategy that is market driven, i.e., making decisions based on what the audience wants to hear. There is also an economic element that, in part, determines what programming choices can be made. Example 3g demonstrates that for every artistic suggestion there is an offsetting question pertaining to the financial costs of employing guest artists and conductors.

Example 3g

**B1:** [Gil] Shaham would be a good choice as a guest artist.

**B2:** What's the cost?

**A1:** $9000.00

**B2:** Whoa.

*B1:* I'm not sure about the Labeque sisters. Any thoughts?

**B2:** What do they cost?

**A1:** $30,000.

*A2:* What guest conductors can work with chorale?
B3 : John Gardner, Andrew Parrott.
B2 : What will they cost us?
B3 : I don’t know but they’re good conductors.

In the above example, every comment by B2 altered the course of the discussion from an artistic emphasis to a business question; i.e., what will these artists cost the Symphony? Given the financial difficulties that the Symphony faces, a question of this sort makes sense, at least from the assumptions of a business code. Those members who are firmly entrenched in the business code, as B2 is in example 3g, require that any artistic decision must be responsive to the Symphony’s fiscal situation. A final illustration highlighting the symbolic differences between the artistic and business codes are examined in example 3h below (each conversational turn numbered for later reference).

Example 3h

1. B1: There’s been a proposed change from what has been printed in the program. It was going to be a Brahms piece and a Beethoven. It’s been proposed that we drop Beethoven for this set and go with another Brahms.
2. A1: I’m against it. People are not interested in two Brahms. It should stay the same.
3. B2: I think it’s a good idea. Beethoven is inward. Brahms is extroverted. It would be a great showpiece. But I’m concerned about marketing.
4. M1: Brahms would be a strong program. Two great pieces, a great pianist. Isn’t that the point?
5. A2: But the program is not selling.
6. M1: Because of Brahms? Do we know that?
7. A1: The rules say we have to stay in business.... People are sick and tired of Brahms.
8. B1: I don’t think they are.
9. M1: We’re splitting hairs between Brahms Fourth and Beethoven’s Eighth. Both are great pieces.
10. B3: What’s it going to cost in ticket sales if we make the changes?
11. A1: There are too many variables to tell exactly, but in my opinion it will affect sales.
13. A1: I recommend the program stays the same.
14. B1: All in favor of the proposed program change? The majority in favor.

Example 3h demonstrates the tension between the artistic code and business code in several ways. First, B2 (in line 3) is supportive of the change from an artistic perspective saying that the program will be “a great showpiece.” However, in the same conversational turn, B2 says “I’m concerned about marketing,” thus expressing a business orientation. In line 4, a musician states that accepting the proposed change will result in “a strong program.... Isn’t that the point?” From an artistic perspective, the musicians might be right, but within the business code there are other concerns that need to be addressed. For example, in lines 5 and 11 two different administrators speak about the program’s ability “to sell.” In line 7, an administrator says, “The rules say we have to stay in business,” a statement expressed in the business code.

Examples 3a through 3h present several cases in which Symphony members, as they begin formulating the season’s program, attempt to balance the artistic-business dialectic. From a musical standpoint, a good, challenging program is
juxtaposed to the meanings that underlie the business code; that is, the program should be affordable yet still appeal to the audience so it will sell. This latter set of interests is, as one administrator stated, fundamental to the "rules of business."

The identification and analysis of discursively distinct ideologies are relevant in understanding any organization where competing cultural codes are enacted in routine speech. In the case of the Symphony, organizational members expressed a course of action that favored either the business code or the artistic code, each code offering a particular and preferred worldview of organizational life. Although the Symphony attempted to maintain some semblance of equilibrium between the countervailing forces of the artistic and business codes, its inability to resolve ideological differences served in part to create a community of distrust and opposition.

Discussion

A central tenet of this study is that organizational culture and its attendant ideological forms are embedded in and sustained through the discourse of Symphony members. Eisenberg and Goodall's (1993) claim that "Language is the organizing locus of human symbolic experience" (p. 117) underscores the importance of documenting Symphony communication as a means of understanding how it functions and what is meaningful to its members. In the context of the Symphony, this focus on communication was formulated as discursively and ideologically coded behavior. However, it is not only important to understand what the ideological assumptions of these codes are but what they do as a recurring way of speaking throughout organizational activities. In this sense, several claims about what these codes actually do in Symphony life are relevant here in terms of their ideological force.

First, when Symphony members "spoke like an artist" or "spoke like a business person" they were expressing a particular and preferred worldview of organizational life. As organizational members discussed topics that were crucial to the Symphony's daily operations (e.g., programming), they expressed an ideological preference grounded in either business or artistic principles. The examples presented in this study illustrate that there were recurring and identifiable patterns of talk that situated members within a particular code. Not only were these codes understood by those who expressed them, but they also served as a rhetorical resource for advancing particular positions.

Second, codes and their attendant ideologies are not spoken in isolation, but rather embody the "lived relations" of organizational participants (Eagleton, 1991, p. 18). Drawing on the works of Althusser, Eagleton (1991) states that ideology "is a particular organization of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in a society" (p. 18). Applied to the Symphony, then, ideology, as it is manifested in an artistic or business way of speaking, influences the manner in which individuals interact with one another and in relationship to dominant forms of power.

At the Symphony, members were well aware of the acrimony that divided the musicians between management and the board of directors. For example, during my fieldwork experience, the administration and the board of directors were in the process of negotiating with the orchestra in hopes of finalizing a contract so that
the upcoming concert season would begin as scheduled. The musicians, fearful of a lock-out by management, congregated in front of the concert hall carrying signs and distributing flyers that reflected their displeasure of how the negotiations were proceeding. Commenting on the contract negotiations, one musician stated that “It’ll be a war.” Management and the board of directors, on the other hand, were in the words of one administrator, “deciding on their game plan” in preparation of a strike by the musicians. The view from the administration was that “the players are trying to ruin us with their demands.” On one occasion, a manager noticed that I was talking to a musician and later asked me [only partly in jest I suspect but revealing just the same] “Speaking to the enemy?” On another occasion, the same manager asked me what conclusions I came to in my fieldwork observations, only phrasing the inquiry as “Who’s winning the war?” Words like “enemy” and “war,” of course, are telling metaphors and the extension of these metaphors portrays the Symphony as a battleground (or at least a site of contested terrain) between artistic and business ideologies. That management had the advantage in this war is apparent in this following exchange between a member of the board and a manager as they were discussing how the musicians would respond to a series of proposals offered by the Symphony Association during contract negotiations.17

A1: The musicians will not go for this proposal.
B1: Why not?
A1: It’s not enough money for them. They’ll go someplace else.
B1: Where they gonna go? McDonald’s?

Although the statement by this board member may seem a bit crass, in fact, there are few opportunities for musicians to join other symphonies given that the competition for orchestra positions is fierce (for example, when one position opened up at the Pittsburgh Symphony, there were 350 applications, and of these, seventy-five musicians were asked to audition). Consequently, musicians are faced with the prospect of working at the Symphony for less than desirable wages and conditions or pursuing other lines of work.

Third, within any organizational context, certain discourses prevail at the expense of others. That is, dominant interests are produced and sustained through specific discursive structures that minimize and marginalize other discourses. These structures can take several forms and are evident in the coded behavior of Symphony participants. Giddens (1979), for example, describes how the representation of sectional interests is viewed as universal and, consequently, how dominant ideologies are perpetuated. Although Giddens was primarily concerned with power and ideology in a societal sense, much of his work has relevance to organizational life in general and to the Symphony in particular. For example, when administrators and board members say “we’re like any other business” or “we need to be market driven” or that “the conductor, the musicians, each program, it’s all part of the product . . .” it suggests that a corporate philosophy is natural and all encompassing regardless of what profession is being represented. Borrowing from what Habermas (1984, 1987) calls a “colonization of the life world,” Deetz (1992, p. 18) refers to the colonizing effect of corporations by which everyday language has become “commercialized” in favor of a managerial perspective. At the Symphony, virtually every decision, regardless of artistic implications, was ultimately predicated on managerial prerogatives and had to be approved by
the board of directors. That the managerial premise has become "universal" or at least widespread is further evidenced by the following quotation by the former president of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra from 1990 to 1993 (and who is still a board member) and currently an executive vice president of Firstar Corporation.

Artistic organizations are not exempt from the principles which make for successful achievement of organizational mission. Symphony orchestras have a product to market and sell, just as do for-profit businesses. Musicians sometimes object to references to their output as a "product," reacting to crassness that this terminology suggests. But just as a business needs effective management of its resources to create and sell its products profitably and to ensure its continued existence, so does a symphony orchestra. The fact that the "product" is ephemeral, inspirational, and even quasi-spiritual does not change this organizational truth. (Schmitz, 1996)

The tone that Schmitz takes suggests that managerial principles are at the forefront of all organizational activities regardless of the nature of the enterprise. He goes on to say that "Three business functions—production, marketing, and finance—drive the activities of business organizations. The same is true for most nonprofit organizations." His claim about what drives an organization is firmly entrenched in a business code and the acceptance of this code reflects what Giddens (1979) refers to as "reification" or "the naturalisation of the present" (p. 195). That is, particular practices, organizational or otherwise, become accepted as natural, fixed, immutable whereas opposing views are dismissed as untenable. Although board members and management of the Symphony readily acknowledged the importance of artistic merit generally, it was also understood by most of the members of those two groups that attention to art should in no way interfere with sound business practices.

Fourth, the expression and acceptance of one code inevitably diminishes the significance of competing codes. Deetz (1992), for example, articulates how discursive closure is made "possible through the privileging of certain discourses and the marginalization of others" (p. 187). In the context of the Symphony, one form of discursive closure that was prevalent was the process of "disqualification" (cf. Deetz, 1992; Jehenson, 1984) where those who adhered to a business philosophy promoted a particular kind of expertise while at the same time disparaging others who were without it. For example, a board member characterized the musicians as having a lack of business expertise by saying, "Most of the players don’t have much of a business background so they stay pretty quiet when we talk business talk. At last week’s meeting, some of the players were obviously confused. They weren’t up to speed on all of the management mumbo-jumbo" [Ruud, 1995, p. 213]. Another board member suggested that "The players are not financial people. They’re not stupid, but they are naïve when it comes to financial matters" (Ruud, 1995, p. 214). In matters of significance to the Symphony, it became evident that musicians as well as others who subscribed to an artistic philosophy were prevented from either taking part in meaningful discussions about how decisions were to be made or having their contributions minimized because of their lack of business expertise.

Concomitant to the process of disqualification is "legitimation;" i.e., the "rationalization of decisions and practices through the invocation of higher order explanatory devices" (Deetz, 1992, pp. 195–196). For the administration and board
members, the higher order was grounded in the principles of managerialism not artistic quality. That is, these individuals suggested that in order for the Symphony to survive, it needed to rely on proven business principles and strategies and, logically speaking, only the board of directors and the managers of the Symphony had access to this business knowledge. A potential problem exists, however, if and when the orthodox values of managerialism “trivialize the human essence, diminish human dignity, and widen the gap between a privileged class of managers and the rest of the people” (Scott, 1985, p. 149).

To be sure, orchestra members increasingly felt that the board and the administration were promoting a particular climate where the artistic elements of Symphony life, including the well-being of the musicians, were being subordinated to strictly business concerns. Some of my most telling moments at the Symphony occurred when talking to musicians about their treatment by the board of directors and management. Commenting on contract negotiations, a musician suggested that the relationship with management is “fucked. They’re being punitive.” When I said to a musician that the Symphony was facing economic hardship and that management may be doing what they think is best for the Symphony, his reply was “Where’s the humanity?”

Indeed, an underlying motive for reporting my interpretation of Symphony life, especially as it relates to ideological differences, is to reflect on some version of the musician’s question, “Where’s the humanity?” Or, as Hymes (1972b), explains it, the agenda for conducting ethnographic work is not “simply empirical—what has just occurred; nor only methodological and theoretical—how to study what has occurred, how best to explain it. It is also a moral problem, a problem of one’s commitments in, and to the world” (p. 14). In a very real sense, the Symphony represents all organizations that politically, culturally, socially, and discursively struggle to define their moral preferences and courses of action.

**Implications for Practice**

The identification and analysis of distinct cultural codes suggest at least three implications that have applied relevance in understanding the communal activities of the Symphony as well as other organizations. First, this study provided evidence that organizations are not bound by a single code. Rather, multiple voices were heard in the Symphony as interlocutors communicated their organizational ideals. The symbolic marking of the artistic and business codes directs attention to the diversity of spoken systems that function within a designated speech community. By analyzing these codes and their attendant meanings, researchers and practitioners alike should be able to produce an account that illuminates more fully the various ideologies that are present in organizational discourse. Second, this study revealed that codes did not simply co-exist in the same cultural space but were interdependent in their expression. That is, the formulation of cultural codes was portrayed as a dialectic in which a business orientation and an artistic orientation to the accomplishment of organizational goals were symbolically competing. Third, this study illustrates the integral relationship between social interaction, particularly as it relates to discourse, and material conditions that underlies all organizational activity in some form. This relationship, or what Giddens (1979) refers to as the “duality of structure” is embedded in all social systems and is particularly relevant to the understanding of organizational activi-
ties. According to Giddens (1979), “the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems” (p. 69). That Symphony life reflects this duality of structure and agency is evidenced in both the historical antecedents that preceded my study as well as the current structures and practices that [re]constitute the organizational system up to the present. The structures that are specific to the Symphony (e.g., the three main branches of the Symphony with corresponding obligations) influence the manner in which organizational members interact, but the discursive codes spoken by members also shape, albeit slowly and not without difficulty, the structural elements of the organization. As this study reported, however, certain groups wield more power and through their discourse have more opportunity to ensure that their interests are maintained.

All of these implications point to the essential task for organizations to attend to discourse as a fundamental factor in [re]creating material conditions and social relationships. Thus, the focus on discourse becomes not just a theoretical exercise, but a practical matter in which the organization can assess the various impact that discourse has on its members.

It was evident that the Symphony, like many organizations, was beset by internal differences that made coordinated action difficult to achieve. Moreover, organizational members failed to reflect, at least in any systematic way, on the underlying ideologies that were so prevalent in Symphony interactions. Although it was apparent that members were, at some level, aware of ideological differences, there was very little meta-level talk that addressed the different codes that figured so prominently in this organization. Having a forum for discussing ideological differences at an explicit level is unlikely to reconcile ideological conflicts completely but may serve as a symbolic move to reduce the tensions that are inevitable in all organizations. Given the political, social, and cultural weight that ideologies carry, efforts at reconciliation may seem futile. Nevertheless, by analyzing discursive codes and their attendant meanings, researchers as well as practitioners should be able to not only illuminate more fully the various ideologies that are present in organizational discourse but, perhaps, to bridge, even if ever so slightly, the symbolic distance between them.

**Endnotes**

1. This study was generated out of a larger ethnographic project describing and analyzing the communicative actions of the Symphony. Although the present study is based on the same fieldwork experience that formed the basis of a previous article (Ruud, 1995), it draws on different data and extends the analysis to account for the different ideologies expressed in Symphony discourse.

2. Baxter (1993), Carbaugh (1988, 1988/1989, 1990), and Philipsen (1986, 1992) offer insightful accounts of how the explication of communication codes can be useful in understanding cultural life. The present study adds to this body of work by illustrating the ideological nature of codes as it is manifested in everyday speech. It is important to note that I rely on Carbaugh and Philipsen as a starting point for understanding and analyzing organizational culture. The point of departure and, hence, the integration of sources not generally associated with those two scholars, is an explicit discussion of the ideological implications related to cultural life. In short, I find some aspects of Carbaugh’s and Philipsen’s conceptualization of culture useful, but I also see the need to address the inequities of social life in ways that Carbaugh and Philipsen typically do not, at least as it pertains to their scholarship.

3. Culture is being applied here in three essential ways. First, culture is conceived as a socially and symbolically constructed phenomenon (cf. Geertz, 1973, p. 89). This usage is in contrast to researchers
who define organizational culture as a material variable or "thing" (cf. Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982). Second, culture is being utilized in a metaphorical sense, i.e., not as "something an organization has" but as a metaphor for conceptualizing and analyzing the symbolic activities of an organization (Smircich, 1983, p. 347). Culture as the central metaphor for analyzing organizational interactions "promotes a view of organizations as expressive forms, manifestations of human consciousness. Organizations are understood and analyzed not mainly in economic or material terms, but in terms of their expressive, ideational, and symbolic aspects" (Smircich, 1983, p. 347). Third, culture is being characterized as a public display of what is meaningful to organizational participants. The positing of meaning as a public rather than private activity calls attention to Geertz's (1973) claim that "culture is public because meaning is" (p. 12). This position can be contrasted to "cognitive idealism" or similar "mentalism" approaches that describe culture in terms of shared cognitions (cf. Goodenough, 1963). Private theories of culture, as presented by Goodenough and others who espouse cognitivist approaches, are antithetical to the argument that meaning is a public affair constituted and reconstituted in communicative activities. In short, since culture is publicly displayed through the symbolic interactions of Symphony members, it can therefore be characterized as a discursively contested phenomenon. The incorporation of these three premises of culture should not discount significant differences between Geertz, Philipson, and Smircich. Most fundamentally, the views of Smircich and myself depart from Philipson, for example, at the level of critique (see Philipson, 1989/90, in the special issue in Research on Language and Social Interaction, 1989/90 where Philipson and several other scholars discuss the role of critique in cultural and ethnographic studies). For overviews of the way culture has been linked conceptually to organizational studies, see Alvesson (1987), Eisenberg and Goodall (1993), Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trijillo (1982), Sackman (1990), Schall (1983), Smircich and Calas (1987).

4. In this sense, my use of culture represents both a theoretical and empirical departure from those who portray culture as largely unified in nature. Carbaugh (1988), for example, states that "Thus, when I write of a cultural use of symbol systems, I do not intend that the use oppresses or unduly constrains persons, though for some it may do just that" (p. 6). My use of the term culture incorporates the ideological positioning of participants in which members recognize not only differences in meanings but communal inequities.

5. Scholars have noted the distinction between discourse and language where discourse "concerns the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects" and language refers to abstract linguistic properties apart from its social context (Eagleton, 1991, p. 9). For the purposes of this paper, references to language should be interpreted as "discourse" or "language in use" (cf. Schiffrin, 1990) or what Stewart (1986, 1995) refers to as "language." See Naughton (1995) and Tannen (1984) for a discussion of various ways in which the term "discourse" has been used in the literature.

6. This definition is in opposition to a definition of ideology in (1) neutral terms; e.g., as simply a "system of thought", "systems of belief" or "symbolic systems" which pertain to social action or political practice" (Thompson, 1990, p. 5) or (2) that ideology is exclusively applied to those groups who have complete power over other groups or (3) that ideology is a "form of false consciousness", or, more accurately, as a "consciousness-restricting" set of ideals and beliefs, having primarily negative consequences and rooted in the materialistic practice of society" (Alvesson, 1991, p. 209). Eagleton (1991) and Thompson (1990) provide a thorough discussion of how ideology has been defined. See Mumby (1988) and Deetz (1995) for a discussion of how ideology is linked to communication studies and organizational contexts.

7. Of course, the ethnographic enterprise does not consist of a unitary body of theoretical and methodological assumptions, although there are general, agreed upon principles guiding much of ethnographic research. In its most basic form, this study integrated Hymes (1962, 1972a) and his ethnography of speaking model. However, whereas Hymes and others have utilized the EOS model to describe the collective ways in which speech communities constitute and adhere to common sets of meanings, I have offered a more critical assessment of organizational life. Agar (1980), Hamersley and Atkinson (1983), Saville-Troike (1982), Spradley (1980) are several classic "how to" texts that describe ethnographic practices. See also Clifford and Marcus (1986), Geertz (1973), Jackson (1989), Marcus and Fischer (1986), and Van Maanen (1988) for a discussion of some of the different theoretical and methodological positions that frame cultural and ethnographic research. See (Ruud, 1993) for a complete discussion of theoretical assumptions and methodological procedures used in this study.
8. This approach is compatible to Burke’s (1941/1973, 1984) cluster-agon method of analysis. See Berthold (1976), Carbaugh (1988/89) and Reuckert (1982) for detailed explanations and applications of how this method can be applied.

9. Being involved with the Symphony for over a year allowed me to contact the majority of Symphony members in some fashion. At the conclusion of my fieldwork, I had gathered data from fifteen members of the administration (of twenty-two during the time of my research) including the President of the Symphony, all department heads and their assistants, nineteen different board members (of approximately forty members who were on the board at any one time), and thirty-one of the eighty-nine musicians that constitute the Symphony orchestra. To ensure confidentiality of those participants whose voices are heard in this ethnographic report, I have elected to identify each discursive example only by the group to which the participant is affiliated (i.e., musicians, board of directors, or the administration). My reason for not being more specific in identifying each participant’s comments (listing all the comments throughout the study by a particular musician as “M1” for example) was the fear that if any one example were recognized, then every utterance by that individual could also be identified. Of course, the native expressions that I have incorporated into this research were not intended to represent each and every member of the Symphony. Rather, my goal was to identify patterns of discourse that transcended individual conceptions of Symphony life and that could be documented through the inclusion of native terms and utterances.


11. Additionally, there have been numerous concert seasons canceled (e.g., the Syracuse Symphony, 1991–1992) or musician strikes (e.g., the Charlotte Symphony in 1991, the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1996, the San Francisco Symphony in 1996–1997, the Toronto Symphony, 1999) that make symphony life problematic.


13. Examples 1a and 1d were taken from informal conversations with two different musicians after a Concert Advisory Committee meeting (a meeting in which programming choices for the upcoming season are made). The comments in examples 1b, 1c and 1e were taken from the survey I distributed to the musicians and represented three different musicians. Example 1f was from a conversation with a musician after a concert in which he explained his preferred view of the relationship between the music and the audience. Examples 2a, 2c, 2d, and 2e were taken from informal conversations with three different administrators (at the administrative offices). Example 2b represents a comment by a board member at a concert negotiation meeting between the administrators and select board members. These examples were selected because of their occurrence across settings, contexts, and individuals, thus illustrating the pervasive nature of these meanings about artistic and business preferences.

14. Briefly explained, the Masterworks Series (now referred to as the Signature Series) features the more serious “classical” pieces rather than contemporary or popular works. Historically, the Masterworks Series is considered to be the backbone of the symphony’s programming. As an art form, the Masterworks series is most important to the players in that it offers the most challenging and sophisticated music. KickBack Classics (formerly “Favorite Classics Series”) offers classical music that tends to be more recognizable than those pieces in the Masterworks Series. Furthermore, KickBack Classics, as the name implies, is intended to be a more relaxed and informal atmosphere than a Masterworks program. The SuperPops Series features contemporary or “popular” music and artists. In an effort to reach a wider audience, the Symphony offers KickBack Classics and SuperPops to those individuals who would be unlikely to attend Masterworks.

15. Typically, there were approximately twelve members, equally represented from the three groups (i.e., musicians, board members, administrators), who attended these meetings. Although all three groups were represented at these meetings, some of the interactions were between members of particular groups only (see example 3d). This was not an uncommon practice, and, at times, there would be isolated conversations between two or more members of the same group.

16. Some symphonies throughout the country have changed their programming to include mostly POPS. Of course, whether or not these symphonies are successful depends on whether one evaluates them from a business or artistic code. From a business code, a symphony is successful if it remains in
business regardless of what type of music it performs. From an artistic perspective, the quality of music is the most important criterion for judging a symphony’s success.

17. Several of the proposals called for a reduction in services (i.e., fewer rehearsals and/or fewer concerts) for the musicians. Since the orchestra is paid on a “per service” basis, musician salaries would be significantly reduced if these options were put into effect.

18. See Deetz (1992) for a thorough elaboration of the various ways in which discursive closure may be enacted. My point is not to argue that the business-oriented members at the Symphony are “guilty” of all of these forms of discursive closure but rather to suggest that these forms may be enacted to prevent organizational members from having full and equal access to the organizational decision-making process.

References


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