A REBELLIOUS READING OF TQM

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ABSTRACT
A REBELLIOUS READING OF TQM

This paper provides a feminist poststructuralist analysis of the root concept of TQM that, to attain quality, variation must be reduced or eliminated. The paper makes three points. First, that the rhetoric of TQM conceals the oppositional, gendered, and hierarchical relationship between quality and variation. Second, that the logic undergirding TQM's vision of quality favors a conception of instrumental rationality rooted in patriarchal thought, and therefore structures administrative thinking in ways that reinforce existing power relations. Third, that TQM's vision of quality privileges traditional conceptions of teaching and learning to the detriment of liberatory (e.g., feminist, critical, ethnic, and cultural studies) epistemologies and pedagogies.
Total Quality Management is the latest "buzz word" among college and university administrators. The conference programs of higher education professional groups and associations are replete with workshops, talks, and seminars on how to adapt the TQM philosophy to the administrative and governance patterns of academic organizations. State boards of higher education are urging public colleges to adopt the management tools of TQM. IBM has given multimillion dollar grants to several large research universities to implement TQM. TQM intensive corporations like DuPont, ITT, and IBM have adopted Big Ten and Land-Grant universities and their executives are instructing academic administrators on how to incorporate TQM processes such as "benchmarking" and "statistical control" into academic and administrative planning. The incursion of TQM into higher education according to a *U.S News and World Report* poll is far-reaching: 61% of the college presidents surveyed claimed their institutions have adopted or are considering adopting TQM programs (Marchese, 1992). Additionally, the American Council on Education's 1993 *Campus Trends* reports that among doctoral institutions, 11% are extensively involved in TQM and 61% are involved in a more limited way (El-Khawas, 1993).

To the converts, TQM represents a "thought revolution" (Seymour, 1992) that promises to "transform postsecondary education" (Chaffee & Sherr, 1992). At a time of decreasing support for higher education and increasing external pressures for accountability TQM's modernist promise of "continuous quality
improvement" is understandably alluring to administrators searching for a rational strategy of retrenchment. The few articles and monographs that have been written on the applications of TQM to higher education are extraordinarily laudatory. College and university administrators are being told that TQM has all the essential elements of good administration in "one consistent package" and that it is bound to work in higher education because "it just looks right" (Chaffee & Sherr, 1992, p. 8).

On the surface, the TQM philosophy appears to be centered on principles of teamwork, horizontal and non-hierarchical structures, and empowerment of subordinates. The followers of TQM stress its human relations aspects: giving primacy to the needs of customers, monitoring processes rather than people, driving out fear among subordinates, reducing symbols of authority and hierarchy by using titles such as "coach" instead of "chairman" or "director," and rewarding the accomplishments of collectives rather than individuals. The human relations tone of TQM creates the image of a management approach premised on connectedness, collaboration, and empowerment, making it appear to be a radical departure from hierarchical management structures and practices. In fact, the human-oriented language of TQM has invited comparisons with "feminine" attributes, making some believe that this is a management approach naturally suited to women's "ways of leading."

The available literature on TQM is full of examples of increases in efficiency and improvements in the delivery of basic services, mostly in the non-academic areas. Without question,
organizational efficiency is highly desirable and the numerous TQM success stories have dispelled doubts about its efficacy. I am willing to concede that TQM may indeed help administrators improve operations such as the processing of financial aid forms or making sure that classrooms always have a supply of chalk. However, my concern is that the logic underlying the TQM philosophy, which advocates accept uncritically, can encourage an administrative mindset that is reductive, conservative, and norm-centered. In other words and administrative mindset that is biased towards likeness rather than difference.

Even though there is a flood of TQM publications, most of these works are "how-to-do-it" prescriptions. For the most part the theoretical origins of TQM have not been subjected to examination. For example, there seems to have been no discussion of TQM’s roots in systems theory, a theory of organizations spawned by a school of thought--structuralist-functionalist--that originated in the principles of the sociology of regulation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Therefore, the impulse for this rebellious reading is a desire to encourage a more critical dialogue about the implications of TQM for the academy. I was moved to provide this critique out of a concern that TQM’s view of quality as the "reduction of variation" is antithetical to the postmodern multicultural university. These concerns are addressed in a three-part critique. In the first part, I "read" TQM’s core concept of Quality from a feminist postructuralist position as an alternative to the more
typical "realist" (Lather, 1991; Van Maanen, 1988) reading that has been provided by TQM enthusiasts. A "realist" reading depicts the principles of TQM as representing an accurate, complete, disinterested description of how management can improve production and service to the customer. A poststructuralist feminist reading "deconstructs" TQM by interrogating the origins of its core principles. In the second and third parts I move from an analysis centered on the language of TQM to institutional examples to illustrate how the language of TQM structures administrative thinking and conceptions of knowledge.

Specifically, in part two of the paper, I argue that the logic undergirding TQM's vision of quality favors a conception of instrumental rationality (Kanter, 1977; Pallas & Neumann, 1993) rooted in patriarchal thought, and therefore structures administrative thinking in ways that reinforce existing power relations. To support this argument, I discuss "textual data" derived from memoranda, planning documents, speeches in a university deeply engaged in TQM-oriented management. In the third part, I consider the teaching and learning climates that are likely to be created or reinforced by TQM-based decision-making. To this end, I entertain the idea that TQM's vision of quality privileges traditional conceptions of teaching and learning to the detriment of liberatory (e.g., feminist, critical, ethnic, and cultural studies) epistemologies and pedagogies. In particular, I speculate on how TQM-induced thinking can bolster conservative arguments against multiculturalism.

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PART I: A POSTSTRUCTURALIST FEMINIST DECONSTRUCTION OF TQM

The idea of an analysis that is specifically grounded in postructuralist feminist theory may appear farfetched, considering that gender is not written into the TQM text. In "gendering" TQM, I am working from the idea that gender and gender oppressions have the power to structure thought even when texts, theories, discourses are presented as genderless (Calas & Smircich, 1993; Sedgwick, 1991). I have chosen postructuralist feminism because it is a theory that "can analyze the workings of patriarchy in all its manifestations--ideological, institutional, organizational, subjective--accounting not only for continuities but also for change over time" (Scott, 1988, p. 33). Second, Calas & Smircich (1993) suggest that feminist postructuralist theory makes it possible to use gender as a strategy to question totalizing categories such as quality and management. Third, postructuralist feminism in being a theory of pluralities and differences--stands in direct oppositionality to the TQM theory of Quality as an essentialist and universal condition made possible by the erasure of Variation.

Postructuralist feminism

The principles of postructuralist feminism that I rely on are based primarily on the work of Chris Weedon (1987) and Jane Flax (1990). First, to examine TQM's focal concept--"Quality as the reduction of variation"--I start out from the position that the meaning of signs is not intrinsic or fixed but relational. In
other words, meaning is shaped contextually within institutions and by prevailing social practices; therefore, the meanings assigned to, "Quality" or "Variation" can serve different interests and purposes. Moreover, they can be contradictory. To university administrators TQM might represent a way of bringing order out of chaos; but to a faculty member, the language of scientific rationality might make TQM appear to be a ploy to give painful budgetary decisions an aura of objectivity.

Second, meanings change according to the discursive position from which they are interpreted. The meanings I ascribe to "Quality" and "Variation" are shaped by my particular interests in existences that challenge the romantic idea of the academy as an integrated, coherent, and harmonious community of scholars. These interests include redefining the academy as "communities of difference" (Tierney, 1993; McLaughlin & Tierney, 1993), changing forms of domination in the academy (e.g., the patriarchal values that shape institutional processes and practices); and advancing the aims of liberatory educational movements.

Third, meaning can be transformed by bringing to bear a different set of assumptions. In this instance, the assumptions that guide my interpretation of "quality" and "variation" are framed by feminist discourses of difference. I start the analysis from the premise that the meaning of "quality as the elimination of variation" is neither self-evident, neutral, nor fixed (as a "realist" reading would make it appear), I present interpretations that contradict and disrupt the illusion of common sense (and
innocence) evoked by the simplicity and forthrightness that marks the TQM discourse.

Quality as the lack of variation

The analytical perspective that informs TQM is aimed directly at reducing variation (Dill, 1993). The authenticity, authority, and exactness of quality indicators are established scientifically by the "sophisticated and creative application of Shewhart's (1931) statistical process control, with an emphasis on reducing variation" (Dill, p. 11, 1993). Implicit in this concept is the notion that sameness, conformity, and regularity represent quality. The dualistic logic--sameness vs. variation--implicit in TQM's formula: Quality=Lack of Variation is a theme that runs through the literature. For example, in On Q: Causing Quality in Higher Education, college administrators are told that "quality means conformance" and "nonquality is nonconformance" (Crosby, cited in Seymour, p. 26). In the industrial sector the reduction of variation depends on manufacturing products such as automobiles or electronic equipment in conformity with essential standards of quality that have been established by "benchmarking" processes and monitored with a combination of quantitative methods to detect variation from the desired norms of performance and production. When the concept of "reduction of variation" and the processes to establish and measure the achievement of "quality" are applied to organizations whose product are humans rather than objects, the model's simplicity looks dangerously reductive. For example, faithful translations of TQM to higher education have the effect of
making processes, choices, judgements, and knowledge appear to be linear, disembodied, and inanimate. When policies on undergraduate admissions are viewed through the lens of TQM, colleges take on the characteristics of industries, establishing relationships with suppliers (the high schools) so they will provide improved materials (better students) for manufacture of the desired products (graduates who have been socialized to the values, norms, behaviors of the dominant culture) (Cornesky, et al., 1990). Furthermore, the concern with stamping out variation creates a view of quality based on conformity. Students who respond well to lecture and traditional assessment formats are labeled "as having a high conformity index" (i.e., quality), and those who do not are "denoted as having a low conformity index" (i.e., variation) (Cornesky, et al., 1990, p. 47).

Judging quality on the basis of conformity is troublesome for many reasons, but one very obvious danger inherent in such thinking is that what is singled out as "defective" and in need of "adjustment according to specifications" are the students rather than the passive lecture method or the professor rather than institutional policies and practices that produce and reward the "banking model" of instruction (Freire, 1984). Needless to say, the criteria for determining quality and variation must come from somewhere, which raises two questions: "Whose view of Quality?" and "Variation from whom or what?" TQM is conspicuously silent about the source of the definitions that rule what constitutes Quality and what constitutes Variation, making it appear as if they
come from nowhere.

But Quality and Variation are not objective. Whoever ascribes meaning to quality and variation does so from a position of subjectivity. Definitions of quality always reflect particular interests, values, and beliefs about goodness. As a patriarchal institution\(^1\) the academy traditionally defined Quality and Variation in ways that exclude, suppress, or marginalize the experiences, knowledges, and intellectual traditions of women, people of color, Third World People, gay men and lesbians (Gates, 1992; Giroux, 1993; Harding, 1991; hooks, 1989; Mohanty, 1989; Tierney, 1993).

**Is sameness to essential as variation is to inessential?**

The focus of poststructuralism is on the analysis of texts "in terms of specific historical and contextual meanings" (Scott, 1988, p. 35). Texts are not limited to books or other written documents, policies, theories, cultural practices can also be deconstructed as texts. Poststructuralist analysis involves the deconstruction of implicit or explicit hierarchical binarisms where the positive value, superior, and essential status of one partner is made meaningful by the negative value, inferior, and inessential status of the other partner (Scott, 1988). Thus, in TQM the meaning of Quality is constituted in the "negation" or "reduction" of variation (negative value) which implicitly posits "lack of variation" or "sameness" (positive value) as being the superior and

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\(^1\) After Gerda Lerner, I am using the term patriarchal to describe an institutionalized system of male dominance (1986) in that positions of power and authority are held by men.
desired condition.

In keeping with the feminist poststructuralist view that meaning is constituted in relationships, rather than permanently fixed in words, I propose that in the discourse of TQM Quality and Variation are constituted in the relationship between sameness and difference. Historically, this relationship has been expressed in gender metaphors that positioned the male as the essential whole, powerful, superior and the female as the inessential fractured, weak, and subordinate whose identity as sexually different was established in reference to men (Harding, 1991; Sedgwick, 1991; Pateman, 1992).

Feminist philosophical and historical analyses of binary oppositions trace the gendered and asymmetrical relationship between sameness and difference to the patriarchal discourse of Western liberal thought, in which the male is encoded as normative (sameness/essential) and the female is encoded as not-man (difference/inessential) and therefore incomplete and imperfect (Pateman, 1989; Bordo, 1989; Lerner, 1986; Harding, 1991). Elizabeth Minnich observes that Simone de Beauvoir's seminal contribution to feminist politics was the explication of how woman's identity was constituted into the variant Other.

In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria,
without reciprocity. . . . She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute--she is the Other (cited in Minnich, 1993, p. 524).

Quality as the lack of variation reinstitutes essentialist² patriarchal discourses that conceptualize Knowledge, Truth, History, Science, Literature, etc. in the contrast between the superiority of Western European culture and the inferior cultures of the Other(s). Quality is based on indicators modeled on the normative gender as male (e.g., whenever references are made to college presidents, doctors, or professors "he" is more likely to be used than "she"), normative race as White, normative culture as Western European, normative sexual identity as heterosexual, and normative occupational status as professional. In contrast, differences such as non-male, non-white, non-European, non-heterosexual, and non-professional are rarely viewed as being desirable because they signify or strengthen quality. For example, not many people would see the existence of more gay students or faculty as a necessary component of campus quality.

The understanding of Quality as the negation of difference is at the heart of curricular debates on multiculturalism, post-colonialism, ethnic studies, women's studies, and gay and lesbian

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² Essentialism according to Diana Fuss "is typically defined in opposition to difference; the doctrine of essence is viewed as precisely that which seeks to deny or to annul the very radicality of difference" (p. xii, 1989).
studies. Advocates for the traditional Western European canon argue that it represents essential intellectual knowledge whereas multicultural canons represent inessential knowledge motivated by social concerns for improved relations and understandings among the races, men and women, heterosexuals and homosexuals.

TQM’s danger lies in the conceptualization of Quality as likeness to the norm. Thus the success of women and faculty members of color depends on how effectively they assimilate to collegial structures and intellectual standpoints that reflect the concerns of white men (Collins, 1993). This means that in order to succeed in the academy Black women (and other underrepresented and subordinate groups) are put in a position of teaching concepts and doing research with theoretical frameworks that require them to accept their invisibility as subjects and agents of knowledge (Collins, 1993; Higginbotham, 1993). Those who refuse to collaborate with norms that devalue and marginalize knowledges derived from the experiences of groups who are newcomers to the academy and refuse to be silent about inequities, sexism, or patriarchal privilege run the risk of not being taken seriously. The highly publicized resignation of feminist writer Carolyn Heilbrun from Columbia University’s English Department after 32 years provides a telling example of what happens when "difference" is asserted. For years Heilbrun resisted socialization, which meant that she was not considered a good team player, failed to show the proper reverence for tradition, and refused to be invisible. Her colleagues viewed her as "uncollegial," "out of
control, where women's issues are concerned," and "frustrated" (Matthews, 1992).

My intent is not to indict TQM as a sexist, racist, heterosexist conspiracy. Rather, I wish to show that postructuralist feminism provides an interpretive lens that forces us to look at the concept "Quality as the reduction of variation" historically and in the context of politics of difference driving campus debates about multiculturalism, cultural studies, gay and lesbian studies, anti-racist pedagogies, etc. Quality is not objective, neutral, or meritocratic; its meaning is derived from what is labeled as difference, not just any difference but differences associated with inferiority, underdevelopment, primitive cultures, colonization, etc. Because the symbol system has historically been dominated by men of power, it follows that quality has been shaped by the interests, experiences, and values of the ruling gender and racial class (Lerner, 1986). The consequences of a definition of quality based on sameness is that the different (and negative) Others are always defined and judged in contrast to unnamed but nonetheless ever-present conceptions of male, white, heterosexual as the generic human being, making it almost impossible to define "quality" in ways that establish differences as authentic, good, and desirable in and of themselves.

I realize that this reading of TQM may sound incredible. Obviously, we are not in the habit of thinking about managerial strategies like TQM in terms of gender, race, or sexuality. I expect that some adherents of TQM will contend that I have
distorted the concept of "reduction of variation," that the intent is to focus attention on improving (e.g., by reducing variation) the academic "processes" used to transform inputs into "quality" outputs. Others may claim that I have chosen to focus on an aspect of TQM to which no one pays much attention. However, now that TQM applications in higher education are rapidly expanding from routine administrative and business practices to the academic domain there is an imperative to have discussions about the implications of a theory of management that is based on a logic of sameness.

Clearly, TQM is not being used as a tool for domination and subjugation. Advocates concerned about the loss of public confidence in higher education and the decline of financial support from legislatures may view TQM as a way of reclaiming the public trust. The language of TQM makes higher education look more rational to corporate executives who sit on boards of trustees and more accountable to legislators who want quantifiable indicators of productivity. Even though choosing the route of TQM may be the politically smart thing to do in an environment of scarcity, it is important that we also consider the impact of TQM on the culture of the academy. In the remainder of this paper I discuss the consequences TQM might have on the administrative and academic spheres.

PART II: THE INCURSION OF TQM INTO ADMINISTRATIVE THINKING

The administrative career has been described as a filtering process that leads to the selection of socially similar individuals (Cohen & March, 1974). In making judgements about
what counts as intellectual knowledge, academic leaders are more likely to be guided by concepts of quality based on universal norms of competence. Thus, a woman sociologist whose work has been published in mainstream journals is more likely to be rewarded with tenure and promotion than the woman sociologist whose work has been published primarily in feminist interdisciplinary journals. Similarly, in spite of the increasing acceptance of qualitative methodologies, many in the academy still dismiss them as journalistic. Studies based on quantitative methods continue to be regarded as being more scientific and, therefore, more trustworthy.

Knowledge that has been purported as universal is being challenged as more representative of reality as viewed from the standpoint (and interests) of dominant groups. The struggle of women, members of racial and ethnic groups, and gay men and lesbians to be recognized as full-fledged members of the academy without submitting to dehumanizing socialization processes (hooks, 1989) has heightened awareness of how and why some knowledges are signified as indicative of universal quality, while knowledges associated with subordinate groups might be seen as culturally enriching but not as essential intellectual knowledge. Challenges to traditional constructions of knowledge and quality, coupled with the increasing racial and cultural diversity of the academy, the thrust toward curricular transformation, the ascendancy of progressive intellectual movements, and the rise of new research methodologies suggest
that the academy is in greater need for a theory of
administration based on "difference" rather than on "sameness." That is, higher education leaders need theories that will arouse their interest in dissonance, inconsistencies, contradictory realities, and conflict. TQM does the opposite; it reinforces the natural tendency to recognize and value conformity to taken-for-granted standards of knowledge, quality, and legitimacy. TQM should be rejected on the grounds that, as a philosophy and theory it is unfit for academic administration.

TQM is alarmingly appealing to the conservative administrative mindset. It can threaten the efforts being made on many campuses to dismantle practices and structures that sustain gender and racially exclusive patriarchal arrangements. TQM is a natural ally of those who believe it is more important to defend traditional values than to reconstruct the academy to make it more responsive to diversity. To illustrate the complementary relationship between TQM and traditional conceptions of the academy, consider the following excerpt from a speech made at the start of the academic year by the president of a research university deeply involved in a comprehensive application of TQM. Referring to TQM’s customer-oriented principle the president says,

> Universities do more, however, than satisfy customers. They also educate them with regard to values and standards--values and standards that shape the public’s conception of what quality is... If we fail to preserve and pass on the values that have served our institutions and nation so well, we fail not only ourselves but also the hopes of the future (emphasis added).
The president's call for the preservation of values reiterates the message implicit in TQM, that the incursion of variation/differences compromises institutional quality. The reference to traditional values, although unspecified, resonates with the romanticized image of the university as the repository of a shared culture. In fact, the emphasis on the preservation of values is reminiscent of William Bennett's claim that "the challenge to our colleges and universities...is to conserve and transmit that tradition" by exposing students to the great books that are representative of "Western tradition" (cited in Rhoades, p. 521).

Also, TQM's propensity for defining quality in terms of hierarchical binarisms can be discerned in the text of the president's speech. He elaborates on the meaning of traditional values by saying,

> These are the values that weigh a delicate balance between community interests and individual rights...that choose reason over emotional response (emphasis added).

The gendered connotations in the oppositional and asymmetric dichotomy of reason versus emotion are obvious, once again illustrating the point made earlier, that TQM encourages a positivist logic. Such logic can produce an administrative mindset that is inclined to be dismissive of the struggles for recognition being waged by feminists, people of color, lesbians, and gay men as emotional expressions of identity politics. The positioning of reason as superior to emotion can also be read as an endorsement of the academy's patriarchal arrangements, in that
reason has traditionally symbolized masculine rationality and emotion has symbolized the irrationality of females.

Hence, consistent with the rational logic of TQM in the president's speech, reality is partitioned: On one side of the partition there is Quality, which is made possible by community values that have been shaped by reason; on the other side of the partition there is NonQuality, caused by the emotional demands of individuals who clamor for recognition of differences. This way of looking at the world makes everything that deviates from the norm appear irrational, inferior, subjective, and unscientific.

The president's speech is not an isolated case; the encroachment of TQM is also evident in the way administrators use information for sense- and decision-making. For example, this university is currently engaged in a comprehensive budget reduction exercise, which consistent with the TQM philosophy, is driven by quantitative indicators of quality (number of faculty publications, number of times faculty members appear in citation indexes, amount of grant money generated, number of students graduated, etc.) that allow for comparisons of departments and programs within the university's several colleges (e.g., college of education) as well as across colleges (e.g., college of education vs. college of engineering). Needless to say, the portrayal of academic units and programs in numerical form has made the central administration acutely aware of some

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\(^3\)TQM seems to be more sensitive to reductions in variation that will save money in the operation of institutions and less sensitive to reducing inequities that would require additional
inter and intra-unit variations. Thus, in an attempt to reduce costs, one administrative proposal claims that more than $2 million dollars could be saved in instructional costs by eliminating "unnecessary elective credits," which are all those credits required by the individual academic units that go "beyond the University minimum of 120." It goes without saying that even though the designation of "unnecessary electives" was ostensibly made on the basis of a "reasoned" and "objective" analysis of statistical data, it nonetheless favors a utilitarian/functionalist view of the nature of knowledge and the curriculum. Ironically, centralized determinations about the curriculum portend reduced autonomy for academic units, violating one of TQM's most revered principles--the decentralization of decision-making and the empowerment of subordinate units.

In sum, the superior value assigned to reason is consistent with TQM's faith in the capacity of statistical analysis techniques to capture a true and objective representation of reality. The belief in reason and the reliance on statistical analysis as techniques of control--whether it be control of values or quality or knowledge--can produce an administrative mindset that is blind to the nuances of institutional life. In the section that follows, I extend this argument by speculating on how TQM might stifle campus movements to bring about the

expenditures. For example, I have not heard of TQM being applied to reduce the variations that exist in the salaries for men and women faculty and men and women administrators or to reduce variations in the allocation of funds to men and women's sports.
transformation of knowledge.

PART III: THE INCURSION OF TQM IN THE CURRICULUM

Even more worrisome than the influence of TQM on the administrative mindset are the consequences of initiatives to apply TQM more directly to the management of academic quality. The notion of TQM being applied in the academic sphere raises a number of questions: "What happens if university administrators apply TQM to the management of academic quality?" "How would we go about reducing variation in teaching and learning?" "What would be required to produce reliable and quality undergraduates?" And, "What might be the consequences of TQM for educational movements that theorize about difference?" These are obvious questions, but surprisingly they do not appear to have been taken into consideration in the discussions on TQM applications to higher education.

To consider these questions, I turn to a comprehensive discussion of TQM by David Dill, entitled "Quality By Design: Toward a Framework for Academic Quality" (1993). Endeavoring to find useful applications of TQM in higher education, Dill (1993) compares the ways in which quality has traditionally been managed in higher education with the principles of TQM. Accordingly, Dill (1993) observes that in academic organizations the reduction of variation has been achieved by "normative mechanisms including shared values, traditions, and networks of socialization and communication" (p. 18), which have led to the implementation of "consensually developed curricula" and "common instructional
techniques" (p. 34).

The idea that quality in the academy is normatively controlled is premised on an organizational model of colleges and universities as collegiums or clans. The shared values of the community of scholars function as the normative controls that mediate how quality is defined, measured, and certified. However, the view of academic organizations as integrated collegial cultures is partial and also distorting. Feminists argue that the status of social fact bestowed on concepts such as "shared values," "normative controls," and "consensus" renders the special interests, privileges, and social power relations of the community of scholars that produced them invisible (Weedon, 1987). Women and people of color have not been part of the dialogues and processes that have produced the academy's "shared values." For this reason, judgements about quality that are portrayed as consensually determined can be deceptive and should be examined critically.

A feminist critique of the notion that quality is normatively controlled can take two forms. The first one is that the meaning of normative was forged within an institutional context that was (and in many ways continues to be) ideologically patriarchal and culturally ethnocentric. And, second, it would argue that knowledge in the academy has been predicated on a faulty assumption: Namely, that the European Western male experience is the embodiment of human and universal experience (Harding, 1991; Minnich, 1993). Thus, the meaning of normative
varies: For those whose knowledge is affirmed, "normative" appears natural; but for those whose "different" knowledge is marked as negative, the "normative" can be a repressive practice.

Clearly, the controversy in campuses throughout the nation between Eurocentrics and Multiculturalists about definitions of knowledge belies the myth of "consensually developed curricula." Indeed, the work of feminists, ethnic scholars, and cultural critics exposes the vested interests underlying the "consensually developed curriculum."

What disturbs me about TQM is that its preoccupation with eliminating variation resonates too closely with the calls by anti-multiculturalists for common standards and a common culture, including a common ideal of quality (Fish, 1992). The apparent connection between the management philosophy of TQM (i.e., the ideal of uniform quality) and educational philosophy of anti-multiculturalists (i.e., the ideal of a common Western European culture) does not augur well for cultural, feminist, and ethnic studies.

Despite the rhetoric of "diversity" and an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse student body, colleges and universities have still a long way to go to achieve integration in the composition of their faculties. Moreover student diversity has not had as major an impact on the curriculum as one might be led to believe by the media's exaggerated accounts of political correctness. General education programs or core requirements are still designed according to monocultural
conceptions of foundational knowledge based on Western European standards as to what is essential to know about music, literature, history, and science to be considered a cultured person. TQM's aversion to difference strengthens the conservative stance against multiculturalism, and it imposes standards of quality that reward intellectual and human uniformity. The idealization of conformity and assimilation have always been detrimental and dehumanizing to those members of the academy who are "outsiders" and who do scholarship and pedagogy in a "different voice" (hooks, 1989; Collins, 1993). The statistical indicators of academic quality being used by universities that have adopted TQM (e.g., faculty publications in first tier disciplinary journals; percentage of students with SAT scores above a certain threshold, etc.) reinforce a culture of sameness. Traditional measures of "excellence" favor individuals who are socially, intellectually, and ideologically similar. They also reward scholarship and research that conforms to scientific inquiry i.e., quantitative and predictive and devalue naturalistic inquiry, i.e., qualitative and interpretive for not being objective, rigorous, and generalizable. Faculty whose scholarship and pedagogy defy normative standards may be viewed as undesirable because their unorthodox work even though popular will not contribute substantively to departmental quality "ratings" if, for example, it appears in interdisciplinary, feminist, or cultural studies journals or is published by obscure non-profit presses. Thus even though TQM may appear as an
objective process- and outcome-oriented system of managing the academic workplace its philosophical underpinnings reinforce ways of organizing and leading that are more compatible with an ideology of quality that is conservative and exclusionary and advantages established forms of power and authority.

PART IV: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ABOUT TQM FROM THE STANDPOINT OF POSTSTRUCTURALIST FEMINISM

The root concept of TQM is that to attain quality, variation must be reduced or eliminated. The intent of this feminist critique has been to strip away the rhetoric of TQM and deconstruct the oppositional, gendered, and hierarchical relationship between quality and variation. Of course, deconstructive strategies could have been used in an infinite number of ways and derive meanings of TQM that are either complementary, oppositional, or unrelated to mine. I have chosen to focus exclusively on the gendered meanings implicit in the quality/variation dualism because, as Eve Sedgwick has observed, "dichotomies in a given text...are likely places to look for implicit allegories of the relations between men and women" (1992, p. 147). I recognize that the oppositional relationship that is emblematic of dualisms--culture as opposed to nature, public as opposed to private, mind as opposed to body--is not self-evident in the relationship of quality to variation. That is, we do not tend to think of quality as opposed to variation. However, my interpretation of the definition of quality as "the
reduction of variation" is that TQM's particular version of quality is constituted by the relationship of "sameness as opposed to variation." Hence, my critique is based on a deconstruction of the gendered meanings embedded in this relationship.

Poststructuralist feminism enabled me to look at TQM from the standpoint of "differences" as opposed to the more typical functionalist interpretations based on similarities. I ascribe social and political meanings to the concept of "quality as the reduction of variation" that some may find surprising and unfounded. Anticipating that some readers may have reactions such as, "This analysis has nothing to do with TQM" or "This is an extremist interpretation of a concept that no one pays much attention to," or "There is much more to TQM than the quality/variation concept," or "This is not rational, not logical," I turned to Chris Weedon for a response that could explain "why" I chose a feminist critique of TQM rather than the newer non-functionalist analyses of organization (e.g., social constructivism). She says:

The use of reason, logic and science as guarantees of the naturalness of patriarchal social structures has not been without its effects on the forms taken by feminist resistance to patriarchal beliefs. The recognition that reason is never value-free and that truth is a social construct used to uphold patriarchal interests has led much feminist discourse to reject rationalist strategies for contesting patriarchal meaning (emphasis added) (Weedon, p. 99, 1987).

Thus, this rebellious reading should be viewed as just that--a conscious move to contest the patriarchal underside of TQM.
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