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# Curricular Transformations: Traditional and Emerging Voices in the Academy

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The purpose, content, and meaning of the undergraduate curriculum has been vigorously debated throughout the history of American higher education. From the antebellum debates over the classical curriculum at Yale and William and Mary to the biting critiques recently leveled against "relativism" in higher education (Bloom, 1987), the undergraduate curriculum has served as an historic theater for defining, producing, and legitimating knowledge. In the past decade, the curriculum has been enacted by a wide range of actors who hold a vital stake in higher education—including academics, policy-makers, students, and representatives of the business community (Conrad, 1989). Their perspectives have focused on both a reassertion—and a reexamination—of the centrality of the traditional canon in the undergraduate curriculum. This dynamic interplay between traditional and emerging stakeholder voices has recently contributed to an intriguing transformation of the American undergraduate curriculum.

By curricular transformation, we are referring to those informal and formal procedures through which knowledge within the curriculum is continually produced, created, and expanded by a wide range of stakeholders acting within a broader social and historical context. The recent introduction—and, in numerous cases, incorporation—of emerging modes of inquiry, perspectives, and pedagogical techniques into the undergraduate curriculum suggests that the purpose, content, and meaning of the undergraduate curriculum is in the midst of major reexamination and change. In this essay, we reflect on the various forces transforming the undergraduate curriculum across three lines of inquiry. First, we explore the contemporary context and discuss four informing forces that have catalyzed recent developments in the undergraduate curriculum. Second, given this contextual background, we discuss the knowledge claims recently articulated by two broad groups of stakeholders and examine their consequences for the undergraduate curriculum. In our final section, we investigate how new knowledge claims are being legitimated by stakeholders within the academy and illustrate how this development has led to a transformation of the undergraduate curriculum.

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## I. The Contemporary Context

In his inaugural presidential address at Harvard in 1869, Charles William Eliot suggested that "the institutions of higher education . . . are always a faithful mirror in which are sharply reflected the national history and character" (Rudolph, 1977, p. 5). From the colonial colleges and land-grant colleges to the movement for equality of educational opportunity during the last three decades, American institutions of higher learning have actively responded to the prevailing trends and social values of the day. Three broad societal changes and one significant change within academe have acted as powerful informing forces on the recent development of the undergraduate curriculum.

### *Changing Demographics*

The ethnic composition of American society has diversified markedly over the past decade, a trend that is expected to continue well into the twenty-first century. By 1996, for example, it is expected that one out of every three 15-24 year olds will be a member of a minority group. The percentage of non-minority white youth aged 15-24 is expected to decline by 12 percent while the number of Hispanic youth aged 15-24 is expected to increase by 44 percent (Wetzel, 1987).

This increasing diversity is reflected in college and university enrollments. Since 1980, there has been a richer blend of age, race, and ethnic backgrounds among college and university students than ever before in American higher education. Between 1978 and 1989, the number of adult students (aged 25 years and older) attending college increased by approximately 24 percent, whereas the number of traditional age college students (18-24 years) grew by only 7 percent over the same time period (NCES, 1989). Similarly, the number of women enrolling in postsecondary education increased 26 percent between 1978 and 1989 (NCES, 1989).

Minority enrollment in higher education has also increased over the past decade. Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, approximately 18 percent of all college and university students represented minority groups in 1988, an increase from 16 percent in 1980. This increase occurred, despite the drop in black student enrollment from 9.2 percent in 1980 to 8.7 percent in 1988, because Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander student enrollments increased notably over the past ten years (NCES, 1989). Although the modest gains in minority student enrollment are troublesome, four out of every five institutions report that they are currently involved in activities designed to increase minority enrollment and retention (El-Khawwas, 1989).

### *Traditionalist Educational Policy Agenda*

With the publication of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983, the first indication of an impending traditionalist policy agenda was recognized on American college and university campuses. Under the bully-pulpit political leadership of then Secretary of Education William Bennett, calls for a return to the fundamentals of the higher learning were stressed by both the popular press and many academics. These fundamentals included greater attention on basic skills acquisition, a renewed emphasis on studying the humanities and the great books of Western civilization, and stronger calls for assessing student learning and development.

The back-to-basics movement in higher education has experienced a revival of interest over the past decade. A number of educational reform reports have suggested that

colleges and universities must pay greater attention to strengthening basic writing, mathematics, communication, and logical reasoning skills among undergraduate students (NIE, 1984; AAC, 1985; Boyer, 1987). This renewed emphasis on basic skills appears to have been precipitated by studies indicating the academic underpreparedness of today's college-aged youth. According to one recent study of 250 four-year institutions, one out of every seven freshman students was in need of remedial coursework in English or mathematics (Roueche, Baker, and Roueche, 1985). In response to this growing concern, a large number of institutions have recently instituted mandatory basic skill assessments for students. A 1989 study of 366 two- and four-year institutions, for example, found that basic skills testing was firmly in place at 65 percent of all postsecondary institutions and that another 19 percent had initiated plans for testing (El-Khawas, 1989).

The reassertion of the intellectual and social value of the humanities and the traditional great books canon has likewise found expression on college and university campuses across the nation. Initially promoted by Bennett (1984), Allan Bloom (1987) and E.D. Hirsch (1987) have recently penned best-selling volumes that have argued for the inherent worth of the humanities as a course of study—and the great books as the preferred curriculum—in undergraduate education. Colleges and universities have responded to this call: in 1986, 42 percent of universities, and 35 percent of four-year colleges required that original texts be used in their humanities courses (El-Khawas, 1986).

The call for accountability has likewise spread across American colleges and universities. In the mid 1980s, several national reform reports—including those by the National Institute of Education (1984) and the Association of American Colleges (1985)—recommended that colleges and universities implement systematic student assessment programs to monitor and track student learning outcomes. According to a 1989 American Council of Education survey of 366 two- and four-year postsecondary institutions, approximately 70 percent of the surveyed colleges and universities had institutionalized some form of assessment activity (El-Khawas, 1989). For the most part, these assessments have targeted basic skills (65 percent), higher order thinking skills (25 percent), general education (25 percent), and major subject content areas (26 percent) in the undergraduate curriculum (El-Khawas, 1989).

#### *Increasingly Pluralistic Environment*

Over the past fifteen years, an increasingly pluralistic environment has emerged both within and outside of the academy. Grounded in societal demographic changes, the international trend toward a global economic marketplace, and the growing environmental recognition of the world as a global village, pluralistic perspectives have surfaced in the American undergraduate curricular landscape in the form of global, gender, and ethnic studies courses.

A number of stakeholders have recently given voice to this pluralistic perspective. In their reform reports, the Association of American Colleges (1980 and 1988) became one of the first major groups to call for the inclusion of multicultural and global perspectives into the undergraduate curriculum: "The first curricular priority is to implant a strong international dimension into the core of general education requirements. The curriculum should be expanded to introduce students particularly to non-Western cultures" (AAC, 1980, p. 4). Several government agencies and private foundations—including the

Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the Lilly Endowment, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation—have provided funding for implementing global, gender, and ethnic studies into the undergraduate curriculum. The entrance of greater numbers of women and minorities into the professoriate has likewise advanced both feminist and multicultural world views.

These pluralistically-inspired courses and program innovations are generally characterized by both a high degree of interdisciplinarity and the use of perspectives and texts not traditionally represented in the Western civilization canon. Pluralists and educational traditionalists have recently locked horns over the legitimacy of representing multiple world views in the undergraduate curriculum. This debate has been most recently illustrated by the curriculum revision projects at the University of California-Berkeley and Stanford University, where both universities have recently revised their general education requirements to include pluralistic perspectives (Mooney, 1988).

#### *Competing Perspectives in the Academy*

The recent dynamic interplay between traditionalist and pluralistic perspectives has generated a spectrum of colorful debates among scholars in academe. The anthropologist Renato Rosaldo has used a militaristic metaphor to describe the recent debate as a "raging battle" where the epithet was the weapon of choice: "Name calling has pitted 'objectivists' against 'relativists,' 'presentists' against 'historicists,' and 'foundationalists' against 'interpretivists'" (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 219). Not unlike the debates at the turn of the century between scientists and liberal humanists, this recent exchange over the legitimacy of competing epistemologies, modes of inquiry, and perspectives appears to cut both across—and within—disciplines and professional fields.

This "raging battle" has largely centered on the validity of the traditional, positivist approach to scholarly inquiry. A growing number of scholars have recently objected to the epistemological view that truth is objective and exists "out there" to be discovered through value-free, neutral, scientific methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The emergence of diverse new perspectives—including interpretivism, feminism, multiculturalism and critical theory—has offered competing epistemologies where truth is viewed as subjective and existing, at least in part, within the realm of an individual's personal and cultural experiences. Because of the constructed nature of knowledge, these scholars argue that new modes of inquiry—such as oral history, ethnography, hermeneutics, and the greater use of interdisciplinary and comparative studies—must be used to achieve not only a critical understanding of their own disciplines, but of the world as well.

As the formal medium for communicating knowledge within the university, the curriculum is heavily influenced by the prevailing events, values, and beliefs of the society in which it is situated. In the past ten years, three broad societal changes—the increasing cultural diversity of American society, the resurgence of traditionalist values and attitudes, and the fuller recognition of pluralistic perspectives—as well as the internal conflict over epistemologies and modes of inquiry within academe, have acted to transform the undergraduate curriculum. These contemporary developments have been facilitated by a diverse group of stakeholders holding multiple perspectives for the purpose, content, and meaning of the undergraduate curriculum. As our next two sections

will suggest, these perspectives have contributed to fundamental changes in the undergraduate curriculum.

## II. Stakeholder Knowledge Claims on the Undergraduate Curriculum

There have been few periods in the history of American higher education when the purpose, content, and meaning of the undergraduate curriculum has been debated as vigorously or as publicly as in the decade of the 1980s. One diverse group has provided high-pitched critiques of American education, arguing that dramatic changes are needed to revitalize the collegiate curriculum. Their proposals have included pleas for reclaiming the national legacy (Bennett, 1984), restoring curricular integrity (AAC, 1985), re-opening the American mind (Bloom, 1987), and ensuring the cultural literacy of our youth (Hirsch, 1987). A second, highly diversified stakeholder group has argued that the current curriculum is narrowly defined by a myopic world view that has minimized the knowledge claims of various groups, including women, minorities, and non-Western authors (see, for example, McIntosh, 1981; Schuster and Van Dyne, 1984; Andersen, 1987; Rosaldo, 1989; Tierney, 1989b). The diversity and vitality of perspectives generated by these two stakeholder groups has drawn national attention to the purpose and substance of the undergraduate curriculum in our nation's colleges and universities. In this section, we discuss the knowledge claims recently articulated by these two stakeholder groups and briefly examine their consequences for the undergraduate curriculum.

### *Stakeholder Knowledge Claims: Traditional Voices*

As noted above, several individuals (Bennett, 1984; Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987; Cheney, 1989) have recently published policy reports and national best-selling books calling for the revitalization of the undergraduate curriculum. Presenting what is widely considered a traditionalist agenda for curricular reform, these stakeholders have argued that the curriculum has become watered down by "relativistic" points of view, becoming little more than a "supermarket" of electives where the central role of the "humanities has been siphoned off, diluted, or so adulterated that students graduating know little of their heritage" (Bennett, 1984, p. 5). These stakeholders have called for a re-statement of the liberal arts course of study and the traditional great books canon as two mandatory steps toward restoring the educational integrity of the undergraduate curriculum.

From an epistemological perspective, these "traditional voices" are firmly rooted within a particular view of knowledge—logical positivism—that has been the predominant mode of inquiry within the academy since the beginning of the American research university in the late nineteenth century. This epistemology assumes that knowledge exists "out there" and can be discovered through objective and empirical means. From this perspective, knowledge is viewed as a series of lawlike, absolute, universal truths that exist independent of, and external to, the knower. The scholar's task is to act as a detached observer in the pursuit of truth and knowledge.

This guiding epistemology is revealed in the traditionalist's knowledge claims concerning the purpose and content of—and, to a lesser degree, the pedagogy within—the undergraduate curriculum. Believing that the kinds of "knowledge most worth knowing" in a Western, democratic society are based in those universal truths of Western civilization that have endured the test of time, traditionalists argue that the purpose of

the undergraduate experience is to expose students to the time-honored truths of their society. For many in this group, these truths are best revealed in the humanities:

I would describe the humanities as the best that has been said, thought, written, and otherwise expressed about the human experience. The humanities tell us how men and women of our own and other civilizations have grappled with life's enduring questions: What is justice? What should be loved? What deserves to be defended? . . . We should want all students to know a common culture rooted in civilization's lasting vision, its highest shared ideals and aspirations, and its heritage (Bennett, 1984, p. 6).

Many traditionalists further argue that if students are to learn the truths of their common culture, the university must provide programs based upon the "judicious use of great texts" (Bloom, 1987, p. 344) which provoke:

Awareness of the classic—particularly important for our innocents; an acquaintance with what big questions were when there were still big questions; models, at the very least, of how to go about answering them; and, perhaps, most important of all, a fund of shared experiences and thoughts on which to ground their friendships with one another (Bloom, 1987, p. 344).

These "great texts," according to traditionalist reformers, "embody the best in our culture . . . no student citizen should be denied access to the best that tradition has to offer" (Bennett, 1984, p. 29).

Without these fundamental truths, traditionalists maintain that students will lack the requisite knowledge needed to be productive and informed citizens in American society. Diane Ravitch has argued that "students cannot learn to ask critical questions or to think conceptually about the past or about their own lives as political actors unless they have sufficient background knowledge" (1988, p. 129). Through the study of the humanities and the great thinkers of the past, the traditionalist-crafted undergraduate experience is designed to provide students with the requisite "background knowledge" in order to live wisely and well.

The traditionalists' pedagogical approach is likewise deeply rooted within their epistemology. In her discussion of teaching in the undergraduate core curriculum, Lynne Cheney references the pedagogical wisdom of the *Yale Report of 1828*:

"The two great points to be gained in intellectual culture," an 1828 report from Yale University noted, "are the *discipline* and the *furniture* [her italics] of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge" (1989, p. 14).

When knowledge is viewed as a series of absolute and universal truths that exist independent of, and external to, the knower, the teacher is viewed as a kind of sage whose task is to impart these universal truths to students neutrally. Given that the aim of a college education is to exercise, condition, and strengthen the intellect, the pedagogical element of the traditionalist's epistemology becomes important only insofar as it more fully engages students in the content of their inquiry.

Traditionalist knowledge claims have contributed significantly to the growing conservative policy agenda that has swept over American education during the past ten

years. Their influence over the purpose and content of the undergraduate curriculum has been apparent in a number of areas, including recent movements to increase the amount of general education required by undergraduates, the fuller integration of liberal education into professional undergraduate education programs, as well as the new emphases placed on basic skills, humanities, and great books instruction (Conrad and Haworth, forthcoming). Ironically, perhaps the most instrumental goal of the traditionalists—to establish interdisciplinary core curricula—has not experienced much success. According to a recent survey of 284 four-year institutions, only 2 percent had implemented an interdisciplinary core curriculum for their general education program (Locke, 1989).

Although some recent reform reports, such as Bennett's *To Reclaim a Legacy* and Cheney's *50 Hours*, have recommended that universities select their "most distinguished faculty" to teach core courses, traditional stakeholder perspectives have generally made few recommendations to improve pedagogical practices within the undergraduate curriculum. An exception is the recent AAC report, which includes substantive pedagogical suggestions for "reorienting teaching" that go beyond content issues and address the process of teaching (AAC, 1988). Specifically, the report encourages active student learning through an improved understanding of how students "hear, understand, interpret, and integrate ideas" (AAC, 1988, p. 28) and suggests that teachers enlist their students as "coinquirers" in the learning process.

#### *Stakeholder Knowledge Claims: Emerging Voices.*

A chorus of new voices has recently been heard in the academy. These stakeholders—although expressing diverse points-of-view—have shared a single perspective in common: the belief that knowledge, as it is currently understood in the undergraduate curriculum, is partial, incomplete, and distorted. Calling for an end to the exclusive dominance of the traditional canon in the undergraduate curriculum, these scholars have argued for an expansion of curricular borders in higher education to include various cultural and theoretical perspectives.

While highly diverse in their own scholarly visions, these new voices share the view that knowledge, at least in large part, is a social construct. This perspective is directly antithetical to the traditionalists' epistemology that knowledge is an objective entity that exists "out there," external to, and independent of, the knower. By contrast, in this other, more contingent approach to knowledge, the interaction between the individual and his or her cultural context is critical to the construction of what is—or is not—considered knowledge. As William Tierney has described it, this epistemological view ". . . assumes that reality is defined through a process of social interchange that cannot be readily mapped, graphed, or controlled" (1989b, p. 43). Rather than employ "one single, simple, unilateral rationality," this epistemological perspective maintains that "there are many rationalities" which are contingent upon "the mores of the enterprise, the individuals involved in the organization, and the socio-historical context in which the organization resides" (Tierney, 1989b, p. 43). Given the belief that knowledge is socially constructed, the scholar's task is to articulate these "multiple constructed realities" (Berger and Luckmann, 1973), not through a detached, neutral stance but, instead, through reflexive inquiry that recognizes the dynamic interplay between the researched and the researcher (Rosaldo, 1989).

An array of emerging knowledge claims regarding content and process in the undergraduate curriculum have been expressed recently by these stakeholders. Firmly rooted

within the epistemological assumption that there is no one single objective truth, these stakeholders have proposed that the purpose of an undergraduate education should be, in the words of Nannerl Keohane, president of Wellesley College, not to "reclaim a legacy . . . but to build upon it for a fuller understanding of the works of human beings in the present and the future" (1986, p. 88). To achieve this purpose, the traditional canon must be expanded to include a balanced view of multiple—rather than a single—knowledge perspectives. As Renato Rosaldo has explained it, the traditional canon as a "classic norm should become one mode of representation among others . . . allowing forms of writing that have been marginalized or banned altogether to gain legitimacy" within the curriculum (1989, p. 62).

For these stakeholders, newly emerging knowledge claims from interpretivist, feminist, critical theory, post-structuralist, and multicultural scholarship must be integrated into the curriculum to ensure a holistic undergraduate experience for students (see, for example, McIntosh, 1981; Lather, 1984; Andersen, 1987; Conrad, 1989; Rosaldo, 1989; Tierney, 1989b). The study of these diverse perspectives, these stakeholders suggest, enriches students with a broader context in which to place their own personal experiences and root their future inquiries. Likewise, the incorporation of new inquiry and theoretical perspectives into the curriculum provides new vistas from which both students and scholars alike can explore familiar and emerging topics.

With respect to pedagogy, this diverse group of stakeholders has offered a number of suggestions for strengthening the quality of instruction in the undergraduate curriculum. Based on the epistemological assumption that knowledge is largely a social construct rooted within the context of individual experience, these stakeholders view the current traditionalist approach to education as inherently limited. One critical theorist, Paulo Freire, has likened the traditional educational approach to banking, where the role of the teacher is to deposit objective, "universal truths" into student minds (Freire, 1971). The problems with this approach, these stakeholders argue, are twofold: first, teachers assume that there is a universal canon of thought to be taught; and second, because a predefined school of knowledge is available, teaching is often little more than a one-way transaction where teachers neutrally deposit knowledge into student "savings accounts." This banking approach "anesthetizes" and "attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness" in students (Freire, 1971, p. 68).

Feminists and critical theorists, by contrast, do not view knowledge as static and objective. Consonant with their view of knowledge as a social construct, they argue that teachers may be better viewed as midwives than as bankers:

Midwife-teachers are the opposite of banker-teachers. While the bankers deposit knowledge in the learner's head, the midwives draw it out. They assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating it . . . they assist in the emergence of consciousness (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986, pp. 217-218).

The role of the teacher in this pedagogical model is to help students unearth their own experiences within the context of the studied material and, within this process, to empower students to recognize their own abilities and to discover their individual "voice" (Shrewsbury, 1987). This pedagogical view suggests that knowledge is not the exclusive property of the teacher whose role is to dole it out to his or her students, but rather an interaction between student and teacher where both equally participate in

the "pedagogic struggle to expose the underpinnings of that which is learned" (Tierney, 1989a).

The knowledge claims recently articulated by feminist, critical theorist, and multiculturalist stakeholders have contributed significantly to the growing acceptance of pluralistic points-of-view both within and outside of the academy. The influence of these perspectives over the purpose and content of the undergraduate curriculum has become increasingly apparent in the recent trend to integrate feminist, critical theory, and multicultural perspectives into general education programs previously dominated by the traditional canon of thought and in the rapid expansion of women's and ethnic studies departments and courses across the country (Conrad and Haworth, forthcoming). In addition, a significant number of institutions have recently implemented faculty development programs targeted at integrating many of these emerging theoretical and pedagogical perspectives into the undergraduate curriculum (AAC, 1981; Hoffman, 1986; Conrad and Haworth, forthcoming).

In the past decade, two diverse groups of stakeholders—each subscribing to different epistemologies—have advanced separate knowledge claims in the undergraduate curriculum. The lively exchange between these two groups has resurrected the continual question of "what knowledge is most worth knowing." Although the consequences of this debate have been visibly evidenced in changes in the content and structure of the undergraduate curriculum, this fundamental questioning of what counts as knowledge has also yielded an increasingly visible consciousness of alternative knowledge perspectives among scholars in the academy. It is at this juncture, perhaps, where Jose Ortega y Gasset's observation may offer a useful starting point for grappling with competing stakeholder knowledge claims in the undergraduate curriculum: "Reality happens to be, like a landscape possessed of an infinite number of perspectives, all equally veracious and authentic. The sole false perspective is that which claims to be the only one there is" (cited in Conrad, 1989, p. 215)

### III. Stakeholder Knowledge Claims and Curricular Transformations

Between 1983 and 1987, 95 percent of American colleges and universities were either currently reviewing their undergraduate curriculum or had completed fundamental revisions of their undergraduate program (El-Khawas, 1987). This latest revisiting of the purpose and content of the undergraduate curriculum lends credibility to the epistemological position that what is defined as (valued) knowledge in the university changes with different cultural and historical contexts. During the 1980s demographic, traditionalist, and pluralistic societal demands have had an influential effect on the contour and texture of the undergraduate curriculum. It appears that what Frederick Rudolph noted about the curriculum almost fifteen years ago remains true today: "Curricular history is American history and therefore carries the burden of revealing the central purpose and driving directions of American society" (1977, p. 20).

The recent clashes between stakeholders voicing traditional and emerging knowledge claims have likewise provoked a fundamental reexamination of how knowledge is defined, approached, and taught within the academy. As faculty have published articles in scholarly journals, presented papers at professional conferences, and restructured their courses around alternate perspectives and modes of inquiry—such as feminism, critical theory, and multiculturalism—the academic community has responded vigorously to their tentative knowledge claims. The recognition, acceptance—and in many

disciplines, the legitimation—of these knowledge claims has led to a significant transformation that has expanded the traditionally-defined canon to include a diversity of new theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. In this section, we examine how stakeholders have facilitated this transformation through the integration of these new knowledge claims into both their research and classroom activities.

*Integration of Emerging Knowledge Claims in Disciplinary Scholarship.*

A merging of the old with the new has generated a fascinating mixture of theoretical perspectives within the traditional arts and science disciplines. Catalyzed by a number of faculty and student-driven initiatives—including newly formed interests in exploring traditionally unstudied populations, re-examining old questions from alternate viewpoints, and utilizing interdisciplinary perspectives in scholarly research—feminist, critical theory, and multicultural perspectives have recently entered the mainstream of scholarly activity in the academy. Each of these perspectives and accompanying modes of inquiry is premised on the epistemological view that knowledge is socially constructed within a cultural and historical context.

Feminist thought has generated widespread influence in a number of traditional social science and humanities disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, history, and English. Although there are many variations of feminist thought (e.g., radical feminism, liberal feminism, neo-Marxist feminism, black feminism), most are firmly grounded in the belief that knowledge is a social construction. As Margaret Andersen explains:

Including women refers to the complex process of redefining knowledge by making women's experiences a primary subject for knowledge, conceptualizing women as active agents in the creation of knowledge, looking at gender as fundamental to the articulation of knowledge in Western thought, and seeing women's and men's experiences in relation to the sex/gender system (1987, pp. 224-225).

Within disciplines, feminist research has helped scholars to articulate new meanings in familiar topics. For instance, in anthropology, the study of kinship systems has come to include an examination of gender issues (Coughlin, 1987a, p. A12). In history, scholars have not only begun to focus on the influence of women in the historical process, but have also questioned the legitimacy of traditional historical narratives that have been constructed almost exclusively on the historical accounts of heroic white males (Andersen, 1987). The influence of feminist research in psychology has virtually created a subdiscipline in the psychology of women. Among other things, research in this area has identified how women and men often view reality from contrasting epistemological perspectives (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986). Sociologists have recently begun to explore the gender-structuring of organizations, the economy, and the workplace (Coughlin, 1987a). And feminist research in economics has investigated the economic relationship between public and private markets, suggesting that household work has a significant economic dimension (Andersen, 1987).

The impact of feminist scholarship has also been felt within the literary disciplines. For instance, in addition to studying works by female authors, literature scholars have begun to investigate why thousands of novels by American women have been

excluded from the traditional canon of literary classics (McIntosh, 1981). One scholar has suggested that "reentering knowledge within the experience of women unmasks the invisible paradigms that guide the curriculum and raises questions that require scholars to take a comprehensive and critical look at their fields" (Andersen, 1987, p. 237). If this brief sketch is any indication, it appears that the acceptance of feminist perspectives by social science and humanities scholars has led to the revisiting of such traditional cornerstones as historical periodization, political hierarchies, public sphere economics, sex-role behaviors, and literary canonization.

Critical theory has likewise influenced the development of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. Critical theory, like feminism, has many variations, but all are tied together by a general critique of the functionalist characteristic of positivist thought. As Henry Giroux explains:

Critical theory [is] tied to a specific interest in the development of a society without injustice. Theory, in this case, becomes a transformative activity that views itself as explicitly political and commits itself to the projection of a future that is as yet unfulfilled . . . Rather than proclaiming a [functionalist] notion of neutrality, critical theory openly takes sides in the interest of struggling for a better world (cited in Tierney, 1989b, p. 40).

Critical scholarship has become an identifiable feature across the disciplinary landscapes of sociology, economics, political science, history, literature, law, education, women's studies, and ethnic studies. For example, in sociology and economics, scholars have begun to redefine the concept of class in terms of cultural and political variables (Winkler, 1986). In political science, scholars are questioning if political power elites mechanically mirror economic interests or if other cultural explanations may be insightful in explaining power within a given society (Winkler, 1986). In recent years, literary critical theorists have incorporated post-structuralist and psychoanalytic insights into their interpretations in an attempt to understand how "capitalism affects cultural life and human consciousness" (Winkler, 1987). Critical theory has also influenced legal scholars, who have investigated how notions of class influence the development of legal decisions (Winkler, 1986). In education, critical theory has examined how the curriculum is shaped by cultural and political factors (Tierney, 1989a). More recently, many critical theorists have begun to incorporate other non-traditionalist oriented theoretical perspectives into their scholarship, including post-structuralism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and neoclassical economics (Winkler, 1986).

Just as scholars have embraced feminist and critical theories within their disciplines, many have likewise extended their inquiry to include multicultural perspectives. Rooted as well in the epistemological view that knowledge is socially constructed, multiculturalists seek to understand how meaning is constructed within a specific cultural context. This approach stands in stark contrast to traditional structural-functional approaches which have attempted to explain cultural differences through a Eurocentric lens. In the discipline of black studies, for example, one recent multiculturalist perspective—Afrocentricity—has sought to understand the experiences of blacks around the world as an extension of African history and culture (Coughlin, 1987b). Some historians have criticized the "one-shot approach" to studying minorities in American history and have, instead, adopted multicultural approaches in their research of Hispanics, blacks, Asian-Americans, and American Indians (Winkler, 1986). In sociol-

ogy, scholars have begun to expand their scope of inquiry to include a new emphasis on cross-national research (Winkler, 1989). In anthropology, a reverse trend has occurred where scholars have become increasingly interested in the study of American society and its many diverse subcultures (Coughlin, 1987a). And, within the literary disciplines, the study of minority and non-Western authors has gained increasing interest over the past decade.

These three perspectives and modes of inquiry—feminism, critical theory, and multiculturalism—have had a profound impact on faculty scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. Tierney has noted that “theory acts as a filter through which we define problems and read answers so that we come to terms with the internal logic of different cultures” (1989b, p. 45). These newly-emergent theoretical perspectives have provided faculty with alternate lenses for understanding how people make sense of reality in a complex, problematic, multicultural world. As faculty have incorporated these perspectives and modes of inquiry into their research, their underlying claim that knowledge is socially constructed has taken on greater legitimacy among scholars in the academy.

*Integration of Emerging Knowledge Claims into Classroom Activities.*

As faculty have expanded their scholarly repertoire to include feminist, critical theory, and multicultural perspectives, they have likewise incorporated these new theoretical views into the undergraduate curriculum. With additional support from the public sector (e.g., private foundation and government agency officials) and from institutional-level and student stakeholders, a number of faculty-driven curricular projects designed to include interpretivist, feminist, critical theory, and multicultural perspectives have been recently integrated into the undergraduate experience at numerous colleges and universities across the country.

Although relatively recent in origin, these curriculum revision/expansion projects have found widespread support from a variety of private foundation and government agencies, including the Ford Foundation, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Mott Foundation, the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the U.S. Office of Education Women’s Educational Equity Act (WEEA) Program. In the ten year period between 1975 and 1985, approximately 80 curriculum integration projects were funded by these and other private and public sources; recent trends indicate that institutional support for these projects has increased over the past five years (Andersen, 1987). Similarly, the 48 Centers for Research on Women in the United States have received substantial funding from these stakeholder groups (Hoffman, 1986). These curriculum projects and research centers have sought both to expand the undergraduate curriculum to include feminist, critical theory, and multicultural perspectives and to model a pedagogy that encourages teachers and students to draw upon each other’s experiences in the knowledge construction learning process (Hoffman, 1986).

A recent project funded through the New Jersey Department of Higher Education provides a telling indication of the growing support for incorporating diverse perspectives into the curriculum. Declaring 1987 the “inaugural year of integrating the scholarship of women” into the undergraduate curriculum, then New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean awarded \$362,500 to the state’s 56 public and private colleges for the “New Jersey Project: Integrating the Scholarship on Gender” (McMillen, 1987). The project is de-

signed to provide an impetus to the state's colleges to "revise their courses to reflect a more balanced view of women, as well as minority groups" (McMillen, 1987). At Spelman College, a grant from the Mott Foundation provided funding for the first women's center at a traditionally black women's college. Their recent Ford Foundation funded project, "Integrating Black Women's Studies into the Liberal Arts Curriculum," has led to a fuller integration of race and gender issues in the undergraduate curriculum. Scores of other institutions have likewise received funding from private and public sources to integrate the emerging knowledge claims of women, minorities, and non-Western cultures into undergraduate courses (McIntosh, 1981; AAC, 1981; Hoffman, 1986).

Institutional-level stakeholders have also supported a number of recent initiatives to integrate feminist, critical theory, and multicultural perspectives into the undergraduate curriculum. Primarily driven by student and faculty demands, these changes have been felt at both the institutional and departmental levels. For example, at the University of California-Berkeley, where approximately one out of every two students is a member of a minority group, students have pressured faculty and administrators for a more culturally balanced curriculum (Mooney, 1988). Under mounting pressure from its minority student population, Stanford University's Faculty Senate recently replaced the university's year-long Western civilization requirement with a new multicultural general education sequence entitled "Culture, Ideas, and Values" (Mooney, 1988). The new program is designed to give "substantial attention" to race, gender, class, and multicultural perspectives. Similar institutional level efforts are underway at numerous colleges, including Hartwick College, which recently implemented a "gender-balanced" curriculum (Heller, 1988).

At the departmental level, many faculty have made attempts to integrate feminist, critical theory, and multicultural perspectives into their courses. In the area of women's studies alone, more than 500 programs and approximately 39,000 courses have been offered in American colleges and universities since 1970 (AAC, 1988). At Carnegie-Mellon University, English department faculty recently reoriented the focus of the department and created, in the words of the department chair, the "nation's first post-structuralist undergraduate curriculum" (Heller, 1988). At both the University of Illinois-Chicago and Brown University, faculty members have taken the study of socially constructed meanings seriously by introducing courses in hermeneutics and an undergraduate concentration in semiotics (Heller, 1988). And, in a recent development, Cultural Studies departments have begun to appear at institutions all across the country, often drawing upon the theoretical perspectives of feminism, poststructuralism, multiculturalism, and critical theory within their courses.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz has suggested that the curriculum can be viewed as a cultural artifact of the knowledge valued by a single—or set of—institutions (1983). Patricia Gumpert has further suggested that faculty members, as "mediators of intellectual ideas," validate and legitimate new knowledge claims through their activities within the university. As faculty begin to structure their activities around certain knowledge claims, they concurrently redefine what counts as legitimate knowledge within the university. In no small measure, faculty are encouraged to explore, examine, and integrate these knowledge claims into their scholarship and classroom activities vis-a-vis a larger stakeholder network—including public policy-makers, institutional level administrators and students (Conrad, 1989).

Gumport (1988) has suggested that curricular change is rooted within "the cultural life of academic organizations in which faculty, administrators, and students construct and revise their understandings and in which they negotiate about what counts as valid knowledge in particular and historical settings" (1988, p. 50). Over the past decade, a variety of demographic, conservative, and pluralistic societal demands have helped to facilitate the debate between traditional and emerging knowledge claims in the undergraduate curriculum. As traditionalists have continued to argue for the legitimacy of objective, universal truths, other scholars have suggested that truth is neither universal or objective; rather, what is defined as truth is often the byproduct of a cultural social construction process. The result of this recent debate has been an intense interest on the part of a broad range of stakeholders—including faculty, policymakers, institutional administrators, the popular press, and students—in the legitimacy of competing knowledge claims within the university.

One higher education curriculum scholar recently argued that "history is an interaction between participants' lived internalized experiences, and the ideological momentum that becomes institutionalized over the passage of time" (Tierney, 1989b, p. 44). Recent events have witnessed a rapidly growing and widespread interest on the part of faculty, policymakers, institutional administrators, and students in the "tentative" knowledge claims of feminism, critical theory, and multiculturalism. Undergirding these alternate knowledge claims has been a new epistemology that views knowledge as a social construct. As more stakeholders have embraced this epistemological stance, the "tentative" knowledge claims of feminism, critical theory, and multiculturalism have been slowly acknowledged, integrated, and legitimated into these stakeholders' research and classroom activities. The consequence for the undergraduate curriculum has been a fascinating transformation where these knowledge claims have become recognized features on the undergraduate curricular landscape.

In a recent volume, Denise Shekerjian relates an interesting story about perspective that may be helpful in understanding the negotiation of knowledge in the curriculum:

A story about Picasso tells of how when he was a schoolboy he was terrible at math because whenever the teacher had him write the number 4 on the blackboard, it looked like a nose to him and he'd keep doodling to fill in the rest of the face. Everyone else in the class saw a number on the blackboard; Picasso perceived a face (cited in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 28, 1990, p. B3).

To recent scholars, the debate between traditional and emerging knowledge claims within the undergraduate curriculum has been viewed as a struggle for the prize of what knowledge is most worth knowing. Among others, Shekerjian has suggested that "creativity . . . requires something new, a different interpretation, a break from the twin opiates of habit and cliché" (*Chronicle*, 1990, p. B3). From our perspective, the introduction of new knowledge claims into the academy has provided stakeholders with a fresh perspective on how *we come to know what we know*. It is this development, we believe, which has at once energized and signalled a recent transformation in the undergraduate curriculum.

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