Birds of Different Feather Flock Together? Rhetorical Competition and the Convergence of Management Discourses*

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Organizational control is a central component of modern management discourses. Techno-structural control emphasizes technocratic rationalization of work processes and maximum utilization of worker's self-interest, while normative control focuses on worker's commitment and loyalties as well as the right kind of employment practices. By using TQM as a normative control discourse and the BPR as a techno-structural discourse, this paper examines how the two rival camps influenced each other's perceptions of organizational control. Analyses of U.S. business articles suggest that the two discourses converged and the perceived gap between the two became narrower. Consequently, once-sharply-defined boundaries gradually eroded. Building on framing theory and content analyses of business articles, I argue that such a rhetorical blending of normative and techno-structural elements of organizational control occurred through borrowing of defining vocabularies from the salient rival and strategic positioning of one discourse against the other. Implications for neo-institutionalism and management fashion research are discussed.

Keywords: Organizational Control, Rhetorical Competition, Definitional Framing, Relational Framing, Convergence, Boundary, Management Discourse

Much of enduring debate in the organizational sociology has centered on the thesis of organizational control. Drawing on Etzioni's taxonomy of compliance and control (1961), organizational sociologists have distinguished two modes of organizational control (Bendix 1956; Edwards 1979; Barley and Kunda 1992). The first is rational, techno-structural control emphasizing technocratic rationalization of production processes and maximum utilization of

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worker's self-interest. An often-cited example is the scientific management theory in which engineers take the lead to promote rationalization of industrial organization through standardization of work processes and even of worker's interests and motivations (Taylor 1911). The second type of organizational control is normative control which is typified by the human relations movement; the idea that workers are social beings driven by a need for belonging and acceptance. By winning the 'hearts and minds' of the workforce, managers could acquire workers' commitments and loyalties, and consequently ensuring a healthy and productive organization (Mayo 1931).

Throughout the twentieth century, the two opposing types of theorizing – techno-structural and normative rhetorics – have heavily competed to attract more attention and support from managers and management theorists (Clegg 1981; Barley and Kunda 1992; Abrahamson 1997). Such competition is sure to be a nontrivial driving force for the evolution of managerial discourse and modern organizational control system.

The 1990s' management discourse, of course, was marked by intense rhetorical competition between what Lincoln and Kelleberg (1991: 1) called "a renewed attention to the question of commitment, loyalties, and worker satisfaction," and the resurged interest in workplace rationalization represented by extensive use of information technology, downsizing, and corporate restructuring. Normative camp came up with Total Quality Management (TQM) – a discursive construct that combines the American human relations tradition and the Japanese management principles like customer satisfaction, quality control, and continuous improvement. A rival change program – Business Process Reengieering (BPR) – was proposed as an arguably novel approach to work process rationalization that puts human elements under the technological and structural constraints. These two rival programs dominated the management knowledge field of the 1990s, competing with each other to grab a greater share of attention from the worldwide business community.

One of the natural questions following this observation is, "What are the consequences of the rhetorical competition between the two managerial discourses that embody totally different principles of organizational control?" Most previous research of management discourse has been concerned with the continual ebb and flow of normative and techno-structural rhetorics (Barley and Kunda 1992; Abrahamson 1997; Carson et al. 2000). We know little, however, about how the characteristics and contents of management discourses evolve as they compete for the audience's attention and support.

One insightful study should be noted in this connection. Jung (2006) found that the service profiles of TQM consultants and BPR consultants in the U.S. became similar over time. Although the study did not directly investigate the causes of such convergence process, one possible explanation could be mutual learning from the rival camps: both camps influenced each other's perception of existing organizational problems and appropriate approaches for addressing them. Convergence of two different or opposing categories has been observed in a

variety of social settings such as French gastronomy (Rao et al. 2003, 2005), sexuality (Stein 1997), ethnicity (Gutierrez 1999), and business writing (Barley et al. 1988), all of which explicitly or implicitly entail competition between rival groups. Rao et al. (2003, 2005), for example, showed that the rise of the nouvelle cuisine movement in French gastronomy induced elite French chefs to abandon orthodoxy of classical cuisine for nouvelle cuisine, which resulted in the hybridization of menus, recipes, and ingredients. Barley et al. (1988) used the term "acculturation" to study how two business communities – those who wrote for academics and those for practitioners – moved closer to each other in their perceptions and interpretations of organizational culture.

Building on this line of reasoning and additional theoretical elaboration, this paper proposes that TQM and BPR discourses would converge in their characteristics and organizing principles through the rhetorical competition, and consequently, the initially strong boundaries would erode as a result of selective, strategic borrowing of 'vocabularies' from the rival discourse. With the increasing salience of BPR discourse, the normative approach of TQM would become encroached upon by technocratic concerns. Likewise, knowledge entrepreneurs writing for BPR arguably adopted normative rhetorics as a response to increasing competitive pressures from TQM discourse. It is also argued that the perceptive gap between the two discourses, as expressed in management literature, might become narrower because of homogenizing pressures emanating from the competition between the two camps (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

To push our theoretical arguments further, this paper employs a cultural-framing approach that has developed in the areas of social movement and cultural studies. I begin with the premise that the rhetorical evolution involves a process of reconstruction of meanings (Berger and Luckmann 1967), through which knowledge entrepreneurs seek to mobilize attention and support from knowledge consumers and media.[1] An analytical distinction is made between the two types of framing process – *definitional framing* to analyze how the collective definition of a management discourse evolves through interaction with a rival camp, and *relational framing* to analyze how and why ways of conceptualizing the relationships between rival discourses change over time. They are discussed in details in the following two sections. And then, I carry out content analyses of articles published between 1987 and 2004 in major business journals.

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[1] Here, our research setting is the management knowledge market, where knowledge entrepreneurs like management gurus, business school faculty, and leading management consultants produce discourses about management issues, and companies and their managers constitute primary knowledge consumers. As in any type of market, therefore, knowledge producers have a motivation to appeal to their consumers in order to elevate their status as a reliable and fruitful source of management knowledge.

FRAMING AND MANAGEMENT DISCOURSE

Framing process theory from the social movement literature emerged out of discontent with the dominant social movement perspectives which assume that social movements are merely carriers of extant ideas and meanings (Snow and Benford 1988; Binder 1993; Benford 1997). Based on social constructionist perspective (Berger and Luckmann 1967), Snow et al. (1986: 465-467) argued that "grievances or discontents are subject to differential interpretation." Mere presence of grievances does not automatically give rise to collective action, because individuals tend not to participate unless they view events and occurrences as a social problem that could be solved through collective action. In this sense, it is necessary for movement activists to construct schemata of interpretation (Goffman 1974), or so-called 'collective action frames' which allow people to identify, simplify, label, and interpret personal experiences in ways to motivate them to participate in social movements; who are enemies, who are appropriate allies, what are ultimate goals, and what kinds of movement tactics are acceptable. This process of meaning creation and maintenance is called *framing*.

Some important aspects of framing process that are particularly relevant to this study should be noted. First, a collective action frame is a cultural construct, because it delineates the boundary between in-group and out-group, thereby forming and strengthening the group identity, and because it is embedded in the cultural context of existing norms, values, and belief systems (Fiss and Hirsch 2005). Second, collective action frame is a strategic construct that is developed and maintained in order to achieve a certain goal – recruiting new members, mobilizing adherents, and acquiring critical resources. Movement activists deliberately exaggerate certain features of the social movement such as its good causes, and de-emphasize other features such as political and economic risk of participation.

Third, since framing is strategic, it is also a dynamic process: collective action frame changes as the social movement develops. Movement leaders occasionally combine their own frame with the other (sometimes rival) ones, or extend it beyond its primary interests to include issues and concerns presumed to be of importance to potential adherents (Benford and Snow 2000). Forth, framing is a contested process (Edwards and Marullo 1995; Benford 1997; Lounsbury 2001; Rohlinger 2002). A movement frame is far from foolproof: it is often challenged by counter-frames, which "rebut, undermine, or neutralize a person's or group's myths, visions of reality, or interpretative framework" (Benford 1987: 75). Frame contest often sparks frame transformation or reframing activities, as activists attempt to make their movement more competitive and attractive, thereby destroying the rival movement's mobilization capabilities (Davies 1999).

Management knowledge entrepreneurs, like social movement activists, are heavily involved in framing process through which they mobilize potential adherents, garner bystander support,

and demobilize antagonists. The framing of management discourse is cultural in the sense that a management discourse is framed and reframed on the basis of managerial beliefs and thoughts collectively held in the business community. It is strategic in that it is a goal-oriented process: a management discourse could be strategically manipulated by knowledge entrepreneurs. Knowledge entrepreneurs seek to mobilize support from knowledge consumers and to induce a great deal of conversions from the rival techniques, by means of producing positive rhetoric, and suppressing negative rhetoric about their own technique. It is also a dynamic and contested process: a frame of management discourse is subject to change in the course of competition with other management discourses (Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999).

There are two ways of building and maintaining a sense of group identity. One is to clearly delimit and demarcate the group boundary by providing members with definitions of the group's goals, values, beliefs, and endorsed means to achieve the goals, and most importantly, how participation improves individual members' welfare. I call this sort of rhetorical manipulation *definitional framing*. Management gurus and writers employ definitional framing strategy to define a management technique with regard to its characteristics, its ability to deal with current organizational problems, and future state it can achieve. For example, a definitional frame of TQM is expressed in the following sentence:[2] "TQM is the integration of all functions and processes within an organization in order to achieve continuous improvement of the quality of goods and services. The goal is customer satisfaction" (quoted from Boaden 1997).

Another way of constructing and reinforcing the boundaries of collective identity is declaring how group characteristics, values, and beliefs are related to those of other groups; manifesting the similarities and differences, and giving members the greater sense of who are friends and who are enemies (Fireman and Gamson 1979; Hunt et al. 1994; Gamson 1995). This kind of rhetorical strategy could be referred to as *relational framing*. In the management knowledge market, relational framing is used to compare two or more management techniques in terms not only of their intrinsic characteristics but also of effectiveness, quality improvement, promotion of worker's morale, cost reduction, and performance enhancement. Example quotes related to relational framing include "BPR is remarkable in that it goes beyond previous managerial discourses such as total quality management in how it combines IT-induced change with soft" (quoted from Mitev 1996).

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[2] The fact that a definitional frame of management discourse is expressed in an article sentences does not mean that it is an individual product, so idiosyncratic. Rather it is a collective product shared in the business community at a specific point in time, so inherently social. Although there must be some level of differences in individual experiences and interpretations, such differences are quite limited.

A BRIEF HISTORY AND THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS[3]

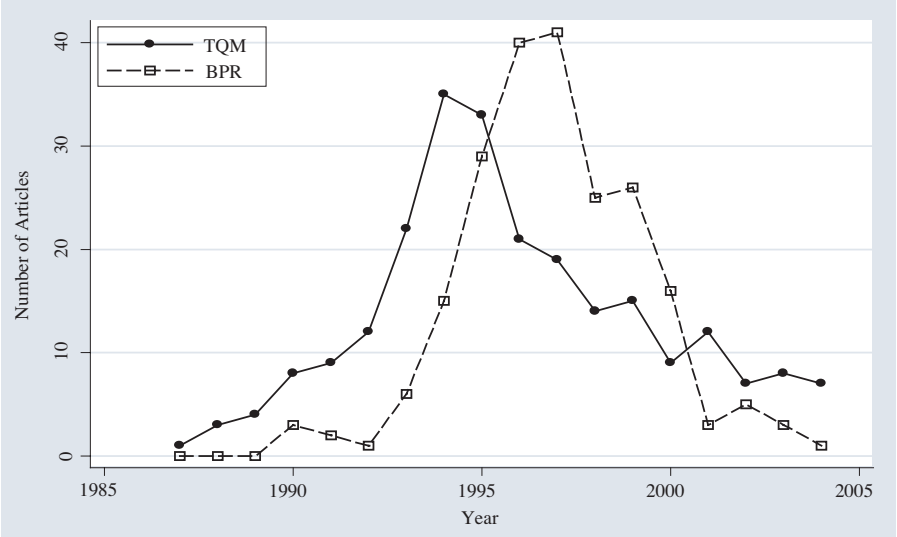
TQM emerged in the U.S. business community in the mid 1980s. It is agreed that the early shaping and diffusion of TQM was indebted to considerable contributions of three quality gurus; Philip Crosby, Edward Deming, and Joseph Juran. In a series of publications and consulting activities, they attributed Japan's remarkable economic success to its unique quality management and human resource practices, and introduced such ideas as quantitative measures, continuous improvement, customer-defined standards, individual empowerment, and situational analysis (Peterson and Reid 1999). Soon, the fever for quality gained momentum, and the focus of dominant US management discourse shifted from 'productivity' to 'quality' and from economizing in spending to customer demands.

However, this sort of quality approach had never been labeled as TQM until the mid 1980s. The lack of a standardized label and a consistent frame made managers hesitant to jump on the quality bandwagon. A pressure for standardization came from big organizations and public agencies such as Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Dow Chemical, Department of Defense, NASA, and Internal Revenue Service. Adoption of quality programs by these organizations produced a 'rationalized myth' about quality. In addition, they demanded the suppliers to have some sort of comparable quality programs prior to issuing any contract. Another field level pressure stemmed from the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award, which was created in 1987 by the Department of Commerce and White House to standardize US quality management and to promote its rapid diffusion. The companies awarded the Baldridge – early recipients include Motorola, Xerox, and IBM – soon became the American symbols of excellence in quality. The spread of their model practices expedited the homogenization of the TQM definition and practices.

The American TQM had, of course, a techno-structural flavor in that statistical quality control and work process improvement were two of its essential elements. Nevertheless, it leaned more toward a normative side of employment control. Such components as teamwork, individual empowerment, trust, cooperation, and other employee-friendly human resource practices constituted its essential foundations (Hackman and Wageman 1995; Abrahamson 1997). In order to benefit most from quality program, those closest to work (frontline workers) should be empowered so that they actively participate in a collective endeavor to locate the sources of product defects and organizational problems, and to suggest fresh ideas for continuous improvement. To make this work, an organization must develop an appropriate

[3] While many management discourses have prevailed in the U.S. since 1980s, we limit our empirical attention to TQM and BPR, the most well-known and inclusive management techniques during this period. Other techniques such as corporate culture, benchmarking, horizontal corporation, agile strategies, and ISO 9000 are either ambiguous in their definitions and boundaries, or seen as part of TQM or BPR.

Figure 1. Popularity of TQM and BPR Discourses, 1987-2004



organizational culture and human resource practices of 'mutual gains' (for example, employment stability, and wage increase) so that the normative components could smoothly fit into the organization (Adler 1993; Kochan and Osterman 1994).

Like other fashionable practices, TQM's popularity did not last long. The number of Baldridge Award applications hit the peak in 1991, and since then gradually declined. Figure 1, which shows the yearly counts of TQM articles published in major US business journals, reveals a similar pattern. The decline in popularity was accompanied by a good deal of criticism that TQM spawned such problems as high costs of overhead, too much bureaucracy, cumbersome processes, and difficulty of workers embracing TQM philosophy. As the 'euphoria' that had driven the initial diffusion of TQM cooled down, managers began to carefully examine TQM principles and solutions, thereby debunking the emotionally charged TQM fever.

Although the question of what caused such a rapid decline is open to various explanations, one possibility has to do with the rise and diffusion of the rival management discourse, BPR. Unlike TQM, BPR had a relatively clear origin. Its core ideas began to diffuse immediately after two articles were published in leading business journals (Hammer 1990; Davenport and Short 1990). As the term suggests, BPR started as a technocratic and engineering approach to organizational control. Early BPR gurus invariably criticized process automation efforts of the past for failing to achieve desired outcomes. According to the BPR gurus, the traditional work processes based on specialized division of labor and mass production were too rigid to cope with rapidly changing technologies and ever-shortening product cycles. These outdated work

processes were no longer effective. What needed to be done was "fundamentally rethinking and redesigning business processes" – reengineering "our businesses and use the power of modern information technology to radically redesign our business processes in order to achieve dramatic improvement in their performance" (Hammer 1990: 104).

Reengineering businesses entails integrating formerly split business functions, eliminating redundant jobs, and thereby converting processes with a great number of intermediate steps into processes that take part directly in the final outcome. IT serves as a technical basis for process redesigning. With it, different functions can have simultaneous access to the information stored in database. IT also makes communication faster between functions by using tools such as e-mail, offsite video conference, and file transfer protocol, to take a few examples.

Unlike TQM, the initial stage of BPR was driven by technocratic concerns at the expense of human factors. First of all, the focus of BPR was more on work process and cost reduction than on worker empowerment or organizational culture. It was frequently proposed that even quality enhancement, for instance, would be made possible by reducing operational expenses through process improvement entailing the appropriate use of IT, streamlining, simplification and massive downsizing/layoffs. Even though BPR gurus gave repeated warnings, BPR was often equated with workforce reduction. This operational determinism had an affinity with a 'top-down' approach that viewed workers as passive recipients of the changes, and top-managers as omnipotent business leaders possessing the power, ability, and know-how to carry out transformational changes.

As this revolutionary approach to management and organizational control attracted increasing attention from the business community, BPR was growing fast to become a strong competitor to TQM (Valentine and Knights 1998). Figure 1 presents the rapid growth of BPR discourse until 1997. TQM and BPR, catering to similar knowledge consumers, soon got involved in a rhetorical battle. BPR supporters did not hesitate to declare the end of TQM, because "TQM contradicted conventional management practices of Western countries." TQM followers predicted the quick failure of BPR as a passing fad, since it is just an idealistic model that is "in conflict with some of the fundamentals of good management" (Jarrar and Aspinwall 1999).

Based on this brief historical account and the theoretical discussion of framing, this paper proposes some predictions about how and why relational and definitional frames of TQM and BPR changed over time. From the standpoint of cultural aspects of framing, the competition between the two management discourses revolves around group identity. The concept 'acculturation,' dating back to the early 20th century migration studies, has special value (Thomas and Znaniecik 1918). Barley et al. (1988: 27), applying this concept to the study of management discourse, define it as "the process by which the beliefs and practices of one community diffuse across the boundaries of another and subsequently alter the second

community's practices and interpretations." In their analysis of rhetorics about organizational culture, they found that acculturation occurred between those who wrote for academics and those who wrote for practitioners. Since both sides wrote about the same topic, they tended to get to know each other through cross-reading or direct exchange of ideas.

One form of acculturation may be that knowledge entrepreneurs working for a management discourse borrow some (not all) of defining vocabularies from the rival discourse, and combine them with their own vocabularies to reframe the management discourse – redefining the characteristics, goals, and acceptable means of the management technique. This argument lies on the premise that a rival discourse is salient to the extent that it is perceived to be strong enough to have a competitive pressure. As salience increases, I would argue, the pressure for borrowing also increases, primarily because salience often signals legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Haunschild and Miner 1997; Rao et al. 2005).

Argument 1: As the volume of the rival discourse increases, the definitional frame of the focal discourse becomes similar to the rival discourse.

Hypothesis 1a: The greater the volume of BPR discourse, the greater the extent to which TQM is defined by techno-structural vocabularies in a business article.

Hypothesis 1b: The greater the volume of TQM discourse, the greater the extent to which BPR is defined by normative vocabularies in a business article.

However, acculturation is not a natural occurrence following the cultural clash: in many cases, cultural blending involves a certain level of strategic reactions to the encroachment of foreign culture, and in this particular case, a rival management discourse. Although many acculturation studies have depicted actors as passive recipients of external pressure, recent studies have begun to emphasize the strategic role of leading actors in cultural blending (McEntire and Bentely 1996; Rao et al. 2003). Therefore, decisions as to whether or not to borrow, if yes, what to borrow depend partly on ways of positioning the focal discourse against the rivals.

As definitional frames converged, we expect, the perceived gap between TQM and BPR became narrower. If business writers working for a management discourse consider the rival discourse superior, for example, they may borrow some elements that can complement the weaknesses of their own. This would be the case when their own management discourse is encountered with the widespread renunciation from once faithful followers. In the mid 1990s that witnessed the steady decline of TQM's bottom-up, continuous, and harmonious change efforts and the rapid diffusion of the BPR's technocratic approach, for instance, TQM writers supposedly began to produce the rhetoric that TQM and BPR could coexist, benefiting from each other. Instead of developing a set of specific hypotheses, I here propose a general argument, based on which to carry out qualitative data analyses of business articles later on.

Argument 2: The relational framing would evolve from competition and segregation to mutualism and integration.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF DEFINITIONAL FRAMES

Data and Analysis

The text data used for the analysis of definitional framing were collected from 3 academic journals, 6 quasi-academic journals, and 3 practitioner journals and newspapers published from 1985 to 2004 (the list of journals is in Appendix A). I found 239 articles that either include "TQM" (or "Total Quality Management") in the title or abstract, or are under the "Total Quality" subject heading. Applying the similar rules (now searched words are "BPR" and "Reengineering"), I found 219 BPR articles. To avoid a possible confusion, I excluded articles that belong to both categories.

Then, I counted the number of normative words or phrases such as "empowerment," "teamwork," "training," and "participation," and the number of techno-structural words and phrases such as "IT," "restructuring," "downsizing," and "cost reduction" in the first two paragraphs of each article.[4] Using the first two paragraphs is reasonable, given that the font size, style, and length of article are quite different across journals and articles. In addition, this strategy can be justified on the theoretical ground that it is often in the first a few paragraphs that words are defined and concepts are articulated. And the author also must interest the readers who are becoming allies in the first few paragraphs (Giroux and Taylor 2002).[5] A typical TQM article contains 2.9 normative words and 1.4 techno-structural words (the numbers of normative words and techno-structural words are distributed from 0~9, and 0~7, respectively). The mean numbers of normative and techno-structural words per BPR article are 2.1 and 3.1, respectively. These statistics are consistent with a general picture that TQM is more normative, while BPR is more technocratic.

This paper uses negative binomial regression to model the rates of word occurrence in a unit of analysis, in this case, the first two paragraphs of each article. There are two dependent variables (the number of normative words and the number of technocratic words), each of which is modeled separately for TQM and BPR. So, four models are run separately (normative words in TQM articles; techno-structural words in TQM articles; normative words in BPR articles; and techno-structural words in BPR articles).

To measure the core independent variables – the volumes of discourses – I count the

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4 Appendix B lists more examples of searched words and phrases. The full list is available upon request.

5 Reading tens of sample articles ensured that most articles seem to have some sort of definitions of the management techniques, or mention their important characteristics in the first couple of paragraphs.

numbers of TQM articles and BPR articles published in the above mentioned 12 journals, 6 months to a year before the focal article was published. This window is used in order to take into account submission-to-publication procedure, which varies greatly across academic and practitioner journals. Whether a journal is academic or for practitioners may make great differences in many ways. For instance, those writing for practitioners seem to be quicker to adopt fashionable management ideas (Barley et al. 1988). So the rate of cross-borrowing would be greater in practitioner journals than in academic journals. Hence, the type of journal is controlled for with a dummy variable (1 = practitioners journal, and 0 = academic/quasi-academic journal).

Prior studies of management discourse suggest that business cycles and levels of labor union activity have significant effects on the changes of management discourse. GDP growth rate and the number of strikes are controlled for with one year lag. Period effects are also controlled. The whole observation period is divided into three subsets, each of which captures a particular opportunity structure for the TQM and BPR camps. Period I began with the first publication of TQM or BPR article and ended with the peak of TQM popularity (~1994). In this period, TQM was more popular than BPR. Period II covers three years (1995~1997) when the two management discourses were in most intense competition for audience's attention. Period III was characterized as the decline of both management techniques in popularity (1998~2004).[6]

Results

I begin with Figure 2 to describe how definitional frames evolved. A substantial convergence of TQM and BPR discourses is found. The graph on the left side presents the mean numbers of normative and techno-structural words per TQM article from 1987 to 2004. The mean number of normative words increased sharply from 1987 to 1990, and then receded steadily until 2004. The number of techno-structural words appearing in a typical TQM article, however, remained around 1 till 1996, and then increased dramatically up to the peak in 1998, followed by a relatively sharp decline. The general pattern is that the gap narrowed over time. In other words, the TQM discourse was initially dominated by normative concerns such as teamwork, participation, and empowerment, but came to be blended with techno-structural approaches to organizational control. The BPR discourse shows a similar pattern of blending (right). Techno-structural words dominated the early BPR discourse, but the number of normative words crept upwards, finally even exceeding, on average, that of techno-structural words.

Our hypotheses anticipate that the convergence occurred with the increasing salience of the rival discourse – TQM articles mention more techno-structural words as the volume of BPR discourse increases, while the number of normative words in a BPR article increases as the

[6] Detailed discussion will be made in the next section.

Figure 2. Mean Numbers of Normative Words and Techno-structural Words per Article, 1987-2004

(A) TQM Articles (B) BPR Articles

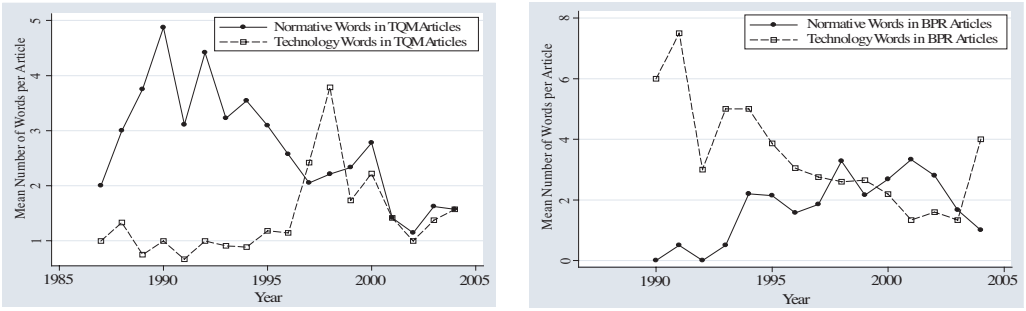

Table 1. Negative Binomial Regression Results of the Number of Normative Words and Techno-structural Words per Article

Variables	TQM Articles		BPR Articles	
	Normative	Techno-Structural	Normative	Techno-Structural
Practitioners Journal	-.072	.363*	.279**	.040
vs. (Quasi)Academic	(.093)	(.152)	(.102)	(.079)
N of Strikes (t-1)	.005	-.004	.000	.007
	(.008)	(.755)	(.009)	(.008)
GDP Growth Rate (t-1)	-.024	.078	-.003	.063
	(.622)	(.373)	(.078)	(.059)
Period II (1995~1997)	-.530**	.116	-.335	-.504**
	(163)	(.667)	(.227)	(.156)
Period III (1998~2004)	-.570***	.299	.481*	-.707***
	(.163)	(.266)	(.240)	(.165)
N of TQM Articles (t-1)	.020	-.023	.057***	.009
	(.013)	(.023)	(.016)	(.011)
N of BPR Articles (t-1)	.012	.040**	.027*	-.007
	(.010)	(.014)	(.010)	(.008)
Constants	.953**	-.261	-.041	1.143***
	(.325)	(.482)	(.380)	(.289)
Log Likelihood	-438.36	-351.01	-373.49	-410.65
N of Articles	223	223	213	213

Notes | Standard errors are in parentheses.
* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

volume of TQM discourse becomes greater. Table 1 reports the results of negative binomial regression models. The second and third models are our primary focus (borrowing models), with the former predicting the number of techno-structural words appearing in TQM articles,

and the latter predicting the number of normative words appearing in BPR counterparts. For comparison, I report the self-reinforcing models where TQM becomes more normative and BPR more techno-structural.

As for the TQM discourse that was initially normative, the coefficient for the volume of BPR discourse is positive and highly significant, indicating that the more salient the BPR discourse, the greater the extent to which TQM discourse was defined by techno-structural words, even after controlling for period effects. One additional BPR article increased the number of techno-structural words in a TQM article by 4.1% (= exp (.040) - 1). As a comparison, the model predicting the number of normative words in a TQM article shows a different pattern (first model): The number of normative words declined as time went on, but had no significant relationship with the volume of BPR discourse. We find a similar pattern for BPR. The third model, predicting the number of normative words in a BPR article, shows that the volume of TQM discourse increased the likelihood of a normative word appearing in a BPR article, with the magnitude being estimated to be 6% increase (= exp (.057) - 1).

There is one big difference, however. The increasing popularity of BPR discourse also reinforced its normative characteristics, though the coefficient is relatively small (.027; $p < .05$). This outcome is puzzling. A possible explanation is that normative components permeated into BPR discourse relatively early. As shown in Figure 2, the BPR camp was quicker to embrace a normative stance while the TQM camp was quite resistant to technocratic change efforts. This is not surprising, because it took only a few years that even the founding fathers of BPR, Hammer and Champy, turned their attention to organizational culture and human factors. They, in a series of interviews and work done in the mid 1990s, argued that "unless you can reach deep into the hearts of people and really convince them, you are not going to get anything done" (Barrier, 1995: 36). Such an early modification of the collective definition of BPR arguably produced a momentum for further self-reinforcement of normative as well as techno-structural rhetoric.[7]

All in all, our results confirm that the two camps with initially opposing and competing logics of organizational change and control mutually influenced each other's perceptions and interpretations of what are most urgent organizational problems and how to solve them, which resulted in the convergence of the definitional frames.

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[7] This is also the case with TQM, we guess. As the convergence process moved forward, the meanings of TQM and BPR became hardly distinguishable, and the effects of the rival discourse gradually diminished. Although the sample size restricts our ability to perform any strict hypothesis testing of time-dependent patterns, our preliminary analysis supports the above argument (not reported here; available upon request).

THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELATIONAL FRAMES

Data and Framework

For the analysis of relational framing, it is necessary to collect text data that describe the relationship between TQM and BPR. Instead of using 12 journals used for the analysis of definitional framing, I searched the ABI/Inform database (a database of business publications), mainly to increase the sample size. I collected article abstracts published from 1985 to 2004 that wrote about the relationship between the two techniques. Article search rendered 356 abstracts that mentioned both TQM and BPR. Then I read them to sort out ones that did not explicitly describe the relationship. 205 abstracts were dropped,[8] and the final text data for the analysis of relational framing included 151 abstracts.

The sample size restricts our ability to do a systematic hypothesis testing. Instead, I carry out a qualitative text analysis – carefully reading all abstracts in order to catch a deep understanding of how knowledge entrepreneurs relate the two management techniques in terms of their similarities / differences, and one's superiority to the other. In so doing, I classify relational rhetoric into four types (which will be discussed below), and examine how the overall strategic positioning of a management technique against the other changed. To ensure the reliability of classifications, this research employed a multi-coder method in which the author and a hired MBA student who uses English as a primary language independently assigned each abstract into one of those five categories. The classifications across the two coders were quite consistent – 86% of classifications were identical. The remaining 14% (21 abstracts) were assigned to "other" category.

In our view, two principal dimensions determine the way of relating one management technique to the other. First, one might want to highlight the distance between two techniques in some important aspects such as goals and fundamental principles. Writers tend to disproportionately stress a few points of interest at the expenses of other points to exaggerate overall similarities or differences. The second dimension is the extent to which one management technique is arguably superior to the other. This dimension could entail various forms, ranging from explicit expressions to implicit assumptions of equality or superiority in qualification. Both dimensions are treated as dichotomous variables: similar vs. dissimilar, and superiority claimed vs. no superiority claimed. Crossing them yields a 2×2 matrix shown in Figure 3. Each cell of matrix lists the ideal-typical relational framing resulting from a particular mix of the two variables. Let us briefly discuss each cell.

Distancing: The upper right-hand cell of Figure 3 shows distancing frame. Distancing

[8] For example, I dropped the abstract saying that "TQM, BPR, and customer facing programs had, for many companies, failed to deliver their promise."

Figure 3. Types of Relational Framing by Distance and Superiority Claim

Superiority Claim	Distance: Similarity	Distance: Difference
No Superiority Claimed	IV. Integration or Identification	I. Distancing
Superiority Claimed	III. Supplement	II. Aggression

frame simply states that the two management techniques are organized around different principles and that they are either alternative approaches to the same organizational problems or should be used for different business purposes (or industries). In many cases, the frame is used to assert that the two techniques can possibly harmoniously coexist in their own right.

Aggression: The most competitive form of relational frame would fall into the lower right-hand cell. Like distancing frame, those who employ this type of frame would keep the distance. Unlike distancing frame, however, knowledge entrepreneurs seek to uncover a possible conflict and incongruence, and further claim the overall superiority of the management program they support. With aggression frame, they intend to push a positive discourse about the rival technique out of the knowledge market and to allure consumers to their own.

Supplement: The lower left-hand cell includes relational frame that emphasizes both similarity and superiority of one vis-à-vis the other. Supplement frame could belong to this cell, where it is argued that one technique provides vital components for the other. Here superiority claim is made not for all, but for a few arguably critical elements. Those using this type of frame may not challenge the rival discourse with the purpose of completely dismantling its resource base. Rather they tend to take advantage of the established niche of the rival by claiming a relative advantage in *some* points where the rival technique has a supposedly critical weakness. For example, let us consider the following quotation. "We suggest that TQM is an essential component of BPR … [Managers] will need to re-evaluate their approaches to quality by focusing on changing the culture … before embarking on a BPR initiative" (Love and Gunaseccaran 1998). In this quotation, the authors do not completely disapprove of the rival technique. Instead, the rhetorical attacks are limited to a couple of points, where their own technique has a relatively sound basis compared to the rival.

Integration and Identification: The upper left-hand cell, a blend of similarity and no superiority claimed, would include two types of relational frame. Integration frame lays emphasis on the integration of the two techniques on an equal basis as a useful way of achieving what a single technique is unable to achieve. Identification framing is a little different – in spite of some small differences, it is very hard to "spot a significant difference"

Table 2. Numbers and Percentages of Articles in Each Category across Periods

Type of Relational Rhetoric		1992-1994	1995-1997	1997-	Total
Distancing		5 (15.6)	4 (5.4)	1 (4.2)	10 (7.7)
Identification		0 (0.0)	3 (4.1)	3 (12.5)	6 (4.6)
Aggress	TQM attack BPR	1 (3.1)	9 (12.2)	2 (8.3)	12 (9.2)
	BPR attack TQM	9 (28.1)	13 (17.6)	1 (4.2)	23 (17.7)
Supplement	TQM supp. BPR	1 (3.1)	10 (13.5)	3 (12.5)	14 (10.8)
	BPR supp. TQM	9 (28.1)	14 (18.9)	3 (12.5)	26 (20.0)
Integration		7 (21.9)	21 (28.4)	11 (45.8)	39 (30.0)
Other		3 (n.a.)	10 (n.a.)	8 (n.a.)	21 (n.a.)
Total		35(100.0)	84 (100.0)	32 (100.0)	151 (100.0)

(Valentine and Knight 1998). Of course, integration and identification framing might be a rhetorical response to the widespread renunciation of both management techniques accompanied by an increasing number of reported failures. In other words, when both discourses were under strong attack without a fashionable discourse available to jump on, knowledge entrepreneurs might attempt to combine the two out-of-fashion discourses to create a 'management Frankenstein.'

Textual Analysis of Relational Frame

To better illuminate the patterns of fluctuation of five relational frames, the whole period is divided into three subsets, as was done for the analysis of definitional framing: the publication of the first BPR article to the peak of TQM popularity (1990-1994), followed by three years up to the peak of BPR popularity (1995-1997), and thereafter (1998-2004). This division is on the concrete theoretical ground: each of the three periods captures a particular opportunity structure within the knowledge market, to which knowledge entrepreneurs strategically respond by producing appropriate relational rhetoric (Diani 1996). Table 2 presents the numbers and percentages of articles in each category across three time periods.

Period I (1990~1994)

This is the period when TQM was firmly established as a legitimate management program, and continued to attract media coverage, while BPR newly emerged and was rapidly diffusing in the discourse market. Relational framing was used mostly by the challenger, BPR camp, whose urgent task was to secure its survival in the discourse market where TQM was holding a sort of monopolistic status. Those who worked for BPR used two relational framing strategies. The first strategy was *distancing* strategy which aimed at cultivating BPR's own terrain separated from the one that was occupied by TQM. Since it might be hard for a newly emerging discourse to directly challenge and win over the old, strongly entrenched discourse, BPR

writers were willing to stay away from a head-to-head competition with the seemingly undefeatable 'Goliath.' Instead they attempted to set a clear boundary between the two techniques and claimed the relative strength of each technique in specific industries, organizational problems, and business situations. In this sense, it is a kind of 'live and let live' strategy. For example, some BPR supporters maintained that TQM's quality improvement was better suited for the manufacturing industry, while IT-based BPR could make bigger business improvement for companies operating in the service industry (Jackson 1994). The difference in business purposes between the two techniques was often emphasized.

> TQM and BPR can coexist. All companies should continuously examine and improve the activities by which they do business. But Reengineering is required when massive improvements are needed to quickly achieve dramatic results" (McManis 1993: 42).

The second framing strategy most utilized by BPR proponents in this period was *aggression* that directly challenged TQM in order to cool down and demobilize the euphoric fever for TQM, and to force it out of the discourse market. The BPR supporters' superiority claims took various forms. First of all, some writers highlighted BPR's promise of achieving dramatic improvement in a short time while looking down on TQM as too slow in implementation and too narrow in scale for U.S. firms to survive in intense global competition ("Reengineering has emerged as a viable alternative [to TQM] when 10% performance increments are no longer enough and 50% … are sought" (Ettlie 1994)). Success stories of firms achieving an enormous performance increase through BPR and failure cases of TQM implementation were often contrasted.

Second, some of the TQM principles were blamed for having fundamental problems when implemented in the U.S., because TQM's bottom-up approach was not consonant with the western business culture. Other criticisms revolved around TQM's lack of process focus and obscurity of TQM principles.

> Now Deming's Frankenstein, the doctrine of Total Quality Management, has found itself surrounded by critics …. Step forward … to those marketers who, by understanding the lineage and future of significance of BPR, can work to ensure that it does not repeat the marketing myopia characteristic of the Total Quality Management" (Woudhyunsen 1993).

The third form is an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of TQM by emphasizing that influential actors such as Fortune 100 firms had switched from TQM to BPR and even "Japanese automobile makers are reengineering their total quality system-from product development through procurement, manufacturing, and distribution" (Sheridan 1991).

Another type of relational framing occasionally sought by BPR advocates was *supplement* strategy that emphasized its supplementary values for TQM. Those who wrote for BPR accused TQM of being incomplete or having significant flaws. Rather than negating TQM's values altogether, however, they tried to let their yet frail BPR survive under the umbrella of TQM by contending that BPR could be used to cure such problems and make TQM more effective. While acknowledging the power of TQM, for example, they said that "successful approach to TQM involves a complete reengineering of processes both within and across departmental boundaries" (Abel 1992: 100).

By contrast, writers working for TQM paid little attention to the challenging, yet unthreatening, management technique. Such relative lack of attention was presumably due to the fact that TQM was enjoying much broader support that its proponents did not consider BPR as a potential threat. BPR might be seen as one of the many passing fads that would vanish in the near future.

Period II (1995~1997)

In this period, both management discourses were around their peak in popularity. What differed was that TQM started to turn into downswing while BPR was still growing or stayed on the peak. This popularity dynamics brought about a few changes in framing strategies.

The first and foremost change was the intensification of rhetorical competition. The dramatic success of BPR, along with the stagnation and even decline of TQM's popularity, shaped the perception that BPR could be a significant threat to the survival of TQM. TQM proponents became more active in producing relational rhetoric. So, aggressive competition intensified in both directions. The rhetorical focus was somewhat different across the two camps, however. Since BPR was believed to have potential for further growth, BPR writers continued to be concerned with complete destruction of TQM discourse. They tended to use more offensive than defensive rhetoric. Given the constant decline of TQM's popularity, in contrast, TQM writers were obsessed with maintaining the current support level, and relied on defensive as well as offensive rhetoric. For example, rather than making straightforward attack on BPR principles, they warned that BPR "threatens to negate the quality gains, and investments, of the last two decades" (Kinni 1995: 11). In other cases, they attempted to directly link the failed results of BPR implementation to the need for the return to TQM.

> The first studies of BPR results showed 50 to 70% failure rates. Now the same headlines that taunted TQM have been recycled for BPR, proclaiming it 'passe' … In a sense, the inability of BPR to deliver what it promised has brought organizations right back to total quality management" (Government Executive 1997: 62).

Second important change occurred around the *supplement* framing. This framing did not

seem popular among BPR advocates because they felt that there was not need to seek a shelter under the steadily declining discourse. In contrast, growing number of BPR articles intended to show the possibility of saving BPR by using core principles of TQM such as teamwork, bottom-up approach, continuous improvement, and most of all, focus on human factors ("By using a strongly participative and bottom up approach to Reengineering, Nationbank has achieved consistent productivity and quality gain companywide" (Sczech and Atenello 1995: 89)). An article cited Champy to argue that even BPR gurus agreed "reengineering must be undertaken in the spirit of TQM" (Barrier 1995: 36).

Third, TQM and BPR moved closer to each other. While distancing framing gradually disappeared, relational framing strategies seeking to integrate the two came to the fore. Although TQM and BPR discourses were very popular, it was also apparent that they both were at the hub of some incisive attacks. Mass media reported the high failure rates of both techniques. Managers complained that implementation of these programs left only large amount of consulting fees without any significant performance increase. Management gurus, in response, became aware that their own management program had some logical and practical problems. All these gave activists on both sides a sense of crisis that their management technique would become a 'flavor of the month' program and soon disappear altogether.

Some business writers recognized that a single management technique could not survive in such a harsh environment, and turned their eyes to the rival for possible integration: "You cannot have one without the other" (McDonald 1995: 21). Incremental improvement in TQM and dramatic overhaul in BPR, which had earlier been described as different approaches applicable to different situations, were now supposed to be implemented in a company simultaneously or alternately. Many of the principles, once considered as contradictory, were now seen as being in harmony. The following long quotation nicely summarizes these points.

> For most firms, the combination of reengineering and quality management has been positive …. 'We continue to reengineer,' says Brown. If a company can combine the more drastic change of reengineering with the sustained and incremental elements of TQM, this should allow executives to sustain the quality principles and prepare for growth, he says. Monsanto's approach to merging the objectives to reengineering and quality was to use principles of TQM to manage the company redesign …." (Sissell 1995: 31).

Period III (1998~)

This period was characterized by a sustained decline of both management techniques. Discourse around them became more negative, more thought-driven, and less emotional. Numerous articles completely rejected both management techniques, and sometimes came up with a seemingly promising substitute. The term fad or faddism was frequently used to cast

them as something that was "here today" but would be "wrong tomorrow" (Butler 1998: 40). Given the absence of an alternative fashionable program for the post-BPR era, however, some knowledge entrepreneurs were willing to stick to TQM and BPR even during their downswing. Instead of returning to the established models that allegedly had many logical and practical problems, knowledge entrepreneurs needed to revise them to assure skeptical knowledge consumers that the revised models would resolve some or most of earlier problems.

In this situation, one of the most feasible strategies might be reviving the two out-of-fashion management techniques to an integrated model. Integration frame rapidly grew to become the single dominant relational frame of this period. Relational frame that emphasized the difference between the two (distancing and aggression) had almost completely vanished. Supplement frame was only occasionally found. A new relational frame that underlined the similarities (identification frame) arose, reflecting the awareness that the head-to-head competition would result in a common disaster – "When examined, the similarities between the revised language of business process reengineering and total quality management are striking" (Valentine and Knights 1998).

Two things should be noted in relation to the integration frame. First, integrating the two management techniques produced a number of jargons referring to the integrated methods. Some examples include "Process Quality," "BPM" (Business Process Management), and "TRPQ" (Total Reengineering Process with the goal of Quality). This must be an effective tactic. Naming a new method by borrowing words from both sides would provide the pretension that the two methods were systematically and concretely combined in ways to maximize their strengths. Second, while integration strategy was most frequently sought, the deepening crisis of the two methods necessitated moving beyond integration. In response, a few writers proposed new models integrating TQM, BPR, and a third element such as benchmarking, learning organization, and strategic planning. A typical example is the following: "An integration of the best practices of TQM and BPR … builds on the strengths of both, and eliminates most of their individual weaknesses" (Jarrar and Aspinwall 1999).

Overall, examination of relational framing from 1990 to 2004 reveals a couple of interesting evolutionary patterns of management discourse. First, relational framing evolved from one-way competition led by the challenging (TQM) camp to two-way competition, and finally ended up with mutualism. Second, the boundaries of the two management techniques, once very distinct, gradually eroded. These patterns again confirm the findings in the analyses of definitional framing.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Organization scholars have argued that most organizational change programs build on one of

the two opposing discourses of organizational control: normative control versus techno-structural control. While widely accepted, this argument must be subjected to a careful scrutiny, because, as many other discursive constructs, a management discourse evolves through interactions among interested social actors within the knowledge market. By employing a textural analysis of the two management discourses, TQM and BPR, which allegedly typify normative and techno-structural control discourses respectively, this paper evaluates how two groups of knowledge entrepreneurs influenced each other in shaping, developing and modifying the perceptions of their own management discourse, and ways of relating it to the rival discourse.

Overall, there was strong support for the central thesis that while the two management discourses initially began with distinct identities, quality and reengineering movements had been on a path toward convergence by borrowing from each other some value-added vocabularies that they lacked but were well articulated in the rival discourse. Such borrowing was found to increase with the salience of the rival discourse. So, we found that definitional framing of TQM became more techno-structural, while that of BPR more normative, and consequently the boundaries between the two discourses gradually became permeable. This finding is broadly consistent with the institutional argument that emphasizes convergence toward a 'rationalized myth' (Meyer and Rowan 1977). There are differences, however. New institutionalism frequently assumes a rationalized myth, or institutional logic to be given, and pays most attention to the process of wide acceptance of that logic in the community, i.e. institutionalization. Our main subject is mutual influence, by which the two logics come to lose their original identities. This mode of convergence, usually neglected by institutional studies, can be found in many social settings such as cultural and political arenas, and social movements (Rao et al. 2003; Stein 1997; Gutierrez 1999).

Another noteworthy improvement over institutionalism is that while institutionalism focuses primarily on cultural and cognitive process, the case of convergence studied here involves not only cognitive process, but also strategic manipulation of meanings in ways to take advantage of given opportunity structures. Not only did knowledge entrepreneurs borrow from the rival solely because it was salient, but they often made use of a variety of rhetorical strategies of relating one technique to another, in order to win over the rival discourse, or to survive under the umbrella of the increasingly popular management discourse. The interplay of cognitive and strategic processes seems to have been present, in that the convergence of definitional frames and the shift of relational framing from distancing to integration went together. Although this study does not specify which one preceded the other, we suspect that blind borrowing would rarely occur. Since borrowing from the rival involves a modification of group identity, it must be justified by appropriate relational positioning as to why it is needed, whether the two techniques have something in common, what the rival is better at, and what can be achieved by borrowing. This is partially evidenced in Figure 2: the relative popularity

gap, reflecting the opportunity structures, seemed to be a stronger predictor of borrowing than the rival's popularity (or salience) itself. For example, the TQM camp rushed into borrowing only when it became apparent that the BPR popularity surpassed that of TQM.

This study, we expect, will open up a new avenue for one of the central questions of management fad and fashion research: why does a management technique get out of fashion? Previous research has proposed that exogenous forces – forces stemming outside the management knowledge market such as long term economic cycles, levels of labor union activity, political climates, and macro-psychological changes – create, shape, and destroy management fashions, and eventually drive the evolution of the management fashion field (Barley and Kunda 1988; Abrahamson 1997). This study, however, suggests that endogenous processes, especially rhetorical competition followed by borrowing, could lead to the dismantlement of a management fashion. Mix of conflicting elements in an 'old bottle' would make two important changes. First, cross-fertilization of ideas undermines the focal discourse's logical consistency and contaminates its once-sharply-defined identity. As shown in some studies of organizational categories (Zuckerman 1999; Carroll and Swaminathan 2000; Rao et al. 2005), hybrid categories suffer from lower standing, because of their lack of authenticity and categorical purity. In addition, cross-fertilization tends to increase complexity and ambiguity of the organizing principles of a management discourse. The more complex and ambiguous a discourse becomes, it becomes less understandable, less reliable, and consequently more likely to be rejected.

This study, of course, suffered from some limitations that future research should address. First of all, our findings and conclusions partly depend on the extent to which the small sample of text data represents whole population of discursive materials. This may be problematic. However, I would argue that the 12 journals used for the analysis of definitional framing were some of the most influential materials in the U.S. business community, and covered a wide range of knowledge consumers. Another concern is that we might lose the context in which each searched word is embedded.[9] The analysis of relational framing was also problematic, not only in terms of data, but also methodologically. Some of the methodological limitations were inherent in discourse analysis, given the current methodological developments of semiotic text analysis. All in all, the results obtained here, I admit, should be seen as rather tentative and inconclusive, even though considerable credit is given to the general patterns we found.

To speak to some data limitations, future research should utilize a variety of data sources; for example, training materials, newsletters published by consulting agencies, written and verbal organization documents, and educational curriculum and even syllabus from leading MBA programs. This work would be valuable, not only because we could evaluate the

[9] It should be noted, however, that we searched words and phrases in sentences defining TQM and BPR. Because words and phrases used to define terms are hardly rhetoric, we do not think that the contexts matter too much.

generalizability of the evolutionary patterns found here, but also because we might be in a good position to examine where such evolutionary change comes from, and how it diffuses across different discursive fields. One suggestive finding in this study was that blending occurred more frequently in practitioner articles than in academic counterparts. This suggests that practitioners were more susceptible to fashionable ideas. Blended discourse spilled over to the academic field only after they were first introduced in practitioner journals.

Future research could also further investigate whether blending in discourse had any concrete basis in organizational practice. In other words, did TQM and BPR practices implemented in business organizations undergo similar evolutionary changes over time? This is an important question, because some studies hint an alternative interpretation for blending of TQM and BPR discourses. For example, Osterman (2000) reported that firms that had implemented TQM had higher rates of layoffs than did firms without it. Other studies found that firms undergoing restructuring, streamlining, and de-layering adopted a quality team strategy. Is this an evidence for convergence toward the middle? A critical interpretation suggests no. What really happened in the era of neoliberalism was the intensification of management rationalization quite consistent with BPR's techno-structural organization control principles. The real value of the normative control system including participation and empowerment was merely rhetorical window-dressing that disguised the tough realities of workplace restructuring (Zbaracki 1998; Strang and Jung 2005; forthcoming). Along this line, the rhetorical convergence of TQM and BPR discourses could be interpreted not as a balanced mix of techno-structural and normative control principles, but as basically one-way convergence where organizational restructuring, streamlining, work process simplification, and cost-reduction are highly valued, while normative elements simply play a legitimizing function to co-opt those who might otherwise be strong opponents of change. This study left this issue open for further research, which must utilize more rigorous analytic tools and extensive text data.

APPENDIX

A. The List of Business Journals Used for Analysis of Definitional Framing

Academic:	Academy of Management Review
	Academy of Management Journal
	Administrative Science Quarterly
Quasi-Academic:	Harvard Business Review
	Sloan Management Review
	California Management Review
	Journal of Business Strategy
	Training and Development Journal
	Engineering Management International
Practitioners	Business Week
	Wall Street Journal
	Fortune

B. Examples of Normative and Techno-structural Words

Normative Words	Techno-structural Words
Teamwork	Top-down
Training	Cost Reduction
HRM	Quality Control
Cooperation	Efficiency
Harmony	Information & Technology (IT)
Organizational Culture	Dramatic
Participation	Radical
Empowerment	Restructuring
Bottom-up	Top Management
Employee Satisfaction	Downsizing
Human Factor	Cross-functional
Commitment	Job elimination
Continuous	Streamlining
Collective	Redesign

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[Submitted January 18, 2008; Accepted June 4, 2008]