The Feminisation of the Labour Market and Males 'New Disadvantage'

Jane Kenway, Peter Watkins and Karen Tregenza, Deakin Centre for Education and Change, Deakin University


Introduction

This chapter examines the well popularised and increasingly popular claims that boys are at risk in the mid 1990s. It argues that while there are grains of truth in such claims, they are also simplistic and unhelpful for educational policy makers and teachers. The case is made for a more nuanced understanding of gender and risk in the context of widespread social change. This argument is advanced with particular reference to vocational education policies for schools. We begin the chapter with a discussion of changing times and their implications for policy with particular reference to vocational education and gender reform policies. Next we explore the concept of risk as it has been applied to boys, to 'students at risk' and to 'risk society'. We then focus on the issue of vocational education, gender and risk and introduce the empirical work that this chapter draws from. Under this heading we consider the gendered dimensions of three areas of social
change and their implications for vocational education: risk, autonomy, security and trust; the restructuring of certain transitions, and gender convergence and intensification.

Uncertainty, redefinition and restructuring

The British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) calls this era 'the age of uncertainty'. Hugh McKay (1993), the Australian social commentator, calls it the 'age of redefinition'. Ulrich Beck, a sociologist from Germany talks of Risk Society (1992). Policy makers the world over are constantly engaged in restructuring. Those in educational circles are regularly restructured, redefined and uncertain. Risk and insecurity are features of their lives. Yet the search for certainty and the need to trust remain; and remain elusive. Changing gender identities and relations, changing labour processes and labour markets and changing family forms are amongst the inter-related characteristics of this age.

A feature of changing labour processes and labour markets is the decline of heavy (male dominated) manufacturing, the rise of the retail and service sector (dominated numerically by females) and the decline in the influence of unions and thus of working conditions. A related feature is what Bakker (1996, p.7) calls the 'gender paradox of restructuring'Ñ the 'contradictory effects of the dual process of gender erosion and intensification'. On the one hand we see the gendered polarisation of labour markets. Certain core, traditionally male, labour markets are shrinking and certain peripheral,
traditionally female, labour markets are expanding hence gender
differences in work are intensified. On the other hand we see the
gendered convergence of labour market experiences. More workers both
male and female are in poorly paid, part time, non unionised casual
work. Beck (1992, p.143) calls this the 'generalisation of employment
insecurity'. Jobs traditionally filled by men are being down-graded and
filled by women. But also, for want of something better, we see males

moving into traditionally female jobs.

Despite the collapsing distinction between bread winners and home
workers and ‘the end of work’ (Rifkin, 1995) for some, women continue
to carry the major load of household and emotional labour. This is so,
even though there is some evidence of change in households
characterised by intermittent patterns of employment and unemployment
by males. Further, the decline of heavy industry has been of
significance for certain single industry localities. Such regions are
being emptied of major sources of employment. Locality has thus become
a particularly important factor in youth employment and unemployment.

Vocational education and gender reform have, both wittingly and
unwittingly, been caught up in these changes. Let us consider how.

Policies for Vocational Education

New approaches to vocational education have quite dramatically altered
the transitions from schools to work in a context of extensive
training, workplace and labour market restructuring (Kenway and Willis,
1995). Within Commonwealth and state educational policy in Australia,
schools are now expected to change the mix of general and vocational
education in order to strengthen the vocational, they are to provide
greater clarity about the pathways between school education and a range
of post school destinations, and they are to help ensure that these
pathways actually lead somewhere by enabling students to gain
credentials which are acceptable in workplaces and in further education
or training. Teenagers are encouraged to complete a full secondary
education and to ensure that the education they receive in the
post-compulsory years provides them with the 'education and training
capital' they need to enter the labour market or further education.

To be more specific, under the Commonwealth Labor Government
(1983-1996), a series of reports associated with the National Training
Reform Agenda (NTRA) argue that the development of more flexible
pathways between education, training and employment. These seek to
promote the integration and/or articulation of school and Technical and
Further Education (TAFE) and/or private provider programs with each
other and with work-based and work placement programs (see Employment
They propose an alignment of post-compulsory schooling, structured
training and demonstrated work skills and the development of a
Standards Framework the purposes of which are to:
enable educators from different education and training sectors to focus on desirable vocational outcomes and develop curriculum to suit; allow a consistent approach to the assessment and reporting of young people's achievement in the key competencies; assist in creating clearer linkages between education, training and industry; and provide new ways for industry to clarify its expectations of young people and the education and training system (see further, Kenway and Willis, 1996).

In addition, the Karpin Report (1995) Enterprising Nation: Renewing Australia's Managers to Meet the Challenges of the Asia Pacific Century, places a strong emphasis on enterprise education in schools, the vocationalisation of the general curriculum and the celebration of enterprise culture. In line with such thinking a new Victorian Certificate of Education Course of Study called Industry and Enterprise Studies has been developed. It aims to teach students about work and its place in Australian industry and society. The Study looks at the economic and social aspects of work. Students complement their theoretical understanding with experience gained through work placement which allows students to develop skills and knowledge in a workplace setting. However, the overall emphasis of Industry and Enterprise Studies is the production of enterprising individuals.
Undoubtedly a significant influencing factor in the changes to vocational education programs since 1993 has been the development of employment-related Key Competencies and Competency Based Training (CBT). The Mayer Committee Report (Australian Education Council, 1991), proposed a set of seven Key Competencies that young people need, to be able to participate effectively in the emerging forms of work and work organisation. It also establishes principles to provide for nationally-consistent assessment and reporting of achievement of the Key Competencies. In contrast, CBT is directed towards the development of specific competencies for specific industries (see Employment and Skills Formation Council 1992).

The Labor approach has been revised under the recent (1996) Liberal/National Party government which has developed the Modern Australian Apprenticeship and Traineeship System (MAATS). While it is not at all clear how this will relate to the Labor initiatives, it appears that the school will be a central link in MAATS. Young people will be able to undertake apprenticeships, traineeships or specific vocational courses as part of their school programme. It is expected that students will leave school having been trained in some work related skills or even having completed part of a vocational education qualification. Consequently the Budget Paper of 1996 stresses that:

Vocational education and training will be expanded in schools. Programmes will be developed that provide progress towards and lead into apprenticeships and traineeships. Students will be able to begin
apprenticeships and traineeships while at school, to give senior secondary students a clear and accessible pathway to employment and further learning. (Moreover) The expansion of vocational education in schools and the further development of pathways from school to work will be supported through the provision of additional financial assistance to school systems to increase the number of appropriately trained teachers (Kemp 1996b, pp.9-10).

Amongst much it is expected that MAATS will address the fact that the number of young people in apprenticeships is the lowest for three decades with just over 50,000 in apprenticeships and 20,000 in traineeships in 1995.

As result of all the above, we now see an increasing articulation of post-compulsory schooling, structured training and competency based work placement programs. This has resulted in complicated, multi site, multi subject, multi assessment, Dual Accreditation and Dual Recognition programs, school industry links through traineeships and apprenticeships and enterprise curriculum and programs.

Policies for gender reform
Recent approaches to vocational education policy seek, in part, to address the needs of 'students at risk'. Most often these students are defined as disadvantaged but their gender is ignored. In contrast, shifts in general gender reform policies for schools have sought to contribute to and address both the redefinition of gender identities
and relations and, implicitly in recent times, the uncertainties which have arisen for boys as a result (eg. Gender Equity Taskforce, MCEETYA, 1996). However, implicit in such policies is the notion that the redefinition of gender noted earlier has placed boys as a group 'at risk'.

In contrast yet again, the more focussed gender reform polices for vocational education, have conventionally perceived voc. ed as the domain of (working class) boys and as most problematic for girls. The gender issues most commonly considered include the gendered segmentation of the vocational education curriculum in line with the gender segmentations of the labour force, the low representation in vocational courses of girls in comparison with boys, the incompatibility of many jobs with future family responsibilities and the implications of this for young women's career 'choices', the limited understandings of gender issues amongst career advisers and issues associated with sexual harassment in work experience sites (see further, Kenway and Willis, 1995). Recently the gendered construction of skill and of workplace cultures have been acknowledged in policy.

The main and rather flawed policy response to such issues over the years has been informed by feminist versions of human capital theory and has encouraged girls to take up 'non-traditional subject and career pathways' in the search for economic security, independence and
mobility (see further, Kenway, 1993). However, frequent reports of hostile male environments and harassment have clarified the risks involved for 'non-traditional' girls in traditional male environments. In such policies, the possible incompatibility of many jobs with future family responsibilities is too often not acknowledged, or seen as something to be escaped, rather than resolved. Equally, such thinking fails to address the definitions of valued or useful knowledge, what counts as 'being skilled' and what is thus seen as worthy of. Only recently have Australian policies for gender reform sought to develop a more nuanced vocational agenda but as we have found in our research schools (discussed later), these have had little impact. However, given the hollowing out of the welfare state and with it the drying up of state support for gender reform, they appear unlikely to have much impact in the future.

Risk
The concept 'at risk' is frequently employed in education circles at school and system levels. It has become a catch-all term for teachers and bureaucrats which is seldom adequately unpacked with regard to matters of gender, class or other differences and dominances. As a result, the specificities and differences among the 'at risk' are often overlooked. Further, the implications for education of 'risk society' are similarly overlooked. This has unfortunate implications for both policy and practice. What do we learn if we consider 'risk' more fully by drawing on the work of those who have sought to put some flesh on its bones?
The popular case about 'boys at risk' has two main dimensions. Boys are portrayed as failing at school and failing at life. In comparison with girls, boys are seen to under-achieve and to have more motivational and behavioural problems — they commit more crimes, have more road accidents, suicide more. Further, they are said to lack social and emotional skills. The failing-at-life arguments have generated a body of interpretive research which explores the risks as well as rewards for boys of subscribing to particular versions of masculinity (see for example Mclean, 1997). It shows how risk and reward are often alternative sides of the same coin. For example, taking risks as a male may mean not taking risks with one's masculinity. The arguments about boys' comparative under-achievement have been convincingly undermined by the wide ranging statistical studies of Teese, Davies, Charlton and Polesel (1995). Their research challenges the popular assumption that girls overall are gaining more success through school than boys. It concludes that boys rely less on school because they have stronger vocational educational pathways outside it, that girls' patterns of subject success and choice offer them less tertiary study and career 'pay off' than those of boys because they are less coherent, vocational and less mutually supporting.

All that said, it is important to observe that the discussion of boys at risk usually centres on the 'academic' curriculum and does not attend to the 'vocational'. The implications of girls' and boys' relative success at school for their paid work options are not usually
part of popular discussion. However, as we have shown elsewhere (Kenway and Willis, 1995), if one is to compare the school and post school vocational pathways taken by boys and girls, then girls have historically been at a disadvantage relative to boys and this state of affairs continues. Further and most importantly in terms of notions of risk, Teese et al (1995) observe that gender differences sharply increase the more the social disadvantage of parents. They thus conclude that, 'the real question is not whether girls as a group or boys as a group are more disadvantaged but which girls and which boys' (p.109).

This point becomes more poignant and telling with regard to matters of 'students at risk' when we consider issues associated with youth employment, unemployment and under-employment. Both Freeland (1996) and Sweet (1995) outline statistically, the uncertainties, vulnerabilities and risks that young people are exposed to in their various pathways to the workplace. They draw particular attention to the risks which await those who do not try to enter full time post compulsory education but seek to enter the labour market instead. Sweet points to the different ways in which young people are marginalised from the mainstream of employment, education and training. Unemployment, that is wanting a job and not being able to find one, is the most common cause. Young people are also marginalised through solely relying on casual part-time work. They normally rely on jobs that provide only a few hours of poorly paid
part-time work each week. The numbers in this category have 'trebled from around five percent to over fifteen percent of all those young people who are not full-time students in the last five years' (1995 p.6). Further, Sweet indicates that one in five has completely dropped out of both the labour market and education. They are not working, not looking for work, and not studying. Some can be traced through social security but others are simply 'lost'. It is suggested that this is partly a result of the increasing retention rates in schools, resulting in a labour market that relies more heavily on credentials. Accordingly, lower academic achievers and other disadvantaged groups are likely to have particular difficulty in competing for work (Sweet, 1995 p.7).

Recently, the Commonwealth Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, David Kemp observed that among 19 years olds, those who had not completed their schooling and had no vocational qualification had an unemployment rate close to 27 per cent, those who had completed secondary school had an unemployment rate close to 18 per cent, and those who held a vocational qualification had an unemployment rate of 7 per cent (Kemp, 1996b). The Minister then argued:

_ The senior secondary curriculum clearly needs to respond to the needs of the students for whom an academic course is not attractive. To provide opportunities for these students it is essential that schools offer pathways to training and employment and just as importantly that students think of schooling as providing that pathway_
Many teachers and policy makers think similarly and thus define 'students at risk' as those who appear unlikely to complete secondary schooling. It is our view that this is a rather limited view.

Freeland (1996) argues that risk is constructed through the transition from childhood to adulthood which 'involves the provisional resolution of a range of questions relating to personal morality, sexuality, politics and economics, all of which contribute to one's personal identity' (1996, p.7). He makes the case that the 'long term structural' collapse of the teenage labour market has:

severity dislocated these processes. The experience of transition has been prolonged for all young people, and there is an identifiable stage of life wedged between adolescence and adulthood but the experience of this transition is not uniform. It is marked by complexity of inter-related social divisions based on class, gender, race, ethnicity and region, and this combination of factors has placed at risk a significant proportion of teenagers: at risk of not effecting a secure transition to adulthood (1996, p.7).

In Australia, the group of students including both boys and girls who increasingly find it difficult to enter the labour market and who could
be classified as most at risk of being unemployed, underemployed or even lost includes working class students, students with disabilities and indigenous students (Sweet, 1995 p.1).

Let us consider some wider understandings of risk. Beck (1992) is concerned with a new self-endangering civilisation which he terms 'risk society' and defines risk as follows. Firstly, he refers to the physical hazards, such as pollutants, radioactivity, chemicals in the food chain etc, that are threatening life on this planet. These risks are seen as not merely the side effects of progress in the modern world; they are progress! Secondly, current times have brought a seductive and confusing array of new choices of work, family and lifestyle as the socialising agencies of society alter and as traditional values and linkages are eroded. Sources of identity and esteem are more multiple and less fixed and biography becomes an individual project constructed through apparently infinite but constrained and elusive choices. However, freedom from old constraints generates new uncertainties. Who am I? Who is in charge? What is my place in this world? Increased choice and autonomy are accompanied by increased risk.

Risk society is concerned not so much with the distribution of material goods but with the distribution of choices and uncertainties or risks. In Beck's view, blind growth has resulted in inequalities which are increasingly evident in an 'individualised' rather than social class form. Hence, in the risk society, life becomes biographical project of
maximising choice and minimising risk, individually. However, risks also have a generalisable quality:

Some people are more affected than others by the distribution and growth of risks, that is, social risk positions spring up. In some of their dimensions these follow the inequalities of class and strata positions, but they bring a fundamentally different logic into play. Risks of modernisation sooner or later also strike those who produce or profit from them...Socially recognised risks...contain a peculiar political explosive: what was until now considered unpolitical becomes political-the elimination of the causes in the industrialization process itself (Beck, 1992 pp.23-24, italics in original).

Thus for many, these risks outweigh the benefits which might occur from unconstrained economic growth. The result, according to Beck, is increased market dependency and new forms of social control. Speaking of policy making practices in the risk society, Beck argues that 'risk management' becomes a major preoccupation which involves 'discovering, administering, acknowledging, avoiding or concealing such hazards with respect to specifically defined horizons of relevance'. He argues that as the risks increase so too do promises of security (1992, pp.19-20).

Gender, risk and vocational education

This sample of perspectives on risk indicates firstly that risk is a general cultural phenomena with implications for all but that there are cohorts of students consisting of both girls and boys who are particularly 'at risk' in terms of their school life and their post
school work options and identities. Further, it shows that within this category, there are some who are more at risk in both respects than others. As indicated, class, gender, race, ethnicity and location and their relationship to education and employment are all implicated in the production of cohorts of young people 'at risk'. Thus to suggest that boys as a group are more at risk than girls as a group is to oversimplify the issue of risk in a most unhelpful manner. None the less, if gender becomes a focus for analysis of the issue of young people at risk there is much to consider as indicated by our current research project titled The Construction of Gender Within the New Vocational Agenda for Schools Implications for Gender Construction, Relations and Reform.

Through a series of case and cameo studies of different schools and programs, we are considering vocational education in changing economic, technological and institutional contexts with particular reference to masculinities, femininities and localities. Our research in three states of Australia in capital cities, provincial cities and rural and remote areas shows that there have been various responses to the policy imperatives noted above by differently located schools. Our research shows that there have been various responses to policy by differently located schools. In very difficult circumstances many very dedicated teachers are struggling both to develop programs and to resolve the many deep problems involved. Some are doing this better than others but
either way, any critical comments to follow are offered in a spirit of support.

Some, the more elite schools, have ignored the vocational imperative altogether. Some have simply added programs for small numbers of students while yet others have adopted a whole school approach to, say, enterprise education. In some schools vocational education is defined quite narrowly and in others it is seen to include the 'hand, the head and the heart'. In some cases schools have developed a wide range of partnerships and links with business and industry and with public and private providers of training programs. In other instances the institutions have remained as separated as ever. Some schools have devoted many resources to the development of new programs and have appointed quite senior staff to develop and promote the field. In certain such instances these schools are becoming or looking to become accredited providers of training programs for populations other than school students. Some have also been very successful in attracting additional grants. In many such cases the vocational education program is becoming a 'marketing tool', used to 'add value' to the school's image and to attract students in an increasingly competitive schooling environment in which numbers equal dollars and in which schools below a certain number of students may be targeted for closure. Given the problems noted above with regard to youth and employment those schools which can develop programs which deliver jobs, feel that they will be very well placed to attract 'clients'. In contrast other schools struggle to deploy staff, mount programs and make cross sectoral connections.
The schools which have adopted new vocational policy agendas with the greatest enthusiasm have tended to be those which serve students who are less securely placed on a route to university education. In some instances these are also schools which serve some of the most seriously disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Australia. Such schools, some metropolitan, some rural, some remote are located in areas where unemployment is as high and where local industry, to the extent that it exists, is unable and in some cases unwilling to provide employment to the locality's youth. In both these cases new approaches to vocational education are seen to provide powerful new opportunities to minimise the risks which plague these particular populations. These students have been encouraged to trust such programs, to see them as 'a step ahead, a foot in the door' (Year 12 boy involved in an industry based/school apprenticeship program).

As our research in progress is indicating, gender identities, relations and inequalities are integral to current processes and contexts of vocational education. Predicably, old gender issues remain and indeed in some cases have been exacerbated. However, as a function of all the changes noted above, new gender (and other) issues have emerged many of which relate to risk and trust. These mean that those in the field must move beyond fashionable but facile and futile arguments about boys as a group at risk and ask questions that pertain to the differences within and across difference and to the complexities of these changing times.
It is timely to ask 'How are gender identities and inequalities inscribed within current approaches to vocational education? Are such inscriptions acceptable or should they change in the light of the times?' Many new issues relate to risk, trust and redefinition. Consider the following.

Experiences of risk, autonomy, security and trust

Are risk, autonomy, security and trust distributed differently between and within the sexes? For example, Sweet implies that through unemployment of various sorts, young people risk becoming economically dependent, living in poverty and risk succumbing to a host of associated problems. What do these different experiences of risk mean for the current construction of male and female identities and gender relationships among unemployed, underemployed and 'lost' young people? What might these mean for vocational programs through and beyond schools? How might voc. ed help girls and boys to maximise gender choices and minimise gender risks, particularly in situations of dependency and poverty?

Vocational education today is a form both of risk management and minimisation which implicitly makes very risky promises of security. As a voc. ed. coordinator in one of our schools says, the students who do the program are 'the students willing to take a risk'. The sense of risk reduction and lessening of anxiety involves, what (Giddens 1984, p.50) terms 'ontological security, expressing an autonomy of bodily
control within predictable routines'. Confidence is thereby created and the sense of risk reduced in such contexts. Trust, Giddens argues, (1984, p. 53) equals confidence with a definite sense of mutuality about it; 'there is at least an incipient feeling of 'being trustworthy' associated with the generalised extension of trust to the other' (p. 53). Also, according to Giddens (1990, pp. 83-84) our uncertain, reflexive, future oriented modern institutions and society are, of necessity, predicated on another level of trust: trust in abstract and expert systems.

If they are to work, new vocational education programs with their complicated institutional and curriculum and assessment arrangements must instil such self/other trust in students who historically have every reason to distrust teachers and schools. Further, they must help them to understand some of the social implications for them of expert/abstract trust patterns. Thus trust must have many sides but too often in our schools we see that it does not.

Students are encouraged to trust their future to such programs. Such trust becomes a program's selling point to others. Students are not to put the program and implicitly other students' futures at risk. Yet our data suggest that a lack and loss of trust is already evident amongst some of the boys and girls of our research schools.

_ TOC \f \n _There's lots of things they've promised that didn't come out. They almost dropped us in the deep end and left us there.
They dangle a big carrot in front of you they offer you money to go to school. When we first started here they promised 8 apprenticeships and that's been dropped to 4. So they've halved that. They've also offered some assistance for those students who want to go uni where that hasn't happened.

They say they want half girls and half boys in the program but I don't think they really mean it.

Sometimes the program is considered more important than students' experiences within it as one girl found when she complained about harassment on work placement. She was not believed and urged not to place the program at risk by taking the matter further. Trust/security and anxiety/risk are a feature of vocational education. In instances such as this, the latter are managed not minimised. Meanwhile, the gender lessons for the students are clear.

While Competency Based Training (CBT) and Key Competencies may benefit such students by offering them 'recognition of prior learning', credentialed pathways and, possibly, a sense of being trustworthy, it does not necessarily provide them with the knowledge to better understand the world around them, let alone to challenge abstract/expert systems by, for example, developing a sense of
industrial agency in the era of enterprise bargaining. The standing of competencies varied across the cameo schools in our study. Some felt competencies had out lived their usefulness and were to be surpassed by dual accreditation and/or dual recognition; while others developed their vocational education programs around the seven Key Competencies, working closely with industry to both raise employer awareness, and to ensure a satisfactory assessment strategy for each party. Yet others used CBT in students workplacements and TAFE courses. We will have more to say on the matter of competencies later.

If we take a broader view of risk and understand it as a general cultural phenomena what are the implications for vocational education policy and practice? What are the implications for students who, in the first instance may not regard themselves as at risk?

The restructuring of transitions
The restructuring of the transitions from school to work/post-school life and from adolescence to adulthood mean that the grounds upon which to build ontological security are uncertain. Giddens argues that the feelings of self doubt and worthlessness which young people who are unemployed frequently exhibit, form a tension - management system around which the polarities of trust/security and anxiety/risk are organised.

Such trust-anxiety polarities are exemplified in his analysis of Willis' study of working class 'lads' Learning to Labour (1977). Traditional curricula make the lads alienated and anxious and
masculine, manual labour, is considered preferable to the conformity and effeminacy associated with the 'brain work' demanded by the school's traditional curricula. This leads them to resist it through the creation of an aggressive, joking anti-school culture which resembles that of the shop floor culture of their future work places. It is this cultural identity, continuity and stability which provides them with ontological security.

Hence, Giddens argues, 'they find the adjustment to work relatively easy and they are able to tolerate the demands of doing dull, repetitive labour in circumstances they recognise to be ungenial' (Giddens 1984, p.293). Writing in the late 1970s, Willis (1977, p.16) points out that amongst the lads' culture there is a conception of the inevitability of work and of certain kinds of work 'the apparent timelessness and inevitability of industrial organisation...the hardness and inevitability of industrial work'.

How times have changed. More recently, Mac an Ghaill, (1996), points out that young people in the 1990's, find themselves in a 'new social condition of suspended animation between school and work. Many of the old transitions into work, into cultures and organisations of work, into being consumers, into independent accommodation - have been frozen or broken...' (1996, p.390). Similarly, Freeland raises issues of identity and implies that without adequate work and income, young people cannot in effect grow up and become adults. Going further, Beck implies that the institutions that, in the traditional sense, defined
growing up are losing their hold on the collective consciousness.

Most current vocational education programs are multi institutional and students are split across the different gendered mores of each institution.

Although the trainers are good tradesmen, they're not good teachers. They were put in the deep end as much as we were. They need to train the people better. One trainer has been described as a sexist pig. He is not a very good person to have teaching guys because he passes his views on just in the way that he talks - that girls are inferior (Year 12 Girl Apprentice).

This process of splitting has particular implications for age and authority relations and for the traditional transitions and for and for the gendered identities that adolescents construct around them. As a Year 12 boy involved in an industry based/school apprenticeship program says 'They're almost running the school like industry but we're still only kids'. Yet another such boys says

It's hard. You try to make decisions for yourself and sometimes the teachers don't like that because they are used to teaching not negotiating. Whereas in the workplace you've got to make your own decisions. [In the workplace] you can often negotiate with the person
who has given you the job whereas at school and in the training centre you can't.

How then, do differently located young women's experiences of these restructured transitions differ from those of differently located young men? Might they undermine many girls' increasing sense of freedom from gender traditions and reinscribe them as docile and dependent? And, given that masculinity has historically been so intimately connected with employment and with certain power positions within households what do these transitions mean for boys? Given that it is no longer feasible for boys to hang onto traditional notions of wage and domestic labour which involve male breadwinners and female home-workers, are new models of masculinity likely to arise in households and workplaces? Mac an Ghaill (1996) suggests that this is indeed happening in some cases in the UK but not for those boys who feel their masculinity most at risk. Further, how then do boys and girls construct their gendered biographies within this context of the restructuring of transitions? We have much to learn in this respect.

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Gender erosion and gender intensification around work

What are the implications of gender erosion and intensification for masculinity and femininity and the relationships within and between them in the workplace and in vocational education? Consider two set of implications.

Such shifts have had particularly destructive implications for manual
trades, long associated with apprenticeship but which no longer guarantee employment. For those men whose manual labour is an important source of their masculinity these shifts have cut deeply into the foundations of their identity. This places in question those masculinities formed through manual work. Mac an Ghaill's (1996) research from the UK. It shows how certain traditional conceptions of working class masculinity seem to be at risk and how others are emerging. It also sheds some light on the implications of this for vocational education. Blurring the distinction between vocational and general education is implicit in programs for vocational policies. New hierarchies between high and low status vocational fields are developing in the UK and leading to the re stratification of working class male students. The emerging high status technological and commercial subject areas such as business studies, technology and computer studies are providing some such boys with what he calls an 'ascending and modernising version of working class masculinity' with associated values of 'rationality instrumentalism, foreword planning and careerism'. Other working class boys, he argues, are maintaining a descending traditional mode of masculinity based on low level, practically based subject areas which reflect the tough masculinity of the disappearing shop floor. The boys who subscribe to this mode of masculinity can be seen to be particularly 'at risk'. There is now an increasing amount of literature which suggests that as males lose power in one arena they search for new ways of expressing it in order to
reclaim their sense of manhood. This suggests that boys at risk place themselves and others at risk more. But what of girls?

Elsewhere (Kenway and Willis, 1996), we have considered the implications for the post-school options of young women of Labor’s policies for reshaping the post compulsory curriculum to make it more oriented to the workplace. For example, we have made the case that the generic work-related Key Competencies proposed for the general curriculum have some potential to enhance girls’ work options because:

- they include competencies at which girls and women are generally considered to excel (e.g., communicating ideas and information, working with others and in teams) but for which they often receive little credit.
- they provide young women with the opportunity to document and accredit their competencies and thus to redress the imbalances in the rewarding of the skills that young women and young men have and which are involved in the work that young women and young men do.
- they make explicit to all students what work related competencies and the expectations of the workplace are. This may reduce the extent to which competence continues to be socially distributed according to gender, class and race.
- they focus on what students actually can do rather than on where or how they learned to do them, thus the Key Competencies can benefit those young women who develop and exhibit their competencies in settings other than formal education or in areas of the curriculum
which are less esteemed.

We argued that the Key Competencies have more potential to enhance girls' work options than the more narrow competencies proposed in CBT modules. However, we also expressed the view that specifically vocational programs in and through schools may also be of benefit to girls because in many ways, schools provide a more 'girl-friendly' environment than industry or TAFE and young women may be somewhat more likely to risk a non-traditional pathway in the relatively supportive environment of the school. This is particularly the case since school programmes are likely to maintain a sufficiently broad base in general education that young women will be able to 'try out' certain pathways without closing others off completely, an option which is not available within industry based programmes. Further, schools are more likely to undertake programmes which have gender equity as an explicit objective and to work for social justice.

However, in the light of MAATS the extent to which such potential will ever be actualised remains to be seen. Equally, it is not at all clear whether funding will be made available to address any of the other gender issues noted above. The MAATS statement by the Minister in the August 1996 Budget purports to go some way towards addressing such problems as the severe disparity between males and females gaining access to the apprenticeship system. As Kemp explains:

Through the introduction of part-time traineeships and new flexible
arrangements, apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities for women will be expanded. Women will also benefit from the extension of apprenticeships and traineeships into areas where they have been generally unavailable but where there is a high concentration of women workers (often in part-time positions), such as in service industries (Kemp 1996b, p.21).

On the surface of things this appears a reasonable move. Historically, young Australian women have been effectively excluded from most apprenticeships and have not usually had access to formal training as part of their jobs. Where training was available to women, such as in business studies, it was either at the public or their own expense, prior to employment, and it generally led to lower status credentials than those available to young men. Even in the early nineties, almost 90 per cent of the 16 per cent of school leavers who went into apprenticeships were male, receiving a training wage and an undertaking of future employment. Of the 5 per cent of school leavers who entered certificate courses, including Australian Traineeship holders, 70 per cent were women. Trainees were paid three days a week and had only a reasonable prospect of future employment. Traineeships are counted in the statistics as full-time jobs, in fact, they currently make up one-third of full-time female teenage employment. The majority of traineeships are in clerical or retail work. Traineeships are one of the main avenues of employment security for teenage women who do not go on to full-time tertiary study, but they have been fewer in number and available in a narrower range of employment areas than are
apprenticeships and recipients earn less than do apprentices. A little arithmetic on the figures, shows that close to 16 per cent of all male school leavers are paid to undertake training through an apprenticeship or traineeship compared with 5 per cent of all female school leavers. While the MAATS move may appear reasonable on first glance, it only addresses the tip of the iceberg with regard to 'girls at risk.' in an environment where boys are very clearly less so.

Conclusion
In the light of all we have said, we conclude firstly that the case that boys per se are at risk can not be sustained but that the boys who are at risk are those who come from the more disadvantaged end of the social scale and who subscribe to traditional versions of masculinity. However, we also conclude that the implications in the boys at risk thesis that girls are no longer 'at risk' particularly with regard to vocational education can not be sustained either. Indeed, one of the major implications of this chapter is that and that gender education and reform for girls and boys must be integral to vocational education. However, it also our view that they must be rethought in order that they may better attend to the issues raised by the 'end of certainty', 'the age of redefinition' and the development of the 'risk society'.

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The Feminisation of the Labour Market and Males

'New Disadvantage'

Jane Kenway, Peter Watkins and Karen Tregenza, Deakin Centre for Education and Change, Deakin University


Introduction

This chapter examines the well popularised and increasingly popular claims that boys are at risk in the mid 1990s. It argues that while there are grains of truth in such claims, they are also simplistic and unhelpful for educational policy makers and teachers. The case is made
for a more nuanced understanding of gender and risk in the context of widespread social change. This argument is advanced with particular reference to vocational education policies for schools. We begin the chapter with a discussion of changing times and their implications for policy with particular reference to vocational education and gender reform policies. Next we explore the concept of risk as it has been applied to boys, to 'students at risk' and to 'risk society'. We then focus on the issue of vocational education, gender and risk and introduce the empirical work that this chapter draws from. Under this heading we consider the gendered dimensions of three areas of social change and their implications for vocational education: risk, autonomy, security and trust; the restructuring of certain transitions, and gender convergence and intensification.

Uncertainty, redefinition and restructuring

The British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) calls this era 'the age of uncertainty'. Hugh McKay (1993), the Australian social commentator, calls it the 'age of redefinition'. Ulrich Beck, a sociologist from Germany talks of Risk Society (1992). Policy makers the world over are constantly engaged in restructuring. Those in educational circles are regularly restructured, redefined and uncertain. Risk and insecurity are features of their lives. Yet the search for certainty and the need to trust remain; and remain elusive. Changing gender identities and relations, changing labour processes and labour markets and changing family forms are amongst the inter-related characteristics of this age.
A feature of changing labour processes and labour markets is the decline of heavy (male dominated) manufacturing, the rise of the retail and service sector (dominated numerically by females) and the decline in the influence of unions and thus of working conditions. A related feature is what Bakker (1996, p.7) calls the ‘gender paradox of restructuring’—the ‘contradictory effects of the dual process of gender erosion and intensification’. On the one hand we see the gendered polarisation of labour markets. Certain core, traditionally male, labour markets are shrinking and certain peripheral, traditionally female, labour markets are expanding hence gender differences in work are intensified. On the other hand we see the gendered convergence of labour market experiences. More workers both male and female are in poorly paid, part time, non unionised casual work. Beck (1992, p.143) calls this the ‘generalisation of employment insecren Tregenza as research associate. We wish to acknowledge the work of Peter Kelly in helping to establish the project.